

LANDSCAPING DISCONTENT: SPACE, CLASS, AND SOCIAL
MOVEMENTS IN IMMIGRANT PARIS

By

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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates the importance of environmental politics, cultural belonging, and public space for a multiethnic coalition of residents who demanded land for a park in one of Paris' low-income, predominately West African and Maghrebi neighborhoods. The dissertation consists of an ethnographic case study of activism related to the new park and the politics of urban space with the goal of contributing to anthropological scholarship on urban environmentalism, public space, and struggles for national belonging among France's post-colonial minorities. It is based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork consisting of interviews and participant-observation with activists, policy-makers, and urban planners. It makes three principal scholarly interventions in the literature on cultural belonging in contemporary Europe, environmentalism in the city, and the political significance of public space, respectively. First, the study suggests that urban politics oriented around space and place allow residents of Maghrebi and West African descent to legitimately assert their cultural belonging in the nation. These "place-making" politics are significant because the majority of the scholarship highlights the de-legitimization of multiculturalism in France and overlooks the spatial dimensions of cultural politics. Second, the dissertation critiques the divergence between the environmentalism(s) of residents and the

“sustainable urbanism” of planners. Sustainable urbanism – an emerging global orthodoxy in urban planning – constructs the environment and environmental problems according to a limited, technical purview. It often clashes with the political projects of activists, who adopt an environmental approach in the broadest sense, incorporating a range of social, urban, and political demands. Third, the dissertation suggests ethnographers should take into account the “political life” of small urban spaces and theorize public space as not simply a setting for public behavior, but as an often incomplete social and political project, which residents (and planners) seek to “finish” for their own ends as part of broader political conflicts in society.

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At the conclusion of this project, Tom, my mother's loving husband, passed away suddenly but peacefully while pursuing his dream of hiking the Appalachian Trail. His

unrelenting passion to follow his dreams and undertake great journeys has long been an inspiration for me. I dedicate this dissertation to him.

**Landscaping Discontent: Space, Class, and Social Movements in
Immigrant Paris**

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The film quality is poor, the images are grainy, and the production is decidedly, perhaps intentionally, amateur. The scene could easily have come from public access TV or YouTube™. A shaky hand-held shot pans around the *Jardins d'Éole* – a newly constructed park in a predominately poor and working class section of Paris. This site, which lies at the boundary of two of the city's northern most arrondissements¹, is among Paris' most socially diverse areas. The camera pans around a large crowd gathered in the park, following people young and old, male and female, of West African, Maghrebi, European, South Asian and East Asian descent. As the unsteady lens takes in the surrounding landscape, we see it bears little resemblance to the “quintessential Paris” visited by tourists, or famous Parisian gardens such as the Jardin du Luxembourg, Parc des Buttes Chaumont, and the Jardin des Tuileries. It is full of stark spaces, jagged edges, and is sparsely vegetated. It is marked not by delicate flowerbeds and gardens but by vast asphalt and gravel expanses, patches of grass which seem to abruptly appear and disappear, and brushed metal surfaces. Concrete stairways and aluminum catwalks bridge artificial knolls and dales of unnatural symmetry. The park is not set among Haussmann's boulevards or palatial ministries like the capital's iconic public spaces. Being in Paris' northern, post-industrial periphery, it lies among wide swaths of railroad track, abandoned warehouses, towering public housing, and older – at times greatly deteriorated – private apartment buildings.

The camera focuses on a crowd gathering around a tent in the park's center. Banners advertise that it is the park's opening day ceremony. Rain has began to fall and droplets splash upon the camera lens. There is precious little room beneath the tarp and

most of the crowd is forced to huddle in the elements. In the tent we see Bertrand Delanoë, the mayor of Paris, giving a speech. Delanoë, a Socialist Party candidate elected in 2001, and the head of arguably the first left-wing alliance to lead Paris since the Commune revolt of 1871, is describing how the park was not only created for the people of the neighborhood but *by* them, as a result of grassroots organizing and local mobilization. “Here” he says, we have the “fruit of local democracy” and of “participative urbanism”. He speaks directly to the front rows of the crowd -- largely made up of local activists – who have, as he mentions, been part of a long campaign to construct the park in an area that has long had little green space. There are waves of applause.



Figure 1: View of Jardins d'Éole, looking north.

But despite the speech's congratulatory, even triumphant tone, the mayor's delivery is flustered, indeed he is shouting at the audience, and he (along with many others in the front rows) wears a look of deep consternation. This is because his speech is barely audible over the ongoing, unmistakable sounds of women's voices, chanting and shouting deep in the back of the audience. The camera turns to reveal a crowd of protesters outside of the tent in the rain --- composed mainly of women of West African and Maghrebi descent – clothed in either traditional West African wraps or in *hijab*, and some cases carrying babies. “Hey, hey, Delanoë! Nous sommes les *mal-logés!*”², they shout. The women are from a housing rights group known as the Mal-logés (a French neologism meaning literally “mis-housed” or “poorly-housed”) which has been increasingly active in this part of Paris because of rising rents and the poor condition of much of the housing stock. A company of CRS – riot police – form a barrier between the protestors and the rest of the audience, but they cannot prevent the gathering of women from trying to drown out the mayor with sound. While there are few words from our narrator (he lets Delanoë and the protestors do the talking) his contented surprise is palatable and his sense of allegiance is soon clear. After some shuffling about we re-emerge on the other side of the police line and have now joined the protest against Delanoë.



Figure 2: Protestors at the Jardins d'Éole inauguration, (video still from Zalea TV, ©2007).

From this vantage point, looking over the shoulders of the riot police, we see that the mayor, his entourage, and the other invited guests are clearly caught off guard by the protest. Delanoë and his aids look uncomfortable as they consult with the police and it is clear they have decided to continue with the hope they won't inflame the protesters further. And so they proceed as planned with the opening, although there is a minor scene when one protester is carried off by four riot police – each clutching one of her limbs – after having been arrested. Otherwise, the politicians continue with their speeches touting the importance of community input and public space, all the while pretending that the crowd of angry, shouting “immigrant” women gathered in front of them are simply not there.

This film, shot by an independent media association known as Zalea TV, is part of a regular, mostly internet-based broadcast news series produced in a now defunct railroad

facility adjacent to the Jardins d'Éole. It is one of the more dramatic representations, or perhaps *invocations* of one group's claim of a "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1995[1968]) and militancy related to the Jardins d'Éole campaign, led by the *Association Jardins d'Éole* (AJE). This residents' led campaign, which led to the construction of the park, is the central focus of this dissertation. A secondary, but crucial process under study, is the arrival of professional planners, who I argue re-codified residents' visions of "neighborhood space" into a "sustainable green space" compatible with Paris' leaders' aspirations for a global city competitive within a neoliberal framework. As I will demonstrate, an ethnographic treatment of the AJE and the struggles related to the Jardins d'Éole provide an opportunity to study global processes at work in local struggles, and offer a way to read the legacies of French empire through the everyday politics of Paris' neighborhoods. My ethnographic study of the AJE mobilization allows me to make three scholarly interventions related to French cultural politics, the relationship between environmental activism and sustainable urban planning, as well as public space in the global city.

First, I argue that the linked idioms of urban space and urban nature allow activists in Paris' West African and Maghrebi communities to construct and contest cultural difference in a way that is otherwise taboo in French political discourse. This is an important intervention in scholarship on cultural belonging in France, which – as my literature review demonstrates – tends to emphasize the degree to which explicit identity politics is absent from the French public sphere because it is seen as corrosive to a unified, monocultural French national identity.

Second – and in a related fashion – I demonstrate how environmental politics in this low-income, largely immigrant community goes beyond simply being about “the environment” in a narrowly conceived way. For the AJE, the environment is linked to class-based and gender politics related to housing, safety, quality of life, and the availability of green space for basic needs of social reproduction. This construction of the environment is very different from the environmentalism of urban planners who draw on technical, aesthetic, and often abstract notions of nature in their plans to recreate northeast Paris as a “sustainable” city. Planners’ notions of sustainability are more related to an emerging global orthodoxy in urban planning than they are the demands of residents. Ironically, the gentrification that is linked to the rebuilding of northeast Paris along ecologically low-impact lines may even lead to the displacement of the same residents demanding environmental justice in the first place. Since sustainable urbanism is an emerging trend in the redevelopment of urban areas around the world, my critique has global implications for research on urban environmentalism and sustainable urban planning.

Third, I show that the mobilization to create the park has disruptive implications for how the language of public/private space is to used theorize spatial contestation in the global city. As my literature review shows, most research has emphasized the degree to which “public space” is vanishing, being curtailed, or being minimized due to aggressive policing, surveillance, and the economic displacement of all but the wealthiest populations in many global cities. In this literature, activists are often depicted as locked in a struggle against elites to preserve an open, democratic city. However, my analyses show a more complicated process of contestation is underway. Activists often attempt to

“enclose” supposedly public spaces in their own ways, using methods that contradict, or even call into question the public/private dichotomy that has long animated the “end of public space” scholarship. I demonstrate that space is defined in multiple and conflicting ways by varying actors with different political and social motives that go beyond the public/private framework. Based on this research, I suggest ethnographers take into account the “political life” of small urban spaces. If the term public space is to be used, it is not as a taken for granted category – a setting for public behavior or an ideal of urban democracy – but as an incomplete social and political project, which residents (and planners) seek to “finish” for their own ends as part of broader social and cultural conflicts at work in society.

I choose the *Zalea* film as an entry point because it captures several themes crucial to this ethnography. First, it is a representation of the contestation within Paris’ continually rebuilt urban peripheries; indeed the film itself is an act of place-making competing with other invocations of idealized public space. Second, because it captures a particularly awkward moment for one set of largely middle class activists and political leaders, and a triumphant one for an insurgent group composed of women and poorer ethnic minorities, it begins to illustrate the parallel contradictions between French grassroots politics and membership in the French nation. In other words, it provides a vivid illustration of the kind of tensions and symbolism haunting the delicate and paradoxical relationship between the mainstream Left in France and “immigrants” – or more often, French citizens of non-European descent³. In the inauguration of the Jardins d’Éole we see the opening of a new park that can be read as either a victory for local level participative democracy, or conversely, the re-conquest of an “immigrant”

neighborhood by the state, or alternatively, a demonstration of the will of marginalized residents to assert their place in the political process. In the following pages, I argue these various readings are not simply a question of the political or theoretical viewpoint of the reader. As this dissertation will demonstrate, there is a truth in each that reveals aspects of a complicated reality inherent in such experiments in participative urban democracy.

This dissertation is built around two aspects of northeast Paris' socio-spatial politics. Half of my focus is on the residents' mobilization to construct the Jardins d'Éole, and the other portion deals with spatial practices since it was built, specifically the role the park has played in the contentious politics of class, ethnicity, and gender in northeast Paris. The roughly decade long campaign (1993-2004) surrounding the creation of the Jardins d'Éole in Paris involved a group of residents in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods campaigning to have the city purchase and clean-up a polluted, former railroad facility belonging to France's national railway (the SNCF). This involved a long confrontation over the rights to the land with the SNCF, varying city agencies, as well as a conflict with private corporations who had their own plans to extract value from the site.

In addition to following the historical trajectory of the AJE mobilization, I also focus on the planning and design process for the new public space. After the activists won their campaign, there were lengthy debates between a team of specialists commissioned to design the park (consisting of ethnographers, urban planners, and architects) and the local activists over the nature of public space, and whether expertise or "local knowledge" should guide the park's design. At the center of these debates were tensions over whether the park should be the 'neighborhood's space' or a showpiece for a

new environmentally sustainable – and internationally competitive – city of Paris. These debates have continued since the park was opened in 2007 through dialogues between the city and residents over how the park should be managed, and in conflicts over the future of northeastern Paris as a whole. The degree of community involvement in the park’s planning process has been nearly unprecedented in France, a fact that has been seized upon by the Delanoë administration as a sign of its commitment to local democracy. Yet such neighborhood level activism and grassroots oriented mayoral politics are occurring against a backdrop of profound global economic and social shifts that are remaking all of Paris, particularly its poorer, ‘immigrant’ districts. The Jardins d’Éole is, on one hand, a part of this transformation, but on the other, it is the rare case of an intervention *led by residents* in the remaking of the city. Thus, one of the persistent questions uniting the many topical strands that make up the Jardins d’Éole story is to what extent can ‘grassroots’ led urbanism actually result in a more just city?

Participative Urban Planning and The Production of Space

Urban planning and has become a significant topic of analysis for anthropologists influenced by Henri Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* (1970) who study forms of socio-cultural contestation that undergird the process by which cities are being transformed in the context of global urban restructuring (Brenner and Theodor 2005; Harvey 1989; Peck and Tickell 2002). I follow ethnographies of Brasília (Holston 1989), Barcelona (McDonogh 1991), Vienna (Rotenburg 1995), Atlanta (Rutheiser 2000), and Low’s analysis of public spaces in San José, Costa Rica (2000) to understand the ways that projects implemented by planning authorities are interpreted and contested by

residents. The AJE campaign, which resulted in residents playing an important role in the planning, conception, and construction of a park, blurs the distinction between “planners” and “users” which animates the political contestation in many of the above cases. In this case, the ‘production of space’ is not only a project initiated by various agencies of the state, but by neighborhood-based movements as well.

It is rare that ethnographies of space and place are written about subjects who are engaged in the ‘production of space’ in such literal terms as the AJE campaign. While I view this as an opportunity to revisit Lefebvre’s core theories, I am aware that the case study can run the danger of spatial over-determinism. Nevertheless, I find several specific aspects of Lefebvre’s thought, and in particular the historical context in which he wrote *The Production of Space*, extremely relevant to this ethnography⁴.

Lefebvre conceived the Production of Space after an initial period of enthusiasm for the emancipating possibilities of urban life, a result of both the ’68 May rebellion and an earlier partnership with Guy Debord and the Situationists. By the end of the 1960s, however, it was clear to Lefebvre that new forms of urbanism – in large part the modernist urban planning seen in Paris’ peripheries and banlieues – had become part of a broader ideology of control (Ross and Lefebvre 1997). *The Production of Space* (1999[1973]) was concerned with pushing this analysis beyond the production of urban space itself, to the more abstract cultural, intellectual, and even spiritual spaces associated with changing epochs of capitalism. Thus, Lefebvre argued that “the object of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*” (p.37) and contended that “every society – and hence every mode of production... produces a space, its own space” (p.31). By “deciphering a society’s space” the “spatial practice of

society is revealed” writes Lefebvre, pointing out that the spatial practice is “space as a dialectic process” that bridges everyday life with large structural conditions or ‘urban reality’ (p.38). Lefebvre’s idea of space as a contested process presents a rich analytical field where otherwise hidden workings of power can be recognized.

Without a doubt, much of the allure that Lefebvre’s framework holds for scholars across a diverse range of disciplines owes itself to the eloquent way it weaves together urban planning, architecture, and a range of other “specialists of space” (p.364) as varied as artists and ethnographers⁵ into the unfolding spatial processes which constitute (and yet are reproduced by) capitalism. Indeed, the *Production of Space* elaborates a theory of capitalist urbanization by exploring the relationship between knowledge, creativity, expertise, and power. Lefebvre is keenly interested in the intellectual models, theories, and frameworks that are overlaid upon ‘daily life’ to rationalize and represent it; these formations of knowledge are termed “representations of space”. This, Lefebvre writes, consists of “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers as well as a certain type of artist with a scientific bent” (p.38). “representations of space” are equated with domination and with specific agents – intellectuals, or more precisely, specialists whose visions of space plan, classify, and are ultimately produced in concrete form. In it, class power is realized through specialized knowledge, techniques, discourses and disciplines. The work of urban planners and architects is perhaps the most tangible example of the production of space as an urban process, as it is those professions’ admixture of science and art that provide the built environments which structure and provide texture to the urban experience.

However, the cracks in the theoretical edifice that is *The Production of Space* come into view when one examines the stark contrast Lefebvre draws between the powerful and the weak, and processes of domination and resistance. Against “representations of space”, Lefebvre juxtaposes “representational spaces”, which he refers to “space as lived” and “the space of “inhabitants” and ‘users’”. According to Lefebvre, “this is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate.” (p.39). Lefebvre’s use of the language of passivity to refer to the social reality of “users” is starkly different from the “dominant space” (p.38) of planners, scientist and other experts. Lefebvre himself seems frustrated when writing about

... the space of those who are referred to by means of such clumsy and pejorative labels as ‘users’ and ‘inhabitants’. No well-defined terms with clear connotations have ever been found to designate these groups. Their marginalization by spatial practice thus extends even to language. (p.362).

Lefebvre seems to blame this difficulty writing about “users” (a term which he criticizes and yet feels compelled to employ throughout the text) on “their marginalization by spatial practice”. Could it be however, that it is actually Lefebvre’s own theoretical framework that marginalizes, resulting in a “silence of users” (p.365)⁶ whose defining social position is that they are “planned for” as opposed to being planners themselves?

Ironically, while the *Production of Space* is a forceful treatise against France’s modernist urban planning technocracy during the 1960s, it falls prey to the latter’s hierarchical separation between “planners” and “users”, and the fetishism of authority

and expertise underlying the modernist project at a broader level. Even when those subordinated by the production of space choose to shed their role as mere “users” and become potentially revolutionary actors, as Lefebvre describes in the *Right to the City* (1996)⁷ and the *Urban Revolution* (2003), the role of social movements is envisioned in a reactive and resistant, zero sum game vis-à-vis the state, planners, bourgeoisie, and others in power. Such a configuration does Lefebvre’s otherwise dialectic, process-driven orientation a disservice by reifying the stifling dichotomy between dominator and dominated. It leaves the analyst in the same quandary caused by the planner/user problem: social beings such as “the user” seem enigmatic, silent and one dimensional because they are theorized as such, in order to exist merely as the opposite of an often better elaborated theoretical construction, in this case, “the planner”.

This ethnography demonstrates that the *Production of Space* provides an indispensable starting point, but Lefebvre’s distinctions between “planners” and “users” – and the mechanism of domination and resistance undergirding this framework – is ill suited to frame the political and social complexities presented by the Jardins d’Éole case study. As my study makes clear, not only does the distinction between powerful planners and policy makers and passive users break down, but my study reveals a complicated dance among grassroots mobilizations seeking to revolt against power and yet flirting with complicity in the production of space (and the reproduction of inequalities), leading to a far more muddled picture of domination and resistance than is indicated by Lefebvre’s framework.

Finally, Lefebvre’s approach is ill suited to deal with the complexities of politics beyond class, and in particular the questions of culture, ethnicity, and gender that mark

contemporary French politics. It is mired by a language and understanding of power which is immersed in the context of the interventionism and centralization of the post-war era French state. Despite France's relative resistance to the types of neoliberal reform seen in United States and Great Britain, such language and operant concepts regarding technocracy and power are increasingly archaic -- even if his general understanding of spatial knowledge and expertise remains insightful. But most of all, Lefebvre's treatment of 'users' is unable to account for the new types of social movements and forms of political contestation that began to rise in the years immediately following its publication.

Since Lefebvre, there has been no shortage of spatially oriented approaches to social movements, in both global and local contexts. Within anthropology, there have been several calls to ground the study of social movements in such a way that anchors them -- and the societies in which they arise -- in specific places. I follow Burawoy's call to "locate social movements" (2000) in specific economic and historical contexts to adequately confront the way in which global social movements engage the process of place-making politics which Escobar has called "subaltern localization" (2001). Taken together these approaches make for an ethnographic approach that conceptualizes the social contradictions and historical processes giving rise to movements. Moreover, by using ethnography to highlight how activists frame their own struggles, it also allows for a conception of grassroots politics that abandons preconceived notions held by researchers over the boundaries between environmental and urban movements.

Neighborhood Mobilizations, Global Battlegrounds: Paris in the Neoliberal Era

Since the end of the Second World War, ‘globalization’ is increasingly spoken about as a process that is ever-present and yet defies any rigid, coherent definitions. Not surprisingly, what is commonly termed globalization is framed in a range of ways, from being viewed in terms of a late-capitalist world economic system developed in historical waves of expansion (Arrighi, Silver, Ahmad 1999; Wallerstein 1979, 2004; Wolf 1982); to a neoliberal class project privileging finance capital and globalized “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2005, 2010); or, a “janus-faced” combination of investment and innovation which offers development but threatens social upheaval (Sachs 2008, Stiglitz 2003, 2007); or, emerging new forms of supranational governance whose interests transcend those of individual nation-states (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004); or, the rise of a global informational society organized around key ‘wired’ nodes, informational flows, and hierarchically organized around the uneven exchange and access to information (Castells 2000). What all of these approaches share in common, however, is the acknowledgement that globalization creates inequality and struggle, regardless of whether or not such conflict is viewed optimistically as the unfortunate birth-pangs of growth and development or as the end result of capitalism’s social unsustainability.

Not surprisingly, the way in which people around the world organize to collectively resist and try to alter the broad social, political, and economic changes linked to globalizing processes are correspondingly far-reaching. Since the 1990s however, the relationship between globalization and social movements have commonly been framed in terms of the global justice movement (Della Porta et al 2006, Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Edelman 1999; Gautney 2009; Guidry, Kennedy, and Zald 2000; Smith 2008). The global justice movement has created novel forms of transnational mobilizations focused

against similarly transnational and multinational opponents ranging corporations, individual nation-states, regional blocs such as the European Union (EU) to institutions such as World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) or The Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (G20, formerly G8). Resistance has emerged among a diverse array of constituencies around the world including indigenous peoples, unionized and non-unionized laborers, agricultural, service and manufacturing workers, environmentalists and human rights activists, to call for what is variously described as alternative globalization, counter-globalization, and globalization from below.

In an era when globalization's impacts are so widespread and ubiquitous, one must ask whether struggles to counter and re-direct globalization processes are also occurring in the spaces of our everyday lives. This domain, sometimes imagined as the local scale, is frequently contrasted with the global. This is especially true in cities around the world, where economic and social conditions, as well the built environments in which people live and work, have undergone dramatic, and often dislocating shifts related to globalization over the last half-century. The world's population is urbanizing at a shocking rate: the UN has estimated that in 1950, just under 30% percent of the world's population was urban; by 2000 the percentage had risen to 47% and by 2050, 70% percent of world's population is expected to reside in cities (UNPD 2007).("World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database," n.d.) Such transformations, and the urban restructuring accompanying it, (Feinstein and Campbell 2002; Logan and Swanstorm 1990; Soja, Morales, and Wolf 1983) include de-industrialization and the downwards mobility of working class populations in advanced capitalist countries

(Harvey 1989), the emergence of impoverished informal settlements triggered by rural to urban migration in developing countries throughout the world (Davis 2006) and the simultaneous appearance of pockets of great wealth and new urban middle classes (Castells 2000; Zukin 1995). While cities should not be over-privileged, resulting in a globalized version of a country/city dichotomy (Williams 1975), urban spaces express the results of globalization at its most enchanting and inhumane extremes. This can often make city neighborhoods spaces of “glocality” (Robertson 1995) where global processes become intertwined with the very meaning of locality and everyday life. Given the vast scale and dramatic quality of these transformations, “glocal” urban spaces will increasingly become the political frontlines in struggles over how and what kind of globalization will shape everyday life for people all over the world.

Paris is one such space, and it has seen its share of dramatic transformations, even if proponents of market liberalization frequently depict France’s leaders as stalwart opponents of neoliberal globalization. In many regards, Paris is a textbook ‘capital’ city of the global economy. Quantitative studies which classify the scale and forms of ‘globalization’ (by measuring capital flows and other forms of intercity networks) rank it on par with London, Tokyo, and New York (see for example, GAWC 2004), and more recently as the #3 most significant global city – ahead of Tokyo, but behind New York and London respectively (Sassen 2001). As the French capital, Paris is a G20 political center, has the highest GDP of any European capital (INSEE 2010), and is traditionally a major hub of diplomatic and cultural exchange. Like London and New York it has been heavily redeveloped and gentrified since the economic crisis of 1970s. Many former working class districts were redeveloped

around tourism and culture such as the Beaubourg area with the building of the *Centre Pompidou* during the 1970s, and the art industry related gentrification of the Marais neighborhood in the 1980s. Away from the city center, La Défense was primarily constructed in this period. It is an American style central business district – Europe’s largest – and houses France’s major banks and corporations. At the same time, neighborhoods in the city’s traditional working class outer arrondissements have undergone steady gentrification as the city’s professional classes grow in size and wealth (Carpenter and Lees 1995; Chalvason-Demersay 1984; Mairie de Paris 2007). Paris is therefore very comparable with other finance capitals in Europe and North America in terms its position of in the worlds’ economy, and its trajectory of urbanization over the last three decades.

However Paris – and France in general – has always been an awkward fit in the global cities literature and in studies on neoliberal transformation. Brennan and Theodore’s *Spaces of Neoliberalism* (2002) – an overview of urban restructuring in North America and Europe – fails to even mention Paris or France. In the 1990s, the city was repeatedly used as an example to test the limits of Sassen’s (2001[1991]) global city hypothesis (Body-Gendrot 1996; White 1998). Many of the problems with assimilating Paris to these paradigms are centered on statism and interventionist policies. Even when the Right was at the helm of the city during the mayoral administrations of Jacques Chirac (1977-1995) and Jean Tiberi (1995-2001), Paris did not see the scale of deregulation in areas such as housing markets that occurred in London or New York. Its building codes and tenants’ laws, despite having undergone some cuts, remain highly restrictive on capital by American or British standards.

Redevelopment has remained carefully controlled by either the state or pseudo public development agencies. Even La Défence, with its symbolic placement *outside* of the urban core, was planned with a degree of state centered coordination that would be unlikely for corporate hubs in the UK, Germany, and the United States (Savitch 1988). Indeed, in France as a whole, much of the welfare state remains intact and in fact has expanded since the 1970s with significant increases in public aid, minimum income and government sponsored work programs, and universal health coverage (Levy 2001; Wacquant 2008). However, this has taken place during a period of neoliberal monetarism and denationalization under the Estaing and Mitterand presidencies (Prasad 2005). Even with the election of reform minded Nicholas Sarkozy (dubbed “speedy” and “Sarko the American” by the French press) macro and micro-level restructuring has been uneven at best, much to the chagrin of the international business press (see for example, Economist 2008a).

France is nevertheless in a profoundly neoliberal moment. The lack of dramatic reform seen in the United States and Great Britain cannot be explained away by strong labor unionism, cultural caricatures like ‘Old Europe’s timidity to change,’ or a Gallic proclivity for bleeding hearts (as the financial press often has done). Labor organizations in France – despite the visibility of specific radical public sector unions – actually make up a *lower* percentage of the workforce than the UK or the United States (Visser 2006). French *dirigisme* – the ideology undergirding the ‘French model’ of capitalism in the service of the strong state – has been cut back to “state enhanced” capitalism (Schmidt 2003), but the statist tradition remains deeply ingrained. Scholars have pointed out (Levy 2001; Prasad 2002) that this is not

because of an ideological resilience of the French Left, but of the Right, harkening back to Charles de Gaulle's post-war project to reconstruct a modern France by means of an economically and militarily robust state. Paris – and France in general – might best be described as in the process of a French style neoliberalization, in which the state directs restructuring of urban space as part of an effort to maintain global competitiveness.

The welfare state in post-war France was, and has continued to be, a primarily middle class centered project, resulting in a sizable minority which is more exposed to the effects of capital flight and deindustrialization provoked by global competition. The greatest negative impacts are placed upon workers in the growing flexible labor market who were formerly reliant on manufacturing (those in the service sector, retail workers, and manual laborers). Unlike those in the civil services and skilled trades, these workers are typically the least likely to be unionized and are most likely to be immigrants (or of immigrant descent). Indeed, only 7% of France's workforce as a whole is unionized (a figure less than even the U.S., at 11%) and these jobs (along with the valuable pensions and benefits that accompany them) are concentrated largely in the public sector (Visser 2006). The majority of immigrants however (60%) work in the mostly non-unionized service sector (Fougère, and Safi 2005). Youths of immigrant origin are especially vulnerable in France's high unemployment low growth economy. Youth unemployment is frequently above 20%, and Maghrebi youths in particular are 50% more likely to be unemployed than their French descended counterparts (Silberman and Fournier 2006). A series of studies have demonstrated systematic discrimination in the job market (Dupray and Moullet 2004), and of those that do get jobs, 70% enter the labor market with short-

term contracts (Frickey and Murdoch et al 2004). Though many poor families do receive RMI (*revenu minimum d'insertion* -- unemployment benefits), housing allowances and public housing, discrimination at the administrative level persists. At an anecdotal level, I was struck by how quickly I, as an European-origin male -- albeit with a foreign accent -- was processed for a housing allowance without any questions in a northeast Paris housing service office. In the same session, many of my non-European origin counterparts were questioned at length, and their documents were carefully scrutinized. For everyone -- but most dauntingly for recent immigrants -- lack of clear policies and procedures for documentation and a maze-like bureaucracy (which itself has spawned residents' associations for document assistance) mean that even those who are qualified must face an "informal test" requiring social capital, finesse, and at times, just plain luck to collect benefits from frequently suspicious, overworked, or disinterested administrators. Across the board, immigrants and in particular, youth of immigrant origin in France, are therefore far from being sheltered by the French welfare state and the benefits associated with it; it was arguably never established for their welfare in the first place.

A final area in which neoliberal tendencies within the French political establishment have dealt a blow to northeast Paris has been French urban policy. Mustafa Dikeç (2008) has traced how changing discourses over immigrant belonging in France coincided with the changing nature of urban policy; specifically he examines how the policy establishment increasingly viewed spaces and neighborhoods as threatening (as opposed to being need of special assistance) and notes an increasingly police oriented, even militarized approach to urban policy in the zones. Following Peck (2003) and Wacquant (2001), Dikeç points out that that strategies of aggressive policing and

surveillance have become globalized in neoliberal urban regimes, and in France, such repression is linked to anxieties over the presence of immigrants. These strategies have increasingly led to a confrontational dynamic between youths and police in low-income urban neighborhoods. The tension finally erupted in the 2005 uprising, in which the deaths of two teenage boys (aged 14 and 15 year respectively) while under police pursuit led to a 3 month long period of rioting in low income areas throughout France.

The AJE mobilization emerged in one such space. Though not playing host to the riots of 2005⁸, Paris' post-industrial northeastern neighborhoods have by-and-large been left unsheltered by the French welfare state from the effects of Paris' global restructuring. Between 1962 and 1999, industrial jobs in Paris declined from 575,000 to 134,000, a 77% decrease. Through most of the 2000's the area has been hit with 19% unemployment compared to a Paris average 12%, with 20% of area's residents belonging to the bottom income quartile (both figures are twice the Paris average). What jobs remain are frequently in the non-unionized, flexibly employed service sector (northeast Paris ranks third in service sector employment in the Paris area).



Figure 3: The arrondissements of Paris; the area referred to as northeast Paris includes the 18th, 19th, and some portions of the surrounding areas (map by Promenador, ©2011, open-use, GNU/Creative Commons license).

The downward mobility facing the area's largely immigrant descended working class (most residents are of West African and Maghrebi descent who arrived to work in manufacturing starting in the 1950s) has been coupled with the complete rebuilding of the district. In contrast to much of Paris, which is famous for its preserved Haussmann-era cityscape, 75% of northeast Paris has been reconstructed anew since 1948 (APUR Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme, 2001). Much of what was demolished were the industrial facilities that once provided jobs to northeast Paris residents (though residual pollution still remains in numerous former factory sites); from 1954-1974, roughly 25% of all the industrial space demolished in Paris was razed in northeast Paris alone (Pinol & Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona., 1996). Northeast Paris' physical and social

landscape embodies the “creative destruction” of global capital flows linked to de-industrialization.



Figure 4: Public housing towers (Les Orgues de Flandre), northeast Paris.



Figure 5: Northeast Paris in the immediate vicinity of the Jardins d'Éole (©2011, Openstreetmap.org, modified by Umapper).

If this prolonged wave of disinvestment was destructive, a wave of re-investment having began in recent years holds the potential for increasing employment but at the expense of new forms of dispossession. A series of private and public building projects in northeast Paris have triggered investment in the region, starting with the construction of an 80,000 seat soccer stadium, the *Stade de France* just 4 km from the Jardins d'Éole in 1995. At a less magnanimous scale, the renovation of a former industrial canal and the construction of a center for contemporary art (the '104' or *Centquatre*) have provided anchors for nearly 100 hectares of urban land being rebuilt into commercial space and housing. Though many of the residences are social housing, it is not at all clear whether low-income residents will be allowed into the spaces. Housing activists and some residents having indicated to me that middle income residents appear to moving into the new units in disproportionately large numbers (if so, this would be far from a new phenomenon in France's public housing sector, see Duclaud-Williams [1978]). Meanwhile, the cost of housing in northeast Paris has surged. While average property values hover around 4300 € /m², (the Paris average is about 6000 € /m²), between 2004-2009, prices have increased over 50% (compared to 40% in Paris a whole)⁹. For this reason, and the inability of many immigrant families to access public housing (see de Rudder 1992) many families are increasingly forced into a "shadow" economy of long-stay hotels, squats, or most commonly, extremely crowded room-shares in apartments lacking running water and proper ventilation.

A number key issues related to global urban restructuring have spawned movements of national import in northeast Paris, including workers rights for undocumented migrants (the *Sans-Papiers*) and housing rights (*Droit au Logement*). The

Association Jardins d'Éole (AJE) is interesting in that it involves residents attempting to restructure urban space at the material and symbolic level. For this reason the mobilization's discourse was organized broadly around themes stressing social and physical renewal of the city, common space for neighbors, and improving the social conditions of its surroundings. The AJE movement actually takes this position one step further, since it has taken urbanization into its own hands. It was organized to address a number of grievances through the creation of a neighborhood green space, such as providing relief for families with children living crowded apartments, a symbolic cultural space of belonging for groups whose membership in the French nation is increasingly under attack, and environmental improvement by transforming what would have otherwise become a diesel truck depot into a tree field park. Though the AJE itself is small, the mobilization maintains connections in a network of global community gardening organizations such as the New York City based Green Guerrillas.

My analysis of the AJE mobilization also owes much to the work of Eric Hobsbawn on banditry and other "archaic" movements (1959), and that of George Rudé (1964) and E.P.Thompson (1971) on crowds, mobs, and riots. This work, which focuses on small, "inarticulate" protest groups as opposed to mass movements, has been developed in contemporary urban contexts by Sussser (1982, 1988). Despite its international partnerships with similar campaigns, the AJE barely qualifies to be called full-fledged "movement". It never likely numbered more than 300 members and was overwhelmingly local in its immediate scope. Compared to larger, well-known mobilizations such as the *Droit au Logement* movement or the *Sans-Papiers*, the AJE mobilization is microscopic. Moreover, the mobilization often seems politically naïve or

inarticulate: its discourse is often self-consciously nonpolitical. In speeches, posters, and most other public forums, the group's rhetoric and style is divorced from discourses favored by most mainstream movements, be it from the left, from environmentalism, or immigrant rights (though, interestingly, this is not true when leaders and members speak in private contexts). As matter of strategy, those within the mobilization portrayed themselves as singularly – almost myopically – focused the immediate condition of their “neighborhood”. They embraced an aesthetic not of anger and militancy, but of festive, carnivalesque hedonism and humorous satire. Compared to France's large social movements, particularly on the Left, the AJE often appears small and unambitious, making a lot of non-political noise, yet they succeeded in creating a \$26 million dollar green space in northeast Paris.

Given its self-conscious image as a more of a crowd of merry-makers than outraged militants, the AJE is comparable to new social movements. Founders of the NSM field of study such as Touraine (1985; 1988), and Laclau (1985) base their analyses on the rise of post-industrial movements beginning in the 1960s that were distinct from or even antagonistic to the modern labor movement. Paradigmatic studies of NSMs (see Melucci et al 1989, for example) hold that they eschew class for identity politics focused on ethnicity, race, gender, sexual identity, disability, or other social markers of identity. Touraine theorized that NSMs, unlike traditional Leftist politics stressing social transformation and emphasizing the role of the state, frequently are single issue focused, often emphasizing the importance of changing “cultural spheres”, public opinion, “values” instead of seizing institutional power. Crucially, NSMs are often predominately composed of and led by the university educated middle classes even if they sometimes

mobilize on behalf of or in alliance with more traditional working class constituencies. The AJE matches many of these criteria: it unconnected to labor (though expressive of a subtle class politics), it ostensibly focuses on a single issue, and is led primarily by middle class activists, though its membership and wider constituency varies from financially secure professionals to individuals who subsist completely on public assistance.

When viewed in the context of contemporary French social movements, many of these traits have meaning in their wider socio-political context. French NSM research over the last two decades focuses on what has been termed a “mutation” of collective action as numerous small “micro-movements” oriented towards local issues have flowered throughout France; at the same time, membership in large movements with a national focus has dwindled (Favre and Fillieule 1994; Perrineau 1994). This so-called “new-associativity in France” is linked to a loss of confidence in not only major parties on the Left and the Right, but also in the ability of unions and mass social movements to counter the threats perceived by the globalization of France’s economy (Waters 2003) This reaction to mainstream politics is important when trying to understand the AJE’s aversion to discourse associated with large social movements and political parties.

In some respects, the AJE is comparable to the American Environmental Justice (EJ movement). As is the case with EJ movements, who draw linkages between environmental degradation and social injustice visited upon ethnic and racial minorities (Bullard 1990, 1993; Bryant and Mohai 1992, Checker 2005, Gottlieb 1993, Gould et al 1996, Mohai 1996), the AJE mobilized on behalf of a “neglected neighborhood” against industrial polluters (including toxic waste and diesel fumes). Many aspects of the AJE’s

mobilization will no doubt seem familiar to students of the EJ movement, including the prominent role of women in the leadership and the way in which environmental politics are linked to the health of children and very reproduction of the afflicted communities (see for example, Bullard 1990 and Checker 2005). But the EJ mobilization is fundamentally different because of its deep engagement with American notions of racial justice. If EJ looked to the Civil Rights movement for its past, the AJE had no similar reference point, nor even a referent for notion of a racial politics, given France's strong tradition of universalist, non-sectarian claims to rights (Jennings 2000; Hargreaves 2007). In a society marked by "racism without races" (Silverstein 2005), how do groups of individuals, particularly in a multicultural coalition, join together against environmental racism? The answer – through activism focused on urban space and the politics of place-making – is revealing about the struggles for belonging among France's post-colonial minorities.

From Guest Workers to Enemies of the Republic

Frequently, the 'immigration' debate is thought of as a defining trait of the "new" Europe, but immigration is far from a novel phenomenon in France. While France is not a self-defined as an "immigrant nation", 1 in 4 of its citizens have either a parent or grandparent who was born outside its borders and immigration in France has a history stretching back to the 19th century (Noiriel, 1996) Often, the term "immigration" is misused in popular debates concerning assimilation and cultural difference, since the vast majority of "immigrants" in France are typically of the 2nd, 3rd, or even 4th generation (Hargreaves 2007; Silberman and Fournier 2008). This

explains how, for example, upwards of 80% of those arrested in riots that wracked France's "immigrant" neighborhoods in 2005 were in fact French citizens. Also, it is important to point out although that though half of France's foreign born population hails from China, Vietnam, India, and Southern Europe, these groups are curiously invisible in 'immigration' related discourse. Several scholars (Bailibar and Wallerstein 1991 ; Hargreaves 1995; 2007, Fysh and Wolfreys 2003) have pointed out that since the economic crisis of 1973 and the resulting curtailment of "guest worker" immigration from former colonies, the debate began to focus particularly on Maghrebis and West Africans in France. Increasingly, the "values" and cultures of these non-European, majority Muslim, post-colonial groups were seen as incommensurably different from the dominant values of Republican France.

Anthropological research in France has played an important role in examining how politics are related to identity formation amidst these contentious politics. Silverstein (2004), for example, demonstrates how place, music, and sports became sites for the production of transnational politics and culture for youths of Algerian and Berber descent. Beriss (2004) examined mobilizations by non-European French citizens of the *départments* in the Caribbean Antilles, and Bowen (2004) examines efforts by Maghrebi descended residents to articulate specifically French modes of Islam. Meanwhile, Bunzl (2005) has examined anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, arguing that in the context of European Unification, notions of civilization and "Europe" are increasingly supplanted nation. Others, including Wilder (2005) and Dubois (2000) have looked beyond the borders of metropolitan France, examining the ways in which republicanism shaped – and was shaped by – the colonial social order.

A ‘boom’ in ethnographic interest in France in the last decade has been inspired the prominent deployment of ‘culture’ as a political category in France’s recent debates over immigration, assimilation, and Islam in the public sphere (Balibar 1992; Bowen 2007; Hargreaves 2007; Stoler 2002; Wieviorka 1991). These studies have emphasized a specific a feature of France’s politics of national culture: a resurgent form of “republican nationalism” in the 1990s. At its core, republicanism is traditionally invoked as the liberal heritage of the French Revolution, emphasizing a secular state guaranteeing universal rights for a citizenry that is equal and undiffereciated in the eyes of the state (Jennings 2000). By the 1990s, the latter principal – the refusal to differentiate within the citizenry – has been invoked as refusal of a right to difference in order to defend monolithic definitions of French national culture. At the same time, such understandings are used to attack expressions of cultural difference as forms of unconstitutional identity politics or cultural impositions on the secular public sphere.

The consequences of this hegemonic notion of republicanism are numerous, wide ranging and varied. A particularly well-known example have been bans, enacted in 2004 on the wearing Islamic *burkhas* in public schools and an absolute 2010 ban on the burkha in all public space. Even in the 1990s, a movement to enact affirmative action legislation was condemned by a high ranking, government sponsored panel on integration the *Haut Conseil à l’Integration* (the HCI) on the following grounds: “notions of ‘a multicultural society’ and the ‘right to be different’ are unacceptably ambiguous ... it would be wrong to let anyone think that different cultures can be allowed to become fully developed in France” (HCI 1992, quoted in Hargreaves

1995:184). The HCI's position, viewed as the consensus of the Left and the Right, emphasizes the primacy of retaining a hegemonic, dominant notion of French national culture attacking not only affirmative action, but any effort to institutionalize forms of multiculturalism. Thus, all government agencies are prohibited from the recognition of difference in their official discourse a practices. It is illegal for the state to collect census data on ethnicity, making the empirical study of ethnic diversity (and the impacts of racism) difficult to conduct. As we shall see, local level social programs and policy initiatives – which are often conceived to address the needs of specific populations – are described in different terms, with place specific markers and age specific designations (especially youth) being the most common acceptable signifiers of difference.

This dissertation has two key implications for the literature on the politics of culture and the local impact of “republican nationalism” in France. A crucial reason for this is that the study is focused on a multicultural neighborhood within Paris – and not the more culturally homogeneous housing projects in poor suburbs or *banlieues*. The banlieue has been long been seen, even before the violent uprisings of 2005, as the paradigmatic ethnographic site for the study of ethnic minorities in France because in such settings, economic marginalization and cultural alterity is coupled with dramatic spatial isolation (see for example Wacquant 2008). However, this singular representation has become dominant, leading to some misconceptions at best and exoticism at worst in media discourse – and that of social science – that over-conflate and over generalize the banlieue and the experiences of ethnic minorities in France¹⁰.

In this ethnography, some of those mistaken notions become quickly apparent, such as the idea that poor and minority populations are somehow absent from France's city centers (in fact clandestine immigrants are often concentrated in northern Paris because they rely upon its vacant buildings for 'squats', and the lower cost of transit). But more importantly, the multi-cultural setting of northeast Paris allows me to look closer at notions of how diversity or '*mixité sociale*' impacts politics within and between social movements – ideas rarely examined in ethnographies of the banlieue. I argue that understanding what *mixité sociale* means in context, or in other words, how notions diversity are operant (or not) as a category within local level politics is especially important now. The 2005 riots forced the question of inclusion into the agenda of the mainstream in France, particularly on the Left. Since Paris's northern arrondissements have traditionally been a stronghold of the Communist Party (PCF), and more recently the Socialist Party (PS) and the Greens, this gives me a chance to examine what "actually existing" republicanism (Dikeç 2007) looks like in a context where political alliance require co-operation, organizing, and mobilization across ethnic lines.

Northeast Paris is also novel compared to other ethnographies dealing with French cultural politics because my analysis situates these questions amidst the urban politics arising in the context of global restructuring. More often than not, lines of ethnicity are paralleled across distinctly urban class formations; in everyday life Paris' cultural politics are at once the urban politics of the global city. The AJE echoes the class structure of the global city itself, with acute divisions between middle class European descended French, second and third generation Maghrebi residents who

were also middle or working class, and an extremely poor population of first generation immigrants, particularly from West Africa. It is for this reason that theories of place-making and the production of space play such an important role in my analysis. As we shall see, the AJE made heavy use of the terms “neighborhood” and “people of this neighborhood”, which depending on the context, could be class specific, a marker of the residents cultural alterity, or – particularly in official settings – a safe way to invoke difference and unequal treatment while skirting culture, ethnicity, and class.

Negotiating Networks: Fieldwork with Northeast Paris Activists

Shortly before I began my 18 months of fieldwork in Paris, in the summer of 2007, I was fortunate enough to become affiliated with a CNRS research group on public space, the *Laboratoire Vie Urban*¹¹. In addition to providing immense logistical support, resources, and knowledge for researching Paris’ history and neighborhoods, the team was vital for the ethnography. It was from this group that I learned about the Jardins d’Éole – they were in fact closely connected with the development team of architects and some policy makers in involved in its creation. Thus I knew many of the major figures in local politics and the neighborhood associations before I set foot in my fieldsite. But, just as importantly, the research team was based at the Institut d’Urbanisme de Paris. This gave me exposure to the discipline of planning as it has developed in France. I was able to attend regular talks and presentations on urban design in the Paris area, and I gained a wealth of knowledge about the discipline and its role in Paris’ urbanization. I was able to

participate in a workshop on the Jardins d'Éole itself. Soon urbanists became an unexpected set of “secondary” subjects in the ethnography. Not only were the students able to help me in my own research, but I began to understand what it means to see urban space like a planner, architect, and designer. In sharp contrast to the gaze of the anthropologist, this involved seeing the city as a series of forms, movements, and uses, and design as a set of interventions in a system that was aesthetic as well as social. I also learned an immense amount about the terminology and operations of public sector planning both in terms of administrative practices and as a policy apparatus of the state. As a kind of “native knowledge” this would prove invaluable for my analysis of the plans for Jardins d'Éole.

Through my affiliation with the university, I was able to rent an apartment in a ‘student building’ in my north Paris field site. The building was a massive tower set amongst a group of monolithic HLM buildings at Paris’ extreme north end. It was in fact, the last street in Paris’ city limits. Living there, taking the crowded busses along the bottlenecked Parisian ring-road – the *boulevard périphérique* – and frequenting cafés on the bustling “*portes*” between the city and its banlieues, I began to know the daily rhythms and movements of people that distinguish the city’s northern peripheries. The area is a transitional zone between the city’s core and the outer areas. It is less a ‘neighborhood’ than a concentration of infrastructure linking the edges of metropolitan area to its center. It is an area of wide expressways, towering concrete over-passes, and continual coming and going with little stopping: loud truck traffic at night, ever passing freight and passenger trains, and hurried crowds filing in and out of busses, train stations, and fast-food restaurants.

I set about beginning to meet the key people who were involved in the AJE. I expected this process to be easy – after all, I had a list that I prepared with my research team members, and I supposedly knew the right names to call – and the right ones to drop. Interviews with those involved in the planning effort at institutions and agencies were relatively easy to get, but with activists, things were different. I made calls, sent emails but heard practically nothing back from anyone. No one seemed to pick up phones or answer messages. I, and my colleagues, were clueless. The silence of the activists was frustrating and mysterious. I speculated on causes. Had there been bad blood or a grudge?

Weeks began to pass. I looked for posters, signs, announcements of meetings on café walls, in laundromats, and grocery stores – anywhere I could find a number or a place where I could potentially meet my subjects. Email addresses from websites drew no responses. The most obvious place to begin was of course, the Jardins d'Éole itself. I began “staking” it out, looking for anyone that appeared to be involved in some kind of neighborhood association or club. Could they be the mothers of children in the playground, the men talking politics over beer at a café counter, or the crowds of young people gathered on street corners, in front of tea saloons, barbershops and CD stores? It was an absurd time, but productive at a more subtle level. As I walked the streets in desperation I became more and more familiar observing the rhythms of people, the coming and goings in the area's public spaces. But, as the first month turned into the second, my worry grew into stress. I asked around, at the cafés. Most people knew who I was talking about. They just weren't there. I learned which buildings they lived in. I continued waiting and walking.

