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Urban Interstices

Paris – New York

In between control and mobility. four residual spaces
of urban planning

by

Stéphane Tonnelat

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Psychology and Urban Planning in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York & Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris**

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Abstract**URBAN INTERSTICES, PARIS – NEW YORK****In between control and mobility, four residual spaces of urban planning****by****Stéphane Tonnelat****Adviser: Professor William Kornblum**

What is the place and role of urban interstices in the contemporary city? Two complementary approaches are used to analyze urban interstices, residual spaces of urban planning, in four case studies in Paris and New York City. The first approach, "major," is organized around the concept of disorder and traces the four sites in a process of deterioration, maintenance, control and renewal, characteristic of urban planning and design. It also outlines a frame of analysis for the second approach, "minor" and ethnographic, which considers the necessity of being "on the move" in the interstice as a "dominant involvement" (Goffman). In the shadow of this involvement were observed apparatuses of: capture of the flow (Charenton and Times Square), transformation of the relation to the built environment (French National Library and Pier 84 on the Hudson), and construction of interstitial networks that span the city. Interstices are finally revealed as "transformative" spaces as much as spaces to transform.

Foreword

First and foremost, this dissertation was an occasion to study and do research in two universities, in two cities greatly influential on my ways of thinking as well as ways of living as an urbanite. This work is actually the result of a joint degree program between the CUNY Graduate School in New York City and the *Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris*, University of Paris XII, in Paris, France. A French version is also available in a longer format containing extended parts on the case studies. Readers interested can find a copy at the department of Environmental Psychology in the CUNY Graduate School.

This work is a dissertation in both environmental psychology and urban planning. These two disciplines, somewhat widely defined, seem to complete each other in raising interesting questions concerning our built environment. This dual approach proved to be fruitful in the observation and analysis of urban interstices, residual spaces usually neglected by either one of these disciplines taken separately. How are they produced as residual spaces? How does this make them singular places (or non-places) in the urban fabric?

This research being an exploratory work, a good part of my time was spent wandering in New York and Paris streets and interstices, the residual spaces of urban planning and design. Without realizing it, I myself developed a vocabulary of motives to justify my very presence in the field that was not unlike the ones I was observing. I learned to walk inconspicuously, to scan my environment with a blank gaze. Thus doing, I started for my own reasons independent of those researched, to build my interstitial network organized around fieldwork. Little by little I was pushed to discover more places, not a sought out

aspect of the work. At some point I ended up with two additional sites, (Major Deegan/Cross-Bronx Expressway in New York and *La Defense* in Paris) where I was hoping to observe interesting phenomenon. I had to leave them aside for lack of time. I did have the chance however to observe a couple of unsuspected connections between these places and my other terrains. In the Bronx for example, was a little shop disguised as a shack that was building huge signage to be installed on the sides of highways and in Times Square (case 4). Also, parking ramps in *La Defense* turned out to be a refuge in case of rain for longboarders from the National Library triangle (case 3).

This, perhaps, is one of the main findings. The interstice is a transformative place that pushes you to connect. The passage is not only an excuse to gain entrance to a place otherwise inaccessible, but a real urban mode of browsing the city. With this research, I truly felt an urbanite in Paris and New York.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor at the Graduate School, William Kornblum, for his hospitality and insightful advice concerning fieldwork. I also want to thank my advisor on the French side, Bernard Haumont. Many thanks go to Michèle Jolé, my correspondent at the Paris Institute of Urban Planning for her supporting guidance throughout the years spent on this research project. She spent an impressive amount of time reviewing my drafts and improving them. I am grateful for her dedication.

Setha Low was another great model of hospitality who helped me immensely in a very kind way. Cindi Katz also guided parts of my research on Times Square. Thank you again. Many thanks to Isaac Joseph, my "translator" between Paris and New York, who provided a very helpful passage linking these two worlds.

I also would like to thank the multiple anonymous persons met in the field along the past six years. They have been wonderful exploratory figures of the interstice, many unknowingly.

I also benefited from advice generously given by my fellow graduate students and friends on both sides of the ocean. I would especially like to thank Mike Menser, Jeffrey Bussolini, Kevin Rafter, Luc Lévesque, Samuel Bonnet and Ilaria Brocchini for the time they shared with me in heated conversations.

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At last, I want to thank members of my family for their ongoing trust and support. Christina has been especially helpful as she managed to transform my awful English into a readable prose. In the meantime, Margaud relentlessly reminded me that the university is only one of the worlds that make up our life. Thanks for being with us. I finally want to thank my mother, who despite terrible adversity, managed to remain, until the end, a strong and understanding support of my endeavor. This dissertation will forever remain attached to a vivid emotional period of my life.

Table of contents

Foreword	ii
Introduction and research questions: The Production and Use of Urban Interstices	1
<i>Research questions</i>	<i>5</i>
Part one: Theoretical approach.....	7
1. <i>First orientation: Interstices as situational disorders.....</i>	<i>7</i>
2. <i>Second orientation: renewal, tidying disorder.....</i>	<i>16</i>
3. <i>Conclusion to disorder and renewal orientations: the major approach.....</i>	<i>18</i>
4. <i>Third orientation: informal existing uses of the interstice, the minor approach.</i>	<i>19</i>
5. <i>Conclusion: major mode approach and minor mode approach</i>	<i>25</i>
Part two: Research design.....	27
1. <i>Definition and objectives: the role of "empty residual spaces in between"</i>	<i>27</i>
2. <i>Case studies</i>	<i>28</i>
3. <i>Choice of the sites: Paris / New York City.....</i>	<i>29</i>
4. <i>Major approach : fieldwork and production of data</i>	<i>37</i>
5. <i>Minor approach: being 'on the move', an ethnographic approach.....</i>	<i>42</i>
6. <i>Summary chart of goals, research questions and methods</i>	<i>47</i>
7. <i>Research dynamic and results.....</i>	<i>47</i>
Part three. Case studies.....	50
Case 1: Charenton-le-Pont.....	50
1. <i>Major Approach.....</i>	<i>55</i>
II. <i>Minor approach.....</i>	<i>68</i>
Three other case studies	86
<i>Case two: Pier 84, Manhattan, New York City.....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Second pair of terrain: the interstices of the information age</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Case three: French National Library.....</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Case four: Times Square</i>	<i>97</i>
Conclusion	99
1. <i>From abandoned sites to the most controlled interstices.....</i>	<i>99</i>
2. <i>The management of visibility (Paris/ New York).....</i>	<i>102</i>
3. <i>Interstitial framework: a point of view.....</i>	<i>106</i>
4. <i>What to do with urban interstices?.....</i>	<i>110</i>
Appendix.....	113
1. <i>The Extras of Times Square.....</i>	<i>113</i>
Bibliography	125

List of tables

Table 1: Three orientations.....	6
Table 2: sites and terrain (also see map 3)	37
Table 3: Institutions contacted.....	40
Table 4: Summary chart of goals, research questions and method.	47

List of maps

Map 1: Residual land in the Eastern Paris Metropolitan Area	4
Map 2: Chicago's gangland	11
Map 3: Two city slices containing six interstices.....	36
Map 4: Charenton and Paris	50
Map 5: Potential interstices in Charenton-le-Pont.....	53
Map 6: Interstices in Charenton-le-Pont and choice of three terrains, winter 1996-97.....	54
Map 7: Beltway Fort.....	55
Map 8: Seine Riverfront	57
Map 9: Seine Riverfront 2	58
Map 10: Abandoned rail tracks	59
Map 11: Visibility of the beltway fort from car traffic	63
Map 12: Homeless shelter	66
Map 13: Interstitial network linking Paris sites.....	77
Map 14: Internal visibility of the beltway fort	83
Map 15: Pier 84 location and site plan	88
Map 16: Satellite gardens of the MBG	90
Map 17: FTA's boathouses network	91
Map 18: A residual triangle in a new neighborhood	94
Map 19: Longboard spots in the Paris metropolitan area.....	96
Map 20: Peddlers' network in Midtown, 1999.	97

List of figures

Figure 1: Disorder as a problem of objects in social space	9
Figure 2: Section sketches of the beltway fort	62
Figure 3: Temporary parking on the riverfront	70
Figure 4: Camouflage on the riverfront.....	73
Figure 5: New York software / Paris hardware	104
Figure 6: Interstice of the spectacle in Times Square.....	124

List of pictures

pic. 1: Exploring the limits	80
pic. 2: Attack of a boy in the street.....	80
pic. 3: Between the street and the interstice	80
pic. 4: A reversal of perspective. The youth immobile in a moving environment	82

Introduction and research questions: the Production and Use of Urban Interstices

This research explores an increasingly common question in urban planning and architecture: what to do with all the empty residual spaces throughout our cities? Are they simply useless spaces to be redeveloped or do they play a more active role within the urban fabric? This research will call these spaces urban interstices. It proposes to investigate four interstices in two very different cities yet both representative of the western world- Paris and New York City.

Urban interstices are defined, in this study, as the residual spatial products of contemporary urban planning. They are the formally useless leftovers of the process of design and use of urban space. Interstices have no attributed function, yet this does not mean they remain unused. Indeed, this research explores how the ways in which they are actually used may influence their place in the urban social fabric and their eventual renewal.

This study looks at two kinds of interstices in Paris and New York City: fallow lands (*friches*) and by-products (*délaissés*). Fallow lands once had a function but are now abandoned. Industrial wastelands and empty lots are the most common examples in western cities. By-products are all the spaces that never had a function but rather were designed from the start as leftovers in the process of the production of space. A good example is the central lawn in the middle of a cloverleaf highway exchange node. Another example is a receding corner on the sidewalk created by the withdrawal of a building but that does not lead to an entrance or has a designated function.

Fallow lands are diachronic interstices because they are devoid of designated uses (but not necessarily empty as social spaces) between two periods of time when they were in use and when they will be in use again. Their life span depends on the economics or urban renewal, cycles of investment and disinvestment in real-estate and industries. By-products, on the other hand are synchronic interstices because they exist at the same time as the functional space which created them. They will remain functionless (but, again, not necessarily devoid of social uses) as long as the function for which they are a by-product exists.

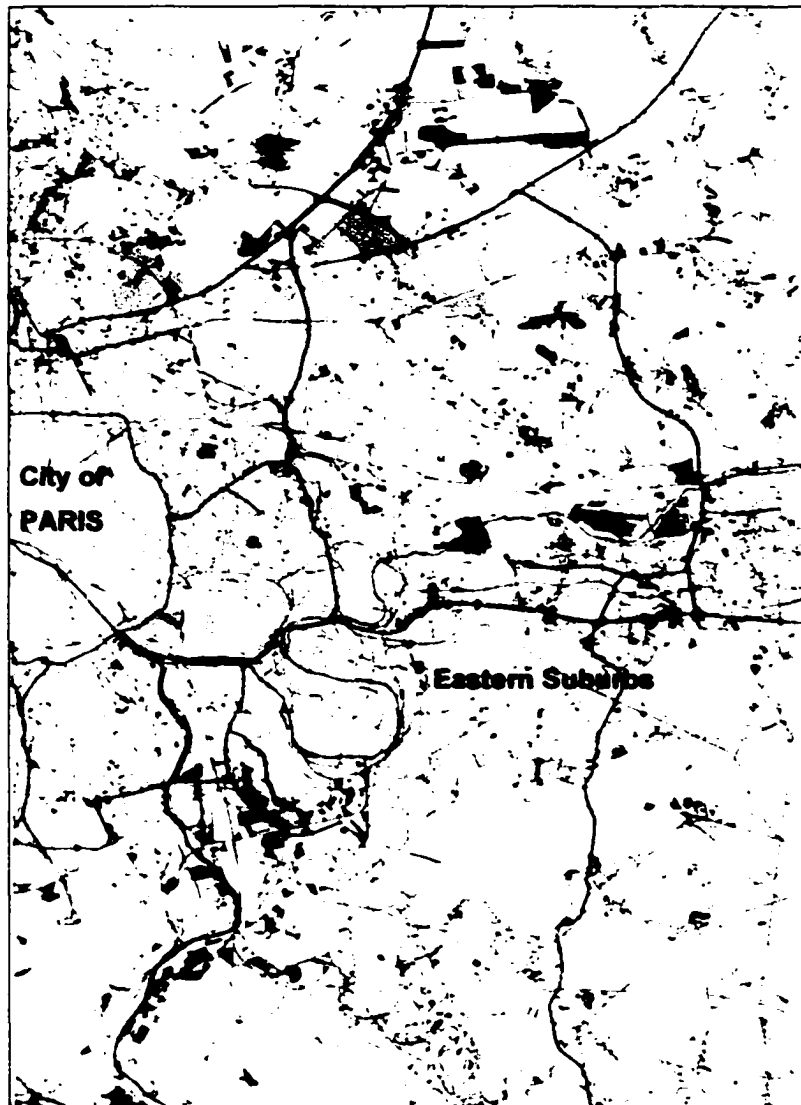
Because they are unused, at least by de jure designations, urban interstices are often viewed as a hindrance to the city. Fallow lands especially symbolize the decay of de-industrialization. Often cluttered with weathered, metallic structures, they evoke a changing economy associated with high unemployment and polluted neighborhoods. As a reaction to this, American and French governments are trying to keep track of empty lands and come up with solutions for their redevelopment.

Since 1985, the IAURIF¹, has kept an inventory of all industrial wastelands in the Paris region. It lists the sites that are eligible for government money in order to be rehabilitated. The definition is quite precise. "The industrial wasteland is a built or unbuilt space, previously busy with an industrial activity and now unused or largely underused." To enter the list, lots must reach a surface of 5000 m² (1.25 acres) and must have been abandoned for at least a year. The 1993 inventory showed 149 sites in the Paris Region with a total area of 1210 acres (IAURIF 1993). In the US, industrial wastelands have been estimated at about 21,000 in 210 big cities (Sierra Club 1999). In New York City, figures are very imprecise and hard to come by. Apparently the municipality identified between 3,500 and 6,500

¹ Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région Ile de France, Institut of Urban planning of the Paris metropolitan Area. A public organisation.

brown fields, many of them in industrial zones in Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx (Jarrett 1999; Environmental Defense Website 1999). All these attempts however, do not take into account a large number of interstices that either don't reach the minimal required size or never had a function in the first place.

By-products, for example, are never included in these estimates. They are extremely difficult to count. Since these spaces are generally not available for a new project, they are not taken into account by planning administrations. Furthermore, by-products are generally administratively attached to the main space that created them if not identified to it. Therefore, only an approach to space as it is produced can include them. In 2000, *l'Atelier* set up by the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*, an important French semi-public real estate manager, attempted the first estimate of all residual spaces around Paris (See map.1 below). The figures given by Romain Paris, a geographer, show that "the process of urbanization generates its own residual space: between 1990 and 1994, urban space grew by 1000 acres, 'vacant urban space' grew by 275 acres." He concludes in a rapid rule: "The creation of 10 acres of urbanization in Ile-de-France yields 2.5 acres of vacant space." To put it more strikingly, one fourth of urban space is constructed as vacant! Far from disappearing or appearing according to the simple variations of urban economy, residual spaces are proliferating together with the growth of cities.



Residual lands are shown in dark shaded areas

Atelier. Caisse des dépôts et consignations. 2000.

Map 1: Residual land in the Eastern Paris Metropolitan Area

Actually, this phenomenon is not new. In 1932, Maurice Halbwachs had already identified interstices as an important part of Chicago's fabric. "The city is half un-built, stuck within are empty spaces, factories, rail yards, interstitial zones, where you are in the city without being completely within, without merging with its flesh and blood: like these simple organisms, poked with holes, which, although internal, lie in the milieu and exterior liquid" (Halbwachs 1980). Today, either in Paris or in New York City one needs only to

take a tour of previously industrial areas and along major transportation axes to realize their presence.

Research questions

Because they have no formal function, urban interstices are often considered as wasted space. The simple fact that public as well as private organizations, such as the ones discussed above, attempt to keep track of them, and sometimes propose solutions or incentives for their renewal, shows that they are undesirable to the urban planning community and real estate managers. However, projects to replace them with functional spaces are neither easy nor in sufficient amount to counter the production of interstices resulting from de-industrialization and a continuing urbanization. Furthermore, it seems that urban renewal itself produces interstices, generally by-products. Therefore, this research looks at interstices as a constitutive part of the urban fabric, and explores their roles in our cities. Since they are produced by contemporary planning, they may reveal a good deal about how we produce urban space today. Can they also help identify differences in outcomes or processes between two common types of urban planning, the state controlled model exemplified by Paris and the more market-driven model dominant in New York City? Finally, in these two cities, can the actual, unintended uses of urban interstices suggest alternatives to contemporary planning?

In order to answer these questions, this research will explore three ways of considering interstices: as disorderly spaces, as opportunities for renewal, and as places of existing but informal social uses. All of these orientations are inspired by the only available study on interstices, Frederick Thrasher's The Gang, a study of 1313 gangs in Chicago, first published in 1927.

The first orientation, often held by planners themselves, considers these interstitial spaces as disorderly or meaningless, the people who enter them as deviant, and the objects there as trash or dirt. This judgment would explain the compelling need to control and recycle these spaces which constitutes the second dominant orientation, also often evidenced among planners and community activists. Second, the renewal orientation emphasizes the need to tidy up the disorders, by giving a function to the place, cleaning up dirty objects, and eliminating or controlling the people in them. The third orientation avoids judging activities observed as negative, but rather analyzes how users take advantage of the place as it is, cope with the constraints imposed by physical environments as well as agents of renewal and control, and reveal needs for space unmet elsewhere in the city. Preliminary research, and that of Thrasher, suggest that these constraints oblige the informal users of existing interstitial spaces to renounce territorial claims and remain mobile or on the move in the area to varying degrees.

Each of these orientations defines a separate direction that will be explored through fieldwork in interstices in Paris and New York City. They will be called disorder, renewal and existing social use. Each orientation corresponds to a specific definition of the situation regarding the way each place is understood, the way the objects in them are perceived, and the way activities which take place in them are defined. The following typology summarizes these orientations and definitions of the situation.

Table 1: Three orientations

Social orientations	Definitions of the situation		
	places	Objects	Activities
disorder	Lack of definition	Dirt/trash	Transgression
renewal	Opportunity for renovation	Reasons for cleaning: maintenance	Demand social control and security
Existing social use	Meet existing needs	Attached to users	Mobile or on the move

Part one: Theoretical approach

1. First orientation: Interstices as situational disorders

In 1927, Frederick Thrasher, an early Chicago School researcher, had already identified a relationship between disorder and interstices in the city. In his study of 1313 gangs in Chicago, he established a direct correspondence between the disordered life of adolescent groups in the zone of transition and the territory within which they reside.

"Probably the most significant concept of the study is the term interstitial - that is, pertaining to spaces that intervene between one thing and another. In nature foreign matter tends to collect and cake in every crack, crevice and cranny - interstices. There are also fissures and breaks in the structure of social organization. The gang may be regarded as an interstitial element in the framework of society, and gangland as an interstitial region in the layout of the city" (Thrasher: 20).

In fact, the territory of the gang corresponded almost exactly to the zone immediately out of the first ring, the Chicago loop, that Burgess had identified as the 'zone of transition' (Burgess 1925). The "empire of the gang occupies what is often called "the poverty belt" – a region characterized by deteriorating neighborhoods, shifting populations, and the mobility and disorganization of the slum." In order to better affirm his agreement with Burgess, Thrasher printed the famous concentric drawing and hatched a gangland that filled almost exactly the second ring (Thrasher : 21). However, the main territory of exploration for the gang was not the whole zone of transition considered as interstitial but more the collection of residual spaces that were scattered in this zone as a result of it being crossed by numerous rail yards and canals that were linking together the growing industries of the city. In fact, in

Thrasher's study, interstices are only a side finding, his interests were more with the gang that actually worked for him as an explorer of space and revealed empty places that otherwise would have gone unnoticed.

As a consequence, Thrasher's classic study seems to suggest that interstices become visible only when an activity takes place in them. This invisibility can be explained by the idea of the disorder of definition resulting from the mode of production of the interstice.

1.1. Interstitial place: disorder of definition

Residual emptiness can be explained with the idea of order. If we admit that urban places are defined according to use value and exchange value, in other words their function and projected states, the ensemble of places in the city can be interpreted as a system of ordering understandable by all urbanites (Rossi 1966, Hollier 1974, Barthes 1986, Eco 1987).

In this view, for order to arise, objects of a given value go to places of about the same value. Therefore, objects put in places also participate in the ordering of the city by giving a meaning to the couple (place, object). From there on, the pre-construction of the system of places in the city is a question of taxonomic pre-construction of the world of objects (Knaebel 1997).

A negatively valued object at a positively valued place (or conversely) creates disorder (for example trash on the steps of city hall or a classic sculpture in a dump site, see fig 1). On the other hand, a positively valued object at a positively valued place creates order (a statue on the steps of city hall and trash in a dump site, fig 1). This idea can be illustrated by the following sketch inspired by Knaebel (1997).

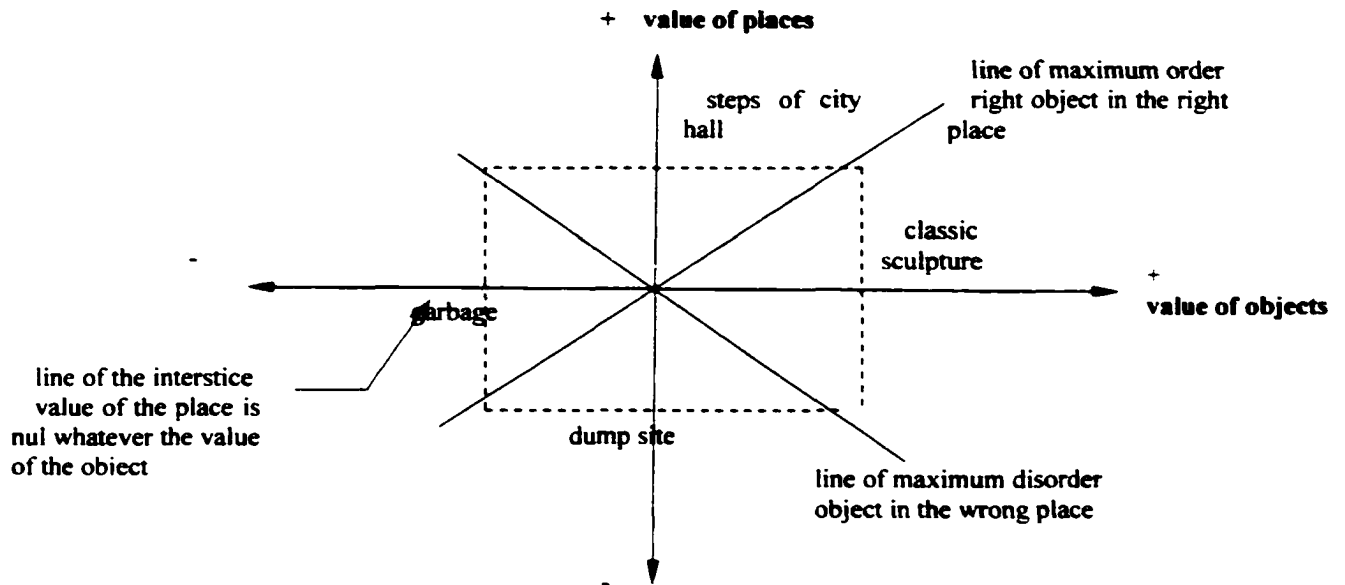


Figure 1: Disorder as a problem of objects in social space

This scheme helps us to understand the idea of the interstice. We could consider the latter as being a place with no value whatever the objects it receives. It remains useless and cannot be considered as part of the order of the places in the city. In the same way, as it is valueless, it is not explicitly noticed or designated as a place for disorder. Thus, it is contained in the horizontal line that gives a place a negligible value whatever its content (for we do not see it or we do not want to see it). The interstice stands right in the middle. It is neither completely ordered nor completely disordered. It still exists but it can not be explained. Interstices point out a fault in the classification of places in the city.

