Social Changes and the Transformations of Kinship Practices

An ethnographic approach to

Non-monogamous Configurations with Children

in contemporary French-speaking Europe

Pierre-Yves Wauthier
Socio-Anthropology

UCL Université catholique de Louvain

CIRFASE

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE LA SOCIÉTÉ
Institut de recherches sociologiques

UcLouvain — UniGe

Research theme

Everywhere, several cultural factors affect the implementation of the kinship functions (Godelier, 2004)

Indicators of changes

Over the last decades in Western Europe (Eurostat, 2014):

- Marriage rates ↘

- Divorce rates ↗

- Rates of birth outside wedlock ≈ rates of birth inside wedlock (Be, Fr, CH?)

- LATs / LTAs / Solo's / group housing ↗

- New sexual and marital tropes and norms develop, largely influenced by the medias (Bajos & Bozon, 2008).

- The definition of the **family** no longer overlaps the definition of the **household** (Bourdieu, Bonvalet).

- The family may be defined as a geographically **scattered network of affinities** more than as a kinship group.

Today, some individuals prefer to raise children by themselves (Mannis, 1999) ; others prefer to involve more than one (adult) partner in family matters (Sheff, 2014).

Research question
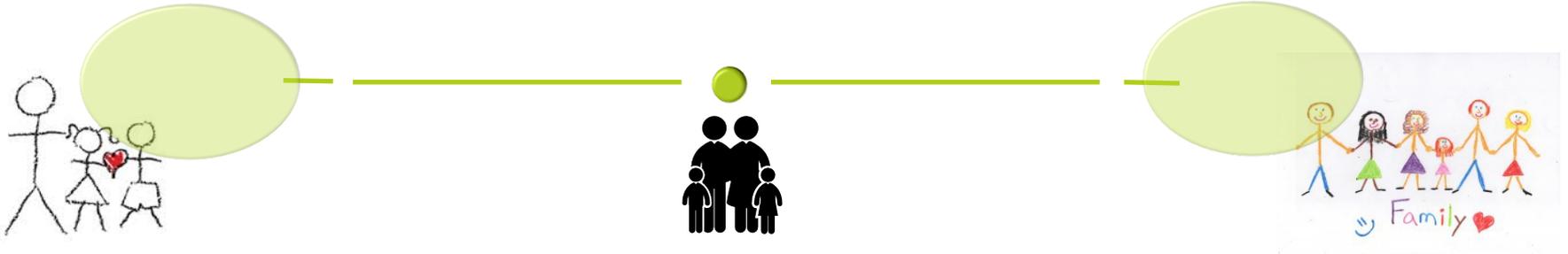
What are the socio-cultural factors affecting the implementation of kinship functions observable among non-monogamous family configurations?

How do you do family when you don't do couple ?

What is the epistemological impact on family and kinship studies?

Ethnographical data

Area: Western Europe
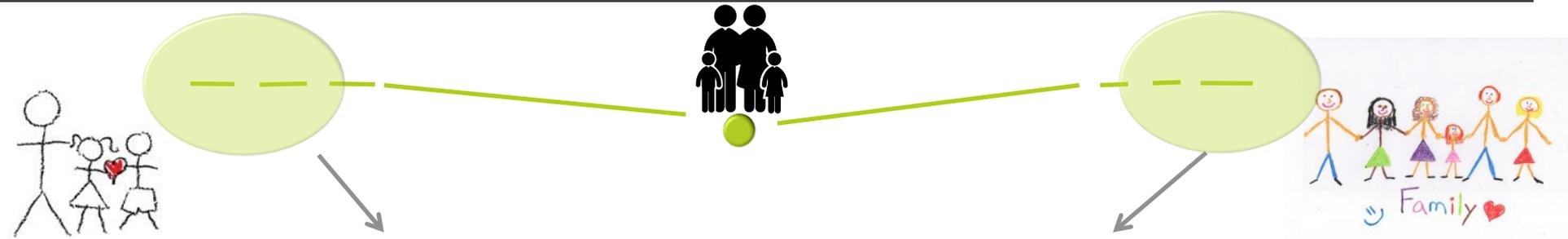Duration: 2011 – now
Language: French

Participative Observation
- ☐ IRL: 65 gatherings (private or public)
- ☐ On line: 4 blogs • 2 forums • 6 FB pages
- ☐ 30 testimonies or short interviews (1h/r.)