Then one day in early November, I was trudging through the grassy lawn in the Jardins d'Éole and I saw a man who looked strangely out of place, primarily because he was carrying a camera. He was photographing people, the park, the apartment buildings, seemingly everything. My first impression was that he was a social scientist of some sort. We both took notice of each other – or at least each others' observational behavior. When I introduced myself – I found out he was a member of the principal association responsible for the AJE. The next thing I knew I was in his home looking at photographs of the campaign, the park under construction, and the neighborhood. A few weeks later, I attended the group's annual meeting, and met the rest of the association's leaders. Now everyone called back. It seemed that there had been an intangible, but real boundary between those who were in the networks of the neighborhood and those outside of it.

I attended the group's regular events at the park itself and grew more connected as a participant-observer. Here the groups' leaders would set up tables, lay out books – mostly children's fiction and best sellers – for passerbys to borrow and return, show photographs of the neighborhood's changes through the years, and speak with neighbors. These became an important place not only to hear the story of the “neighborhood's campaign” from different perspectives, but to see it told to others as a performance. I analyzed these and other gatherings in the park – including commemorations of their victory – as spatial practices in their own right. And moreover, through these forums I also was able to “follow the networks” of the various associations, making connections to attend other meetings in the area and attend events with other groups.

After about six months, I began to have a good idea of the edges and limits of the Éole network and began to contact other associations in the northern Paris that were not affiliated directly with AJE – frequently I learned these were associations that ideologically to the Left or in rare cases, to the far Right. These groups were more “traditional” social movements ranging from Sans-Papiers organizations to an anti-immigrant group. I attended protests, events, and conducted interviews with members and leaders of these groups.

The types of field methods that I employed were predominately interviews and above all, comprehensive fieldnote collection. I paid particularly close attention to carefully observe various “spatial practices” such as festivals and protests, but also the everyday usage of Jardins d’Éole. And, like many anthropologists who work with small community organizations, I had told many activists that I was at their service if they wanted me to help with anything – especially in areas such as archiving for example, where my skills as researcher could be of help. The leaders of the AJE became very interested in my work upon learning I was conducting observations of the park – after all I first met one of the members while he himself was “observing” the space. I gave them an informal synthesis of fieldnote data on what sections of the park were used when (though I never related information on specific people or even types of activities that I saw). I am arguably implicated in the AJE’s spatial practices; in this sense, I worked in the grassroots “planning apparatus” as well, which I would argue, has similar but not exactly the same political implications as working as an official planner. One could view such activity as empowering a community group, or in Lefebvre’s terms, aiding the group’s own spatial attempts at control. My

ambiguous role as participant-observer with north Paris activists therefore not only extends to daily life, but to their spatial-political practices as well.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters, including this introduction and a conclusion. These chapters follow an order that roughly approximates the unfolding of the historical progression under study – a process of spatial contestation linking the global restructuring of Paris to a grassroots mobilization to transform a vacant space into a park. In the first chapters, after describing the history of northeast Paris itself, I trace the emergence of a spatialized cultural politics among youth of West African and Maghrebi origin – who were the first to appropriate the Cour du Maroc. I then follow how the AJE appropriated the space, and through protests and political maneuvering began the process by which the Cour du Maroc was transformed into the Jardins d'Éole. The final chapters of dissertation examine the relationship between the building of the Jardins d'Éole and the reproduction of urban inequality in northeast Paris.

At the same time however, the six chapters forming the main body are grouped in pairs according to broad theoretical concerns they address. Chapters Two and Three, for example, are broadly concerned with how urban space – and principally ‘neighborhood’ – becomes a way that the ethnocultural politics of Maghrebi and West African origin residents are articulated despite a broader republican moratorium on so-called “anglo-saxon” styled multiculturalism and identity politics. Chapters Four and Five examine the ways that such spatial politics were adapted by the AJE. These chapters take a close look at the struggle that resulted

in the Jardins d'Éole as well as the institutional contestation amongst planners, architects, city officials, and activists that marked the park's design process. The tension (and potentially incompatibility) that exists between neighborhood-based environmentalism and urban planners interested in greening the city through "sustainable urbanism" is an all-encompassing theme of these two chapters. Chapters Six and Seven, historically set after the park's creation in 2007, focus on the ethnocultural, gendered, and class-based politics which marked residents' attempts to manage the park as a distinct "neighborhood" space (distinguished from the rest of Paris by its cultural incommensurability and economic and urban marginality) and at the same time, an area in the midst of gentrification and experiencing a dramatic inflow of capital investment. In each of these chapters, this grassroots attempt to redefine a neighborhood through the creation and "management" of its new social center suggest the limits of "public/private" and "privatization" arguments in discussions of how urban space is produced, and contested. A more detailed summary of each chapter follows:

Chapter 2: Between Center and Periphery: The Making of an Urban and National Hinterland: This chapter reviews the histories of post-colonial immigration, de-industrialization, the building of public housing, and gentrification that constitutes Paris' northeast periphery. A particular emphasis is placed on the way in which the area has been discursively constructed as an urban and national hinterland in the French capital, and how modernist urban planning has been historically (albeit unsuccessfully) used to remedy its alterity.

Chapter 3: Contested Republicanisms: Place, Culture, and Politics in Northeast

Paris: This chapter examines the emergence of political associations among immigrant origin residents. It follows the trajectory of particular activists whose immersion in youth culture and hip-hop figured prominently in associations' efforts at place-oriented politics. This was done through self consciously re-constructing the neighborhood's image, often invoking themes of social marginalization and cultural pluralism in ways that challenged the French taboo on identity politics. Special attention is paid to a particular immigrant youth association that mobilized to make an abandoned railroad station into a neighborhood center – a project which set the stage for the Éole mobilization.

Chapter 4: Space, Class, Gender, and Protest: the Jardins d'Éole Mobilization

This chapter sharpens its focus on the AJE. It traces how and why this cross-class, multiethnic coalition sought the creation of a new green space as a solution to a wide range of environmental, social, and urban ills facing northeast Paris. Gender politics became especially important in activist's visions of the park. Special attention is also given to the discourse, style of protest, and alliance building that permitted the group to succeed in its goal of having a park (ultimately a \$26 million dollar, 11 acre green space) built after six years of campaigning.

Chapter 5: From Urban Environmentalism to the Sustainable City:

This chapter examines how the mobilization's form of urban environmentalism was "translated" by architects and planners into urban sustainability during the parks' design process (itself billed as a groundbreaking example of participative urban planning and sustainable urbanism). It also situates the Jardins d'Éole with respect to long-standing efforts by

elites to redevelop northeast Paris and explores the dilemmas posed by “green gentrification” for activists in low-income urban neighborhoods.

Chapter 6: Parks, Housing, and the Right to the City: This chapter describes contestation within northeast Paris linked to rising land values and gentrification. It draws on examples from the AJE mobilization and Droit au Logement (a right to housing movement) to show limits of the public/private dichotomy in discussions of power and urban space. The chapter argues that urban movements themselves manipulate the boundaries of public and private space as part a strategy to claim a ‘right to the city’.

Chapter 7: To Watch and be Watched: Urban Design and Everyday Life in the Surveillance City: This chapter engages Jane Jacobs’ “eyes on the street” argument – that residents are best at “self-policing” unruly urban spaces – as well as recent literature arguing that increasing urban surveillance is leading to the “enclosure of public space”. The chapter argues that surveillance is not simply a microscopic gaze directed at targeted districts; rather, surveillance fundamentally changes the way the city (and public space in particular) is used, lived, and (re)produced, at a social and material level. The emphasis on surveillance is altering the way public spaces are designed and it is transforming the way residents use and appropriate these spaces. Neighborhood dwellers are not simply watched more closely, they are increasingly doing the watching themselves. At times residents’ “eyes on the street” counter the surveillance practices of the state and police, but at other moments they are complicit with them.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: The conclusion elaborates on the three main issues – and implications – raised by the ethnography. First, since the politicization of cultural identity is important in Northeast Paris, perhaps scholars of contemporary France

should pay more credence to local articulations of place and identity. It could be that “actually existing” republicanism is more grounded in local political practices and particularities – and therefore more amenable to cultural pluralism – than the national level discourses which are often studied. Second, urban environmentalist politics are demonstrated to be incongruent with some of the values (and ends) of sustainable urbanism. Projects often appear “sustainable” in a broad sense only if abstracted out of the workings of power (and in particular gentrification and redevelopment) which constitute the global city. Otherwise sustainable urbanism simply becomes another (albeit environmentally friendly) means by which poor and marginalized populations are dispossessed of their homes and their “right to the city”. Third, I suggest that urban movements do not simply react against the remaking of the city by powerful political and economic interests. Instead, residents themselves re-construct, re-imagine, and assert control over “their” spaces in ways that create political openings (and enclosures) along the lines of class, ethno-cultural difference, and gender. Despite the importance of social fault-lines however, the study highlights the shared predicament faced by this diverse urban population, focusing on the promises of cross-class, multi-ethnic organizing while still providing an honest assessment of the conflicts that arise.

¹ Paris is divided into 20 arrondissements, roughly equivalent to a ward or borough, and administered by its own elected mayor. The Jardins d’Éole is located between the 18th and 19th, in the far north side of the city.

² Trans: “Hey! Hey! Delanoë, we are “mal-logés”! or mis-housed

³ In France, citizenship is conferred by *jus sanguinis* and in some cases, *jus soli* and naturalization. Nevertheless the term “immigrant” is widely used as an ethnocultural category in popular discourse to refer to individuals of non-European origin (Balibar &

Wallerstein, 1991; Hargreaves, 1995; Silverstein, 2005). I use the term of West African or Maghrebi origin to highlight ethnic and cultural backgrounds of residents, regardless of their citizenship status.

⁴ It is especially important to contextualize Lefebvre as a thinker because his career spanned nearly 60 years (from the 1920s to the 1980s) and resulted in more than 30 books. As a constant fixture in the French intellectual scene for many years, he seemed to float freely along in a dialogue with several different generations of French thought from pre-war Marxism, to existentialism, structuralism, situationism, and post-structuralism without ever being fully attached to any school of thought, making him an ever present but never particularly fashionable figure.

⁵ In the *Production of Space* (p.41) Lefebvre explicitly states that ethnographers are themselves producers of "representations of space". Perhaps only an ethnographer who effectively situates him/herself within the relations of power is immune from this charge.

⁶Lefebvre is suspicious of advocates for residents which again, could include ethnographers – and asks the reader:

...who can speak in their name [the users] or in their place? Certainly not some expert, some specialist of space or of spokespersonship; there is no such specialization, because no one has a right to speak for those directly concerned here. The entitlement to do so, the concepts to do so, the language to do so are simply lacking. How would the discourse of such an expert differ from that of the architects, 'developers' or politicians? (p.364)

Lefebvre is uncompromising in his skepticism of intellectuals and other advocates who claim to speak for – let alone plan or design on behalf of – 'the people'. Such figures – the producers of "spaces of representation" – lack the both the "right" and "entitlement" but more profoundly, the "language" and "concepts" to do so. The argument is a powerful indictment of "populism" amongst the powerful, but it also points to a certain gulf of incommensurability between those who plan and those who are planned for; those who represent and are represented.

⁷ More about the relationship between social movements and the "right to the city" is described in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

⁸ Local activists and officials often claim that the relative abundance of public goods (i.e. quality schools, community centers, etc.) and the robust presence of neighborhood associations are among the main reasons the area did not see violent unrest during the 2005 revolt (immediately adjacent areas beyond the city limits, saw extensive property damage and violence).

⁹Data on real estate prices from La Chambre des Notaires de Paris, (CNP 2011).

¹⁰ Dikeç (2007) gives an excellent history how a variety of discourses (including media accounts and ethnography) are implicated in the cultural construction of the banlieue. Most interestingly, he roots place-based stigmatization with specific geographies of difference associated with republican nationalism.

¹¹ (UMR CNRS LOUEST 7145) Our team was composed of two sociologists Michèle Jolé, Stéphane Tonnelat, myself, and two doctoral candidates in Urban Planning, Irène d'Agostino, and Sophie Koch. It was based at the Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris, Université Paris XII, Val de Marne.

Chapter 2: Between Center and Periphery: the Making of an Urban and National Hinterland

The ‘making’ of northeastern Paris as a distinct area within the capital is a complicated story in which global, national, local (and even geological) processes and histories are tightly interwoven. Paradoxically, the area’s exceptionality is largely due to its unmarked status as a “no-place”, buffer-zone, or hinterland between highly charged landmarks in France’s social-spatial imagination. It is, as one northeast Paris resident described it, a “frontier between Paris and the *banlieue*” (the capital’s working class suburbs, synonymous in French popular culture with impoverished, unassimilated immigrants and the 2005 riots). This makes it peripheral not only to the capital’s core, but to the recognized urban periphery itself. It has, in many respects, been constituted as a *hinterland* similar to the classic usage (the term *hinterland* originating from the German term “land behind”) referring to areas immediately beyond coastal ports. Northeast Paris’ neighborhoods lay just beyond and are largely defined by their proximity to Paris’ well-defined “ports” or openings to the banlieue to northeast (specifically the *Porte de Clignancourt*, *Porte de la Chapelle*, and *Porte d’Aubervilliers*) as well as the train terminals linking the city to banlieue and beyond (the *Gare du Nord* and *Gare de l’Est*). Moreover, the area is marginal within Paris’ socially charged geography of outer neighborhoods, lying between *Montmartre* (the mythical, now Disneyfied Paris of impressionist painting and *Moulin Rouge* fame), the *Goutte d’Or* (often known as Little Africa), and *Belleville* (a storied, rough and tumble neighborhood of Paris’ blue collar

past, birthplace of Edith Piaf, and now home to one of Paris' largest chinatowns). For many residents of the metropolitan area and tourists alike, northeast Paris is merely the place behind the railroad terminals, experienced on a regular, if not unconscious basis as a post-industrial valley of ashes seen from commuter train windows en route between Paris, the banlieue, and *Charles de Gaulle* airport.



Figure 6: Satellite image of northeast Paris. Note the presence of railroad tracks, industrial buildings, and the canal. The city limit of Paris lies just above the northern edge of this map. Image adapted from Google Earth, ©2010.

It is no wonder that this hinterland (and the corresponding center and periphery) has become firmly ensconced in the minds of residents and social scientists alike. Northeast Paris' illusory naturalization as a hinter region appears all the more formidable due to Paris' mythical status as a powerfully charged center of culture, politics, and economics for not only France or Europe, but Western civilization as a whole (with the banlieue increasingly cast as representing the opposite of each of these ideals). Residents of northeast Paris, for their part, must contend with the social reality of northeast Paris'

ambiguous status on a regular basis in terms of both territorial stigma, and more profoundly, the ever-present realities of economic deprivations that often mark daily life in the area. Social scientists have for the most part accepted this process as natural with scholars as varied as Soullignac (1993) and Wacquant (2008) taking the ‘periphery’ as both a given and a starting point. Such approaches appear to have missed or forgotten a parallel set of arguments made by both Raymond Williams (1975) and Henri Lefebvre (1999), both of whom insist upon the importance of analysis that does more than uncover the forces of marginalization creating peripheries, but seek to expose what is hidden by the center/periphery dichotomy in the first place.

Anthropology – having long fashioned itself as a science of empire’s hinterlands, colonies, and peripheries – has undertaken considerable and productive reflection on thinking beyond the center/periphery, metropole/colony dichotomy. Skurski and Coronil (1993), following *The Country and the City*, seize upon Williams’ emphasis on the mutually constitutive linkages between country and city (as an alternative to taking the dichotomy for granted at face value), and extend the metaphor to metropole and colony. They write:

At the global level we may observe the same ideological concealment that operates domestically: a tendency to obscure the mutually constitutive relationship between center ('city') and periphery ('country') and to represent them as separate entities whose characteristics appear as the consequence of intrinsic attributes. [Skurski and Coronil quoted in (Coronil, 1996, p. 239)].

Coronil argues that the tendency to conceal the “mutually constitutive relationships” and

linkages between colonial edge and metropolitan center is itself a technique of empire's construction and reproduction (1996). Moreover, empires not only seek to maintain and naturalize the division between periphery and center, but do so in favor of maintaining the primacy of the latter and subordination of the former. At the same time, the production of northeast Paris as a hinterland is a result of the very divisions and inequalities that are produced by empire (and serve to sustain its imperial expansion). And, more importantly, the mere existence of a *hinterland within the center* of the empire reveals, of course, the fictional nature of even the most potent center/periphery dichotomy.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections in an effort to trace northeast Paris' construction into a hinterland which is constituted by – and serves to reproduce and legitimate – Paris as an imperial, neoliberal center. “A Transitional Zone” examines how urbanization (especially railroad and canal building during the industrial revolution) and immigration first constituted the area I term northeast Paris, largely during the Second Empire boom (1852-1870) and later during France's post-war boom (1947-1974), known as the *Trente Glorieuses* (“The Glorious Thirty”). “From Garden Cities to *Grands Ensembles*” focuses on the development of public housing that has greatly shaped northeast Paris as an urban and national hinterland. Special emphasis is placed on the misunderstood linkage between public housing and immigration that continues to animate the center/periphery, Second Empire Paris/modernist banlieue dichotomy that animates much of the discourse about urban marginality and national belonging in France. “Neoliberalism in the Republic” focuses on the restructuring of the French state after the end of the *Trente Glorieuses*, paying particular attention to the

impact of welfare state transformations on two groups whose relationship is tantamount in northeast Paris' grassroots politics: the immigrant working class (and their children) as well as the French middle class. The final section, "Northeast Paris' Neighborhoods" provides a description of how these historical forces have constituted the area's neighborhoods, both in terms of their urban fabric and the emergence of grassroots politics within the area.

A Transitional Zone

One of the difficulties of this neighborhood, when compared with the Goutte d'Or on one side or Belleville on the other, is the lack of strong symbolic identity here, that's to say it is a zone of passage or of transition; it is a working-class neighborhood one could say, but of a people in a state of becoming. – Isaac Joseph, sociologist (correspondence with Jardins d'Éole architect, Michel Corajoud)

Long before the site of the Jardins d'Éole was first developed as a rail station in 1847, the areas surrounding it already occupied a peculiar position as a linkage between Paris and the outside world. This is partially due to the natural topography of Paris' northern section: the eastern portion of the 18th and much of the 19th arrondissements lay on a relatively flat valley between the largest hills in the city, Montmartre and Belleville. This made the valley the logical route connecting the city to the north, thus the current Avenue de Flandre has its origin in a Roman road that connected Lutetia (the Roman city centered on Paris' current Île-de-la-Cité) to northern territories of the empire. The villages of La Chapelle and La Vilette, which gradually developed here over the next millennium subsisted largely from carriage repairers, wheelmakers, blacksmiths, inns,

guinguettes, and other forms of commerce supported by travelers leaving and going to the city. The building of a monumental defensive fortification (*Le Mur des Fermiers Généraux*) towards the end of the 18th century along the present boulevards de La Chapelle and La Villette, further solidified the position of the area as firmly outside the capital yet fully at the mercy of its sways of urbanization and economic development.

Industrialization and railroad building (and France's accompanying imperial expansion in the 19th century) would be the deciding factors which shaped northeast Paris into the form we recognize today. In 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte decreed that the Canal de l'Ourcq be created, a 96 kilometer waterway that would bring freshwater and goods into Paris from the north-east (part of a national canal system that was largely constructed to support military expansion). The canal de l'Ourcq nourished an industrial boom so great that by 1841, barge traffic in 19th arrondissement was equal to ship traffic at Le Havre (France's main English Channel port), and the development of an eastern industrial quarter in Paris – centered around Paris' eastern fringe at the time (now the Canal St-Martin in the 10th and 11th arrondissements) was well underway by the 1850s (Chadych, 1999, pp. 150-151). The defining moment in the neighborhood's future however, was the creation of two grand railroad terminals: the Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est in 1846 and 1849, respectively. The areas south of the two rail stations (in central Paris) were rebuilt in grandiose fashion: wide boulevards connecting the rail stations with spectacular icons of bourgeois urbanism such the Opéra Garnier and the Place de la Republic. The areas immediately north of (or "behind") the terminals – the villages of La Chappelle and La Vilette – underwent a rapid transformation from bucolic *faubourgs* to railway service quarters packed with switching yards, locomotive turntables, and customs facilities. The

gare de marchandises (freight station) that occupied the park's current site was built in this wave of infrastructural investment. This development expanded urbanization from the arterial roads of avenue de Flandres and Rue de la Chapelle into the present areas around the Rue du Maroc, the Rue Pajol, and Rue d'Aubervilliers. This process of rail centered development would accelerate after the totality of the areas were annexed under the direction of Prefect George Haussmann 1860, and reformed as the 18th and 19th arrondissements with Rue d'Aubervilliers forming the boundary between the two.

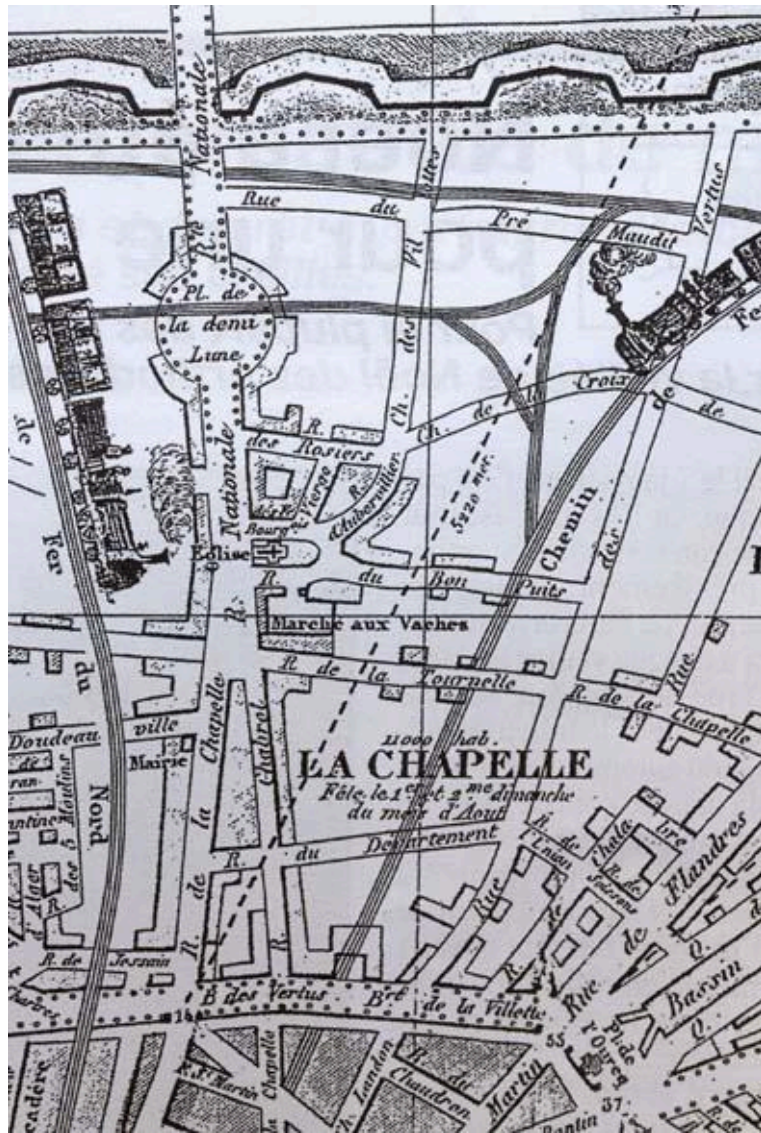


Figure 7: Mid 19th century map of the La Chapelle neighborhood of northeast Paris. The fortifications shown at the top mark the current limits of the city.

It was the Second Empire boom (1852-1870), sustained by imperial expansion in Crimea and Italy, as well as burgeoning efforts in Indochina and increasing urbanization and industrialization in metropolitan France, that underpinned Paris' ascension as the “capital of modernity” in this period. Under the dictatorial powers claimed by Napoleon III (the nephew of Bonaparte) and Prefect Haussmann, the city annexed a ring-like swath

of territory that presently makes up the outer eight arrondissements (12-20). North of the city, the two small villages of La Chapelle and La Villette fell within the boundaries of Paris. These areas north of the railroad stations became a spatial expression of the often violent dialectical processes of creative destruction driving Haussmann-era modernization. Here, gritty and noxious processes of production took place that sustained the glamorous and sensual consumerism that made the city, in Benjamin's words, the "capital of the 19th century". The flat valley between the hills of Montmartre and Chaumont hid a Paris well concealed from the bourgeois city center. It was not planned around boulevards or monuments but instead around massive sections of railway, and the often putrid Canal d'Ourcq. Sections of railway track, far wider than the grandest boulevards, were slashed through La Chapelle and the adjacent Goutte d'Or (a newly constructed neighborhood named for the vineyards which it replaced) to carry fresh labor into the city from the French countryside as well as goods to be sold in the new *grands magasins* and arcades. La Villette became Paris' slaughterhouse district, immortalized in Georges Franju's (2007) documentary masterpiece *Les sang des bêtes* ("the blood of the beasts"), and Flandres the site of a massive *pompes funèbres* railway station that was built to transport the bodies of the dead to suburban cemeteries. This area behind the grand façade of the train terminals operated as a "backstage" hinterland to the spectacle of modernity that was Haussmann's Paris. Northeast Paris thus began to assume its idiosyncratic form based on its liminal status in the capital's hinterlands. It was neither working class banlieue nor City of Light; the uses for the area (slaughterhouses, funeral homes, and for a short period, gallows) even suggest a kind of profane quality was attached to its liminal position. The area is formerly within the administrative zone of the

city of Paris itself, and in fact integral to the capital accumulation driving urbanization, but also removed from the meaning-laden urban fabric that constituted Paris as a capital of France and of modernity itself. As a 1936 poem describing the northeast Paris neighborhood of La Chapelle from a collection called *Derrière Chez Martin* (“behind Martin’s place”) by Marcel Aymé (1938) makes clear:

*Le quartier de la chapelle, en sa partie nord, est resserré
entre des murs nus dissimulant des usines, des gares de marchandises, des voies de
chemins de fer, des gazomètres,
des trains sales et des locomotives haut-le-pied.
Les fumées des réseaux de l'Est et du Nord,
se mêlant aux fumées d'usines,
noircissent des immeubles conçus avec économies
et les Rues, peu passantes, ont un aspect
de province flétrie, cernée par un désert de rouille
et de charbon. C'est un paysage littéraire
où les promeneurs d'une âme sensible,
en écoutant les trains siffler dans une brume souillée,
se surprennent à prier Dieu pour que la vie ne soit pas démesurément trop longue*

*La Chapelle – part of the neighborhood up north – is choked
by railroads and freight yards, and bare walls hiding factories and tanks,
dirty engines and dead mileage trains.
Locomotive smoke, coming and going from the north and east,
mingles with the factory fumes and
blackens the ramshackle buildings and streets.
Its withered roads could have a provincial look,
but are surrounded by a desert of rust and coal.
In this netherworldly place, a passerby with a sensitive soul,
upon hearing a train whistle pierce the soiled the fog,
cries out to God: “may life not be too long”.*

Most importantly, the evolution of the areas' residential neighborhoods into a major immigration center in the 19th century was linked to Paris' development as a national capital and later, its global importance as a colonial metropole. Beyond the industrial facilities, urbanization of this undesirable area to live was slow to occur and did not begin in earnest until the end of the 19th century, when residential neighborhoods developed in free pockets of land amongst the railways and various industrial tracts. The land adjacent to the smoke-belching rail yards was available for relatively low prices and was the first section of Paris encountered by many of the bewildered rural immigrants entering the city from Breton, Normandy, and other northern provinces in the mid to late 1800s. The area soon developed a concentration of inexpensive, but often insalubrious hotels, furnished apartments and boarding houses for long-term guests. Those who were fortunate enough to arrive in the capital with kin-based or other types of network could often board from or co-habitate with relatives in less noxious districts. The less well-connected were forced into northeast Paris' crowded long-stay hotels. Such establishments were profitable for their operators (who were frequently immigrants themselves) because of the constant flow of migrant laborers arriving in Paris to find work: between 1860-1920 over half of the Paris metropolitan area's populace were born in other French provinces (Soulignac 1993: 29). Long-stay hotels catering to migrants proved especially lucrative because they were faced with a clientele often held captive by a mercilessly booming housing market (as is the case today). In the decade between 1850-60 alone, rents climbed 75% in Paris (ibid: 54). In the latter half of the 19th century,

the 18th and 19th arrondissements still offered amongst the cheapest costs of housing in Paris (around 32FF) while prices in the city center could easily reach ten times that amount (ibid 53). The most desperate were forced to squat in a vacant tract of land set aside for military defenses at northeast Paris' *portes*, at the city limit itself, known as "the zone". Soulignac (p.55) writes of a census estimate citing 46,000 such inhabitants still decamped in the zone as late as 1926. The largely male, marginally employed inhabitants of this area were derisively termed "zonards" (literally, a "zoner") and their occasional excursions into the capital (often en masse for reveling on pay dates) sparked panic among city's "respectable" classes (Hussey, 2008) . A century later, the term zonard is still in use by youth from the city's outskirts as a term of ironic self-effacement (Silverstein, 2004) and Paris' newspapers still run frequent stories on "incursions" of "delinquents" from the city's banlieue venturing into the capital on Friday and Saturday nights.

By the early 20th century, the successive waves began to shift away from French rural to urban migrants to immigrants from beyond France itself, with Belgium, Italy, Poland and the Iberian Peninsula being particularly well represented. Between 1921 and 1936, the share of Parisians born in the provinces remained dominant but was shrinking (dropping from 59% to 51.9%) while the percentage of those who were born abroad began to grow (6.8% to 8.4%) (Soulignac 1993: 33). Large numbers of migrant laborers, particularly Maghrebi, West African and Antillean men, began arriving in France during World War One. Many worked in war related industries – particularly munitions factories – though undesirable industrial jobs in foundries, and the chemical and food industries were well represented after the war (Noiriél, 1996, p. 105). After the Great War,

immigration was encouraged because of the appalling losses suffered during the conflict. By 1940, there were 120,000 immigrants of Maghrebi descent alone in France, 70,000 of which settled in the Paris region (Fysh & Wolfreys, 2003, p. 26). After the Second World War, migration was reinstated during the *Trente Glorieuses*, France's thirty year post-war economic expansion. In the 1950s, thanks largely to guest worker programs instituted to address the post-war labor shortage in a variety of industries, waves of workers from the Maghreb (whose families still make up a significant part of the northeast Paris) began to arrive in substantial numbers. Maghrebi immigration in France reached its height towards the end of Algerian Civil War in the late 1960s. Others from the former colonies, especially the West African countries of Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Mali, and Burkina Faso followed. During the 1950's alone, between 350,000 and 700,000 immigrants from West Africa and the Maghreb arrived in France, mostly to find work in the manufacturing and construction industries in Paris, Lyon, and Marseille (Silverstein 2004: 3). France's post-war boom led to the increasingly proletarianization of its immigrant population: in 1901 one-third of France's immigrant population held blue-collar jobs, but by 1975 the proportion was half, while the overall percentage for France, however, remained at a third (Norie 1996: 104). Though women remained a minority within the overall immigrant labor pool in France, their employment was heavily gendered and ethnically marked in domestic services as maids and nannies: 28% of immigrant women were employed in domestic services, compared to 11% of French born women (ibid). The labor underlying France's "glorious thirty" – both in the home and the factory – was thus heavily dependent on its immigrants, many of whom arrived from the former colonies in West African and the Maghreb.

The mid 1970s brought a considerable change in the economic situation for guest workers and France as whole, given the onset of the global oil crises and de-industrialization marking the end of France's 30 year boom. While the number of industrial firms had been decreasing in Paris itself since 1962, the early 1970s represented a turning point for France as a whole towards a major economic contraction (Soullignac 1992: 95); the construction and manufacturing sectors upon which immigrant-origin laborers depended were among the hardest hit. Between 1975 and 1983, manufacturing and other blue collar jobs dropped from being 48% of the total jobs in the Paris region to 39% (ibid 105). Given these economic pressures and a mounting xenophobic trend in France, guest worker programs were ceased but immigration continued through family re-unifications, refugee seekers, and other means.

The 1980s to the present continue to see immigration from North Africa and West Africa. The 1990s saw substantial numbers of war refugees from former Yugoslavia; the 2000s have seen Chinese and Sri Lankan immigrants as well. These latter two groups began to expand into northern Paris after having already formed central enclaves within Paris itself: the core of the Sri Lankan community in Paris is immediately around Gare du Nord, while Paris has two long established Chinese areas in the 20th arrondissement and the 13th arrondissement.

Though banlieue cities have often been most associated with immigrants (and have indeed seen the highest *relative increases* of immigrant origin residents), Paris has historically had a large share of the metropolitan region's immigrant population. These groups have been highly concentrated in areas such as northeast Paris. Such areas –and northeast Paris in particular – have been termed centers of ethnocultural *ghettoization*

[see for example, (Simon, 2007)] by the French media, and viewed as expressions of the corrosion of French identity in the capital. However, in stark contrast to classic definitions of a monocultural ghetto, these areas remain among the most culturally heterogeneous in Paris. And as researchers of immigrant housing point out (De Rudder 1992), the economically precarious position of the populations mean that few groups become culturally, socially, or economically institutionalized in such areas for very long. The enduring trait of northeast Paris is less that it is associated with a particular immigrant group than it is constantly shifting between France’s most precariously housed populations.

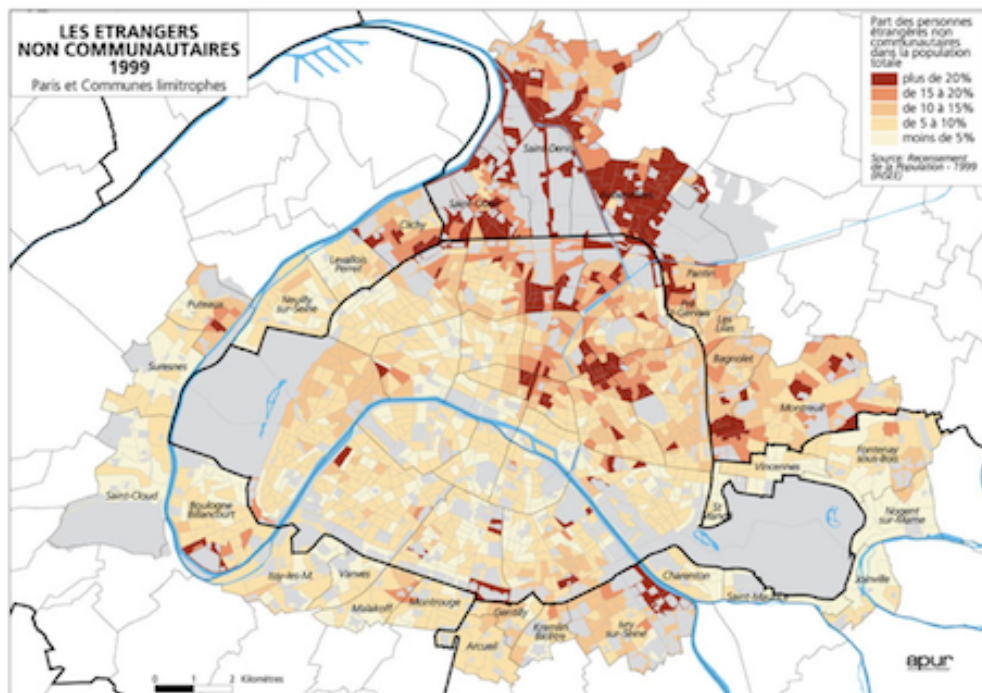


Figure 8: Map showing density of foreign-born populations in Paris, by APUR, © 1999.

The more recent waves of non-European migrants have faced a similar, if not worse, housing predicament to earlier waves of immigrants from Europe and the

provinces. While the transient, at times clandestine, nature of immigrant housing situations makes precise statistics difficult to trust (Silberman, Alba, & Fournier, 2007), some rough figures for France as a whole are revealing. In 1975, 14% of immigrants (as opposed to 4% of French by birth) resided in “nonstandard housing” (i.e. dormitories, long-stay hotels, boarding houses, etc.). By the 1990s, amongst groups of immigrants the differences have also been striking, with later waves of immigrants from outside of Europe being far more likely to experience precarious housing situations: 33% of Turks, 28% of Moroccans, and 25% of Algerians lived in nonstandard housing while Italians and Spaniards from earlier waves were housed similarly to French nationals (de Rudder 1992: 253). As a whole, 49% of immigrant households in France lacked tubs, showers, indoor bathrooms, and central heat (as opposed to 39% of French households in general and 37% of households occupied by laborers). As might be expected, immigrants are also more likely to reside in overcrowded housing (42.7%) as compared to the population at large (15.8%) or even laborers as a whole (21.8%) (ibid 254). According to de Rudder, “immigrants remain the primary, almost exclusive, clientele of inferior housing, and of housing supplied by employers” (i.e. company dormitory, worksite camps, and furnished hotels). She points out that 7.4% of immigrants are housed by their employers and 5.9% reside in rooming houses (for French households the figure stands at 4% and 1.5% respectively) (ibid). My own informal survey of immigrant housing conditions (performed by observation and recording names on mailboxes in apartment buildings listed as “insalubrious” in municipal records) suggested that decrepit housing in northeast Paris was almost exclusively the domain of families and house-sharers of Maghrebi and West African origin.

There is, at first glance, an eloquence to the center-periphery narrative which links northeast Paris' marginal position within the capital to its immigrant population. This could lead to a temptation to conflate its urban marginality to the capital the populations' marginality to the French nation. Such a view continues to animate much of the discourse surrounding assimilation, cultural belonging, and delinquency among residents of the city's far-flung and isolated banlieues, much of which has simply substituted the "Paris-banlieue" dichotomy for that of "metropole-colony". The problem with the center/periphery metaphor which looms over many scholarly and popular accounts of the banlieue is that they hide the profound degree to which the center has been remade because of the periphery. The notion that immigration is peripheral to French nation is a vivid example of how such a trick is played by the center/periphery discourse so prevalent in discussions of Paris and the French nation itself. As a coterie of French historians – notably Gérard Noriel – has shown, *immigration has been absolutely central to the making of the modern French nation*, particularly beginning in Second Empire period and continuing into the present moment¹. It is, therefore, perfectly fitting that northeast Paris would be in the French capital itself as immigration – and in particular, populations from the margins of the French empire – have been firmly at the center of France's re-making of itself as a nation for well over a century. If one can be speak of marginality when describing northeast Paris, it less to do with its population than with its distinctive urbanism -- and the forces that have historically produced it.

From Garden Cities to *Grands Ensembles*

Perhaps the most striking aspect of northeast Paris – or at least the feature which can be most quickly ascertained by the average pedestrian – is the dramatic juxtapositions characterizing its built environment, which oscillates between vast wastes of railroad tracks and vacant factories, densely built often deteriorating 19th century apartment buildings, and imposing public housing towers: the *grands ensembles*. For reasons that are architectural as well as social, it is frequently the public housing towers that capture the imagination. The *grands ensembles* have been a defining characteristic of the built environment and the lives of residents in the area: northern and eastern Paris (the 18th, 19th, 20th arrondissements) are home to 80% of Paris' social housing (Pinol 1996). Fully 55% of the neighborhoods' housing stock are social residences (the proportion of Paris as a whole is 14% social housing) (APUR 2010). The presence of the large housing estates – indeed the intention behind their monumental scale – is to convey the magnificent capacities of the modern French welfare state to care for its disadvantaged. The additional presence of a large immigrant population in their midst no doubt reinforces a common linkage made by anti-immigrant politicians: that immigrants are exploiting the welfare the state supported by the heavy tax burdens of the French middle class. But in the same way that a close examination of the *grands ensembles* quickly reveals crumbling facades, a closer examination at the emergence of public housing (and the decline of the statist vision of which it was apart) reveals a more complicated narrative lurking behind housing, immigrants, the modern French state, and the emergence of a *neoliberalism à la française*

(Jobert & Théret, 1994) since the 1970s which continues to produce northeast Paris as a hinterland.

Aside from isolated experiments in low-income housing (inspired by workers' collectives), public housing as a responsibility of the modern state entered the political debate in France in the late 1800s. The discussion was shaped by the large wave of domestic migration which tightened the housing markets of Paris and other French cities, leading to the exploitive housing conditions described in the previous section. In many crowded working class neighborhoods an emergent social movement known as the "*ligue des antiproprios*" called for resistance against landlords, and at the same time, "social housing" became a hotly debated topic amongst reformed minded figures in the elite (often animated by concerns with moral and physical hygiene). Social housing would be featured in the Universal Exposition of 1889 (Soulignac 1992: 57), unveiled alongside a more recognizable symbol of French modernity, the Eiffel Tower). A landmark piece of legislation – the Siegfried Law – was passed in 1894 defining housing for the poor as a responsibility of the state.

Many of the early experiments in the creation of state designed housing at a large scale happened in the North African colonies in the first two decades of the 20th century. As a host of scholars have pointed out, the imperial "periphery" of Morocco was the center of modern experimentation with "slum clearance", towering vertical living spaces, the use of "*cordon sanitaire*" ("sanitary belts" or buffer zones of green space), and careful segregation between "native" and "European" zones (Abu-Lughod 1980; Çelik 1997; Rabinow 1989; Silverstein 2004). Many of these designs were soon transplanted to Paris and its outskirts, where 15 cités-jardins (garden cities) were built (themselves

heavily influenced by English visionary Ebenezer Howards' emphasis on the moral and hygienic benefits of plentiful green space for the working-classes). In northeast Paris, several of these garden cities were built over top of the former defensive zone at Porte de Clignancourt and near Porte de la Chapelle (displacing the infamous *zonard* encampments) in the decades following the World War I. The garden cities consisted of six story, tudor style apartment buildings, often broken into 'courts' with luscious tree filled gardens in their interiors. This first wave of developments was known as HBM (*habitations à bon marché* or affordable housing). HBM would foreshadow not only larger scale *grands ensembles* of the post-war years (most of which would dispense with the green space), but an emphasis on nature, gardens, and its relationship to social well-being that would infuse mobilization to build the Jardins d'Éole nearly 80 years later.

After World War II, France found itself in the midst of the largest economic boom since the Second Empire while at the same time facing its largest housing crisis since the 1800s. By 1954, 22% of the French population was living in overcrowded conditions and 40% percent of all French dwellings were without running water (as compared to 19% in the U.K.) (Duclaud-Williams, 1978, p. 125). Castells, in his research on social housing in the Paris area, notes that almost 9% of the population had no regular home (14% for blue-collar workers), 17% percent of families were forced to cohabitate with others and 55% percent of dwellings lacked bathrooms (1985, p. 75). The solution to the situation was proposed through the HLM (*habitation à loyer modéré* - rent controlled apartments program) which proposed housing on a far greater level than had ever been envisioned in the pre-war HBM developments (though construction was still unable to keep up with demand for housing during the post-war boom). After 1958, special emphasis was placed

on all encompassing “zones” of urban development – the *grands ensembles* included not only housing on massive scale (numbers of units in the thousands are common) but schools, recreational buildings and commercial centers, often in the forms of “new towns”. Though major construction was terminated in the 1970s, today there are more than three million HLM lodgings in France, 30% are run by the state directly, 25% are operated by local municipalities, and the remainder are under the control of pseudo public sector HLM corporations (Silverstein 2004: 95).

By many accounts, the model of the welfare state that *grands ensembles* presented was hardly embraced by the inhabitants or outside critics. Scholarly denunciation of the buildings themselves, the lifestyle they engendered, and the hubris of their planners was swift and wide ranging; both Lefebvre’s *Production of Space* (1974) and Chevaliers’ *The Assassination of Paris* (1977) were partly inspired by the wave of modernist HLM construction. Indeed, much of Lefebvre’s language and ideas from the production of space draw from the technocratic and sweeping nature in which the modernist *grands ensembles* were constructed in and around Paris. At a more ethnographic level, Castells’ research (1985) on social movements in the banlieue cities of Sarcelles and Val d’ Yverres described outraged residents resorting to street protests in order to force the HLM administration to repair the shoddily – and at times perilously – constructed buildings.

Today, HLM is widely associated with France’s working class and poor immigrant and immigrant-descended populations, particularly in the domain of youth culture. In addition to popular films such as *Banlieue 13* (2006) (the title itself a satirical reference to the often numbered names of HLM communities) and countless references in hip-hop music, academic and media treatments in and out of France frequently draw upon

– or assume – the public housing and immigrant connection. Among American anthropologists who have conducted research in Paris’ banlieue neighborhoods, both Silverstein (2004) and Beriss (2004) have suggested that HLM and post-war public housing was employed to break up ethnic enclaves within Paris itself; the HLM neighborhood is viewed as an architectural strategy of containment to prevent the emergence of immigrant enclaves within the city.

However, the immigrant-HLM association, upon closer examination, appears a misleading half-truth, at best. In some cases, the immigrant-HLM association may indeed be present, and even institutionalized, as the example of Sarcelles HLM apartments, given to Algerian Jews and Algerian Muslims loyal to the colonial regime after the Algerian war, as studied by Silverstein. A long line of research on immigration and housing suggests that wider assumptions about the linkage between HLM and immigrants (and even the working class as a whole) may be drastically over-stated. As early as 1978, Duclaud-Williams noted that regardless of government regulations on income, individual HLM administrators were illegally renting apartments to numerous residents who were middle class. He notes that workers in the middle-management level were the most likely to be selected as tenants by HLM companies and made up the majority of the tenants. In contrast to the spirit of HLM legislation, “*wealth appears as a positive advantage* in the competition for an HLM tenancy” (1978: 134, emphasis added); Castells also noted the over-representation of white-collar workers in his research on banlieue HLM developments (1985). On the question of immigrant tenants, discrimination by HLM administrators appears to have been especially widespread and entrenched. Duclaud-Williams reports that the government went as far as to pursue legal action against its own

HLM operators who were found to be discriminating against foreign origin tenants; despite a legal decision against the companies in 1968, discrimination in tenant selection continued flagrantly and openly (1978: 135). Nearly three decades later, de Rudder notes that “immigrant representation in subsidized housing is below what one would expect on the basis of their numbers in the lower classes of the population” (1993: 252). In Paris, 7.5% percent of foreign laborers live in the HLM system as compared to 21% of French laborers; this despite the fact that 75% of employed foreigners are laborers or service workers (ibid). Immigrants actually live *more frequently in private apartment buildings* than native French in the same socioprofessional category (ibid: 253). Many of the most desperate immigrants are therefore forced to depend neither on the public nor private housing sector, but in a shadow “parallel market” of long stay hotels and boarding houses, marked by substandard, highly exploitive housing (note: during my time in northeast Paris, a fire in one such hotel injured a person and resulted in two families being homeless; the episode is covered in detail in Chapter 6). Such lodgings are not to be found in the modernist banlieues but in the densely built, poorly maintained older housing stock of Paris itself. The areas offer proximity to employers, an important advantage for those with long working hours and for clandestine immigrants who must avoid ID checks on commuter trains from the suburbs. Since the inception of HLM it seems, immigrants are actually least likely to be “sheltered” by the state, in literal and figurative terms. Indeed, it seems the reproduction of the most marginal form of the housing market depends upon being located in the Parisian center, and not peripheral banlieues.

Neoliberalism in the Republic

The second set of forces that have dramatically shaped northeast Paris are those constituting the area's recent status as an economic and social hinterland in the capital. As we have seen, dilapidated buildings and visibly poor residents have long been a defining characteristic of this area. But even during the economically troubled years since the end of *Trente Glorieuses*, residents of northeast Paris have remarked upon what appeared to be a further economic and physical decline in the neighborhood, pushing what has long been a working class area into particularly grave depths of despair. One neighborhood activist (a member of the Association Jardins d'Éole, who organized to create a green space for the area) reported that though the working class district had been "pleasant and full of life" as late as the 1980s, "the situation began to deteriorate in the following years. These circumstances, combined with what he called the "inertia and silence of the powers that be" had, in fact, convinced him and his neighbors to mobilize, as covered in Chapter 4.

As an even cursory review of the policies of the French state since the 1970s shows that France's "powers that be" have been anything but "inert" with regards to the "deterioration" of poor urban areas. Indeed, the French state has *actively embraced* a set of policies that have produced urban poverty in France, particularly in immigrant areas such as northeast Paris. What largely defines northeast Paris as a neighborhood has been "the absence of the state", contributing to the perception of the area amongst its inhabitants as a forlorn periphery where residents "must take our future into our own hands" as the CMC activist put it. I differ with the diagnosis of many of my informants in

this regard. A review of some select French economic policies since the end of the post-war boom indicates the economic predicament of northeast Paris is not decay brought about by neglect but is instead produced and sustained through a wide array of policies, many of which are not even focused on the specific area or urban districts per se.