Levels of visibility / invisibility

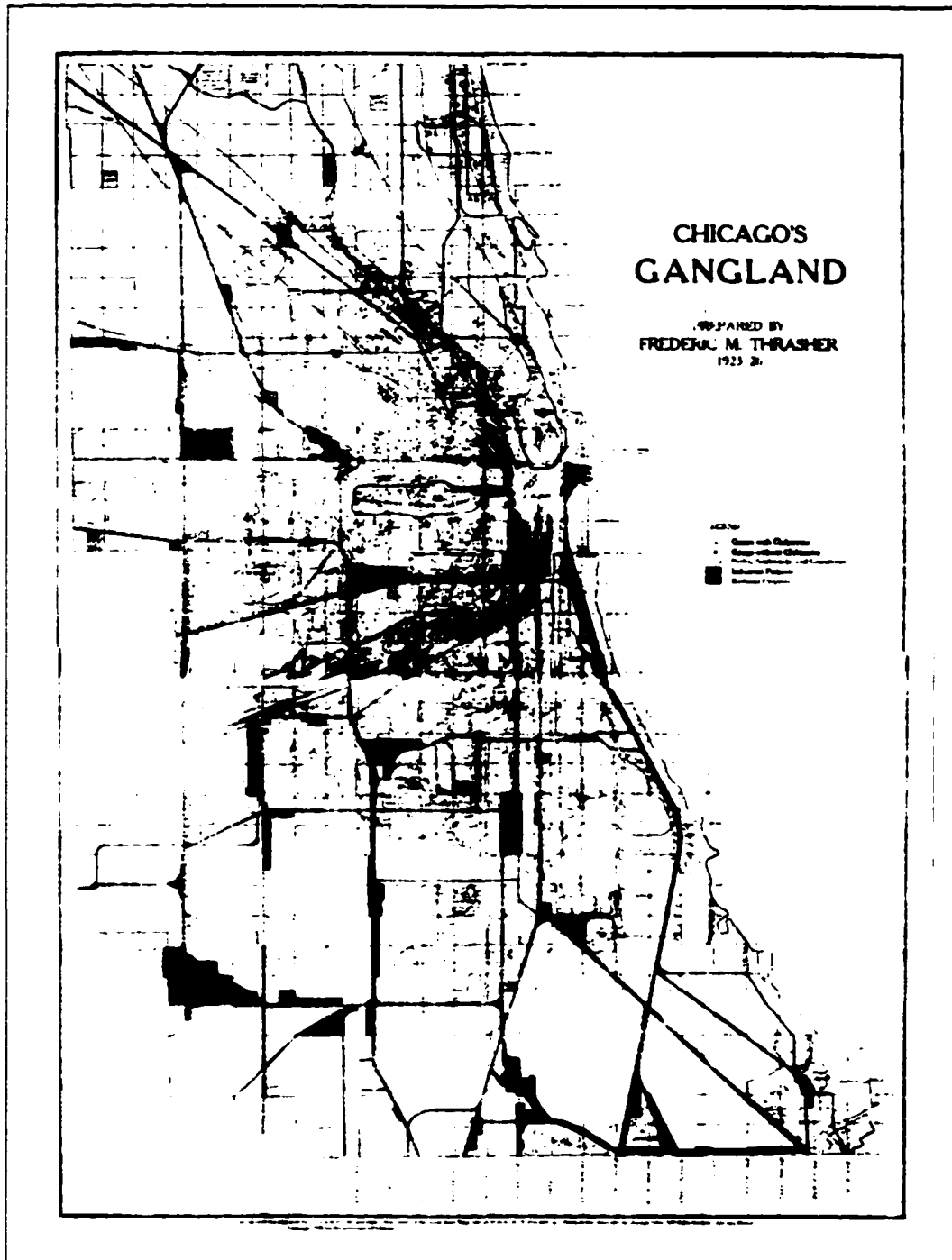
This contradiction between the physical existence of interstices and their absence from a system of ordering of places can be better understood with the idea of visibility. In fact if interstices do not find place, it is mostly because they are not seen and therefore not even

considered. Of course, invisibility is not physical but both spatially and socially constructed.

In the case of interstices, it corresponds to a disorder of definition. Residual places are the leftovers of a process of production of space that rejected them. In the case of urban planning, objects rejected can be pieces of land that become useless once the process of construction is over. Once rejected, they lose identity and become mixed with their immediate surroundings. Mixture produces a lack of understanding by jamming identities of objects or spaces that are not assigned to a right place. Then, places get mixed too. "In a mixture, objects are still distinguishable but not in the right place. Being in the middle partly replaces their identity" (Knaebel 1996). Here we come close to the definition of the interstice as a "residual void in between". The residue has no shape precisely because it is the leftover of the shaping of an object from which it is excluded. It is the absence of form, disembodied from a previous whole, it dissolves, it decays, it indifferentiates. The residue is useless, it has no value.

This observation leads to the first way of detecting interstices according to means of production. Residual spaces have no name, they are not represented on maps and official plans. Therefore, they are difficult to spot. However, as Thrasher's map already pointed it in 1923, by-products are always next to constructions that produce them and that generally strongly contribute to the ordering of places in the urban fabric. Infrastructures and natural topographic elements such as rivers, highways, and other large facilities are generally significant in the organization of the city (Lynch 1960). Thus the disorder of definition can help us approach interstices by paying attention to important constructions or large structures and looking for the voids next to them. This can be extremely revealing on a large

scale map since it generally symbolizes morphological features of constructions such as residential pattern, highways and intersections, large facilities, etc (see map 2).



Map 2: Chicago's gangland

The dots represent the gangs identified by Thrasher. In dark shades are also represented the transportation infrastructures and industrial areas that they seem to closely follow. Thrasher (1923).- *The Gang*, University of Chicago Press.

In the same way, objects and activities in the interstice acquire their own invisibility. It corresponds respectively to a disorder of dirtiness and a disorder of transgression. These three disorders define three levels of visibility for the interstice.

1.2. Objects in the interstice: disorder of dirtiness

Once an object has been observed in the interstice, the disorder of definition which is often undecipherable becomes more visible and changes into a disorder of dirtiness. If we follow Mary Douglas's definition : "dirt is that which is not in the right place" (1974: 55), we have to admit that since the interstice has no function, there is no commonly admitted reason for an object to be there. Therefore, anything occupying it is out of place and becomes dirty.

In addition, since interstices have no function, they are likely to receive all kinds of objects (as well as people) that cannot find a place in the city. These are remains in the same way as interstices are leftovers of urban construction. Knaebel speaks about these objects which cannot find place: "Some objects have no place, they are nowhere in the right place. They have either to float and never stop anywhere, either to be rejected elsewhere, beyond the system of places, in the interstices or beyond the limits. They cannot exist for, in order to exist, you have to occupy a place [...]. They are then either simply denied existence or displaced in a forbidden space beyond culture, or destroyed."

When they are dirty, that is to say when they are not in the right place, remains become dangerous. They have a negative value. "The absence of shape (form), of lines, the indistinctness, the mixture, the propensity to scattering, all of this combines to frighten, because it means the reverse of social order, of rules and good manners, of hierarchy as well as of conscience" (Knaebel 1996). The less value an object has, the less it has a shape (a

form). Therefore, remains are taken away from the places where they could produce disorder. They generally end up out of the system, out of the city. And yet, absolute cleanliness is impossible in a fabric "poked with holes" (such as Maurice Halbwachs' sponge-city (1980)). "If the final hole of beyond the limits of the territory is the place to forget the residue, we could say that all the interstices, small, medium and large are their natural place" (Knaebel 1991).

A second scale of observation of the interstice, after the first one which was focused on large infrastructures visible on a map, thus calls for looking at leftover objects on the site. Of course, this is a very subjective notion. Nevertheless, observation of accumulated domestic or industrial trash and of aging of materials is simple. It depends on the level of maintenance on the site. Thus a dirty piece of land shows the owner's lack of interest. It exhibits an abandonment that demonstrates that the interstice is valueless for the time being.

1.3. Activities in the interstice: disorder of transgression.

According to Thrasher the gang was an oppositional structure attempting to make up for the defects of the surrounding society. In this regard the zone of transition was mostly perceived as a zone of disorganization where norms and laws weakened. The gang then came and proposed new rules of fidelity strictly imposed by the members. It thus offered an escape to a youth contesting family values. Thrasher stated "It offers a substitute for what society fails to give; and it provides a relief from suppression and distasteful behavior. It fills a gap and affords an escape. Here again we may conceive of it as an interstitial group providing interstitial activities for its members" (Thrasher: 33).

According to the then dominant idea, disorganization in the zone of transition was only temporary. It was associated with a period of reorganization within the larger American

society. In this mechanism the interstitial zone could be seen as the place where the individual would lose their community values before they would be able to adopt national ones. This vision seems very functionalistic in the sense that it gives a role to a temporary disorder that is contained within certain limits in the city.

However, in the case of the gang, the pattern of assimilation was not so clear and often times, these groups would end up being opposed not only to their own community but also to the larger social organization. Therefore, although somewhat functional, interstices in Chicago were already perceived as dangerous and had to be watched by the police for fear of anomia (Durkheim).

By the second generation of the Chicago school, the zone of transition had lost most of its appeal. Undefined territories in between neighborhoods were now considered as actual no-man's land and separation from a potential enemy rather than a territory for free exploration. As Suttles points out in his study of the Adams neighborhood in Chicago in 1968: "No-man's land create a "social vacuum where the usual guarantees of social order and control are lacking. Ordinarily they are viewed as dangerous, and people cross them 'at their own risk'. [...] In actual fact this does not mean that these no-man's land are never crossed, even in the late hours of the night. What is far more important is the way crossing one of these areas can cast suspicion over the purposes of someone who does so at certain hours of the day. Unless their good intentions are obvious, they expose themselves to every suspicion. Momentarily, they are 'adventurers', and their state as well-intended citizens is suspended. Some people avoid them; some don't care what happens to them; a few take them as a 'fair game" (Suttles: 35).

One way to explain these suspicions that were looming upon Thrasher's gang as well as anybody entering the no-man's land between neighborhoods (interstices) is to consider activities in the interstice as automatically transgressive.

Actually, activities in the interstice can be interpreted as dirty since they are automatically out of place (there is nothing to do in the interstice). However, actions imply a conscious decision that brings forth a disorder that is deeper than simple dirt. They exhibit a non-respect of the order of the place. This observation is a statement of a disorder of transgression. In the interstice, when they are not dirty, people transgress simply because they should not be there.

Like dirt, transgression is dangerous. It corrupts the form of what it touches and occupies (Bataille 1928). It soils because of a danger of contamination (Douglas 1974). The disorder of transgression can be conscious. It depends on what is understood as the law or the rule (the norm). It opposes the forbidden. Nevertheless, transgression can also apply to a victim especially when the cause is something non-personal (such as labor flexibility and unemployment). Then, the victim is not in the right place and therefore transgressing. This is, for example, the case of a homeless person seeking shelter in the interstice.

Of course, the ability of the interstice to remain empty despite the activities it is able to receive makes it a good place for the weakening of the forbidden and consequently, for the weakening of the rules (a kind of anomie). Therefore, the interstice presents us with the danger of a double transgression. The first one is caused by the impossibility to be in the right place in the interstice while the second risk rests on the suspicion that since the interstice is a place where the rules lose strength, one might only enter them in order to escape them, which is to say, transgress.

Transgression now becomes the main way of seeing interstitial activities from the outside, which is to say, from a place where it is normal to be. Thrasher's gangs transgressed the rules when they entered the interstices. It is therefore normal that they were considered deviant and eventually arrested by the police.

1.4. Conclusion to the first orientation: the situational "frame" of the interstice

Together, the three different levels of residual emptiness and visibility (place, object, activities) construct the situational context that "frame" (Goffman 1973) both the way interstices are generally considered but also the way objects and activities possibly taking place in the interstice are considered and risk a constant labeling as deviant. The important point about this frame is the fact that it is entirely situational, linked to the interstice as a place. As a consequence it applies to anybody or anything entering the interstice.

2. *Second orientation: renewal, tidying disorder*

Because interstices are mostly viewed in a negative way as places for disorder, mixture, dirt or transgression, the general idea in the planning world is that they have to be recycled so they can reenter the normal realm of urban places. In this view, there is a treatment adapted for each disorder identified. The lack of definition or the disorder of the place can be tidied. That means that the place needs to be given a new function that will contribute to redefining its shape. Practically it means two possibilities: filling up (Boyer 1994) and domesticating (Lynch 1965, Mongin 1987, Garreau 1991, Lion 2000). Dirtiness, on the other hand has to be cleaned up. This means that objects have to be removed or neutralized (Whyte 1980, Knaebel 1997). Finally, transgression needs to be controlled (Whyte 1980, Mc Donogh 1994). Activities in the interstice can be made functional or simply removed. Here again, just like disorder, renewal implies three different types of intervention: a

planning scale, a maintenance scale and a social control scale. As each of these scales indicates directions toward the control and renewal of the interstice, we have to understand that they also, and perhaps more importantly, point out "motives" available to justify a physical presence in the interstice. Someone who is projecting a new function or design in the interstice is not transgressing since s(he) is already giving a new place to the site where s(he) normally belongs.²

² For fallow lands, two options are possible. They can be taken over by another industrial activity, generally lighter, or they can simply shift to commercial and residential use. In Charenton-le-Pont, one of the sites studied in this research, a small municipality in the first ring around Paris, new "projets urbains" have proliferated, facilitated by the French ZAC (Zone d'Aménagement Concerté), zoning procedure that escapes the municipal zoning plan.) In the US, the renewal of central industrial zones started in Baltimore's harbor, transformed into a leisure and retail mall. Boston, with 'Faneuil Hall,' then New York City with 'South Street Seaport', both built by Rouse real estate developers have now become the archetype of these urban rehabilitations.

But all interstices are not so easy to fill. By-products do not easily lend themselves to a new function. Therefore, they are often considered in the planning world in a way that tends to erase their negative qualities and transform them into "open spaces."

Actually, ^{weeds} and wild bushes colonizing abandoned sites can be considered a first step toward the resurgence of the natural. Therefore, instead of erasing every trace of the past so as to fill up the void, domestication exploits traces of nature. By-products are specially fit for this kind of rehabilitation. These spaces are generally inaccessible and unfit to build. A landscaping mostly based on vision can transform them into 'natural landscapes' (Lynch 1965).

Often, when the land is more accessible, projects are more than a simple decor and become real parks. In New York City, Robert Moses, very early on, had considered parks along highways, such as "Riverside Highway", as arguments in favor of intensive roads development and convenient tools to solve the encounter of speedways with the city (Caro 1974). Still now, in St Denis, just north of Paris, greening is the main tool used to minimize the cut materialized by Highway A1 (Lion 2000). Of course, the ongoing discourse about the deficit in parks is validating all of these projects. However, isn't it simply because it is easier to fill up the voids with trees that we domesticate interstices?

In New York City, The Manhattan Hudson Riverfront, another research site for this work, is currently being redesigned as a park while 12th Avenue is being transformed into a "urban boulevard." Here too, green fills up the interstices. In addition it becomes a commercial argument to develop the adjacent neighborhoods (Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen) that suddenly afford "vistas on the river."

In fact, it seems that greening has always played the role of a conjunctive fabric between buildings and functions. From "edge city" (Garreau 1991) to the core of Paris and New York City, projects are under way to domesticate open spaces and thus reincorporate them into the urban social fabric. However, this type of rehabilitation still does not consider interstices as potential sites where innovative needs are met. They are more than often merely a way of ordering a disorder that has somehow become more visible.

When they cannot be recycled, interstices have to be maintained so that they do not transform into dump sites. The direct treatment for dirt is to remove it. Therefore, interstices that are perceived as dirty might be cleaned up by special workers. In this case, these workers have a reason to be in the interstice and therefore do not transgress. However, they have to make their action understandable so that there is no confusion regarding their morality. Therefore, a direction of inquiry in this research is to not only look at how interstices are kept somewhat clean but also at the strategy used by the maintenance teams themselves to justify their presence on the site. Thus maintenance is informative on a double level. Its observation allows establishing a threshold of

3. Conclusion to disorder and renewal orientations: the major approach

Maintenance and social control are actions aimed at keeping the interstice under a state of minimal disorder. They do not constitute a final solution. Only a new project that attributes a new function to the site terminates the existence of the interstice. However, disorders registered by maintenance and control teams can serve as reasons to initiate new design that would solve the problem. Therefore, we could think that the first two directions of inquiry account for a process of decay and renewal of space that seems once again pretty functionalist. Disorder would serve as a reason for an action of renewal. It points out interstices, stigmatizes them and calls for a solution. In this view, interstices are but a part of a more general process of the evolution of the city. Observing them might lead to an analysis similar to Setha Low's take on the Costa-Rican plaza, where activities and control are intimately linked to design issues (Low 2000). However, a main difference lies in the fact that interstices are not technically public spaces since they do not have a recognized function in the city and therefore cannot take on the central role that plazas occupy. However, from an institutional point of view, we can see how interstices can take on the role of a margin of maneuver to control and recycle land and disorder. This is why the first two orientations are regrouped in the study and fieldwork under the name 'major approach.'

the amount of dirt tolerable in the interstice before it needs cleaning and it offers the first way of escaping a judgment of transgression precisely by controlling disorder.

Transgressive activities have to be kept under control exactly like dirt. Surveillance and policing are the two activities that aim at preventing and possibly treating disorder of transgression. This is the reason why policemen were patrolling Thrasher's interstices and attempting to bring younger gang members to institutions where they would be in the right place. Others would be summoned or end up in correctional facilities, once again the place supposedly right for them.

As a consequence, another direction of inquiry for this research is to look at the way the traditional system of control applies to the interstice. This observation, just like maintenance, should show both a threshold of tolerance and another activity escaping the judgment of transgression.

4. *Third orientation: informal existing uses of the interstice, the minor approach.*

Neither domestication nor filling up gives the interstice a role in the city. A third approach is therefore necessary to analyze these spaces as they are in their present state, before any renovation takes place.

Here once again, Thrasher's study is useful. Despite its functionalist theoretical framework, Thrasher's observations were not only about a process of integration or failure to integrate. Gangs, although deemed disorganized, also showed interesting characteristics that allowed them to escape the judgment of norms, and construct a new spatial relationship with interstices. As a consequence, the third orientation is aimed at analyzing interstices as places fit for activities that are not necessarily deviant but that are nevertheless different than acceptable activities taking place in public space.

4.1 A prospective reason: new experience

One of these alternative activities is suggested by Thrasher. For him, no-man's lands became a field for games to a gang searching for new possibilities and experience. Main activities consisted of building shelters, setting up campsites, drinking alcohol, smoking, swimming and boating in the ponds and rivers. Most of the fun enjoyed by gang members relied on opportunities offered by the environment that would trigger their imagination. Thus, "a sour basement becomes an ogre's cave; a dank areaway, a glorified castle. [...] the piles of rubbish in the city dumps or the mud hills along the drainage canal are mountain fastnesses, while stretches of wasteland become prairies of the Golden West" (Thrasher: 84). According to Hannerz (1983: 60), Thrasher saw in this quest a symbol of independence. "The zone was a moral and a cultural frontier where human nature could find its raw expression and where the delinquent himself became a frontier man." Through its ongoing research of new experience, the gang raised the level of mental stimulation of the members

and broke "the humdrum of routine existence" (Thrasher: 68). New situations, random or constructed were occasions of destabilization that favored "ways of mobilization of the individual" (Grafmeyer: 39). Given the threats now looming upon urban public space (Sennett 78, 95, Lofland 98), the interstice might thus be a place to recover a "lived experience" more and more lacking in our cities. But how could it work given the disorder "framework" imposed on these sites?

4.2. A vocabulary of motives "On the move"

While trying to find an alternative approach, we should not forget that disorder constitutes the main opinion regarding interstices. However, if mixture is inevitable because of the process of construction of the interstice as a residual space, dirt and transgression might be avoidable.

In the interstice, we have seen that the main "frame" (Goffman 1973) was constituted by the risk of dirt and transgression. Now we have seen that transgression of norms was linked to the idea of order in a place, to the distribution of objects in space. To transgress is not to be in a place corresponding to one's value. It is to be out of place. Therefore, in order not to transgress, not to be out of place, a solution is simply to avoid taking place. In other words, staying in movement can suspend the risk of a stigmatizing judgment of disorder. For example, in order to enjoy simple pleasures, Thrasher's gang always had to watch for unwanted encounters, either with another gang or with the police. The best tactic in this regard consisted of a constant mobility. The gang was a wandering organization. It could not be localizable in a given place and thus escaped judgment.

As a consequence, one alternative way to be in the interstice and not be labeled as deviant, meaning out of place, is to develop a "vocabulary of motives" (Mills 1940) on the move.

This can be done in one of two ways. The passer-by can be either on his way to another place in time or to another place in space. In the first case s(he) projects another state of the land that will transform its space and thereof positions herself within the second orientation already explained, tidying disorder. In the second case, s(he) is only walking to some other place, actually using the interstice as a shortcut. Of course, this does not mean that one actually has to be in movement but rather that one has to exhibit a certain motive of presence in the interstice whose goal is beyond the site. In other words, it appears that the activity in the interstice must take place on a larger trajectory which goes through and past the interstice.

4.3 Main involvement and side involvement

If being "on the move" is the only solution to escape judgment, a new difficulty is then how to enjoy a place if one is always moving around, or if one's goal lies outside of the terrain? Goffman's theory of the allocation of involvement (outlined in Behavior in Public Places, 1973), helps address this problem.

According to Goffman, moving around is doing more than just providing a justification. It also gives the opportunity to free one's mind and stay open to possible encounters with people or space. "The act of purposefully going about one's business, of looking as though one is coming from some place or going to some place, involves a dominating objective that leaves the actual focus of attention free for other things; one's destination, and therefore one's dominant involvement, lie outside the situation" (Goffman 1973).

In fact, this freedom of attention is achieved thanks to the mechanism of division of the allocation of involvement between a main one and a side one. According to Goffman, in a public place our main involvement is most likely to be walking through space, watching for

obstacles. Our side involvement, on the other hand might be participating in a conversation or working on one's public appearance.

What this distribution of involvement suggests is that in the interstice, a part of ourselves can be dedicated to give an appearance of movement while another part can exploit the freedom obtained by this main involvement to construct a relation with the site that is not dependant on norms anymore. For example, someone can show a main involvement by using the interstice as a 'shortcut' to somewhere else. While this apparent behavior takes care of the justification for the presence in the place, (s)he can have a side involvement liberated from the obligation of movement.³

4.4 Objects in the place

Until now, the empty space of the interstice was actually only thought of as a space of communication where people are or could be judged deviant or not judged if they happened to be "on the move". However, we can now start to see how an interstice can be partially filled up and not prompt further disorder. Actually, if one is moving through space, objects are merely seen as obstacles or practical occasions for a change in a course of action. They are not to be interpreted anymore but used.

