

Marginality, Co-Integration and Change: Social History as a Critical Exercise

Gérard Bouchard

Volume 8, Number 1, 1997

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/031115ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/031115ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0847-4478 (print)

1712-6274 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Bouchard, G. (1997). Marginality, Co-Integration and Change: Social History as a Critical Exercise. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 8(1), 19–38. <https://doi.org/10.7202/031115ar>

Article abstract

In an address delivered as a guest speaker, Gérard Bouchard conveys the theoretical and historiographical considerations which led to the writing of his *Quelques arpents d'Amérique*. In particular, he presents the concept of family reproduction as a promising tool towards the understanding of the links between micro and macro social phenomena. Thereafter, he traces the limits of the notion of marginality for the study of the multiple economic activities of the Saguenay, which he rejects in favour of co-integration and integration. These concepts allow a consideration of the relation between two systems and for the autonomous dynamic of the society otherwise called a periphery. As illustrations of his global approach, he then offers some conclusions pertaining to contraception, agricultural change and education. He proceeds to identify elements of other North American historiographies of agricultural regions, in Quebec, Canada and the United States, which call for the use of the notion of co-integration. Only once detailed comparisons are made will historians be able to discriminate between the originality of the French Canadian habitant and his "Americanity".

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER CONFÉRENCIER INVITÉ

Marginality, Co-Integration and Change: Social History as a Critical Exercise

GÉRARD BOUCHARD

The Saguenay Region: Quelques arpents d'Amérique

THIS ESSAY IS A CONTINUATION OF VARIOUS ANALYSES PRESENTED IN MY RECENT book on the Saguenay farming community, *Quelques arpents d'Amérique*.¹ In that study, which was in the spirit – and indeed an extension – of *Le village immobile*², I sought to give concrete expression to the broad objectives of social history, as a scientific endeavour that (a) attempts to grasp the various components of the social sphere, (b) shedding light on their interactions, (c) from a perspective of change, (d) drawing on comparisons so as to test the validity of the interpretations offered. To achieve this overall purpose, it was first necessary to base the analysis on an approach that would make it possible to cover the entire field while meeting two requirements: first, to avoid artificially compartmentalising the social sphere, that is, juxtaposing its components but never really relating them to each other; and second, in one way or another, to build bridges between the micro-social (individuals, families, their strategies, etc.) and the societal or macro-social sphere (what French sociologists used to call *la société globale*). I have found this approach (or, more precisely, one of several that were possible) in the dynamics of family reproduction, with its various parameters – geographic, demographic, economic, social and cultural (religion, literacy, values, etc.). These parameters were dealt with from two angles, both as independent variables (or as factors determining family reproduction) and as

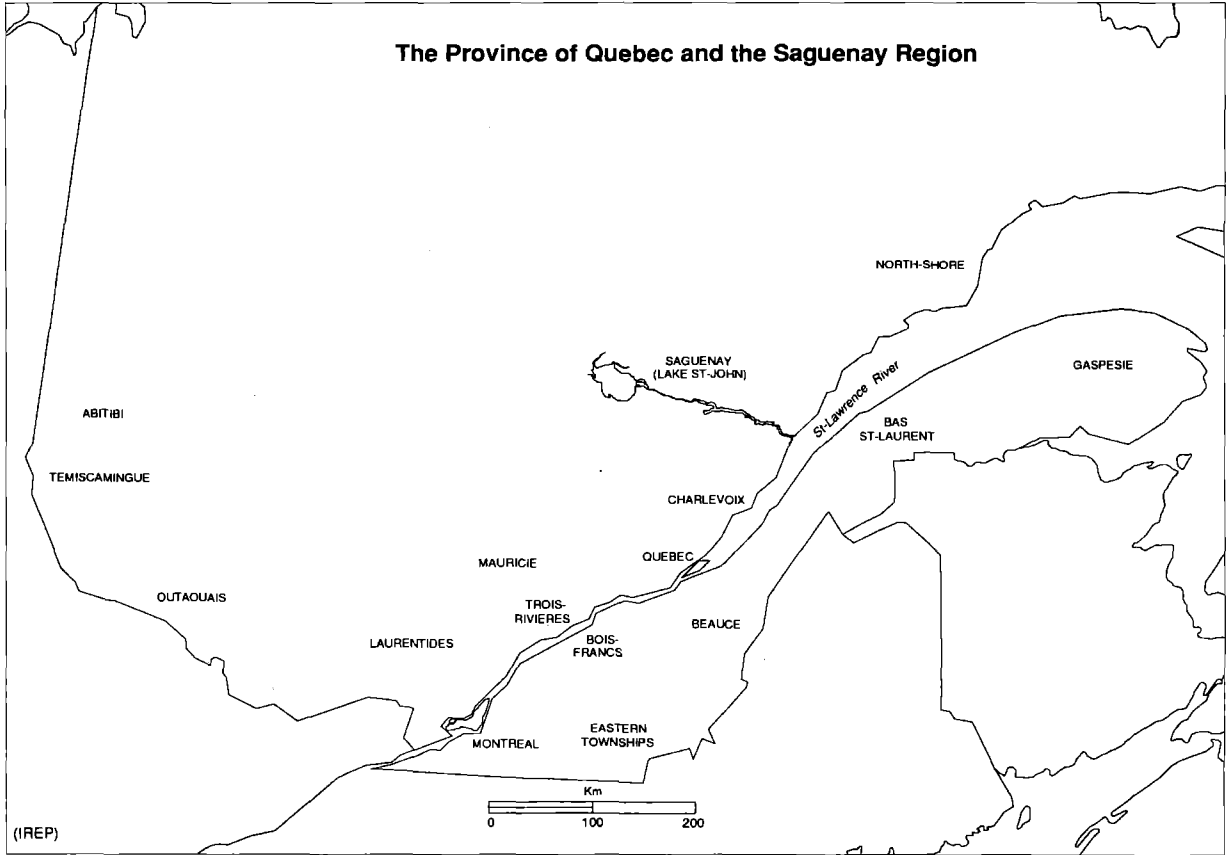
The author wishes to thank Marc Saint-Hilaire and Ronald Rudin for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