It is crucial to note that France's political leaders' incremental, often ambiguous movements towards economic liberalization defy understandings of neoliberalism as centered around austerity, and an enfeebled, shrunken public sector. France, of course, has a long history of statism, centered largely on the ideology of *dirigisme*, centered around a strong state as "gatekeeper of capital" (Clift, 2003, p. 180) leading the way in economic development, which was championed by none other than Charles de Gaulle and his supporters *on the right* during the post-war boom. Under this system, state funds first fed industrialization and reconstruction after World War II, particularly with regards to public housing, pensions, and other efforts to modernize the French economy in the wake of the war and produce an urbanized French middle class. From a foreign policy perspective, strong-state dirigisme meshed closely with the nationalist, imperialist project of *grandeur* envisioned by de Gaulle: a France committed to a nuclear arsenal; independence from NATO (at least in formal terms), and a willingness to go to war over the preservation of the French empire in Algeria and Indochina. Dirigisme, though a product of a post-war consensus between center left and right parties, was born less of left ideals than it was a post-war drive towards accumulation. It was widely accepted across the political mainstream in France as necessitated by the war-time ruination of the French economy at home, and its precarious hold on the colonies abroad.

When *dirigisme* did unravel, the process occurred in fits and starts. Efforts at reform began in 1974 when President Valerie Giscard D'Estaing appointed conservative economist Raymond Barre, an admirer of Thatcher as well as the neoliberal experiment in Chile, as Minister of Finance. Barre brought a focus on monetarism to French macroeconomic policy and styled himself as an axe-wielding liberal reformer. He dismantled price controls, eased regulations on the business sector and reduced national subsidies to industries and ailing firms. Construction of the Grands Ensembles slowed. "Market reality" became the order of the day, and this perception was fueled by an increasingly wide spread sentiment among elites and those in the French macro-economic technocracy that international competition with American and Japanese consumer goods was the only way that French business would remain an important force in the global market (Clift 2003: 183). The outward looking, nationalist project of *grandeur* envisioned in the post-war years by de Gaulle as primarily military in nature was transformed as well during this era, as France's position as a world power now became overtly connected to the success of its multinational corporations. Above all, the end result of Barre's reforms was untangling the state's role in moderating the cycles of unemployment caused by deindustrialization and capital flight – precipitating the downturn of many of France's working class neighborhoods.

Ironically, it would fall to the Socialist Party (PS) to sound the death-knell of post-war state-centered capitalism in France. At first, the election of Socialist president Francois Mitterrand in 1981 and the victory of the United Left Front in the legislature that year indicated increasing public dissatisfaction with D'Estaing's policies and hinted that a reversal might be in order. Initially, Mitterrand's government passed a number of

reforms targeted at expanding dirigisme: increased public sector hires, a reduction of the work week, longer vacations, and an increasingly active industrial policy focused on unemployment reduction. Unfortunately for the socialists, these new measures led to rising capital flight and a considerable trade deficit. These actions also left the franc vulnerable to a massive wave of speculation; it plummeted in value during the early 1980s and was nearly forced out of the European Monetary System (Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb, 2002, p. 565). These global economic pressures proved overwhelming and the government was forced to institute an austerity plan of tax increases and social spending cuts. Liberal monetary policy was reintroduced to an even greater extent than under Barre, a project that might be thought of as a late 20th century Haussmannization of the French regulatory bureaucracy. The measures were envisioned as a form of competitive disinflation under the rubric of a new logic that argued that there was nothing to be done but accept the free play of global market forces. By the mid-1980s, these basic neoliberal tenets were enshrined in the state as a hegemonic, common sense policy regardless of which party was in power.

At the time these measures were dismissed by many – even among the more militant socialists in the government – as technical matters of macroeconomic management outside the purview of most political discourse. But in the end, the legacy of this *pensée unique* (or doctrinaire thinking, as it was termed in technocratic circles) was the creation of sustained, systematic unemployment as the primary anti-inflationary tool and adjustment mechanism of the French economy after 1983. (Clift 2003: 185). In the rapidly deindustrializing urban areas of France, overall unemployment has therefore

skyrocketed from 3.8% in 1975 to 12.9% in 1999 – and in low income urban areas home to immigrants, it has been nearly double these figures (Dikeç, 2007).

It remains true that many aspects of French statism – particularly the welfare state – have been preserved. France’s leaders in both parties have “tip-toed” around efforts to make drastic changes to the welfare state: during the 1990s efforts by ministers Edouard Balladur and Alain Juppé (under the Chirac presidency) to make across the board cuts in pensions and health care were met by the largest street protests since May of 1968, including a six week public sector strike. Other comprehensive efforts at reform have been met with direct protests as recently as 2006, with regards to liberalization of labor laws, and in 2008-2009 for the restructuring the university system and academic research institutions (notably the CNRS). Even the current President Nicolas Sarkozy, dubbed “Sarko the American” by the press for his open admiration of Reaganite and Clintonian economic policy, has proved to be no less timid than his predecessors. If the *Economist*’s editorializing can be taken as a bellwether for the neoliberal orthodoxy in global business, Sarkozy was initially seen as a “reforming juggernaut” whose appointment of a former Baker & McKenzie executive as Finance minister showed “a familiarity with ‘Anglo-saxon’ business culture” (2008a). But after having backed off a host of reforms, and more recently, having been critical of finance capital as a whole since the Wall Street meltdown of 2008, the title of a later article put the question plainly: (“Is a Sarkozy a closet socialist?) citing his declarations that “laissez-faire capitalism is over” and his commitment to create 100,000 state subsidized jobs to avert the crisis (2008b) (Sarkozy’s aggressive and successful campaign of 2010 to reduce pensions appears to an isolated, if meaningful victory, towards neoliberal reform.) Nonetheless, France’s leaders have

historically placed partisan issues and survival over commitments towards neoliberal reform (Levy, 2001). Just as importantly, the real threat of street protests and public sector strikes have made touching the welfare state akin to placing a finger on a live-wire for the French political elite, particularly during moments of recession .

This does not mean, however, that the presence of a welfare state has much to offer the poor residents of northeast Paris, especially those who are foreign-born or even of foreign descent. Indeed, the ethnoracial dimension of France's burgeoning urban poverty has been exacerbated by the structure of its welfare state. As is the case with public housing, such "welfare" policies are often more exclusionary (less public or social, as it were) than one might suppose. As Monica Prasad (2005) has pointed out:

...a larger state does not necessarily mean a political economy that is oriented toward issues of social justice. In tax, welfare, and industrial policy, the French state in the immediate postwar period was oriented not toward social goals, but toward economic growth. France's postwar regime might best be characterized as a strong state put at the service of capital, all in the service of nationalism (p. 358).

It must be remembered that the French welfare state's post-war origin was a product of the same modernization centered dirigisme that also legitimated the colonial "guest worker" program. If the projection of state power on immigrants from the colonies were primarily coercive and disciplinary, even in the matter of housing, welfare was no exception. As has been mentioned in the Introduction, the French welfare state was, and has continued to be, a primarily a middle class centered project, one which redistributes wealth and risk within classes and not between them. It is actually reverse distributive,

because the majority of social spending goes to old age pensions, health, and education, which disproportionately benefits middle classes (Prasad 2005: 391-392). Broken down by pensions for example, the wealthiest 15% of retirees receive 1/3 of all pensions, the next wealthiest 25% receive another 1/3, and the bottom 60% receive 1/3 (Smith, 2004, p. 195). The result has been the creation of a sizable minority which more exposed to the effects of capital flight, deindustrialization provoked by global competition.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 1, the system leaves those of immigrant descent far more exposed to the shifts brought about by globalization than their French origin counterparts. Immigrant origin workers are less likely to be unionized than their French origin counterparts, and are far more likely to be employed on temporary contracts, with the generation of youths born to immigrant parents (*jeunes issus de l'immigration*) being especially vulnerable and faced with 20% unemployment – and 50% percent for Maghrebi youths in particular (Silberman & Fournier, 2006). Overall, documented immigrants (to say nothing of the undocumented), and in particular youth born in France of immigrant origin, inhabit a space of neoliberalization that exists outside of the welfare state, which can be more accurately described as a mechanism of publicly subsidized middle class reproduction.

These forces of government reform have, paradoxically, helped to produce a periphery in the Parisian center. Here the legacies of empire still shape a welfare state supposedly blind to all but a universal humanity, but which is in fact, built upon and enabled by the remnants of an imperial social order built upon class-based and ethno-racial hierarchy.

Northeast Paris' Neighborhoods

When anyone in Paris would ask me where I worked, I often found myself fumbling for lack of a neat, understandable answer. Northeast Paris is not really a specific, well-defined neighborhood, though when a person speaks of Paris “*Nord Est*” one typically knows the area to which she is referring (a new urban redevelopment project termed *Paris Nord Est* may soon ‘fix’ this appellation more tightly). It loosely refers to an area of the city in 18th and 19th arrondissements. When one tries to describe the area to someone else, it becomes clear that one can hardly do so without resorting to negatives or talking around it: saying what northeast Paris is *not*, *next to*, or *in-between*. It lies outside the historic *Paris intra-muros* (that is, Paris’ central core that was enclosed until the mid 19th century) but should *not* be mistaken for a *banlieue* as it is administratively within Paris. Its landscape is not marked stately rows of 2nd empire apartments and boulevards for which Paris is renown but by canals, railroad tracks, bridges, and towering housing projects. It was not host however, to the infamous episode of rioting in 2005 that is now synonymous with the word *banlieue* for many in France, nor do its inhabitants suffer from the level of public sector deprivation impacting transport, schools, and other public goods with which their counterparts in the *banlieue* must content. However, many residents in northeast Paris are extremely poor, and many live in more precarious housing situations than their counterparts in the *banlieue*. This is despite the fact that they live within the administrative limits of a municipality which is overwhelmingly affluent compared to the surrounding *banlieue*.

This ethnographer is hardly the first to wrestle with the area’s liminal status, as the quote supplied by Isaac Joseph earlier in this chapter may suggested. Perhaps this is

why planners and city officials often refer to northeast Paris as a “difficult neighborhood” (*quartier difficile*). Ostensibly used to refer to the difficult social and economic conditions faced by residents who reside there, as this chapter will show, northeast Paris has also been “difficult” for planners to grasp, define, and control. They have sought to “modernize” the area and its inhabitants since the 1960s, through the mass demolition of 19th century apartments and the creation of public housing projects. Police have also found the neighborhood difficult to control. Relative to the other sections of Paris, they have never been able to fully rid its streets and public spaces of a booming illegal drug economy that emerged soon after the factory closings that occurred in the 1970s, despite maintaining a constant and imposing presence in the area. Finally, residents themselves – particularly activists – have also found the neighborhoods difficult liminal status both a complication and impetus for organizing. For example, one promotional flyer distributed by the AJE (the Association Jardins d’Éole) described themselves fighting for “a space of life for the Parisians who live across the entire sector from La Chapelle and Stalingrad to Château Landon to Crimée, in order to give these neighborhoods a sense of unity and identity.” In asserting the need for a “space of life”, this declaration invoked a list of neighborhood names (La Chapelle, Stalingrad, etc.) composing the sector and demanding a sense of solidarity. In many respects the AJE activists resembled their stated adversaries, who they described as “authoritarian urban planners”, in that they too were engaged in attempting to remake this periphery into a neighborhood.



Figure 9: Hand-drawn map of northeast Paris, circa 1990s. The central area marked as *Gare Aux Marchandises* is the current site of the Jardins d'Éole. Taken from *Plan du centre de Paris à vol d'oiseau*, by Georges Peltier and Blondel la Rougery, ©2001.

La Chapelle/Marx Dormoy

Though the heart of La Chapelle – near the Basilique Saint Jean-de-Arc and central square called the Place de Torcy – has retained much of its quaint charm from its days as a *fauborg*, it is surrounded, choked – “resserré” in the poetry of Aymé -- on all sides by either urban renewal, factory walls, or railroads. Of the nearly 50% of La Chapelle’s built environment that was constructed before the Second World War, much of it is concentrated in its older village core near the basilique. In contrast, the areas to the north, near the fortification of Thiers, were cleared to make room for HBM in the interwar period, and railways for the eastern and northern railroad networks. Other than

the Rue de Marx Dormoy and near the Le Église Saint-Bernard de La Chapelle, where bourgeois apartments were built in the classic Haussmann style, the majority of the housing has been low quality construction, over-crowded, and occupied by the working class and poor.

By the late 1800s, the area had developed a concentration of inexpensive, but often insalubrious hotels, furnished apartments, and boarding houses for successive waves of migrant workers, the earliest waves of which came from throughout the French provinces. By the early 20th century, the successive groups included Belgians, Italians, Poles and Spanish immigrants. As early as 1932, Léon Paul Fargue (2001) described “groups of foreign workers roving about in the shadow of the elevated metro” (pp. 22-23) at boulevard de la Chapelle, who lived precarious and delicate lives since a constant threat loomed: the possible refusal of work permits or of identity cards. In the 1950s, thanks largely to guest worker programs waves of workers from the Maghreb (whose families still make up a significant part of the neighborhood) began to arrive in substantial numbers. The shops and cafes along Rue de Riquet still play a role as a social center for many first through third generation Maghrebi-origin residents. Others from the former colonies, especially the West African countries of Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Mali, and Burkina Faso followed; many live along Rue de Pajol where cafes such as L’Autorail (itself a remnant of the neighborhood’s past) provide important gathering spots. In recent years, a Chinese community has developed around an epicenter of restaurants and markets on Rue de Torcy, while a sizable Tamil community has developed along the Rues Department, Girard, and Marx Dormoy. The temple *Sri Manicka*, on Rue Philippe de Girard, has become one of Paris’ most important Hindu

centers and organizes parades and public gatherings in the neighborhood on holidays. Currently, one in four of La Chapelle's residents was born overseas (this number does not, of course, count the numerous residents *issue d'immigration* nor undocumented immigrants), making it one of Paris' most culturally diverse areas and anything but a ghetto, as it is often described in media representations.

While La Chapelle has long been one of Paris' poorer neighborhoods, the decline of the areas industry and rail infrastructure has taken an especially difficult toll. Between 1962 and 1999, industrial jobs in Paris declined from 575,000 to 134,000, a 77% decrease (Pinçon, 2004, p. 58). By the 1980s, a number of iconic centers of employment closed their doors (not to mention numerous small anonymous firms), including the gazomètres of the city of Paris on Rue d'Évangile, the SNCF's facilities for Messageries et Douane and the Gare aux Marchandises, which would later become the ZAC Pajol and the Jardins d'Éole respectively. The loss of jobs, combined with family reunifications drawing guest workers' wives and children, created a "perfect storm" of global, economic forces for the development of harsh social conditions in La Chapelle. Now the neighborhood has a population that is among the capital's youngest (24% are under 18, compared with Paris' average of 18%) and an unemployment rate of 19% (Paris' average is 12%). A fifth of the neighborhood' households are described as "foyers à bas revenus" and 10% receive RMI; both rates are twice the Paris averages (APUR 2010).

Nevertheless, like many *quartiers difficiles* in Paris, La Chapelle has also experienced gentrification and a minor real estate boom. Newcomers have been especially attracted to quaint areas around the Place de Torcy and a historic covered market: the Marché de La Chapelle. On one hand, La Chapelle and its surroundings have

the lowest property values in the 18th arrondissement, averaging about 4300 € /m², roughly 1000 € lower than the area as a whole (the Paris average is about 6000 € /m²). However, between 2004-2009, prices have increased over 50% (compared to 40% in Paris as a whole). Within the neighborhood itself, the most valued real estate has generally been in the core of the old village itself, where prices are just below 5000 € /m² while along Rue Pajol and Riquet, closer to the former rail yards, prices hover in lower 4000 € /m² range. In general, the neighborhood's status as an enclave surrounded by rail infrastructure (combined with less than advantageous transit connections) seems likely to keep it from experiencing the type of gentrification seen in trendier parts of the city; the Goutte d'Or, just to the west, has experienced higher prices increases and is noticeably popular with a younger 'hip' segment of newcomers (CLAMEUR 2008; CNP 2011).

Many residents' perceptions of these conditions and their "sense of neighborhood" are magnified by the enclave-like setting of La Chapelle, surrounded by rail tracks and factory walls. These sentiments, present in Aymé's 1936 prose quoted before, remain an important part of the neighborhood's identity: the first time I attended a local association meeting, I was immediately taken to a wall mounted map and the encirclement of the neighborhood by railroad tracks was explained as both a source of environmental degradation and solidarity. The residents continue to celebrate an annual fete de La Chapelle at Place de Torcy (a tradition that extends at least as early as the early 19th century, likely longer) and a vibrant associative culture has taken root in the area. Much associative literature and imagery is saturated by a discourse linked to *Paris fauborg*: a return to communal, in some ways, pre-modern forms of sociality and community, a kind

of imaginary France of the pre-war era (the sociologist, Chalvon-Demersay, has created a rich ethnography on such nostalgia amongst the Parisian middle class²).

Such accounts can also be juxtaposed with a less celebratory interpretation of the neighborhood's enclave status. One activist and association founder – whose organization would become an important actor in the development of the Jardins d'Éole – explained the name of her organization (*Cactus*) to me: “This neighborhood is like a desert, but the cactus that grows here has sharp needles so people are scared to put their hands on it!” In this view, in contrast to the idyllic village, the neighborhood is a resource starved place where associations survive off minimal means and require “spines” to keep the interests of more powerful forces away (the group was originally founded to contest a massive public/private development known as the ZAC Pajol). La Chapelle thus has a kind of dual existence in the eyes of its residents and association members – it can either be viewed as an oasis of community or the urban equivalent of a desert ecosystem where only tough and resourceful organisms can survive.

The contrasting image of the neighborhood as resource-starved and yet strongly bonded around locally oriented solidarities has allowed a vibrant associative dynamic to take root. In one vein, a group of associations tied closely with the local *Regie du Quartier* (a national association linking low-income residents to public services) managed to procure an abandoned school from the city of Paris to use as a meeting space for language classes, dance lessons, and youth-oriented activities. Indeed a major constellation of activity has emerged around youth oriented groups because of the sheer number of children facing difficulty in the neighborhood. Youth associations have a long history of providing a structure of extra schooling and leisure activity for the

neighborhood. A group of associations also emerged to provide a way to connect the neighborhood's large population of intravenous drug users to addiction treatment centers. Finally, a movement emerged in the 1990s to address the issue of air pollution caused by railway activities; specifically, pressure was placed upon the national railroad to convert their utility locomotives to electric from diesel. All of these issues would become significant in the residents' demand for the Jardins d'Éole, including the isolated nature of La Chapelle itself.

Flandre-Aubervilliers -- Stalingrad

If La Chapelle can be described as quaint and preserved, the area on other side of the proverbial railroad tracks (later to become partially replaced by the Jardins d'Éole), Flandre-Aubervilliers, is an example of continual construction, destruction, and reconstruction. It is the anti-thesis of museumified Paris where generations of urbanists have been active in wiping the area's past clean in favor of each epoch's visions of an ideal urban future. Even the name of the area is indeterminate and unfixed: it is variously known as "Flandre-Aubervilliers", "Curial-Tanger", or "Tanger-Maroc". The name "Stalingrad" is used as well, but is frequently deployed in contexts where questions of drug use and delinquency are being invoked (the name, in honor of the battle, was assigned by local Communist Party deputies (PCF) to a public space along the canal after World War II). In many respects, the area is a "neighborhood between neighborhoods" lacking the strong identity of other economically and socially comparable "quartier populaires" such as the Goutte d'Or and Belleville.

Though the area was urbanized by the 20th century, 75% of it has been reconstructed anew since 1948. Many of these areas would be demolished after World War II (or in it, as the rail infrastructure in the area was, unlike the rest of Paris, targeted by the Allies). The razing of the area would be most pronounced in post-war years however: of all the industrial space that was demolished in Paris between 1954 and 1974, roughly 25% of the total (1.2 of about 5 million square meters) was razed in the 19th and 20th arrondissements alone (Pinol 1996, p. 62): in many cases monumental industrial sites were replaced by equally imposing grands ensembles. Notably, the complex known as the Orgues de Flandre, built by Martin van Treeck between 1974-1980, covers 6 hectares, contains the highest residential building in Paris, and houses over 8,000 inhabitants. Indeed, to walk across the area to review the history of French social housing, beginning with 1920's era HBM near the boulevard MacDonald (at Paris' extreme north limit), through the monumental "Orgues" of the 1970s, to the small-scale gated communities completed in 2008 at Passage Goix. Not surprisingly, population densities are extremely high here – averaging around 750 and at times approaching 1000 per hectare (Paris' average is 201 per hectare). The older housing that has yet to be demolished is marked by small dwellings averaging 40 m² (City of Paris 2003a); one in five of the neighborhood's total housing units is deemed 'sans confort', and when one eliminates the social housing, the rate is much higher (APUR 2010). The neighborhood is thus one of extremes – towering monoliths of modernist social housing stand like hulks amongst masses of decaying, century old apartment buildings.

Like much of northeast Paris, the neighborhood has long been a destination for migrant workers. In keeping the pattern seen in La Chapelle, waves of European

immigrants gave way to Maghrebi immigrants in the 1950s. Rue Caillié and Rue d'Aubervilliers become an important center for "guest workers" from North Africa; on Rue d'Aubervilliers the principal halal butcher, and several residence hotels which are still open today were established during the 1950s. At the corner of Rue Bellot and Rue de Tanger, a dormitory for male workers was established which has a traditional market where West African men congregate to sell traditional crafts, clothing, DVDs, and soft drinks. Families from throughout West Africa began to arrive in large numbers during the early 1980s and established markets and restaurants alongside their Maghrebi counterparts on the Rues d'Aubervilliers, du Maroc, and Bellot. Today, social centers between the two populations are often segregated between tea salons catering to North Africans and several bars and brasseries, which are frequented by West African workers (though both visit the same mosque). In addition, the Rue du Maroc also has a Chinese cultural center, though few Chinese residents live in the neighborhood (most visit the center from La Chapelle, or the far side of the Bassin de la Villette). 20% of the area is foreign born, with the vast majority of immigrants being Maghrebi and Sub-Saharan Africans (City of Paris 2003a; APUR 2010).

The neighborhood also lies directly in the middle of an axis of development that has emerged in the last ten years, stretching from Canal St. Martin past La Villette, to the Stade de France, in St-Denis. In the northern section of arrondissement, an important urban renewal zone or GPRU (*Grand Projet de Renouveau Urbain*) is located at Porte d'Aubervilliers, and just beyond it in the cities of Aubervilliers and St-Denis, some of the largest redevelopment projects in the Ile-de-France are expected to be completed within the next 10 years (the project, termed *Paris Nord Est*, will entail a complete

remaking of the Paris/banlieue boundary, and is described in further detail in Chapter 5). This corridor of development follows the Canal d'Ourcq into Paris, passing the Parc de la Villette, which arguably marked the beginning of the area's transformation in the 1980s, to a ZAC zone called Bassin de la Villette, where the rotunde de La Villette, the Place de Stalingrad, and nearby areas were renovated in the mid 2000's (an large cinema was opened at the site in 2005). In the heart of the neighborhood, bordering on the Jardins d'Éole (itself accounted 4.5 hectares of redevelopment) the small streets of Caillié and Goix are undergoing renovation of 2010, while another large renovation, covers multiple blocks south of Rue du Maroc, between Flandre and Rue d'Aubervilliers. Finally, the entire area north Riquet until the Porte d'Aubervilliers has been designate a special "urban policy area".

Much of this redevelopment has driven considerable property value increases, with Curial/Tanger seeing increases above 50% over the least five years (compared to a Paris average of 40%). Unlike La Chapelle which has a fairly tight concentration of apartments which are desirable for buyers, private buildings in Flandre-Aubervilliers are spread erratically throughout the neighborhood's modernist *cités*. Other than a concentration of higher priced properties near the Bassin de La Vilette which touch or exceed 5000 €/m², most property sells between 4000 €/m² and 4700 €/m² depending the physical condition of a given building. Prices can see-saw wildly in this area: a new construction on Passage Goix is estimated at above 6000 €/m², while a particularly decrepit property on Rue de Aubervilliers is more likely to command around 3700 €/m². Nevertheless property here remains cheap in general, with an average value of about 4600 €/m² (well below Paris' average of 6000 €/m²). In comparison, prices on the

southern side of the Boulevard de La Chapelle (long considered a border by real estate brokers) regularly demand 1000 €/m² more, though these areas have not quite seen the same percentage of recent appreciation as Flandre-Aubervilliers (CLAMEUR 2008; CNP 2011).

Despite such market fluctuations – and even numerous urban interventions throughout the neighborhood’s history – the area remains thought of as a *quartier difficile*. Indeed, nearly a century after the time when “At all hours of the day, teams of workers stand in long lines for lunch outside of the cafes” (Pinol 2001, p.21), Flandre-Aubervilliers has become more characterized by the presence of its “*précariat*” than any proletariat. With the abbatoirs of La Villette and the many railway operations now long departed, unemployment remains high. 18% of the neighborhood is unemployed, and nearly 25% of its households are documented as *foyers à bas revenue* (low income). Over 10% of the households receive housing assistance or RMI. When combined with the high number of children in the neighborhood (33% percent of the population is under 25, compared to a Paris average of about 26%) one can see that, like La Chapelle, a combination of factors conspire here for social *precarité*. But unlike La Chapelle, Flandre-Aubervilliers’s population is much more densely packed into the neighborhood, either in large social housing complexes (which some residents feel stifles neighborliness and community solidarity) or in decrepit apartments where large families are forced to occupy a great deal of space with little in the way of amenities (including no running water or indoor bathrooms). For these reasons, the need for housing and public space, as green space, as well as shared ‘community space’ (especially for children) was viewed as particularly acute among inhabitants.

These difficult social conditions, combined with the presence of a large population of immigrant descent, has made the area of magnet for media representations which frequently articulate national level anxieties related to cultural assimilation and delinquency. No less an observer than *Le Monde* described one of the neighborhood's grands ensembles as a "tower of babel" of ethnic strife, a theme that frequently appears in media representation of the area. Despite the irony of using a biblical allusion to invoke an anti-republican specter such "communautés", the article described the place in following terms: "The residents of the foreign melting pot that is the *cité Michelet* is torn between the instinct to battle for one's own territory, and the need to break the isolation and stick together" (Simon, 2007). It was as if in the biblical story, in which the *urbanism itself* – the building of a neighborhood on such a large scale – led to social fragmentation. The term "étrange melting pot" (originally *entrance* melting pot) even created an anti-republican image for the neighborhood as fundamentally non-French, not only in ethnic make-up, but in its forms of sociality and solidarities that appeared more "anglo-saxon" and "multiculturalist". Similar reports have appeared in a number of national-level periodicals.

Residents of the area are highly aware of this process and have responded by organizing themselves on several fronts. On one hand there was an attempt to confront very real problems stemming from a lack of familiarity amongst neighbors in social housing, and on the other, to revindicate the image of the neighborhood that had been so heavily damaged in the press. Youths have played an important role in this process. In one example a group of young people from the Cité Michelet calling itself "Brave Garçons de Afrique" (BGA) harnessed the appeal of hip-hop for neighborhood youth and

channeled it towards association politics (see Chapter 3). Another group, calling itself “One Community”, was created to facilitate solidarity and “neighborliness” in the area’s buildings, often by creating spaces for children of the neighborhood’s diverse ethnic groups to play amongst each other and build friendships from early ages. “One Community” played a special role in creating shared gardens in some of the HLM buildings on Rue Maroc which draw children throughout the neighborhood for organized activities. The trend has grown popular in the area, and now, one can find community gardens tucked in various spaces around Avenue de Flandre and Rue Riquet. Both groups would participants in the process to plan and manage the usage of the Jardins d’Éole.

An even stronger call for a renewed public space was linked to the rise of a neighborhood movement against the trafficking of illegal drugs. By the early 2000s, it had become well known that the quartier of ‘Stalingrad’ -- specifically the Place de Stalingrad and the Rue d’Aubervilliers – was, according to Roger Madec, mayor of the 19th arrondissement, “one of the most important sites of drug peddling and consumption in Paris”³. In 2002 alone, there were an estimated 771 drug related arrests in Stalingrad, which according to police, had comparable rates of crime to nearby neighborhoods, with the glaring exception of drug violations and criminal activity directly linked to narcotics trafficking.⁴ An outcry by residents led to a citizen’s panel being created, endorsed by the 19th arrondissement with input by local associations as well as outside experts, such as the sociologist and public health expert, Anne Coppel. While panel members perceived the roots of the drug problem in broad terms, (“problems linked to drugs are undeniably born of deplorable social condition endured by too many of our residents”)⁵, a heavy emphasis was placed on the question of urbanism⁶. As with the question of promoting

increased sociality and solidarity in the cités, the remaking of these areas was linked to creating a “real neighborhood” space. Such concerns would be central to the demand to build the Jardins d’Éole.

Conclusion: the historical making of an urban and social predicament

In tracing northeast Paris’ construction as an urban hinterland, this chapter revisited a series of moments of local and national development, beginning with the area’s urbanization as a whole, and continuing through the post-war industrial and public housing boom, and finally, the post-industrial rise of neoliberal policies. By studying the reproduction of this areas as national and urban ‘hinterland’ over time, this chapter highlighted the interlinked connections between the center/periphery trope and the Paris/banlieue, French/immigrant complex of dichotomies. Not only is this formulation over-simplistic, but more profoundly, it conceals important processes which constitute the social and the spatial order in the present moment. The urban fabric – and urban politics – of northeast Paris are largely an expression of this predicament. For these reasons, the status of the neighborhood as a “hinterland” played a paradoxical role. On one hand, it has provided both an oppressive backdrop – an urban expression – of the social forces structuring the exploitation of residents. On the other hand, the area’s status as a “zone behind” that is often overlooked and ill-defined made it an opportune place to mobilize in ways that defied and tested many republican norms. These conditions would make northeast Paris an ideal place for residents to experiment with news forms of solidarity linking the urban to the economic, national, cultural, and global.

¹ 1 in 5 people born in France have at least one immigrant parent or grandparent; when great-grand parents are factored in, the ratio rises to 1 in 3 (Noiriel 1996: xii) (even President Sarkozy's father is of Hungarian origin). The trend has only accelerated since the First World War; by 1930 France had the highest rate of foreign-born residents in the world (515 per 100,000 inhabitants compared by 492 in the United States) (ibid 5). As late as 1975, 12-14% of French residents were of recent foreign origin, as compared to 5% in the United States (ibid 6). Noiriel concludes his study by stating that despite popular rhetoric to the contrary, immigration in France has been at least as important as immigration in the United States, particularly over the last three generations (ibid). The over privileging of the center/periphery framework when describing northeast Paris (and other immigrant neighborhoods) is a spatial corollary to the "writing out" of immigration of from French national historiography that is has been described by Silberman (2007) and Noiriel (1996).

² Chalvon-Demersay, Sabine. *Le Triangle du XIVe: Des Nouveaux habitants dans un vieux quartier de Paris*. Éditions de la Maison des Sciences d l'Homme, Paris.

³ "Lettre de Mission du Mairie du 19e arrondissement" from "Panel citoyen – Mieux vivre à Stalingrad". Mairie du 19e arrondissement, 2002.

⁴ Panel citoyen – Mieux vivre à Stalingrad". Mairie du 19e arrondissement, 2002. pp. 13

⁵ Panel citoyen – Mieux vivre à Stalingrad". Mairie du 19e arrondissement, 2002. pp. 35

⁶ Specifically, the panel identified the role of built environment, noting "*The degraded habitat is directly associated with the drug problem ... drug dealing can take root in the alleys, main streets, and our common spaces*" (emphasis original). The panel placed special attention to the question of "habitat" in a broad sense, including degraded housing (three of the area's squats were major concern) but especially public spaces such as streets and general gathering places. The panel went on to mark a central goal of the proceedings in somewhat abstract terms. "*The objective is to remake this neighborhood into a "real neighborhood"*" (emphasis original) noted a panel speaker, who listed three places of special attention: "the insalubrious habitat", "squats" and the "vacant lots". According to the plan, the reconstruction of several specific places held the key to this goal, including the rehabilitation of the "Cour de Maroc" (the abandoned rail road facility later to become the Jardins d'Éole). The implicit theory behind the plan was that by remaking the spaces, activities within them could be transformed as well, and moreover, there was a direct link between the degraded nature of Stalingrad's urban fabric and the proliferation of drug use and activity within the neighborhood.

Chapter 3: Contested republicanisms: Place, culture, and politics in northeast Paris

In this chapter, I demonstrate how republicanism – a set of discourses framing citizenship and cultural belonging in France – is contested and remade in the everyday politics of Paris’ northeastern neighborhoods. I focus on the place-based politics (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Low, S., & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003) embedded in the discourses and practices of urban planners, policy makers, journalists and activists, which I argue are mobilized to appropriate and redefine the meaning of urban spaces in northeast Paris. Indeed, I show that competing notions of place are a significant way that republicanism is contested in Paris in the realm of everyday politics. Place is significant for the politics of cultural belonging in France because it provides a legitimate way of discussing difference, multiculturalism, or *mixité sociale* that is otherwise absent in republican politics. For this reason, the debates I describe in this chapter are not simply contestation over the re-making of urban spaces in northeast Paris, but over the definition of republicanism and therefore France’s self-image as a nation.

The better part of this chapter is concerned with northeast Paris’ neighborhood level politics since the early 1990s, with the aim of demonstrating how concerns over the changing ethnic and racial make-up of the French nation manifested themselves in contestations over urban space. Before speaking about Paris in particular, however, I will begin with the national and even global processes that frame and belie the origins of contemporary neighborhood politics. These historical and political shifts have constituted the scale of the local or of ‘the neighborhood’ as a space where these broader politics are

contested. When I speak of Parisian ‘neighborhood politics’ I therefore mean global and national politics expressed through the spatial idiom of Parisian neighborhoods; I do not mean – and am adamantly opposed to the very idea of – the neighborhood as a shorthand that is oppositional to – and detached from – the global or the national scales. I also show how this urban, spatially oriented approach offers a new perspective of politics of pluralism and republicanism as it commonly framed by anthropologists studying France.

The End of the “Glorious Thirty” and the Cultural (and Class) Politics of Republicanism

Ironically, France’s rightwards shift towards exclusionary forms of national belonging has been most responsible for the significance of local politics in Paris’ immigrant districts. While the origins of the modern right in France can be traced back to the Dreyfus Affair and the loss of the Franco-Prussian War (Fysh 1998), the more recent emergence what Mustafa Dikeç (2007) has termed “republican nationalism” has its origins in the 1970s. This decade saw the dramatic end of *Les Trente Glorieuses* (The Glorious Thirty) – demographer Jean Fourastié’s (1979) term for France’s 30 year period of post-war population growth, economic expansion, and a rising standard of living – and the beginning of a wave of currency devaluation, near economic stagnancy, and high structural unemployment characterizing the French economy to the present day. The economic bust had wide-ranging reverberations for France, but the onset of the OPEC crisis had the immediate effect of ending guest-worker immigration from the former African colonies (though family reunifications were still allowed) (Fysh & Wolfreys, 2003; Hargreaves, 1995, 2007). The loss of jobs in industry – where many guest workers

were employed – was already well underway at this time; between 1962-1995 industrial employment in France fell just over 13% (Lee, 2005).

These developments set the stage for two connected trends since the 1970s that would have direct bearing on the emerging politics of ethnoracial and cultural difference in France. First, a general atmosphere of social and political malaise among France's middle classes related to what Robert Castel (Castel, 1995) called "insécurité sociale" (fears of downwards mobility and lost privilege) and second, the development of a large surplus labor pool amongst the population of former "guest worker" immigrants and their descendents. This population, which was formerly dependent on jobs in construction and manufacturing, now composes part of France's growing "*precariat*" (Wacquant, 2008) - a flexibly employed class of service sector workers whose low-wage jobs lack both benefits and long-term prospects for advancement or continuous employment. If France's immigrant descended population can be viewed as victims of end of the 30 year boom, politicians' across the political spectrum were quick to deploy the opposite analysis in the 1970s, casting France's West African and Maghrebi origin minorities as the reason for the economic crisis¹.

Since the 1990s, anxieties over "immigration", "assimilation", and "integration" have dovetailed with the emergence of a discursive formation unifying monocultural, essentialized notions of Frenchness with constitutionally rooted, legalized frameworks of citizenship and political participation.² Influenced by the Islamic headscarf affair of 1989 and the subsequent *Haute Conseil à l'Intégration* (HCI) report (1995), political parties on the left and right developed a consensus around several key themes with regards to the political recognition of cultural diversity in France; first and foremost, that there should

be none³. This inherently paradoxical idea, that the state sees only individuals, not “groups” or “minorities”, and yet, still sees an essentialized “French society” marks the anti-communitarian impulse of the republican nationalism that emerged in 1990s (Dikeç 2007). In a sharp contrast to American multiculturalism (indeed, French republicanism is often explicitly formulated as a contrast to so-called “Anglo-Saxon” categories of race and ethnicity), this is a discourse in which the political claims of meaning of “minorities” or even “communities” are either absent altogether or deployed only in a menacing light. This incarnation of republicanism plays a discursive role, strengthening the French nation-state dyad to the extent that within the borders of state there is no other identity other than of France; one is either French or an “immigrant”, any attempt at a “hyphenation” is an attack by the latter on the former.

However, outside of national-level discourses – at the level of everyday life and street politics in Northeast Paris – “actually existing republicanism”, to borrow a term from Mustafa Dikeç (2007), is a decidedly less monolithic, less concerned with anxieties over Europeaness or Frenchness, and is neither oriented towards cultural fundamentalism or neo-racism. “Actually existing republicanism”, unlike the carefully worded language of policy briefs and official decrees, is an inherently instable set of assumptions and criteria defining the political legitimacy of mobilizations and movements in the eyes of elected officials and constituent populations. It is not that the essentialist strictures of the HCI are irrelevant in these notions of legitimacy – as we shall see the discourse of arrondissement and neighborhood-level politics is suffused with republican language and ideology. However, the day-to-day realities of grassroots political action in northeast Paris (where the vast majority of residents are of non-European descent) requires a

different kind of republicanism. Indeed, from the standpoint of local politics in Northeast Paris, the HCI does not actually represent republicanism in a lived form, but appears more akin to a nationalist fantasy that policy making elites, far removed the actual day-to-day to realities of poor, multi-ethnic France, wish or believe to exist (even though the careers of some national-level political figures are closely tied to northeast Paris' street politics). As I argue in the following pages, 'actually existing republicanism' in Northeast Paris is shaped by – but frequently contrary to – both nationalistic articulations of republicanism, and its often cited Manichean opposite: “anglo-saxon” multiculturalism. Grassroots politics is an arena where residents play with both of these opposing ideas – often based on political pragmatism as opposed to ideological zeal – and in doing so gesture towards (though perhaps not fully articulating) “third ways” of negotiating cultural diversity and identity in France.

Place and Mixité Sociale: The Spatial Politics of Diversity and Inclusion in Northeast Paris

In order to understand why questions of space become important in the 1990s for northeast Paris residents, one must examine how nationalist ideologies of republicanism impacted the area in literally concrete terms. Urban policy in the 1980s was important in the 18th and 19th arrondissements because it provoked a radical reshaping of these neighborhoods, thus providing a direct impetus for a set of political concerns uniting spatial and cultural difference with class inequality. As we shall see, residents' vocabularies of place were frequently the orientation or discursive maneuver that made such arguments “legitimate” (often just barely) in the eyes of elected officials and the

local political establishment (which remains close to the wider Socialist establishment in France).

Ironically, the use of a discourse of place to speak about generalized social alterity (in contrast to speaking about class, but especially cultural difference or “race”) has its origins not in grassroots politics but in elite urban policy circles. Mustafa Dikeç, in his excellent history of the social construction of the banlieue through urban policy (2007), has examined the rise of a nationwide urban policy in response to the first series of banlieue uprisings in the early 1980s. These policies – and the vast majority of national level policy since then – have been based around the creation of specific spaces as “problem areas” or “zones”. The specific policy nomenclature for zones, and the initiatives themselves, varied widely depending the program, from ZACs , *Zone d’Aménagement Concerté*, (zones of intensive development), to ZRUs, *Zone de Redynamisation Urbaine* - zone of urban redynamization) to ZUS (*Zone Urbaine Sensible* – sensitive urban zones). This discourse linking ‘zones’ to alterity has a long history in France⁴; “problem areas” quickly percolated into popular culture (primarily through news media coverage and an expansive genre of banlieue films), making “zone” a stigmatizing identifier for residents, who might be called *zonards* (literally, “zoners”). But moreover, as Dikeç shows, the urban policy agenda, in parallel to the rise of nationalist forms of republicanism, grew more oriented towards surveillance and policing, helping to shift understandings of low income areas “from neighborhoods in danger to dangerous neighborhoods” (2007:93), and normalizing republican values through urbanization.

While the vast majority of “policy neighborhoods” are in France’s outlying banlieues, the Goutte d’Or neighborhood in northern Paris was one of the first such areas to be designated in France, and currently, six of the nine special policy zones (ZUSs) in Paris itself are located within a kilometer of the Jardins d’Éole. The Goutte d’Or merits special mention because it was conceived as a problem area from the beginnings of the “zone” programs in 1980s, and because it has long been symbolic – perhaps even the prototypical example – of an immigrant “enclave” providing a vision of dangerous yet alluring exoticism in the Parisian imaginary (Bacqué and Fijalkow 2007; Milliot and Tastevin 2010). A 1991 *Le Monde* article, itself part of flurry of interest generated by the policy-driven renovation of the Goutte d’Or, illustrates this tension by juxtaposing charming images of its “cafés” and “pâtisseries orientales” with, in the 1989 wake of the Islamic headscarf affair, a less consumable, more threatening picture of non-assimilated exoticism (Bernard, 1991). Quoting Benjamin Stora, one of France’s most well known historians of Algeria, a description is provided of the immigrant experience in the Goutte d’Or:

He [the immigrant] is confined from the outset in a very limited Paris... a sliver of space abandoned by the Parisians; it imposes and reinforces a set of mores and lifestyles. He keeps the meaning and benefits of the local community which was his birthplace. Entrenched in his housing-hotel, which often opens on to a courtyard sometimes inhabited by people of the same *dou’ar* , he does not have to leave this neighborhood that has become his new village. (quoted in Bernard: 1991)

In many ways the classic narrative of the immigrant enclave, Stora's quote also epitomizes of the neo-colonial hubris underpinning the rebuilding of the Goutte d'Or itself. The space of the neighborhood itself is differentiated as a Paris apart from that of the "Parisians". It is seen as "confining", "imposing", and "reinforcing" "mores and lifestyles". Moreover, it is a space which "is a very limited Paris" geographically, but also in terms of worldview and civilization: with verbs such as "entrenchment", he invokes the vision of the "housing-hotel" with its ambiguously public/private space of courtyard, inhabited by people of the same, pre-modern *dou'ar*: a Maghrebi Arabic word meaning both "world" and "village".

Urban policy zones were proposed as a solution to address a problem combining the urban with the national. It was these "urban villages", and housing-hotels in particular, that were the target of urban renewal, funded by national level urban policy initiatives throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As an adjoint-mayor of Marseille stated (it along with Paris and Lyon are the primary French cities to have large immigrant enclaves in the urban core) the strategy is one of "*reconquête*" (reconquest). "We are applying a strategy of encirclement", he said, pointing out that in addition to new infrastructure and housing, "student dormitories are expected here, which will provoke a new influx of populations... we would like to make a neighborhood like the others" (emphasis added, Andre 1991). In the Goutte d'Or, by 2000, an estimated 1400 housing units had been destroyed with 870 new units constructed (Bernard 2000), along with a host of public facilities including new child care center, community athletic facilities, a library, a police station - and dormitories.

However, in Paris' 18th arrondissement, despite the scale of renovation underway in Goutte d'Or, a decidedly more ambiguous and fraught attitude was displayed about the role the area's future than in Marseille, where renovation was explicitly linked to a cleansing of the "urban body politic" (Harvey, 2003). The then-arrondissement mayor, Alain Juppé, a future Prime Minister under Chirac and part an influential "gang of 18" (the "*bande du 18*") of elected officials whose career were launched in the district, compared the remaking of the Goutte d'Or unfavorably to central Marseille, saying "I need to conserve the neighborhoods' '*aspect populaire*' " – an euphemistic expression for "working class aspect" that is ethnically ambiguous in this context (Andre, 1991). Michel Neyreneuf, the adjoint-Mayor of the arrondissement responsible for housing and urban planning, stated that one of the goals of the renovation was to "keep the people in their place... families need to be rehoused because of problems with overcrowding" and that "we try to mix the populations... there have always been opulent neighborhoods and working class neighborhoods [*quartiers populaires*], the objective of *mixité sociale* is not to erase that reality, but to mitigate it" ("Logement social : politique et objectifs dans le 18e arrondissement - dixhuitinfo.com - l'actualité du 18e arrondissement de Paris," n.d.). This definition of *mixité sociale* is based in many respects on a formulation of republicanism that seeks to control, "mitigate" and contain "difference" through housing policy. *Mixité sociale* represents a highly republican way to speak about difference by valorizing a controlled version of diversity without actually giving lip service to any specific group. Nonetheless, there is a recognition in Neyreneuf's focus on the neighborhood that "difference" (ambiguously framed around either class, culture or race) gives the neighborhood a distinctiveness that should remain. Other arrondissement

officials have been more explicit about what *mixité sociale* can mean: “This is a traditional place of welcome for immigration; it is also home to middle class apartments as well, but it is not turning into a new yuppie neighborhood [*quartier bobo*]⁵.” (Caresche quoted in Chenay, 2002). Even more interestingly, the politicians embracing these changes are central figures in the national level power structure of France: The *bande du 18* included Lionel Jospin (a future Prime Minister under Chirac), Daniel Vaillant (future Minister of the Interior), Bertrand Delanoë (future Mayor of Paris), and Claude Estier (future of head Senate Socialists)

This policy has provoked bitter recriminations by some who view it as anti-republican. Romain, a long time activist in the Goutte d’Or and La Chapelle neighborhoods, surprised me with his views on urban policy in the area. One afternoon, while discussing France’s colonial history, the retired professor of French (specializing in French literary treatments of North Africa) and Socialist party stalwart grew agitated while staring out the window of his Haussmann-era apartment, which overlooked the beautiful 19th century Church of St. Bernard de La Chappelle. “This neighborhood has become a place of *autogestion*, of *laissez-faire* controlled by the associations” he said, referring to recent moves by the Delanoë administration to create specific forums or “neighborhood councils” for association leaders to meet with elected officials. I asked him to clarify what he meant by *autogestion* and *laissez-faire*, and his answer was illuminating as an example of republican fears of “*mixité sociale*” (often articulated as *ghettöisation*):

Romain: The Left here mixes it up a bit, manages its interests, it’s an opportunistic Left which has in its head a ghetto ideology, to let go, of autogestion. It’s above all the post-

colonized, the Maghrebis, the Africans, some Asians, but mainly the Maghrebis and Africans. Here, it's the Algerians essentially, at least over at Barbès [one of the main public spaces and open air markets of the neighborhood] it's the Algerians, and now more Africans. So, it the post-colonized who seize upon the politics of the colonizers. That's to say, it's not a nostalgia for colonialism, it's a habit, or if you prefer, a neurosis, a historic French neurosis... a post-colonial neurosis! It is manifested, created, mis-en-scène, as the French ghetto. The French ghetto of Barbès is a prototype! But it's not the only one! All the banlieue are in this post-colonial ideology. ... Now as for Mr. [N] he was the founder of an association, he worked in more than 20 years in an association, it's he who brought the ghetto politics here, the ghettoization.

Andrew: And what are some examples of ghettoization?

Romain: Well ghettoization is characterized by concentration, it's the same policy that was enacted in Algeria. As for this urban policy, it's the policy of ethnic containment, a policy followed in all of the countries colonized by France, I know it very well from Morocco, I was in a little city, and it had a pretty beach that was forbidden for the Arabs, and a part of the city where the Arabs were forbidden. Now it's the opposite, our ghetto is forbidden for whites, for French. That's to say, several times when I spoke to the police about these problems I'm talking about right now, ghettoization, the policeman responded: "Well sir, you are French, do you live in this neighborhood? If you are not happy you should leave". That's our policy, as I understand it. You have the concentration of social housing. 35% of the housing is social just in this part of the 18th alone and zero percent in Montmartre! There isn't any in Abbesses!

*Andrew: Ok. But that's social housing, that's just a concentration of poor people right?
So how's the ethnic side of this concentration work?*

Romain: The ethnic concentration is Mr. [N] [the association president]. He organized the Africans, he worked with a housing rights group, immigrant activists, they are organized all the immigrants from the hotels, where the Algerians are housed, to go the Goutte d'Or, it's a revindication.