This perception can be made explicit by the idea of "affordances" suggested by J. J. Gibson. It supposes that the visual world is not made out of pure forms but out of availabilities. It is a world of objects and surfaces proposing themselves to be seen, accessible to perception. The word 'pickup' describes affordances. It designates not only the

³ In a more general way, the figure of the walker can be considered an analyzer of modern urban spaces. Authors such as Beaudelaire, Walter Benjamin Paul Auster or Michel de Certeau have all shown different aspects of how walking can become a critical instrument in getting away from established modes of viewing space and establishing a specific relation to the environment. (cf.: C. Baudelaire ([1861] 1995).- *Les Fleurs du Mal*; Benjamin.- (1999) *The Arcade Project*; Auster (1990).- *The New York Trilogy*; De Certeau (1990).- *L'invention du quotidien*).

conditions of our movements in space but also the conditions to handle an object. The light properties, the legibility of a code of signals, the type of urban furniture, its ordering, constitute as many pickups an environment can offer for any activity or use. The pickups are defined as opposed to objective or subjective proprieties. "The idea of affordances crosses the dichotomy of subject/object while helping us to understand its inadequacy. It designates both an environmental and a behavioral fact" (Gibson 1971).

4.5. Interstice as a public space in a minor mode

Double involvement in the interstice reflects a division of the self adapted to the double organization of perspectives in urban public space. Isaac Joseph describes this: "The first perspective shows how much space is full and cluttered [...] and tends to adapt it to the constraints of circulation; the second perspective views [space] in terms of scenography as an art of organizing gaze and hearing, and this art of action demands that space be cleared, able to accommodate several modes of exposure, empty or occupied by the pure form of mutuality, a space of narration and intrigue" (Joseph 1998: 9). In the interstice, the second perspective that empties space is always dominant. Therefore, although negligible in the urban fabric, the interstice is a pretty exposed terrain. It is comparable to a stage set. Nobody looks at it when it is empty but it becomes the focus of all attention once it is occupied. It is only when a person is "on the move" that the tension loosens up a little. On this condition only, space can begin to fill up according to the second perspective of urban public space.

What this suggests is that the interstice is not so different from public space. It is only more constrained in the sense that in the interstice the justification of presence is always required and constitutes the main involvement before any other one. As a consequence to

the hospitality of public space expressed by the feeling of "not being out of place" (Bordreuil 2000) responds a double displacement in the interstice. In the normative sense because there is no place to be in the interstice but also because the only acceptable line of conduct is precisely to be in between places, dis-placed, which is to say "on the move." This is the only justifiable involvement in the interstice and should therefore be the main one.

In fact, this constraint effectively transforms every person crossing the interstice into a "stranger", someone who is not at home but just visiting. In this regard, the difference between the interstice and the early Chicago School public space is very slight. It stands only in the fact that in the interstice, no-body is at home and everybody is a stranger. There is no exception except for the people who want to transform space, that is designers, maintenance teams and police (whereas the city of the Chicago school has inhabitants). But that is a meager difference when considering the public spaces of the zone of transition where populations were constantly shifting. Thrasher's gangs were actually mostly found in this zone that already showed the greatest concentration of interstices.

The existing use's orientation calls for an observation of the interstice in a minor mode as explained by Deleuze and Guattari. In a book about Kafka and minor literature, they argued that the writer was in a very constrained situation, one reminiscent of the urban interstice. He was in a triple impossibility: the impossibility not to write, the impossibility to write in German, the impossibility to write other than German" (Deleuze 1975: 29). Interstices also show a triple impossibility: The impossibility not to be in the interstice, the impossibility not to be out of place in the interstice, and the impossibility to be out of place (risk of transgression). According to Cindi Katz (1996), the minor is an interstitial position that can apply to various domains. "it is a way of working with material.[...]of working in a

vocabulary in which one is not at home..." In other words, the minor corresponds to a transit situation comparable to the stranger's position visiting a foreign city.

Finally, considering the interstice as a public space in a minor mode suggests that the interstice finds a position not in the system of places of the city but rather on the trajectories of people who are brought to cross them on their journey. As a consequence, this study will observe and classify itineraries rather than locations. Consequently, two questions become interesting to explore: accessibility - What are the limits of the interstice? Where are the entrances and exits? – and visibility - What lines of conduct are the most discrete and how do they take advantage of the physical organization of the interstice? What are the visual perspectives that participate in the construction of the terrain?

5. Conclusion: major mode approach and minor mode approach

To conclude, this study proposes to consider urban interstices as paradoxical spaces in the contemporary city. They are spaces for disorders and at the same time manage to escape the very judgment that makes them empty by being "moved through." These two possibilities constitute two main approaches for this research.

First, the major approach explains the origin and the position of the interstice in a process of urban renewal based on a judgment of disorder. This approach corresponds somewhat to a backdoor entrance to urban planning, from the point of view of its leftovers and by-products. As such it might be able to reveal differences or similarities between the renewal processes at work in Paris and New York City.

Second, and more importantly, a minor mode approach attempts to look at what happens in the gaps of this process when activities find place in the interstice not in order to reintegrate it in the realm of urban places (although they might pretend to) but to take

advantage of its singular position in the city. In practice, such activities are led by people who have to behave like strangers "on the move". In this regard, the interstice could turn out to be the very materialization of the conceptual urban public space that served as a foundation for the city of the Chicago School. In this case, interstices could have a real role both in bringing back a vision somewhat forgotten by the urban planning world in general and, revealing needs and desires not satisfied by current professional practice.

Parallel to the contested dwindling of the democratic values of urban public space (privatization, control, surveillance), the urban interstice could also figure as a last and unexpected resistant. It is actually sufficiently constrained not to be submitted to the current phenomenon touching public spaces such as privatization (Low 2002) and indifference (Sennett 1995, Joseph 1997). It could therefore become the receptacle of activities pushed off the streets and squares of our cities.

Part two: Research design

1. Definition and objectives: the role of "empty residual spaces in between"

Urban interstices are defined as residual spaces in the city. They are the remains of urban planning and design after a process of transformation of space. They exist as such as long as they are not rehabilitated and reincorporated into the urban fabric as functional spaces.

There are two types of urban interstices: fallow lands and by-products. For a practical reason, vacant lots or, a type of fallow lands are not included in the study. Actually, in a number of cases, they are located in residential neighborhoods and are under constant watch by inhabitants that tend to covet them. Therefore, they are often taken over and transformed into common spaces such as community gardens or parking lots (Schmelzkopf 1995, Hynes 1996). When owners do not want the land to be appropriated, they tend to protect it so well that they are completely inaccessible. In all cases, vacant lots are out of reach for this research. Vacant lots can probably be studied in impersonal zones such as commercial or administrative areas. This is the choice made by Luc Lévesque (1999) in his study of Montreal's *terrains vagues* in and around St Catherine Street, a central business axis. In Paris and New York, not only are these places scarce but also very well protected from intrusion by efficient wooden palisades or metallic fences.

This study explores a dominant way of considering interstices that determines most of the judgments about them as well as their general fate in processes of urban planning and design. According to this view, which will be examined in the major approach, interstices are places for disorders, meaning, mixture, dirt and transgression. Thus they should be either controlled or eliminated. This approach should therefore uncover processes of

recycling of space. Since the frame of analysis is the same in Paris and New York City, it should also reveal differences or similarities between urban design and planning in these two cities.

This research also explores a minor approach to the interstice which states that although dominated by the major, and perhaps because it is dominated, interstices show a possibility for certain activities to take place unnoticed or at least unchallenged. However, there is a condition to that possibility. Activities that need to escape a judgment of dirtiness or transgression and its possible consequence need to be "on the move". In other words, they cannot take place. They cannot make the interstice theirs and thus re-introduce it within the realm of normal urban places.

The goal of this research is also to explore the relationship between the institutional and the minor approaches and perhaps uncover innovative and challenging aspects of the interstices capable of influencing the dominant trend in urban design regarding residual space.

2. Case studies

This study is an exploratory research. In order to maximize the scope of the search, several sites have been chosen in two different cities, Paris and New York. These different interstitial places are not to be compared directly but only follow a situational context simply defined as "empty residual spaces."

Therefore, this study is neither a comparison of Paris and New York, nor a comparison of their interstices. The interstice is rather a means to reveal a reality probably not well considered by major theories of the city or by urban planning and design. This is why the interstice was defined, before all, in terms of a process of production of space rather than by

direct and positive properties. This position is aligned with Simmel's sociology that states that "instead of considering concepts as closed ensembles where the only task is to define the substance, it is more important to use them as simple indicators of a reality whose content is still to be discovered, [...] such as sketches still to be filled" (Deroche-Gurcel in Simmel 1999: 21).

In this regard, it is interesting to consider that my position as a researcher is itself interstitial for two reasons. First I have to enter interstices like any other person on the site. I must therefore develop my own vocabulary of motive and even more difficult, find a way to explain and justify my research to people that either are not in the least bit interested in the topic or feel constrained enough so as to not want to reveal the complexities of their own conduct. Second, I observed movements happening in the "void" and therefore almost invisible. There is probably here an inherent inadequacy of the general vocabulary of this research and the phenomenon supposedly observed. That is however a necessary risk.

The different case studies are not only a way to accumulate chances of a better observation but also a means to help construct the object, the interstice, as well as the method. The only solution then is to adapt to each site. "It thinks behind your back and you are constrained and pushed. That is the virtue of the case" (Badiou 1997: 25.)

3. Choice of the sites: Paris / New York City

Paris and New York are the two cities chosen for this research. It is their quality of model cities that brings them here and that account for most of my own fascination with them. Both of them represent, under a different shape, a concept of the city. Paris and New York are two cities of lights, somewhat old-fashioned for Paris, a city marked by history, more

modern for New York, a city of verticality and congestion. Both of them have an image that makes them unique.

At the same time Paris and New York are now considered "global cities" even though Saskia Sassen (1991) did not include Paris on her famous list. The definition is fuzzy though and Paris is not far behind the sacred trio, New York, Tokyo, London. Several comparative studies bringing Paris and New York together have been led. It appears that these two cities are different but still comparable. The most important similarity seems to be their experience of the same phenomenon of evolution, mainly economic mutations. Thus in 1988, Hank Savitch considered them "post-industrial cities." In 1995, Llewellyn Davies' study dubbed them "world cities." Important points are mostly economic. The book gathers in successive chapters, comparisons of financial services, power structures, tourism, culture industry, transportation, education and information technologies.

In France, *New York* was sometimes considered by planners and urbanists as an example of future trends to hit Paris. In 1994, the journal *Villes en Parallèle*, devoted a whole issue to the exploration of all the domains in which this comparison was valid. In addition to economics and other classics covered by the books above, another reason which appeared in this journal was the diversity of populations. This was possible because Paris as well as New York can support Simmel's hypothesis on the importance of the stranger.

In this case, the theoretical grounding for the study calls for both French and American thinkers whose reference cities are often Paris, Chicago and New York City. Second, if as more and more economic and political studies are showing, these cities have gone through the same craze of construction and traumas, Paris and New York should not exhibit as many common traits as they hide common traces and remains.

For example, both cities have been largely affected by major transportation oriented policies. Highways and rail tracks are one of the numerous structures that produce leftovers throughout the urban fabric. Of course, New York is often ahead of Paris. Robert Moses, however, is often compared to Haussmann, a fact that tends to blur hierarchic comparison and foster the idea of cyclical evolution. In the 1930's Moses initiated large programs of highways and parks that considerably modified the face of New York (Caro 1974). In France, highways started to proliferate only after World War II whereas rail tracks have a much longer history.

New Interstices in Paris and New York City

If de-industrialization did not affect Paris and New York in the same way, wastelands have both marked their territories in a durable and significant enough way so that rehabilitation has become an issue in both cities. In this regard, although more government controlled, Paris Great Works and the dynamics between President Mitterrand and the city of Paris are strangely reminiscent of New York's own process of renovation led by both the city and the State of New York thanks to semi-public institutions such as the Empire State Development Corporation or BIDs to parallel with the French SEM and their ZAC areas.⁴

So far renovation has taken place mostly in the center but also in suburban cores. As it proceeds around new issues such as communication, it tends to create its own new types of interstices loosely identified as the backstage of the spectacle or of the conservation of urban patrimony. They are the invisible residuals spaces, the blind spots of communication.

⁴ SEM: Société d'économie mixte, public/private partnership. ZAC: Zone d'Aménagement Concerté: a construction area superceding regular zoning laws. In New York, the EDC is an emanation of the State. It has a right to by-pass municipal zoning in defined areas in a way similar to the French ZAC. BIDs (Business Improvement District) are private territorial organization that can collect a tax in a defined perimeter in order to improve business conditions.

All the changes have produced and continue to produce remains, various interstices, wastelands and leftovers that inhabitants regularly rediscover as possible spaces. This study then is not a comparison of two cities but an observation of a few of their interstices. This detour approach might now be able to uncover difference in the way both cities deal with urban renovation. Although subject to the same global tendencies, New York and Paris stand as the products of two different types of urban planning. Paris is supposedly more controlled by the State whereas New York is driven by market forces. In this regard, looking at their interstices might uncover significant differences or similarities between their two systems of production and renewal of space. It might also reveal, in between global or world phenomenon, unknown modes of negotiation between public and private, between order and movement.

3.1 City Slices from center to border

In order to find residual spaces, the zone in between the city center and the suburbs seems the most promising. Actually it often shows encounters between well constituted pieces of fabric and other space logic more at a geographical scale such as transportation networks and natural topography. Thus, Thrasher's gangland was located exactly in the second ring of Chicago, the transition area, stuck in between the center and the first ring of residential suburbs. At the same time, processes of de-industrialization and renovation have penetrated into the heart of cities and flowed over into the suburbs. Therefore, the choice of the sites has been logically organized around one slice of each city taken as a section from the center towards the city limit. In Paris, following the concentric organization of the city, the slice goes outbound from the new National library in the 13th arrondissement, a newly build area

just East of the historical center to Charenton-le-Pont, a little neighboring municipality (a sort of 'outer borough'). It basically follows the Seine River. In New York, a gridiron city, 44th street served as a bone for a transversal exploration from the UN gardens to an abandoned pier on the Hudson River, through Grand Central Station and Times Square. These sections served as exploratory territories and the context for the emergence of interstices. Little by little, certain terrain materialized along the slices. For each one it leads to the choice of three different kinds of interstices: a fallow land, a by-product of transportation and a by-product of the information age.

See map 3: Site locations, Paris / NYC

3.2. Paris: junk yards, highways, river and *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* (BNF)⁵

In Paris the exploration perimeter was first limited by two train stations, *Gare de Lyon* and *Gare d'Austerlitz*, and their tracks on each side of the Seine River. Cut from the rest of the city by rails, and severely touched by de-industrialization, this zone is now a large perimeter of renovation constituting the tip of the *Seine Amont* project which is supposed to re-equilibrate Paris by injecting investment in the eastern part of the city.

In this slice along the river, several sites and terrain were chosen. First, the little municipality of Charenton-le-Pont was chosen as a site containing interstices such as wastelands and leftovers created by industrial disinvestment and the construction of highways. This little city was convenient for a first site because it is precisely limited on all sides: the Seine on the South, the *Parc de Vincennes* on the North and the *boulevard périphérique* on the East. In this territory, a careful exploratory search led to the choice of three more precise terrains that concentrated fieldwork:

⁵ Also called Très Grande Bibliothèque (TGB)

Later, another terrain was chosen in the "Seine Rive Gauche" area, a large renewal project in the 13th arrondissement, closer to the historical center. The TGB, new French National Library, a project sponsored by the late President Mitterrand, is the core of this project. However, as a big machine, it did not fit easily in the site proposed and thus produced little leftovers on its side. The western border became the interstice chosen for a study of residual production of new projects.

Thus the Paris slice accounts for two case studies gathering the following interstices:

Case study number 1: Charenton-Le-Pont

Interstice 1: A junk rail yard resulting from the decrease of train freight and the departure of wine industries from the neighborhood.

Interstice 2: A thin slice of land stuck in between the Seine and the Highway A4

Interstice 3: Remains of Paris fortifications stuck in the intersection of Highway A4 and the *boulevard périphérique*.

Case study number 3- ZAC Seine Rive Gauche

Interstice 4: Side of France Great National Library, TGB

3.3. New York City

In New York, after a succinct exploration around 44th Street, the site shrunk to the western part of Midtown called Hell's Kitchen in between Times Square and the Hudson River. For several reasons, this neighborhood is considered underdeveloped by the real estate industry that wants to invest in it. Major influences that recently marked this neighborhood come

mostly from the sides of the neighborhood. First, the docks on the riverfront have been abandoned leaving deserted piers (mutations of Sea transportation technologies). The banks can also be considered a by-product as the construction of a large and high-speed avenue has contributed to separating the neighborhood from the Hudson. Now a renovation process is coming to the area from the south. The commercial success of Battery Park City has launched a large dynamic of rehabilitation going up along the river. In order to capture all these movements, Pier 84, an abandoned pier just off west 44th Street has been chosen as a fieldwork site.

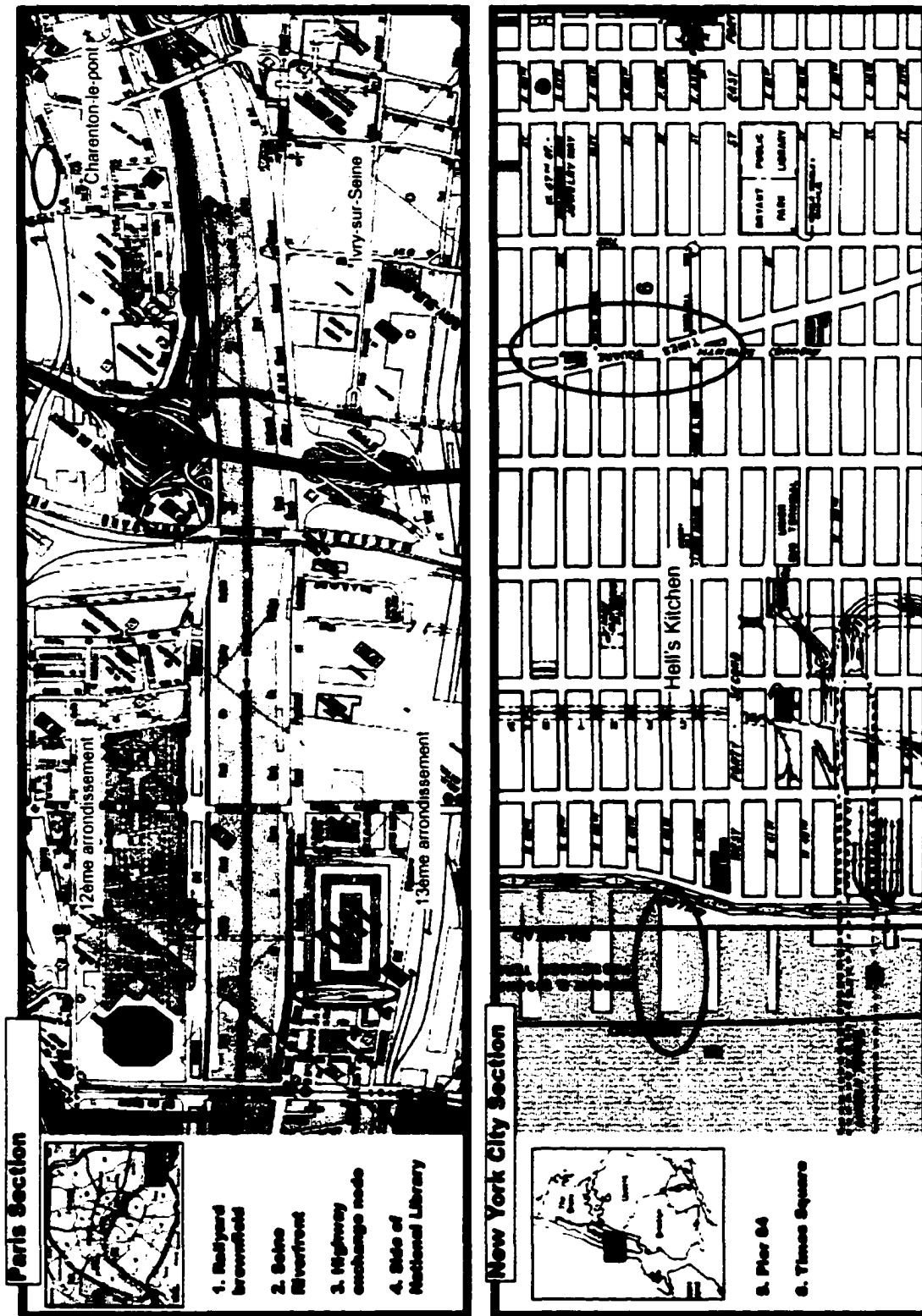
A second development tendency comes from East Midtown. It is best embodied in the radical transformation of Times Square that started in the early 90's prompted by a general feeling of disorder in this area slowly constructed in the 70's and 80's. William Kornblum's study of 42nd street in 1978 offers a solid starting point for the site. There, new residual spaces created by the renewal process took on new forms depending on new technologies of organization of space based on information and communication. The new Times Square interstices appeared less defined by physical characteristics as were the wastelands on the Hudson Riverfront and more by visual hierarchy. Interstices in Times Square have thus become the second terrain in New York.

Thus New York City accounts for two case studies:

Case study number 2: Hudson Riverfront; **Interstice 5:** Pier 84 on the Hudson River

Case study number 4: Times Square; **Interstice 6-** Times Square

.



Map 3: Two city slices containing six interstices. Source : S. Tonnelat.

Table 2: sites and terrain (also see map 3)

City	Site/ Case study	Terrain/ interstice	type	Number on map 3
Paris	Charenton-le-Pont	Junk rail yard	Industrial wasteland	1
		Seine river front	By-product of highway	2
		Ancient fort	By-product of boulevard périphérique	3
NYC	Manhattan Hudson Riverfront	Pier 84	Industrial wasteland	5
Paris	ZAC Seine Rive Gauche	Side of National Library	By-product of information age	4
NYC	Times Square	Times Square	By-product of information age	6

4. Major approach : fieldwork and production of data

Fieldwork was divided into two parts. First, it was aimed at identifying the different dimensions of emptiness that make up the major context of the interstice and that build the constraints that frame activities expected to take place on the terrain. It was also aimed at identifying processes of recycling of space. Then, fieldwork attempted to observe how activities dealt with identified constraints and stayed "on the move" so as to turn them into an opportunity. These two parts of the research process are called the major approach and the minor approach.

We have seen that the major approach depends on three different scales. Each one determines a level of emptiness and contributes to uncovering the process of construction and renovation of the interstice.

4.1. First scale urban planning and disorder of mixture

At the geographical level, the interstice is a technical residual space caused by an encounter between different spatial logic. It can result from an incompatibility between the

principles of construction of a large superstructure and topography. Highways for example must have straight lines and fluid curves that do not always adapt to the irregular riverbanks that they follow. Planning must save a margin like a buffer that becomes an interstice, sign of a spatial discontinuity. This space has no function other than being in between. Therefore it is residual and remains immobile, normally unused and uncrossed, except when it is sometimes domesticated as pocket parks. It is only next to a more significant construction.

Industrial wastelands show a more temporal discontinuity. Activities leave behind large areas unfit for uses other than industrial. They have to be divided and reworked before they can be rehabilitated. Therefore, industrial wastelands mark the rupture between successive and different systems of allotment. For a while they are useless because they are physically and legally unadapted.

Therefore, the first scale of constitution of emptiness concerns the physical production of space. This research thus paid a lot of attention to urban planning and design in order to situate the interstices in a process of construction.

4.2. Second scale: maintenance and disorder of dirtiness

Because they are seen as useless, interstices are not well kept. The second approach, already discussed, was based on the level of dirtiness of a terrain. As we have seen, dirt is an accumulation of objects at the wrong place. One way to inquire about dirt was to see what organization was in charge of maintenance and why it was not working well. It also required an observation of objects accumulating in the interstice.

Maintenance is important for it can also mark the end or the start of a process of recycling that will lead the way to degradation of a terrain and the appearance of the interstice or its rehabilitation and the disappearance of the interstice.