- 1 Gérard Bouchard, *Quelques arpents d'Amérique: Population, économie, famille au Saguenay, 1838-1971* (Montréal, 1996).
- 2 *Le village immobile: Sennely-en-Sologne au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1972).

dependent variables, (insofar as they were in turn determined or changed by family reproduction). It is actually this two-fold approach that, in the book, allows for linkage between the micro-social and macro-social spheres. Under these conditions, the complex and comprehensive dynamics of family reproduction could fulfill its promise: to serve as a guiding principle, an axis from which one can move about or 'navigate' within the social sphere. Hence the arrangement of the chapters and parts of the book, which first describes the geographic context, the population, the economy, the social structure (Part 1), deals with family reproduction itself, in all its dimensions (Part 2), then makes comparisons (Part 3) and finally analyses social change in a last part that brings together all the variables studied, seeks to capture a pattern and pull together the various threads identified.

It is appropriate at this point to briefly describe the Saguenay region, which served as the spatial framework for my analysis. The Saguenay is a remote area that was opened for settlement at the end of the 1830s by immigrants from the neighbouring Charlevoix region (see map on facing page). Those migrations were carried out primarily by families in search of land on which to establish their offspring. The occupation of the arable land was completed in a century, resulting in the creation of 65 rural parishes and a dozen small cities. In general, settlement advanced from east to west, moving clockwise around the Lac Saint-Jean. During this period, there was a great amount of geographic mobility, first at the interregional scale but mainly within the region. The population increased primarily as a result of very high fertility (with an average of ten live births per complete family until the 1930s); there were 5,300 inhabitants in 1852, 37,000 in 1901, 143,000 in 1941 and 285,000 in 1991. With the coming of large-scale industry from the end of the nineteenth century (pulp and paper, aluminum, hydro-electric power plants), urbanisation took off. However, the urban segment of the regional population increased rather slowly. Prior to 1931, only one city had more than 5,000 inhabitants (Chicoutimi, 11,877). In 1931, urban Saguenay consisted of about seven or eight very small cities, replicating the mill town pattern. If we use the 2,500-figure as an urban/rural threshold, only 10.3% of the Saguenay population could be considered urban in 1901, 32.3% in 1931, and 43.5% in 1941. Therefore, prior to 1931, the urban segment did not offer much as 'alternatives' to the farmers and their children, and it did not greatly affect the life style of the countryside. As regards the rural economy, the very first years of the settlement were characterised by subsistence farming, owing to the constraints inherent in land clearing. Starting in the 1880s, however, most farmers turned to cattle farming and the raising of forage crops to support dairy production. The milk was sold to cheese and butter factories that mainly exported their products to Europe.

The Province of Quebec and the Saguenay Region



This specialisation, however, did not lead to a real and rapid conversion to agrarian capitalism. It is remarkable that farm families continued to rely on multi-activity, from which they obtained a major portion of their income.³ I was able to identify at least fifteen types of small off-farm jobs, all of which represented sources of additional earning for the farming family and which were performed along with farming or during the off-season. One of the main jobs consisted of winter work at logging camps, often for companies outside the region. Another task was to harvest various products (blueberries, pine gum, birch bark, etc.), again for sale outside the region. The range of supplementary jobs also included tasks such as teaching, road repair, employment in sawmills or factories (in Montréal or in Ontario or New England), domestic work for members of the local elite, cutting and selling firewood, etc. It was mainly the children (daughters as well as sons) who worked at these small jobs, turning over their earnings to their parents, in keeping with a strict family rule. Thus there developed a system with various dimensions – economic (multi-activity), social (family service) and cultural (the ethic of solidarity) – all of them impeding a complete conversion to capitalism.

In the course of this study, I soon discovered that I would have to account for a complex or even paradoxical reality, in that this Saguenay farming community (a) maintained numerous and regular relations with the extra-regional market but managed to do so without allowing itself to be really converted to capitalism; (b) showed signs of autonomy and dependency at the same time; (c) exhibited vitality and maintained vigorous population growth and spatial expansion but was little concerned with increasing the farm productivity and changing its technology and practices; (d) incorporated important changes while perpetuating major elements of permanence; (e) lived in remoteness but not necessarily in isolation; (f) tried very hard to take roots, a goal, however, that was reached only through a high level of intraregional mobility.

In this paper, I briefly present the concepts and models that had to be developed in order to correctly decipher these rather puzzling Saguenay realities. I will then explain how, on reflecting on marginality and the dynamics of collective integration, I was led to call into question (a) some theoretical concepts related to the process of dissemination of capitalism and the centre/periphery relationships; (b) stereotypes associated with Québec farmers and their English Canadian and American counterparts. Along the way, I will also underline the

3 Multi-activity refers to the various types of paid work performed off the farm by the farmer, his wife, and – much more frequently in the case of the Saguenay – by his children. On this concept, see Ronald Hubscher, “Une nouvelle clé de lecture des sociétés rurales: l'exemple du Nord de la France”, in *Entre faucilles et marteaux*. G. Garrier and R. Hubscher eds. (Lyon, 1988): 33-58.

indispensable contribution of comparative analysis as a critical procedure for enriching and validating historical findings.⁴