I sympathize with readers who may take exception to my giving an extended quote to a relatively privileged subject who is, in some respects, repeating standard republican attacks on immigrants of non-European descent, but I want to take a closer look at the way such ideology is articulated in the context of northeast Paris' urban politics, as it revealing about the movements I will describe momentarily. On one hand, Romain's argument is connected to larger discussions in France from the 1980s and 1990s about the rise of so-called French ghettos⁶. It represents an anxiety over concentrations – or “communities” – of non-Europeans in urban space that is orthodox in republican inspired urban policy, as indeed the newspaper stories quoted above should already indicate. And, it almost seems that the French post-colonial neurosis he describes is in his own when he moves directly from his memory of a segregated beach in colonial Morocco to his feeling of being forbidden to move about in the Goutte d'Or. However, the significant aspect of republican ideology that this quote illustrates that it is *not* paradoxical that a scholar who is well versed in post-colonial studies and critical of French colonialism would himself be anxious over the concentration of non-Europeans in his neighborhood (even if his

personal views that the “post-colonized” are seeking “revindication” with the help of the “extreme Left” are close to conspiratorial).

Indeed it is precisely an anti-colonial republicanism, a fear of the inversion of colonialism, which separates Romain’s position from that of “Far Right”, such as Le Pen’s view, which he actually places in the same category of “neurosis” as the “Far Left associations” which he sees as imposing “ghettoization” on the neighborhood. This is why he is frustrated with “autogestion”, as well as “laissez-faire”, and let go (*laissez-aller*), attitudes that he believes mark the dominant ideology towards the development of neighborhood, under the Socialist Party at arrondissement and city levels. Despite the tremendous amount of statism present in the neighborhood (after all, its renewal is based largely on state funds and national level urban policy) it is lack of state control over *mixité sociale* and expressions of cultural difference in public space that are the core of his anxiety. This is betrayed by his use of the expression the “*French ghetto of Barbés is a prototype*”. This is an important use of the term “ghetto”, because Barbés is not a ghetto in the sense of being a neighborhood, but a short stretch of boulevard consisting of an open air market where men and women of Maghrebi and West African descent sell a variety of imported foods, goods, as well as more informal market items such as cigarettes, handbags, clothing, CDs, and DVDs. It is a loud, crowded, congested place which feels uncontrolled and impossible to secure or survey, as it is a major pedestrian thoroughfare and a large transit hub for several Metro and commuter lines linking the central-city to the outlying banlieues. My key focus however, is the role neighborhood-based associations play in creating these contested spaces of *mixité* in northeast Paris.

“Towers of Babel” and their Politics: Hip-Hop Republicanism and Urban Space in Northeast Paris

The trajectory of one particular activist turned local official in northeast Paris (I will call him Mamadou) is especially informative on how the politics of place in northeast Paris merge with contestation over France’s ethnoracial and cultural identity as nation. Mamadou, now the Adjoint-mayor of youth programs for the 19th arrondissement, is a 15 year veteran of association politics and the anti-racism movement in northeast Paris, despite only being 35 years old. His position carried tremendous symbolic weight not only because he is one of the few prominent young people of color (*jeunes issus d’immigration*) working for government in northeast Paris’ arrondissements, but because of the particular type of politics from which he has emerged. In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on his work exclusively because he has been at the center of intermittent national media attention for several years as an activist and official. This media discourse and his own work with his association *Les Braves Garçons d’Afrique* or BGA (the Brave Boys of Africa) is especially instructive about how abstract notions of republicanism, race, and nation become concretized in northeast Paris’ place-oriented politics, which blur the urban and local with the national. As I will show in the following chapter, these contestations lay out the stakes underlying the politics of public space in Northeast Paris. Additionally, they serve as a foil to simultaneous mobilizations to build the Jardins d’Éole, in which a group of white, mostly middle class activists used very different notions of place to succeed in goals which are arguably similar.

Nearly six months before speaking with Romain, I took a walk with Mamadou through his old neighborhoods of Riquet and Stalingrad, at the eastern edge of the Jardins

d'Éole. Our meeting had been somewhat fortuitous. A week earlier, I had encountered a group of young men wearing shirts emblazoned with the letters "BGA" and "R-Style", who were posing for photographs in front of a deteriorating set of long-stay hotels on a little street slated for nearly 100% demolition, Rue Caillié. The group, which was composed exclusively of young men of West African and Antillean descent, introduced themselves to me as a "*bande*"⁷ (gang) / association of Hip-Hop artists called *Les Braves Garçons d'Afrique* and gave me a generic sounding (info@) email address to contact. I was surprised when I received a reply just a short time later from an adjunct-Mayor of the 19th arrondissement. Since our initial contact had been related to music, this set the tone for our subsequent conversations, which in hindsight, developed as kind of counter-history to Romain's (and much of the wider media's) narratives of northeast Paris in the 1980s and 1990s.

On a sunny afternoon in late spring, we strolled up the Rue Caillié, which ends at the Jardins d'Éole. There the streets' old hotels and apartment houses, all of which are rubble strewn and in varying states of demolition, give way to the vast openness of the new park. From here, the Jardins d'Éole, with its newly poured concrete plaza, sleek steel catwalks, and freshly planted lawns abruptly announces a new vision for northern Paris. More than I could have expected, the place proved an excellent setting for Mamadou to reminisce. In the sentimental manner of a host showing personal effects to houseguests, he articulated a veritable geography of the 19th arrondissement from the point of a view of second generation youths who were raised here in 1970s and 80s: a place of long-stay hotels, most of which were now abandoned, squats, warehouses where DJs and taggers

practiced their art, and the childhood homes of soon to be famous hip-hop artists, part of the first generation of rappers.

At the end of the Rue Caillié, one has an impressive view of some of the largest social housing developments (or *cités*) in Paris, located to just to the north of the Jardins d'Éole. These large buildings, the result of 1970s era renovations, had been recently dubbed the “tower of babel” by *Le Monde* who described it as a “foreign melting pot” (*étrange melting pot*). By using English for ‘melting pot’ the article had played with a double meaning of “étrange”, which can either mean strange, foreign, or both. In either case, the focus of the article was on the “communitarian” tendencies amongst the multitude of ethnic groups who resided in them, their lack of Frenchness, and indeed the “anglo-saxon” (read American-Anglo multicultural) quality of the sectarian situation in the cité (Simon, 2007). The article quoted Mamadou, in his capacity as adjoint, describing him as “mediator” between the ethnic “factions” in the cité. It did not mention, however, that Mamadou had grown up in these very towers; indeed they had been a crucible for his nearly two decades of work combining politics with France’s emergent hip-hop subculture. This past was where he dwelled for the majority of our stroll:

Mamadou: For us, in France, the 1980s were really important, in a way that’s a bit comparable to New York, because in the 80s is when lots of bandes (gangs or crews) were founded. Notably, in our neighborhood, in Stalingrad, Riquet, Crimée, there were huge gangs, that were well known, and who would face off with each other. Hip-Hop arrived, in 1984 exactly, in our neighborhood, - in fact, you are working on the Jardin

d'Éole right? That's where hip-hop was born in France, there, in those old warehouses, there-

Andrew: Like Rue d'Aubervilliers?

Mamadou: Yeah. By Rue d'Aubervilliers.

Andrew: The railroad tracks for Gare de l'Est?

Mamadou: That's where hip-hop arrived in France. A lot of hip-hop artists you hear about got their start over there. We called it the La Chapelle wastelands then. All the artists used to go down there, dancers, rappers, taggers. Hip-Hop came from this neighborhood here, right by us. That's why it was an important time because it was a period of transition, because before there were these tough gangs, but then there was a new outlet. It's a movement, like I said before, of artistic vindication, and it was cultural, and athletic. That's the dynamic that came to pass, a bit like New York, it was a kind of a revolution in the cité, in the neighborhood. Because the artists, the rappers, dancers and taggers, appropriated their environment, the walls, the trains, the rooftops.

Andrew: Because you've got the abandoned factories-

Mamadou: Voila! You've got the abandoned factories, the wastelands, all of it abandoned. So a bit like New York, you've got these dense wastelands of abandonment, and the youth from the cités, they appropriated it all...

Andrew: You're talking about the generation who formed the bandes, but why these kids?

Why were they, I'm interested in the generation of kids in northern Paris—

Mamadou: In the 1970s, that's the big wave of immigration. You had the Africans and Magrebins who came to the country. They arrived, notably, in the banlieues and the North of Paris. Our parents and grand parents came, they worked in the industrial zones,

in the banlieues, for Renault, for Peugeot, in north-east Paris; the men had come before and in the 70s, their wives and children arrived. In the 1980s, that's the first wave of young kids "coming from immigration" (issus de l'immigration), and what happened was that it was a generation who was completely lost, who posed the question, where did I come from? I live in this neighborhood, but I have nothing to go back to. There is no structure, it is a neighborhood that is completely abandoned – voila! So, they started to learn, to search, and the hip hop movement arrived, and the bandes arrived, and sometimes they appropriated it. It was a way to, how to say, identity, to say, exist: "I myself am in a band" like the Crips and the Bloods. So the kids started to identify like that, to work in groups.

Whether or not Mamadou's bold claim that hip-hop arrived in France in the future Jardins d'Éole is true (audacious claims of innovation, "authenticity" and being the "original" are themselves an ever-present trope within hip-hop discourses), the above conversation illustrates in clear terms the relationship between neighborhood-based identity, hip-hop, and marginal forms of local politics in northeast Paris. Mamadou's recollections underscore the tremendous role played by notion of place – specifically 'neighborhood' – for northeast Paris youths, as an abstract space of social belonging and, in a linked fashion, the built environment as raw physical space – or material – for cultural production. In a manner that parallels narratives about the beginnings of hip-hop in The Bronx, New York (Chang, 2007; Mitchell, T. 2001) hip-hop bandes developed out of already existing groups of young working class and poor youths for whom territoriality played a crucial social role. Thus neighborhood draws its importance as a site of identity formation from its association with post-colonial 'immigration', but also as a

transnational space where hip-hop “arrived in France”; it is a space of cultural alterity where a generation of youths who identified neither with their parent’s country of origin nor felt accepted by France. An important facet of this narrative is the way Mamadou’s invocation of his generation merges with that of the “abandoned” neighborhood:

It was a generation who was completely lost who posed the question, where did I come from? I live in this neighborhood, but I have nothing to go back to, there is no structure, it is a neighborhood that is completely abandoned.

Indeed, both the generation and the neighborhood which Mamadou constructs as his own might be seen as lost or abandoned by flows of capital out of France’s industrial zones after the end of the Trente Glorieuses and the subsequent de-industrialization of Northeast Paris. This aspect of the story is far from unique in post-industrial cities around the globe: deprived of the working class position afforded to their parents, a self-styled generation turns to the ensemble of representational practices that is hip-hop (music, poetry, dance and art) to transform the neighborhood abandoned by capital into a sight of insurgent cultural production. The cités, railroad trestles, and abandoned factories that mark economic and cultural marginality of northeast Paris are themselves “re-appropriated” by inhabitants through graffiti writing or the re-valorization of spaces for dance and musical performance. The unique aspect is how this process occurs in northeast Paris in the 1990s, and its relationship to France’s turbulent post-colonial politics of immigration and national identity in the same era.

In this regard, the importance of place is undeniable. In Mamadou’s reminiscence, place, or specifically, the geography of northeast Paris became contiguous with the

blurred boundaries of culture, race, and nation in France. Place conveys meanings of belonging and identity in northeast Paris' youth subculture, but also gains importance as it began to articulate with narratives of cultural and racial belonging. Hip-hop became the expressive vehicle for such articulations. This became apparent in a conversation between Mamadou and I about the relationship between artistic legitimacy and "crossover appeal" or multi-racial audiences for Hip-hop in the United States and France. In contrasting France to the United States, where hip-hop was recognized as legitimate by mainstream institutions such as the "Grammy awards", Mamadou remarked:

In France, hip-hop is associated with violence, delinquency, it's really for the youth, and especially for the "neighborhood youths" (jeunes du quartier)"...Let's say, for example, in the US, you are white and you could like hip hop, maybe even more than me who is black, but in France, it is strongly connoted with youth, delinquency, neighborhood youth, its like that.

It is important to note that in Mamadou's comparison, he stops short of articulating hip-hop as "black music" and brackets the use of "white" and "black" for the American context, but uses "neighborhood youths" for the French case. This term, *jeunes du quartier*, a frequently heard French expression, is an unstable category, implying economic and at times, racial marginality as well (though it is not as precisely racial as the term *noir* or black). What is more definite is that "jeunes du quartier" is a marker for particular kind of youth which is urban (and frequently in a post-industrial, de-valorized context), and therefore non-middle class, perhaps non-white and or non-French, and in general outside of dominant taken for granted categories of "youth" (moreover,

Mamadou's use of the term "delinquency" also seems suggest a quality of moral alterity as well). When taken in the context of Mamadou's longer narrative from about his own youth, *jeunes du quartier* represents a sub category of youths who are neither fully French or fully "foreign", and for whom the transnational space of the "neighborhood" become the basis for an identity, and a physical terrain to be appropriated, used, and invoked as general signifier of abandonment. It is thus an category for which *place* becomes a crucial marker of identity: Mamadou's reminance of his youth is peppered with invocations of small neighborhoods in the arrondissement ("Stalingrad, Riquet, Crimée"); members of BGA are pictured with shirts emblazoned with their local postal code, and dominant features of the built environment demarcating territory, such as the railroad tracks separating the 18th and 19th arrondissements (which would later become the site of Jardins d'Éole) would become (and remain) important sites of collective expression through art, dance, and music.



Figure 10: Graffiti mural in northeast Paris; note the "Stalingrad" tag at top center, and the images of the three public housing towers (the Orgues de Flandre) in the path of an incoming airplane, music, and drug-use.

But the paradox of “local” discourses is that they only gain currency through larger – often global – symbolic and material economies. Since the early 1980s, the global distribution of hip-hop, both as a set of practices for cultural production (Mamadou favored the word “discipline”) and as a marketplace of commodities (in the form of records, clothes, jewelry, etc) provided one form of glocality (Robertson 1995). In it, territorial practices such as “tagging” with graffiti, the prominent displays of neighborhood names in clothing and in song writing, and lyrical elements such as “shouting out” or “representin” self-consciously construct a global consciousness from a patchwork of economically marginalized, frequently non-white, urban communities represented on music distributed throughout the world. The globalization of hip-hop as

“movement” was far from merely an outgrowth of its commercial success. Even before the rise of a truly mass market for the music in the 1990s, hip-hop was formally introduced in Europe in Afrika Bambaata’s Zulu Nation tour of 1984. For that Bronx based rapper, disseminating new musical forms went hand in hand with communicating an explicitly globalizing ideology stressing solidarity, mutual respect, and calls for social and racial justice. There should be little surprise, then, why 1984 should be so clearly marked by Mamadou in his own history of his youth, even though he was less than ten years old at the time.

At its fringes – at the levels of the bandes – struggles could, at times, become violent⁸. A direct confrontation occurred between groups of northern Paris and National Front protestors over the construction of a mosque in the neighborhood in 1996 (Tincque, 1997) (tragically the mosque would later be destroyed by a pipe bomb). This was, according to Mamadou in an un-taped conversation with me, (but later publicly recounted by him in an interview with the newspaper *Libération*), one in a series of violent confrontations that occurred between youths of color from Riquet and right-wing skinheads from outside of the area. In a bizarre show of posterity for urban wars of the past, the groups of youths chose the nearby Place de Stalingrad as a site for their battles.

Mamadou recounts this as a time in which the bandes became directly involved in the France’s emerging crisis of nationhood through links with larger social movements, chiefly SOS Racisme. Though the anti-racist Left in France dates back to WWII, groups like SOS Racisme were energized during the precise period in which Dikeç and others describe “republican nationalism” as beginning to solidify as a discursive formation. The anti-racist counter-formation had a national presence, and it was in northern Paris

where local actions garnered it national visibility and facilitated access to local elected officials who were close to national level political leadership. For Mamadou, emergence of practices such as hip-hop that stressed the appropriation of local space led seamlessly into the national level anti-racism movement, he points out.

At this time, in the 1980s, this group who was issus de l'immigration began to revindicate their right to exist in society. At the time the area was full of movements – there was ferment of the bandes, the social revindication movement born with [SOS Racisme's] March for Equality, the creation of SOS Racisme, the birth of hip-hop. All of those movements were revindication movements that existed for different problems: the social revindication movement for the march for equality and the creation of SOS Racisme. The movement of bandes which was about creating an identity for youths, our movement of hip-hop, which was another manner of asserting our existence.

For Mamadou, the locally oriented bandes served as a “ferment” from which forms of politics that more articulate with republicanism could arise. SOS Racisme’s March for Equality was after all for a key a part of the “trinity” of the French Republic (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). This time delimites not only a period in politics but constitutes the creation of a politicized generation. There was a seamlessness between this generation’s mobilization for a politics of “revindication” and the “asserting our existence” in national space and the appropriation of urban space by the bandes and the hip-hop artists.

Mamadou's political trajectory shows this vocabulary of place-based politics was translated and appropriated into a political arena shaped by the rise of the nationalist Right in the northeast Paris' association politics. During this period, the re-emerging anti-racist Left had an important presence in both 18th and 19th arrondissements. A watershed moment occurred in 1996, at the local Church of St. Bernard de La Chapelle, when dozens of undocumented workers sought refuge in the church for fear of being deported. In rare of show of solidarity with then fringe anti-racism movement (and, it should be pointed out, a shrewd gesture of solidarity with the surrounding neighborhood), the church clergy allowed the workers (and supporting activists) to take sanctuary. After a highly publicized period of indecisiveness, 18th arrondissement leaders from the Socialist Party decided to support the workers, some of who would later enter this debate at a national level. Soon after, the occupation began to be commemorated in annual celebrations by parties and unions across the spectrum of the left as well as SOS Racisme as a milestone moment of recognition for the Sans-Papiers movement (even though few of the labor unions and political parties paid the movement heed at the time).

For the activists who emerged from this volatile political crucible, the vocabulary of place-making and territoriality inherited from hip-hop and working class youth subculture and merged with a nationally specific framework of politics: the republican civic tradition of associations. The term "association" is frequently used to refer to "grassroots" organizations or "community-" or "neighborhood-" based associations. The term itself serves as an invocation of the "right to associate" which was established in French civil code in 1848, repealed, and then re-formalized in 1901 (thus many associations describe themselves as "associations according to the law of 1901"). Other

than voting, associations become a key method by which political participation and the full rights of citizenship are performed under the auspices of republican civic traditions. Indeed by the 1990s, many analysts argued that associations had in fact supplanted voting and union participation. This period, often described as one of “political malaise”, saw a decline in a voter turnout, union membership, and a shriveling of large scale national social movements. It coincided with what some observers termed a “new associativity” or a boom in “micro-movements” focused small scale local politics. (Favre & Fillieule, 1994; Perrineau, 1994; Waters, 2003). Such mobilizations, analyzed with in the rubric of New Social Movement theory, are frequently viewed small in size, single issue and highly local in focus and scope, and ephemeral in duration. Nonetheless, associations provide one facet of the evolving tradition of republicanism, which along with voting, provides one of the few ways in which republicanism can be viewed as a set of practices involving citizens, and not merely the discourse of elites and policy makers, as it is frequently imagined. However, as the BGA’s politics in northeast Paris shows, the slippage between local and national politics was profound in these particular neighborhoods, and the if the focus of such associations was singular (as in hip-hop) the overall goal was much broader, bridging awareness of global movements with broad questions concerning class, youth, and urban justice.

For Mamadou and a coterie of other Northeast Paris youths, the forms of locality that were bound to associative politics dovetailed with place oriented practices of hip-hop, as well as its emphasis on social justice. Indeed, Mamadou describes the founding of the association, BGA, as a logical outgrowth of Northeast Paris’ youth subculture of bandes:

The 1980s are important because you had the big bandes, but you also had the arrival of hip-hop as a movement in France. We came out of that, and us we are the generation of the 1990s, and over time we had two choices. We could join these big bandes, that all these people were moving towards or we could focus our movement as an association, our association. So we decided to create an association, primarily, to give a new image to the youth, not the image of the delinquent youth, not the image of youth as violent, not the image of youths as [drug] dealers. It was an image of youth that would go and appropriate and dynamism to the neighborhood. That's why we did it, to get away from the violence at the time, which was physical as well as moral. It was a troubled time and we had a choice. Either you would be a delinquent or an artist, except we wanted a different choice, not just creating a movement of youths in a bande, we wanted to create a movement of youths, like a bande but which emerges like an association...

Mamadou presents his groups' step of creating an association – and therefore become politically involved in a recognized idiom of republican citizenship – as not merely a choice but an imperative necessitated by “violence” that was “physical as well as moral”. Republican politics become another “way out” for youth and part of a set of practices related to hip-hop in which “moral” and “physical” “violence” can be transcended. Mamadou poses associative participation as a giving an “image to the youth”; republicanism – alongside hip-hop – thus provides a framework of social belonging for a “lost generation” that is an alternative to street culture. Associative culture built logically on the place-making practices connected with youth culture such as forming bandes and hip-hop. Indeed hip-hop became incorporated into the mission of the BGA Association,

which worked in the traditional goal of many neighborhood associations, to “add dynamism to the neighborhood”.

It would accomplish this goal by aiding northeast Paris’ youths’ “search” as Mamadou put it, for “structure” in a place that was “completely abandoned”. The replacement structure which Mamadou’s group helped to create was partly oriented around defining a place in the present for youths who were *issus de l’immigration* and partly about unearthing a past: a history, or ancestry, for those, who “had nothing to go back to”. The BGA began holding a series of public events, culminating in 2005’s “Festival Afro”, a ten day festival featuring scholars and activists from around the world lecturing a variety of themes including “sports”, “solidarity”, “health”, “citizenship”, and “memory”. Above all, importance was placed upon the importance of the African-Atlantic diaspora and its relationship to French colonialism in establishing populations of oppressed, African descended youth throughout France and the former colonies.

This aspect of BGA’s project drew the attention of the national media to the association and Northeast Paris in general. Mamadou was quoted by a major national magazine (*L’Express*), in 2005, saying “In the schools, our origins are not valued. The result: the discrimination we live today is rooted in a past of slavery” (Boris, 2005). While the article described the conference itself in neutral terms (“The BGA welcomed several thousand people in a festival on themes as diverse as the slave trade and slavery, colonialism, integration, and the equality of the sexes, health and sport”) it did so in a context invoking the ever-present bogeyman of monocultural republicanism: “communitarianism”. This was done by playing with pre-existing, dominant notions of place that mark northern Paris as outside the boundaries of the city center, and the

national body politic as whole. Indeed the mere setting of neighborhood itself was constructed in such way that would leave conservative, republican-minded readers bristling:

Five towers, thirty floors each, overlook a vast expanse of concrete. The Riquet neighborhood (XIX arrondissement) home to 4,500 residents, is an urban no-man's land marked by unemployment, troubled schools, delinquency, racism, and the rise of communitarianism. It was here, in the 1980s, where bandes of young blacks like the vicious sharks (*requins vicieux*) or the CKC oscillated between hip-hop culture and violent outbursts. It was also here, last January, that several youths, recently converted to Islam, met and prepared to travel to wage the jihad in Iraq....
(Boris 2005)

It seems impossible for media, particularly the national level press, to describe grassroots politics in northern Paris without invoking the racial, and religious, cultural boundaries of the French nation as part of the area's geography. The area is depicted as a "no man's land" closed to the strictures of republicanism where racialized violence and Islamic radicalism how sway. Indeed, by invoking an internationally publicized 2005 incident in which young insurgents captured by the US Army in Iraq were discovered to be from the 19th arrondissement, the area is presented as fulfilling the even most xenophobic right-wing prophesies of a France inhabited by uncontrolled gangs of non-Europeans and host to violent confrontations between "Islam" and the "West". Such journalistic treatments subordinate the documentation of BGA's project to a more sensational media discourse on the French nation, this time composed through journalism as act of place-making in its

own right. Based on reports such as this one, one can easily grasp why the image of “neighborhood” and “youth” are concepts of political interest for Mamadou.

The specific way the BGA invoked a shared consciousness linked to slavery also provoked ire in a political context marked by deep hostility to “anglo-saxon” models of “multiculturalism” and American notions of racial “consciousness” and “justice” in particular. BGA meetings and activities featured images of and lectures on figures who were established in French anti- and post-colonial literature such as Toussaint Louverture, but also included Malcolm X and Martin Luther King – figures associated with American racial hierarchy and categories. Drawing in readers with a tagline highlighting “the rise of communitarianism on the part of muslims and blacks”, the center-right news weekly *Le Point* introduced an article on the BGA with the following rhetorical device:

“Do you define yourself as French-Caribbean? French-Maghrebi? Full-blooded French? Circle the corresponding box.” This type of administrative questionnaire, as surreal as it may seem to our republican ears, could well become normal in a few years’ time. (Dufay, 2005)

Raising the image of a “communitarian vulgate”, the article held just short of accusing the BGA of anti-white racism outright when describing the BGA’s “festival Afro”. As a parting shot meant to provoke its conservative audience further, the magazine ended the feature by quoting Mamadou on the meaning of “brave” in the name BGA: “Because it takes courage” said their [the BGA’s] president, Mamadou, 26 years, of Burkina Faso, “ to find a place in this society.” (Dufay 2005). This leaves a loaded question for the

reader to answer: on whose terms should the BGA's place be found (if is one to be afforded to them/him in the first place)?

It was not lost on *Le Point* however, that the supposedly anti-Republican BGA enjoyed the full support of the Socialist Party (PS) in the 19th arrondissement. Its mayor, Roger Madec, has long been allied with the anti-racist Left and was himself an understudy of a fellow Northeast Paris politician from the 18th arrondissement, Lionel Jospin. Jospin, a former Prime Minister, played an influential role incorporating the anti-racist Left into the Socialist mainstream (though only quietly and with much controversy from those espousing more nationalist articulations of republicanism in his own party). Indeed, at national level, the PS has frequently been restrained on questions of immigrant rights, and it is arguably as forcefully opposed to ideologies that seem to embrace 'multiculturalism' as the center-right opposing party, the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement). As described at the beginning of chapter, the Socialist party even has a history of practicing "race-baiting" when political calculus indicates it will produce gains. But, in the realm of local politics in northern Paris, the PS has proven remarkably quick to embrace not only on the associations from the anti-racist left (chiefly SOS Racisme and MRAP) but even more controversial issues from the standpoint of the mainstream PS. For example, Roger Madec, as mayor of the 19th arrondissement (PS), advocated publicly for the building of the local mosque, its' subsequent rebuilding after a 1998 pipe bomb attack, and supporting its controversial imam even after captured "insurgents" from Iraq were reported to have met in the mosque. His creation of arrondissement level post for youth affairs and the selection of Mamadou as the BGA leader was, on one hand, a recognition that youth affairs were crucial in this section of

Paris, where both youth unemployment and the overall percentage of youths as part of the population are among the highest in Paris (APUR 2010: 57, 66). But Mamadou's selection also conveyed legitimacy to the kind of associative politics practiced by the BGA, which have provoked so much ire by not only the Far Right, but conservative republicans on the Left such as Romain, who arguably represent the mainstream of the Socialist Party in Paris.

A few years after his appointment at the 19th arrondissement, Mamadou faced the first big test of not his abilities as an adjunct-Mayor but the pluralistic republicanism that held sway there. In June of 2008, a 17 year-old Jewish youth was severely beaten by two Muslim youths of West African and Maghrebi descent, in an incident that was widely considered an anti-Semitic attack. The incident occurred in the heart of the 19th arrondissement and garnered international media coverage. In an evocation of the 2005 riots that shook Paris' banlieues, the *New York Times* published the article along with a picture of a burned-out car (an event exceedingly rare in the neighborhood) and described it a place of "young Muslims and blacks in low jeans, sunglasses and hoodies, often with a kaffiyeh knotted carefully around the neck, and sometimes, now, with guns" (Erlanger, 2008). The 19th arrondissement pursued a solution that was in many ways resembled "Festival Afro" – a committee termed as Vivre Ensemble ("live together") was organized in which by the arrondissement in which different cultural associations met in forum. One of the principal goals of Vivre Ensemble ("live together") was to create a space for youths who, as Mamadou pointed, lack familiarity with their peers partly because of the sheer architectural size of the buildings they lived in. Months after our earlier conversations on the streets near the Jardins d'Éole, Mamadou described the following to

me from his office at arrondissements' ornate 'town hall' adorned with symbols of the Republic and more lavishly decorated than most American city halls. This time, in his role of adjoint-Mayor, he was neither nostalgic nor dwelling on music, but stern, official and declarative when speaking about policy. As Mamadou described the goal of Vivre Ensemble to me, I was struck by his use of the somewhat controversial term "community":

There are several extremely important communities in this arrondissement. There is an extremely important Jewish community, a black community that is very important, and a strong Muslim community as well. Its true that the different communities have lately had difficulties living together. But one must ask who are the actors in making this work? It's the associations. To answer your question about diversity, and who preserves it, its really the associations. The neighborhood associations, the public spaces, and all the places where the residents, the inhabitants, the youths, the children meet to do activities and events.... We permit the means to have a meeting, a discussion, an understanding of what a Muslim is, what a Jew is, what or Catholic or Christian is, or to understand what an agnostic is. And so each one understands their differences from their point of view. So, if you have different beliefs than me, I from you, sometimes we agree to disagree, you and I discuss, we spend time together and so when you see me on the street I give a you big hello. So things happen like that. Sure in the future there might likely be more incidents, it is sad to say it like that, but it is true, but today we work on that dynamic.

Mamadou's descriptions of the stakes behind Vivre Ensemble are revealing for several reasons. First and foremost, "communities" are "important" for themselves. The acknowledgement, and indeed valuation, of particular communities by a member of the

government is very rare in France, but the establishment of a project by local government further this goal is rarer. The idea seems contrary to the notion of the state “dissolving” difference through assimilation that permeates recent republican discourse such as the Haut Conseil à l’Intégration. However, the means by which the goal is accomplished is through the highly traditional means of “neighborhood” associations. The goal of such associations, is however, to preserve difference. The arrondissement’s role is to provide a forum for this process to take place.

I asked Mamadou about this curious difference in his approach, if he was concerned that Vivre Ensemble was “fanning the flames” by encouraging the development of “communities” in arrondissement. Was not this, in fact, the problem to begin with? With visible annoyance at my asking (had I learned nothing from our previous conversations?) he told me:

The French Republic recognizes the one indivisible man, with no difference with regards to religions, sex, culture or otherwise. Of course, when one look at it this way its not exactly like that. One can look for example, at the political level, men and women are not treated in the same way. One can see that also with the question of diversity, which there is supposedly more of today. So yes, there is a certain political direction, with which the 19th arrondissement has been concerned with for a long time, where we can’t continue to live with that logic, we need wake to the reality. Yes, there are different communities which are present in this neighborhood here, with their own values, their own ways of living, their own routines, and yes indeed, it happens sometimes that these values and these ways of life are not identical between communities, that the values of one

community are not the same as another. So what do you do? You show that this is the reality here. If they [critics from the Right] continue a perpetual crusade on that, well, that does not reflect reality at all. One could find that programs like that which are more like something in the United States than France, but the reality is, well, today, this is France. Definitely the republic we have constructed up until today has limits.

Mamadou's argument is less directed at republicanism than those who would argue for a vision of it as exclusive and monocultural French. The "reality" is the vision of citizenry in which diversity plays a role, and which cultural incommensurability is an unwelcome but perhaps inevitable fact of life. The role of the state, as we have seen above is by fostering the public and open mixing of these communities as opposed to facilitating their disintegration through assimilation.

Local level diversions from nationalist forms of republicanism might be tempting to understand as a "survival adaptation" in an immigrant area, which is supposedly marginal to France's political and social mainstream. From the standpoint of nationalist Republicans, the tolerance of communities amounts to an unbearable "absence" of the state in its responsibility to subjugate the immigrant origin population to republican (or French) strictures. For example, when discussing questions of cultural diversity in the northern Paris, Romain echoed a frequently heard Left critique against neoliberal governance as the "absence" of the interventionist state from the private, economic sphere. Romain, however, spoke not about an economy but about nationhood when eliciting the image of "a state that does not follow its own laws", and the danger of "laissez-faire" and "laissez-aller" (let go) when speaking about race, ethnicity, and nation.

Thus, the reemergence of a “non-French”, culturally and racially distinct “ghetto” is imagined as the result of a different, but linked form of state laxity. It is a state, that to quote the *Haut Conseil à l’Intégration* (the HCI), for which “different cultures” must not be “allowed to develop”(HCI 1992, quoted in Hargreaves 1997:184). As we have seen, such discourse frequently merges with media constructions of northeast Paris as a “no man’s land” where Republican authority is absent and “towers of babel” appear as a result. In its leftist incarnations such visions unite center left calls for dirigisme (capital in the service of a strong state) to nationalism (Frenchness in the service of the strong state). The local form of the argument is that northeast Paris is a marginal area which has been divested of both by a lax state.

However, northeast Paris’ geographical location in the nations’ capital, its long history as an election stronghold for the left, and most of all, its role in nurturing and producing Socialist Party leaders at the highest level of government make such claims paradoxical. The pluralism championed by groups such as the BGA (and condoned, if not furthered by elected officials) is central the maintenance of the national power structure. Moreover, groups such as the BGA are not marked by a hostility towards a secular republicanism committed to undifferentiated society; indeed they embrace it, arguably to an extent that is even greater than their right-wing opponents. Again and again, as Mamadou describes in his attitudes on hip-hop as social ideology or his approach to associative politics there is a constant rejection of “anglo-saxon”, specifically American notions of race as a subtext for social justice and basis for political mobilization. As we saw for example, Mamadou explicitly rejects the notion of “black” music for example when discussing hip-hip subculture, instead favoring the place-centered term “jeunes du

quartier”. Similarly his use of the term “jeunes issus de l’immigration” are highly republican notions of difference in that they do not construct specific racial or even cultural identities as basis for political action but instead draw upon a generalized theory of alterity and otherness, and in the latter case, difference itself. Even the “Festival Afro”, greeted with skepticism by the media, incorporated its emphasis on African heritage and history into a wider program emphasizing education, healthcare, and civic involvement. Such practices encourage a type of politics that, far from being an assault on republicanism, implicitly reifies its core values. Such programs cultivate the “jeunes du quartier” as citizens in classic republican ideals by making use of history, athletics, and even health education. And, nowhere is the BGA’s republican streak more clear than in use of associative discourse and forms of politics to air social grievances in the first place. It is clear from Mamadou’s political trajectory and his own discourse that republican notions of civic involvement such as forming an associations were crucial as alternatives to “delinquency” and “violence”. In several respects such politics demonstrate the hegemony of the republican model in the so-called Northeast Paris’ “no man’s lands” and “towers of babel”.

Political approaches such as Mamadou’s demonstrate the degree to which republicanism can not be spoken about as static ‘thing’ which is – particularly from an American viewpoint – the source of political angst of France’s national identity. Instead, the BGA the represents the contested nature of republicanism, and more importantly, the role of the politics of place as an element of the contestation. Despite the claims of his adversaries, Mamadou’s politics are not anti-republican; if anything they are too republican because they refuse to differentiate citizens on any terms – including their

lack of “Frenchness”. In this respect, the problem that conservative adversaries have with the BGA and its supporters in the Socialist Party is, perhaps, its over-universalism; even notions of the French nation are not sacred. The BGA makes a call for a humanistic republicanism that is neither French in a traditional sense nor multicultural, but which recognizes the equality in diverse sets of heritage and not merely monocultural historicism. History is valued not for imbuing Frenchness in citizenry, but as weapon against oppression. In this regard, the BGA’s project demonstrates that its place-making politics is in fact in line within tradition of republicanism, despite its focus on youth, hip-hop, and France’s post-colonial minorities.

But another highly unique component of “actually-existing republicanism” in northeast Paris is its strong urban nature. As we shall see in the following chapter, public space, in the architectural sense and in its legal, political sense becomes both goal and the battleground. However, the Association Jardins d’Éole, whose development was contemporary with the BGA, shared the same neighborhood and some of the same goals, though it invoked a very different set of ideals that not only avoided controversy, but in fact seemed to attract politicians to its cause because of its apparently unassailable legitimacy and morality. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, this mobilization also made use of notions place such as “quartier” to justify demands for justice, albeit in different respect for the BGA.

¹ In 1976, for example, Jacques Chirac (at the time the Interior Minister) pointed out that there were “2 million immigrant workers and 900,000 unemployed French”. The Socialists were not above race-baiting either, with the mayor of Marseilles making similar comments (Fysh & Wolfreys, 2003, pp. 40,44). Indeed, Peter Fysh and Jim Wolfreys, in an excellent history of the far right in France (2003), points to a boom in anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic violence occurring during this period. The era also saw the creation of citizens safety groups after a widely publicized murder committed by an

Algerian man and workers of West and North African descent were found murdered with increasingly frequency in 1970s and early 1980s. In the 1980s' however, the contours of the debate began to change as minorities of post-colonial ancestry were not only cast as an economic menace but as a threat to the nation as well. This was largely due to the arrival Jean-Marie Le Pen on the national political scene, during the presidential election of 1984. A public figure since having been a paratrooper in the Algerian War, Le Pen shed his trademark eye patch and military uniform for a suit and tie, mainstreaming the image and growing the voting power of the extreme-right National Front Party (FN) to the point that it become a threat to France's dominant center right and left parties. The National Front drew its discourse less from colonial ideologies of racial inferiority than from moral discourses focused on producerism and delinquency, as well as the invocation of an essentialized national culture that was irreconcilably different (and superior) to that of foreigners – and particularly those of non-European descent. The core of Le Pen's rhetoric concerned "immigrants" – in the public sphere. Blaming attacks against him on an "immigrant lobby", Le Pen used his status as political outsider to marshal support, and blamed the end of *trente glorieuses* on "immigrants" (Fysh & Wolfreys 2003: 40). By the 1990s and 2000s, Le Pen's focus shifted specifically on Islam. This shift seems to have brought him significant gains, with the FN capturing 16% percent of the vote in the 2002 presidential elections. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, FN candidates received nearly 12% of the total vote running on a "no to the Islamization" of France platform (the FN's campaign banner depicted a map of France covered in minarets). Le Pen's biggest success, however, has been his ability to shape mainstream debates over citizenship and nation in France, even if his core arguments are not accepted or ridiculed by mainstream politicians. For example, the majority of those who bear the brunt of anti-immigrant scorn are actually citizens whose parents or grandparents were immigrant-born; it has been the influence of Le Pen that shifted the debate's terms to "immigration" and the cultural incompatibility Islam as opposed more inclusive formulations of "diversity" and "multiculturalism". This move discursively erases the history of two, three, or even four generations of Maghrebis and West Africans in France, creating the rhetorical illusion that they are recent arrivals, placing them at threshold of the nation, and the margins of political life as a whole. The ease at which the 2010 ban on the wearing of the Islamic burqa passed in the French National Assembly (335-1) can be viewed as further evidence of Le Pen's impact on French political mainstream. Indeed, Le Pen has explicitly accused Sarkozy and other leading politicians of stealing his ideas, with "why buy the cheap copy, when you can have original?" [quoted in ("FT.com / In depth - Rivals are stealing my ideas, says Le Pen," n.d.)] becoming an often heard slogan at his political rallies in the Sarkozy era.

² As with much of Europe following WWII, categories such as culture, civilization, and race have played ambiguous, and sometimes interchangeable roles in essentializing discourses in France. Anthropologists and others have debated the extent to which the rebirth of right-wing projects of exclusion occupy the semantic terrain of "culturalism" or "racism". Stolcke (1999) has argued Europe's post-Nazi taboo on race and other biological frameworks constructing human difference has led to race's replacement by "cultural fundamentalism". These forms of rhetoric tie national belonging to

incommensurable cultural difference, citizenship, and the viability of the nation-state. This interpretation is in sharp contrast to what Balibar and Wallerstein (1991) describe as Europe's "neo-racism" or "racism without races", in which race appears to be of increasing importance in the shaping the "social personhood" of non-European origin citizens, despite state-sanctioned taboos on the race concept as a viable social metric. This debate (Asad 2002; Beriss 2004; Bunzl 2005; Harrison 1995; Silverstein 2004, 2005) seems to demonstrate that anthropologists remain far from agreeing on the limits of the cultural and the racial when attempting to untangle essentialist discourses. However, this inconsistency in discourses of belonging could itself reflect a broader uncertainty over once hegemonic ideas of who "Europeans" actually are, as a cultural, civilizational, and racial category. In addition to immigration, European Unification (see Bunzl 2005, for example) is another example of a force eroding traditional categories of difference, including the internal boundaries between nation-states, the inclusion of overseas territories (such as the French Antilles) and the potential inclusion of Turkey in the EU.

³ The HCI constructs difference not as diversity, but as "communitarianism" (*communautarisme*). In this influential policy document, which set the tone for an array of local and national policies (Hargreaves 1995), it is clearly seen as against the value of the republic to permit an "organized and institutionalized grouping on the part of the population according to religious or ethnic criteria, recognized by public authorities". Moreover, the HCI points out that the Republic "has always refused to recognize collective rights that are specific to groups of minorities. It is to each man and each woman that it has granted full rights to allow him or her individually to take a place in French society" [HCI 1995, quoted in (Jennings, 2000)].

⁴ The derogatory usage of term "*zonard*" has at least two centuries of history, originally referring to poor, morally suspect migrant workers who would camp in cities' peripheral military defense zones. See Hussey (2006) for a striking comparison between a 19th century moral panic over *zonards* in Paris with contemporary discourse surrounding banlieue youths

⁵ *Bobo* is a somewhat derogatory French neologism stemming from a conjunction of bourgeois and bohemian, with a double meaning, since it is widely known that bobo means "fool" in other romance languages. Its implications are similar to "yuppie".

⁶ This discussion is what led Loïc Wacquant (1993) to conduct a comparative study between the south side of Chicago and the Parisian banlieue of La Courneuve to demonstrate how French urban poverty could not be thought as a racialized ghetto in an American sense. While his structural arguments comparing the role of the state in each are likely supported by the case of the Goutte d'Or, much of my evidence seems to indicate that concentrated urban poverty is racialized in France, albeit in a different way than in the United States.

⁷ The term *bande* can either mean ‘gang’ in a criminal sense, or in more friendly meaning, a group of friends. In the context of hip-hop in France, *bande* is more akin to ‘a crew’ or group, though rappers frequently enjoy blurring the lines between each of these meanings.

⁸ The potential for “communitarianism” or ethnic rivalry in Northeast Paris’ bandes has been a source of considerable anxiety in the media. In a 2008 newspaper interview, Mamadou, textually marked as a “reformed” former member turned municipal official, felt obligated to defend the groups from such charges, despite acknowledging their sometimes violent history. He noted: “the bandes were very organized, with a name, and dress code, and distinct tattoos, but there was no national or communitarian criteria for being involved...” (Binet 2008)

Chapter 4: Space, Class, Gender, and Protest: the Jardins d'Éole Mobilization

“Ladies and gentleman, look to the example of the neighborhood teenagers who stake a claim their little bit of turf. Stand up and unite for our four hectares now! Then at least we won't have to wonder in the future what might have happened if had we only given it our best today!”

- Association Jardins d'Éole (AJE) activist's appeal to northeast Paris residents

At the same time the youth movement *Braves Garçons d'Afrique* were planning their *Festival Afro*, another group of residents were also looking to “re-vindicate” the neighborhood as a territory *for* the residents as opposed to outside interests. This time however, environmentalism and urban horticulture, not hip-hop, provided a source of inspiration for claiming territory. And, in this case, the residents were not immigrant origin youths but primarily non-immigrant French origin in various middle class professions, especially teachers and civil servants. But again, activism oriented around space – and in particular, neighborhood – was of crucial importance in context of France's republican taboos on identity politics and demands for justice in racial or ethnocultural terms.

Between 1998 and 2007, a group of northeast Paris residents – the Association Jardins d'Éole (AJE) –developed into a coalition of neighborhood associations and groups crossing ethnic and class lines. Their proposed solution to address a broad range of social problems facing northeast Paris – transforming an abandoned freight train

station into a park – was seen as quixotic to many. And yet, in less than ten years, the AJE succeeded in wooing a number of influential politicians from the Mayor of Paris to the Interior Minister of France successfully enough to have a \$26 million dollar “sustainable” green space (known as the *Jardins d’Éole*) built in the neighborhood by one of France’s pre-eminent landscape architects.

This chapter traces the emergence, style of protest, and trajectory of the AJE movement. It demonstrates how spatial politics centered around a park became a way to weave together a hosts of concerns facing northeast Paris inhabitants including the environment and pollution, gender and childcare, class and tenants rights, and issues of cultural pluralism and political solidarity. In a similar way to the youth movements studied in the last chapter, an emphasis on rendering social questions as spatial in nature was a crucial aspect of the AJE’s activism. The group articulated a strong territoriality for an area that lacked the degree of socio-political “place-based” identity seen in other Parisian working class neighborhoods. Indeed the goal of the park was to a large extent to provide a social “center” – to serve as a foundation for political solidarity in the neighborhood. These concerns drove a set of strategies that were deeply shaped by the group’s middle class leadership (and the strong influence of women in particular), and when combined with good political fortune, this enabled the group to prevail over rival interests (specifically, France’s national railroad and local industries). In the end, AJE’s “political savvy” (itself a heavily middle-class inflected set of styles of protest and contestation, as well as refined skills in timing, negotiation, and strategy) allowed the AJE to gain the favor of key figures in local Socialist Party establishment, ensuring the creation of park. A question that remains how ever is whether the increasingly deep class

contradictions marking this gentrifying neighborhood (magnified by politically charged ethno-cultural differences between immigrant origin populations and residents of non-immigrant French descent) will render the political solidarity in neighborhood unsustainable. Above all however, the trajectory of the AJE demonstrates the process by which activists self-consciously create a kind of locality – not to insulate themselves from global forces reshaping the city – but as a means with which to confront it.

“The wealth of this land”

In northeast Paris, the boundary between the 18th and 19th arrondissements was long dominated by a vast swath of partly abandoned railroad tracks and freight facilities. In the midst of this half-dead railway artery sat the Cour du Maroc: a wasteland of weeds, abandoned railroad tracks, and century old warehouses dating back to France’s first railroad boom in the 1850s. The name Cour du Maroc (translated as the “Moroccan Court”) was drawn from a nearby street, which itself was named nearly century before surrounding area became associated immigrants from North Africa. The deteriorated freight station had been abandoned (though it was still owned) by France’s national railroad (the SNCF: *Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer*). In the 1990s, part of the site became a refuse deposit from tunnel digging for a new commuter line linking Paris to its northeastern banlieue called the RER E or ÉOLE (the Est Ouest Liason Express and the name referred to the ancient Greek deity for wind, Aeolus). In other ways however, the Cour du Maroc operated as a “free” space, and moreover, a kind of repository for competing visions for northeast Paris generated by different factions and interests within the city.

An early group to “claim” the vacant space were neighborhood youths who, inspired by France’s burgeoning hip-hop movement, saw the vacant buildings as a giant set of canvasses for graffiti and venues for music and dance concerts. These youths, who were often from the nearby social housing complexes and who were mostly of West African and Maghrebi descent, often competed with a sedentary population of IV drug and crack-cocaine users for the spaces. Hip-hop youth culture – imported largely from the United States and adapted, re-codified, and re-produced in the context French post-colonial relations and Paris’ post-industrial landscapes, contained within it a pre-formed ‘vocabulary’ for re-appropriating abandoned urban spaces (see Chapter 3). This proverbial teenage wasteland became a place where connections were made with the worldwide hip-hop movement, making it a kind of globalized space of youth culture. It became a center for graffiti drawing, break dancing, and in particular, hip-hop performances – at times drawing hundreds of youths from northeast Paris and the banlieues – attracting (and helping to produce the careers of) several DJs and artists who rose to national repute. The area gained notoriety in France’s booming hip-hop culture of the period, with the railroad stations and Stalingrad (or Stalin-G) becoming frequently invoked landmarks in hip-hop songs¹². After the Jardins d’Éole was built in 2007, concerts would return to the space on occasion (along with many of the now nationally renowned performers who began their careers there).

At roughly the same time – and at the opposite end of Paris’ political and social order – the Cour du Maroc became important for national and local politicians. During a 1993 campaign for the 19th circumscription in Paris, two soon to be members of the Socialist Party elite would visit the abandoned site: Daniel Vaillant (later to become the

Mayor of the 18th arrondissement and French Interior Minister) and then Minister of the Environment, Ségolène Royal (a future Socialist presidential candidate, beaten by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007). For these figures, the Cour du Maroc became an icon of a more utopian, ideological vision of urban renewal by way of greenery. As part of Vaillant's campaign, the two planted a symbolic tree on the site, and proposed that a park be built there as part of his electoral campaign, as a way to pay homage to the neighborhood in which Vaillant himself had started politics. Little detail was given on the specifics of the green space, except as outlined in a brief in campaign pamphlet, which advertised a six hectare park on the SNCF property at the Cour du Maroc and the current ZAC Pajol. The park would be called the Jardins d'Éole, to be named after the RER ÉOLE, (or *Est-Ouest Liason Express*) which would occupy the site after the SNCFs completion. The vision was short lived however, since after the election (which Vaillant lost) work immediately began on the RER E commuter line, and most of the abandoned space became a construction zone.