4.3. Third scale control and disorder of transgression

Since there is no reason to be in the interstice, any activity on the terrain can be judged as deviant. However, it has to be seen and noticed in order to be classified as such. Therefore, transgression depended mostly on two categories of visibility. The first one was the exposure of the terrain to visual surveillance by inhabitants or passers-by. Mostly, it concerned visual perspectives onto the place. The second concerned the surveillance by the police or another institution that had the power to arrest people and label them as deviant. It was an institutional visibility.

4.4 Collection of data

The three dimensions of emptiness corresponded to different modes of data collection. They all tended to come together to build a single image of the terrain accepted by a majority of people. Therefore, they are considered as major data.

These can be grouped in different categories according to their nature: they are graphic, written, and oral. Most of them come from research with public or semi-public institutions.

4.4.1 Major approach and institutional data

In general, discontinuities result from institutional actors. The first two levels of research therefore took place mostly outside of the terrain (disorder of definition and disorder of dirtiness). They organized around the collection of administrative and promotional documents and interviews of administrative employees in relation with the terrain.

This phase was aimed at identifying the frame of production and management of space. Data was gathered in two groups according to the scale of emptiness : everything that pertained to the history of the site, its construction, its evolution and projects; and everything regarding statuses and maintenance.

Table 3: Institutions contacted

Institutional level	Paris	New York
Municipal level: planning	- Services d'urbanisme	- City planning commission
Municipal level: maintenance	- Service des parcs et jardins - Police municipale - Services sociaux contre l'exclusion	- Parks department - NYPD - Social services - Dept of Citywide Administration services
National level: construction, maintenance and planning	- Transportation companies: SNCF, VNF, Highways - National police	- State Department of Transportation, State Dept of Environmental protection. - National police
Semi-public level, planning	- SEM and ZAC	- EDC and BIDs, Partnerships
Semi-public level, maintenance	- SEM	- BID: police and cleaning
Private level	- associations of inhabitants - private owners	- associations of inhabitants - private owners

Municipal administration and national level

The municipal administration was logically the most important institution in this research. Its different services concerned urban planning, hygiene and maintenance, and social affairs such as measures against exclusion and security. All these services were met and documents collected.

In general superstructures that go beyond municipal territory were managed by organizations dependent on the State. Technical bodies of engineers take care of rivers, highways, canals, bridges and so on. These services were met in the same fashion as the city services.

Partnerships and associations

Partnerships bringing together national, municipal and private actors also emerged, especially in the case of renovation projects. At the local level, associations of inhabitants could have an influence on municipal policies, especially regarding maintenance issues. They also had their own projects concerning the terrain. In this regard they were an actor like other institutions already evoked.

Interviews

Employees of institutions were interviewed as representing a position in their organization. Interviews took place in offices on a quite formal tone, mostly in the form of the consultation of an expert. They were semi-directive, organized around themes and completed with more precise questions if necessary. Of course, employees could have opinions not shared by their organization. In this case, the interview became confidential and the source is not revealed.

A first part of the interview identified the place of the interviewee in the institution and the more general position of this organization in regard to the terrain. It thus concerned the person, her/his career, her/his status, the definition of her/his work and her/his relations with other employees.

The second part centered on the terrain. Questions were about history. What was the site like before it became residual? What brought it to this state? About status: Who owns the site? What are the constraints applied to it? About management and projects of transformation: Who maintains the site and how? How often? Are there any projects to renovate it? In this part, things unsaid or unknown had as much importance as things said. Another important question concerned other institutions that the organization was working with and the people directly concerned. The points of view of one administrative service on another one were precious in the sense that they revealed tensions or inconsistencies in the management of space that could partially explain its emptiness.

Red tape and graphic documents

Most institutions had more or less well kept archives. One difficulty, however, was to gain access to them. Otherwise, interviews were a good occasion to ask for the most basic documents.

Documents were divided in two categories just like the interview. The ones that gave information about the organization and the ones that spoke about the terrain. Maps and plans were very useful in order to have an idea of the representation of spaces within administrations that managed them. They often revealed incomplete drawings and blanks that showed the first level of the terrain's emptiness (disorder of definition).

4.4.2. On site descriptions

Physical description of the sites through notes and sketches allowed comparisons of institutional visions with the reality of the place. They served to check whether administrative limits were visible on the ground. They revealed how well a construction fitted into the topography of the site and verified the efficiency of management by an estimate of the level of cleaning and the growth of wild vegetation.

Photography served to study the visibility of the terrain from different points of view and thus establish the third visual scale of emptiness.

5. Minor approach: being 'on the move', an ethnographic approach.

Institutional data sketched a dominant portrait of the terrain. They showed how it was empty and useless. At the same time they showed how it was controlled and constrained. Paradoxically, the hypothesis of this study stated that despite and thanks to these conditions, the terrain was still available for some types of invisible mobilities to be observed. Thus, observation required a more ethnographic approach than the first part of data collection.

The only theoretically acceptable conduct in the interstice has been identified as a passage, being "on the move." However, it can take several forms that need to be explored. One aspect of the collection of minor data therefore concerned the observation of people crossing the site and the attitudes they developed to make it seem normal.

One way to observe was to identify the various access points to the terrain and look at how people passed these thresholds. Once paths had been identified, observation focused on the possible stops on the terrain and on the way these were negotiated within the context. This could be done through distant observation, semi-participant observation and interviews.

5.1. Distant observation

A first method was distant observation. The inherent discretion of the interstice allowed for invisible positions or transformed the investigator into a flâneur. This technique also helped identify the different thresholds of access into the interstice since the researcher himself experienced them. It was therefore a good means to identify the different figures of the passage. Also, distant observation revealed rhythms and frequency of passage and helped determine periods of traffic and or significant activities.

5.2 Traces

Traces were indications of activities sometimes difficult to observe. They permitted to localize in space and, less precisely in time, activities already over. In the case of an observed activity, they could measure the impact on the terrain and its durability. At the same time traces were often considered dirty by cleaning services and they helped to construct an idea about the degree of tolerance of dirtiness on the terrain.

In other cases traces revealed accesses opened by people in otherwise closed limits. They indicated weak points in control and a margin of tolerance. The crossing of a limit often marked a symbolic passage. Their identification was therefore interesting.

5.3 Semi-participant observation

Participant observation was not the desired mode because this study focused primarily on space rather than people. However, activities were supposed to reveal the constraints and

opportunities offered by the terrain. Therefore they were interesting to observe and analyze. Each time that it was possible, I tried to follow them and observe their ways of doing, their know-how. More than actual reasons, it seemed that modes of passage revealed the necessary adjustments to bring together the constraints and opportunities of the interstice. Often, interviews accompanied the movement in order to inquire about how people described their own activity. This technique was difficult however and most of the time interviews happened after the fact, on site or in another place.

5.4. Interviews

Interviews about activities on the terrain were constructed in a way similar to institutional ones. One part was organized around the interviewee and one part around her/his activities. However, the tone was not of consultation but more of a conversation since the position of the interviewee was to be defined. It was easier anyway to approach people through their activities than to start with more personal questions. In general, they came up once the immediate context had been explored.

The interview was semi-directive and loosely guided, only reorienting the conversation toward the terrain when it slipped too much away. Leading questions attempted to describe activities and their modalities of operation.

One of the first questions concerned the reason for being on the site. As we have seen, this constitutes the motive of passage. Explanations and modalities of access were a logical continuation of that question. Problems met and solved by interviewees were especially interesting. They could result from the difficulty to maintain an acceptable conduct. Agreements with institutional services of maintenance and surveillance showed, from a different angle, the degree of equilibrium between appropriation of the site and invisibility.

These tactics could be temporal, such as a share in time (day/night for example), or spatial (front/back, stage/backstage, visible/invisible), static or dynamic. Another leading question was about the first discovery of the terrain. When did you first come to this place? How did you find out about it? These questions asked about accessibility and thresholds, physical as well as symbolic.

The impact of activity on the terrain was important in the sense that it revealed a willingness to transform it. Interstices could then be seen as Foucault's heterotopias as they became spaces of compensation (as ordered as the outside is disordered) or spaces of contestation (disorder in a coercive world).

As much as possible, interviews brought into discussion the technical aspects of activities in order to uncover specific interactions between people and the terrain. From this point of view, the interstice is considered as a not well identified resource.

Finally, activities showed other places of practice. The way they linked these places was interesting as well as the similarities between the different places. In this regard, it was useful to check out other mentioned interstices and to identify people's journeys on which interstices found place. The more personal part of the interview generally gave a social and geographical frame for the observed activity. More than the person's name, it was the place where people came from and the distance they had covered to come to the interstice, which was researched. Motivations were often linked to paths across the city, as if an interstitial activity was a side involvement on the way to someplace else (*Goffman*). This aspect gave information about the relational scale of the interstice, meaning how far it reached.

For especially interesting activities, further interviews were conducted in order to draw a more precise portrait, or a kind of an "activity life story."

5.5. Minor graphic and written documents, sketches and plotting

Very few documents were available on activities in the interstices. However, in the case of well organized actions that aspired to a form of recognition, documents were sometimes distributed or available through 'contacts'. They addressed institutions, asking for financial or administrative support or individuals and asked them to join a group. These documents showed a form of gradual institutionalization of the interstice from an informal place to a more visible one. Therefore, the limit between the two aspects of the research, major and minor, was not clear at all times and may even still overlap.

Graphic documents showed plans of the terrain as it could or should be. They were a contestation or a counter project to more official ones. Pictures acted as proof of activity or simply presented the place to people otherwise not likely to enter them.

The research process went along with a systematical plotting aimed at producing a map more precise and comparable to other available documents, official or not. They also served to situate activities and kept a record of them. Sketches completed this process.

5.6. Internet

The Internet was also used as a source of information about statuses and activities on the terrain. Actually, a number of institutions proposed an increasing amount of information on their websites. Renovation projects were for example often publicized online.

Also, the web's anonymity allows people to talk about their experience in a less constrained way. Systematic searches looked for personal stories related to a site or historical research posted by professional or amateurs alike.

6. Summary chart of goals, research questions and methods

Table 4: Summary chart of goals, research questions and method.

Goals	Questions	Methods
Major orientation: disorder and renewal		
Identify the main constraints that will apply to activities in the interstice	How is the interstice empty? What is its position in a process of urban decay and renewal?	Identify 3 scales of disorder and trace a history of the site.
1st level of emptiness: Geographic emptiness Disorder of definition	How are the interstices produced as empty residual spaces in between?	Archival research, projects, maps Interviews of employees in charge of urban planning.
2 nd level of emptiness Statuses and maintenance Disorder of dirtiness	How are interstices maintained and surveyed What are the current projects ? Are there any processes of recycling?	Interviews with sanitation and police departments. Scaling of the degree of dirtiness of the interstice Search for official and informal projects.
3 rd level of emptiness The risk of transgression	How is the interstice controlled?	Interviews with the police and other guards Evaluation of visual perspectives in and onto the interstice.

Minor orientation: existing uses 'on the move'		
List activities and see which ones are labeled as deviant or dirty (exclusion) and the ones that escape this judgment.	What are the activities taking place in the interstice and how do they deal with the network of constraints that requires them to be immobile or invisible?	On site distant observation and semi-participant observation Interviews with people met on the site. Comparison of data with major observations from the 3 scales of emptiness.
Identify activities that are "on the move" so as to escape the network of constraints and develop a relation with the interstice that does not consider it empty.	What are the modes of movement of these activities?	Observation of the three aspects of accessibility: Plotting of entrances and exits Observation of trajectories in the city and that pass through the interstice Identification of a variety of lines of conduct according to their discretion.

7. Research dynamic and results

Although the conceptual framework was the same for each site, each one served to emphasize a different aspect of the interstice. This was due to the fact that the research was

exploratory and not comparative. Therefore, aspects already well identified somewhere do not have to be pursued everywhere to the same extent.

Charenton-le-Pont, the first site in Paris was for example an occasion to elaborate a basic typology of interstices: wastelands, by-products and vacant lots. It also showed the tight relation between interstices and transportation networks. This work did not have to be performed for the three other sites although it was also explored.

Different sites have not experienced the same urban mutations and therefore did not produce the same type of interstices. Charenton-le-Pont and the Hudson Riverfront were more influenced by de-industrialization whereas Times Square and the French National Library were two leading figures of contemporary urban renewal. Of course, all interstices were residual spaces but they showed different phenomenon.

The work in this abridged version presents only one shortened case study describing the context of the interstice, its production, its maintenance and control and finally interstitial activities. It attempts to bring together the different levels of the research process. The three other cases are very briefly summarized only to give a sense of the progression of the research towards the conclusion.

Fieldwork took place from 1996 to 2001 within different academic programs. The year 1996-1997 was focused on Charenton-le-Pont in Paris and this first exploration gave way to a *mémoire de DEA* at the *Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris*. The next two academic years were spent in New York, researching both Pier 84 and Times Square (cases 2 and 4). The data on Times Square was the base for a second year paper in the department of environmental psychology at the CUNY Graduate School. Finally, further research in order to complete the joint doctoral degree in environmental psychology and urban planning was led from

September 1999 to April 2001, first on the library site in Paris (case 3) and then for short periods of time in each of the four sites to complete the data for the dissertation.

Protection of human subjects

In accordance with the Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects (IRB 6040401), except in the case of known political characters, names are not used in this paper in order to protect the identity of the people met. In most cases the names of people met in the field are not known and were not asked for. This anonymity was often a prerequisite to any conversation in the field.

Part three. Case studies

For a more extensive report on the case studies, please read "Interstices Urbains, quatre études de cas à Paris et New York", the full text French original version of the dissertation (deposited in the department of environmental psychology, CUNY Graduate Center.)

Case 1: Charenton-le-Pont

Charenton-le-Pont is a small municipality bordering Paris on the east side along the Seine



Map 4: Charenton and Paris 1/25 000. Source : S. Tonnelat, based on a IGN Map 1999.

River. It is the first territory I chose to explore urban interstices. It is interesting for two main reasons. First, as a "first crown" town, it is somewhat representative of the "zone of transition" in a modern sense between Paris and its suburbs. Second, throughout its history, this small area has been successively cut and enclaved by large urban planning projects, all of which have been susceptible to produce interstices.

As early as 1830, the walls of Paris have separated Charenton from the city. Then in 1848, the first rail line linking Paris to Lyon and Marseille spliced the town into two parts: in the North, a residential neighborhood organized along the "Parc de Vincennes", and in the South, an industrial zone specialized in the trade of wine thanks to its connection to the river and the rail tracks. Finally, in the seventies, new road improvements such as the Paris beltway, the "Boulevard périphérique" (1973, porte de Bercy) and the Highway A4 (1970 to Strasbourg) further separated Charenton from Paris and from the river. In parallel, urban renovation replaced dwindling industries with housing projects, thus establishing a class divide. Later in the 1980s, new "projets urbains" mixing stores, offices and housing were build in isolation from their surroundings as industries were moving out, hampering the potential for reconnecting the different city parts.

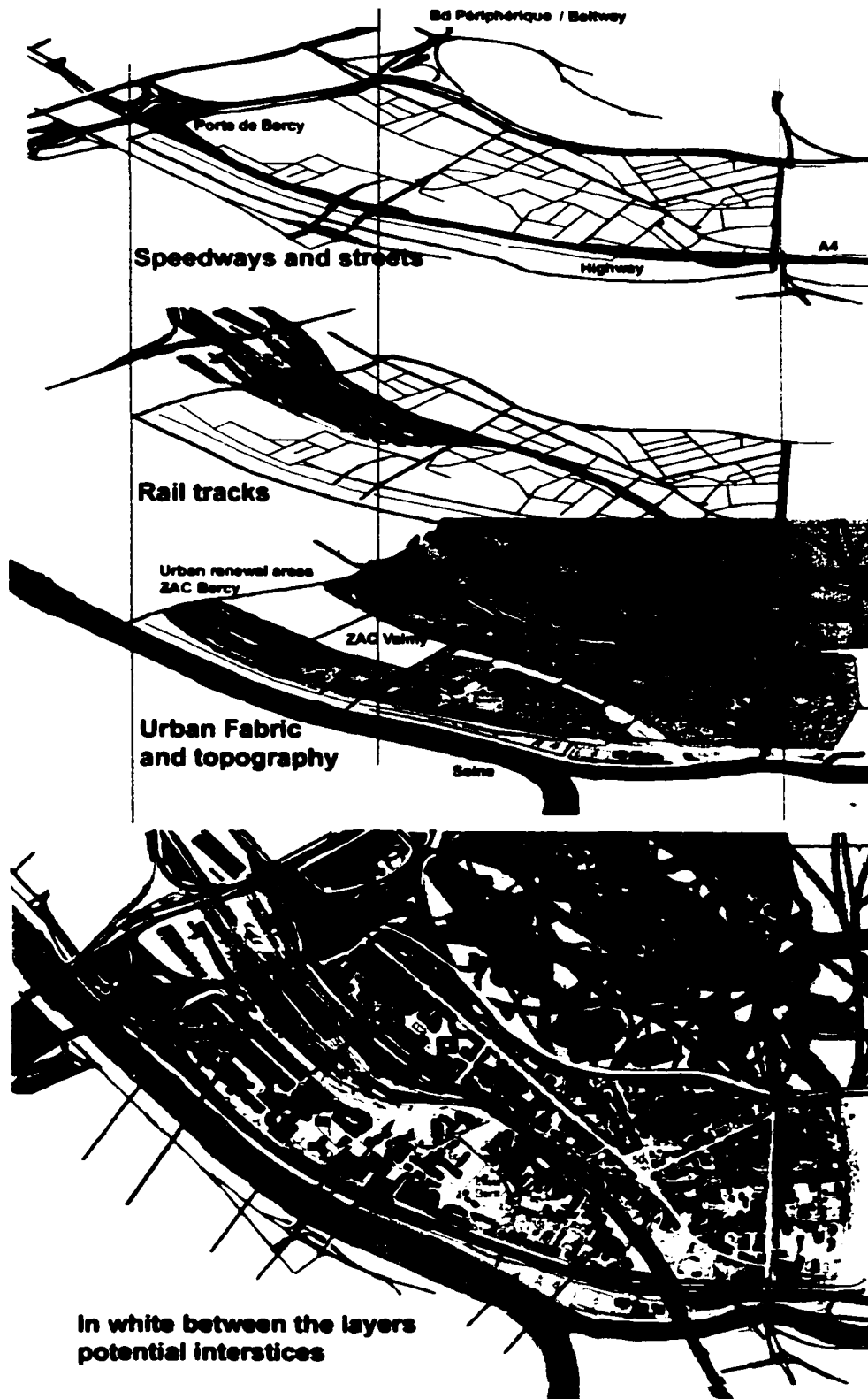
On the map, this division of the Charenton territory is illustrated by several layers of which encounters were thought to be prime locations for interstices. In order to confirm this hypothesis, a foot exploration produced descriptions of several locations aimed at uncovering disorders characteristic of the interstices. The result is a second map of the city compiling all urban interstices. It shows that residual spaces actually maintain a relation to

large transportation infrastructures. This relation led to the choice of three more precise terrains for further investigation. These are:

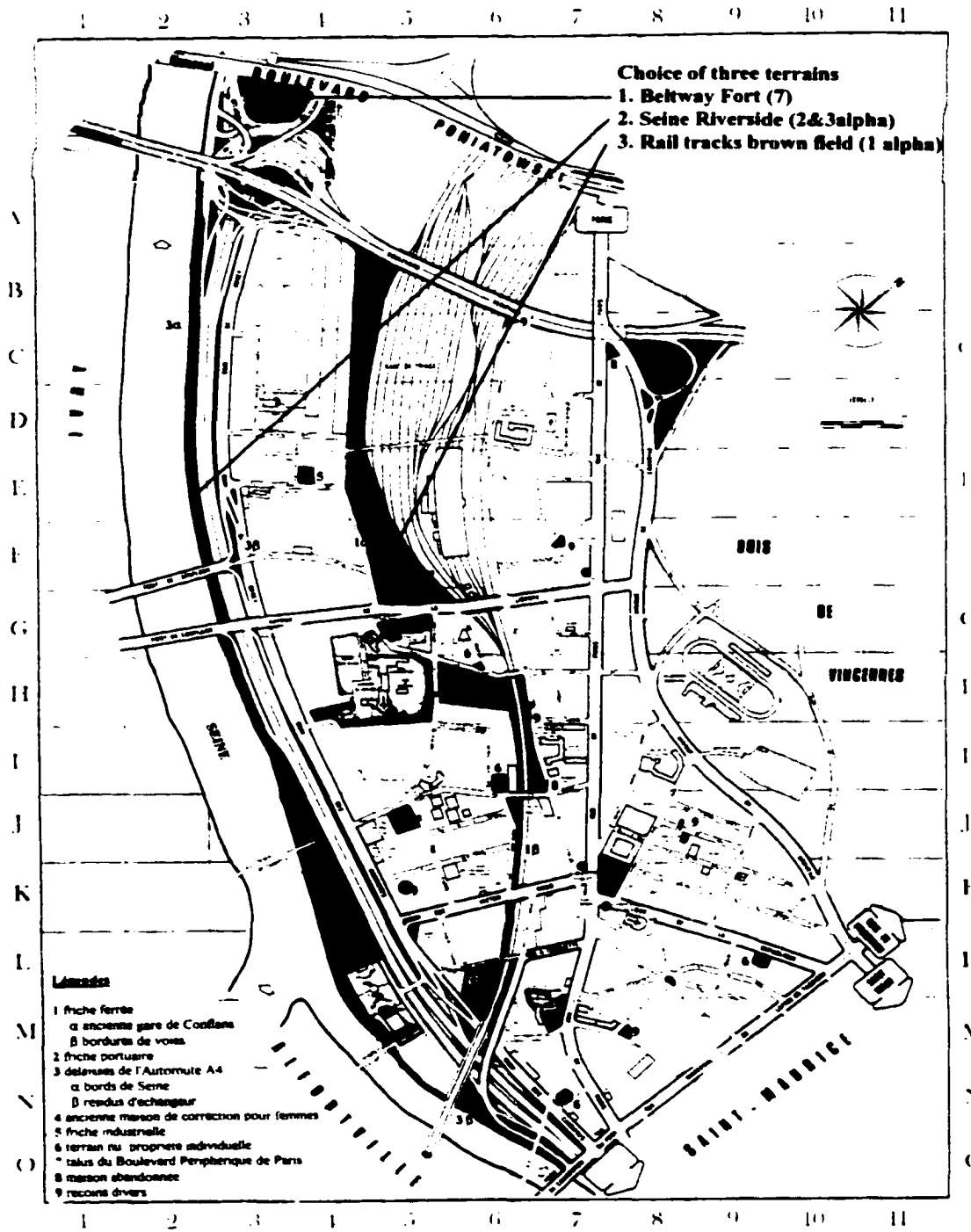
1- The Seine riverfront chosen as both an industrial wasteland and a leftover of the Highway A4.

2- The rail yard brown field as a testimony of change from an industrial to a more traditional urban fabric.

3- The "beltway fort" (*bastion périphérique*) as both a witness of pre-industrial times and a leftover of technical engineering. Furthermore it constitutes the administrative limit between Charenton and Paris on the latter's side.



Map 5: Potential interstices in Charenton-le-Pont. Source : S. Tonnelat.



Map 6: Interstices in Charenton-le-Pont and choice of three terrains, winter 1996-97.
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a Charenton municipal map.