Audio Interviews
- ☐ 27 life-paths of parents in a non-monogamous configuration (on location — 5h/r.) + FNM

Coding • Sorting • Comparing

Praticalities	Motivations
Network of people	Justifications
Domestic time/space	Values
Technologies	Believes
Institutions	

Praticalities	Motivations
Network of people	Justifications
Domestic time/space	Values
Technologies	Believes
Institutions	

Non monogamous configurations

A

B

C (Bruxelles)

D

E

F

G (école)

H (Paris)
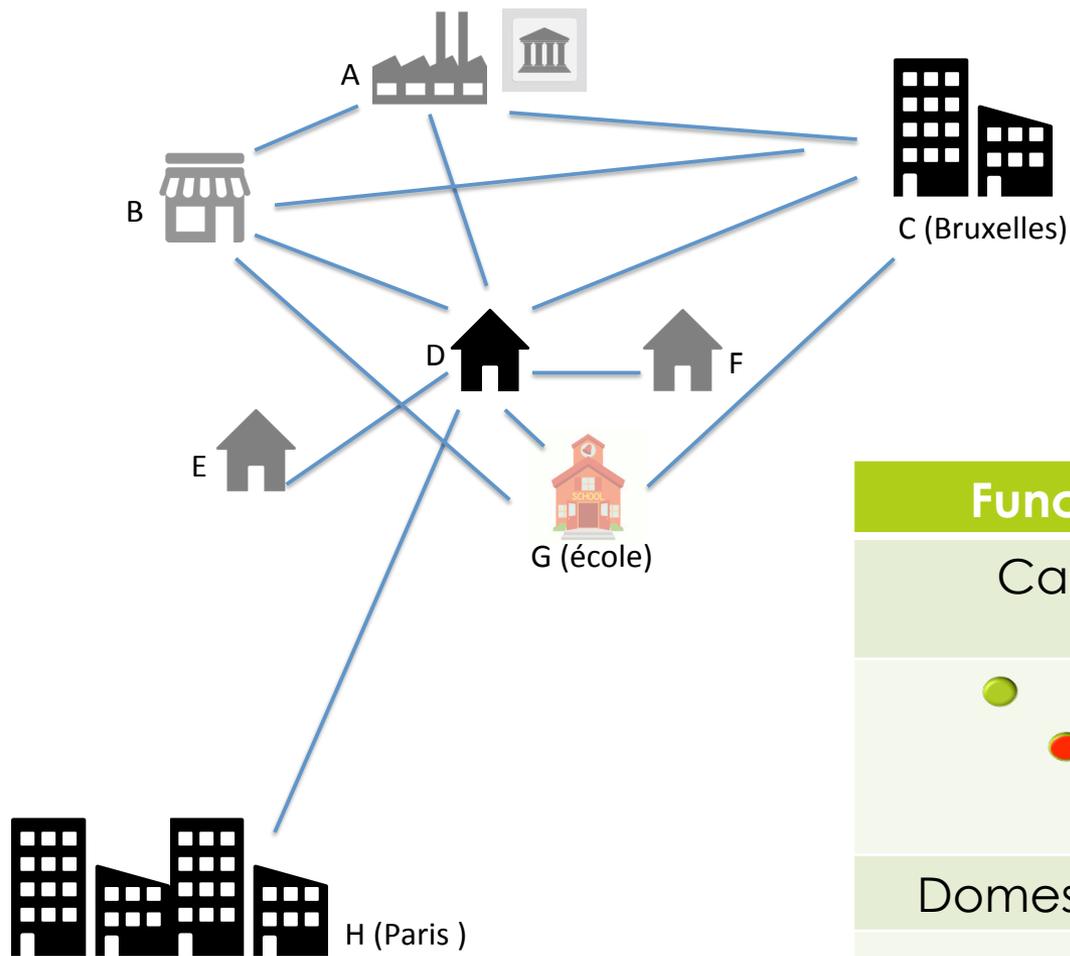
Functional meshwork (doing family)	
Care givers	Sexual partners
Domestic partners	Parental partners

Materialities and Mentalities
in non-monogamous configurations

Sociocracy
A Method for Self-Governance
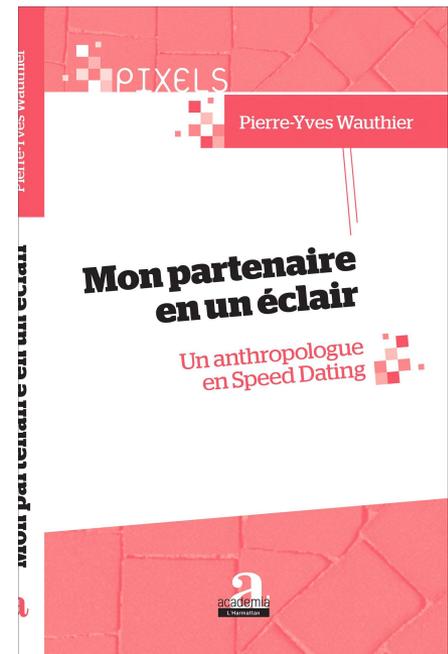
individualism
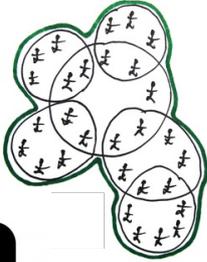
[(She + He) / time   ⇔   Att + Sex + Dom + Chld] ?

Thank you

Pierre-Yves Wauthier
Socio-Anthropology

pywauthier@gmail.com

Feed back and inputs are welcome