Figure 11: Daniel Vaillant and Ségolène Royal plant a symbolic tree at the Cour du Maroc, 1993. Photography courtesy of the Association Jardins D'École.

Of course, this space – one the largest undeveloped parcels in Paris – also had tremendous value for the accumulation of profits – a fact which was not lost on several commercial interests in the area. The Tafanel corporation, a tenant of the SNCF and drink distributor employing approximately 400 employees on property adjacent to the Cour du Maroc, decided to expand its 45,000 m² of warehouse space to the space. SYTCOM (the *Syndicate Intercommunal por le Traitement des Ordures Ménagères* – a regional garbage collection and disposal authority) also had its eyes on the site a potential processing and storage facility (in fact other businesses had been ongoing users of the site for the illegal dumping of construction and even toxic waste). The values of the land was not lost on the SNCF either; it also began formulating plans for the re-industrialisation of the site for freight services almost immediately after the completion of RER Line E.

The Cour du Maroc became the focus of a diverse array of symbolic projects connected to national belonging and globalized youth culture, political power, and of course, the expectations of future profit. The presence of such interests only served to increase the intensity of the “land rush” which would take place in 1998. At this point, the RER E project finished and future of the Cour du Maroc was open to contestation amongst various parties, each of whom had a different vision of the spaces’ value, in symbolic, political, or economic terms.



Figure 12: The Cour du Maroc, early 2000s. Photography courtesy of the Association Jardins D'Éole.

The emergence of the Jardins d'Éole coalition.

For one group of residents, the vacant tract appeared to symbolize the neighborhood itself, or more precisely, the ability of residents to determine their own vision of what the urban future should hold. For many activists, the situation had reached a point in which an urban transformation in the interests of residents as opposed to

surrounding industry was now an imperative. One activist noted the neighborhood was faced with “a scattered a population of poor families of diverse ethnic origins, unsanitary housing, growing numbers of households dependent on public assistance, environmental degradation and industrial pollution, overcrowding, and a lack of public facilities of all kinds”. Another, a founding member of the Association Jardins d’Éole – a French origin civil servant in his forties noted:

When I arrived in this area in the 1980s it was pleasant and full of life. But, over the years the situation began to deteriorate: drug trafficking and narcotics came, buildings were left to abandonment, people we worried about their homes being razed, there were disturbing rumors about what was going to be built on the Cour du Maroc, and there was only inertia and silence from the powers that be. I knew that in other Parisian neighborhoods people who mobilized had been able to get some things done. So, with a group of residents we decided to collectively take our future into our own hands, and we persuaded ourselves that this four hectare area could be a issue to leverage a better a life for the neighborhood.

From the very beginning, the associative campaign for the park was not simply about green space or even the “environment” in an ecological sense (though appeals to both ideas were often made, nonetheless). Indeed, the land use conflict was rooted residents’ response to a series of social processes leading to urban degradation and a sense of breakdown in “neighborhood life” in general; the struggle for the Cour du Maroc, as the writer notes above is, about “ a better life for the neighborhood”.

A diverse array of questions, but in particular, the increasingly public selling and consumption of illegal drugs (heroin and crack-cocaine in particular) as well as residents' worries over the dilapidated state of housing were central to the movement. A flood of problems related to poor quality housing was particularly urgent for immigrant (and especially undocumented) families who often rented in a "shadow market" of unregulated, "off the books" apartment buildings that were poorly maintained, unsafe, and frequently lacking running water and private bathrooms (see Chapter 2). A high proportion of these renters (as well as a number of squatters) consisted of large families living in overcrowded conditions, lacking proper ventilation and simply inadequate space of facilities for children. Many families also lived in constant worry of housing demolitions by landlords or public authorities who frequently condemned the structures, and many cases these spaces were shared with drug users who also squatted in the buildings or used hallways intermittently to smoke crack cocaine and inject heroin. Even those who lived in newer modernist social housing (HLM) often found themselves having to organize to demand repairs and improvements from HLM operators. For these residents, the question of the park was less about of "public" space as opposed to the need for more space, particularly for children (recall that neighborhood has among the highest ratios of children in Paris).

Amongst many activists, there was a broad sense that the future of the neighborhood as a whole would be determined by fate of the Cour du Maroc. If it was transformed into space of "collective or educational usage", an activist felt it could solve a problem described as a "population in a malaise because it feels imprisoned". Thus the large, undeveloped, piece of open space – physically – but not legally – within the reach

of residents (one of the AJE's leaders described it as the "last free space in the city") but still under the control the SNCF appeared symbolic of both the neighborhood's current state and its potential for an alternative future. To dictate the development of the site was claim control over a territory and a set of social conditions beyond the actual boundaries of a single lot. The AJE was founded then, with a mission that was not only "to create a great park on the SNCF land (la Cour du Maroc)" but "to contribute to the defense and improvement of urban conditions – the conditions of life, the environment". Given the vaguely identified hinterland that is northeast Paris, the AJE's neighborhood was not named and instead only defined through an extensive list of streets and boundaries ("the perimeter of Boulevard de la Villette, Boulevard de la Chapelle, rue Phillippe-de-Girard, rue Pajol, rue d'Evangile, rue d'Auberivilliers, boulevard Mac Donald, Avenue Corentin-Cariou, avenue de Flandre"). Activists would therefore have to construct a neighborhood identity as well as mobilize if they wished to have "neighborhood-based movement".

The AJE was further informed by a gathering global movement in the 1990s focused on urban gardening though, unlike these movements its members were not interested in a mere "community garden". An especially formative experience for the leadership had been participation in the *Forum national de jardinage et de la citoyenneté* (national forum of community gardening and citizenship) held in Lille, in 1997. This international conference brought together "citizen gardeners" from throughout France, as well as Belgium, and New York in a global forum on the state of community gardening. Presentations by the Green Guerrillas, a New York City based group which used gardening as way to recover abandoned lots were especially influential for the AJE's leaders (the group's founder had travelled to New York in the late 1990s to observe

community gardening there). For conference participants, the creation of gardens was not simply about adding more greenery in neighborhoods or “brownfields”, but a broader political intervention in struggles over urban land that were becoming more pronounced as global cities passed into post-industrial phases of socio-spatial restructuring. Despite the AJE’s highly local approach, the emergence of the group must be understood in context of this global trend, itself a product of de-industrialization and burgeoning urban environmentalism in North America and Europe.

But unlike the so-called “community gardening” movements, the AJE had as its aim making the city and elected officials act on its behalf – it was not satisfied with creating a temporary community space that would likely disappear when a “legitimate” use for the Cour du Maroc had found more powerful interests. By 1998, when the construction on the Éole commuter line was completed, there was a gap in expectations between elected officials, who had apparently forgotten the plans for 6 hectare “Jardins d’Éole” along with Vaillant’s unsuccessful 1993 campaign, and the residents who lived near the Cour du Maroc, who had been greatly impressed by the visit of elected officials and the tree planting, regardless of the campaign’s outcome. On a walk through the neighborhood in 2007, Pierre, one of the groups founding members, told me “Most people you met on the street thought after the electoral campaign event, that there was going to be a park built here, because of what the politicians did.” Yet, upon the completion of the RER line in 1998, the SNCF announced that the Cour de Maroc would be split between the Tafanel company (50%), its own freight operations (40%), and potentially, “a small neighborhood garden” on 10%³ of the site. Neighborhood meetings in the late 1990s were marked by feelings of “deception and worry by inhabitants who

had heard of a possible return of freight activities at the Cour du Maroc”. Fortunately for the AJE, the group was able to find open ears early on with mayors of the arrondissements. The group appealed forcefully to Daniel Vaillant, as a member of the neighborhood (“The people here know you are a ‘neighborhood guy’” they wrote to him in a letter⁴) as well to Roger Madec, mayor of the 19th arrondissement. Though the latter lacked jurisdiction over the territory itself (Rue d’Aubervilliers is the boundary between the arrondissements with the Cour du Maroc lying just inside the 18th arrondissement) most of the “affected” citizens were residents of the 19th arrondissement.

Nevertheless an array of powerful but competing interests was already in the process of assuring the Cour du Maroc would remain in private hands for the sake of profit accumulation. The SNCF, like railroads throughout Europe, had already sold off vast tracts of its valuable urban land because of redevelopment in post-industrial areas; in Paris it had recently let go of major rail yards in the 12th and 17th arrondissements. It had no intention of abandoning the Cour du Maroc as it now stood poised to sign a lucrative lease with the Tafanel Corporation, which in turn planned to expand warehouse space onto the site. In line for access to the Cour du Maroc behind Tafanel was a sanitation and garbage collection entity, which had the explicit support of Paris’ then mayor Jean Tiberi (and Chirac protégé), of the dominant center- right party at the time, RPR (*Rassemblement pour la République* – Rally for the Republic). The Tafanel corporation (and by extension, the SNCF) had the public support of the Communist Party (PCF), who had strong union ties to the railroad, favored the re-industrialization of the area, and still viewed northeast Paris as its home territory (despite it having lost an electoral majority here, its national headquarters lay just a kilometer away). Meanwhile, Daniel Vaillant of

the 18th held negotiations between Tafanel and the SNCF (despite privately reassuring the AJE of his support through written correspondence, he did not invite the AJE nor any other residents to the discussions). Only Roger Madec (PS), the Mayor of the 19th arrondissement, which by virtue of ward boundaries represented the residents near the Cour du Maroc (but not the site itself), publicly supported the AJE's position from the outset.

In late 1998, the AJE began with a series of head-on protests designed to seize the attention of local officials. Finding themselves locked out of negotiations between Vaillant and the SNCF over the future of the site, the group held a demonstration in front the 18th arrondissement town hall, waving placards that called for a "halt to authoritarian urbanism" and calling for end to "savage urbanism". When locked out of another meeting at Tafanel's headquarters the following year, the AJE gathered at the company's entrance with signs, and in the words of one activist, "politely offered coffee" to the participants as they arrived to the meeting.

Such gentility (often rendered absurd or ironic by its context) would become a signature trait of the group's style. A year later the AJE embarked on campaign to mail hundreds of "Cour du Maroc" postcards (emblazoned with a picture of a park on the site) to the arrondissement. The group covered the apartments buildings near the Cour du Maroc with banners. When it did find itself able to attend meetings, Pierre, the group's leader at the time, noted that "it wasn't only two or three people that came to ask questions at arrondissement council meetings, 10, 80, even 2000 – then they are obligated to listen". By using sheer numbers the AJE sought to, in the words of Pierre, "force the politicians to work". Such direct tactics continued to run up against the inevitable fact

that Paris' Mayor Tiberi appeared to have no interest in the AJE's demands. Despite the growing pressure the residents exerted at the arrondissement level, the 18th arrondissement and the City of Paris gave the SNCF and TAFANEL a favorable review to begin the process of obtaining construction permits for the site.

The group had also begun developing a different strategy of protest that sought to make use of northeast Paris itself. Instead of meeting with politicians in their established sphere (that of the arrondissement councils and committee meetings) the AJE aimed to lure or stage confrontations with politicians in their own "turf", where they could set the stage and control the terms of the conversation. From its inception, the AJE began holding what it called *manif-festives*, a contraction between *manifestation* (the French term for demonstration) and *festive*. The events combined the visual impact of a protest (masses of residents holding signs and placards, chants and speeches) with the atmosphere of a party (food was served pot-luck style, games were played, and musicians performed). Whereas most demonstrations might march *through* neighborhoods and culminate at a politically symbolic site (an arrondissement's town hall or government ministry) the *manif-festives* stayed put in one place in the neighborhood, either at the *Passage Goix* (a narrow lane lined with the neighborhoods' most dilapidated apartment buildings and squats) or later, the Cour du Maroc itself. The mood was not angry but earnest, at times even fun-loving and welcoming; it eschewed a political aesthetic of anger in favor of one of celebration and friendliness – but urgent – one of bonding and solidarity. The lingering presence of the *manif-festives* soon became a fixture in neighborhood and that drew a large contingent of residents that stretched beyond the

middle class milieu of the organizers to include West African and Maghrebi residents, and sizable numbers of women and children in particular.

The numbers of residents on the streets as well as the AJE's success in publicizing the events began to draw journalists from local newspapers, and quickly thereafter, politicians. While local Socialist Party figures such as Daniel Vaillant and Roger Madec were eager to be seen in streets that have long been a left base in French politics, representatives from the right wing City Hall (presided over by Jean Tiberi, at the time) also began to make appearances. A decade later, Pierre, the AJE's first leader and co-creator of the manif-festive remained amused at how eager even opposing elected officials were to mingle with the crowd. For him and other AJE leaders, however, the crowds and setting were not simply there to "welcome" politicians or impress them with numbers, but a key element in influencing them. A visibly proud Pierre recalled the politicians' presence at the manif-festives with more than a bit of chuckling:

At each party there would be between ten and twenty politicians, from across the board, left, right, from the arrondissement and the City of Paris. I used to tell mothers to tell their children, to go say "oh, Mr Mayor we must have a park here" and I would tell the kids to go pull on the politicians' hands. That was funny, that, but you absolutely had to motivate the politicians. When the elected officials came in to the Cour du Maroc, with the barbeque and about two or three hundred residents – everybody was there – and they saw the people wanted this place, and then the people were asking them questions about whether this place would become a park or not - [he pauses for a moment, seemingly lost

in reminiscence] At those parties I remember looking over my shoulder and noticing oh, there is a politician! And another one, and another, and another...

The manif-festives served as a spectacle concocted for the seduction of elected officials who in turn arrived seeking votes from numerous residents in an assortment that stretched across ages and ethnicities. Aided by the wafting smell of merguez sausage being grilled over an open flame, the manif-festive offered what might termed a mouthwatering manifestation of the “neighborhood” in all its generational, class, and ethnic diversity. It seemed many aspects of the events played to the desires of politicians in an almost a satirical manner: there was ample space for photo opportunities with children and opportunities to sit and eat alongside residents.

Just as importantly the manif-festives offered both a cause and presentation that was more than palatable for Paris’ Socialist Party establishment. In contrast to more radical and nationally prominent movements in northeast Paris such as the *Sans-Papiers* (undocumented immigrants movement) and *Droit au Logement* or DAL (the right to housing movement) the AJE sought no wider social change (despite a number of its individual members holding radical politics). Though a form of street politics, this was face-to-face politics on a micro-level, interpersonal sense serving to expose the politicians to the people (and thus awaken their desires – or at least their obligations – to their constituents) And though expressive of a solidarity with more radical movements the AJE eschewed the more common, traditionally radical street politics rooted in a tradition of barricades and open class confrontation. Instead this “park politics” cultivated a milieu of middle class civility and conviviality, often heavily inflected by an

aesthetic of merry making and the carnivalesque. Many aspects of the movements' aesthetic were evocative of an anti-modern, rural nostalgia for village festivals, Romani imagery, and circus and sideshow performers that has been associated with France's middle class counterculture since the late 1960s. Manif-festives included performances of puppetry, circus acrobats (a travelling circus troupe known as *Cirque Electrique* occupied the Cour du Maroc with the AJE's support for several years) and a Roma and Balkan influenced band making heavy use of a rustic, exotic sound grounded in accordions and horns. In many respects, the manif-festive substituted the anti-conformity message conveyed by the zany circus performer aesthetic from the level of the individual to that of the urban space where protest was centered: it was the neighborhood that was a pariah, quirky, somewhat exotic, and a wellspring of creativity. The AJE also had a Situationist-style penchant for transforming the urban spaces into surreal park like spaces. The crumbling alleyways and weedstrewn lots that were the sites of the manif-festives were often decorated with numerous potted plants, small trees, and even pictures of parks and greenery (one might say that the AJE replaced the "under the pavement, the beach" motto of May of 68 with "under the pavement, a park"). Such imagery and sounds resonated as a kind of subcultural "signifying practice" (see Hebdige 1979) evoking a middle class inflected aesthetic, political, moral, and even social sensibility instantly recognizable amongst France's so-called "68ers", who remain very prominent in Paris' Socialist and Green Party establishment. The AJE was thus seeking to transform urban conditions impacting some of Paris' poorest residents, but it entered into a dialogue with power through a language and symbolic system heavily associated with France's left leaning

urban middle class and emergent and rapidly expanding base of power for the Socialist Party in Paris.

Espace de vie: Culture, Gender, Children, and Park Politics

The manif-festives may have been a spectacle for politicians, but they were far from being a simple act of showmanship. The demonstrations served as an effective way for a small middle class minority to mobilize a neighborhood that was largely poor and of immigrant origin. Despite its dense population, it was – and continues to be – marked by clear social divisions in daily life between non-immigrant French, West Africans, and Maghrebi residents. Cafes in the neighborhood are moderately segregated between these groups, and retail shops (ie music stores and produce sellers) are especially divided: my non-immigrant informants would often react with surprise and amusement when they bumped into me leaving certain African run markets: it was clear they never set foot in many such businesses (likewise, I was the only non-Maghrebi customer at local tea lounges the vast majority of the time I visited them). The AJE's leaders were very aware of these divisions and despite having connections with the local mosque, its core members – even those of immigrant origin – were middle class and college educated.

A broad discursive project was undertaken to demonstrate how the presence of the new park would satisfy the needs of the population as a whole, with the manif-festives being a principal setting where a demonstration of an idealized vision of the neighborhood could be *manifested*, to translate literally from the French term for protest, *manifestation*. At times this approach could be paternalistic, as one member recalled struggling with “people who, for reasons of difficulty that are so common in this

neighborhood, don't see how to change and improve things" (such views seemed to ignore the ongoing presence of *Sans Papier* and housing related activism already prevalent in the West African and Maghrebi communities). But overall the group realized that the struggle over the development of the Cour du Maroc was closely tied to residents' ability to impact the conditions of in the neighborhood at far greater level. This meant that the residents had to reach out beyond "park politics" to broader questions of urban justice (which had been at core of the group's missions since its inception). Posters for manif-festives thus made the following appeals to residents:

Everyone knows that a family of seven can't live in a two bedroom and that the overburdened classes and their children's future are threatened by the problems of this country... Fighting for a four hectare park with cultural, athletic, and community facilities is to make a bet that a bit of a space of life [espace de vie] in the area from La Chapelle to Stalingrad, Chateau Landon to Crimée could give these neighborhoods – and the people who live there – more unity and identity. It is urgent we respond to the suffering of the residents.

Invoking images of "overburdened classes" and overcrowded apartments, the AJE linked broader issues of class and housing to issues of family and the need for athletic and cultural facilities by way of the park. A park was touted not so much to appeal to environmentalist sympathies but as a more abstract way of "opening up" the highly dense neighborhood. Not only would a park offer "espace de vie" (or a space of life) for low income families living in crowded conditions, but it would create a "neighborhood space" for local identity and solidarity as a response to the "suffering" of inhabitants. Indeed by

invoking the physical boundaries of the area the protest sought to actually define a neighborhood.

To this end, the form of the protests themselves were demonstrations of the possibilities of a what new “space of life” could hold for residents. To be certain, the *manif-festive* had a practical function: AJE members used the functions to inform residents about new developments in the struggle of the park, the presence of industrial pollution emitted by the SNCF and Tafanel’s vehicles, and to draw more core members from the wider, diverse population of the northeast Paris. But these practical successes were underlain by potent symbolic elements. Trees and plants were brought into the rubble of the Cour du Maroc; at other times, festivities were held amidst the crumbling apartment buildings in the narrow alleys adjacent to it. North African cuisine and merguez sausage in particular, was served at the events. One journalist marveled at how “the Cour de Maroc was transformed in the space of minutes into veritable garden.” (“Fête du Printemps pour les Jardins d’Éole,” 2001) Two leading members of the association described how the multiple goals of what they called “*manif-festives*” were closely tied to residents re-imagining the social and built environment of the neighborhood itself. The AJE activists, Paul, Rachel, Pierre therefore said the *manif-festives* were held to convey a vision to residents as much as they were meant to express collective grievances

Paul: We did it to give desire when people passed by, because in the site there was a huge wall and no one could see there [into the Cour du Maroc]. So to attract people to the event we put up trees and plants and stuff like that so that people could discover the

grandeur of the site, so that people would have the desire for have a park there, to enrich their lives.

Rachel: We had to get the people to imagine a park there. For one of the manif-festives for example, we searched in stores for images of parks so we could tell people “you could have that”, to tell people in this miserable area, this degraded neighborhood, in the social housing, to “imagine having this” and show we could take the initiative, get the ball rolling, to get this park. So its true that a goal of the manif-festive was to introduce the people of the neighborhood to the land and to inform them. And more there were concerts, games, some food -

Pierre: -- and to make the politicians come, so they could see the number of people present.

Mani-festives appealed not only to “needs” such as housing or space for children, but at a visceral level, the group sought to appeal to (or create) desires for a green space as well. In most of the demonstrations, the group would invite people into the Cour du Maroc itself, which was decorated with spontaneous vegetation, and often featured music, games, and a forum for debates over how it should one day look. In this way – by symbolically breaking down the wall along rue d’Aubervilliers – which at least one journalist could not resist dubbing a “Berlin Wall” (du Martera, 2002) – the group sought to show the possibility of a changed future by exposing the vast openness of the Cour du Maroc itself to the inhabitants. This “pedagogical” form of protest served to demonstrate the vastness of the vacant lot and allow other neighborhood residents to imagine what a park might look like – often by showing images of parks and gardens in literal terms. It

was a statement that the neighborhood's space was included the Cour du Maroc; in this sense the manifest was a demonstration of desire as much a political demonstration. The idea was to create – “manifest” – if only for a short time, a space of sociality and community as well as a physical green space the movement sought to realize in the creation of the Jardins d'Éole.



Figure 13: Two photographs of manif-festives. Photography courtesy of the Association Jardins D'Éole.

Nevertheless, the AJE could only mobilize residents in large numbers if it articulated the park's significance as reaching beyond the visceral desire for a lush green space and focused on the needs facing residents. One of the mobilizations' founding members, a woman in her 30s named Rachel, recognized the importance of open space and a park in this regard as an elementary school teacher in the neighborhood. Her ability to articulate the political relationship between children, public space, and gender equity would be crucial to the mobilization – she eventually became the leader of the AJE despite being its youngest core member. In my discussions with the AJE's current and former leadership, she frequently alluded to difficulties experienced by women taking care of children in neighborhood, pointing out for example, that “the mothers from large families with strollers and children have to take the metro to go to Butte Chaumont or La Villette”. In a situation that was made worse by the crowded housing conditions in which many immigrant origin families lived, it was women – who are most often entrusted with childcare – who bore the brunt of the lack green space in the neighborhood. When combined with the fact high ratio of children under 18 that marks the neighborhood it becomes clear that the lack of green space was a gendered inequality. Ironically, then, the neighborhood's lack of public space was at once a hidden, domestic, and often gendered form of privation related to the more intimate spaces of family and child rearing. It was frequently women who were forced to use extra time and energy taking public transportation to find a place to play with children. And in many cases, the lack of a social space for children to play also meant that there was lack of a public social space for women to share.

For this reason women and children became an increasingly prominent presence in the AJE, and ideals of maternalism emerged as central to its discourse. Parents' associations in the area's schools – helped by Rachel's role as a teacher– were closely tied to the mobilization since its inception. The group networked with tenants organizations (which have traditionally had a strongly immigrant and female membership) as well as holding a manifestive in the Passage Goix. In this alley, lined with apartments buildings housing immigrant origin families in acutely deteriorated, overcrowded conditons, the AJE holds its first manifestive. According to the AJE's own summary: it created an atmosphere of “conviviality, information, and discussion... children benefitted from a full array of activities and five politicians visited, marking their interest in our action”. Mothers from the neighborhood were not only important in planning activities at the manifestives for children but in constructing an improvised sandbox and playground in the Cour du Maroc itself (little more than a large pit of dirt). Calls for a park were therefore commonly articulated by residents as focusing on a “play space for children” and an “infants garden”; “ a place for the mothers to meet“ and “a traditional park offering shade and a place for mothers and their children”. Parents (and frequently mothers) with children became some of the earliest appropriators of the Cour du Maroc itself, claiming a corner in the space for themselves (while teenagers practiced break dancing and record spinning in the abandoned buildings nearby). This identified the space early on as a children's space (and a woman's space as well, though it was associated with rigid assumptions linking gender and maternal roles).

A second way in which the association consolidated its political base in the neighborhood was through an appeal linking environmentalism and nature to child

rearing (a common theme in the American EJ movement as well (see for example Bullard, 1993, 2000; Checker 2005). A particularly rich source documenting the ways many northeast residents constructed their need or desires for a park in the Cour du Maroc around these themes of children and nature are present in a set of written petitions the AJE collected during its campaign. Designed as a written testimony to pass on to politicians and local officials these residents' quotes about the need for green space are flawed in that they contain no information regarding a particular respondents gender, ethnicity or class background. It is only known that the "survey respondents" were approximately 20% under 20 years old, 60% between 20-60, with the remainder being older residents. The majority of respondents (70%) were not registered members of the AJE itself, and main arrondissements where respondents lived were the 19th arrondissement (54%) and the 18th arrondissement (42%). The AJE obtained written "imaginings" of park from 141 residents (the vast majority were collected at the manifestes). While one cannot treat the responses as representative of the neighborhood in a statistically valid light, they represent an informative collection of ways in which social concerns are articulated around green space.

The principal theme of these written responses deal with a concern for children frequently articulated in conjunction with nature and the environment. Frequently the tie between children and nature was through association, thus one resident articulated a desired vision for a park as "Green! Very Green! With lots of lush foliage, beautiful plants and large trees, play areas for children". In many cases however, residents articulated nature as specifically a *children's* need in this largely post-industrial area. Residents envisioned the space as a site where children could learn about plants and

animals and be exposed to nature. Thus a resident longed for a “ real green space where one can see nature at work and show young Parisians of the neighborhood the cycle of the seasons, and how plants grow (other than the weeds that come up through the sidewalks)”. Another called for “a space where children and people of the neighborhood and discover or rediscover the cycles of nature”. Yet another saw the park as not only a “garden for children”, but “space for children to garden” with one request for “goats and sheep for children to see” (another envisioned a place with cows and chickens). In multiple instances it appeared that residents linked children’s exposure to nature and symbols of rural life as an escape, relief or redemption from northeast Paris as a place of physical, environmental, and even moral degradation. Often this involved the educational (and presumably moral) value that was linked to children discovering nature and “working the land”. For many residents, a park offered a potential antidote to the evils and perils of urban life.

An expression used by the AJE (“espace de vie” or space of life) seemed to capture many concerns that residents voiced about the importance of life and vibrancy (particularly regarding children). In the post-industrial landscape of northeast Paris, where capital disinvestment had resulted in the visible “death” and “decay” of the neighborhood’s economic and built environment discourses of nature; above all vitality appeared to be at the forefront of individual’s consciousness when envisioning rebuilt urban space. Thus residents spoke at length of a “place of life”, “lots of lush greenery and water”, “a wooded valley”, and a “garden that could transmit life across the generations, a park of human values”. Of course, this is not to say there was much love for what little industrial “life” remained in the neighborhood. Nature was often seen as

having a healing effect on this industrial activity and the pollution that accompanied it. One resident stated that the “minimum to obtain is for non-polluting trucks and engines – no noise, no diesel – it’s hellish.” Another called for “trees to recuperate a maximum amount of oxygen and clean the pollution”. The park was seen as “oasis” of life as well as being restorative of it for northeast Paris.

Frequently these images of life, whether related to healing or lush vibrancy intermingled the realms of the social, biological, urban, and cultural. The AJE itself had made a slogan out of the call for a “great park to heal the wounds of a suffering neighborhood”. As the below quotes show a number of residents drew parallels between horticultural of the park and the opportunity for the space become of one of multicultural, social, political, and environmental vitality for the neighborhood. A few examples of such visions are:

A place of awareness for culture as well as botany. Just as well, it could be a space to play for little ones but equally for the teenagers who could move their basketball courts out from under the scandalous spaces under the metro and have them in the park. I’m thinking also of a place for health, and imagining a meeting place (for debates, different events, a socio-cultural place)

Heavily wooded and flowered. It really should be a meeting place for residents of the nearby neighborhoods for cultural activities and sports.

A place where the neighborhood might have the possibility of discovering the beauty of the changing seasons. A place of calm and meditation for some. But in another way, a feast of oxygen, and above all a place of life for demonstrations to improve to neighborhood and its residents.

Green! Green! Green! Lots of trees to heal the pollution in the neighborhood. A playspace for children (of which the 18th arrondissement currently suffers a serious deficit). A space for encounters between different types of people: a space of communication.

A real working class park (don't make it like the *buttes*). [reference to the highly stylized *Parc des Buttes Chaumont*, which contains lush forests and gardens but no places for sports or activities]

A forest made of all of the trees of the neighborhood's residents' countries (baobab, pine, oak, olive, palm...). A park with the identity of the residents.

A large portion should be occupied by GARDENS for the NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS. That's to say, semi-public – open to residents of the neighborhood, the schools, handicapped people, unbalanced people (addicts, etc) to give a taste of the Earth, and of Plants. All of this could be done thanks to a personal investment that the associations could offer.

Much of the discourse centered around the park intermingled and juxtaposed images of a vibrant flower setting with a social, political, and urban “flowering”: thus residents tied culture and botany together, biodiversity parallels cultural diversity and *mixité social*, and the intermingling of plants and species is envisioned in the same breath as “encounters between different types of people”. Such a space of “communication” could enable political consciousness and activity: it would be a “working class park”, a space for “debates”, and according to a few residents, a place largely managed and controlled by

neighborhood associations. Both residents and the neighborhood itself could benefit from exposure to the natural cycles of life (“the changing seasons” or “a taste of the Earth”) be it from the palliative power of nature or the contagiousness of natural energy and vitalities (ie “a feast of oxygen, and above all a place of life for demonstrations to improve to neighborhood and its residents”). The park would be an *espace de vie* in a natural, cultural, social, urban, and political sense. Such visions by residents suggest that the imagery of nature and green space that accompanied the park was at least as much about describing a future green space as it provided a vocabulary or shared idiom with which residents could grapple with political and social struggles facing the neighborhood. Even at this early discursive stage, the park was produced as a political space in which residents’ visions of an urban future revealed the worries of the present: a lack of political unity across of ethnic and class lines, the threat of industrial pollution, and dearth of collective goods or public facilities in the area. In this sense, articulations about the park were not about a green space but the myriad of social concerns facings the area.

This park related idiom for discussing social and political issues facing the residents were especially pronounced in discussions of the so-called “wall of Rue de Aubervilliers”. The presence of a long, high wall (roughly 4 meters high and running the length of the Rue d’Aubervilliers) that served to demarcate and restrict access to the Cour du Maroc had been a particular target of ire. Given the fact that the wall happened to separate the 18th arrondissement and the 19th arrondissement, and it was a physical barrier between residents and the Cour du Maroc itself, its symbolism was powerful. A wave of media attention on “sectarian conflicts” and “ghettoization” in the neighborhood (including violence between Jewish and Muslim youths throughout the 2000s and the

1998 bombing of a local mosque⁵) had placed a need for unity at the forefront of many local activists' agendas. In this context the wall was a vivid symbolic marker in the urban landscape of social divisions of ethnicity and class conflict in the neighborhood. Even though many activists with whom I spoke derided such depictions of ethnic strife as exaggerated there was a strong premium placed on solidarity across class and ethnic lines and an importance placed upon creating a neighborhood "center". In one flyer, the AJE appealed to residents' worries about SNCF development perpetuating "clashing street borders", pointing out (in the context of European unification) that "Europe is in the midst of being born, but if you are Aubervilliers you are not La Chapelle! (and vice-versa!)." The wall along the Cour du Maroc was a symbolic center of these worries serving a metaphor of social and spatial division in the neighborhood (journalists – and Pierre – frequently invoked the image of the Berlin Wall when describing it).

Other concerns centered on the degree the wall impacted the vitality of the residents in more direct terms. One resident's vision of the park, for example, had called for the "destruction of the wall of shame" and stated that "one could measure in kilos and tons the stress imposed by this wall on the residents". One afternoon, in a discussion of the AJE's impact on the neighborhood with Pierre and Rachel and Paul, special emphasis was placed on the profundity of the wall's destruction:

Pierre: When the wall was demolished over a period of two or three months, and the people of the neighborhood would come walking down this street here, that you know well, you see people used to walk down this street like that [he imitates a person with their head low, eyes to the ground] people would walk with out looking at anything

around them, but all of sudden, there was light! I think, I'm no expert, but I think there was a phenomenon of de-stressing, of ...

Rachel: of unburdening

Pierre: Yes of unburdening. Before that sidewalk it was gloomy and closed.

Paul: Now people can be breathe.

Rachel: Rue d'Aubervilliers was a hallway before.

A tremendous degree of emphasis is placed on opening up the neighborhood, exposing it to light, uncovering, and unburdening its residents. Again, light, air, and oxygen became central elements of the vitality of the area's "urban tissue" intermingling the realms of biological and social life. Other AJE discourse often invoked metaphors stressing death and, in particular, "suffocation" and "resuscitation" were employed by the AJE, who frequently described the park as a needed *espace de vie*, *espace de la vie* or *espace de vivre* (living space, space of life, or living room) or alternatively, a "space to breathe", "let in light" or as "lungs for the neighborhood". The AJE's discourse appeared to be marked by a kind of triadic conflation of life between the human, the horticultural, and the urban. Metaphors were mixed and combined related to the physical health of the inhabitants, the ecological conditions favoring gardening, and the material and economic conditions of the surrounding neighborhood.

However, if such imaginings of an urban future sought to tear down walls – metaphorical and concrete – some residents' visions were more discerning of which public should be welcomed in the new space. Many residents had embraced the idea that the "healing" power of nature should be available for all residents (particularly those

suffering from substance abuse), but more voiced concerns about a “bad crowd” in the neighborhood with a number of respondents describing their ideal vision of the park as “securitized”. “Pardon me” wrote one of the neighborhoods more well-heeled residents in a letter to the AJE, “but I’ve been the owner of an apartment on Passage Goix, and I think this site would be an ideal place for the illicit commerce that is already flourishing in the neighborhood. Thanks for thinking of prevention.” Clearly, there were some who opposed to the idea of park altogether because of fears that it would be overtaken by drug users, but the group that placed security at the forefront on the concerns was nonetheless a minority. And while security was not at the center of the AJE’s discourse (explicit discourses over hygiene and securitization were closely associated with the right wing Tiberi Mayoral administration) the group found itself forced by such concerns to address the issue of drug usage and public space in explicit ways. To this end, the group built strong coalitions with community based drug treatment programs and held meetings in which residents spoke about the importance making sure the Cour du Maroc not lapse into being a “drug park”. Interestingly, the discursive solution to this issue, influenced by the “eyes on the streets” theory of Jane Jacobs, again hinged upon articulating the *espace de vie* idea. Activists proposed that a “vibrant”, “alive” space always be frequented by numerous residents in organized activities that would deter crack-cocaine and heroin users (as opposed to a robust police presence or security cameras). In a disciplinary logic reminiscent of childcare and after school programs that are common for the neighborhood’s teenagers, residents insisted upon the importance of “keeping the park busy” so that it might stay out of trouble.

Thus all of these discursive elements: a focus on safety and the “moral life” of the space, a focus on natural, social, cultural and vivaciousness and harmony, breaking down barriers symbolic and real, and political effervescence and along with questions of gender equity and family politics, made the ideal of park popular across the neighborhood’s diverse but divided population. The manif-festives provided a forum and showcase for such ideas, which were disseminated through speeches, discussions, and interpersonal contact and networking. And importantly, the proposed solution of a park for problems as varied as drug addiction, gender inequity, overcrowded housing, and worries over children’s moral development had concrete, tangible and achievable appeal. The creation of the park was radical enough of a change in the neighborhoods urban fabric to appeal to those inclined to profound social and political transformation while being cosmetic enough to pull in those threatened by radical change to the mobilization. The primary question that remained then, was whether powerful interests such as the SNCF or Tafanel corporation could be outmaneuvered in the neighborhood’s bid for claiming the space.

From Toxic Waste Dump to Children’s Paradise

Fortunately for the AJE a set of events occurred that helped make their improbable goal of setting the land aside for a park more appealing to politicians. First, the discovery of toxic waste filled barrels on the site in 1998 served to enliven the debate, if not change its terms. Tests revealed that 2.5 metric tons of sodium cyanide were found illegally stored in the site, though they were also discovered to be safely contained (Hurin, 2000). This drew the Green Party (*Verts*) into the debate. The greens were less

interested in the broader movement for the park than the issue of dangerous pollution. Their support, combined with the considerable press attention drawn to the issue by the toxic waste increased pressure on a now deeply embarrassed SNCF, even though the railroad was absolved from being primarily responsible for the waste (two other companies who were tenants of the SNCF were later fined). Similarly, a short lived but very public deliberation by then mayor Tiberi to locate a municipal garbage processing facility on the site only strengthened the perception of the neighborhood as victim and pawn in the hand of more powerful interests. Both incidents served to galvanize wider support for residents, even though the planned garbage processing facility appeared to suggest that Tiberi's valuation of the Cour du Maroc was quite different from that of the associations.

Given the neighborhood's historical and geographical position relative to the railways, there was no shortage of ill feeling or willing participants in a campaign against the SNCF as well as Tafanel. The AJE found an enthusiastic partner in a La Chapelle based neighborhood association who had long fought with the SNCF over air and noise pollution. A particular focus was placed upon on the noxious effects of diesel fumes spewed by the delivery trucks (especially those of the Tafanel corporation) and most of all, SNCF yard engines. These diesel powered locomotives (also known as 'dead mileage' trains) are run through the neighborhood day and night, as they are used to assemble passenger trains prior to their departures from Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est, where electric engines then take over for scheduled service. In addition to a virulent letter writing campaign to elected officials and the SNCF, the associations were able to conduct press interviews leading to a full page article in *France Soir*, entitled a "a poisoned

neighborhood.” Not only did the article (Didier, 1999) draw connections between the toxic waste, the diesel fumes, and the number of children living in the area, but it painted the SNCF as the undeniably the antagonist. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that by 2000, a publicly cowed SNCF was now offering the association a garden of 30000 m², with 12000 m² area set aside for Tafanel. Not only was the new offer 10 times the amount of green space first proposed in 1998, but it included a total retreat of the SNCF’s own facilities from the site.

This did not mean that AJE was without opponents outside of the SNCF or Tafanel. The Communist Party (PCF) took up the cause of Tafanel on the grounds of reviving industrial employment in the 18th and 19th arrondissements (both of which were former PCF strongholds) and in support of rail based freight delivery (it also has historically strong union ties with the SNCF). Others, including some residents with whom I spoke as late as 2008, cited the need for housing over parkland. AJE members had treated this debate delicately, acknowledging as one activist told me, that “housing is a principle urban demand” but frequently citing the already high population densities of northeast Paris and its lack of green space. As a founding member Paul had told me “in that case it wasn’t good versus evil” acknowledging that there were arguments to be made for housing, and employment in the form of jobs with Tafanel and the SNCF. Furthermore the group acknowledged that there was indeed an environmental argument *against* the park and for reindustrializing the railroad site to decrease Paris’ overall dependence on diesel trucks for the delivery of goods. Rather than counter such arguments directly, the association preferred to point out that when it conducted the survey of 141 residents, a majority wanted the park. Whether or not the survey truly

represented the views of the neighborhood, no other associations emerged in opposition to the goal of building a park, and housing groups such as DAL (Droit Aux Logement – to be discussed further in Chapter 6) did not join the debate or suggest that housing should be built on the land.

It was a matter of no small importance all of these debates (including the widely publicized cyanide barrels scandal) occurred during the build-up to Paris' mayoral race of 2001, in which an energized PS-PCF-Green coalition on the left saw an opportunity seize the mayor's office for the first time in Parisian history. By polling day, Jean Tiberi, the right wing incumbent, had been weakened by several scandals involving vote rigging and the illegal possession of a firearms cache in his apartment. His party (the Gaullist RPR – *Rassemblement pour la République* – Rally for the Republic) split its ranks due to the scandals, running a second mayoral candidate in the election. Bertrand Delanoë (PS), a little known former city councilor who happened to be from the 18th arrondissement (first elected to represent the affluent, but left-leaning Montmartre neighborhood), won the election handily against the split opposition. Delanoë's campaign had publicly supported the bid for the park, and his new administration was quick to tout a park at the Cour du Maroc as one of its first new projects, situating it as part of an new approach away from "monuments", and towards "neighborhoods" (*Le Nouvel Observateur* 2002). This was a populist gesture in a city long known for its leaders' pharaonic penchant for large projects in central locations (away from the city's outlying *quartiers populaires*). Such statements were not merely public relations: as an AJE activist described it, after the election of Delanoë, the terms of the debate surrounding the park swiftly went from 'yes or no' to 'what size?'. The already weakened SNCF soon found that the 18th

arrondissement mayor Daniel Vaillant (PS) abruptly became an outspoken supporter of the park.

The AJE now found itself in an enviable position: not only did the 18th and 19th arrondissement have a close ally in city hall, but beginning in 2001 Vaillant won a presidential appointment as Interior Minister: he now sat at the apex of France's domestic policy apparatus, behind only the prime minister and president. The importance of this alignment of political stars should not be underestimated. 2001 was indeed a fortuitous year for politics in the 18th arrondissement. Not only was Vaillant Interior Minister, but Lionel Jospin (long an 18th arrondissement figure) was Prime Minister, in addition to Delanoë' has roots in the 18th arrondissement as a former councilor elected by Montmartre. These politicians came to be known as the "gang of 18" and formed the leadership of the Socialist Party resurgence in Paris. The resultant change in political currents was quick, and by December of 2001, the city of Paris had all but approved a 4.2 hectare garden, part of which would now be built *over top* of a Tafanel facility of 4000 m².

A related factor in the group's later success in negotiations was the passing of a law sponsored by now Interior Minister Vaillant, calling for the nationwide creation of Conseil de Quartiers (neighborhood councils) in 2002. Under the auspices of "local democracy" a dramatic reorganization of local governance occurred, creating 121 local level councils in Paris alone. The new councils, organized geographically around set of defined neighborhoods, created a new type of forum between associations and policy makers, the effects of which neither the elected officials or the associations could predict. The AJE became active in several councils, especially Flandre Aubervilliers in the 19th

arrondissement and La Chapelle-Marx Dormoy in the 18th arrondissement. According to AJE members, it was not so much that the establishment of the councils themselves gave more of a “voice” to residents, but rather, their newness and unfamiliarity created what might be called a level playing-field for the different interests involved. As Paul, long a “strategist” of the AJE noted about the neighborhood councils:

Nobody in City Hall knew how to handle them [the councils], so he [Delanoë] sent a deputy mayor. In the beginning they didn't know how to manipulate the assembly – now they know much better – and they found themselves a bit overwhelmed by the mobilization. (...) The moment the City of Paris started negotiating with the associations – well, its just that the association had a lot of experience with negotiation, and the politicians didn't have a lot of savvy with dealing directly with the public like that.

It seemed at the time, in 2002-2003, no one in elected office understood the new system of councils well enough to dominate the proceedings (more recently the councils have been criticized by some neighborhood activists for not “deepening” democracy but simply extending the control of the City Hall deeper into neighborhoods.) At this early stage however, the associations were quick to seize the upper hand. Adjoint-mayors and other officials who attended the meetings were unaccustomed to direct negotiation with the public and felt more at ease in backroom deal making (Rachel once described the city's representatives in the meetings as “people from city hall, not real people”). These officials found themselves overwhelmed by the association leaders, who had long relied upon rhetoric and charisma on a regular basis and often brought numerous supporters.

Over the next two years, the railroad and its tenant, Tafanel, were forced to renegotiate their claim to the Cour du Maroc in ever decreasing sections. Finally, they were driven off the site altogether, having been pressured to sell the property to the City of Paris. By the end of 2003, the SNCF had cancelled the plan to allow Tafanel access to even the underground facility. The Cour du Maroc would now be set aside purely for the Jardins d'Éole. If the campaign for the park had been declared a victory in 2001 over the SNCF, it now represented a trouncing of the Tafanel plans as well. Residents were able to claim a victory against the “powers that be” and ironically, so was the new Socialist Mayor Bertrand Delanoë.

Conclusion

Thanks to a combination of political timing, shrewd coalition building, a fortuitous institutional transformation and luck, the AJE and its allies managed to win a sizable prize – the planned construction costs for the 11 acre park was estimated at \$26 million – in the face of powerful opposition, in roughly six years time (1998-2004). The victory was all the more remarkable because it occurred in an area whose residents have been historically marginalized - politically, socially and economically. For residents, the building of the park was linked to the end of an “authoritarian urbanism” and viewed as a coup for local, grassroots democracy. The park would link not only ecological concerns, but improve the “urban environment” in the broadest sense, linking issues of housing, health, safety, quality of life, and a strengthened political consciousness of the “neighborhood” as a force in favor of democracy.

The campaign for the park demonstrates the way that the politics of green space are at once public and private, class-based, gendered, and ethno-racial. Park politics in northeast Paris are defined not only by the type of demands voiced by residents, but the style of voice used to express such demands. In the social and political economic landscape of northeast Paris, the AJE distinguished itself from other protest movements through a style that eschewed angry street politics long associated with working class Paris with a different approach. From letters written to politicians to the signs carried in protests, to the mere definition of what a protest meant, the AJE conformed to a satirical, whimsical style that was familiar and palatable to middle class members of the French left – the 68 generation – who make up both the ranks of the ascendant Socialist Party in Paris and the burgeoning urban middle class engaged in the gentrification of Paris' neighborhoods. This style of politics, while successful was also singular and to large extent not inclusive of diverse ethnic and class composition of the neighborhood.

However, a nature based vocabulary emphasising “life”, “vibrancy”, “vivaciousness”, “light”, and “air” used by the AJE had broader cross-class appeal. Nature was often used interchangeably in discussions of the neighborhoods' urban fabric as well when describing the physical health of the neighborhood's inhabitants, in a tripartite conflation of the urban, horticultural, and biological. In fact it is not enough to say that park was a stand in for other social issues: the nature based discourse surrounding the park shaped the ways in which activist constructed social problems as varied as poor housing conditions, industrial pollution, and the lack of facilities and spaces for childcare. In many respects the park represented an attempt to heal what

viewed as a “wounded city” (Schneider & Susser, 2003) with nature playing an essential role in “reviving” northeast Paris as an urban “body politic” (Harvey, 2003b).

As this chapter has demonstrated, spatial politics have been central to the AJE movement at a number of levels. Since the AJE’s campaign was a struggle for land, this may appear self-evident. At more profound level, the AJE mobilization transformed a vacant tract of land into a kind of repository or blank tableau for highly political visions of the neighborhood’s social future. Indeed, the movement to transform the Cour du Maroc focused on asserting the identity of the neighborhood itself for political purposes in a way that emphasized the unfair treatment of the immigrant origin residents without lapsing into an “anti-republican” discourse of identity politics. In taking a cue from hip-hop articulations of place, “neighborhood” offered activists ways to discuss inequality, exclusion, and even a right to difference amongst an immigrant origin population without transgressing strict republican taboos on identity politics. This spatial politics (along with visibly “middle class” style of protest) was crucial in securing the AJE’s legitimacy since northeast Paris was largely constructed as a hotbed of “sectarian” tensions and “communalism” in the media (see Chapter 3). The AJE’s spatial politics also reveal the deeply intertwined relationship between class, gender, environmental politics, and nature in urban movements. The mobilization was less about a park than it was oriented towards using a park to address a broad array of social issues facing northeast Paris. These included the class politics related to overcrowded and dangerous housing conditions, the gendered politics of childcare and child rearing (which were closely related to housing), and the class politics of pollution (which were closely linked to questions of child rearing). Such place-based politics also appear to be a way in which locality can be

constructed by residents as way to leverage and intervene in the urban expression of what are ultimately, global processes.

Of course the “victory” of the AJE raised as many questions as it had answers, chief among which was what kind of park – if any – could address such a variety of concerns. How such a park would be built would also be an important concern. But as the next chapter shows, the mere fact that a neighborhood movement was playing a central role in reshaping and “greening” the urban landscape points to inescapable fact that the AJE was now implicated the kind of urban and social transformations often associated with urban planners and developers. And this question would place contradictions of class (and the ethno-racial character of class inequality in France) at the forefront. Indeed, as the subsequent chapter shows the creation of the new park (its name changed from the *Parc de la Cour du Maroc* to the *Jardins d’Éole*) became both an instrument and a feature of the broader remaking of northeast Paris.