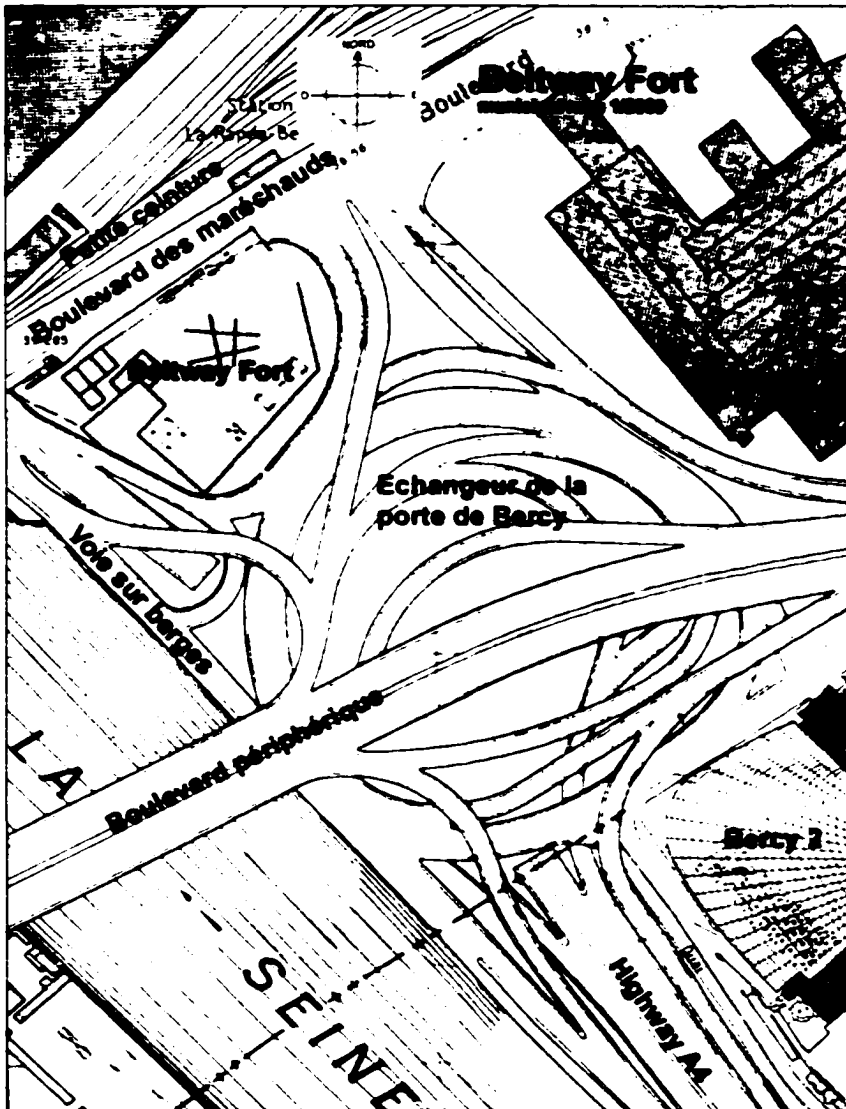
I. Major Approach

1. Sites production and projects

1.1. The Beltway Fort

As previously hinted by the map of large infrastructures, the creation of interstices in Charenton reaches quite far back in time.

The fort, the first terrain in the study is itself a remain of the last walls of Paris, build in



Map 7: Beltway Fort
Source : S. Tonnelat, based on a Charenton municipal map

1844 under Adolphe Thiers. Added to this major construction was a "non aedificandi" zone 250 meters wide. However sturdy, the walls were no match to the face of improving weaponry and the German attacks on Paris in 1870 proved them obsolete. In 1919, right after World War One, they were officially declared useless and taken apart.

Although a large swath

of brick urban housing gradually filled the area around the city, the Bercy Fort remained untouched and the belt became the Sunday stroll of the Parisians masses. Finally, in 1954, with the rise of automobile in France, the construction of the *boulevard périphérique* (Paris Beltway) was built. In 1968, the *Porte de Bercy* exchange node gave its contemporary shape to the site and locked the fort in a maze of shoulder lanes giving access to the most intricate high speed connection in France (map 7).

The status of the fort changed from a public domain to "annex domain to the public domain". Practically, it means that it belongs to the beltway administration service as a technical land supporting the shoulder lanes. Its function is thus attributed to its sheer bulk of stone and earth while its surface remains empty. Its basement is not left unused as it shelters a station to pump the rain water from below the Seine level up into the city sewers.

Only its surface is left unused, an empty space on a full ground. There are no projects possible for the renewal of this space resembling a strange pocket park not easily accessible.

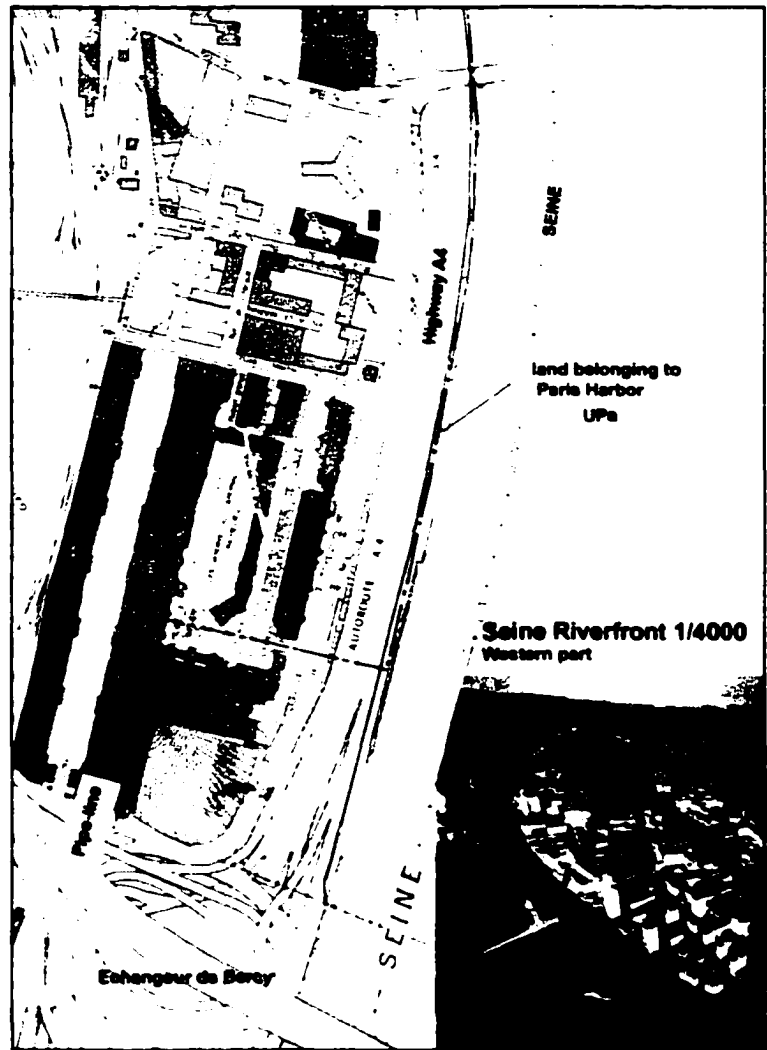
1.2. The Seine Riverfront

Not all spaces touched by highway construction are unusable. Along the riverfront, although a construction process quite similar to the fort has taken place, small pieces of land are still available for projects.

From the 1960's on, the diminishing importance of river traffic allowed the National French Construction Administration to sever Charenton from its river by progressively building a 2 times 3 lane highway linking Paris to Strasbourg. At the same time, a pipe line, also built to fuel the gas powered transportation, was installed between the river and the road. As a consequence, a narrow strip of land from 20 to 60 feet wide was left over between the highway and the river. Since 1971, it has been the property of either the *Port*

Autonome de Paris or the *Voies Navigables de France*, both public authorities in charge of the navigability of the waterways (map 8).

This configuration leaves extremely scarce building space as diverse constraints overlap. First, a right of way along the river prohibits building in a 10 to 25 foot strip along the water. Second, the pipe-line reserves a 15 foot wide strip above it that must remain untouched. Finally, a margin of isolation from the highway renders most of the waterfront unbuildable. As a



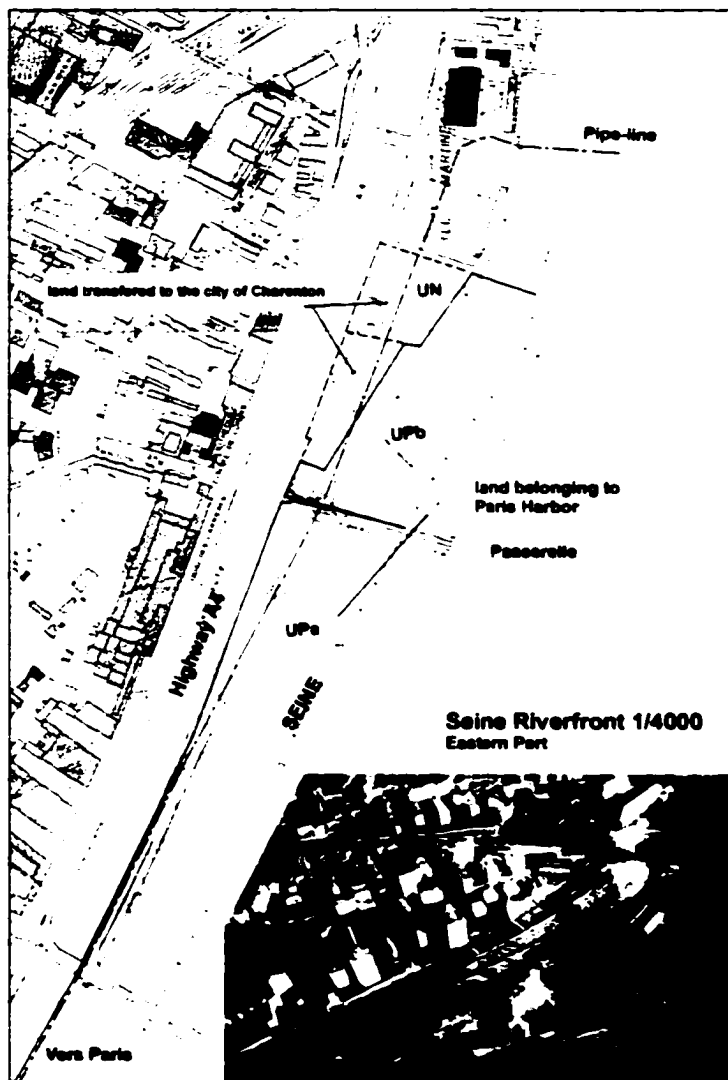
Map 8: Seine Riverfront
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a Charenton municipal map

consequence, this area remains empty and almost unseen in Charenton. The city map shows a long white stretch of land lining the only street without a name in this little municipality (map 8 & 9).

Only a short local widening, previously an island and now attached to the land by the highway, partially escapes these constraints. However, in this precise location, the municipality, headed by its mayor, a strong national right wing political figure in the 1980's and 1990's has claimed the management of the land for public purpose (map 9). Therefore, the riverfront is now divided between three public landlords making redevelopment projects quite difficult to say the least. In fact, the

Port Autonome and the city have planned two independent projects

each on their own little piece of land. The almost total absence of cooperation between them fueled by a desire to gain control of the land has stalled the work. In one instance, the city couldn't build a high school, to be maintained by the regional administration, since it was not the owner but only the manager of the land. The Port was not able to develop its part of the land since the municipal zoning had ruled out any occupation except for leisure and had locked the terrain from the land.



Map 9: Seine Riverfront 2

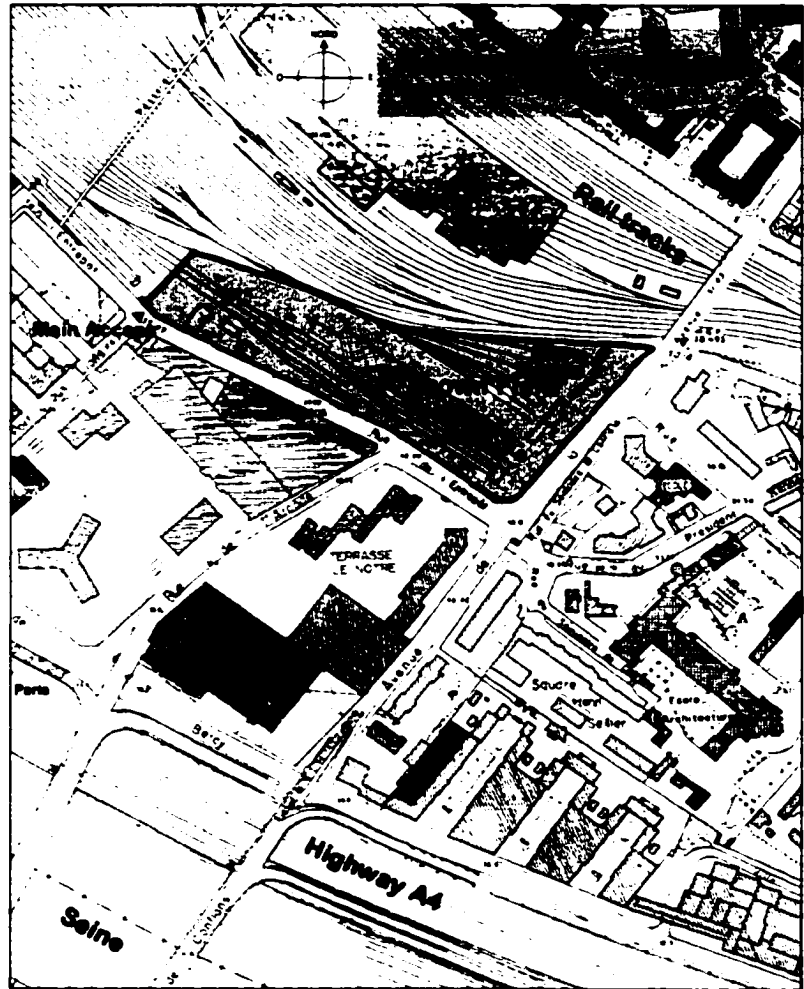
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a Charenton municipal map.

The Seine Riverfront is thus both an industrial wasteland, a technical leftover of the highway and an administrative void. That makes it quite a complicated interstice.

1.3. Rail yards

As a consequence of this landlock, the city has moved its project to another available piece of land within its

territory, the rail yard wasteland. Freed by deindustrialization, the site near the freight station was to become a place for a major urban project as early as 1991 when the city started to negotiate with SNCF, the owner of the land. The ambitious project called "ZAC de la Colline", was supposed to bridge the gap dug by the still working rail tracks and finally bring



Map 10: Abandoned rail tracks

Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a Charenton municipal map.

the divided parts of Charenton together.

Far too costly, the project was abandoned in 1993 and the land left unattended until the city, unable to reclaim the waterfront, decided to transfer the high school project onto the

degraded rail tracks. In order to secure the land, the municipal administration imposed a very low FAR⁶ in the municipal zoning plan preventing the owner from seeking other investors. However, while preserving the opportunity for the city, this strategy effectively froze the land in a decayed state until a new ZAC process, a local zoning review procedure, was put together by the administration. Even then, the negotiation around the price of the land added to the difficulties created by mixing a high school, not a profitable project, with private housing slowed down the renewal process considerably. However economical, the method chosen by the city was time consuming and in 2001 the land was in the same state of neglect as in 1993.

Map 10 representations reflect this tendency by the city administration to not consider the land in its actual situation. Rather, the official plan shows it as it was before its decay, more than 10 years ago, denying any present for a terrain stuck between an obsolete past and an improbable future.

2. Maintenance and surveillance

Technical and administrative constraints all contribute to the creation and continuing existence of the three interstices chosen for the study within the city fabric. This situation however must not let us think that these spaces are left to decay. Land owners are certainly aware of their property and do not want it to become a dump site. They therefore impose a "minimal" maintenance, which however costly, keeps the interstice in a state of emptiness rather than in a more dangerous disorder. In addition, this undetermined situation allows for exceptional treatment of marginal cases otherwise impossible in their main domain.

⁶ Floor Area Ratio, ratio of buildable surface over land surface. In French COS, Coefficient d'Occupation des Sols.

2.1. Beltway Fort: the visual organization of dirt

The beltway fort is under the responsibility of three different technical services each in charge of a specific function. The *Direction de l'Équipement du Boulevard Périphérique* makes sure that the walls are actually supporting the shoulder access to the beltway. This does not require much maintenance as the walls are sturdily built. The department of sewers of Paris (*Services de l'Assainissement*) seems to have a little more work on the site as the pumps in the basement of the fort suffered several leakages along the research period. In 2001 they spent significant amount of time on site pouring concrete around the pipes. However, their presence was always discrete as they only worked underground. In fact the technical service which holds the most important activity in this terrain is the *Service des Parcs et Jardins de la Mairie de Paris*. Since the site is considered accessible to the public it is supposedly maintained like a park. However, the gardeners of the "subdivision de Bercy" already have a lot of work with the recent "parc de Bercy" and are not willing to care for a quasi-wasteland surrounded by car traffic.

Teams of three to four gardeners come only four times a year for about a week. They apply a minimal maintenance aimed at preserving the appearance of the site for car drivers. They organize the plants as a dynamic landscape not to be entered only viewed. They propose a set of coloured splashes constituted by persistent flowers and tree leaves. The interior of the site however is masked, as much as possible and therefore does not demand a tight control over its appearance. Actually, several spaces in the fort do not show the same attractive landscape as the view offered to drivers. Litter is allowed to collect in places hidden from the exterior and when too visible.

In fact, this visual organization leaves room for illegal occupation that at times has to be restrained. The most discrete places in the fort are regularly squatted by homeless people

who settle to sleep for the night. In fact, in 1999, it had become so visible that the gardeners could call the central platform a "bum's nest". Under pressure from the owner, they hired a private company to remove the cobblestone and plant deterring thorn bushes watered with an automatic system plugged into the pipes in the basement. However drastic, these conservative measures didn't last long. The watering system, unchecked, soon broke down, and cave like holes appeared in the bushes offering new precarious night shelters. The failure of this apparatus reveals that the operating dirt control system in the site is not self contained but dependent on the exterior gaze. Homeless people interrogated about this very well knew that a different code of behaviour was at work in the visible and in the invisible zones.

The traces and activity map finally show that it is the maintenance itself that guarantees its interstitial nature by keeping up this mask allowing the space to remain empty and open to disorder of dirt.

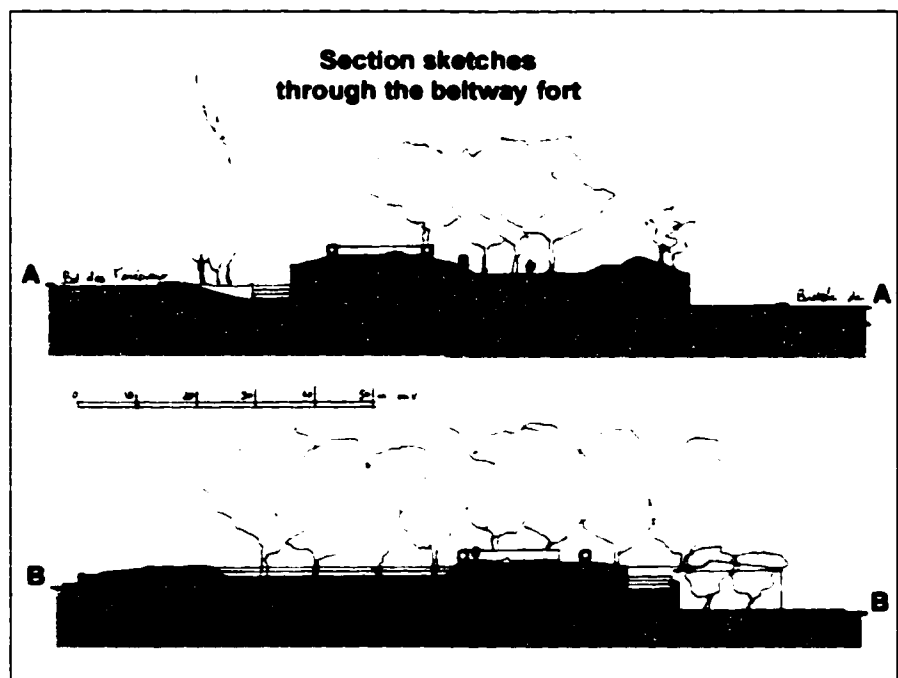


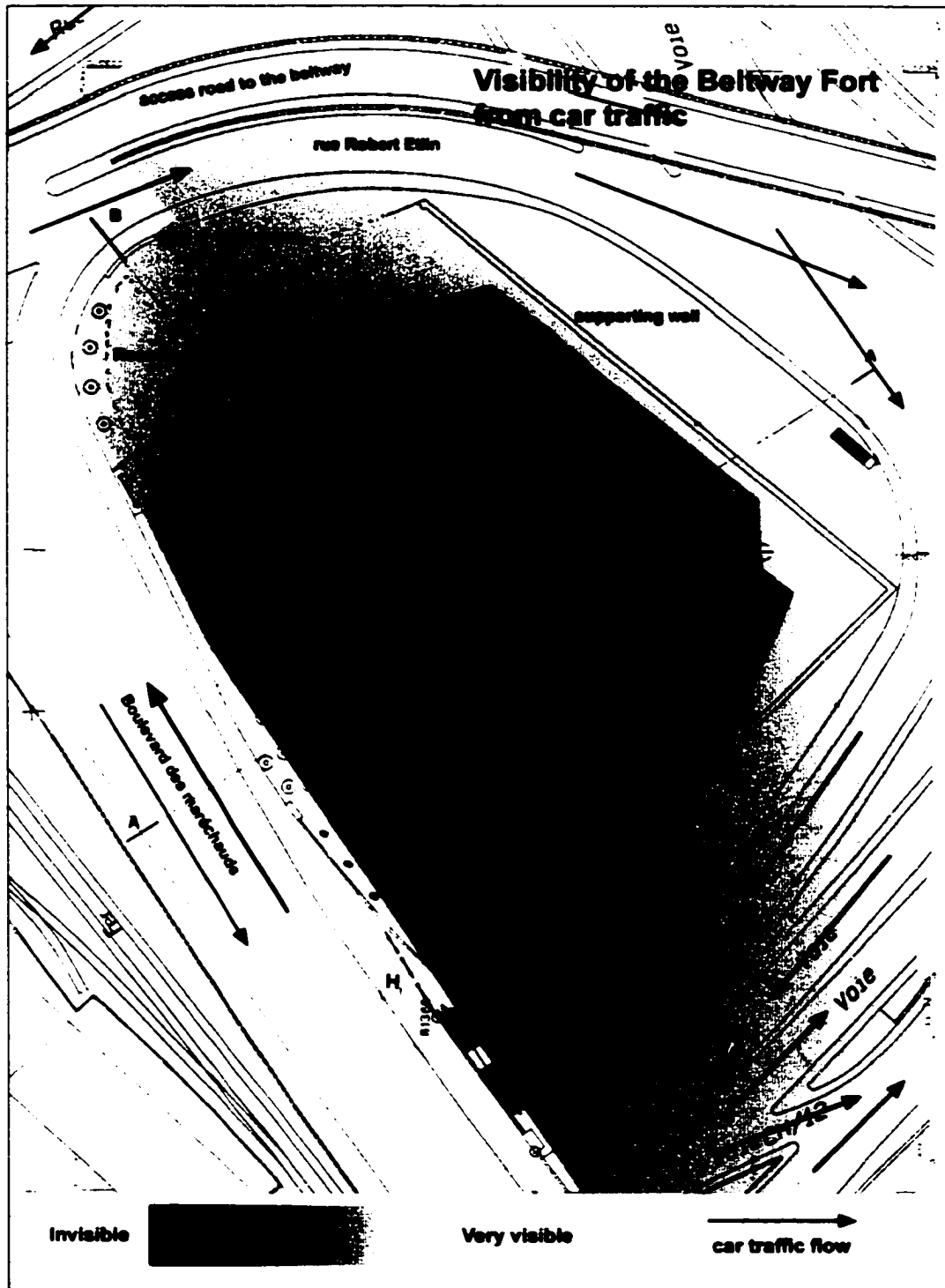
Figure 2: Section sketches of the beltway fort

Source : S. Tonnelat

There is therefore a

structural relation between the exterior and the interior of the interstice. The former offers a façade that becomes constitutive of the emptiness of the latter. This relation explains the importance of visibility in the definition of emptiness and its correlatives, the three

disorders of mixture, dirt and transgression. They are made possible by a system of vision that reserves gaps or holes (map 11 of visibility).