The Notion of Marginality

Seeking to account for the main features of the Saguenay farming economy, which developed in remoteness and was long driven by the settlement process, I was at first tempted to resort to the concept of marginality. But basically, this concept proved to be of little use, firstly because it suggests an absence of relations between two collectivities or social systems (the 'marginal' one and the other), whereas here the two entities were in fact closely interwoven in various ways; and secondly because it tells us nothing about the structure, characteristics and dynamics of the so-called marginal society. It is important to underline that truly marginal economies are quite rare; indeed, the populations usually referred to by this term generally maintain regular connections with the marketplace. The concept of marginality presents the double flaw of not shedding light on these relations and of even obscuring their existence. For the same reasons, the model of subsistence economy (or self-sufficiency) had to be rejected, even though the Saguenay farming community undeniably showed numerous signs of a longing for independence and a desire to perpetuate a world that was not yet lost. Furthermore, marginal societies are usually represented as stagnant, passive, disorganized, underdeveloped and backward. Once again, these terms carry a negative or even pejorative connotation: they refer to what the marginal society is not or the manner in which it is supposed to differ from others, but they do not say what it is. It is precisely the historian's task to shed light on the specific collective processes that underlie this type of society, beyond the superficial attributes that are commonly used to describe it; hence the need for a new framework which postulates that the so-called marginal society is in reality a social subset that interacts with others but does so according to interactions and dynamics of a particular type. As a result, the so-called marginal reality must not be confined to its strictly spatial or geographic meaning.

According to other theories, the analysis of marginality presents on the one hand a local economy labeled as traditional and on the other hand an extra-regional economy (national or international in scope) that is characterised as modern, capitalistic, metropolitan. As we know, years ago, attempts to explain

4 It should be noted (this aspect of the research will not be examined here) that most of the analyses are based on the BALSAC population register, developed by IREP (Gérard Bouchard, Raymond Roy, Bernard Casgrain and Michel Hubert, "Computer in Human Sciences: From Family Reconstitution to Population Reconstruction", in *From Information to Knowledge: Conceptual and Content Analysis by Computer*. Ephraim Nissan and Klauss M. Schmidt, eds. (Oxford, 1995): 201-26.

this duality gave rise to two schools of interpretation, one liberal and the other of Marxist inspiration.⁵ Irrespective of their specific merits, these two approaches also suffer from the above-mentioned flaw, namely that they obscure, oversimplify or very negatively reflect the dynamics of the so-called local society. The latter is depicted either as frozen in backward attitudes of *cultural resistance* and rejection, or as subdued by the dominant economy, *its structure being undermined*, as if the state of dependency of the 'traditional' society shaped all its features. Against this interpretation, it must once again be pointed out that this society nonetheless embodies a *specific structure* and a *specific dynamics* that must be reconstructed and understood from within if we are to grasp its economic, social and cultural specificity.

A final caution is in order. References to culture and mentalities as mechanisms for explaining collective phenomena are always to be suspected of what economism used to be criticised for (and rightly so): namely that they reduce the complexity of the social sphere by emphasising one of its dimensions, to the detriment of its unpredictable logic of interactions. Hence, again, a need to look in other directions.

Roads to the Marketplace: Co-Integration

In keeping with the foregoing, it is appropriate to stress that there are a number of ways in which local economies or collectivities may be linked to the *société globale* (the term is used here as a synonym for the 'central', mainstream society, or the metropolis), and more especially to the market economy. In this respect, the capitalist model, with its ethic of specialisation, productivity, profit, and capital accumulation, represents one way among others. The proto-industrialisation model represents another path to the market. But neither of these models adequately accounts for the characteristics of the farming economy and society of the Saguenay between 1840 and 1940. Despite the close ties which this society maintained with the market, its agriculture did not exhibit the essential features of the capitalist system. Primarily through land clearing, farmers extended (often substantially) the size of their holdings. But on their death, those holdings were divided among the sons rather than fostering a process of accumula-

5 The most often cited references are, in the former case, W.A. Lewis, "Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour," *Manchester School of Economic and Social Studies* 22(May 1954): 139-91 and *Theory of Economic Growth* (Oxford, 1969); Royden Loewen, "Ethnic Farmers and the 'Outside' World: Mennonites in Manitoba and Nebraska, 1874-1900," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada* 1(1990): 195-213; and in the latter, André Gunder Frank, *Le développement du sous-développement: l'Amérique latine* (Paris, 1972) and Samir Amin, *Le développement inégal: essai sur les formes sociales du capitalisme périphérique* (Paris, 1973).

tion. Also, until the 1930s, an economy of mixed farming⁶ accompanied by multi-activity prevailed. And lastly, during the same period, major indices of yields or productivity (of dairy cattle, for example) remained practically stable. The overall economic outputs rose, but this was due to a quantitative increase in the factors of production (manpower, work time, amount of land under cultivation, etc.). As to proto-industrialisation, there is hardly any evidence of it; records indicate that in the Saguenay countryside, there was very little cottage fabrics and even less small-scale industry exporting outside the region.

The Saguenay farming community prior to 1930-40 comes under what we have termed the co-integration model. This model seeks to bring out the fact that the farming economy maintained numerous, close and regular ties with the extra-regional (and even international) capitalist economy but did so without converting to its specific ways and means. On the contrary, the local community took advantage of those contacts to secure its reproduction along identical lines (as a 'traditional' society) and to provide for its own growth. The basic features of the model are as follows:

- The local economy or society is primarily driven by dynamics of reproduction based on family and community solidarity. The function of these dynamics is to preserve a maximum of collective autonomy or independence from the *société globale*, within the framework of family reproduction based on land ownership.
- The local society manages to perpetuate itself by taking advantage of various sources of by-employment and cash offered by the capitalist economy (seasonal or part-time work, sale of products of the land). This strategy finds its economic expression in multi-activity, as the main characteristic of the small-scale farming unit. It is also accompanied by a very high rate of geographic mobility among the family members.
- The farming economy thus manages to maintain close and lasting relationships with the capitalist economy without truly converting to the latter's ethic or structure.
- Multi-activity is made possible by the existence of a large family labour unit, whose members are relatively submissive and agree to sacrifice for a number of years for the good of the parents and the family as a whole. The *family service* is an integral part of the broader community dynamics.

6 Despite the emphasis that existed on dairy production, it is still appropriate to speak of mixed farming, owing to the diversity of the livestock (pigs, sheep, poultry, etc.) and the importance of secondary crops.