¹ France’s most famous rapper, MC Solaar, choose to splice footage of the 18th arrondissement and northeast Paris’ streets with images of the Arizona desert for his 1994 wild-west themed hit “Nouveau Western” (itself a remake and homage to Serge Gainsbourg and Brigitte Bardot’s 1960s hit, “Bonny and Clyde”). These spatial practices and discourses were not merely about creativity and art for its own sake but political articulations of one’s belonging a social and civic sense. Indeed, several figures from the hip hop scene would go on to play prominent roles in neighborhood associations, often focusing on culture and youth related issues.

³ Correspondence 22/06/1998

⁴ Correspondence 22/05/1997

⁵ While police never located a perpetrator for the bombing, at times violent demonstrations were held over the mosque’s presence by right wing groups, including the National Front, for several years before the bombing.

Chapter 5: From Urban Environmentalism to the Sustainable City

Sustainability is an emerging business megatrend, like electrification and mass production, that will profoundly affect companies' competitiveness and even their survival (David Lubin and Daniel Estay in *The Harvard Business Review*, May 2010, pg. 45)

In the past three decades, neighborhood-based mobilizations for environmental justice have emerged as an important force in urban politics around the world. Such movements often articulate environmental politics in combination with already existing demands for urban justice. Partially in response to these mobilizations, many actors in the urban planning and policy establishment have taken up the notion of the “sustainable city” or “sustainable urbanism,” at times embracing neoliberal schemes of “green gentrification” (Ceaser, 2010; Dooling, 2008) even though this can lead to the displacement of the very populations demanding environmental rights. A broad ranging and often-idiosyncratic mix of class, ethno-racial, gender, and green politics shape urban environmentalisms, which should be considered a separate political project from “sustainability”. As this chapter demonstrates, the discourses and practices that define the sustainable city or “sustainable urbanism” – in contrast to the environmentalism of neighborhood residents – are bound primarily to the realm of urban planning and policy specialists. Despite sometime sharing the ends, values, and objectives of environmentalists, sustainable urbanism is a very different project, which is deployed

from outset as a way to transform, reorder, reorganize, and dominate urban space. A necessary question that arises, then, what is the relationship between the urban environmentalism of the grassroots and the sustainable urbanism of planners and architects?

It is important to remember that my distinction between urban environmentalism and sustainable urbanism does not imply that a clear, shared definition exists for either concept. The disjuncture between “movement environmentalism” and “institutionalization” by policy-makers (J. P. Brosius, 1999) calls attention to the fluid character of environmentalism as well as sustainability – a problem already raised with regards to development (Escobar, 1995). Anthropological approaches to sustainability and environmentalism in the city offer an opportunity to refigure how the “environment is constructed, represented, claimed, and contested” while moving understandings of environmentalism beyond a “limited purview of social movements” (Brosius 1999: 277, 278) and towards an environmental “arena” (Agarwal 1992; Milton 1993; Johnston 1996; Fischer & Hajer 1999; Brosius 2001; Tsing 2001; Checker 2005; Vivanco 2006) of discourses, practices, and policies that is contested between social movements, public agencies, the state, and private corporate interests.

This chapter focuses on how the urban environmentalism of the AJE (the Association Jardins d'Éole) a movement to convert an abandoned train station into a green space) was re-codified into a vision of sustainable urbanism held by planners and municipal agencies. The process of contestation in which the Cour du Maroc was transformed into the Jardins d'Éole demonstrates the complicated relationship between urban environmentalism and sustainable urbanism. Sustainable urbanism is deeply

implicated in attempts by elites to consolidate a competitive position for Paris among top-tier “global cities”. Once associated primarily with neighborhood movements, green politics are now on the policy agenda of urban elites around the world, often under the rubric of sustainability initiatives centered on urban redevelopment and revitalization. In some cases, processes of “green gentrification” have emerged as a means for profit accumulation by dispossession that displaces the urban poor (Checker, this volume; Dooling, 2009); these developments suggest that such initiatives are being incorporated into a “global urban strategy” (Smith 2002) of capital accumulation. These processes indicate that the institutionalization of environmental politics has gone beyond “green-washing” or the co-option of particular movements. Instead, sustainable urban planning and green design¹ is becoming a core component of numerous redevelopment projects and the strategic plans for many urban regions, making it increasingly central to capitalist urbanization. Moreover, the changing of names from the Cour du Maroc (Moroccan Court) to Jardins d’Éole (the Gardens of Aeolus, the ancient Greek god of wind) suggests the degree to which these struggles over urban space in the French capital are framed in terms of conflicts around nation and civilization. The ethnocultural dimensions of struggle over urban space in Paris are however, not purely symbolic: redevelopment and gentrification of immigrant districts in Paris and its near or *banlieues* has deepened a housing crisis for working-class and poor residents. Many of these residents, who are often of Maghrebi and West African origin, are unable to pay rising rents or, in some cases, excluded from public housing because of their undocumented status and other institutional constraints.

Whether framed in environmental, cultural, or in purely urban terms, the creation of the Jardins d'Éole and the struggles over the sustainable remaking of Paris' northeastern neighborhoods is an example of "spatial practice" as theorized by Henri Lefebvre.² Spatial practice changes and shifts in particular moments of capitalist development, such as the emergence of 'global cities' (and the contestation resulting from urban elites' efforts to reproduce a city's position in the global economy). Once associated primarily with neighborhood movements, green politics are now on the policy agenda of urban elites around the world, often under the rubric of sustainability initiatives centered on urban redevelopment and revitalization. In some cases, processes of "green gentrification" have emerged as a means for profit accumulation by dispossession that displaces the urban poor (Checker, this volume; Dooling, 2009); these developments suggest that such initiatives are being incorporated into a "global urban strategy" (Smith 2002) of capital accumulation. These processes indicate that the institutionalization of environmental politics has gone beyond "green-washing" or the co-option of particular movements. Instead, sustainable urban planning and green design³ is becoming a core component of numerous redevelopment projects and the strategic plans for many urban regions, making it increasingly central to capitalist urbanization.

Of course, other albeit connected forms of politics occur within and through urban space: struggles for national belonging among France's post-colonial minorities often take an urban and gendered form, but such contestation should not be reduced to alternate expression of urban/class struggles – as Lefebvre often does. Indeed, Lefebvre's tendency to subsume such politics to "urban issues" is strikingly similar to current iterations of republicanism in France, which explicitly aims to homogenize difference, often by

spatially rendering inequalities in terms of “sensitive neighborhoods”, an act which obscures processes of ethno-racial marginalization itself (Dikeç, 2007). The other extreme, which is to remove France’s current struggles of national belonging from the context of urban and local politics in which many mobilizations are often immersed, is equally misrepresentative of how and why contestation takes place. This chapter attempts to bridge these gaps by weaving together an urban ethnographic approach informed by Lefebvre with environmental and political ecology concerns (Brosius, 1999; Escobar et al., 1999; Heynen, Kaika, & Swyngedouw, 2006; Moore, 1996; Paulson & Gezon, 2005) as well as analyses of France and Europe’s contentious politics of national culture and ethnicity (Beriss, 2004; Bowen, 2004, 2007; Bunzl, 2005; Hargreaves, 1995, 2007; Jennings, 2000; Silverstein, 2004, 2005; Wilder, 2005).

Urban Environmentalism and the Grassroots

Paris has been praised by urban critics and policymakers for being at the cutting edge of sustainable urbanism. Cities around the world have emulated its municipal bike sharing scheme known as the “Vélib” program (a combination of the terms *vélo*, for bike, and *libre*, meaning free) as both a way to coax commuters onto bicycles and as a public health program. It has, in the spirit of much sustainable urbanism, upended Le Corbusier’s famous call to “kill the [pedestrian] street” by closing many of its major auto routes at select times. Even the city center’s principal vehicular thoroughfare – the Voie Georges Pompidou – is closed for cars and opened for pedestrian and bicycle access on Sundays. During the summertime, the motorway is covered in sand, fake palms, and

reclining chairs for several weeks, converting the Seine's right bank into a faux beachfront during an annual festival known as Paris-Plage (*Paris beach*).



Figure 14: Mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoë inaugurating the *Velib'* (community bike sharing) program, 2007.

Less well-known than such municipal initiatives aimed at sustainability (but arguably responsible for their political viability) is the environmentalist momentum maintained by the city's neighborhood associations. The AJE mobilization emerged within the context of this wave of locally focused environmental activism throughout the city. The wave can be linked, as is often the case with "new social movements" to changing forms to grassroots politics resulting from the increasingly middle class make up of its gentrified neighborhoods (Pinçon, 2004). However, the implicitly narrow definition of environmentalism as being premised entirely on middle class interests lurking are far from true, as analysis of the environmental justice movement in American cities has certainly shown (Bullard, 2000; Checker, 2005). Indeed, one cannot properly

contextualize urban mobilizations such as the AJE without understanding the peculiarity of the spaces – literally, the urban environments – in which such movements emerge, and the class-based and ethno-cultural politics that engenders such contestation.

Northeast Paris is distinctive within the capital in number of ways: it's landscape is marked not by grand boulevards or second empire apartments but by railroad infrastructure, canals, and Paris' densest concentration of public housing. It largely populated by residents of Maghrebi and West African descent (now Second and Third generation), who since the 70s, have deeply affected by de-industrialization (unemployment is at 20%) (APUR 2010). Moreover, the area has been stigmatized in the media and by policy-makers as an immigrant “ghetto” (Andre, 1991; Boris, 2005; Simon, 2007), home to threatening communitarian and non-secular tendencies.

As a response to these difficult social conditions, the degraded built environment, and need to remake the maligned “image” of the area, residents formed the AJE during the 90s as a way “re-vindicate” the neighborhood (see Chapter 4). The mobilization was led largely by a French origin group of middle class (public sector employees, teachers, civil servants, etc.) but drew on a multi-ethnic, cross-class and coalition made its goal the transformation of an abandoned freight train station, into an 11 acre park. The group saw the park project as remaking the neighborhood's public space into an “espace de vie” (space of life) that would be a much needed bit of greenery and common space in this densely built post-industrial landscape. It waged an acrimonious campaign against the owner of the abandoned site asserting residents “right to city” or a neighborhood's right to green space as an entitlement given its marginal status in Paris. Indeed, ‘neighborhood’ – not ethnocultural identity or class was key idea – as it provided a vague enough of a

referent to refer to either class, ethno-cultural politics, or purely spatial inequality depending on the context and intended audience.

By 2003, the battle had been essentially won and by 2007 the \$26 million dollar park was completed, heralded as a mile stone of sustainable design and participative urban planning. It is important to point out, however, that all of this has occurred in the context of gentrification or more precisely in Paris, publicly financed redevelopment (property values have climbed over 50% in the last five years, compared with a Paris average of 40%) (CLAMEUR 2008; CNP 2011). Paris' entire northeast limit and its near *banlieues* are being remade into center of services and tech oriented investment. Just one of several projects near the Jardins d'Éole, for example, occupies 250 acres of demolition amounting to a complete reconstruction of the city's northeastern periphery into a green belt like office park. This project is in turn being folded into the vision of the remade *Grand Paris* promoted by President Nicholas Sarkozy: an ambitious attempt (focused in particular on the city's boundaries and *banlieues*) at spatial, political, and economic restructuring to re-establish Paris as competitive with cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo on a global level.

From Cour du Maroc to Jardins d'Éole

The landscape and identity of the new park was an added element in northeast Paris' arena of environmental contestation involving careful negotiations between activists and the design team. AJE activists demanded – and received – an innovative “organic”, and resource-efficient park design that required no chemical fertilizers or pesticides, the first of its kind in Paris. In a city infamous for the “museumification” of its

urban spaces, the AJE demanded “a garden for living” with open, unrestricted access to lawns and playgrounds; the activists resolutely spoke out against a “garden to be looked at”. The architectural team⁴ responded to these demands with a level of technical and aesthetic acumen that brought their design international recognition⁵. However, by foregrounding the importance of sustainable practices (*durabilité*) and green design features in the new park, architects reinforced their dominant position as experts in a different type environmentalism than that espoused by the AJE.

As a design principle, sustainability articulated with a globalized environmental discourse stressing themes such as energy conservation and the use of renewable resources. This was in contrast to the environmentalism of the AJE activists, which despite connections to a transnational network of activists, was largely the result of a specific urban, social, and ethnoracial predicament combining anti-pollution politics with concerns related to housing, childcare, and to a contested extant, a cultural space in the city. Thus, while sustainability was not an important concept to the AJE, it became a fundamental theme for the design team combining both aesthetic and technical details. A number of symbolic elements such as a miniature wind turbine (a token with a minimal power yield), the use of “natural” materials (meaning wood, millstone, terracotta, and slate), and an overall aesthetic of sparse, resource efficient minimalism helped to conjure an aura of sustainability through the park’s visual composition. Resource efficiency was a theme of particular emphasis: stones from the abandoned railway station were re-appropriated in the construction of the park, and according to the architects’ design proposal, only “materials with provenances compatible with the rules of sustainable development” were used (City of Paris 2003c: 7). In many respects, the park combines

recycling and resource efficiency with ambiance to make the space an example of – and an allegory for – environmental sustainability.

Indeed, the park was meant as a medium through which ideals of sustainability could be communicated to northeast Paris residents; a veritable green polemic or allegory inscribed upon the northeast Paris landscape. Nowhere was this more clear than with the use of water, which was viewed as an important visual and sensorial element in the park and a symbol, laden with connotations relating to resource management. Emphasis was placed on the recycling of rain water, and to this end, an ingenious “gravel garden” (*les jardins de gravier*) was created, allowing collected water to trickle down through subterranean channels and be recycled in an adjacent canal, itself host to an aquatic garden. An impressive technical feat, the connection between the gravel garden and plant filled canal was meant to call to mind a symbolic interrelationship: “...the gravel garden evokes vital links between earth, water, and plants, evoking the fragility and scarcity of resources” wrote the architectural team in their design proposal, adding “In this sense, the garden is a didactic digression of our project” (City of Paris 2003c: 5). In essence, the water irrigation system allowed the canal and gravel garden to operate in perfect harmony, as a self-sustaining, human-made analogy of a naturally balanced ecosystem, a statement of the imperative for resource conservation. Indeed, the design proposal and related documents are filled with language dwelling on the “didactic” and “pedagogic” aspects of the space. And finally, water was a means of spatial control, with the canal serving as a stand-in for fencing along a section of the park’s perimeter, restricting movement and access while still being “inviting” and allowing for more visibility into the space from the adjacent streets. It was a core component ensuring that the park would be a place

providing residents with the expected benefits of green space (sociality, physical activity, security), as well as instilling the importance of resource conservation and natural harmony on park users.



Figure 15: Design for the park by Michel Corajoud, ©2003.



Figure 17: les jardins de gravier (Gravel Garden).

The question of who would manage the park's operation was central to the AJE. In this respect, the architects played an empowering role for the AJE by designing collective action into the operation of the space. The design team demonstrated a remarkable level of engagement with the “espace de vie” concept so central to the AJE mobilization itself – a direct result of collaboration with the sociologist Isaac Joseph and his successors⁶. Measures were taken to create a residents' presence in the park at multiple levels. The community garden played a central role in this processes, as did a refreshment stand operated by residents. A residents' committee consisting of the AJE, cultural associations from the Maghrebi and West African communities and youth associations was formed to work alongside the DEVE in managing the park. Above all, according to one design team member, the aim was to avoid a “dead space”. A particularly novel step towards this end – and a controversial provocation for some policy makers and officials from the DEVE

(Direction des Espaces Verts et de l'Environnement: Paris' Parks and Environment Department) – was a decision to leave a plaza-like section of the park open and accessible to residents 24 hours a day, contradicting a strongly ingrained tradition in Paris' parks emphasizing both spatial and temporal control of green spaces (at sundown each day, uniformed guards with whistles expel visitors from parks, and nearly all of the parks are gated and kept locked after dark). The idea of allowing nocturnal usage was viewed as part of the *espace de vie* concept by allowing residents to use “their park” anytime they wanted. The measure provoked protest by the local *arrondissement* mayor Daniel Vaillant and some in the DEVE who pointed out that the very location which was open at night was at the street corner most associated the illegal drug economy in northeast Paris: ungating the park thus risked turning it into a “druggie park”, in the words of one resident. The AJE, architects, and sociologists countered, and eventually won the debate with a Jane Jacobs-inspired “eyes on the street” (1961) argument: by inviting residents into the park at night, hypothetical undesirable uses of the park (in particular, the selling and consumption of illegal drugs) would be displaced. The design was meant to provoke what the leader of an immigrant youth association described as a “re-vindication” of the neighborhoods’ public spaces by residents themselves, as opposed to the use of gating and police.

At the same time, the final design – and name – for the park eliminated any potential for it to be formally associated with northeast Paris’ multi-ethnic identity. “Jardins d’Éole” was adopted as the park’s name primarily because this was the name first used by 18th *arrondissement* mayor Daniel Vaillant in 1994. The AJE (Association Jardins d’Éole) had adopted the name to “remind” the politician about the park. Though it

is translated as Garden of Aeolus (the Greek god of wind) the name Éole is known locally as an acronym (ÉOLE: *Est-Ouest Liason Express*) for a commuter rail line using the neighborhood railroad tracks (this was the intent of Vaillant's usage). Jardins d'Éole is thus a reference uniting sustainable energy, and the neighborhood's long history as a rail thoroughfare, while evoking Greek mythology (a change that resonates with Bunzl's [2005] observation of the increasingly civilization-oriented focus of citizenship discourse in Europe). No official reason was ever given by officials for abandoning the name Parc de la Cour du Maroc (the "working title" of the project). A plausible explanation is that the usage of Maroc (Morocco) in the title of the park was avoided because of its foreign, even immigrant, connotations. If true, this would be a meaningful decision given that the locale is already strongly associated with immigrants from North Africa, and in the context of France's current "crisis" of national identity, there is particular anxiety over immigrant assertions of cultural identity, particularly among North Africans and other populations associated with Islam.

Residents have provided a rejoinder to the Jardins d'Éole's design through park usage. DEVE officials point out that one of the most significant problems with the Jardins d'Éole is actually *over-usage* and the stretching of its capacity because of its great popularity (more playground equipment has hurriedly been added, for example, to deal with the even greater than expected number of parents with children who use the park). It is popular across the lines of class, ethnicity, and gender, with children being among the most prolific users of the space (Jolé, Tonnelat, & Newman 2009). It is especially popular with women of Maghrebi origin who gather in large groups to socialize in the early evenings while their children play in the space. Teenagers of West African and

Maghrebi descent are also prominent users of the space; they frequently stay on the park's open esplanade until well after midnight during the summer. The park has also become an important outdoor concert venue for youths in particular, with hip-hop performances having attracted crowds in the thousands during Paris' annual *Fête de la Music* and the *Paris Hip-Hop* festival. Usage does not necessarily take form according to the spatial (and ideological) guidelines laid down by architects. Puzzlement and indifference were the most common reactions to the gravel garden, which despite its pedagogical intent, was frequently dismissed by residents in terms of being an "architects' thingy" (*truc de les architectes*). Perhaps the most amusing "critique" of the design can be read from the playful, sensorial spatial practices of the many children who enjoy the gravel garden. Much to the chagrin of park officials, they enjoy tossing the gravel in the canal, a pastime that continually threatens to malfunction the irrigation system's carefully planned simulacra of ecological equilibrium.



Figure 17: Children playing in the Jardins d'École.

Overall, sustainability and the tenets of the AJE mobilization were cast as architectural and managerial problems with solutions that could be built into the park's design and operations. Sustainability sat alongside of – but separate from -- the espace de vie concept so integral to the discourse of AJE mobilization, finding its way into the official vision for the park as project de vie. Both project de vie and sustainability were viewed as integral to the concept of the new park, though sustainability became a way to separate environmental concerns from project de vie (social) concerns. In many respects, “sustainability” became associated primarily with design decisions (and therefore technical expertise requiring professionals) while social concerns were increasingly

relegated to a complicated arena involving residents, various agents of the city, and the sociologists. Though the AJE had campaigned for the park using the slogans “halt authoritarian urbanism” the design process for the Jardins d’Éole very much affirmed the authority of the urban planners, architects, and city agencies involved. Indeed, the deployment of sustainability as a body of conceptual, technical, and aesthetic knowledge held by specialists provided an important means by which this re-affirmation of authority was accomplished, even if the overall project could be viewed as urbanism “from the bottom up”. AJE activists, for their part, did little to contest many of these changes, fearing that the “window” of political opportunity that allowed the park to be built might not remain open. In particular, there was a sense that the project must be moved forward as quickly as possible. The unprecedented election of a Socialist Party Mayor of Paris – Bertrand Delanoë – who was closely linked to 18th and 19th arrondissements (the ward mayors were from the same political party), combined with the weakening of the railroad due the pollution scandal presented an opportunity that was both significant and potentially temporary. This was particularly true of Delanoë’s office, who was committed to a very fast pace so that the park’s completion could be used as part of a campaign platform for the next cycle of municipal elections (which Delanoë handily won) in 2008.

The environmental arena and the “re-conquest” of immigrant Paris

The full socio-spatial impact of the Jardins de’Éole – and the environmental arena of urban politics – only comes into focus when viewed as part of the wider urban, social, and economic context of the Paris region. Indeed, when the city itself is viewed as a “project” (and not merely the park) the environmental arena’s broader impact on

processes of capitalist urbanization are rendered discernable. Although the Jardins d'Éole was arguably an example of “bottom up” urban planning, it is situated in an axis of ongoing redevelopment and social conflict. The building of the Jardins d'Éole has accompanied the demolition of two full residential city blocks adjacent to the park to “remedy” northeast Paris of “insalubrious” conditions (City of Paris 2003a: 27). These dramatic changes in the built environment are two of over twenty other urban renewal projects in northeast Paris that are part of the 200 hectare *Paris Nord Est* urban renewal initiative, undertaken with the goal of building “a piece of the sustainable city.” (City of Paris 2011a). The project focuses on Paris’ boundaries in an effort to add 27 hectares of green space (City of Paris 2011b) to the intermediary zone that lies between the capital and the city’s banlieues, which Silverstein has previously compared to the *cordon sanitaire* of Lyautey’s colonial plan for Rabat, Morocco (2004: 89). These initiatives have been spearheaded by the Delanoë administration, illustrating the Janus-faced meaning of the Socialist administration’s pledge to shift the emphasis of Paris’ urbanism away from monumentality and towards neighborhoods.

As ambitious as the Paris Nord Est project may appear, it is only one aspect of regional and globally-focused strategies for the Paris region, including the inner-ring banlieues that saw extensive and violent unrest in 2005, which was only the most dramatic instance in a string of banlieue uprisings that have frequently occurred since the early 1980s. These projects include a two decade old regional plan to redevelop the banlieues of Saint-Denis and Aubervilliers, centered on the national soccer stadium, the 80,000 seat, \$400 million *Stade de France* (Lecroart 1997) located less than 4 km from the Jardins d'Éole. At the same time, and allegedly in conflict with Paris’ urban planning

establishment (according to one informant at the *Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme*) President Sarkozy's office has proposed his widely publicized and controversial plan to remake Paris' outskirts, the *Grand Paris*. This ambitious proposal explicitly invokes Haussmann's 19th century restructuring of Paris (see Harvey 2003a) as a precedent for this 21st century project, which is touted as "a response to a vital challenge facing our country: how to sustainably engage France in international economic competition" (Grand Paris 2011). While still a vision awaiting precise planning, this multi-municipality project, which includes Paris and many of the cities along its outskirts, takes aim specifically at London and New York as urban competitors in creating an internationally dominant, "post-Kyoto city" (Grand Paris 2011). The grand scale and ambitions of these visions may seem distant from the 4.2 hectare Jardins d'Éole, but the significance of each green space and redevelopment project in a globalizing urban region should not be discounted. Indeed, a high-ranking official in the *Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme* described the "Jardins d'Éole... as a strategic anchor in the re-conquest of all of this territory" (La Rocca 2008). The question that remains is who is this territory being re-conquered from?

As is often the case with gentrification and redevelopment the physical renovation of Paris' urban landscape is inseparable from the class-based and ethnocultural remaking of the capital. The geographic scope of the redevelopment, much of which is publicly financed and planned (as opposed to gentrification driven by the renovations of private home buyers) is coterminous with Paris' immigrant neighborhoods (APUR 2003c; 2010). In this regard, the relationship between redevelopment and the housing situations facing immigrant-origin Parisians is of crucial importance. Land values in Northeast Paris, despite being the lowest in the city, have been among its most rapidly rising, climbing

over 40% between 2004 and 2010, a rate that defied the Paris average until the global real estate crash of 2008 (CNP 2011). Prior to the downturn, northeast Paris rents rose at a rate double the Parisian average (CLAMUER 2008) and continue to rise steadily, despite being among the most deflated in the city (OLAP 2010, 2009). These shifts have occurred in tandem with mass evictions accompanying the demolition of housing in the area; more than 350 apartment buildings have been demolished since 2001 (APUR 2010: 58). Residents have responded to these processes through protests and housing movements such as DAL and the Mal-logés, whose emergence occurred in conjunction with the remaking of Paris' working class and immigrant neighborhoods.

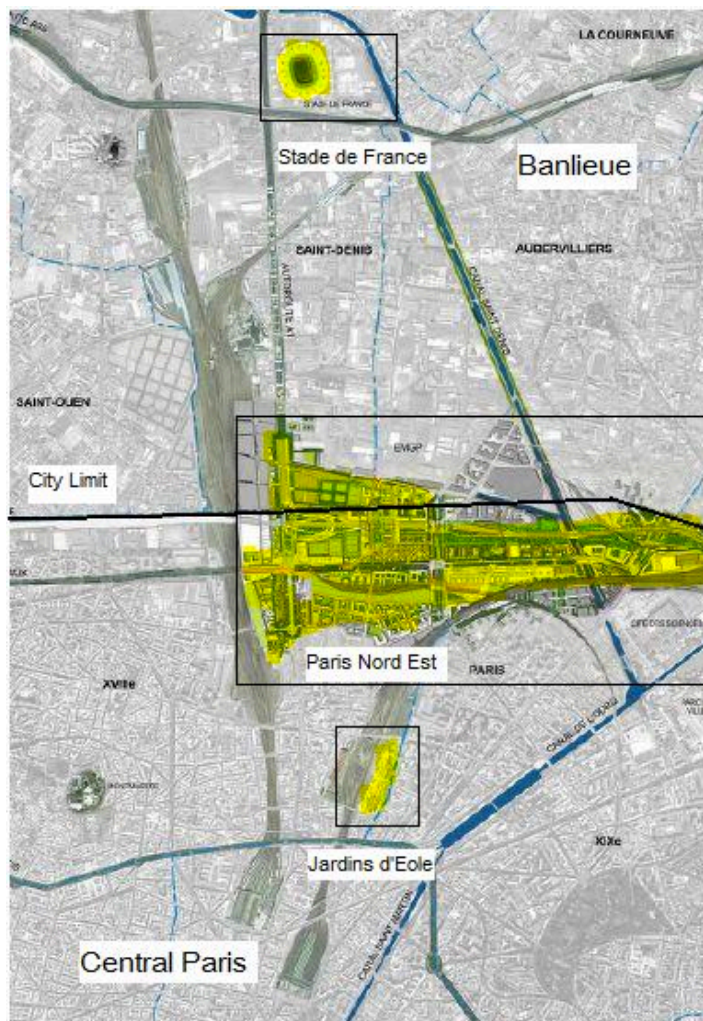


Figure 18: Map showing renovations related to the Paris Nord Est project, adapted from a map created by the Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la Région d'Ile-de-France, © 2008.



Figure 19: Street adjacent to the Jardins d'Éole, undergoing demolition. The apartment building and hotel on the left is slated for demolition (note the water-pump in the foreground, which is used by inhabitants whose apartments lack running water). On the right, new housing is under construction.

The framing of northeast Paris' "sustainable" redevelopment in the media and by policy makers has taken the character of a class-based, ethnoracial, and civilization-based project. As early as 1991, an article in *Le Monde* lamented the "foreign" character of working class neighborhoods in northeast Paris. Pointing to development of "black neighborhoods" as well as shops with signs now written in Arabic, the article deployed the language of reconquest (*reconquête*) in describing efforts by elites solve the problems of France's emergent "ghettos" (Andre 1991). The historical and civilization implications

of “reconquest”, with its reference to the Reconquest of Spain and shift in power in the Iberian Peninsula from Muslims of North African origins to Christians may appear extreme, but “reconquest” discourse has become normalized (and thus de-historicized) in Parisian urban politics. The usage of the term is commonplace when describing the cultural, economic, and social remaking of the northeast Paris (see for example, Ambroise-Rendu 1993, 1995; Sauvage 1996; Garin 2005; Boccara 2006). In this sense the socio-spatial remaking of the city parallels an established body of Islamophobic discourse rendering European civilization as in state of struggle with an internal Islamic other (Bunzl 2005). Paris’ ethnoracial and spatial patterns of redevelopment, gentrification and displacement now reflect France’s exclusionary politics of national belonging towards post-colonial minorities.

Planners and urban policy makers are not alone in situating the Jardins d’Éole as a landmark in the contested remaking of the French capital. The park’s inauguration ceremony in May of 2007 demonstrated the extent that the environmental arena has become a flashpoint of contestation along class-based and ethnoracial lines. During the inauguration, northeast Paris residents, members of the AJE, Mayor Delanoë, Daniel Vaillant, and the design team saw the proceedings upstaged by a raucous protest. A visibly frustrated Delanoë attempted a triumphant speech, in which he described the Jardins d’Éole as the “fruit of an environmentalist ambition present in each of our public policies, utilizing techniques that are most respectful to the air, water, and soil” and calling it an example of “sustainable development, urban aesthetics, and a space of conviviality open to all generations”. However, he was nearly shouted down by several dozen members of the Mal-logés housing rights mobilization, who had gathered at the

park to demand the construction of affordable housing and protest home demolitions in northeast Paris. Riot police were dispatched to form a barricade between the Mal-logés and the other residents attending the event, including the AJE activists. The police detained and arrested the majority of the protestors, many of whom were Maghrebi and West African women (some of which carried infants swaddled over their shoulders). The vivid class, gender, and ethnic divisions on display at the inauguration – with West African and Maghrebi protestors being repressed by the police while the largely (but not exclusively) middle class and non-immigrant origin AJE leaders were seated near the elected officials – present a vivid rendering of the class based and ethnic inequalities marking the new “sustainable” Paris. The protests highlight the degree to which the environmental arena is relevant not only to the construction of the park but is embedded in struggles over the reproduction of the political, economic, and ethnoracial order that defines Paris as a global city.



Figure 20: Map of northeast Paris redevelopment accentuating the importance of green space in the project (the Jardins d'Éole lies just south of the area of covered by this map), APUR © 2005.

Conclusion: What is sustained for whom?

The creation of the Jardins d'Éole entails a series of connected transformations: a vacant piece of urban land renovated into a park, a movement espousing a broad set of goals related to environmentalism, housing, and quality of life refocused as a sustainable urbanism project, and a post-industrial section of Paris (long associated with a socially precarious immigrant population) undergoing a dramatic shift towards residential and commercial redevelopment in the name of global interurban competition. Each of these developments arguably tells a separate story, and yet omitting the connections between these changes can obscure the processes that define them in full. Otherwise stated, what defines the AJE as an urban movement, Paris' re-orientation as sustainable city, and processes of ethno-cultural and class-based contestation linked to the city's position in global capitalism, are inseparable.

The AJE demonstrates the broad sets of practices, interests and goals that constitute environmentalism (and environmentalist practices) in the global city. To be sure, aspects of the mobilization were “classically environmentalist” in the sense that it pursued anti-pollution politics and advocated for green space in a post-industrial area largely bereft of parks. These ends, however, were seen as an extension of ongoing struggles that were “classically urban”: questions of overcrowded housing, a deteriorated built environment, public spaces increasingly dominated by the illegal drug economy, and a general lack of shared, community facilities. At the same time, aspects of the movement certainly helped the property values of some members who were homeowners – those who owned their apartments stood make sizable return on their investment. In several respects, the call for a “public garden” as a space for the

neighborhood to “to breathe” and “let in light” amounted to a use of environmental and horticultural imagery to articulate urban and social problems and solutions. The AJE’s holistic approach was therefore “urban environmentalist” in a literal sense of the term, in that it combined the urban with the environmental, and some aspects of the social (it notably did not, however, take up questions of immigrant rights or housing to the aggressive extent seen by more radical movements such as the Sans-Papiers or Mal-logés). Environmental politics, in the narrowly conceived sense of being related to pollution control and the valorization of natural environment, were used by the AJE as a “lever” towards the ultimate end of the park, which was viewed as an environmental good, but also social (and potentially economic) boon to “re-vindicate” the neighborhood.

Discourses and practices of sustainability, however, were largely distinct from the ideals of AJE, and were taken up principally by architects and urban designers when the park became an official design. Sustainability was restricted to a group of professionals, steeped in technical and aesthetic disciplines involving design, engineering, and even management. “Sustainable urbanism” has become *de rigueur* for professionals of urban planning and green architecture – is increasingly a part of the spatial practice of late capitalist Paris, playing a visible role in how post-industrial (and now, gentrifying) Paris is re-inventing itself in a neoliberal era marked by globalized, intra-urban competition. Sustainability, as a set of spatialized practices and discourses, is therefore difficult to separate from power and domination. It should, for the most part, be considered separate from the environmentalism(s) associated with movements. Even when sustainability shares the ends, values, and fulfills the goals of environmental movements, it is frequently a different type of project, deployed by different actors, with a different

political and economic significance that can, as we have seen, counterbalance environmental movements.

The so-called “reconquest” of northeast Paris is the aspect of spatial practice which defines the capital as both a global city and part of France’s reproduction as an “imperial nation-state” and the remaking of the boundaries of European civilization. The remaking of the capital as a global city or, as President Sarkozy defines it, a “Grand Paris” becomes the way in which nation, empire, and civilization are inscribed onto urban space, reproducing the gendered, ethnocultural, and class-based domination in the landscape of the gentrifying, global city. The “imperial” aspect of Paris’ global urban restructuring is evident in the ubiquitous presence of civilizational and ethnocultural language linked to the transformation of northeast Paris. This includes the symbolic transformation of the Cour du Maroc into the Jardins d’Éole, and the broader reconquest of northeast Paris and the inner-ring banlieues such as Saint-Denis (with the Stade de France forming a symbolic anchor of economic and cultural renewal). As contemporary urban movements in France make clear, the “mis-housing” of West African and Maghrebi origin residents is often gendered as well. Movements for urban justice are inextricably linked, and blur into, “immigrant rights” movements such as the Sans-Papiers, with women playing a particularly visible role in housing rights politics. The AJE, while not formally tied to either movement, drew heavily from the gendered politics of housing and thus shared many constituents with the housing and immigrant’s rights movements.

All of this is not to argue, however, that the political promises of environmentalism are absent from either the AJE or the Jardins d’Éole itself. It might be tempting to view the conflicted arena of environmentalism in the city as representing an impasse between

neighborhood-based movements and policy makers. However, the example of the Jardins d'Éole makes it clear that the arrival of the “environmental arena” to Paris has provided a means to changes in northeast Paris’ urban political ecology instigated by residents that were unimaginable a decade ago. The presence of the park prevented the arrival of more diesel trucks and the proposed waste-processing unit. It also created a much-needed space for parents to care for children, a issue that was exacerbated by overcrowded housing conditions facing many recently arrived families of West African and Magrebi origin. In many respects it has become a “space of life” like many AJE activist imagined and it is very popular. The mobilization (and design team) successfully created a vibrant green space, which is now (according to DEVE officials) almost over-used, being very popular with residents young and old, male and female, from across the class and ethno-cultural spectrum of the neighborhood. It is, according to DEVE personnel, residents, and ethnographic observation (Jolé, Tonnelat, and Newman 2009) a very successful space.

But, such projects appear sustainable in a holistic sense (i.e. socially, politically, and environmentally) only when abstracted from the spatial practice that defines Paris as global city and France as contested nation in the current moment. The limits of sustainable urbanism were evident in the ethno-cultural and class based divide on display at the Jardins d'Éole’s inauguration protest in 2007. These limits and contradictions should not however, be taken as a cue to disregard environmental politics or mobilizations such as the AJE. Indeed, as anthropological approaches continue to show (for example, Paulson and Gezon 2005) it is the very instability and continual rebirth of environmental mobilizations that will most likely ensure their success in enacting ecological and social change alike.

¹ See for example, Beatley (1999), Wheeler & Beatley (2004), and Farr (2007).

² Spatial practice "...consists in a projection onto a (spatial field) of all aspects, elements, and moments of social practice" (Lefebvre, 1999). For Lefebvre, space is not theorized merely as container or setting for social action, rather, it is both the outcome of social processes and the means by which processes unfold through contestation. Spatial practice is linked to the modes of production characterizing societies, and in this way, space is produced amidst relations to production, structures of domination, and social struggles, ("a spatial practice secretes a society's space, it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction" [p.38]).

³ See for example, Beatley (1999), Wheeler & Beatley (2004), and Farr (2007).

⁴ The design team was led by the architects Michel Corajoud, Claire Corajoud, and Georges Descombes of ADR Architects.

⁵ The design was featured in a Museum of Modern Art exhibition on contemporary urban public landscapes titled *Groundswell* in 2005. See:
<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2005/groundswell/gs.html>.

⁶ The role played by social scientists in designing an environmentally and socially sustainable urban park merits further discussion, though space limitations do not permit it in this short piece. Sadly, Isaac Joseph passed way soon after the design contracts were awarded, and was replaced by Stéphane Tonnelat and Yann Renaud. For a reflection on the process by the sociologists themselves, see Tonnelat and Renaud (2008).

Chapter 6: Parks, Housing, and the Right to the City

As the last chapter showed, one of the core contradictions of the Jardins d'Éole and (the sustainable urbanism of which it was apart) was that it was implicated in the ethnoracially charged “reconquest” of northeast Paris. But the paradoxical notion that this new public space – despite being successful as a park – was also part of an emergent geography of dispossession is by no means limited to the Jardins d'Éole itself. Instead, a closer examination of urban politics, and urban social movements in particular, sheds further light on the contradiction filled ways in which “public” and “private” space has been theorized by urbanists.

This chapter is an effort to rethink – and move beyond – the way in which scholarship on urban politics and the spatialization of inequality utilizes the dichotomy of public/private space. It begins with a critical review of “public space” as a theoretical construct in the literature. It then focuses on two case studies of mobilizations in northeast Paris: the *Association Jardins d'Éole*, or the AJE (the mobilization to create the Jardins d'Éole that was the central focus of Chapter 4) and *Droit au Logement*, or DAL (“right to housing”: a national level housing rights movement which has been particularly active in northeast Paris). Although offset by a number of fundamental differences, both DAL and the AJE actively engage in a form of politics based on Lefebvre’s notion of the “right to the city” (1996[1968]). As I will also show, the term “public space” is a misleading term for what is actually a strategic spatial politics combining traditionally held notions of public and private as part of a larger claim on the right to the city. Both groups use the socially charged tension between public and private as a protest strategy.

Indeed, the AJE and DAL might be thought of as strategically blurring the boundaries of public and private, if not eroding them altogether.

The fixity of the public/private dichotomy in urban studies stems largely from scholarship pronouncing the “end of public space” (and thus standardizing the language of public/private). Michael Sorkin’s introduction to the edited volume *Variations on a Theme Park* (1992) provides a paradigmatic example of this approach. For Sorkin, the city as theme park (i.e., the development of urban malls, festival market places, and indoor alternatives to sidewalks) amounted to an “erasure of difference” (1992: xii) and the creation of urban spaces permeable to consumers and workers, but off limits to those (i.e., homeless people or teenagers) whose uses did not fit urban accumulation strategies of elites, developers, and the state. This argument was in many ways a postmodern rehashing of an earlier wave of criticism directed by American urban planning of a different kind: Jane Jacob’s attack on modernist planning – and specifically the work of Robert Moses in New York – three decades before. “Streets and their sidewalks, the many public places of a city” wrote Jacobs, “are its most vital organs” (1961, p. 29). This argument was further taken up by Mike Davis, who lamented the rejection of “Olmsteadian visions of public space”¹ and the “destruction of any truly democratic urban space” (1992: 155,156) resulting from the fortress like revitalization of Los Angeles’ central business district. In each case, the argument is that various forms of enclosure, including legal redefinitions of “public/private”, coercive policing, surveillance, and architectural designs cause “public space” to disappear. The problem with the argument is that in all cases, “public” is implied to represent a just urban society, but the details of what this means are left undefined. Just as importantly, the historical

emergence of the “private/public” dichotomy is forgotten and the centrality it plays in processes of capital accumulation is ignored. In other words, to fetishize public space threatens to reify and naturalize the mode of spatial production concealed by it.

My approach in this chapter is based on theories of urban space in geography and anthropology in which there is an implicit (or explicit) critique of a fixed public/private dichotomy. For example, Don Mitchell (2003) focuses on the importance of “rights”² discourse implied in legal decisions that circumscribe public and private in American cities. Setha Low and Neil Smith (2006) are frank in their discussion of the vagaries and assumptions often lurking behind the terms public and private in the first place, pointing out that “it is not so much a matter of the privatization of the public sphere as of its global curtailment by the most supposedly public of all institutions, the national state” (p. 13). This theme is elaborated upon in David Harvey’s contribution to the volume (2006), which focuses on the “inherent porosity of the boundary between public and private” (p. 19). Harvey notes that it is “the relational connectivity among public, quasipublic, and private spaces that counts when it comes to politics in the public sphere” (ibid: 31). The politics of public space is not simply the case of what was once public being made private in the present moment: it has always been defined by a shifting tension between what is considered public and private. Indeed the very intermingling and struggle between these spheres (be it individual and collective, or public and private), lies at the heart of struggles over urban space.

In many respects this point hearkens back to a Lefebrian approach to the politics of urban space, and in particular the “right to the city”. There are several key notions in the “right to the city” that deserve teasing out with regards to ways in which spaces are

claimed or invoked through struggle. For this reason, the concept of “public space” itself is less important than the repetitive themes of *fête* (a party or festival) and *oeuvre* (a work or project). For Lefebvre, cities

are centres of social and political life where not only wealth is accumulated, but knowledge (*connaissances*), techniques, and oeuvres (works of art, monuments). The city is itself ‘*oeuvre*’, a feature which contrasts with the irreversible tendency towards money and commerce, towards exchange *products*. Indeed, the *oeuvre* is use value and the product is exchange value. The eminent use of the city, that is, of its streets and squares, edifices and monuments, is la *Fête* (a celebration which consumes unproductively, without other advantage but pleasure and prestige and enormous riches in money and objects) (emphasis original Lefebvre, 1996)

The *oeuvre*, which could be understood as the concretization of surplus wealth in the form of monuments and the built environment has a dual role. It is at once a product – a commodity - that is produced and traded to create wealth (i.e., through the real estate market) and an object and tool with use values that can be planned or spontaneous. For Lefebvre, this inherent ambiguity makes the city as oeuvre an inherently unstable and uncontrollable site of political possibility. The intended use of boulevards, streets, squares, and monuments may indeed have been for symbolic, economic and even forceful domination of the city by elites, but there is always the possibility that the oeuvre in its concrete, realized form can be used in ways different than intended, and even retaken, allowing “streets, squares, edifices, and monuments” to be appropriated, reclaimed, and redefined. This contested process of retaking, which could be understood as the creation

or *invocation* of public space, is the realization of the oeuvre's value in use as opposed to exchange. For Lefebvre, the most exalted form of use is the *fête*, which is a celebratory collective reclamation of urban space which would over turn the opposition between work and leisure (Lefebvre writes "the problem is to put an end to the separations of 'daily life – leisure' or 'daily life – festivity'" [p.168]). *La Fête* largely represents the celebration of the right to the city as a collective and shared project: an oeuvre.

But what are the politics of the *fête*, or in other words, how do people in a city's often deeply divided neighborhoods, fragmented by class politics and ethnic tensions, realize "their right to the city"? A problematic aspect of *la fête* is that it is based on a notion of recovering a distant if not mythical past, rooted in medieval origins of the European city and rural life. Lefebvre writes that the "rural society was (still is) a society of scarcity and penury... It was also the society of the *Fête* (or festivities). But that aspect, the best, has lost..." (p 150). Such a vision seems to elevate an idealistic image of a much more simple (albeit parochial and impoverished) France, which seems very distant from the globalized, culturally diverse and economically stratified society that marks Paris (or any other global city) in the present moment. In many respects, *La Fête* is for Lefebvre what the idyllic pre-war Greenwich Village street of neighbors and small merchants is for Jane Jacobs: instantly recognizable in the mind's eye as an urban ideal worth striving for, but mirage like in its resistance to empirical verification, either in the present or the past.

However the core tensions underlying the right to the city, namely the ways in which the urban landscape may be re-appropriated for shared, insurgent uses, becomes visible when one examines contemporary urban mobilizations in northeast Paris

today. In this regard the right to the city is about more about just “rights” or the “city” itself. As David Harvey has written: “the right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city” (Harvey, 2009, p. 53). The question becomes, then, how do social movements represent “ourselves” and what kind of public space do we invoke in the process of claiming the right to the city? Are notions of “ourselves” with regards to cultural, ethnic, and gender based identity subsumed by the “right to the city” or are they integrated into it; who can claim the right to the city on behalf of whom? Lefebvre neglected or ignored the tremendously varied ways in which cultural, gender-based, and ethnic politics are enmeshed in ways that groups give meaning to urban space – the oeuvre – through political action. Not only do the politics of difference provide a kind of cultural “texture” to urban movements, they fundamentally alter the reasons why groups claim the right to the city – and how they do so in the first place. In fact, given France’s Republican “taboo” against the politicization of identity in particular, “the right to the city” provides a rare way for minority politics to be rendered visible through strategic uses of the city’s locations.

“The Right to the City”: Two Cases

The following section offers two brief case studies on mobilizations active in northeast Paris, the *Association Jardins d’École* (a community mobilization in favor of building a public park, covered in detail chapter 4), and *Droit au Logement* (a large, nationwide housing movement’s response to a particular long-stay hotel fire). As these examples show, the right to the city is less about defending a static notion of “public

space” against “privatization” than it is about how *social movements bring “public space” to the city* through political practices and invocations of the right to the city. Indeed, it is often the strategic deployment, invocation, and blurring of the ambiguous concepts of “public” and “private” that becomes the basis of political claims against the state, urban elites, and corporate interests.

The Association Jardins d'Éole

One of the most visible manifestations of northeast Paris' intense deindustrialization was the Cour du Maroc, a 4.5 hectare abandoned station for freight trains, consisting of weeds strewn railroad tracks, crumbling platforms, and warehouses. From the time of its abandonment by the SNCF (the national railroad) in the late 1980s to the late 1990s, residents' regarded it as a symbol of the apparent obliviousness of politicians, public officials, and other elites to the needs of surrounding residents. Officials from the SNCF, the city of Paris, and the local arrondissements sparred for the better part of the 1990s over whether the site should become a depot for a local beverage distributor (the Tafanel Corporation), reused as a freight station, or transformed into a garbage processing facility. Residents of the surrounding districts of Flandre-Auberivilliers, Stalingrad, and La Chapelle grew frustrated and formed a militant organization known as the Association Jardins d'Éole (AJE) in order to assert their right to determine the future of what one activist called “the last free space in the city”.

In contrast to the prevailing plans at the time, which called for the reindustrialization of the space, the AJE demanded the creation of a public park to be built over the entirety of the space. As described in detail in Chapter Four, this “residents’

park” was demanded on the basis that the post-industrial area, despite having among Paris’ highest housing densities and highest ratios of children under 18, had among the cities lowest amounts of green space per person. But beyond a privatization of green space in a narrow sense, the mobilization was animated by a larger sense that the area was historically one in which the needs of the residents were subordinate to the needs of the rest of the city, the railroads, and industry: northeast Paris’s twin legacy was as a hub of noxious facilities (diesel train facilities, factories, and slaughterhouses) and, at the same time, a long-time community for some of Paris’ poorest immigrant populations.

However – as described in Chapter Five – the AJE’s claims for the “right to the city” were not simply on behalf of the “neighborhood” even if it was cast as “working-class”, but were based on the more private family and household politics of immigrant born women with children in the area. One reason this poor neighborhood had among Paris’ highest numbers of children was linked to patterns of intimacy and family life tied to the immigrant history of northeast Paris (and France as whole). As was commonly the case with guest-worker programs instituted throughout post-war Europe, men (arriving from the Maghreb in 1950s-60s and West Africa in the following decade) arrived first. In many cases, women followed later – and after the end of the post-war boom in the 1970s. ‘Family reunification’ was often the only legal way for anyone to immigrate to France from the former African colonies. The so-called youth *issus de l’immigration* (youth born “from immigration” as opposed to “immigrant children”) were therefore born in this key historical juncture. Despite popularly held beliefs suggesting otherwise in France, these so-called “immigrant families” were significantly less likely to find public housing (see chapter 2).