Map 11: Visibility of the beltway fort from car traffic
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a Paris municipal map

2.2. Seine Riverfront

The invisibility of the Fort becomes an informal authorization for disorder. On the Seine banks, the *Port Autonome* is well aware of a comparable situation since, every week, they have to truck away the waste dumped by numerous vans and cars unwilling to dispose of their trash properly.

The problem is summed up rather simply by the person in charge of the land: "dirt attracts dirt". And since the Port doesn't want to be threatened with eviction by the city for lack of maintenance, they have to keep a close eye on it. Competition over the land thus brings a new level of visibility as both institutions are ready to publicize the image of the site for political reasons.

But surveillance also works inside depending on the technical networks that cross the interstice. The pipe-line buried along the banks is signaled by small orange signs planted in the ground that become a lot more numerous around a little zone occupied by shacks built by homeless people. Pipe-line inspectors tour the site every week and inform the inhabitants of the dangers of digging.

For the city administration, dirt is a complex issue. Since not all land belongs to the Port, they cannot publicize an image of neglect as a weapon to gain control of the land. They legally have the obligation to renew the land transferred by the Port within five years or to give it back, which they do not want to do. Therefore, the state of unknowingness in which the site is plunged satisfies all parties involved. To maintain it as such, the city sends its municipal police everyday to check on the squatters. They make sure that the people remain as invisible as possible. Thus building, just like in the case of the beltway Fort, an exterior façade visible for everybody and an invisible hidden interior where dirt is tolerated.

In some cases, the interstice even becomes a site to treat marginal situations. For example, the port uses the abandoned banks to dock three private boats that do not fit the required norms to join a harbor. They are thus allowed to remain in the interstice in exchange for a cheap rent. This time is supposed to help them fix all safety issues before they can regain the official world of boating. The city also uses the site for recycling. It uses several containers as temporary dirt storage for its municipal services.

2.3. Rail yard

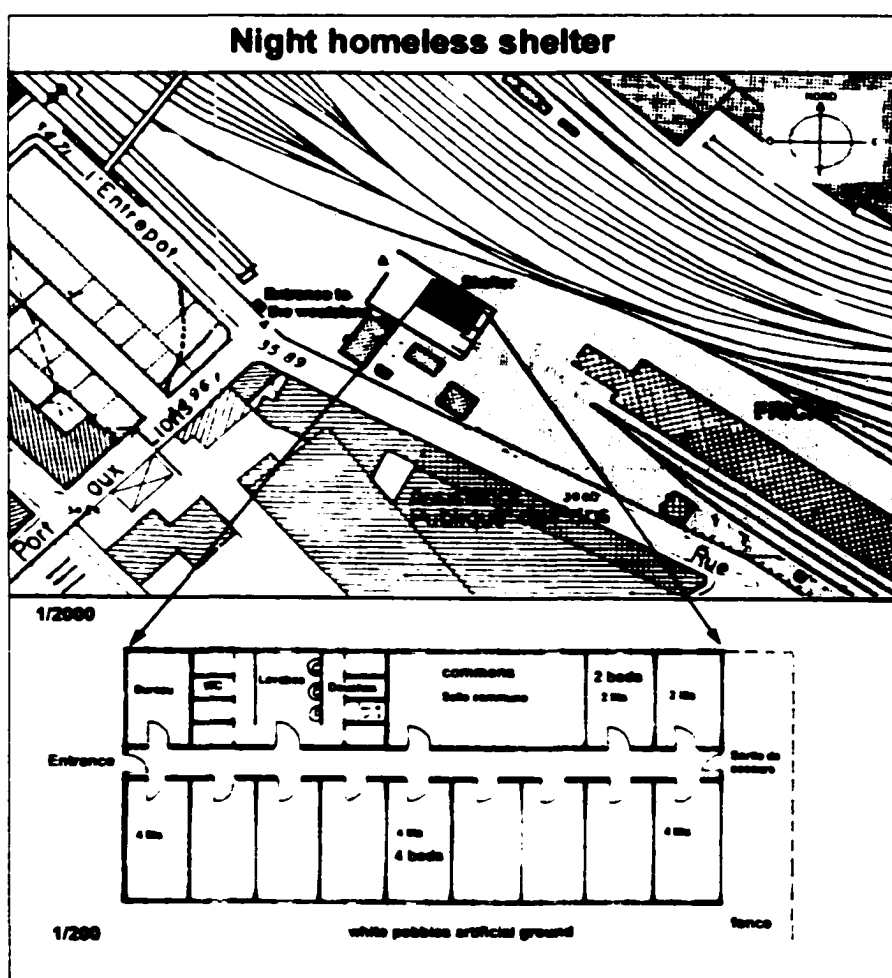
The case of the homeless people along the bank lies in between a control by the State and an unchecked zone of exclusion. The controlled part can be better viewed in the third interstice, the rail yard.

During the winter 1996/97, the SNCF had an association, the "Secours Catholique" implant a barrack in the wasteland to give a night shelter to homeless people who were recruited in the Lyon train station further up the rails in Paris. Inside, the center offered a bed for forty people. An employee was present every night from 7pm to 11pm and every morning from 7am to 9am to welcome and wake up the homeless who ere not allowed to stay during the day.

This activity can be considered as a controlled interstice aimed at recycling the homeless people picked up in the station. In a lot of ways it can be compared to a process of dirt removal.

First, most the homeless are themselves in an interstitial situation that does not give them a place in our society. They hang out in the station like fallen litter that needs proper treatment. This is exactly what the several institutions engaged in the process do. They have decided a rigid path to be followed by the homeless in order to gain night accommodation.

Step one, *SNCF* does not come into contact with the homeless people themselves. They have hired another association, the *Amis de la Rue* who cruise the station to remove the homeless from public places and bring them to a temporary shelter, *la Halte*. In a technical room without windows, well hidden under a bridge at the back of the station, the people wait and are given tickets that allow them to board a special *RATP* bus that will drive them to the shelter in the interstice. There, the same ticket gives them access to a shower, a kitchen and a bed.



Map 12: Homeless shelter
Source: S. Tonnelat

A recycling process could take place here if this center served as a base for personal reconstruction. However, the barrack was placed in the terrain as a foreign object totally detached and invisible from its surroundings. It was circled by a fence and laid upon a bed of white gravel

stone thus preventing any interaction with the site (which might interfere with business negotiations between the SNCF and the city). The analogy with recycling stops here as the homeless have to walk their way back to the station the next day if they want to be able to stay another night at the center.

The rail yard shows an extreme control of interstitial potentialities. In order to bring order to the normal world of the station, objects that are not at the right place are taken to a void where they can disappear for a while.

3. Major mode approach conclusion

All three terrains show how it is the planning process and the maintenance that constitute the void of the interstice. All sites have an exterior facade that masks an interior space prone to disorder because it is automatically out of place. As a matter of fact, most disorder is controlled or at least watched by institutions in charge of the land. We can thus speak of institutional production and uses of the interstices as margins of maneuver of a dominant order. This view is consistent with a functionalist idea of disorder as it is for example described by Mary Douglas.

Visibility seems to carry most of the burden of delimitating the interstice both in terms of its external limits, presented as a more or less natural landscape, and in terms of its internal spaces made out of visible and hidden zones from the outside. This observation, to be pursued in other case studies, leads us to believe that institutions cannot keep a constant watch on these spaces. Therefore, another approach aims to at explore minor uses that precisely escape the control of appearance applied by landowners.

II. Minor approach

Only two out of the three sites in Charenton have been selected for the minor approach. The rail yard has been set aside because it is too controlled to offer enough minor phenomenon to be observed. On the other hand, we have seen that the Beltway fort and the Seine riverbanks are organized so as to preserve an invisible interior space. We are now going to see how they fill up.

1. Seine river bank: homeless shacks

The one activity that seems to partially escape institutional control on the riverfront is a illegal habitat set up by a few homeless people in the narrowest part of the strip very near to the *Porte de Bercy*. There, from 1997 to 2002, the number of people has gone down respectively from 8 to 3 people and the number of shacks from 4 to 3. This progressive disappearance of the habitat is not due to improving social conditions but to a tight control by the municipal police that has done its best to prevent any newcomer from settling in the interstice.

For those already settled, or who managed to settle because they hold a European Union nationality, life conditions imposed by surveillance reveal the importance of visibility, already evoked as well as tactics used to escape it.

Actually, the first condition imposed on activities that might take place on the riverfront is their invisibility so that the institutional actors do not fear any bad publicity. Within this window, the ability to clear the space on demand is paramount since invisibility is a fluctuating notion. As a result, all activities observed in the interstice obey both these constraints which actually force them to a motive of passage. As we have seen earlier, this is one, if not the only affordable position in the interstice where everybody is out of place.

This condition can however be actualized in several ways, all adjustments of the basic "just passing" behavior.

The constraints are not merely interiorized but actually applied by a team of surveillance forces such as the municipal police, the national police and the pipe-line surveyor. Police forces insist on keeping the place clean a demand that some inhabitants interpret as a threat of eviction.

To respond to these constraints, the inhabitants have come up with two different spatial solutions that allow them to stay in the interstice for a time that can be quite long, from a couple months to over ten years, while still seeming as if they were just passing. The first strategy is temporary parking while the second one can be compared to camouflage within the site.

1.1. Temporary parking

One inhabitant on the riverfront did not build his shack. He was staying in a small trailer parked half on the roadway and half on the grass. His way of dealing with the constraint of movement was to pretend to be parked for a short while under the cover of a temporary construction site such as roadside improvement.

The trailer, a small metallic round roofed cabin on 2 wheels, obviously didn't look like housing. It had no windows, and seemed barely big enough to fit a bed. However, the inhabitant, managed to make it a livable place thanks to a very tight organization of the interior space and a careful management of the exterior image.

First, the trailer was not blocking the little road. Nor was it completely settled on the grass and left a right of way along the river. On the edge between the road and the grass, it refused to take place for good, just like a car temporarily stopped in a forbidden spot.

the trailer were covered by thick rubber rugs to protect the room from the rain. Anybody seeing the place from the river or the bank could immediately guess its real nature. However, from the other side, pedestrians and cyclists did not seem to pay the slightest attention to the installation. The door, on the front side of the trailer, even wide open, did not even offer a peak into the 'bedroom'. As the only window, it was the sole source of light and remained a black silhouette cut into the trailer.

This organization was not due to chance. The inhabitant complained that he often had to repaint his street façade tagged by wandering youth in search of visible media surfaces. Somehow he had to spend a part of his meager pension to upkeep his place. This was the price to pay to be allowed to stay.

1.2. Camouflage

The other tactic used on the site by the inhabitants consisted in a camouflage that made their houses blend in with the environment. In this way, their settlement was not visible at all.

Camouflaged shacks were placed on the grass ribbon, just behind the curb and the little bushes and trees planted along the road. They used recycled materials such as plywood, and cardboard assembled in an apparent disordered patchwork. All these materials aged and acquired the same colors as the vegetal environment, between green and brown.

The shacks were not surrounded by fences but they were guarded by dogs whose leach exactly delimitates the public from the private space in an immaterial way. Entrances were pushed to the back on the Seine side or concealed by a panel or a tree on the side perpendicular to the street.

Most people who passed by the shacks paid no attention to them. If they saw them, they were entitled not to acknowledge it. The camouflage was sufficient enough for them not to notice. In fact, passers-by, skaters and bikers almost never turned their head aside to peak at the shacks. When they slowed down (which was my case), the dogs were prompt to bark and trace the limit of the private space.

Camouflage is a less costly tactic than temporary parking since it requires less maintenance. However, the most adapted spots, the ones that offered a sufficiently dense environment to blend in were not so numerous. This is why, the shacks were all contained in the narrowest part of the strip towards the *Porte de Bercy* where they were the most discrete (see figure). There is a risk however with this strategy. It can be revealed and presented to the public as an appropriation of space. That is what happened in 1995, when a television show interviewed the residents along the river about the forthcoming presidential election. The day after the show was aired, complaints from nearby residents and offices tenants across the highway led the mayor to call a meeting with the *Port Autonome*, the owner of the land, in order to get rid of the homeless people. The squatters however, did not bother the *Port Autonome* and were allowed to stay. This event further pushed the inhabitants to camouflage their shacks and become even more discrete. One construction, a little aside from the others was burned by the police a little bit after a resident had moved out revealing the heightened level of tension around the presence of the homeless people.

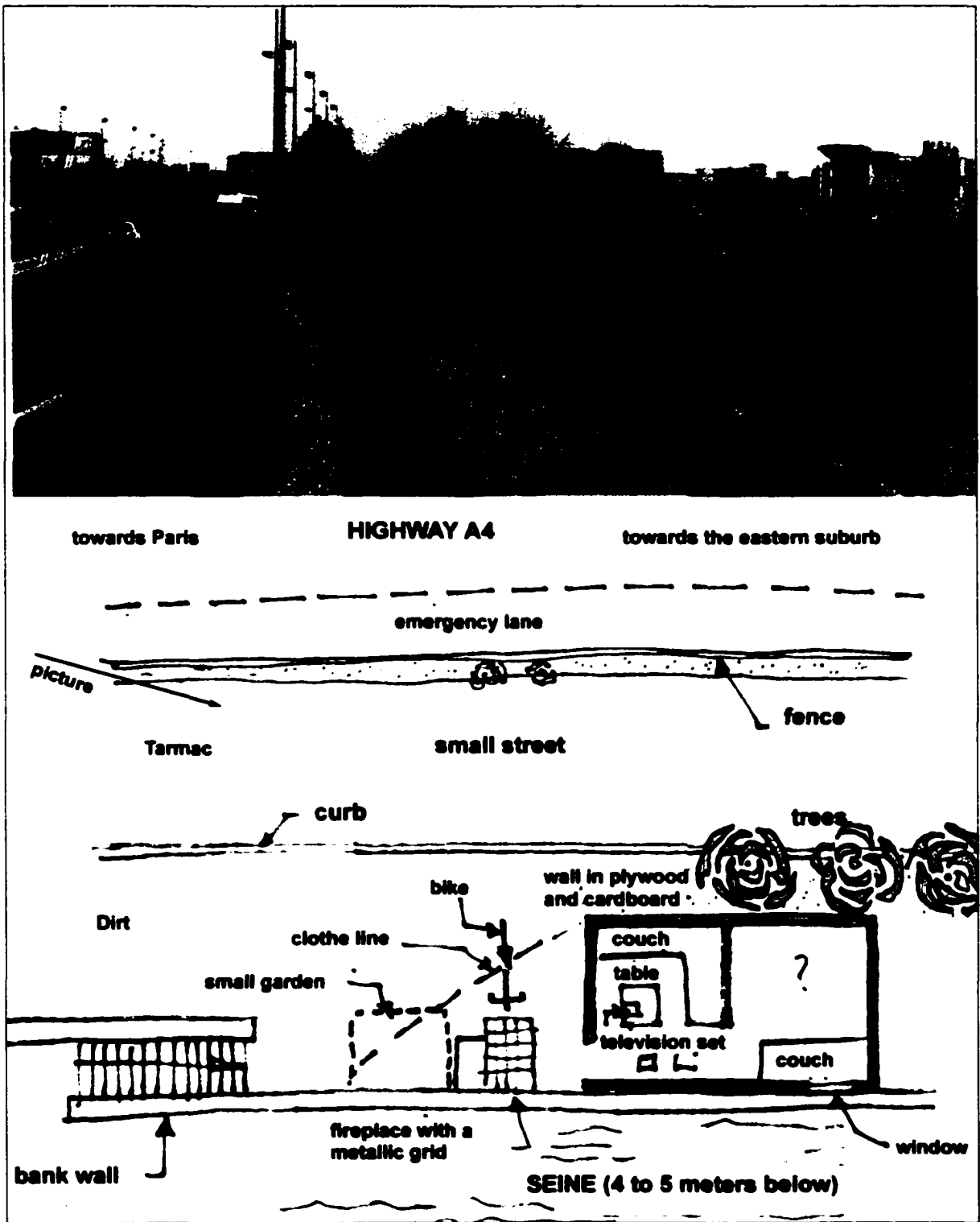


Figure 4: Camouflage on the riverfront
Source: S. Tonnelat

1.3. In the meantime

Despite the constraints, temporary parking and camouflage became a spatial involvement offering a justified façade to the inhabitants that allowed them to lead other activities than just securing a place to sleep.

Of course, they did not have an easy life. Alcoholism was widespread and winters were difficult. The death rate was exceptionally high and only two people in 5 years have managed to get back into an apartment. However, if they were willing to move to regular housing, none of the residents were willing to spend a single night in a homeless shelter. They have build a home on the bank that they deem infinitely more secure and comfortable than the temporary beds provided by the state and non profit organizations such as the *Secours Catholique* on the rail tracks brown field. In fact, most of the residents on the river front get help from an association in *Ivry-sur-Seine* where they could receive the RMI⁷, mail and take a shower. Foreigners who were not entitled to state money found alternative ways to make a living such as copper recycling, from wires that they burn on the site or from panhandling, at the single red light around the beltway fort for example.

But the most important opportunity offered to the inhabitants on the site resided, in fact, in the ability to strike new relations with passers-by. Of course, this was quite a difficult task for several reasons already discussed: the police surveillance and the invisibility sought by the tactics of spatial settlement.

The second constraint was by far the most impairing since it built something like a skin between a very private space of intimacy and a public and open space of passage. For example, in the case of the trailer, there was only a slim sheet of metal between the bed and

⁷ *Revenu Minimum d'Insertion*, a welfare stipend given to people ineligible to receive unemployment money. The amount was 2300 FF/month at the time of fieldwork (about \$ 550)

the road. The opening of the door and the three steps leading up to it were the sole materialization of a transition between these two radically different spaces. That in fact is an obstacle to encounters since even the most innocuous gaze can be felt on each side as an infringement on private life. As a matter of fact, the residents were quite happy with the respect given to their privacy but they also repeatedly complained about the inability of passers-by to see them and acknowledge their presence.

In fact, the only solution to this insolvable problem was a thickening of the skin between public and private that could allow a stranger to establish contact with the residents without entering their private life. This occasion arose once in 1995, when a widely followed public transportation strike put a lot of workers on their feet to reach work. Suddenly, the riverside became a main thoroughfare which the bank residents managed to connect to. A couple, for example, set up a table at the limit between the grass and the curb and started to offer hot tea and coffee. In exchange, the passers-by would give a coin or more and strike a conversation. This was a good intermediary ground between public and private that actually allowed for meaningful encounters. Following this, a movie was shot on the site and screened at an art cinema in Paris. Also, a photographer distributed his pictures of the sites to the inhabitants who started to build a more comfortable relationship to their situation. Eventually, the couple who set up this table was able to move into a subsidized apartment in Charenton. For them, the site actually served as a transitional place of passage where they were able to build new relations where from rebound and get a new start.

1.4. Disappearance of the site

For most residents, the end was not so happy. The conditions of invisibility and communication were too difficult to negotiate and they tended to shut themselves off into

the invisible part of their world, behind the public skin. Drug and alcoholism became a common exit towards death. From 1997 to 2001, eight inhabitants have died of accidents related to alcohol. Also, three shacks and the trailer were burned some following accidents due to drunkenness. Along with the heightened surveillance of the site, these deaths contributed to a slow disappearance of the interstitial capabilities of the site.

2. Beltway Fort

The Beltway Fort is at the same time more and less constrained than the Riverfront. It is more constrained because the possibility of a durable stay, such as shacks is prohibited by the visual organization of the site. However, it is also less constrained because it offers more opportunities for encounters between the dominant flow of cars and the more informal pedestrian traffic.

As a consequence two interesting aspects of this interstice are pointed out. First, it can be considered as an interstitial crossroads linking at the same time a pattern of other residual lands nearby and offering unsuspected options of exchange with the dominant world of circulation. Second, even though it does not authorize long stops, the visual organization of the fort allows for spatial gaps within the interstice wherefrom passers-by can reverse the usual perspective from the dominant into the minor, and build a point of view on movement and perhaps an experience of duration.

2.1. An interstitial crossroads

The Beltway fort resembles a public garden stuck in the middle of highway shoulder lanes. It is almost too beautiful and manicured to be there right in the middle of traffic. Although it has no specified function, it is often crossed by various types of people on their way to a goal beyond the site. These people always behave in the most discrete fashion and tend to avoid each others paths. Numerous glances only serve to assert each other's direction and consciously avoid encounter.



Map 13: Interstitial network linking Paris sites
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a IGN map, 1997.

This observation tends to make us consider the fort as a place of passage where the only reason to come is the "shortcut". Actually most people entering the site know where they are going and do not stop on their way. The remarkable aspect of their path, however is that it does not lead them

from a normal public space to another via the interstice but rather, it leads them from interstices to interstices. Following people at a distance has allowed me to sketch a map of

an interstitial network whose nodal point is precisely the Beltway Fort. This space actually connects to the sites we have previously observed, the riverfront and the rail yard. It also opens the way towards Paris along the rail tracks and around the city through the *Petite Ceinture*. Map 13 shows how all this interstitial lines meet at the Fort.

However, the site did not become a place for encounters between all the interstitial walkers who carefully avoided one another. The density of connections was rather an opportunity to initiate exchanges with the dominant traffic, here the automobile flow. Actually, as surprising as it can be, cars and trucks often managed to park in the *Porte de Bercy*. The curves of the access lanes offered spots where drivers could rest without having to pay for parking. Besides, the location of the *Porte* is ideally connected to the highway and the *boulevard périphérique*. Delivery drivers on scooters have understood this best as they often waited by the curb for the radio call that would send them anywhere in the agglomeration for a pick up.⁸

Just as on the riverfront however, contact was not easy. Whereas on the banks it was hindered by a problem of breaching private space, here it was handicapped by a position of automatic transgression. Men and women who expose themselves to the eye of drivers were respectively considered as tramps and prostitutes.

At the only bus stop in the *Porte de Bercy*, by the side of the fort, women waiting for the bus often felt uneasy as the traffic by the curb slows down and drivers gazed at them with a suspicious smile. In the same way, the group of three polish homeless people who were

⁸ The customs also use the *Porte* as a last gate to stop incoming traffic to Paris and search Trucks

coming from the riverside to panhandle at the only traffic light in the *Porte de Bercy* was often looked upon as disturbing appearances from an invisible world.

Only hitchhikers who openly displayed their motive of passage sometimes found credit with drivers and got a lift. For it to work however, they were slowly drawn to the only acceptable spot for this purpose, the start of the lane to the highway towards the East. Somehow there, the remoteness of their destination was consistent with the speed of cars. The *Porte de Bercy* is an infrastructure at the scale of the agglomeration and the national territory and only involvement commensurable with it can find place in it, even at a stop.

The transgression is situational. The fact that people on the side of the road are or are not outcasts is irrelevant. It is their very presence and visibility in areas where the traffic slows down that constitutes the basis for the judgment of disorder. Homeless people who liked to take a break in their journey and rested on the site for a little while knew this well as they chose their spot carefully, neither completely remote in the invisible zones, neither frankly exposed in the slow traffic zones.

But they might also find something in these areas that other places of the interstice did not offer. In order to explore this question, we now have to consider an activity that took place during my fieldwork and that contributed to my understanding of the place, the making of a short movie.