- The labour and low-cost products that the farming community provides to the industrial sector and the capitalist economy in general contribute, through the income that it derives from them, to the community's own reproduction and integration, and indeed to its expansion, which is especially evident in the context of settlement. Therefore, the two entities or systems mutually ensure their reproduction, integration, and growth in a context often marked by a highly unequal relationship but above all by reciprocity and interdependence, with each party benefiting from the other; hence the concept of *co-integration*. At the local scale, multi-activity is the economic expression of co-integration, while the community dynamics are its social expression and the family ethic its cultural trademark.
- Owing to the connections established with the 'modern' economic and social system, the farming community manages for a time to perpetuate its most traditional features (high fertility rate, low-yield agriculture, strong family and community bonds, minimal literacy level, etc.).
- This co-integrated economy should not be considered basically static or passive. On the contrary, within the framework of settlement, it exhibits remarkable vitality and growth, expressed in the expansion of its land base. *The two systems ensure each other's growth and development, but they do so in different ways, along specific paths.*

Implicitly, the co-integration model may be seen as a theorisation of multi-activity, in that it brings out the latter's underlying cause and functional rationality, in furtherance of the farming family's objective of autonomy. In fact, it could be said that farming communities, in engaging in a relationship of co-integration, seek to achieve through the market economy a form of autonomy comparable to that which self-subsistence was supposed to provide. They do so, somewhat paradoxically, by resorting to a wide range of off-farm activities and income sources, that is, by *diversifying their dependencies*. This fragmentation of ties (some lasting, others temporary) with the market, combined with family ownership of the land, gave farmers a sense of independence that would have been compromised by specialisation or monoculture. The support provided by kinship network and community gave them additional protection against the *outside world*.

In this the family plays a highly important role. It is truly the centre of economic and social decision-making, the hub of collective reproduction. The children are submissive toward their parents, and until they marry they work in the service of the family, turning over the product of their labour. A major contribution is in the assistance that they provide in clearing the land. In return, when they marry, most sons receive nearby land on which to estab-

lish themselves (and prolong the dynamics of mutual assistance); daughters do not receive land but are married to farmers. This can be seen as a real *strategy of family reproduction*: the family uses the availability of land and the income from multi-activity to provide for its spatial expansion, its reproduction along identical, *traditional* lines (as well as its multiplication through high fertility), and a form of independence. The price of that independence is the regression, in each generation, toward a state of great poverty. Young couples, newly established, must recommence the cycle of expansion and development.⁷

These dynamics are made possible by the relationships maintained with the capitalist market and the income obtained therefrom. Through co-integration, the 'modern' economy provides opportunities that can be used to perpetuate 'traditional' social and cultural forms: the linkage of the local and the extra-regional in the sphere of production can serve to further varied if not opposite modes of reproduction. Consequently, what we see here are two interacting systems that pursue divergent objectives.

One might be tempted to identify culture (or 'mentalities') as the governing factor in this sort of structural distortion brought about by co-integration. But to do so would be to oversimplify a reality that is highly complex. It would also deny one of the richest premises of social history, namely that any society is made up of a set of interacting components producing a complex equilibrium. In the case under study, the co-integrated farming community was the product of various factors acting in combination: a geographic setting that made land available at low cost; dynamics of settlement that created a sense of being apart from the old laurentian communities and established a break between the *frontier* and the large urban centres; a high fertility rate which induced farm families to clear more land on which to settle their offspring but which also provided the means to do so in the form of a large and free family labour; strong community solidarity born of the poverty that made mutual assistance indispensable; an interdependence between children and parents that gave rise to an ethic of family service; the priority given to the reproduction of the family, in search of independence; farmers' willingness to accommodate themselves to a rugged way of life; etc. Clearly, culture played an important role in these collective dynamics. But it was one factor among others.

7 These findings are consistent with the main lessons from social history in the past twenty-five years. It has been shown repeatedly that the evolution of the family was not passively determined by the great structural changes at the macro-social scale; one need only consider the many studies refuting liberal sociology's portrayal of the family in the context of industrialisation. These studies have shown that the family was also an entrenched player that had its share of autonomy, was capable of strategies and maintained an interactive relationship with the macrosocial sphere.

It is precisely in this respect that the co-integration, as a theoretical tool, differs from the *moral economy* model proposed by authors like J.A. Henretta, M. Merrill, C. Clark⁸ and others. In the latter model, a predominant role is assigned to *mentalities* as a factor of resistance. In addition, the model is strongly based on an opposition between self-sufficiency (supplemented by local trade or barter) and the capitalist economy. As we have seen, co-integration challenges this type of dichotomy. The model is also distinct from the *peasant or household economy* of A.V. Chayanov.⁹ In our view, this approach fails to adequately account for the entire phenomenon of multi-activity, which blurs the correlation assumed between the number of children and the acreage under cultivation. It also attributes a falsely static character to family reproduction in not taking sufficient account of its demographic and spatial expansion. Lastly, the concept of co-integration has also led us to cast a critical view on pioneering works on the history of farming communities in Québec.¹⁰

Social Change: From Co-Integration to Integration

As stated above, co-integration is not a synonym for stagnation, firstly because family reproduction was characterised by demographic growth and spatial expansion, and also because this farming community absorbed various changes, between 1840 and 1940, without breaking its structural equilibrium. Indeed, the features of permanence already identified were accompanied by major changes in the economy (increase in the size of farms and dairy herds, increase in use of credit), in social behaviours (changes in models of marital choices, increase in travel due to the railway, etc.), in culture (continual rise in literacy). But the changes that truly posed an obstacle to the co-integrated community and ultimately signaled its demise occurred between 1930 and 1950. These were primarily: (a) the end of the settlement process, which made land ownership less accessible and jeopardised the old pattern of family reproduction; (b) the restructuring of the agro-forestry economy and the decline of multi-activity; (c) the introduction of compulsory school attendance; (d) the reform of

8 James A. Henretta, "Families and Farms: Mentality in Pre-Industrial America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 35 (January, 1978): 3-32 and *The Origins of American Capitalism: Collected Essays* (Boston, 1991); Michael Merrill, "Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States," *Radical History Review* (Winter, 1977): 42-71; Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, 1990).