In northeast Paris, this combination of a large population unable to access public housing, and a large generation of children born in recent years has had consequences that are frequently domestic, hidden, but nonetheless brutal in the daily lives of poor immigrant origin residents. In many cases, poorer residences lack proper ventilation, individual baths, toilets, and running water (I suffered from a recurrence of childhood asthma after spending time in some of the more decrepit northeast Paris apartment buildings). As a result, the suffering caused by the area's lack of basic open space is inseparable from its status as a low-income immigrant district. Moreover, since many women assume the roles of childrearing to a large extent (often caring for their own children and those of other women who are employed) the lack of green space was more than an urban, environmental, or even class problem: it was a lack particularly felt by low-income women of West African and Magrebi origin.

As a result, the AJE developed a language and set of practices aimed to claim and reappropriate the Cour du Maroc in a way that emphasized the importance of children, maternal ideals of femininity, as well as broader concepts such as a "space of life", "space to breathe", and "living room". A make-shift playground was established in the vacant space and, in a strategy that seems uncannily congruent with Lefebvre's notion of *la fête*, the group organized a regular series of *manif-festives* or half protests, half parties.

The manif-festives were "demonstrations" or *manifestations* in every sense. They were purposefully meant to demonstrate or "manifest" a vision of not only a park or neighborhood, but a particular type of public space or city organized around different values than those of the existing northeast Paris. This was to be not merely a park, but a new kind of northeast Paris: "a children's space", "lush", and "vibrant". It was also a

demonstration *to* a particular audience: this included the residents of the neighborhood, but more importantly, media, and elected officials who often attended the events (particularly before elections). The familial, private domestic associations of children and motherhood were placed in the center of this new vision of the city. In other words this assertion of public space centered on the private sphere of family life, or more precisely *a call for a space that eroded normal boundaries between public and private*, especially in political life.

These and other strategies proved symbolically efficacious and pragmatically successful as well. Thanks to the presence of a sympathetic mayor and effective mode of negotiating with local leaders, the group succeeded in convincing the city of Paris to purchase the Cour du Maroc for the park, and to hire one of France's most notable landscape architects to design it, Michel Corajoud.

The Jardins d'Éole was indeed a dramatic transformation for northeast Paris. Even in the design phase, Corajoud formed a close relationship with the AJE in an effort to translate many of the movement's values into concrete attributes of the park. It featured a community garden, gathering spaces for the neighborhood associations, and a refreshment stand that would be managed by a not-for-profit community organization. It was designed to be "more public" than other Parisian parks ("ultra-public" according to Corajoud) as all of the lawns were deemed accessible, and a large section of the park was never closed for the evening (an unprecedented policy for a Parisian park). But it was also meant to be "ultra-domestic." This idea referred to the fact that much of the park was designed specifically for small children and uses that encouraged visits by families with children; it was viewed as a collective "front yard" for many residents as much as it was

seen as a “public” park. For the most part, these design decisions were effective in accomplishing their intended goals. In fact, within two years of being open the park was reported by DEVE (the Paris Parks Department) officials as being over capacity. Small children make up of the majority of the park’s users, and children have even devised “unforeseen” usages for the park’s gardens and water features (much to chagrin of many park maintenance personnel). It has provided a gathering space for many youths, elderly residents, and West African and Mahgrebi women that did not exist before, and continues to be used by the AJE – and other neighborhood associations -- for parties and activities. As a “public space”, in the urban design sense of the term, it has been widely considered a success.

However, it is clear that the new park – despite providing a source of open green space – is arguably a means of enclosure at the same time. Part of the park’s design also focused on security: elevated walks and artificial buttes. These design attributes, while providing the appeal of visual symmetry for visitors, also provide excellent visibility for security patrols and unimpeded views into the park for police in the nearby streets. The fact that the park was sited directly on a street corner which was long a center in Paris’ crack-cocaine economy was greeted with worry by some, but the design of the park itself has been part of an effort to pacify the streets. Paradoxically, it is the creation of a new “public space” which is designed to displace a particular portion of the public.

Droit Au Logement

Less than a year after the Jardins d’Éole was completed, a long-stay hotel (single room occupancy) known as the *Hotel Chartres*, located directly across the street from the

Jardins d'Éole, caught fire on a cold December night. Fortunately, the fire was quickly contained. Of the 32 people that resided there (11 of which were children) three adults were injured, one seriously. The tenants were subsequently evacuated from the city of Paris to a nearby “tourist hotel” to await relocation. The fire was the second at the *Chartres* in two years, and far from an uncommon occurrence in many of northeast Paris’ long-stay-hotels and boarding houses, which are infamous for their unsafe conditions. However, the fire also provided a vivid display of the social flammability undergirding competing claims for the right to the city in northeast Paris.

Within days of the fire, activists from a national level organization known as *DAL* (*Fédération des Comités Droit au Logement* – Federation of Committees for the Right to Housing) organized the tenants. DAL was formed in the nearby 20th arrondissement in 1990 as a schism within a broader housing rights movement and has grown into a “federation” of committees in all of France’s major cities. It is strongly associated with squatters’ mobilizations and homeless peoples’ movements (the so-called *sans-abri* or “without shelter” movement). The group’s primary goal is to pressure government officials to recognize housing as a “basic right,” though it is engaged in a broad spectrum of housing rights work, from lobbying politicians on housing rights legislation to aiding individual families who have been displaced. The day-to-day work of DAL often involves re-housing residents living in poor conditions (especially those who have been removed from housing deemed “insalubrious”) and attempts to force the state to requisition abandoned private sector apartments for use as social housing. The group has always been active in France’s immigrant communities by virtue of immigrants’ often precarious housing situation throughout France; its protests and public demonstrations are

some of the most visible demonstrations by Maghrebis and West Africans in France. However, in “good” republican fashion, DAL does not position itself in any identity politics or as an immigrant rights organization (though many of its pamphlets and visual representations often prominently feature people of color). Instead, its political identity is purely dedicated to struggling for the citizenry as a whole to enjoy housing as an unalienable right.

DAL’s most visible and successful actions have often involved dramatic occupations of buildings, streets and neighborhoods by encampments of homeless and recent expelled residents. In 1994, the group and 126 people (many of whom were families with children) occupied two buildings slated for demolition on Rue de Dragon, in the heart of the fashionable St. Germain-des-Prés neighborhood, to call attention to Paris’ “real estate speculation frenzy”. There was extensive TV news coverage of the occupation, much of which was cast as a street festival, complete with jugglers, fire-eaters, and mural painting, all in the name of housing rights and the collective re-appropriation of property. The Rue de Dragon action gave DAL a high level of national visibility, drawing support from the well known Catholic priest, Abbé Pierre, and the SUD union (*Union Syndicale Solidaires*), representing approximately 90,000 workers across several sectors. DAL has also become connected with France’s *altermondialistes* (global justice movements) and the European Social Forums.

In 2007, at the time of the Hotel Chartres fire, the group had undertaken one of its boldest and most well publicized occupations: the take-over of a former Le Credit Lyonnais bank on Rue de la Banque, directly across from the Paris Bourse (France’s stock exchange). The group converted the former bank into an administrative

headquarters and intake area for displaced people and adorned the outside of the bank with a banner reading “Ministry of Housing Crisis”. At one point nearly 200 people resided at the bank; eventually the encampment overflowed on to Rue de la Banque itself, leading to DAL being fined 12,000€ (\$17,000) for blocking a thoroughfare. The symbolism of the appropriation couldn’t have been more clear: the Rue de La Banque is the heart of finance capital in France and the geographic center of the economic engine driving Paris as a global city. By flooding the street with tents (many of whom were occupied by families of West African and Maghrebi origin) those subjugated by Paris’ housing market were placed in full view at the foot of the institutions profiting from their deprivation. Moreover, by dubbing the former bank the “Ministry of Housing Crisis,” DAL lampooned the notion of the welfare state, essentially marking it as culpable in the production of housing scarcity and practically interchangeable with capitalist institutions.

The space claimed by DAL on Rue de la Banque represented a politically charged amalgam of the public, economic, and political with the private, domestic, intimate – and even guarded. In sharp contrast to the male dominated worlds of the nearby stock exchange and corporations, “The Ministry of Housing Crisis” was a female dominated (if male led) space. A visit to the “ministry” in January of 2008 found the front door of the bank guarded by young women of Maghrebi descent who greeted my arrival and request to speak with those involved with the Hotel Chartres fire mobilization with great suspicion. A runner (another woman in her early twenties) was sent inside the bank to ask permission for my entry. The main hall of the former bank resembled a combination of an intake facility, refuge, and homeless shelter. Its marble floors were covered with sleeping bodies wrapped in tattered blankets, and the air of the lobby was thick with the smell of

musty clothing and sweaty bodies. Women of West African, Maghrebi, and Roma origin were by far the most numerous occupants of the space. Many rocked babies to sleep and others sought to keep small children quiet and occupied. Most sat on the floor waiting patiently, tending to children, and socializing with neighbors before receiving advice and counseling from DAL staff seated at the former desks of bank managers. All in all, Rue de la Banque (and other DAL actions), represents an attempt to take the often domestic experience of “mis-housing”, and turn it out from the inside, by situating the often hidden victims of the problem on the streets. As one DAL activist at the Rue de la Banque told me, “The only means not manipulated by the state, the only means for expression, is the street. It’s not the newspapers, it’s the way you have the right to speak to others. Nobody can speak in the newspapers.” However, as DAL’s strategy shows, it was not merely “speaking” in the streets. By placing bodies into the streets – often those of women and children – it made public the often private, gendered nature of housing deprivation as a form of social suffering.

In the case of the Hotel Chartres fire mobilization, DAL also sought to take the struggle directly to the doorstep of the hotel. In many respects this action was part of a concerted campaign – areas with poor housing stock often see a spike in landlord inflicted arson when a housing market heats up (one DAL activist had evoked Nero when describing the gentrifying neighborhoods of northeast Paris as, saying “its like Rome”). Soon after the fire, DAL activists, hoping that “maybe the people over there [in northeast Paris] would get interested” held a series of protest/occupations on the Jarden d’Éole esplanade. The first, consisting of mini-encampment in front of the Chartres, was drenched by the cold December rain and then forcefully removed by CRS riot police. In

an apparent display of the limits of “publicness” of Jardins d’Éole, many of the protestors -- who had come with sleeping bags, blankets, and food - were dispersed and arrested by the police. Interestingly, it appeared that the esplanade of the Jardins d’Éole, despite being an “ultra-public” and “ultra-domestic” space according to its architect, prompted a quicker and more violent police action than the financial district’s Rue de la Banque.

Droit Au Logement and the Jardins d’Éole: Opposing Styles of Spatial Politics

The second protest, again held at the esplanade of the Jardins d’Éole, brought about an interesting display of the tensions between different claims of public space and differing levels of belonging in the city. On that cold December Saturday, the AJE also chose to hold an unrelated event at the site, a “children’s book swap” (part of a long standing effort to draw families with children into the esplanade, itself an attempt to displace those who used the space to sell drugs). I arrived early with the AJE and was surprised to find that the owner of the Hotel Chartres promptly approached the AJE leaders, clearly beside himself with anxiety and agitation. Though not asking directly for their support, he let forth an emotional tirade to Pierre and Rachel (the AJE’s leaders who had relationships with all of the owners of the various small businesses which sat along the park), in which he repeatedly proclaimed his innocence of arson – an accusation which DAL had implied, but not outright stated.

Tariq, the Algerian-born owner of the Chartres, was in fact a well-known figure in the neighborhood, having owned the long-stay hotel since the 1960s. Known as “Ricky,” he was also the proprietor of a tea lounge (in the lobby of his hotel) that was popular with the Maghrebi youths in the neighborhood and where one could feel welcome spending

the entirety of the day watching satellite television from North Africa on just one cup of tea. Ricky and his wife Fauzia were also founders of an association known as MEF, whose name was based on the word for “femme” – *woman* – in the backwards word slang of *verlan*, an argot popular among youths in France’s immigrant neighborhoods. At MEF, Ricky and other instructors taught karate to local children – but focused especially on young girls – as a form of both moral and physical discipline. A black-belt himself, Ricky was reputed to put his skills to work on occasion to forcefully remove those he suspected of drug trafficking from the sidewalk in front of his tea-lounge. Indeed I had often noticed him watching me when I passed on the street near his hotel.

On this day, however, Ricky was close to groveling to the AJE’s leaders, seemingly too proud to ask for their support outright, but apparently not wanting to walk away without some form of public endorsement or words of support to the DAL protestors now assembling in front of his hotel. But Pierre and Rachel seemed cold as he spoke to them, despite having had a long relationship with him. I imagined the political calculus they likely made, the weighing of their history with Ricky, and his long track record of support for the AJE, with the fact that he was also the proprietor of a deadly firetrap which had now injured a person and drew the ire of one of France’s foremost social justice movements. Pierre expressed a few words of pity, but little else. Indeed, they simply stayed put, seemingly too tethered to Ricky and the Hotel Chartres to join the gathering DAL protest but far from willing to defend him. Tellingly, after Ricky walked away, Pierre motioned towards the DAL protestors and said to me, “you should go over there, and go see some of the issues of the neighborhood”. So I did go, but the AJE and

its members stayed put on their half of the esplanade, handing out children's books to families who strolled by and drinking mulled wine for the holiday season.

On the other side of the esplanade, but occupying a very different public space charged with a very different political valence, DAL assembled. About fifty protestors, the majority of whom were women of Maghrebi and West African descent, were present. The crowd carried signs demanding justice for housing and a DAL activist began a speech in which he described the horrid conditions in the hotel, and the highly exploitive rents of over 500€ a month that the residents paid there. Ricky was nowhere to be seen, but his wife Fauzia and a female companion suddenly appeared from inside the Chartres and began confronting DAL. A loud face-to-face shouting match ensued. Suddenly, in fast blur of movement, a younger man from DAL, his arm raised high above his head, flew through the crowd directly into the two women from the hotel, in an apparent attack. The entire crowd suddenly surged backwards, taking on a kind of amoebic life of its own, and then surged forwards again, becoming a tangle of raised arms, shoving, pushing, and shouting. Ricky appeared from the hotel and forcefully dragged Fauzia back into the Chartres; it was then she who wanted to fight, but she was overcome with tears and her carefully coiffed, dyed blonde hair had become a stringy mess hanging over her face and around her shoulders. After this cathartic event, the DAL protest seems to die down, and the crowds broke into small groups of murmuring people, each assessing and rehashing the previous moments' events. The leaders returned to their bull-horns, and called on the group to march to the 19th arrondissement's town hall. The crowd left the neighborhood, and within a few moments the street and esplanade became calm again, as if the event never happened.

The public humiliation of Ricky and Fauzia was ultimately the end of DAL's involvement with the Hotel Chartres fire. The City of Paris took over efforts to rehouse the inhabitants of the Chartres, and within a year municipal authorities required the hotel to close (though the Tea Lounge stayed open). DAL had succeeded however, in publicly exposing the hidden oppression of Chartres's tenants, and while doing so, turning the public personhood of the owners inside out by exposing them as oppressors. It is telling that Ricky's reaction when branded as an agent of exploitation was to hide – and pull his wife out view – despite the fact that he had long been one of the most public figure of Rue d'Aubervilliers. It was also telling that Ricky spent the next few months constantly inviting me to MEF meetings and karate tournaments in an apparent attempt to repair his public persona with me. But DAL's form of the public/private juxtaposition could not be more different than that being practiced by the AJE on the same day, which centered around creating a nurturing space for children and family life, and often sublimated social conflict in favor of an image of social harmony. Nonetheless, both associations were claiming a right to the city with the esplanade for the Jardins d'Éole as a stage for the entire neighborhood to see.

Conclusion

DAL and AJE are both mobilizations engaged in claiming the right to the city, and both demonstrate the limits of a strict public/private dichotomy in discussions of public space. Though one group was concerned with housing, and one group with a park, neither could be described as being concerned with the preservation of public space.

In the case of the AJE, the residents were engaged in claiming a literal piece of the city – the Cour du Maroc – for shared and collective use – and in preventing institutions and corporations from subjugating the needs of the residents for the sake of profit accumulation. The actions of the AJE are in line with many of Lefebvre’s ideas about the right to the city in near literal terms: the AJE was dedicated to a vision of the city as a collective shared project undertaken by its citizens (the city as oeuvre). Its manifestive embraced the idea of the fête as a way for residents to realize the right to the city and as a way of breaking down boundaries prescribed by the capitalist structuring of time and space (in this case, the boundaries of domestic and public).

The vision of the AJE is a limited one compared to that of DAL. Though each mobilization shared globally reaching aims and ideals about urban justice. AJE aims to transform a neighborhood whereas DAL is a movement aimed towards social transformation as well interventions in urban policy. DAL’s broad goal of housing justice was a more abstract vision of urban change than the concrete Jardins d’Éole, and housing is often equated as the opposite of public space. Yet, it was precisely by appropriating the streets and bank that DAL sought to claim the right to housing as a broader, more comprehensive vision of the right to the city. Despite these differences, both mobilizations demonstrated the importance of the urban fabric itself – the city as oeuvre – for social mobilizations. Both DAL and the AJE heavily depend on the symbolic and real appropriation of urban spaces, (the bank, the vacant Cour du Maroc, and the esplanade of the Jardins d’Éole) as a way to accomplish their objectives; they are not simply movements in the city, they are movements of the city.

For both mobilizations, the stakes of the struggle are not about simply fighting for the right to public space. Indeed the politics of both mobilizations could better be described as a strategic erosion of the boundaries of the public and private. The AJE was not interested in “public space” as an abstract idea, or even in the fashion that is dominantly found in Parisian parks. Instead, its goal was to establish a new kind of utopian space and a refuge for children and families living in overcrowded, unhealthy conditions. For DAL, however, the erosion of public/private was less a utopian vision of the city than it was the demonstration of its dystopian reality: by clogging the main artery of France’s financial district – the Rue de la Banque – it sought to lay the private suffering of the mis-housed at the feet of one of France’s most powerful institutions. As the protest at the Hotel Chartres shows, this incarnation of public space was far from being a spectacle of social harmony that was preferred by the AJE, it was space of confrontation, open struggle, and of public exposure of hidden oppression.

As both of these examples show, the appropriation of such spaces is rarely an end in itself. Even in the relatively limited case of the AJE for example, the goal of the park is invoked and appropriated as part of a broader claim to the right to the city. Such claims are not simply framed by unmarked subjectivities. Despite France’s republican taboos on identity politics, in France both the AJE and DAL are deeply shaped by particular types of suffering endemic to France’s ethnoracial, gendered regimes of urban oppression.

Of course the issue that remains – and which repeatedly resurfaces in both cases – are the limits of the visions of the right to the city made by these mobilizations. As the next chapter shows, the remaking of northeast Paris is not simply about the

transformation of boundaries between public and private, but accompanying changes in territoriality as well.

¹ For Davis, this “Olmsteadian vision” is derived heavily from the writings of Frederick Law Olmstead on Central Park which “conceived of parks and public landscapes as social safety-valves, *mixing* classes and ethnicities in common (bourgeois) recreations and pleasures” (ibid, emphasis original). This view may overstate the “liberalism” and inclusivity of Olmstead’s *actual* parks as *realized* (as opposed to that expressed in his writings). From the beginning, (and under Olmstead’s direction) Central Park had banned conventional working class games, there was segregated transport and usage (the middle class and affluent moved through the park in carriages while others were on foot), and the “republican political culture” favored by the working classes such as civic processions and public oratory was strictly banned (Burrows & Wallace, 2000, p. 794) in Olmstead’s spaces. Nonetheless, Davis’s larger argument is a new socio-spatial regime stressing surveillance and out and out segregation of public space has replaced an urban vision oriented around an older reform minded vision of American democracy and a bourgeois dominated public sphere.

² Mitchell makes heavy use of Lefebvre’s argument that “the right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights – the right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and inhabit. The right to the *oeuvre* to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct for the right to property) are implied in the right to the city” (Lefebvre, quoted in Mitchell 2003: 18). For Lefebvre, the right to the city represents a broader constellation of rights to collective ownership that transcend and supersede the right to property. The right to the collective use of urban space based on concept of use value – which is expressed vividly in livid concept of the *oeuvre*, or the city as a collective project undertaken for and by all of its citizens – includes the right to occupy, appropriate, and use urban space as well as civil liberties: “the right to freedom.”

Chapter 7: To Watch and be Watched: Urban Design and Everyday Life in the Surveillance City

A whole problematic then develops: that of an architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen (as with the ostentation of palaces), or to observe the external space (cf. the geometry of fortresses) but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control...

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p.172 (1995)

The beating was halted by one of our neighbors who saw it from his window and who, unconsciously certain that even at night he was part of a web of strong street law and order, intervened.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, p. 41 (1961)

“Don’t speak with him! He is going ask to see your papers!”

A child to his younger sibling, in response to my greeting them both in the Jardins d’Éole

One of the most important aspects of the Jardins d’Éole’s design was made clear to me during an interview with one of the security officials from the City of Paris Parks Department, the DEVE. When I asked him about the suitability of the Jardins d’Éole for securitization, he beamed at me proudly and beckoned at his office roughly 200 meters on the other side of the park from where we were standing. “From the moment I left my door” he said, “I saw you were here and could watch you the entire time I was walking

over to meet you”. While many residents (including myself, upon first impression) had found the Jardins d’Éole somewhat sparsely planted, it quickly became clear to me that the “openness” of the park was not matter of a mere aesthetics but was itself a surveillance tool. Indeed, it was a design feature I myself put to use in my efforts at getting to know the daily routines of residents who used the park. I learned that I could get a quick “snapshot” look at who was doing what in every section of the Jardins d’Éole in a walkthrough of less than 10 minutes. There were no nooks and crannies for anyone to hide, and I learned to use the design’s openness and numerous “overlooks” to spot specific people I was looking for (and to see and avoid others). It was clear that the landscape architect Michel Corajoud had not only put a tremendous amount of thought into making the space interesting to look at, but had been equally expert at making the park amenable to the gaze of surveillance, be it that of an ethnographer or a security guard.

It is therefore tempting to situate the Jardins d’Éole as a powerful metaphor for the remaking of Paris – like many other global cities – into a *surveillance city* (and to do so would not be entirely incorrect). As this chapter shows, the design is heavily informed by class and ethnically rooted anxieties of “delinquency” and an emphasis on securitization and surveillance. As was stated in Chapter Five, the Jardins d’Éole was intended as a park for all of northeast Paris residents, but it was also an effort to “pacify” the area at the same time, specifically by giving those involved in the illegal drug economy (both users and dealers) no place to hide, and making it too risky for them to operate in the open. It is both a public park *and* a securitization technology; but that is the beginning of the story, not the end.

Most accounts emphasizing the role of urban surveillance have dwelt on the top down aspect of the “surveillance society” (Lyon, 2001). Whether the concern is with technologies like CCTV and biometrics (Bennett & Lyon, 2008; Graham & Marvin, 2001) or the urban design of streets and parks (Davis, 1992) urban surveillance is usually understood in the framework of the omnipotent panopticon, gazing down from the realms of power (be it government regimes or private corporations) on high. The current boom in urban surveillance has been accompanied by a concurrent boom in critical literature detailing its emergence as a part of broader effort by neoliberal regimes to make once restive and impoverished districts safe for the burgeoning, iPod toting urban middle classes now prevalent in many post-industrial cities worldwide. Urban surveillance has, of course, intensified under the banner of anti-terrorism since 9/11, but it was well underway in the 1990s in leading global centers like New York and, especially London.

This chapter, however, combines an analysis of the Jardins d’Éole design process alongside ethnographic accounts of neighborhood activists and the everyday experiences of residents. It draws a picture that goes beyond top-down notions of urban surveillance suggesting that the park is only part of northeast Paris’ broader transformation into a “surveillance city”. To return to Foucault, this transformation is described less accurately by the commonly invoked panopticon metaphor than it is by Foucault’s description of disciplinary architecture’s ultimate goal, the making of the disciplined (and disciplining) subject. As Foucault writes, that ultimate project is “to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them” (Foucault,

1995, p. 172). The disciplinary architecture of Jardins d'Éole is an eloquent example of this process, but it is only part of a broader culture of surveillance that pervades the daily life of northeast Paris residents, as well as urban design and the political practices of activists.

In this culture of surveillance, watching takes places not only from the top down, but from side to side, and from the bottom up. In fact, watching and being watched is an indispensable part of daily life of northeast Paris, particularly in the tense atmosphere following the banlieue uprisings of 2005 and the subsequent immigration crackdown mounted by Nicolas Sarkozy, since his presidency began in 2007. Police, park security, as well as a host of other government authorities as varied as public health and urban planning agencies monitor northeast Paris and its residents, but residents also watch each other. Power, however, does not flow through subjects so easily without being diverted, and at times, subverted. Residents also survey their surveyors, and engage in “watching” for a host of different reasons and political projects. For some, this everyday watching is an extension of the efforts of the powerful, for others it is done to pre-empt it, or resist it, and for those in the most precarious situations (especially those who are extremely poor or possesses an “irregular” immigration status) it is simply a means of everyday survival. But what this chapter makes clear is that the “surveillance city” is marked not merely by the presence of a surveillance apparatus, mobilized by governing regimes who favor police, CCTVs, and security oriented urban design. There is, in fact, a deeper, more insidious culture of surveillance, which includes a pervasive degree of complicit surveillance (resident watching residents) but also, counter-surveillance and watching as a tool of survival that is crucial part of everyday life in northeast Paris.

My occasional choice of the verb “to watch” (as oppose to survey) is to distinguish between different types of monitoring. If surveillance may be understood as way to “render visible” certain objects to power, allowing power to “act on” on subjects and objects in Foucauldian terms, watching is a more vague and undetermined form of social practice. Watching can be an indispensable part of resisting power through counter-surveillance (through the idea of a “look-out”) but to “keep watch” is also to claim territory for any number of projects which can be complicit, oppositional, or ulterior to those embarked upon by agents of “official” surveillance. In contrast to formal surveillance, people watch out for themselves, their friends, and their interests, in pursuit of goals that don’t simply further the interests of dominant regimes or diametrically oppose it either.

Some of this watching may understood as part of a more general urban sociality geared towards the protection of neighbors and kin; a kind of benevolent surveillance which Jane Jacobs famously described when she wrote “there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we call the natural proprietors of the street” (1961: 35). For Jacobs, the agents of this “do-it-yourself surveillance” (p. 39) are crucial actors who are socially positioned to survey urban space that they claim as “their territory”. To survey is thus not merely to watch, but to construct belonging by drawing borders. Thus Jacobs recalls an anecdote about receiving directions from a woman perched high above her in an apartment building in a neighborhood that was not her own: “This women” she writes “was one of thousands of people in New York who casually take care of the streets. They notice strangers. They observe everything going on. If they need to take action, whether to direct a stranger waiting in a wrong place or call the police, they do so” (p.38).

For Jacobs, an informal but close-knit network of surveillance geared around self-protection exists amongst people who are neighbors in the city, provided that they see each other regularly enough to be recognized, and occupy the same space long enough to have a sense of propriety over it.

But Jacobs is less precise in defining why people watch, for what reasons, and how such social practices historically emerge in the first place. For Jacobs, this entire system of surveillance, which she describes in proto-Foucauldian terms as “an intricate, almost unconscious network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves and enforced by the people themselves” (p.32) exist for a simple and straightforward purpose. People want to “take care of the streets” it seems for the sake of the “public peace – the sidewalk and street peace” (p.31). In the end it seems, all of this watching is about the maintenance of social harmony, the reproduction of social relations, peace, and a general ethos of altruism to neighbors and even to strangers, if in a more guarded mode. Only during a generalized discussion of gangs does Jacobs conceive of watching as stemming from other motives (which she describes with proper noun “Turf”) but such practices are viewed by Jacobs as “intolerably subversive” because they grate against social harmony and “freedom of movement” (p.47). Moreover, while she implies at times that watching is shaped by ones’ social position (note that the above “public figure” was a woman, for example) *Jacobs never examines how one’s social position might be related to why one watches*, how one comes to watch in the first place, or what one is ultimately watching for. And finally, Jacobs seems to think it unnecessary to historicize and specify how such a “web of strong street and law and order” emerges, other than to say where it does not exist (which includes urban sprawl, suburbs, high-rise

districts, in general areas zoned for a single use). “Do-it-yourself surveillance”, in so far as that is a social phenomenon, is apparently a near natural development in landscape of the “well used city street” (p.34) in the dense, pedestrian oriented urban fabric of “the old city” where “there is a marvelous order for maintaining the safety of the streets” (p.50). In the end, Jacobs, for all her excellent ethnographic description and insight leaves us with a basic functionalist analysis of a highly essentialized urban society. People – really a series of unmarked, undifferentiated social actors – watch each other simply to preserve the harmony and equilibrium of their territory; but only if they reside in a city that meets the right criteria of density and urban environment, regardless of their place in geography or history.

A look at northeast Paris however, suggests that it is important that the emergence of a so-called “culture of surveillance” be contextualized as a product of specific historic developments and geopolitical events. Around the world urban areas, especially neighborhoods inhabited by the working class and poor, have long displayed varying forms of “street corner” sociality and self-regulatory, territorial surveillance. It is important however, to avoid attributing such social practices to ahistorical societal types, be it “urban society” or an ideal-typical vision of the “working class neighborhood”.

Instead, the emergence of a “culture of surveillance” in northeast Paris is the product of a major political initiative mounted by President Nicolas Sarkozy against France’s so-called “un-assimilable” immigrant population, as well as longer standing efforts to police “youth delinquency” and “quality of life” related crime. But with recent immigration related policy, surveillance has reached a new level of intensity. Since taking office in 2007, Sarkozy has set quotas for mass deportations of immigrants in irregular

status of 25,000 for 2007, and 26,000 for 2008 (“29 000 sans-papiers expulsés en 2009 par la France - LeMonde.fr,” 2009; “L'essentiel : immigration - Libération,” n.d.). The resulting crackdown has led to intensified levels of scrutiny for immigrant populations across the board; identity checks are now being conducted at random, particularly on mass transit lines shuttling commuters from outlying, often immigrant districts into Paris' center. Not only have these measures driven many undocumented (and those who support and shelter them) underground, but it has likely increased the number who seek shelter in the “shadow market” of overcrowded, deteriorated apartments in centrally located neighborhoods such as northeast Paris (the Paris metro and bus system is less surveyed than the commuter lines connecting the banlieue to the city center). While neighborhoods such as northeast Paris have long been subject to pressure by a range of authorities, recent measures have intensified the extent to which northeast Paris has become a hotbed of both police surveillance and suspicious counter-surveillance and territoriality by residents seeking to protect themselves and their friends and kin.

The surveillance of persons in “irregular status” is concurrent and overlapping with a less publicized but significant push to evict and clear residences used as squats and “insalubrious housing” (as well as with longstanding programs to combat “delinquency” among youths living in such “sensitive urban zones”). Even during his earlier tenure as Interior Minister, Sarkozy called for the closure of all of Paris' “insalubrious buildings and the presumably hazardous squats” (quoted in Bouillion, 2005) a policy that complements the deportation of undocumented persons with their eviction from apartments. Such concerns with insalubrious housing, “delinquency” and immigration may pre-date the arrival of Sarkozy, but the completion of the Jardins d'Éole (in the same

month that Sarkozy took office) and subsequent efforts to remake the neighborhood are inseparable from this broader ensemble of projects targeting France's urban, poor and working class, immigrant and immigrant descended population.

Surveillance of numerous kinds (including police, public health, urban planning, and social science) has been an important part of these projects, but the insidious, everyday practices of “watching” that one experiences on the streets of northeast Paris must also be understood in relation to these initiatives being unfolded in the Sarkozy-era. As this chapter demonstrates, the urban spaces that are the focal point of this intensified surveillance are not just passively being watched by police and those administering other urban and social policy. Indeed northeast Paris is actively transformed by this watching, and it becomes host to a range of projects of complicit co-surveillance, counter-surveillance, and even divergent alter-surveillances. Its effects are felt not only in the design of the Jardins d'Éole itself, but the way in which activists claim the “right to the city” and in the everyday lives of a diverse array of inhabitants from café owners to teenagers.

Under the Gaze of Experts: Architects, Social Scientists, and Surveillance

When Socialist party candidate Bertrand Delanoë was elected as Mayor of Paris, in 2001, one of his first changes of policy from that of the previous administration of Jean Tiberi was to recognize a five year long mobilization among residents in northeast Paris to build a new park. In what was viewed as a new approach to urbanism in Paris, Delanoë's Adjoint-mayor of urbanism emphasized neighborhood scaled projects for the capital over monumental, centrally located landmarks favored by his predecessors. The

gesture was a symbolic recognition that a new era had arrived in Paris as much as it was a political calculation. Delanoë, the first left wing politician to be elected in the city's modern history, owed an electoral debt to left wing bastions such as the northeast part of the city, and he had begun his own public career in a nearby neighborhood of the 18th arrondissement. The Jardins d'Éole represented an ideal project for him to support as it demonstrated a legitimization of grassroots politics in the city's left-leaning neighborhoods, embraced environmentalism and sustainable development, and it impacted an area which had been all but neglected under previous administrations.

Any ideological gestures towards grassroots involvement in this so called *quartier difficile* did not, however, diminish the questions of security and surveillance that whirled around the project from the start. The site of the future Jardins d'Éole lay at a streetcorner that authorities regarded as the epicenter of the crack-cocaine economy in the city at the time. The question of how to secure the new park was therefore sensitive. Delanoë held a “pro-camera” position on surveillance in general that was contentious within the left wing coalition that governed Paris' arrondissements and councils. Green Party (*Vert*) candidates were already using the issue to threaten to unseat Socialists in the lower-echelons of city government (including that of northeast Paris itself). Thus two other options were settled upon by the Mayor's office and the parks department (the DEVE) to ‘manage’ the space in a ‘social sense’. These measures would be the architecture itself, and to the surprise of many, ethnography, in the form of what would be called a ‘mission sociologique or “accompagnement sociologique” – (literally an ethnographic mission, or accompaniment) whose task would be to assist in the process of designing the park for the neighborhood in question.

It is also likely that the winning design for the park itself was chosen in no small measure because of its “surveillance-friendly” nature. Ultimately the jury (which, in addition to the Mayor’s Office and DEVE officials, included a sociologist and a member of the Éole association) chose a design that was submitted by the Corajoud team, a firm that had designed several large urban parks in France, but never in Paris. A number of features of the Corajoud plan were unique and well liked by the jury. First, and foremost – according to one jury member – was the “simplicity” of the design. In contrast to complex and intricate pieces of landscaping submitted by several competitors, the Corajoud plan was easy to read and ‘legible’ from the point of view of jurors and potential users. It divided the park into three easily discernable zones (a great lawn at the parks’ southern end, a set of terraced paths and athletic areas at the north end, and an esplanade along rue d’Auberivilliers). It was not crowded with trees and “spaces within spaces” but favored large, somewhat monolithic expanses granting a large degree of visibility and openness throughout the design. Indeed the proposal itself often deployed terms such as “simple space” and “open space” as key concepts.

In many respects, the most distinctive aspect of the Corajoud design was the way in which a particular feature of the new park – the esplanade – operated as the expression of several linked concepts. The esplanade was a concrete and gravel open space that ran along the park’s eastern flank. Other than a small booth to sell refreshments and some scattered trees, it offered unobstructed views into the park. This open design was at odds with many plans for the park as they were articulated by residents, who often imagined “lush gardens” full of trees. However, when one strolls by the Jardins d’Éole as it was built, one finds no lush forest, but instead scattered trees which do little to block a wide

open vista across concrete and grass exposing the vast majority of the space. This minimalism allows the passerby, whether she is a prospective park visitor or a police officer on patrol, to fully see into and know the space. It also means that whatever happens within the park is detectable from the street.

A more surprising security addition, given the park's location at a street corner infamous for drug activity, was the decision to leave the esplanade ungated (and therefore open at all hours), making it the only such space in Paris' parks system. This idea brought together a way of playing with the park's edges ("an edge that is porous and alive" according to an architect) with the idea of the design as a kind of a dialogue with inhabitants. The esplanade was described as "ultra public" and "ultra domestic" because it was open, and yet was meant to serve as an extension of the domestic spaces which many of the crowded dwellings of the neighborhood lacked. The Corajoud team found the esplanade to be a way to integrate several key elements called for by the resident's association, the Association Jardins d'Éole. First, the Corajoud team was the only one of candidates to pay serious attention to the issue of lighting, and in fact, make use of it in a creative way (using different colored lights) that illuminated the area at night. Renderings of the space depicted a bustling cafe and playing host to neighborhood gatherings. This was to be the soul of the park as a "project de vie" (or life project, see Chapters 4 and 5) as it was imagined in the Corajoud concept, but it would also prove to be most complicated area of the park to plan and manage, at political, social, and administrative levels.

The other intervention with regards to questions of security was the role of ethnographers. Ethnographers in particular were included in the principle contract as a

commanditaire of the project (along with the DEVE and the Corajoud team), meaning that their signature of approval would hold the same degree of legitimacy and authority as the City and the architect. Such a step reinforces the perception that the City of Paris had agreed with one of the Éole movement's key tenets: the building of the new park was oriented towards the reconstruction of the neighborhood in social and material aspects. It also indicated a remarkable legitimation of the value of ethnographic knowledge regarding urban design, and above all, securitizing urban space.

However, the unprecedented nature of this arrangement meant the position of the sociologist in the design process would be somewhat improvised and defined while “on the job”. Initially, Isaac Joseph began work with Corajoud by focusing on how to conceive the “social context” of the site. First and foremost, this referred to the potential for drug activity in the park, which Joseph saw as controllable through a number of means (including public health and neighborhood associations), but especially, the usage of the space by the broader public. For him, this meant building on what he called a “tradition of lingering” in the neighborhood that had been invoked by associations’ efforts to populate the streets of the neighborhoods with families with the hope of displacing street corner drug dealers and users. This was made difficult, however, by what Joseph had felt was the lack of strong sense of symbolic and collective identity with which to unite a movement. Unlike the Goutte d’Or or Bellville, he had observed in fieldnotes that the neighborhood was “a place of passage or of transition”, a place “in the process of becoming”. He believed that a sociologist could help remedy this situation by the rendering the neighborhood legible to an architect through ethnography.

The question of how such steps would be placed into practice would not be defined by Joseph, who tragically passed away in February of 2004. His death occurred at a crucial moment in the design process. Already, in September of 2003, the Atelier Corajoud won the design completion of the park, and began moving quickly to end the design process and begin construction with maximum speed. The sense of urgency was exacerbated by political pressures: the Mayor's Office sought to inaugurate the park at least 6 months before the next round of municipal elections, to be held in 2007ⁱ (after the deadline, elected officials could not legally use a project to promote themselves in an electoral campaign). As a result a new team of sociologists had to join the planning effort in mid-stride, in a period where debates over the conceptual content of the park were eschewed for progress towards logistical and construction related planning.

This politically driven reality immediately clashed with the initial goals of the sociologists, who in attempting to pick up where Joseph left off, sought an intervention in how the architects "translated the desires of the residents into the technical practices of creating the park". According to both sociologists, they became abruptly aware that a consensus had developed between the DEVE and Corajoud to move quickly. From the architects' point of view, "the dialogue with the sociologists was before, in the conceptual stage" and now there was worry about "risks of putting the project behind". "We decided on a strategy to work on the functioning of the park, and not on the design, because they wouldn't let us" noted one of the sociologists. A combination of chance and political developments thus produced a situation where formal ethnographic practice, already extraneous to an established process of design, was in danger of being pushed aside despite its official legitimation at the projects' outset. The sociologists therefore

found themselves in a less than enviable position: devising a novel form of intervention in a politically charged process that had already built momentum without them.

However, there was one space in the park that generated enough worry amongst planners that ethnographic knowledge was deemed conceptually and practically necessary. The esplanade was already, at a conceptual level, a difficult space for the DEVE and the architects alike. It crossed a line that was rare in French definitions of urban public space: by being ungated, and open to the street at all hours, it seemed part of the sidewalk. In this sense it violated certain norms common in every other Parisian park, where the line between interior and exterior is carefully maintained by fences and gates, allowing for a careful set of official rules and social norms regarding usage to be applied differently and delimited to each type of public space. But far more worrisome than any conceptual ambiguity (though perhaps not divorced from it either) were the strong reservations by some planners based on the public presence of a drug economy (and specifically crack-cocaine) here. Creating an open ungated plaza at this very spot would therefore be a surprising move for any city parks department, but especially for the DEVE, for whom the boundaries between park and street are so crucial to the definition of urban parkland in Paris.

It was therefore in the context of security where the sociologists found themselves able to intervene with some undeniable effects. Joseph had already placed a special level of concern on “the boundaries of the park” and the difficulties arising from the esplanade, which was like a giant edge being designed as social center. Later, even as considerable pressure was placed upon terminating the design and conceptual phases during the later

sociologists' tenure, it appeared that ethnographic approaches could also find room in this area:

At that point, everything I could say was a potential risk for questioning at least the design. I remember one time, at a meeting I pointed to a mistake, and Corajoud, - he was not happy that I saw that! It was on the esplanade, (...) in the design they had originally put the gate further into the park, and there was this dead space that was invisible from the street, but closed from the park at night. I pointed at that spot and I said to Corajoud, "If there is trouble, this is where it's going to start with drugs in that park". I thought I was playing my part around the esplanade because that's how I thought I had an in. You wanted to keep it open, but everybody was scared. Everybody was afraid it was going to be a drug spot. The DEVE prepared small walls, so if there was a problem, they could put up a chain link fence up in one night. So, I told Corajoud: "Well, if you want to make sure the space stays open and you want to make sure this is a safe space, and one way for it be safe is, first, don't create nooks and crannies, but also, let the people of the neighborhood be involved in the day-to-day workings of the space"

The esplanade revealed itself to be an opening for the sociologists to address the social concerns that seemed to defy easy architectural or administrative control. As a space of "benevolent indifference" called for by the AJE, the esplanade was arguably the most public space in the Jardin d'Éole, and therefore it most represented the ideals of the campaign for the park. It was also, by no coincidence, the space least controlled by the DEVE, who were reluctant to completely relinquish the space to "the public" by un-

gating it, (DEVE went as far as to build a foundation for a chain link fence so that the area could be enclosed in a short notice). The sociologists' recommendations were to make the area a gathering space for residents of the neighborhood and allow them be involved in its day-to-day workings. This would be accomplished by creating a *buvette*, (concession stand) managed by neighborhood associations, which would sell inexpensive drinks and food as part of an effort to animate the esplanade. The idea, influenced by Jacobs' analysis of safety and sidewalk uses, essentially sought to use a resident's "eyes on the street" and pedestrian circulation as a way to create a social center and simultaneously displace drug related activity from the space.

Such measures would complement already established modes of surveillance of parks that are orthodox in Paris, namely that of the guardians (*gardien*) and the indeed the special nature of parks as codified in formal rules of usage. All parks in Paris are staffed by uniformed guards (employed by the DEVE) who open and close the park gates at the beginning and end of each day, and who patrol the space, ensuring that rules of usage are followed. The guards, officially known as "welcoming agents", circulate through all but the smallest Parisian parks during the day. They enforce a disciplinary regime that is more or less standardized throughout all parks, meaning that Parisian parks are subject to special surveillance from the start, as they are more regulated spaces than streets. Specifically, drinking alcohol and bike riding are forbidden in Parisian parks (though both activities are legal on streets), and in many cases, using the grass itself is forbidden. The DEVE further codifies particular parks as *jardins d'usage*, meaning literally, parks for use, as opposed to those of heritage or *patrimoine*, in recognition of the fact that parks are not merely public space, but forms of public space. In opposition to the street, in

which behavior is frequently less policed and could be understood as a kind of de facto public space, parks in many respects represent a different category of space, which is formally provided and maintained by the state (and specifically, the DEVE) for the public. Parks follow a highly republican “model of citizenship” with regards to use: all citizens are guaranteed rights of access and usage (posted in a ‘bill of rights style’ format at the entrance of nearly all gates as *règlement*) so long as they observe the rules (Tonnelat, 2006). Additionally, there are discrepancies in how closely parks (and their visitors) observe these formally ‘republican’ codifications of use. At one extreme, for example, is the monumental Jardin du Luxembourg. Created in 1612, it is not managed by Paris’ DEVE but a special authority of the National Senate, and has the strictest rules of usage in Paris (sitting is only permitted on the provided seats, for example) and is located outside of the Senate chambers, at the Luxembourg Palace. At the other end of the extreme, lay many parks in the city’s working class neighborhoods: the “parks for usage”.

The Jardins d’Éole, is arguably chief among this category of public gardens, as it was conceived as a living park (“un *parc de vivre*”) in the words of one of its horticulturalists. It is the only park in Paris to have an ungated section, open twenty-four hours, and here guards regularly tolerate breeches of the rules, and residents frequently flout them (often people need to be coaxed into leaving at night, and children frequently play in one of the parks’ decorative canals). The lax feel of the guards at the Jardins d’Éole was illustrated to me by the fact that one of them favored wearing a necklace adorned with a very conspicuous cannabis leaf (an ironic message, given the amount concern voiced by planners over public drug use in the park). And yet, surveillance remained a top priority. Guards described the park as “well made for their professional

use” with “excellent visibility” (a design feature I appreciated in my own work, as was mentioned at the start of this chapter.)

This is not to deny the Jardins d'Éole represents a good example of the kind of disciplinary architecture described by Foucault's concept of disciplinary architecture. Indeed it hard to ignore the parallels to Jardins d'Éole when Foucault writes: “The old simple schema of confinement and enclosure – thick walls, a heavy gate that prevents entering or leaving – began to be replaced by the calculation of openings, of filled and empty spaces, passages and transparencies.” (1995, p. 172). The Jardins d'Éole is a space designed for a variety of uses, chief among which is surveillance. This is after all, a park designed not only for a neighborhood long viewed as “difficult” to manage by authorities; the park itself represents a new attempt at controlling, surveilling, and pacifying the very residents who are the source of intensified social anxieties in the Sarokozy era. Perhaps it is no surprise that it is a simple design, composed of several open and “easy to read” spaces and a lack of obstructions is the aspect that differs the most from some early “imaginings” of the park that were drawn with close-consultations by residents prior to the Corajoud team's involvement.

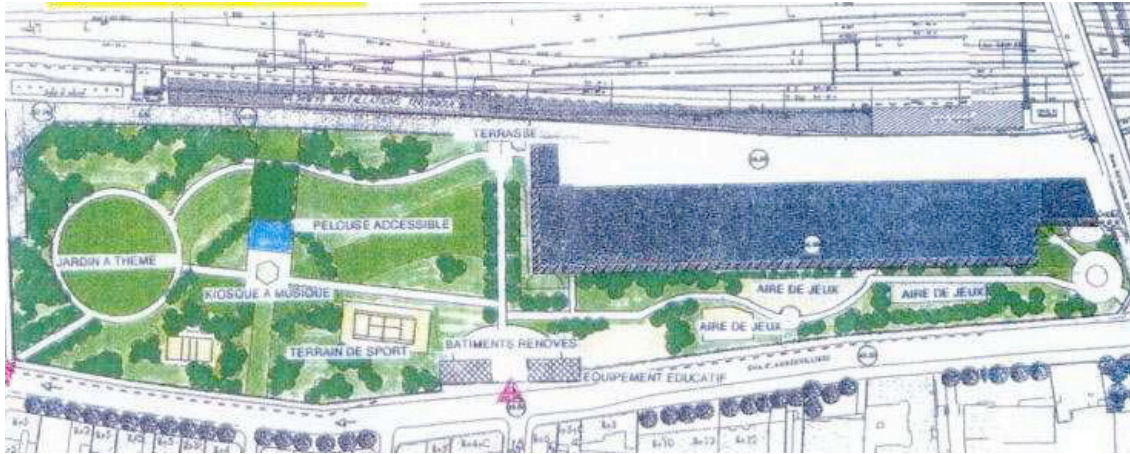


Figure 21: Early drawing of a planned park at the Cour du Maroc, courtesy of the Association Jardins d'École.