2.2. *The beltway fort movie: a reversal of perspectives.*

A short movie was shot on the site during the observation period by a film student interested in the "ambiance" of the place. This activity and its result was considered as an event actually taking place in the interstice but also as a visual commentary on its situation.⁹

This student decided to use the fort for a movie after he had to cross the place one night to go back home. He was impressed by this "crossed desert", "dirty, abandoned and feelings he chose to make a super 8 silent movie staging two contexts. They were two male youth, supposedly lost in their and a job impossible to find. For the director the analogy between site served as a guideline. "Abandoned youths find themselves in abandoned places." Along these lines, the sketch of disorder can explain how the director filmed the interaction between actors and place. The characters, outcasts, can be compared to objects with no value whatever the place they occupy. Therefore they always stand between order and disorder along the null horizontal line independent of places. We can call this line, the line of wander. (see fig 1.)

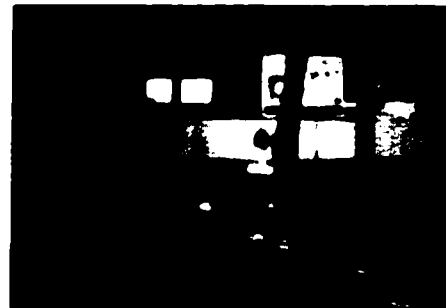


Pic. 2: Exploring the limits

Still images from the movie taken by S. Tonnelat



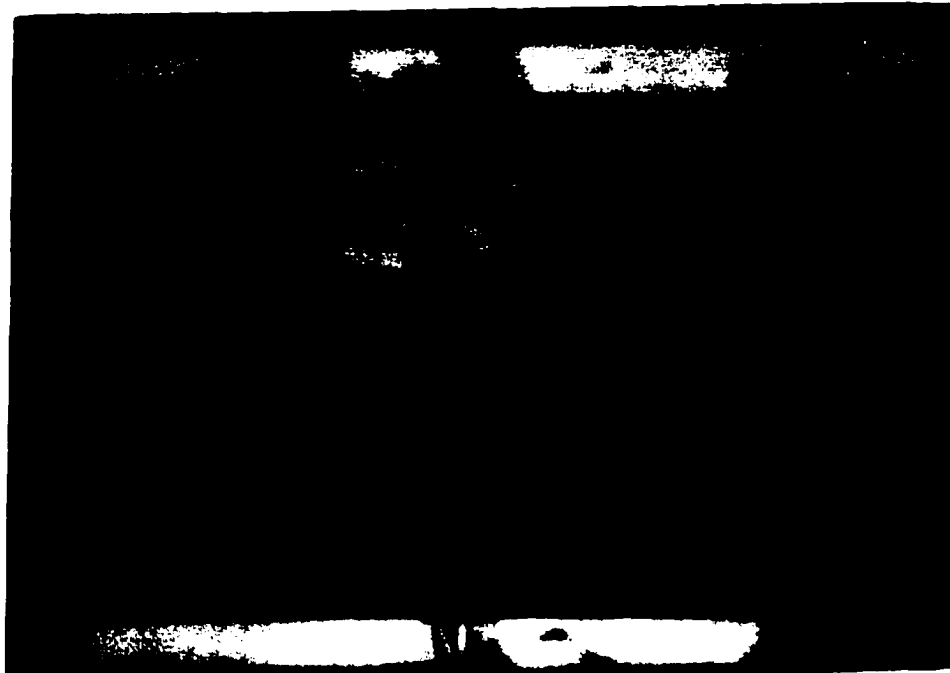
Pic. 1: Attack of a boy in the street



Pic. 3: Between the street and the interstice

In their exploration, the youth cross different spaces where they always seem slightly out of place. The camera, always set in a traffic zone (sidewalk, roadway), plays on physical limits and shows how the characters cross them without even noticing, moving from the normal world to the interstice. All the scenes illustrate the instability, between order and disorder, of the situations met by the actors until they finally reach a small place at the foot of the fort, in one of the most visible but insignificant zones of the interstice. There a reversal of perspective takes place. Whereas the camera was always showing the point of view of a driver or another pedestrian, it was now filming from the top of the fort, one of the most inaccessible spaces of the interstice. The background, which was so far focused on the interstice changed and now displayed the fast lanes loaded with car traffic. The characters are not moving anymore, it is the décor that moves. Where the camera was previously showing wandering youths in a normal world, it now reveals stable people in a frantically moving world. Suddenly, disorder fades out. Valueless youth find themselves in a valueless place, at the crossing of all axes (0, 0), a point merging maximum order and maximum disorder in a single event.

⁹ The interpretation proposed here was discussed during several interviews with the director who agreed to it.

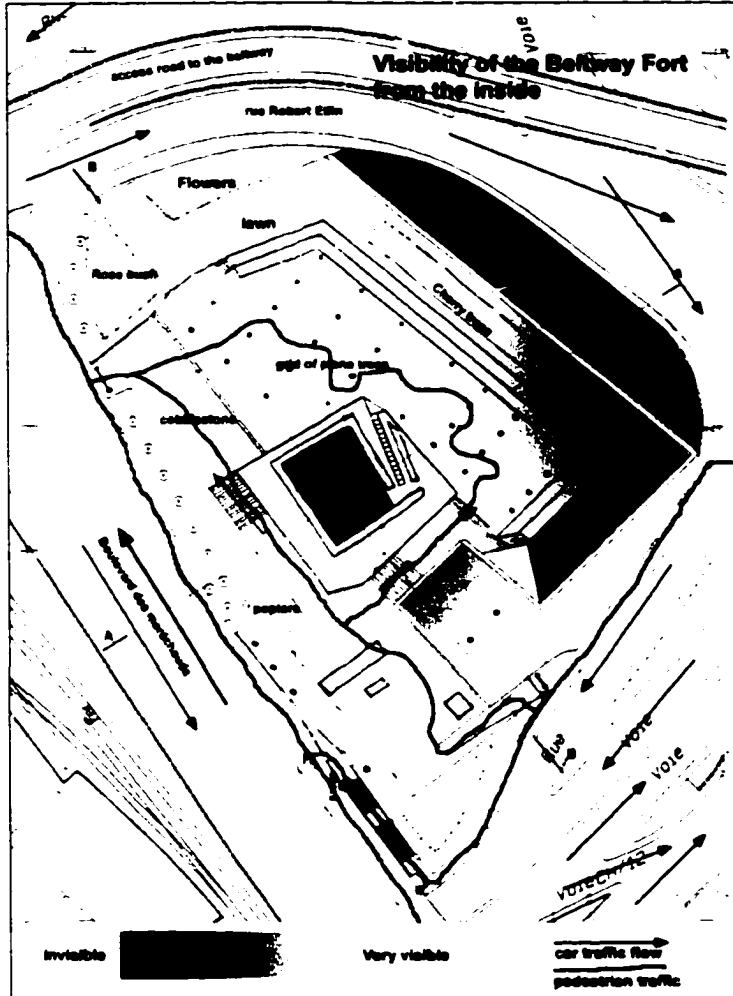


Pic. 4: A reversal of perspective. The youth immobile in a moving environment
Still image taken by the author from the movie

These notions in fact lose all efficiency precisely because of the reversal of perspective. Nobody can now lay a judging eye on the youth finally freed from interaction with the normal world. Time also acquires a new dimension as it is not the dominant rhythm of circulation which runs the clock anymore. Rather the instant takes on a new thickness to fill the dead moments of traffic with duration. It is precisely the movement of cars that makes them immobile, stuck in a repeated routine, which frees a moment for the youth in the interstice.

3. Conclusion: an interstitial topology

The reversal of perspective is not only cinematographic. It actually corresponds to a visual organization of the interstice that determines two types of invisible zones. First, as we have



Map 14: Internal visibility of the beltway fort
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a Paris municipal map.

seen with the maintenance of the site, are zones which are mostly invisible from car traffic. These are also places wherefrom the traffic disappears. The film, and other activities observed on the Fort reveal another type of gap within the interstice. There are spaces that, although visible from the speed lanes, are hidden from circulation paths internal to the interstice. These locations,

provided they are out of reach from car traffic either by a

differential of speed or by distance, offer spaces somewhat protected from the risk of encounter and at the same time great panoramas on the surrounding movement, the Seine River and the sky. Of course people in these places are still on the move. However, they do not risk judgment of transgression or dirt. This might explain the words and presence of a

handful of homeless people and other wanderers in these "gaps in the gaps." The disappearance of short sight goes with a fading of the present in favor of a duration aligned with the general movement of the site. An escape from the instant to access a piece of time.

Practically, the drawing of these second degree interstices (gaps in the gap) amounts to an interstitial topology organized around lines of sight associated with movements and trajectories. They delineate zones of varied visibility influencing the activities that might take place in the interstice and the way they can be (or not be) considered from the outside or from someone crossing the interstice.

We have seen on the riverbanks and in the Fort, two types of internally invisible spaces. The first ones were actually built by the inhabitants of the banks using tactics of disguise fitting their habitat. In so doing, the inhabitants transferred the motive of presence in the interstice to the environment thus freeing a safe private zone for themselves. However, whereas this device worked quite well at the scale of the city by masking the settlement to car drivers and office workers across the highway, it brought new problems of management of the relation between public and private space inside the interstice itself. The thin built 'skin' marking the limit between intimacy and anonymity tended to prevent encounters between passers-by and inhabitants always under risk of a breach of privacy. Anyway, this obstacle could be overcome when some inhabitants managed to thicken the zone of transition between public and private and offer common grounds of encounter.

In the fort, given the impossibility of even the lightest hard construction, internal invisible zones depended more on the existing visual configuration of the site. This meant that the activities observed had to really be temporary and therefore could not relate to other passers-by on an inhabitant/visitor basis. Rather, the interstitial gaps offered a visual

connection to the general movement of the site that is at the inception of the interstice. They also constituted a panorama on the multiple foot connections that make the Beltway Fort a truly interstitial exchange node.

This last observation brings together all three terrains studied in an interstitial network spanning a wide area of the agglomeration (See map 13). It is made out of all the industrial wastelands and leftovers linked to the transportation networks. Depending on the actual segment of road or rail track they are juxtaposed to, these bits of land offer different connections to the more public spaces of the city. They can be institutionalized through a system of recycling at the margin, like in the rail track brown field, informal and depending on face to face encounters in the case of the riverbanks, and finally more sensory in the case of the Beltway Fort. In all three cases, we could say, that the sites offer an interstitial mobility that allows activities to turn around the actual flows of transportation and possibly re-enter them from a different point.

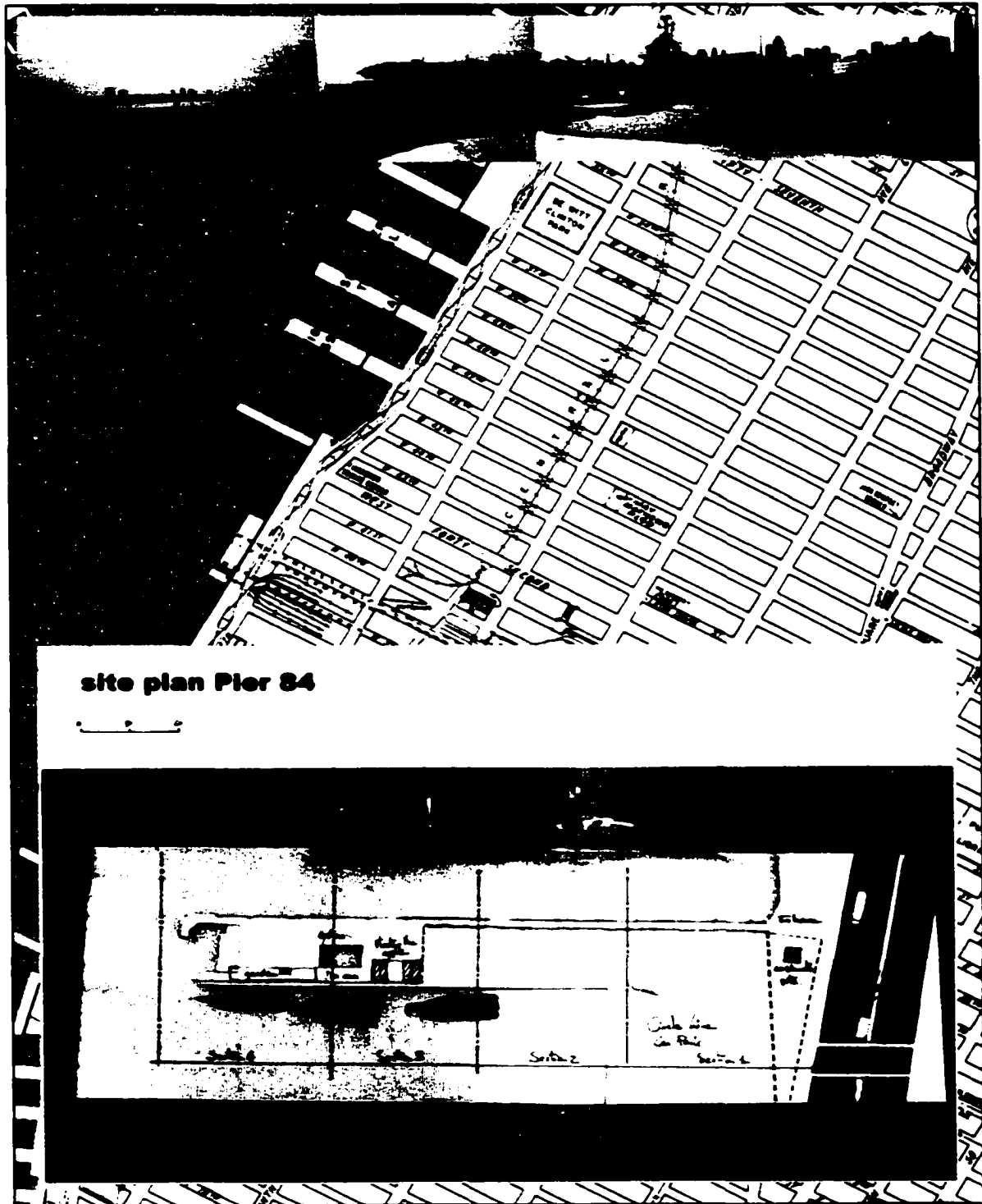
Three other case studies

The work of this dissertation is made up of three more case studies comparable in size to the first one. They will not be discussed here in order to avoid a repetition of form. They are however very briefly summarized to show the scope of the research and the further exploration of findings already illustrated with case one. Of the three remaining cases, one is in Paris and two are in New York City. The original presentation of the dissertation in French grouped them in pairs according to their nature and location. The first pair regrouped case 1 in Charenton, Paris and case 2, an abandoned pier on the Hudson riverfront in Manhattan as both these sites can be considered as classical interstices made out of industrial wastelands and leftovers following the urban planning and the deindustrialization from the 1950's to the 1980's. The second pair of cases explores more contemporary produced urban interstices that maintain a strong relationship to what can be called the urban design of the information age. Case 3, a side of the new French National Library and case 4, a collection of spots in the "New Times Square" are both new interstices that present strong similarities to traditional urban public space. They are therefore an occasion to suggest a drift of the interstitial approach from residual urban spaces to 'resulting' public spaces.

The three remaining cases will now be summarized so as to present only aspects of the work not already visible in case 1 and thus show the evolution of the research across cases.

Case two: Pier 84, Manhattan, New York City

Pier 84, a derelict space on the Hudson riverfront in Manhattan is a site comparable to Charenton's interstices for several reasons. First, it is a residual product of deindustrialization that struck the city harbor since the 1970's. Second, it is a site separated from the city by six lanes of semi-fast traffic. Indeed, pre-fieldwork research of the history of the site revealed common issues such as occupations by housing shacks and evoked the strategies developed by their inhabitants to be able to stay on the pier. However, at the time of the research, the terrain along with the riverfront was caught in a very large and much contested renewal project aimed at transforming the previously industrial banks into a joint city-state park. This process, involving important institutional organizations and large amounts of money, allowed me to pursue observations about the interstice that were almost non-existent in Paris because there were too many constraints for any large scale renewal project. On Pier 84, I was thus able to study what was interstitial within the renewal project itself when the land did not appear to be abandoned anymore but was rather contested.



Map 15: Pier 84 location and site plan

Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a City Planning Commission map and a model built with the City As School students, New York, 1998.

Major approach

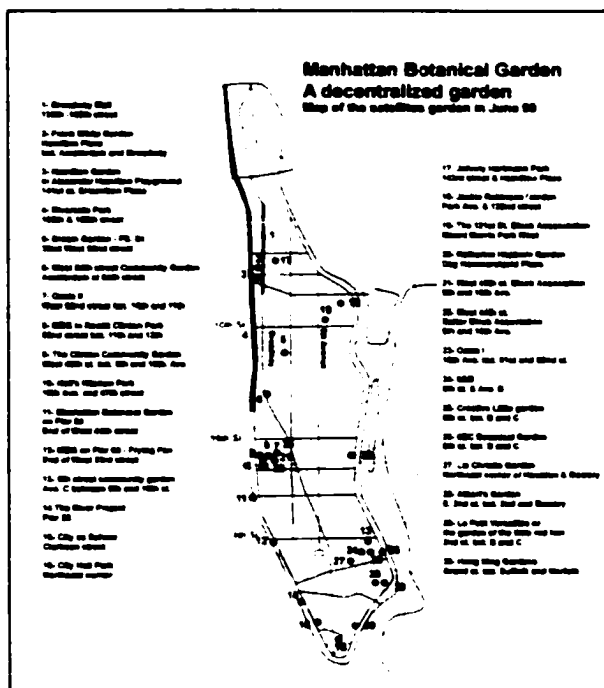
The main finding of the major approach concerns the "apparatus of capture" (Deleuze 1980) put together by the promoters of the park to ally with grassroots community organizations along the riverfront. "Friends of Pier 84" a non profit association created to save the pier from a private development by the neighboring *Intrepid Museum* subsequently became one of the major interlocutors of the park proponents. However, in order to its their voice heard, it had to go through a complicated path of circulation of information that would finally reach the actual designers of the projects in a very simplified form obliterating the very presence of the members on the pier to only retain general objectives such as a public space. This led to a half victory where the final draft actually recognized the public nature of Pier 84 while the actual physical space was taken down by the city services.¹⁰ The president of the association summed this up laconically at one of the last meetings: "We have a public pier but we have no pier".

Little by little the association had been drawn away from the pier and become an official relay of power in the neighborhood. The engagement of leading members on the site, once minor, when they pretended to renew it in order to better enjoy its space, was over. The motive of "renovation" previously accessory had become dominant.

¹⁰ Hudson River Park Bill, New York State, 1998.

Minor approach

This movement of capture by institutional powers only touched the leading factions of the associations along with members not really involved in actual physical activities on the pier. Other members however, used the motive of renovation proposed by the association as a cover for their own activity with no evident relation with a park project. Three



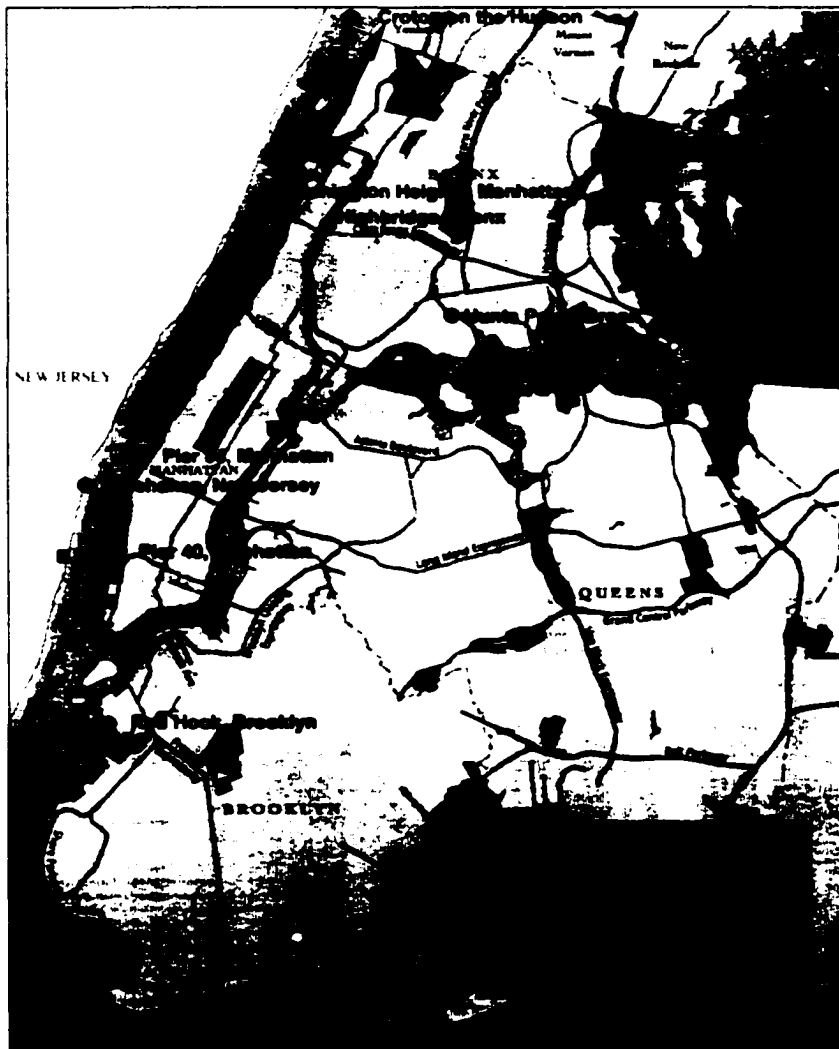
Map 16: Satellite gardens of the MBG
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a draft by MBG

of them were studied. First, the "Manhattan Botanical Garden" (MBG)

used the pier as a community base camp wherefrom expeditions of 'colonization' of the rest of the pier and beyond to all the nooks and crannies of Manhattan could depart. Under the pretense of building a park, this group, organized like an army of female gardeners, had a much larger view of how Manhattan should revert to the idealized new world city that it once was.¹¹ Second, a dog run, in fact a not precisely defined zone of the pier, worked for a couple months like a 'zone of liberation' where the dogs and their masters could get rid of the leash while not being bound to an actually locked space. Third, "Floating the Apple" (FTA), a loosely organized group of rowers under the leadership of a charismatic person, used Pier 84, until its closing and destruction as a point of departure for numerous expeditions on the New York waterways. The pier was then serving both as a zone of

concentration where individuals would get formed into teams (Goffman 1963) and a zone of diffusion wherefrom the boats would reach other coastal interstices in the agglomeration.

At the closing of the pier by the city administration, MBG and FTA were both able to resist the loss of their space by migrating to one or several of the other spots they had gained through their activities on the pier. The garden, however, which was still dependent on a motive of renovation, suffered the loss of a large number of members and had to resort



Map 17: FTA's boathouses network
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a map by E. Homberger (1994).- *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, H. Holt and Company.

to institutional help by the parks department which marked the end of the independence of the activity. Captured, it was later allowed back on the remaining land part of the pier, contained in planters easily removable without notice. On the other hand, FTA's lack of hierarchical organization, along with its enduring position

¹¹ The MBG and its satellites garden were analyzed with the concept of heterotopia of compensation proposed by Foucault (1984).

on the pier as "just passing" in order to get to the water, permitted the group to shift its activities to new places without falling under the control of any large organization involved in the Hudson Park project. This was possible thanks to the role of the leader offering his reputation and time to institutional actors thus freeing the teams who could reach the waters.