9 A.V. Chayanov, "Peasant Farm Organization," in *The Theory of Peasant Economy*. D. Thorner, B. Kerblay and R.E.F. Smith, eds. (Homewood, Illinois, 1966): 29-269.

10 Léon Gérin, "L'habitant de Saint-Justin," in *Léon Gérin et l'habitant de Saint-Justin*. J.-C. Falardeau and P. Garigue, eds. (Montréal, 1968): 49-128; Horace Miner, "The French-Canadian Family Cycle," *American Sociological Review* 3 (October, 1938): 700-08.

farming practices; and (e) the spread of contraception. In the absence of these foundations and under the impact of competition in the markets, a new relationship to the land was established; agriculture was redirected toward specialisation and productivity; capitalism instilled its rule of profit and accumulation. And the farming community as a whole shifted gradually from *co-integration* to *integration*.

It is worth noting that in this region, the saturation of agrarian space did not in the short term lead to the spread of contraception. It seems clear that the behaviours of these inhabitants of the Saguenay were not immediately patterned on the neo-Malthusian models of Hajnal, Easterlin, Yasuba and others. This is not the only singularity revealed by the analysis. Indeed, the changes affecting the regional society followed a number of seemingly separate pathways and did not occur according to the same timetable. Using the BALSAC register and a few supplementary sources, we were able to trace, at 10-year intervals over the period 1842-1971, the evolution of 26 demographic, social, and cultural variables (marital status, structure of households, endogamous marriages, consanguineous marriages, literacy, religious practice, premarital conception, models for the assignment of given names, etc.). A comparison of the evolution of these 26 variables showed no patterns indicative of a single model. Some variables or indicators showed no change at all over the entire period. Others evolved according to differing chronologies and speeds. Most of the timetables were divergent even within dimensions that were presumed to be homogeneous (for example, variables pertaining to the demographic behaviours, or to the religious sphere). The changes occurred piecemeal, so out of phase with each other as to cast doubt on the existence of a single driving force that would give order to the overall course. In these circumstances, one suspects instead that various factors combined, both from within and outside the region, which blended together in interactions that are very hard to account for and even harder to predict. Recourse to a multi-causal explanatory model then becomes inevitable. This being said, the hybrid model that we have devised can be characterised as a social model, in part because it assigns a very important role to the family unit, as the locus of sociability, and to its extensions in the community, but also because it draws on all the components of the social sphere, understood here in the very broad sense.

The study of change sheds its own light on the relationship between the region and the larger society. The numerous transformations that occurred in the Saguenay between 1920 and 1950 (e.g., the decline in recruitment to religious orders from 1930 onward) were significant enough to call for a new interpretation of the Quiet Revolution, this digest of social change orchestrated by new technocratic elites which, in one or two decades starting in the 1960s, were said to have brought a tradition-bound Québec into the ranks of modern societies. The Saguenay data call for a reinterpretation that for some time has been

gaining ground, namely that the institutional changes that took place at the Québec level as a whole were not without a long historical preparation. Actually, the Quiet Revolution can be seen as the culmination of profound transformations in both the social structure and the culture, in rural areas as well as in the cities. The Saguenay example shows that, by the 1920s, major changes were already under way. In addition, a strong motivation to educate the young was present among the rural disadvantaged, especially in the aftermath of the Great Depression, when the construction of a school was hailed with the same enthusiasm as a new road or even a hospital. In a region such as the Saguenay, we can in this regard speak of *the lost generation* which experienced the difficult transition from rural to urban life, and which may be considered as a major force for modernisation. It is that generation which suffered the most from the minimal formal education that had been the norm up to then, and which indirectly paved the way for the trends that were to trigger the institutional reforms of the 1960s. There would be no risk in extending this observation to the great number of Québécois from families of modest social ranks who came of age during the Great Depression. It may be hypothesised that the changes brought about by the Quiet Revolution were long desired at the grass roots; it was precisely at the top of the society that there was resistance. The Quiet Revolution, then, might have been a collective rendez-vous at which the popular classes probably preceded a sizable portion of their elites.

The Co-Integration Beyond the Saguenay?

Was this co-integrated farming community an isolated phenomenon, exclusive to the Saguenay? Was it an anomaly in the rural landscape of Québec and Canada? I believe that it was not. Actually, the main features that characterised the Saguenay countryside (remoteness, underdevelopment, multi-activity, strong local solidarity, maintenance of so-called traditional collective traits, etc.) have been noted in a great number of studies. But, most of the time, no effort was made to treat them as parts of a specific social system and, from there, to develop a new theoretical framework; or they were viewed from the perspective of the marginality and backwardness models. This is the case, in particular, when economic and social history is informed with the paradigm of triumphant capitalism or agricultural entrepreneurship, with its stereotype of the rational producer as an aggressive economic agent, striving to continually improve his farm and to maximize his profit. As we know, in the United States this historiographic interpretation of the farming economy and society has given rise to a competing view (the moral economy, referred to above) which undertook to substantially qualify the model of agrarian capitalism by drawing attention to the numerous hybrid forms, to the adaptive capacities of precapitalist economies, and to the complexity of the transition to capitalism.