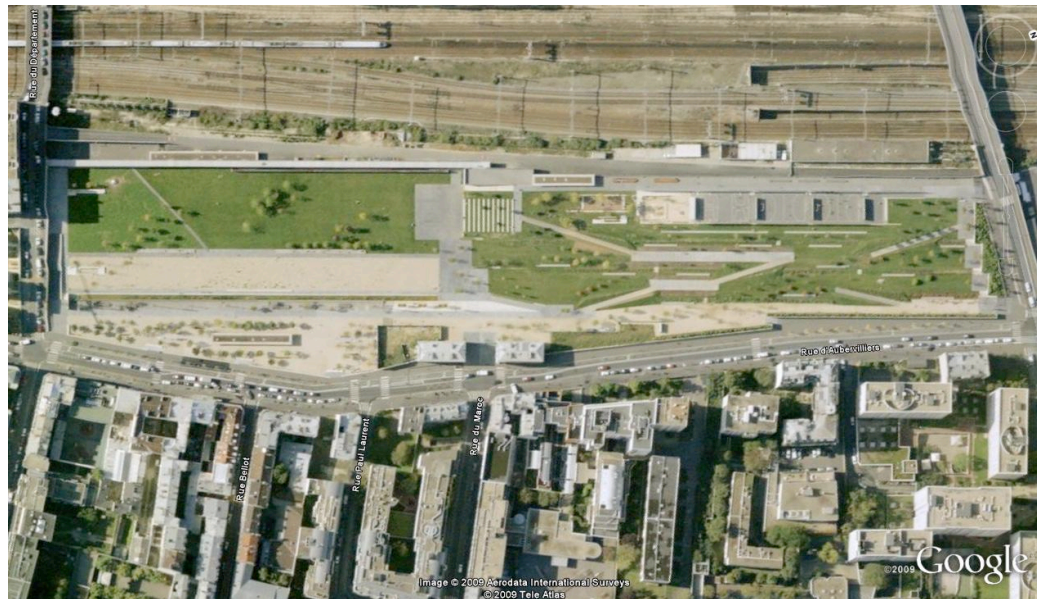


Figure 22: Satellite image of the Jardins d'École, Google Earth ©2009.

Yet open spaces, overlooks, and sight-lines are a core part of the design that has direct bearing on how the park interacts with the street and neighborhood around it; indeed a central element of securitizing the park involves its integration with the neighborhood around it. This aspect of the design is paradoxically the most “democratic”

aspect of the park as well as the feature most oriented towards social control. At a physical level, the park's boundaries have been left open to enable constant traffic and usage with streets around it at all hours, based on a highly Jacobsian theory of safe streets. It should be no surprise that the sociologists were instrumental in integrating the neighborhood residents in this fashion – and establishing a presence for them in the day to day operations of the park's concession stand, community garden, and committees focused on park management. All of these helped create an environment that was designed to be self-regulated though much of this surveillance was planned, as we shall see, to pre-empt the surveillance of the police, whose interference was viewed an absolute worst case scenario. In this regard, the AJE mobilization (and other neighborhood association) would begin to conduct a kind of surveillance of their own. In some ways, such projects appeared to have much in common with that of the state, even though the project had as its goal preserving the autonomy of the neighborhood to police itself.



Figure 23: An example of one of the expansive vistas afforded by the Jardin d'Éole's carefully designed combination of elevation differences and sight-lines. Note that two women in the foreground are also pointing and watching.

Neighborhood Associations and Surveillance

Andy: "Why is there a need for an association like yours?"

Claire: "For surveillance."

(taken from an interview with a founder of an association to assert community participation in northeast Paris' redevelopment projects).

In January of 2009, I was surprised to learn that a filmmaker, Jean-Marc La Rocca, had just released a documentary on the movement to build the Jardins d'Éole. I was struck by the title, an invocation of revolutionary rhetoric : "De Haute Lutte! Urbanisme et démocratie participative" (roughly translated the Great Struggle: Urbanism and

participative democracy”). The term invoked an idiomatic French Marxist expression “haute lutte”, often used to describe class based struggles at a monumental, epochal scale, or of an especially hard fought intensity. The title intrigued me further when I noticed the film was also marked with the logo of the City of Paris’ Mayor’s Office. But most striking of all was that the poster for the film (and the cover of subsequent DVDs) was graced with a photo of one of the AJE’s founders, staring out of his apartment window, peering over the Jardins d’Éole with binoculars. The choice of the cover photo perturbed me to a degree. Perhaps the picture suggested he had his eyes on some distant utopian goal, or perhaps he was meant to be keeping watch upon the powerful. My interpretation, which was likely a product of my time spent as participant-observer of the mobilization, was admittedly more cynical: he was surveying the park he had helped to create, and specifically, the troublesome esplanade, which had come to occupy a tremendous amount time for the activists since the park was completed.

Once built, the un-gated open design of the esplanade, which had been an intense concern for planners, DEVE officials, and even politicians, was now a fixation of neighborhood residents. In many respects, this particular role for associations was “built” into the park’s design by the mission sociologique, which beforehand sought to displace “external” surveillance (especially that of the police) by associative activity to the greatest extent possible. This was integrated into a part of larger social mission on the part of the association: the goal of remaking the neighborhood space at a level which is less tangible than the mere construction of the park itself. As one member told me “the pre-occupation [of the AJE] is not only the garden, in general, it is social; the innauguration of the new park was not the end for us”. Another AJE founder explained

that the completion of the park “is like a birth, in fact, the park is only just beginning”. Seen in this light, the park appeared less a concrete goal of the mobilization than it did a kind of far-reaching social project for the neighborhood, and it was clear that surveillance and watching was to play a central role in it.

This conception of the park as a “project” was given urgency by the fears of an enclosure of the esplanade. Often, the surveillance of the space itself was linked to a fear of the surveillance of others – it was commonly remarked that it would only take one phone-call to result in the construction of a fence, and the subsequent “enclosure” of the Jardins d’Éole. As a member of the AJE association told me one afternoon while sitting on the esplanade itself:

For us, managing this open space is a very, very important issue. Notice this little concrete wall there [the provisional wall created by the DEVE for the quick construction of a fence]. Up until the last minute, that was the last big struggle we had, over the creation of that fence. (...) after all, this is a neighborhood reputed for drug addiction and dealers, so it's a worry of certain people.

Two aspects of this quote merit close attention. First, there is the profound impact of the literal, concrete representation of the potential for the creation of the wall (placed as the reader will recall, for the creation of a fence in one night in case of an “incident” on the esplanade). At stake with the enclosure of the esplanade is one of the key tenets of the AJE, namely the dismantling of the SNCF’ “wall of shame” along the Rue d’Aubervilliers and the “opening up” of the space for the neighborhood (see Chapter 4).

The enclosure of the space is seen as an enclosure on the neighborhood itself. An equally important issue that is indicated here is the importance of managing (*gerer*) this space, and specifically the importance that the space be self-managed (*autogeré*) by the association as opposed to outside authorities. It seems clear then, that the AJE has moved from being a residents' mobilization which agitated for a park, to one which is interested in managing urban space. Or, more precisely the self-management (auto-*gerer*) of public space in favor of creating a kind of "neighborhood space" free from the control of outside agents. Surveillance is thus linked to self-control and auto-*gerer*; it is practiced in order to preserve a level of residents' autonomy over the neighborhood streets.

One way of accomplishing this goal has been attempting to "animate" the esplanade. In a project that began with the mission sociologique, one of the neighborhood associations became the manager of a buvette – a small cafe – on the esplanade. The goal: to create a center of activity that would ideally "displace negative uses" and users (specifically drug users) whose presence it was feared, would transform the entire garden into a "drug park". Ensuring the "proper functioning" of the esplanade has proven difficult however. The associations had hoped that the buvette would become a pole of activity for the area but it is often quiet, especially on weekdays. Despite efforts to establish better signage, it has been difficult to maintain a steady stream of sales. This is due largely to a lack of disposable income by residents, but many argue that it is also due the lack of welcoming architecture of the space. The associations have therefore, continued to lobby for various improvements to building from the city, and have managed to procure a license to sell alcohol at the site. Some might argue that such developments indicate that Jardins d'Éole as a public space is in the process of being

“privatized” in the sense that the functioning of the space is managed and surveilled by neighborhood associations. Yet residents play a greater role in monitoring and “animating” the space as opposed to city agencies or the police. More importantly, the efforts by neighborhood associations to survey the space represent an ongoing effort to claim the neighborhood as a distinctive territory within Paris. The irony is that associations themselves become oriented towards surveillance and the “displacement” of “delinquency”.

Surveillance and Ethnographic Encounters: Everyday Life on the Rue d’Aubervilliers

Yet another layer of “street corner” surveillance was revealed by my presence in northeast Paris. Interestingly, my position as an ethnographer often meant that encounters began by me having to explain my own obvious surveillance practices to residents. More than the presence of a notebook or camera, it seemed the most disconcerting aspect of my presence to residents was that I had no place in certain contexts other than practicing surveillance in one form or another. I was only there it seemed, in the beginning, to ask questions, check up on things, or take a photograph. This detached state, which was primarily a problem early in fieldwork, attracted obvious attention in a community that was already vigilant because of immigration raids, police operations, and criminal activity. Being marked as white, middle class, and male in a working class neighborhood populated by people of color potentially led to skepticism by a few residents; but what led to far more difficult situations was simply classic ethnographic practice: jotting in a note book, stopping to look closely at things, taking the occasional photograph. As the

following anecdotes show (all of which were collected on one block), I learned it was possible (often unwittingly) to use my outward identity in a number of ways to “trip” alarm bells and elicit forms of territoriality that were both revealing and varied.

Although I often restrained myself from overly intrusive observations, I had a series of encounters provoked by my own ethnographic practices (i.e. surveillance), which in turn, revealed the informal, street corner surveillance of residents themselves. Many residents or local business owners appeared to, at first, embody what Jane Jacobs termed “eyes on the street”. But such watching is not simply an enactment of “neighborliness” or careful “looking-out” for fellow members of a community. Numerous socio-political and often deeply ideological factors shape the meaning of watching as it is practiced by individuals. In some cases, these practices seemed to give the impression of agency by granting control of not only a territory, but possible interventions in much larger issues.

At times, my appearance could elicit trust from French residents of European descent who held deep and angry prejudices against their Maghrebi and West African neighbors. Anthropologists such as Verena Stolcke (1999) may be right that culture has replaced race in many “official” discourses of difference and exclusion in post-war Europe. However, in everyday life in northeast Paris, I found my own phenotypic markers of European descent (despite being non-French) led several residents to reveal their xenophobic sentiments to me before they even knew my name, background, or political sentiments.

Indeed, it appeared that the willingness of such individuals to place their trust in me was directly related to a kind of weariness brought about from their own impulses to

constantly watch ethnoracial others in their midst. Claude, the French descended proprietor of a café on Rue d'Aubervilliers appeared to be an extreme case of such paranoid watching. He frequently seemed overly happy to see me – often the only customer of European descent – waiting at the polished zinc counter of his otherwise dark and poorly kept establishment. A thin, wiry man who often appeared nervous and worried, he spoke of his business with great dread, fearing that he would be unable to make the payments to keep his poorly frequented café open for the remainder of the year. He had, in fact only been in northeast Paris for three years, having sold a previous establishment in the banlieue of Saint-Denis because he said, the neighborhood had become too dangerous. Lured to northeast Paris by municipal subsidies for businesses in this “distressed area” (the Zone Urbaine Sensible or ZUS) he now felt that not only his business but the entire neighborhood was under threat by “delinquents” and “drug-dealers”. As a response, he had a battery of security cameras installed in the café and had himself taken to perching nervously behind his cash register; often warily eyeing the street even as he poured beers, coffees, and spoke to customers.

This constant surveillance was rooted in a venomous hatred of his Maghrebi and West African neighbors, despite the fact that he needed more of them as customers to survive. In fact, he constantly appeared to be on the verge of alienating the few immigrant origin customers who did patronize his café, mostly for cigarettes (his was the only licensed *tabac* or cigarette vendor on a bloc with several large social housing developments). On occasion, he would greet my arrival with tirades of disparagement against “immigrants” on everything from their manners (“they say neither hello or goodbye” he would say) to the fact that as Muslims, they would not order ham

sandwiches. More than once he said such things to me literally while serving Maghrebi and West African customers coffee or cigarettes (I thought it surprising he had any customers). His favorite refrain was “people say it is the extreme right who are racists, but really, the immigrants are the racists” – a quote borrowed from Jean-Maire Le Pen. He often assured me that I only disagreed him because I had spent enough time “in this neighborhood”. He reserved particular animosity for teenage boys and young men. On one memorable day, in which Claude seemed given to an almost pathological state of paranoia, he was fixated on the Rue d’Auberivilliers with a particularly acute level of worry and dread. Presently, a young West African teenager of about 18 or 19 years of age came strolling down the street dressed in a black leather baseball hat, leather jacket, and the designer “skinny” jeans that were at their peak of popularity among Parisian youths at the moment. Claude stared at the young man with suspicion; he even seemed to physically tense up as the youth stepped through the door and up to the register. He was, of course, buying cigarettes, and Claude indulged him. But when the young man casually stepped back outside in front of the cafe and with the habitual nonchalance of any smoker, tapped his fresh pack of Marlboros on the end, and paused for a light, Claude lost it. Crying out to me, “Look! Now it is starting again!” he ran outside, confronted the youth with the question: “what are you doing”. The young man, who seemed neither surprised nor particularly threatened by Claude’s inquisition, simply responded with a question: “Am I bothering you?” To this Claude responded angrily: “get out of here!” and so off the young man walked, aloofly smoking his cigarette, having apparently cultivated a level of resilience to such treatment that I simply could not fathom. Claude returned inside in a state of fury: he stated that it was the third time he had to chase away “drug dealers” on

that day alone. By this point, however, I had (for my own safety) become very familiar with which street corners and at what times groups of men sold crack-cocaine and heroine in this area, and I knew upon first glance that this young man was in no way involved in the drug economy. But I remained silent, nodded, and even elicited Claude to illustrate the northeast Paris in which he inhabited, as twisted as it may have been by paranoia, delusions, and gendered, ethno-racial and class-based anxieties. “The police do nothing”, he said, “and the people at the arrondissement say just wait, the neighborhood will improve, but I won’t last another year here”. Still, after this incident I increasingly found it difficult to visit Claude’s establishment; and I worried that if others saw me with him or at his cafe my relationships with them could be jeopardized. Nonetheless, his restaurant did stay open, and upon my return trips to northeast Paris in later years I saw that the opening of a new art space on Rue d’Aubervilliers had furnished him with nearly too many weekend customers to adequately serve. Apparently he is now in northeast Paris to stay.

A few addresses down from Claude’s café is a West African restaurant owned and operated by a woman named Aminata, and her eldest daughter, Binata, who arrived from Senegal in the mid-1980s. It, like Claude’s down the street, is an establishment in an ill state of repair except that care has been taken to keep it clean and ordered; pictures almost conceal the cracked sections on the walls and vibrant dyed fabrics are draped over torn vinyl seats. Frequently it too seemed empty, I never saw more than three of the dozen tables occupied in the small restaurant. And here too, I was overcome by the role of watching in everyday life, but in a very different manner than that seen at Claude’s. Aminata often stands beside the door of the restaurant (which is always left open)

frequently with a cigar in her mouth and clothed in a colorful kaftan, greeting passing neighbors and watching the children of their friends and relatives play across the street in the esplanade of the Jardins d'Éole.

In many respects she and her daughter fit the Jacobsian notion of “public figure” for Rue d'Aubervilliers, but this watching is not simply about preserving “social harmony” nor is it tied to “law and order”, at least not in any conventionally understood sense. Their concerns, despite their restaurant being located directly on a corner associated with drug trafficking, had little to do with fears of “dealers”. Indeed as Binata once told me when describing growing up in the restaurant, “I was scared of the drug addicts as a little girl, but when I grew older I realized some of them were nice people, and some became our customers.” Instead, the manner of watching practiced by Aminta is best illustrated by second short anecdote.

Early in my fieldwork, when I decided to stop in and eat Aminata's restaurant for the first time, I became very aware of the fact that this space, like many other spaces associated with transient and poor populations, could quickly become one of tension, suspicion, and paranoia. I visited the restaurant soon after it opened for the day, right after sundown (it was common for Aminata's to only open late in the day, and stay open into the early hours of the morning). That night, as I would later learn, would be a typical one for the restaurant. When I came in, there were only a half-dozen other people there, all of whom were together at a table in the rear of the restaurant, watching Senegalese television via satellite. The other customers greeted my entrance with a few raised eyebrows and surprised glances. Aminata was very friendly but had no menu to offer me. She seemed genuinely surprised that I intended to order a meal and offered “meat and

rice” as the sole dining option before sending a somewhat annoyed looking Binata away from a table full of friends into to the kitchen to prepare me dinner. Despite her friendliness, I had the distinct feeling she would not mind my leaving at all, and also became aware that none of the other customers were eating or had ordered any food. I then noticed a lanky middle aged man of West African descent in jeans and tee shirt take a step up to the door, see me, awkwardly stop short, and step back towards the curb in a poorly executed act of fake nonchalance. He stayed outside for a while, peering in towards Aminata, until they made eye contact. One of the men with Aminata then rose from his table, went outside, had a lengthy discussion with the man in front of the restaurant, and then returned inside to retrieve a brown paper bag from the back of the restaurant, which he finally delivered to the man outside. Around this time, my food came – a baked unseasoned lamb chop served with rice, an item that surprised me for a West African dining establishment. Now I felt reasonably sure that I was probably eating food intended to be served to no one other than Aminata and her family. More people, all of whom were Wolof speakers, came in to the restaurant throughout night, with the vast majority not staying but nervously waiting about while Aminata gave them brown paper bags, or merely saying hello. Aminata, for her part, was cordial with me, but continually asked me if I was done, and if I needed anything else. Despite her friendliness I felt my presence generated suspicion – and even stress. Even though people seemed to relax later in my stay – a bottle of liquor and a pack of cigarettes was produced from one of the brown paper bags in front of me– I was overcome by the feeling I was disrupting a clandestine routine.

Over time I would learn that Aminata's was less a restaurant in the classic sense than gathering place for a network of West African – and specifically Wolof-speaking – immigrants. It survived, despite elevating rents, not by serving food but illegally selling cigarettes, single drinks, or the occasional bottle of rum or whiskey to a clientele who resided in the apartment buildings nearby. Indeed, Aminata's place was something like a collective living room and dining room for an overcrowded, exhausted group of immigrants – many of whom were men. More than a few of the regular clientele, like Moussa, the man who was too paranoid to enter the restaurant the first time he saw me in it, share single studios with as many as half a dozen roommates and relax at Aminata's table after their late shifts have ended, while waiting for roommates to leave a bed free for them to sleep in. The watching, nervousness, and paranoia is partially to safeguard the “informal” sale of cigarettes and alcohol that permits survival of the restaurant. But an even greater source of tension comes from the fact that places like Aminata's are crucial nodes serving as indispensable social spaces for networks of individuals in irregular immigration status whose movements are increasingly at risk. Indeed, neighborhood associations of *Sans-Papiers* report an arrest of a local worker nearly once a week. More than ever, as France continues to deport record numbers of immigrants, the undocumented live with the continual threat of detention. For several people I met, even the fact that I was non-French did little to alleviate their suspicion of me, so great was their vulnerability. Aminata herself is a naturalized French citizen and her daughter is a French citizen as well. But individuals such as her function as “eyes upon the street” *against* the forces of “law and order”, on behalf of their neighbors. Strictly speaking, she

and her daughter are the matriarch and custodians of not so much a city block, but a network of transient, precariously employed, mostly male workers.

Yet another example of such encounters occurred during a chilly winter evening after I had finished a meeting with the owner of one of Rue d'Aubervilliers tea lounges. Upon leaving the interview, while running through details of the meeting in my head, I decided to pause on the Jardins d'Éole esplanade – a zone deeply associated with the formal surveillance of police and informal watching of residents – to write down my thoughts. I began jotting in my notes feverishly, hoping to make sure I recorded several key impressions, and then hurry home for dinner. After a few moments, I became aware there was someone standing over me. Without realizing it, I had sat down directly across from a couple of young men who had been sitting on the inside wall of the esplanade, probably watching the street. They likely had watched me scribble notes, and perhaps vacantly stare at the street in thought, for several minutes. One of them, a very youthful looking teenager of Maghrebi descent, abruptly asked me: “what are you writing?”. I tried to answer the question as if it was posed casually, or out of curiosity, but it was in fact put forwards quite aggressively, almost as a challenge. I said that I was writing notes about my work and I that was researcher. The next question was as is often the case, about my accent (“yes its American, not English”), which led to a domino-like series of further interrogations. The questions were aggressive enough to make me uncomfortable, as otherwise I would have welcomed our discussion. Taking my notebook from me, one of the young men flipped through it, and then began to scribble in it, while he related to me a bit about himself (he was named Ziad, 18 years of age, born in Morocco, and he lived with his mother and younger sister directly across the street). Just when I thought

he was feeling more comfortable with me, however, he abruptly showed me what he had drawn: an unflattering portrait of me, wearing a hat marked “FBI”. “Voilà!” he said, “This is you”. The implication was clear: I was a cop, or worse, a kind of unspecified, generic agent of American empire. At this point he beckoned to some friends – other young men about his age, of Maghrebi, and in one case, Serbian origin – who arrived and introduced themselves (they clearly lacked his sense of dissatisfaction at my presence, and most told me about where their families were from upon hearing I was writing about the neighborhood). Ziad then grew angrier, and in an animated, gesturing performance in front of his friends, he began to pepper me with condemnations of American foreign policy. It mattered little to Ziad that I expressed agreement with most of what he said. The point was that he had caught me here, in the esplanade, a territory that was definitively *his* space. For him, I was American Empire in person -- the flesh and blood representation of something he clearly harbored a deep disgust for but had apparently only known until now in an abstract form. At one point, when a strikingly tall, bearded Maghrebi man, wearing a *taqiyah* and flowing robe passed us by, it prompted him to yell out, mockingly, “look! there is Osama Bin Laden! That’s incredible! Now you can go back and tell the Americans that Osama is in Stalingrad!”. A few moments later, in his most intense expression of his aggressiveness towards me, he produced a small pocket knife and saying “I detest your president, Bush,” made swiping gesture the air, adding “I will cut your Bush/mouth” (*je vais vous couper la Bush*) -- a pun that switched the word “mouth” or *bouche* with Bush. The encounter ended without incident, though I subsequently became paranoid about how my lingering presence was “read” by others for weeks afterwards (in the end, it was by far the most aggressive encounter I experienced

in the field, and the only belligerent discussion I had among many similar ones). What is clear in hindsight, however, is the ease in which highly localized, individual expressions of territoriality and surveillance can lead to articulations of resistance against incredibly global geopolitical regimes (such as the War on Terror). Simultaneously, the same encounter seemed to betray the emotions of helplessness and frustration of individuals who feel oppressed by such powers, who are left literally swiping the air in futile anger.

Conclusion

This chapter began by briefly examining the literature on urban surveillance that has grown in large part due to the proliferation of urban surveillance technologies such as CCTV in the last two decades. Much of this work has convincingly shown how neoliberal regimes, private corporations, and public/private partnerships have used this apparatus to monitor activity in urban areas – especially those deemed vulnerable to terrorist attack after 9/11 – on a scale that would have been qualitatively and quantitatively unimaginable mere decades before. Much of this literature has balanced a focus on the linkage between surveillance and the emergence of neoliberal urban governance, with a Foucauldian read of surveillance technology that draws from well known metaphor of the panopticon: frequently it seems to matter little if anyone is actually watching behind the myriad of cameras and sensor that dot contemporary cities, the mere presence of them we are told, is significant. Paris has been no exception to this trend, having been the victim of terrorist attacks in the mid-1990s, though it has not seen the same degree of CCTV deployment as London or post 9/11 New York. In France as a whole however, the advent of recent surveillance has also been tied to a law and order

crusade of a different kind; that of long running and joined campaigns against delinquency and undocumented immigrants which frequently targets low income urban areas.

However, my work in northeast Paris suggests that the boom in urban surveillance goes beyond being just a new, technologically based threat to civil liberties or privacy infringement. Intense surveillance, or more precisely, the expectation and/or fear of it – even in a context when it is low-tech – fundamentally alters urban life. From the design of urban parks to everyday life in its cafés and squares, interactions in Paris are deeply shaped by watching and being watched as a form of a social practice. While the work of Jane Jacobs suggested a functionalist explanation for why watching occurs as a social practice, the example of the Jardins d'Éole, the role of surveillance in residents associations, and the place of watching in northeast Paris suggest the degree to which everyday urban life is transformed by national and international political shifts.

At the level of urban design, the Jardins d'Éole was shaped from the start by social anxieties related to ethnicity and class in the form of delinquency discourses that have been long established in France and Europe in general. A central theme of the design was to dispense with hiding places, and render all activity occurring in park and on the surrounding streets visible. At the same time it has, through the clever use of sight lines, created ideal locations from which to watch others. Sociologists, who were incorporated into the project to largely render the immigrant neighborhood knowable to the architects and urban planners, managed to subvert their intended role by encouraging design decisions that made residents the primary surveillance agents through usage. This was largely intended as a strategy for community empowerment vis-à-vis the police.

However, it contributes to the degree to which residents become implicated in an ongoing web of unconscious but daily surveillance practices that is arguably more pervasive in scope than the mere presence of security cameras (which were not installed in the Jardins d'Éole).

Another level of surveillance has been incorporated in the grassroots political landscape of northeast Paris with the construction of the Jardins d'Éole. As part of the plan to involve residents in the operation of the park, residents themselves now play an active role in keeping an eye on the space. Frequently, residents participate in surveillance practices in order to pre-empt what is perceived as interference from municipal authorities – chiefly the police – in the neighborhood's affairs as there is fear that police involvement tarnishes the image of the neighborhood, and is more likely to lead to violence and injustice. The paradox of such behavior is that it is arguably an example of grassroots democracy or *autogérer*, but it raises fundamental questions about whether residents' watching of each other itself reproduces the marginalization and displacement of particular groups, especially minority youths, arguably making it complicit in larger state centered surveillance and policing.

And finally it is clear that residents' "eyes on the street" are an important and crucial way in which surveillance is part of daily life in northeast Paris. In contrast to what Jacobs' argued however, residents don't merely watch each other in order to "take care" of their surroundings and keep the peace (or to be more precise, "taking care" of someone can have multiple meanings!). "Taking care" can mean a café owner chasing away innocent youths in an enactment of Far Right ideologies concerned with ethnocultural purity; it can mean keeping an eye open for state agents who might interfere

with economic and daily lives of clandestine friends and family; it might even mean confronting agents of empire who are suspected of surveilling and oppressing a “Muslim neighborhood”. In some cases residents surveil against real threats, but in many cases they are concerned with at least partially imagined ones. Often surveillance reveals the way that a stranger himself can become a tabula rasa upon which abstract ideologies related to power, ethnocultural difference, and a host of struggles and injustices can be projected. This type of watching is much more paradoxical and complex than that described by Jacobs, though it doesn’t preclude a genuine concern on the part of many with preserving class-inflected visions of social order. Above all it seems to suggest that watching, especially in areas that are themselves the target of heavy surveillance, becomes a core part everyday life.

When one speaks about the importance of surveillance in contemporary urban life, the now common-place pronouncement that we are always being watched thanks to the proliferation technologies such as CCTV and biometrics tells only part of the story. If one spends enough time in northeast Paris, one realizes that nearly everyone seems to be watching everyone (and this in in a neighborhood that has almost no CCTV cameras). People watch each other in pursuit of a variety of goals and projects, including some that are complicit with the surveillance being carried out by the powerful as well as some who wish to defy the designs of the powerful, and there are hosts of practices with goals that lay in between. But if we conceptualize surveillance as a form of social practice and a means by which power creates subjects, then we are not simply being watched, we are being changed as well, and often in profound ways. Northeast Paris offers an example of how everyday life is transformed in the landscape of the surveillance city.

ⁱ Municipal Elections were later moved to 2008 to avoid overlap with national elections.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This dissertation examined the emergence of protest movements related to the recent construction of an urban park – the *Jardins d'Éole* – in Paris, France. It sought to understand how and why the mobilization to build the park was framed in a way that unified environmentalism with broader struggles for national belonging among France's post-colonial ethnic minorities. The study focused on residents in northeast Paris – a low income area home to several large communities of West African and Maghrebi origin – who succeeded in convincing the city to build a \$26 million dollar park to “green” the post-industrial landscape and re-assert a sense “neighborhood” and “community” in an area severely affected by poverty, unemployment, and stigmatization. The fact the park was built as an outcome of a protest movement led to the effort being hailed as an example of local democracy and “green urbanism”. However, it has also been met with counter-protest by other residents claiming that it represents not a victory, but the beginning of the end of a working class, immigrant enclave: as land values rise, gentrification is beginning and the area is seeing demolition, rising rents, and threats of eviction and displacement.

The six chapters that formed the core of this dissertation have been arranged in pairs according to three specific themes. Chapters two and three dealt broadly with how France's legacy as an imperial nation-state shaped Paris' geography of neighborhoods, which in turn informed how mobilizations of working class and poor West African and Maghrebi origin residents symbolically and physically re-appropriated these urban spaces on their own terms. Chapters four and five examined the way such spatial politics played an important role in the broader movement to build the *Jardins d'Éole*, which despite

being a new amenity for this neglected neighborhood, is now a potential trigger for the “green gentrification” (Ceaser, 2010; Dooling, 2009) of northeast Paris. Chapters six and seven took a closer look at the politics of class and ethnocultural difference in this changing and contested landscape. Specifically, it examines how different groups of residents mobilize to claim their “right to the city” (Lefebvre 1996), and how surveillance is practiced on and by residents in the context of recent initiatives against delinquency and undocumented immigrants mounted by current president Nicolas Sarkozy. The remainder of this conclusion will elaborate on the dissertation’s findings along these themes and explain its contributions to anthropology, urban studies, and beyond.

Reading the Legacy of Empire in Northeast Paris’ Neighborhoods and Youth Mobilizations

Both before and during the arrival of West African and Maghrebi immigrants to northeast Paris, the flows of money, ideas, and people that constituted French empire shaped northeast Paris into a “hinterland” behind the *portes* of Paris, separate from both the capital’s opulent center and the working class banlieues to the north and east of the city. This leads me to challenge the center/periphery framework that has long been overstated discussions of Paris and its banlieues (see for example Dikeç, 2007; Pinçon, 2004; Paul Silverstein, 2004; Wacquant, 1993, 2008), in which being on the spatial periphery is tied neatly to economic and social marginality. Northeast Paris reminds us that such center/ periphery dichotomies (center/periphery, Paris/banlieue, French/foreign, rich/poor, etc.) are oversimplifications. More importantly, however, Henri Lefebvre (1999) and Raymond Williams (1975) remind us, center/peripheries are joined economic

and ideological creations linked to capitalist modes production and colonial regimes of dispossession. At the ideological level, center/periphery conceals the process by which each end of the dichotomy fundamentally reshapes and reconstitutes the other. The history of northeast Paris' urbanization illustrates these processes on several levels. So called "immigrant" neighborhoods have played a central role in shaping Paris itself, in the same way that French culture has been long fundamentally shaped at its center by immigration. The history of public housing in the neighborhood – and who is and is not sheltered by it – reminds us of its central role in reproducing the middle classes in the capital while simultaneously excluding those who are poor and/or of immigrant descent from it. Indeed, the very presence of immigrants – documented and undocumented – living outside of the public housing system in a high pressure housing market helps to reproduce Paris as an opulent center since they provide a ready supply of motivated, low-cost labor close at hand in the capitals vital service and hospitality sectors. In general, northeast Paris' historical development offers a vivid urban expression of the contradictions that are apart of all center/periphery dichotomies. Few cities (and nations) offer better examples of the ideological and social power of such extreme centrality than the French capital.

For the *jeunes issus de l'immigration* (the youth born out of immigration) this set of spatial, social, and economic circumstances gave rise to a potent combination of working-class territoriality and cultural self-determinism that was a self-conscious aberration from France's broader cultural politics of nation. I have focused on the trajectory of a particular activist to describe the way that spatial and urban politics offer political possibilities. Other researchers focusing on the cultural politics of France's

immigrant and immigrant descended population have described the limits of republicanism with regards to identity politics (Beriss 2004; Hargreaves 1995, 2007; Silverstein 2005) and the issue of a “double bind” facing activists who are neither accepted as French but can not legitimately organize on the basis of their shared difference (Fernando 2009). When viewed through the lens of urban politics however, the city becomes a space – and a means – by which belonging is asserted; thus *jeunes issus de l’immigration* find success and legitimacy organizing as *jeunes du quartier*. Urban and spatial politics offers a way to contest and reshape, but not reject dominant notions of republican belonging.

This dissertation demonstrates that northeast Paris is a realm of “actually existing republicanism”: outside of the discourses of politicians and major newspapers a quiet, but insurgent cultural pluralism is alive and well in France. As my analysis shows, it is not merely a question of “going local”, but instead focusing on the way in which these types of cultural politics are also fundamentally enmeshed in France’s post-industrial, urban social relations. In other words, to adequately understand “actually existing republicanism” in France one has to understand how France’s contemporary politics of difference manifest themselves outside of politicians’ speeches and newspapers. Republicanism is instead always contested, subject to negotiation, and most of all, enmeshed in the combination of class and ethnocultural politics of the urban areas where immigrants and their decedents reside. Even more importantly, this insurgent pluralism is neither an aberration, exception to the rule or marginal practice: it is thoroughly enmeshed and essential to the reproduction of the political order at local, municipal, and national levels despite ‘official’ discourses that are contrary or even hostile to it.

Of course other ethnographies of France have taken urban space seriously, such as Silverstein's (2004) examination of the city (and specifically the apartment building and housing project) as a transnational linkage between the colony and metropole (Silverstein 2004). I differ from this transnational orientation since many of my informants associated the "colony" with their parents' generation. Moreover, this difference in approaches is likely due to the analytical importance of national categories ("Algeria" and "Algerians") in Silverstein's ethnography. I did not go to the field looking for Tunisians, Algerians, Moroccans, Senegalese, or Malians, and in fact, I found that even when residents identified as belonging to a distinct national heritage, they did not organize politically as such (to do such would have flown in the face of republican politics). Again, this returns me to my central points, that urban space, more than national, cultural, or even religious identity became the basis upon which residents sought make political and social demands. Moreover, urban space is a linkage between local (ie neighborhood) and global scales as well.

From Grassroots Movement to Sustainable Urbanism: the Jardins d'Éole Mobilization and the Remaking of Paris

Such spatial politics also became important in the broader campaign for the Jardins d'Éole, which sought to transform a vacant railroad facility into a neighborhood park. Like the youth movements of the 1990s and 2000s, the mobilization for the Jardins d'Éole (the AJE) also sought to reclaim, redefine, and remake an urban landscape that itself was viewed as an oppressive element the lives of the residents. But the AJE, despite networking and drawing energy from youth mobilizations such the BGA, represented a

broader coalition of residents that was cross-generational, cross-class and multiethnic. Indeed, it was largely a middle class led organization, with women playing a visible and significant role in the group's leadership. For the AJE, the spatial politics of the park became a way in which one could concretize a number of social concerns: the lack of spaces for childcare (and the degree to which this issue disproportionately burdened women), the sheer lack of physical and healthy spaces available to poor, often immigrant origin families living in overcrowded apartments, and questions of environmental justice. This aspect of the park movement demonstrates the immense variety within the "limited purview of social movements" (Brosius, 1999, p. 278) that are often studied as "environmentalist". But given the fact that the mobilization was also occurring in the gentrying landscape of Paris, middle class "park politics" played an important and essential role in the AJE's protest and negotiation practices. The AJE's emergence was contemporaneous with the growth of a sizable, politically active middle class in Paris which led to the election of Bertrand Delanoë and the victory of the Socialist Party in 2001; a development which Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot (2004) have termed the paradox of the "Left bourgeois city" (p.77). Many aspects of the AJE's political style were deeply enmeshed in the symbolic idiom of the 68' generation of the French Left, which plays a very important role – sometimes if only in name alone – the establishment Socialist Party in Paris. A combination of style and the use of a specific class-based political idiom helped to endear the AJE to emergent political figures in Paris (some of whom have quickly risen to national prominence since municipal victories in 2001). Though specific to the political history of the late 20th century French Left and its relationship to the middle class, this aspect of the AJE is related to a global trend in the politics of

gentrifying cities. Specifically it demonstrates the changing role of class in urban movements as cities become heavily gentrified – urban movements are much more complicated than being about working class neighborhoods pitted against the interest of urban elites. Despite the overwhelmingly immigrant and working class nature of northeast Paris, negotiations and the general idiom of urban politics were dominated by this “middle class style” even if the political goals of the movement were broader.

The question of how the AJE mobilization and the resulting Jardins d'Éole are related to the broader remaking of Paris has important consequences for urban studies and our understanding of what is meant by the “sustainable city”. The globalization of sustainable urbanism is evident from a wave of urban planning publications (Beatley, 1999; Farr, 2007; Wheeler & Beatley, 2004; Zetter & Watson, 2006) and promoted by the U.N. HABITAT agenda (UN-HABITAT, n.d.). In sharp contrast to the debates that emerged related to sustainable development (Escobar, 1995; Hornborg, 1998; Paulson & Gezon, 2005; Peet & Watts, 1996) – there is a dearth of critical perspectives on sustainable cities, except for isolated critiques of “green gentrification” (Dooling, 2009). This portion of the dissertation is part of an emergent critical approach (Isenhour, McDonough & Checker n.d.; Newman n.d.). I situate sustainable urbanism as a core element of urban restructuring and inter-urban competition embarked upon by Paris as a global city (Body-Gendrot, 1996; Castells, 1991; Sassen, 2001; White, 1998).

When the Jardins d'Éole was designed, planners and architects followed through on the AJE's vision by creating a technically masterful, ecological low-impact park, which recycled much of its own water, did not use chemicals, pesticides or fertilizers. However, when the wider social vision of the mobilization was translated into

“sustainability”, it was recast as a set of ideas that not only required technical expertise of architects and urban planners, but legitimated their newfound dominance in the project. In this regard, as a set of ordering practices and discourses employed by planners and architects, sustainability is part and parcel of power and domination. Even though it might share some goals and values with “movement environmentalism”, sustainable urbanism is a project deployed by different actors towards different ends that have completely different political and economic significance.

These differences are evident when one looks at the Jardins d'Éole -- and the sustainable urbanism of which it is apart – in the context of Paris' broader metropolitan area and gentrification as a globalized “urban strategy” (Smith 2002) and not just as the outcome of a single, neighborhood movement. Much of Paris – and especially the post-industrial immigrant districts north and east of the city – are in a process of re-invention. This redevelopment is transforming formerly working class areas into centers of culture, sport, entertainment, and service sector employment in order to cling to the city's top position in a neoliberal era marked by increasing inter-urban competition at a global level. Interestingly, this new strategy for accumulation is steeped in gestures and language evocative of recent tendency towards “republican nationalism” (Dikeç, 2007). The symbolic transformation of the Cour du Maroc into the Jardins d'Éole is one of example of this, forming part of the rebuilding of the Paris' northeastern periphery known as the Grand Paris project. Championed by President Nicolas Sarkozy as his legacy project for the capital, this rebuilding of thousands of hectares of the city and its outskirts is at once a national and imperial vision as well. The Grand Paris project does not only show that the “sustainable city” has become a major new engine of capital accumulation,

but that it is a means of dispossession as well, being implicated in the reproduction of ethno-racial and gendered forms of inequality in Paris.

From Public Space to the Right to the City: Reframing Power, Movements, and Space in Urban Politics

This dissertation also proposes a rethinking of the public/private space dichotomy that is often used in discussions of social and spatial injustice and the city. Since the 1990s urban theorists have described the threat posed by the constant “erosion” of public space. In these discussions, public space can mean everything from the degree to which streets and parks are literally open and accessible to the public in everyday life (Davis, 1992; Sorkin, 1992) to the legal right of individuals to use such spaces for political speech (Mitchell, 2003), or it can mean linkage between urban space and the broader public sphere of democratic debate (Low & Neil Smith, 2006). At broad level, this study supports the assertion that that urban space is growing more restricted, especially towards ethnic and racial minorities and the poor; and part of the neoliberal transformation of the city has meant that urban space has become increasingly restricted and subject to surveillance.

However, based on the case studies examined herein, this dissertation reframes the problem away from the specter of “privatization” towards a more nuanced role played by the tension between private/public in struggles over the right to the city. As Chapter 6 showed, it is not a question of urban movements fighting to preserve a static notion of public space from forces which seek to enclose it; indeed mobilizations strategically manipulate the tension between public/private in order to claim their right to the city; in

some cases they themselves becomes agents of enclosure. Thus both DAL and the AJE made their political points by placing mothers with children, who are commonly associated with the private domestic sphere into the streets in order to make political points for the need for housing and green space alike. Movements did not merely “occupy” public space as if it were a frozen setting or backdrop for action, their street actions invoked and created their own forms of territory as part a political strategy. Moreover, each group invoked a very different idea of “public space”, suggesting the difficulty of using the concept in any in any unified way. DAL used the streets as site to expose often hidden suffering of those without housing and accuse those who exploited them; the AJE sought to create a festival-like – almost utopian – space in which family, harmonious cultural pluralism and nature were the agents of neighborhood renewal. At the same time both movements practiced forms of enclosure that were anything but public: DAL carefully guarded and surveyed the buildings it squats and while the AJE was more than willing to exclude individuals who it believed were drug dealers or users from the park which it sought to manage. If public space can be talked about in a unified fashion, it is best understood neither as setting (or a thing which can protected or lost) but as an unfinished project, which is created by mobilizations claiming their right to the city.

In similar vein, this dissertation argues that the significance of surveillance in the global city is also worth rethinking, or at least framing in more empirically grounded terms. A core part of many arguments about the “enclosure of public space” (Davis, 1992; Mitchell, 2003) is based on the significance of surveillance in contemporary urban life, especially in terms of technologies such as CCTV employed by the state, corporations, and public/private partnerships in attempts to control city streets. Again,

while accepting this diagnosis, I take issue with the fundamental categories being discussed, namely, what is meant by surveillance itself.

This dissertation argues that recent literature on surveillance in the city understates the social importance of surveillance in everyday life because it primarily takes issues with the intrusive and efficacious nature of technological surveillance, as opposed to its impact on those inhabiting carefully watched urban spaces. It is certainly true that the proliferation of CCTV technology and other forms of electronic surveillance (Bennett & Lyon, 2008; Lyon, 2001) is intensifying the degree to which urban dwellers are watched and transforming how they are watched as well. Paris is only beginning to approach the level of electronic surveillance that has been established other global cities such as London and New York (Samuel, 2008). Nevertheless, the increasing scale of surveillance practiced by police and other government agencies due to national anxieties over immigration and youth “delinquency” (often implicitly focused on the *jeunes issus de l’immigration*) has transformed everyday life in northeast Paris. In other words, even without a proliferation of electronic surveillance, “old fashioned” methods strategies including police patrols and inspection of various public agencies fundamentally change the spatial organization of everyday life in northeast Paris. It impacts the design of parks, and the way they are managed, changing the way in which the city itself is conceived, designed and inhabited. Everyone, it seems, becomes concerned with watching and being watched in the “surveillance city”. On one hand, a great deal of this watching is similar to “do it yourself surveillance” described by Jane Jacobs (1961). But residents, particularly in the context of northeast Paris’ contentious ethnic and class politics, do not watch each other to preserve social harmony or law and order, as Jacobs argues. Instead,

they watch each other through a gaze informed by specific ideological projects. At times such watching is complicit with that of formal state surveillance because it is rooted in the same class based and ethnocultural anxieties that have informed the immigration crackdown implemented by the Sarkozy government. At other times, it is oppositional to such policies, or even part of survival strategy deployed in the face of such initiatives. In many cases, as in the example of neighborhood associations practicing surveillance, watching can be contradictory: a method to assert residents control of their own space, but still informed by anxieties over the presence of immigrant origin youths, for example. In any case, this dissertation shows that the global city is not merely more watched than ever, it is fundamentally transformed by that watching at the level of urban design, political practice, and even daily life.



Figure 24: Graffiti mural in northeast Paris, depicting the sun setting on the neighborhood, with the words "You will only be free after you have lost everything."

Anthropology, Lefebvre, and Social Movements in the City

This dissertation's approach was largely inspired by a call for anthropologists studying social movements to go beyond the strictures of orthodox social movement

theory (Burdick 1992; Edelman 2001). With some notable exceptions (Burrawoy, Burton, Ferguson, & Fox, 1991; Castells, 1985; Robotham, 2005; Susser 1982) scholars across the social sciences frequently overlook the spatial dynamics shaping – and shaped by – social movements in order to better assimilate their studies to social movement theory. As a result, scholarship on social movements has become theory driven to its own detriment. Frequently the focus is on assimilating movements to categories inherent in often schematic and mechanistic models (whether it is resource mobilization, political opportunity, or otherwise) instead of using the close, empirical study of movements to call into questions the foundations for the theory itself. What is missing from such abstract analysis is a sense for the way in which collective action emerges in specific places because of specific historical contexts; crudely put, the dialectic relationship between setting and movement.

A Lefebvrian anthropology offers distinct possibilities to bring spatial context (i.e. environment or setting) and process back into the study of social movements. The political importance of the city in this regards does not come from any urbanophilic impulse in Marxian social theory – critiqued as “magical urbanism” (Susser 2007) – nor from an essentialized notion of urban culture seen in the Chicago School and classical American urban studies (Mumford, 1961; Wirth, 1938). Instead it derives from the most basic anthropological tenet, the holistic insistence on incorporating the environments – *the spaces* – in which humans live, work, play, and struggle (in this case a city) into explanations of their social action (in this case political mobilizations). Such a perspective can rarely be obtained from a distance, hence the importance of ethnography and anthropology in study of social movements. It is this call that led to the common

thread that runs through each chapter of this dissertation: the relationship between the setting (in the case northeast Paris) and movements. In each chapter, there is an important and inseparable relationship between the way in which movements contest power and the city in which movements operate. These are urban movements, in other words, because they operate *through* the city, using it as means (and an end); they are not merely social movements in the city. The remaking of the city – at the level of the artistic imaginary, the social, and the material – was central to the project of all of the mobilizations described herein. This remaking of urban space was neither a means to – are goal of – the call for social change. Rather, there was fundamental interrelationship between the urban, social, and environmental.

Lefebvre offers a flexible and adaptable way to situate how mobilizations make use of the spaces of which they are apart, but his work is not without problems to be overcome. Lefebvre places a strong emphasis on how the production of space is a means to structure capitalist domination, and his work demonstrates how the appropriation of and remaking of space must be a key project of any revolutionary or resistant politics. But this framework, with its monolithic notion of power as domination and singular notion of resistance as a reaction to that domination, is unable to engage with the complexities of on-the-ground urban politics. Mobilizations that engage with power – especially efforts of participative urban planning – take part in a variegated political pattern, alternating between complicity and revolt vis-à-vis the political and social order. As my research on the AJE (and other mobilizations such as the BGA) showed, both mobilizations and powerful intuitions (and leaders) take part in a contested mix of ideology and so-called ‘pragmatism’ that is calculated at times, and spontaneous in some

moments. It is not that Lefebvre is wrong when he states that residents' involvement in the production of space (ie participative urban planning) reproduces capitalist domination. Rather, he fails to see domination and resistance as contradictory processes, and therefore little if any on-the-ground politics can be assimilated to his framework. As a result Lefebvre, finds "users" to be silent and "inhabitants" to be difficult to theorize or classify – a problem (Lefebvre, 1999, p. 362) that is the fault of his theoretical framework, and not due to any so-called "silence" on the part of urban movements.

Lefebvre's approach is also amenable to but unable to directly accommodate questions of gender, ethnocultural politics, race, and sexuality. His thought wanders back and forth between the poles of deterministic Marxist analysis and a more dynamic understanding of power, capitalism, and social inequality that holds much intellectual promise but is never fully defined or articulated in a complete and systematic form. Moreover, translators have tended to either ignore or overlook the degree to which Lefebvre's seeming vague language was itself a direct engagement with intellectual and urban issues shaping France in the 1960s and 1970s. It seems that a matter as simple as the dearth of adequate footnotes and historical context has resulted in passages with highly specific meanings rendered ethereal, unfocused, and absurd. In many cases Lefebvre himself is to blame, often sacrificing nuance for slogan like pronouncements (for example, "Urban life has yet to begin" (1995[1968]) meant to provoke and puzzle readers into adopting his own creative but counter-intuitive thought process. But, as with all theory, such incompleteness invites as much promise for further research as it frustrates readers looking for explanations.

To return to northeast Paris for a last time, this dissertation also seeks to make one final contribution. In a vein meant to transcend purely academic interests, the study addresses a predicament familiar to activists and planners in cities around the world: the difficulty in maintaining cross-class, multi-racial, and multiethnic alliances in often fragmented (and hence dominated) communities. This dissertation demonstrates the shared predicament of these populations – who are often scripted as adversaries – by focusing on the promises of cross-class, cross-cultural organizing while still providing an honest assessment of the conflicts that may arise. My hope is that there can be more victories for future mobilizations such as this, but less lost in the process of winning.

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