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Fabrice Langrognet, *Neighbours of Passage: A Microhistory of Migrants in a Paris Tenement, 1882-1932*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2022. xiv + 201 pp. Maps, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$170.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9780367862350; \$52.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781032196046; \$52.95 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9781003017820.

Review by Gillian Glaes, University of Montana.

The history of immigration to any country or region often involves the study of numbers and trends. Scholars, including historians, investigate patterns related to the quantity of immigrants who migrate to various destinations, the demographic profiles of immigrant groups, their destinations, their occupations, their living conditions, and the obstacles they face. Methodologically, however, the question often remains of how exactly to tell the story of the immigrant groups we study without reducing them to the very patterns and statistics we analyze. Is it through the analysis of a single group? Multiple groups that end up in the same place? A particular time period? Or a certain trend? Often, place-based approaches—a street, a neighborhood, or a city that can serve as a case study—are neglected. Fabrice Langrognet's *Neighbours of Passage* demonstrates the power of microhistories to explore the topic of immigration from a multi-dimensional perspective.

In *Neighbours of Passage*, Langrognet examines the lives of generations of residents in a group of buildings on the Avenue de Paris in Plaine-Saint-Denis. This housing complex on a single street in a suburban town north of Paris became a nexus of working-class immigrant life beginning in the late nineteenth century. Langrognet's study uses this community as a focal point to investigate the lives of immigrants between the 1880s and the 1930s. In focusing on a single set of dwellings, his study incorporates multiple immigrant groups rather than one specific population. This choice enlivens and enriches his study. Langrognet focuses on the interactions and representations of those who lived at 96, 98, 100, and 102 Avenue de Paris (now Avenue du Président Wilson), highlighting the residents' stories and revealing the texture of their everyday lives. He convincingly argues for the effectiveness of what he terms a "microhistorical experiment," explaining that his selection of place and time is tailored to his study's main research question: "how did the people who lived there--most of whom happened to be migrants--experience sociocultural difference?" (p. 2). Langrognet contends that the answer to such a question "has to include more variability across time, more intersectionality (broadly understood here as the combination of several parameters of difference) and more agency than one would expect" in a broader study (p. 2). Langrognet emphasizes "the contingent dynamics of coexistence, rather than [the] putatively natural separations between people" (p. 2); we see the interactions between multiple immigrant groups over several decades within the same space,

rather than separating out immigrant and migrant groups for analysis. We also learn more about the relationships between migrants from other regions of France and those who arrived from beyond France's borders, something relatively rare in the literature on immigration to France. The place-based approach thus illuminates the history of immigration to France by helping us see the impact of the space in which migrants lived and the ways in which it shaped the trajectory of their lives.

Many of the book's chapters begin with a specific story about an immigrant who lived at 96, 98, 100, or 102 Avenue de Paris. This approach highlights the diversity of inhabitants in the tenement but also underscores the diversity of immigration to France during this period and beyond. The first chapter of the book establishes the setting and the demographic profile of the residents. The tenement environs are described as "overwhelmingly rural" (pp. 19-20), yet the economic roles of the inhabitants were diverse, from grocers and merchants to shoemakers and bakers. The area around the tenement included community spaces such as parks and churches, restaurants, cafés, and bars and extended to the neighboring towns of Aubervilliers and Pantin. As the tenements' environs developed, the buildings evolved too, changing ownership and structural configuration over the years. In the tradition of Alain Corbin,^[1] Langrognet captures the auditory history of this space, explaining that "the inhabitants themselves were probably responsible for most of the tenement's soundtrack" (p. 25). Over the years, he explains, "the most consequential evolution of the tenement can be put in one word: decay" (p. 26). The impact of the First World War was particularly evident: No. 96 was hit by a grenade in March 1918. Such moments were experienced collectively and communally.

Chapter two, "A Carousel of Neighbours," examines the demographic profile of the residents, from the number of households to the ratio of men to women to the tenants' ages. Health, occupation, and income also play a key role in the analysis. From the standpoint of immigration, Langrognet highlights "the intensity and variety of migration flows that regularly renewed the tenement's population" (p. 39): immigrants arrived from Germany, Italy, Argentina, and the United States, internal migrants hailed from such places as Brittany. Langrognet frames the tenement as "a demographic carousel" and concludes that "the population at Nos. 96-102 underwent significant evolutions over time: waves of migrants, health crises and improvements, socio-economic challenges, [and] variations in job diversity" (p. 47).

Chapters three and four explore the important topic of how various migration patterns worked. In chapter three, Langrognet argues that migration shaped, and was shaped by, the decisions tenants made throughout their lives. Here, Langrognet seeks to dispel some persistent myths about nineteenth- and early twentieth-century migrations. This section and the book as a whole challenge, for example, the idea that people generally traveled in a linear manner over long distances and that their relationships were informed by larger geo-political tensions. Langrognet's analysis applies key tenets of social psychology to understand "the ways in which social and cultural difference could be enacted or reconfigured through migrations" (p. 53). Ultimately, Langrognet concludes that migration and mobility could amplify or reduce the importance of such distinctions, be they ethno-national, gendered, or class-based. Chapter four carries this discussion further, exploring how social and familial connections facilitated migration to and from the tenements. Building on the vast scholarship on migration, Langrognet argues that "social relations were often crucial in the tenants' migrations to and from the Plaine-Saint-Denis" (p. 71). Connections, kinship ties, and local solidarity shaped the migration trajectories of those who found themselves living in these tenements, regardless of their origins.