It is worth noting that this 'revisionist' historiography does not appear to have really inspired a counterpart in English Canada. And yet even a cursory survey of the publications of recent years reveals numerous references to characteristics or collective traits that may attest to major elements of co-integration at the very time when the agricultural economy is supposed to have been widely penetrated by capitalism. For nineteenth century Ontario, J. Roelens and K. Inwood¹¹ have identified forms of association between agriculture and cottage industry that are characteristic of co-integration. Other data showing the non-profitability of the dairy industry at the turn of the century suggest the same thing: Ontario farmers nevertheless devoted themselves to that industry because of the income security that it provided.¹² And once again with reference to Ontario, the research carried out by R.M. McInnis¹³ shows that in the mid-nineteenth century, only about one-sixth of so-called commercial farms truly organised their production on the basis of the market; the others were said to be self-sufficient (although they maintained relations with the market). Various types of multi-activity, seasonal work and family service have been identified by a number of authors.¹⁴ Along the same lines, it is appropriate to mention the 'farmers without farms,' studied by G. Darroch¹⁵, or the farmers who, in order to pay cash for purchases of food, household items, or equipment, had either to

-
- 11 Janine Roelens and Kris Inwood, "'Labouring at the Loom': A Case Study of Rural Manufacturing in Leeds County, Ontario, 1870," *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 7 (1990): 582.
- 12 Robert E. Ankli, "Ontario's Dairy Industry, 1880-1920", *Canadian Papers in Rural History* 8 (1992): 528.
- 13 R. Marvin McInnis, "Marketable Surpluses in Ontario Farming, 1860," *Social Science History* 8 (Autumn, 1984): 395-424; "The Size Structure of Farming, Canada West, 1861," in *Agrarian Organization in the Century of Industrialization: Europe, Russia, and North America, Research in Economic History. Supplement No. 5*. George Grantham and Carol S. Leonard eds. (Greenwich (Conn.), 1989): 313-29.
- 14 Joy Parr, "Hired Men: Ontario Agricultural Wage Labour in Historical Perspective," *Labour/Le Travail* 15 (Spring, 1985): 91-103.; Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (Montréal/Kingston, 1987); Marjorie Griffin Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets, and Economic Development in Nineteenth-Century Ontario* (Toronto, 1988); Douglas McCalla, "Above the Falls: The Economic Development of Western Upper Canada, 1784-1851," lecture delivered at l'Université de Montréal, Colloquium on the rural economy and industrialization, 1992; Ian Radforth, *Bushworkers and Bosses: Logging in Northern Ontario, 1900-1980* (Toronto/Buffalo/London, 1987); Terry Crowley, "Rural Labour", in *Labouring Lives: Work and Workers in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*. Paul Craven ed. (Toronto/Buffalo/London, 1995): 13-104; R.W. Sandwell, "Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 27 (May, 1994), 1-32; Eliane Leslau Silverman, *The Last Best West. Women on the Alberta Frontier, 1880-1930* (Montréal, 1984), and others.
- 15 Gordon Darroch, "Scanty Fortunes and Rural Middle-Class Formations: Farm Size and Farm Families in Nineteenth-Century Central Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review* (1997). Forthcoming.

maintain crops for the market or to have their children work off the farm. Outside Ontario, there are also numerous references to one characteristic or another of co-integration, for example among the Mennonites¹⁶ and the Ukrainians¹⁷ of Western Canada, or in various communities of the Maritime provinces.¹⁸

All these references suggest that there might have been considerable diversity in the farming economy of English Canada, and of Ontario in particular, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is also interesting to note that the descriptions of family service and multi-activity often come from works of feminist history, which make a point (and rightly so) of showing the specific contribution of farming women and their daughters to family income. These analyses lift the veil on major aspects of the farming economy that the paradigm of modernising capitalism tends to neglect. One wonders to what extent there might be ground here for a critical review of the historiography of the English Canadian, and more particularly, of the Ontario farming economy.¹⁹

This being said, in Québec too there has not been, over the past twenty years, the scientific equivalent of the *moral economy*, in the sense of a challenge or critique of the dominant paradigm. But the Québec historiographical context is very different. Traditionally, it is the entire farming economy of French speaking Québec that has often been depicted as backward, inward-looking, reluctant to technological progress and capitalism, captive of community solidarity and of the conservative *mentality* of the *habitant*. As a result, the historians following the Quiet Revolution primarily sought to break down this stereotype, stressing in their research the manifestations of modernity within the farming community, attempting to show that to a large extent the economic behaviours were rational, *normal*, that is, conforming to the ideal-type of capitalism. In so doing, however, they may have implicitly affirmed another stereotype to which they in turn have fallen victim: the stereotype of the modern, *pure* capitalistic English speaking farmer. Like the first stereotype, we believe that

16 Loewen, "Ethnic Farmers and the 'Outside' World."

17 John C. Lehr, "Kinship and Society in the Ukrainian Pioneer Settlement of the Canadian West," *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien* (1985): 207-19.

18 Rusty Bittermann, Robert A. MacKinnon and Graeme Wynn, "Of Inequality and Interdependence in the Nova Scotian Countryside, 1850-70," *Canadian Historical Review* 74 (March, 1993): 1-43; Daniel Samson, *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950* (Fredericton, 1994).

19 In this regard, the article by R.W. Sandwell is of great interest. It raises precisely this issue, calling into question the paradigm of modernisation as it has been applied in economic and social history in Canada ("Rural Reconstruction").

the latter must also be examined critically and replaced by a more subtle representation that serves as a basis for more appropriate comparisons.²⁰

R. Rudin²¹ has characterised as *revisionist* this Québec historiography that disputes the traditional interpretations portraying French speaking Québec as a lagging society that had missed its chance to progress. It is not at all my intention to call into question the considerable and valuable contribution of this current of historiography, in which I myself have at times participated. Thank to this scientific input, we now have a clearer and more accurate picture of the Québec past, and other approaches are now available to historians. As regards the farming community, we are rediscovering that the roads that lead to capitalism are varied, that in any society they are traveled at different speeds and in different ways, and that the so-called margins are present everywhere. It is this diversity that we should now seek to account for in the comparisons to be conducted, so as to better understand the complex web of relationships between the *margins* and the dominant trends, between the centres and the peripheries.

Everywhere, capitalism created peripheries, and this must be seen as an in-built characteristic rather than an accessory phenomenon. As to the co-integrated economies, there are obvious traces of them in various periods in Québec, in many regions other than the Saguenay (for example, Charlevoix, the Lower St. Lawrence, the Eastern Townships, etc.).²² They border on other areas where agrarian capitalism developed vigorously. The studies referred to above suggest that the concept of co-integration can be applied to areas in Ontario and the other Canadian provinces. As to the United States, one need only refer to all the research carried out from the perspective of the *moral economy* – and here again we believe that the areas already studied could usefully be reconsidered from the perspective of co-integration. Lastly, European farming communities also offer

20 Along these lines, within IREP's VALIN project, a team of researchers have conducted comparative analyses focusing on the development of the dairy industry. For instance, Marc Saint-Hilaire has traced the chronology of the introduction and expansion of this industry in New England, Ontario and Québec. The findings reveal a fair amount of diversity in all those places, and they underline the difficulty of establishing simple hierarchies at the macroscopic scale (*From New York to Gaspé: the Spread of the Dairy Industry in Northeastern America, 1830-1890* (Perth (Australia), 1995), paper presented at the ninth International Conference of Historical Geographers).

21 Ronald Rudin, "Revisionism and the Search for a Normal Society: a Critique of Recent Québec Historical Writing," *Canadian Historical Review* 73 (March, 1992): 30-61.

22 A number of references could be cited in support of this statement. Of particular note is a project under way at IREP (under the direction of D. Gervais and G. Bouchard), focusing on several parishes in the St Lawrence Valley between Québec and Montréal (Gérard Bouchard and Diane Gervais, *Le projet SAINT-LAURENT: Problématique et grille d'entrevue* (new version) (November, 1994)).

numerous examples of this phenomenon in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I am referring in particular to communities in the Alps and Pyrénées, but also to all those cases of 'failure' where it is said that proto-industrialisation was thwarted for one reason or another and which did not evolve (in a 'normal' way?) toward an authentic capitalism.²³

The countryside area does not exhaust the scope and the possibilities of the co-integration model, inasmuch as it designates a relation of dependency and mutual use involving two social systems that provide for their integration, their reproduction and sometimes their growth, according to their own terms and orientations. Co-integration originates in subpopulations defined on the basis of some sort of cleavage: economic, social, linguistic, religious, racial, spatial, etc. The duality thus created between the subpopulation and the surrounding society may be built on relationships of reciprocity that are the foundation of co-integration. I shall confine myself to a few examples. In fishing areas, the sea plays quite the same role as fallow land, as an apparently unlimited pool of resources; there is often the same seasonal employment pattern, the same multi-activity and so forth. The industrial city also presents numerous features of co-integration. One example that comes to mind is that of the Montréal working-class families studied by B. Bradbury.²⁴ One also thinks of the French-Canadian families who settled in New England and worked in large-scale industry, but who nevertheless counted on their community traditions and used the family wages to recreate their original community, in symbiosis with the American city.²⁵ In a similar way, once again in an urban setting but in Ontario this time, and in a period of full industrialisation, family solidarity and mutual aid networks were seen to strengthen within the working class.²⁶

This latter type of co-integration is even more clear-cut when industrial capitalism consciously uses, as a strategy, the characteristics of the local society that are best suited to the requirements of the organisation of work and pro-

23 On this, see Bouchard, *Quelques arpents d'Amérique*, Chapter VI.

24 Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montréal* (Toronto, 1993).

25 Tamara K. Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time* (Cambridge, 1982) and Tamara K. Hareven and Randolph Langenbach, *Life and Work in an American Factory-City* (New York, 1978).

26 Gordon Darroch, "Migrants in the Nineteenth Century: Fugitives or Families in Motion?," *Journal of Family History* 6 (Autumn, 1981): 257-77; Gordon Darroch and Michael Ornstein, "Family Coresidence in Canada in 1871: Family Life-Cycles, Occupations and Networks of Mutual Aid," in Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers/Communications historiques* (1983): 30-55. On these dialectical relationships between the working-class family and the world of large-scale manufacturing, also see Tamara K. Hareven, "What Difference Does it Make?" *Social Science History* 20 (1996): 317-344 (especially 324 ff).

ductivity. J.-E. Igartua²⁷ has shown how this was done in the town of Arvida (Saguenay). In the early 1940s, Alcan, seeking to stabilise its manpower, changed its recruiting policy in favour of local workers, because of their roots in the community. Here the cohesion of family and kin, characteristic of the 'traditional' family, was clearly put to use by the 'modern' economy.

The concept of co-integration can also find ground for application in the cultural sphere. It is easy to imagine how it could serve to re-examine in this manner the entire theme of the culture of poverty as propounded by R. Hoggart²⁸ and illustrated, in particular, in the works of the renowned anthropologist O. Lewis.²⁹

Comparative History as a Critical Tool

Before concluding this discussion of co-integration, I will digress briefly to emphasize the benefit of comparative studies. Indeed, comparison serves as an indispensable methodological control for putting into perspective the characteristics of the local or regional society, which in appearance are always unique. In this regard, it is useful to briefly return to my experience with *Quelques arpents d'Amérique*.

One of the objectives of the book, once again entirely consistent with the philosophy of social history, was to inquire into the archetype of the 'traditional' French Canadian (others would say 'le Québec profond' . . .), to trace it in daily life, attempting to grasp its concrete features, in its collective environment, whereas it was primarily known as an ideological projection, a romantic fiction or a legendary figure. But, as the test of comparison showed, it was not the *typical* French Canadian that I finally encountered, nor 'le Québec profond'; rather, it was the 'Americanness' (in the continental sense) of this farming community, a pioneer society engaged in the same type of experience as English Canadian and American collectivities in comparable periods. This finding enabled me to bring out the false identities in which Québec French speaking have been wrapped up in the past, owing to the dominant ideologies and literary fiction, both of which have been overly anxious to promote distinctive characteristics of the French-Canadian nation within an English-speaking America.