Chapter five explores local solidarity using an approach that is not rooted in ethnicity, race, or nationality. Langrognet's goal is to provide a "less biased approach to mixedness" by moving away from an ethnocentric analysis (p. 93). Instead, Langrognet incorporates birth, marriage, and death registers to explore tenants' relationships, while asking what bound tenants together. The author deploys approximately fifty years' worth of civic registers in Saint-Denis, exploring marriages, friendships, employment, religious beliefs (Catholicism, in particular), and language-forces he deems "critical to building and maintaining bonds of solidarity" between neighbours (p.104). Rather than analyze what divided migrants or created tensions between them, this chapter makes a crucial contribution to the existing literature by conveying the myriad factors that bound them together. Langrognet concludes that such an approach "can be a useful tool to sidestep predetermined ethnic categories" in the analysis of mixed relationships (p. 105).

Langrognet then shifts from positive relationships to confrontations and antagonisms in chapter six. Despite the solidarity explored in the previous chapter, we learn that violence was commonplace in the Plaine. The area's population density contributed significantly to the frequency and scale of conflict, as did the origins and ethnicity of its residents. Yet Langrognet discovered that "people of different ethnicities were not pitted against each other" (p. 111). Using newspapers and police and judicial archives, Langrognet highlights the ways in which residents of the Plaine struggled with one another, looking at the demographic and ethnic dimensions of various moments of conflict. Langrognet posits that many factors shaped these conflicts, and that ethnic identity was not always the cause. As he explains, "the construction of difference did not happen only through interpersonal contacts" (p. 120).

Chapter seven discusses the negotiation of national identifications. Langrognet argues that public institutions played a role in "enacting differences in nationality and citizenship" (p. 120). He charts an important shift during the First World War in terms of identity documents. Whereas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, residents of the tenement rarely carried identification, the First World War made identity documents much more common. Inhabitants of this and other regions carried residency permits, identity cards, passports with visas, proof of military exemption, benefit cards, ration cards, and food stamps. This was the latest development in a long-term shift toward frequent interactions with the state, from voting to censuses to appearances in court. This chapter focuses not only on "obligations, rights, and state interventions," but also naturalization (p. 126). By filtering these developments through the lens of the tenement, Langrognet's goal is to explain how the inhabitants "were able to either act upon, counteract or ultimately alter the outcome of official identifications that depended on their participation" (p. 125). Yet for the residents of Avenue de Paris, "ignorance, negligence and active avoidance strategies, combined with variable zeal from law enforcement, often blunted the effectiveness of nationality-based rules" (p. 136).

The book concludes with an exploration of the impact of the First World War on the residents of the Avenue de Paris, which became more diverse with the increase in migration that was a hallmark of this era. In this final chapter, Langrognet's goal is to "understand, at close range, the impact of the war on social boundaries" (p. 143). Racial, ethnic and gender dynamics shifted under the influence of the war and the increased involvement of governmental organizations in the daily lives of the Plaine's inhabitants. Langrognet highlights the ways in which residents resisted and negotiated with the state on issues ranging from nationality and visas to food rations. The networks established at the Plaine remained paramount, informing how inhabitants interacted

with the state. In looking at the intersection of state policies and the tenants' lives, Langrognet concludes that the institutional discourses of belonging and citizenship were a powerful force, but not an irresistible one. When these forces did permeate the micro-context of the tenements, "always after some degree of diffraction, this rhetoric contributed to reconfiguring the boundaries of difference in tenants' lives" (p. 154).

Langrognet's analysis ends in 1932 with the Great Depression re-shaping the social, cultural, political, and economic landscape. The tenements' residents continued to live on the Avenue de Paris even as it deteriorated. In 1944, they were caught up in the Royal Air Force's bombing campaign ahead of the invasion of Normandy. After the war the area declined further, with the glass and wire factories that had drawn workers to the region closing by the 1970s when the tenement was eventually demolished. This postwar history is fascinating and dovetails with so many key developments in France after 1945.

While the book's periodization makes sense, one wonders if there could have been room for further exploration of the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the postwar era. The residents' experiences during the Occupation, like their navigations of the postwar period, would no doubt have been enlightening. Nonetheless, Langrognet's book is a strong contribution as it is, and it challenges so many of the assumptions underpinning migration studies, from the field's emphasis on single immigrant groups to the tendency to prioritize larger-scale studies. Marriage, births, deaths, conflicts, pleasantries, and state policies all shaped the lives of those living on the Avenue de Paris. Langrognet's work convinces us that microhistories—in this case, that of a single tenement outside Paris—provide an important means of understanding a range of issues related to migration, from the dynamics of daily interactions to the networks of sociability created by residents.

NOTES

[1] Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the Nineteenth-century French Countryside* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

Gillian Glaes
University of Montana
gillian.glaes@mso.umt.edu

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