27 José-E. Igartua, *Arvida au Saguenay: Naissance d'une ville industrielle* (Montréal/Kingston, 1996).

28 Richard Hoggart, *La culture du pauvre* (Paris, 1970).

29 Oscar Lewis, *Les enfants de Sanchez: Autobiographie d'une famille mexicaine* (Paris, 1963); *La Vida: Une famille portoricaine dans une culture de pauvreté: San Juan et New York* (Paris, 1969); *Une mort dans la famille Sanchez* (Paris, 1973).

It is therefore necessary to challenge the stereotypes and the simplistic or erroneous dichotomies that have traditionally been used to characterise not only French Canadians but also English-speaking people (and especially Americans): the former were said to be sedentary, community-oriented, religious; they had many children, remained attached to the small family farm that they operated in the traditional way, through self-subsistence; and the family was their primary sphere of reference in most of their activities. By contrast, Americans were individualistic, mobile, free-thinking and materialistic; they were reluctant to large families, practiced progressive farming characterized by large holdings, in accordance with the capitalist *ethos*, etc. I believe that all these images must be corrected in one way or another: some are simply contrary to reality (e.g., French Canadians as sedentary, Americans as irreligious), while others are wrongly presented as being specific to Québec (e.g., high fertility rate, importance of the family unit, deep sense of community, small family farm), and others are simply exaggerated in order to set up an artificial dichotomy (French Canadians as community-minded, as opposed to Americans as individualists: the fact of the matter is that there was considerable individualism in rural Québec and a great deal of community in rural America).³⁰

From the above observations, it should not be concluded that nothing distinguished French-Canadian society from its neighbours. On the contrary, it exhibited major distinctive traits in terms of language, relationship to the sacred, social organisation, demography and so forth. But each of these so-called distinctive features must be scrutinised in the light of rigorous comparative study.

Finally, I came to the conclusion that the case of the French-Canadian *habitant* (in the context of the Saguenay) must be examined in the broad perspective of Americanness (this is what the title of my book seeks to stress). Moreover, this perspective should be expanded to encompass collectivities throughout the New World, including Australia and New Zealand.

Conclusion

In concluding, I shall first return to the subtitle of this document, which draws attention to an essential function of history as a science: to develop procedures meant to enhance objectivity and that historians apply to collective representa-

30 I have tried elsewhere to show the origin of these representations and the collective functions that they were intended to serve in Québec and French Canada: "Une nation, deux cultures. Continuités et ruptures dans la pensée québécoise traditionnelle (1840-1960)," in *La construction d'une culture: Le Québec et l'Amérique française*. Gérard Bouchard ed. with the collaboration of Serge Courville (Sainte-Foy, 1993): 3-47; "Le Québec comme collectivité neuve. Le refus de l'américanité dans le discours de la survivance," in *Québécois et Américains: La culture québécoise aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles*. Gérard Bouchard and Yvan Lamonde eds. (Montréal, 1995): 15-60.

tions produced and disseminated by power elites; but historical science also must turn these procedures against itself in order to test its assumptions and its own representations. *Quelques arpents d'Amérique* provides examples that illustrate both these angles. As for the latter, my main proposition is an invitation to re-examine the paradigm of capitalistic modernisation, in order to qualify it, and also to better understand the complex reality that it seeks to embrace. This concern inspired the model of co-integration, which is intended to account for major features of the market economy that the classical theory does not readily address. With reference to Québec, this proposition leads to critically examine two stereotypes: that of the traditional French-Canadian habitant (this task is already well advanced) and that of the English speaking farmer as the perfect capitalist entrepreneur.

Co-integration is expounded as a theory of certain types of cleavages that segment society as a whole into subsets, although without splitting it. The basic components of the model may be summed up as follows:

- Co-integration applies to situations of duality involving two social entities or systems, one of which is a subset of the other.
- The two are, however, linked by regular contacts involving exchange of goods and services, which make the concepts of marginality and self-sufficiency inappropriate.
- Reciprocity prevails between the two systems, by virtue of which each, through the other, provides for its own integration, reproduction and even growth, but does so according to its own specific collective dynamics.
- Thus, beyond the economic ties that connect them, the two entities follow divergent social and cultural paths.
- Researchers should therefore refrain from contrasting these paths either in developmental terms (stagnation, backwardness, resistance, catching up), or in functional terms (disintegration, apathy, underdevelopment, marginality).

Applying the co-integration model to the Saguenay farming community calls for a shift in the reflection upon the transition of rural economies and societies to capitalism, and more especially on the latter's modes of dissemination. The model shows that the capitalist economy extends its influences and connections according to very diversified sets of relationships. Collectivities that appear not to be within its grasp are in reality closely associated with it. Therefore one has to become much more alert to the need to account for those paths (and they are numerous) that do not follow the straight line of the ideal

(or 'classical') pattern or do not exhibit the elegant and somewhat capricious geometry of proto-industrialisation – all those pathways which circle back on themselves or meander, which take hybrid forms or invent temporary directions and unorthodox types of equilibrium, and which are so readily dismissed as marginal phenomena, anomalies, instances of resistance or failures. In reality, these are specific collective dynamics whose impulses and movement must be studied for themselves, avoiding any normative judgment that disqualifies them in advance. Co-integration represents one of these original configurations, which indeed is probably only one among others. And this is precisely the kind of contribution that social micro-history can make to the social sciences: to explore the interstices of the large-scale models and bring to light other models that enrich our understanding and attest to the diversity of social structure and change.

Looking beyond rural collectivities and economies, co-integration sheds light not only on relationships between the centre and the periphery but also on the structure of the *société globale*, on the way in which it incorporates its various social, ethnic, spatial and other components. It may also lead researchers to revisit (again) both functionalist theories and Marxist-inspired theories of conflict. On the one hand, the manner in which collective integration occurs is not monolithic, but rather disparate and discordant, and the concept of social dysfunction or pathology is quite inadequate to account for rich and complex collective dynamics. And on the other hand, does it not sometimes happen that classes in conflict also maintain significant relationships of reciprocity and dependency that may be relevant to co-integration?