Second pair of terrain: the interstices of the information age

The steps of the French National Library (case 3) and the gaps of the "New Times Square" are a residual production of a new urban design contemporary of the information age. The two sites chosen can be compared to technical leftovers of communication flows, just like the Beltway fort in Paris was a side of highway traffic. The main difference however lies in the fact that these new interstices maintain a very tight spatial relation to pedestrians' urban public space. They also show that interstices are not a production of a certain time in the history of the city but that they pervade all of its evolution from the urban demographic boom and industrialization to 'globalization'.

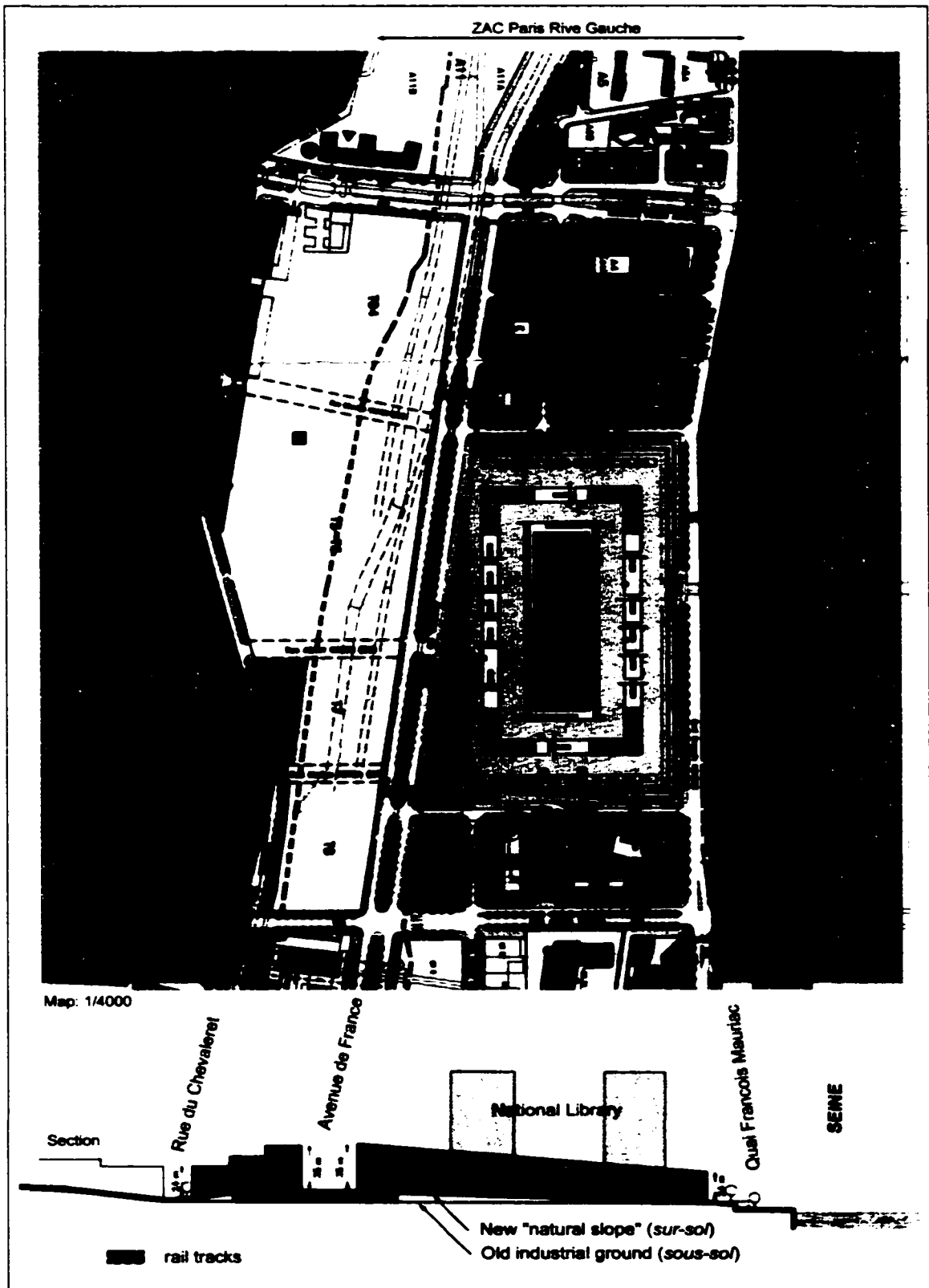
Case three: French National Library

On the side of the new grand "French National Library", a landmark of the last large urban renewal in Paris, a small triangular leftover space became the interstice chosen to approach contemporary urban planning and its residual production

Major approach

Created by the gradual withdrawal of the steps surrounding the library deck, this interstice has appeared as a revealer of several spatial discontinuities inherent to the more global urban design of the new neighborhood. First, the triangle illustrates the difficulties resulting from the city urbanists' choice to re-create a "natural" slope from the 13th arrondissement down to the Seine River, which actually transforms most of the existing land prior to

renovation into an artificial underground. Subsequently, the spaces of the projects are caught in a tension between this old ground (sous-sol), level with the river, and the new-ground (sur-sol), ten meters above, welcoming the new Avenue de France, the backbone of the urban design. In this context, the library was conceived as a building working on both levels with horizontal planes, thus revealing the shift between ground and underground with monumental wooden stairs adjusting for the difference in levels. On the small sides of the library, this encounter of planes was however not well mastered, producing two triangular leftovers drawn as the orthogonal projection onto the slope of the underground up and the ground down.



Map 18: A residual triangle in a new neighborhood

Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a map and section by SEMAPA.

Second, the triangle reveals the lack of a linking role attributed to public space in the new neighborhood. The fact that 'resulting spaces' are thrown out to the sides of the different blocks that make the area shows the lack of consideration for communication between the different functions in the zone. Indeed, the streets are only devoted to transit or at best visual separation.

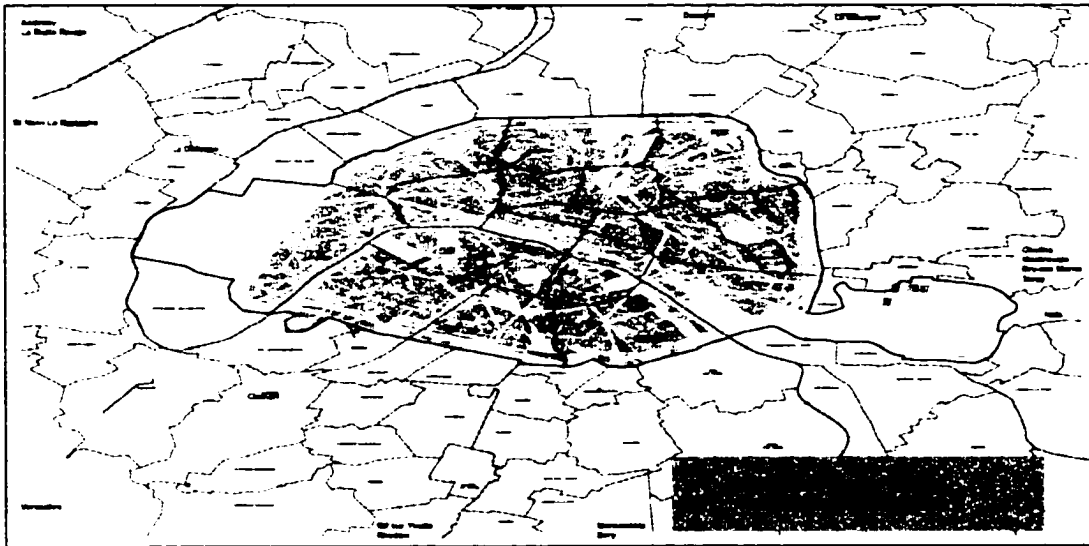
Not quite a sidewalk and neither a library space, this interstice does not obey the strict rules of the library deck enforced by private guards but cannot be taken over by the city administration which would like to fill it up. It therefore remains mostly unused and unkept between the steps and the sidewalk, a witness of the divide between the library and its surroundings.

Minor approach

A sign of the lack of contact, the triangle nevertheless became the place of an unplanned communication both transversally between the library and the neighboring block and longitudinally between the area and the Paris agglomeration at large. The spatial and social situation of this interstice has made it the gathering place for all sorts of activities on wheels. Local youths, not well accepted in the manicured central islands of the housing blocks and barred from the deck by private guards, find in the triangle, a place to play ball.

More interesting, the interstice has become a regular spot for longboard skaters who gather on its slope every Thursday night. They use the site to socialize and build an informal network based on skating. This form of sociability does not produce tightly organized groups such as gangs. Rather, it serves to build a network of shared experience based on the very sensation of skating in identified spots of the Paris agglomeration. The triangle,

therefore, is more a place where teams form and later that same night diffuse around the city.



Map 19: Longboard spots in the Paris metropolitan area
Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a IAUFR map

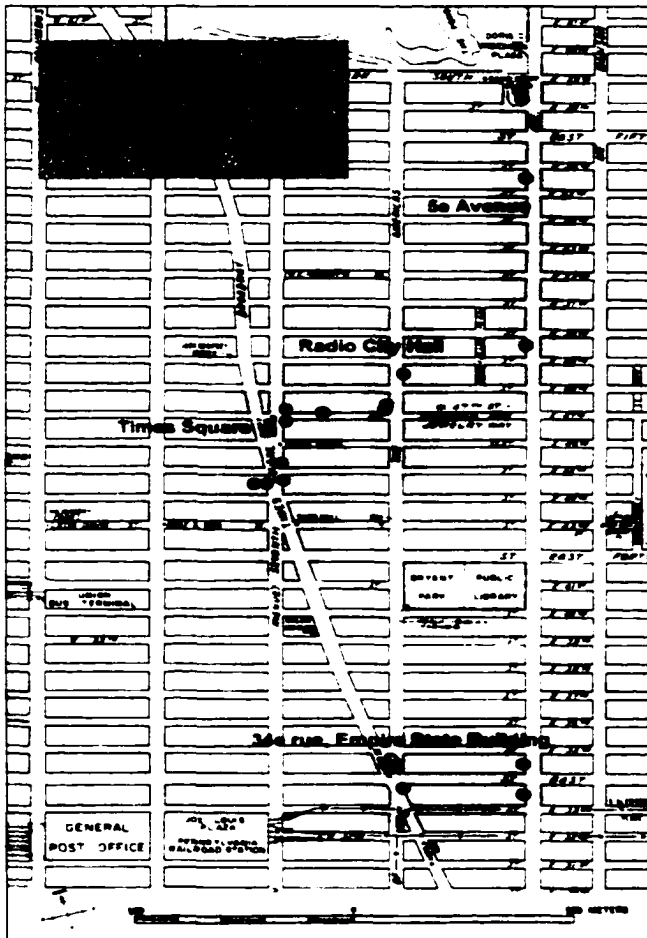
Thus doing, the longboarders establish a new relation to the present and the ground based on a permanent contact with a continuous surface. Their practice, both local and decentralized, appears to have reached the goal set by the late president François Mitterrand when he solemnly announced the "creation of an entirely new type of library" that would be at once local and global, accessible from any part of the national territory. The least thought of space, the triangular interstice finally appeared to be one of the most connected to rest of the city.



Pic. 5: Longboarding in the triangle
Source: S Tonnelat

Case four: Times Square

Times Square, in New York, was chosen as a site in some ways similar to the library,



Map 20: Peddlers' network in Midtown, 1999.

Source: S. Tonnelat, based on a City Planning Commission map

entirely based on concepts of information and communication. The fieldwork which was first aimed at observing the residual triangular spaces resulting from the crossing of Broadway and 7th Avenue soon showed that the already revealed importance of visibility had provoked a migration of the interstice from the actual physical residual spaces to the more recent blind angles of video capture omnipresent on the site. There, in the dead angles of the 'money shots', amidst police forces of all kinds, Senegalese peddlers have

found a way to take advantage of these unstable interstices to sell counterfeit goods to the continuous flow of tourists. In a space now largely predictable, where the recent past is equivalent to the near future, these vendors reintroduce a present by hailing passers-by out of the presentation offered by a tightly managed spectacle.

The new interstices are not as stable as the primary physical ones. To better adapt to the fluctuations, the vendors have developed tactics of "fitting in" the flow, "fading out" of the spectacle, and locally "standing out" in order to sell. The observation of these techniques

allowed me to draft a network of the new urban planning interstices outlined by the vendors. Pursuing the observations on the library site, the fieldwork showed that the interstitial connections in Times Square were of a different nature than the main information networks otherwise directing the renewal of the site. Senegalese peddlers developed tactics that are comparable to a 'background noise' in the new picture of the site by being able to move in and out of the flow of both the crowd of tourists that make up the new image of Times square and their captured image on the information networks set up by communication companies and distributed around the world.

For a more detailed account in English, see in the appendix: "The Extras of Times Square."

Conclusion

1. From abandoned sites to the most controlled interstices

Besides respecting the fieldwork chronology, the presentation of the sites also follows a choice related to the production and the management of urban interstices. From Charenton to Times Square, we have passed from the most abandoned sites without any near future, to a much contested wasteland in a process of renovation, to an entirely new neighborhood recently reclaimed from industrial decay to finally one of the most famous and controlled place of the world. Despite this choice that could have gradually precluded the very existence of interstices, we have observed their recurring presence throughout the sites, showing that interstices are not only spatial but mainly dependent on the social organization of the surrounding spaces, thus strengthening the "betweenness" of interstitial definition.

1.1. Interstitial maintenance (Charenton)

In Charenton, Paris, we have observed that it is the institutions themselves in charge of the land that are responsible for the creation and the maintenance of the interstices. Interstices thus cost a little money to local governments, since they need maintenance and surveillance, but they also offer functional margins of maneuver such as places for homeless shelters or docking for boats not compliant with public safety rules.

This maintenance and surveillance has also shown the importance of the visibility of the interstice from the outside and the possibility, in the very gaps of the lines of sight, of "passages" that often lasted more than a short moment.

In these unseen spaces, "natural" or built, activities that could take place offered a reduced intimacy and, occasionally opportunities of contact with the outside "normal" world either under the form of face to face encounters or under a point of view on the circulation around. Together, these modes of contact, built an interstitial network that could be utilized as a time/space vacuum to travel through the city.

1.2. Renovation (Pier 84)

The much contested renovation park project along the Hudson not only precluded interstitial uses such as the one observed in Charenton but also allowed public authorities to "capture" (Deleuze 1980) the only grass-roots association originally formed to save Pier 84 and integrate it into a negotiation process where it lost most of its influence and presence on the site.

However, the very process of renovation offered 'satellites activities' of the association (FTA, MBG, dog run) a new motive of presence used to remain on the pier during the time of the renewal itself. When the site was finally closed some of these activities (FTA, MBG) had build a network of interstices around the city on which they could depend to survive. This shows that not only the renovation process didn't suppress the interstice but also that the motive of renovation it provided didn't prevent some activities from establishing spatial relations that had nothing to do with the park project and actually went far beyond it in terms of distance.

1.3. New Construction (Steps of the French National Library)

The next step after exploring an interstice in a renovation process was to look for interstices in a neighborhood recently re-build. The library steps not only showed that interstices do not disappear with urban renewal but that their production process is

extremely telling about the new urban design applied in a leading renovation project. A reading of the physical shape of the interstice illustrated the difficulties met by the APUR¹² planners in their attempt to recover Paris on a new "natural" ground while at the same time erasing the traces of the local industrial past at the lower level. Moreover, the interstitial space produced proved useful for activities on wheels rejected by other public spaces in the area. Just like other interstitial activities, the longboarders found in the triangle a base wherefrom to connect to a number of other slopes in the agglomeration making this residual by-product the most relational public space of an area entirely build on the idea of physical separation.

1.4. Extreme surveillance (Times Square)

The last step, after discovering a new neighborhood interstice, was to show that residual spaces were pervading even one of the most controlled public areas of the world, Times Square. There, just like at the library, the idea of the form of the interstice became very important as it revealed the forces at work in the shaping of the "New Times Square." One main difference however with the "hardware architecture" of the library was that the limits of Times Square's interstices were not defined by physical encounters of mismatching designs such as the triangles between 7th Avenue and Broadway but by more immaterial yet very efficient lines of sight. This observation lead to a view of the Square as "software architecture" aimed at capturing the image of strolling crowds at the center of the world and redistributing it worldwide added to a company brand name logo.

In the interstices between these lines of visual capture, and despite a heavy surveillance, the Senegalese peddlers found ways to appear and disappear and establish another network

¹² Paris department of urban planning.

of blind spots throughout Midtown wherefrom to initiate contacts with the flow of pedestrians and by the same token, draw them out of the spectacle into a more bodily lived experience.

2. The management of visibility (Paris/ New York)

The succession of cases above suggests that the very existence of interstices depends more on a management of visibility than on a pure process of production of physical residual space as it was defined at the beginning of this study. The spatial aspect of the interstice is important only insofar as it is the medium of visibility a notion otherwise somewhat socially constructed.

An analysis of the differences in terms of the management of this interstitial visibility actually shows that all the questions evoked here revolve around the surface that separates the visible from the invisible. Two categories can be identified: "built visibility" and "found visibility."

2.1. Built visibility

The inhabitants of the Paris Riverfront were able to remain only because they had constructed a skin telling the story of a temporary stop on the side of the highway behind which they could live. The motive of passage was thus delegated to a built environment that could be controlled by the police and agreed on by the owner of the land. In a similar way, on Pier 84, the association FOP84 was able to state its claims on the space only insofar as it accepted to publicize its position as renovator of a park on the riverfront. The built visibility of the group was both spatial in the way it imposed certain standards of camouflage (FTA and dog run) or transformation (MBG) on the site and mediatic in letting the association become a voice for the neighborhood.

In both cases we can say that the visibility of the interstice, or more precisely of the motive invoked to use the interstice, was at the same time a means for the institutions to control activities and negotiations and an escape from that control in the form of a secondary involvement (housing, rowing or gardening) that would take precedence over the main one (passage and renovation.)

A difference between Paris and New York can be noted here. Whereas the surface of visibility was built in Paris by the actual users of the interstice, in New York it was provided and imposed by the official organizations in charge of land development. This led to the use of Deleuze and Guattari's "apparatus of capture" to describe the complex system of negotiation around the pier that finally pushed the association to abandon all claims on the interstice that didn't fit into the theme of renovation and therefore had to remain invisible. It is also precisely on this visibility that the leader of FTA played when he offered himself to capture by the state in order to keep the teams of rowers free to access the New York Waterways.

On the riverfront in Paris, the skin between the visible and invisible was built by the inhabitants themselves giving the public authorities no other role but to control the efficiency of this device for their constituency of voters and more importantly for the companies settled across the highway. This led to a heavy surveillance but no capture. In the case of the rail yard however, the visibility was entirely controlled by public authorities who effectively put together an apparatus of capture aimed at ridding the *Gare de Lyon* train station of its homeless population. Converse to New York however, this apparatus was entirely separated from the process of urban renewal, offering no role to the population simply transported from one place to another and therefore no easy upward social mobility.

In contrast, in New York the involvement of the association in the renewal process of Pier 84 allowed its leader to build a small political career surviving the debate around the pier.

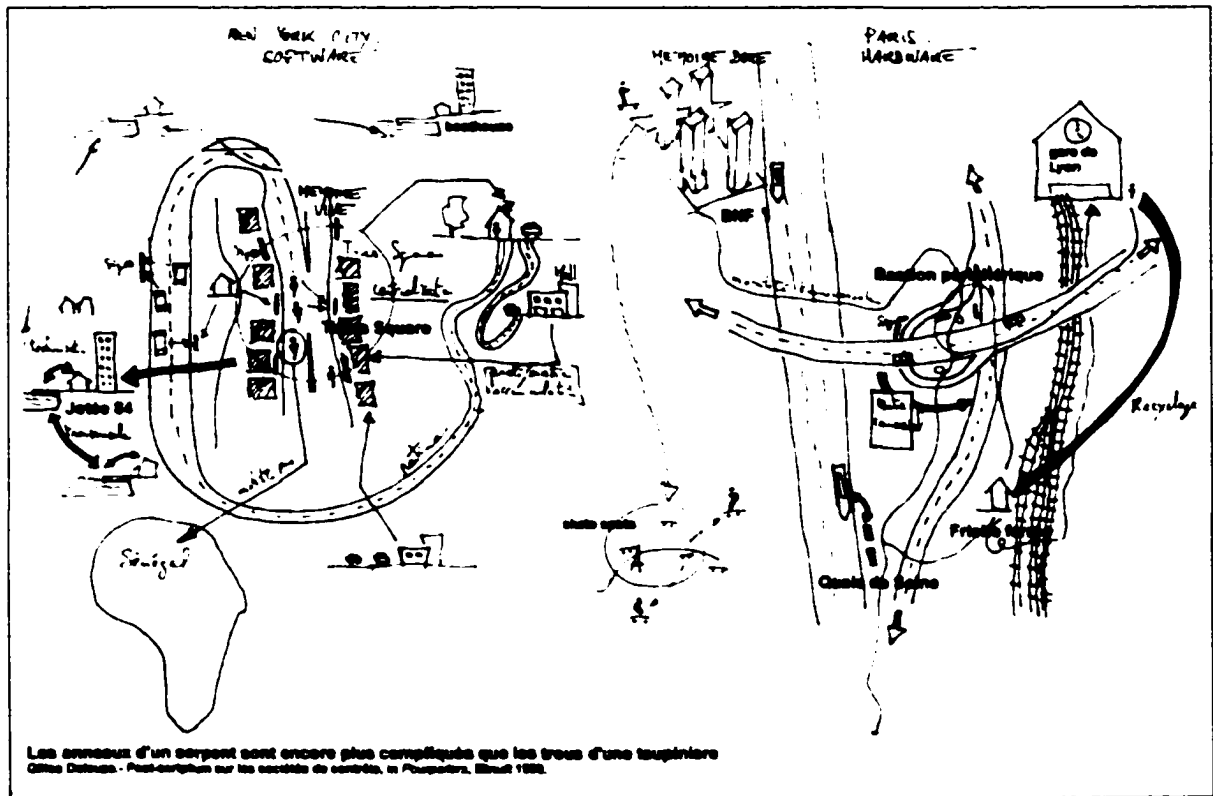


Figure 5: New York software / Paris hardware
Source: S. Tonnelat

2.2. Found visibility

In Paris, by the Library steps, the public authority in charge of the development of the neighborhood never accepted to give a role concerning its design to neighborhood associations. There was no built visibility that framed the opposition into participating in the general project and subsequently abandoning their original claims. Instead, associations chose a frontal opposition that led to the temporary demise of the project by way of the court.

(similar to the "Westway" Project on the Hudson Riverfront.) Finally the input of ordinary citizens concerned with urban planning was reduced to almost nothing if not purely denied.

A found invisibility was also observable on the same site in the residual triangle by the library steps as the longboarders, who were coming to this slope to skate, did not have to build any kind of facade to remain invisible from authorities. Of course, public and private police perfectly knew about their presence but the status of the interstice added to the fact that the skaters were just passing allowed them to ignore this activity. It was exactly the same phenomenon that took place in the Beltway fort in Charenton and in Times Square. The spots chosen by Senegalese peddlers in the dead angles or by passers-by to sunbathe in the "gaps in the gap" were sufficiently invisible from the point of view of the main authorities to be permitted to stay. Throughout these cases, invisibility is not only spatially organized but also for the most part socially accepted. In Times Square, one of the roles devoted to private police was thus to render the peddlers more visible by filing "affidavits". However, the only visibility that could affect the NYPD did not depend on the built visibility proposed by the agents of the Times Square BID but rather by the actual image of peddlers in the public's general opinion, especially through their occasional appearance in the media.

2.3. Wastelands and by-products

In general, built visibility and found visibility correspond to the urban planning difference between wastelands and by-products. Whereas the first kind offer an opportunity for renovation and justify preparatory interventions, by products do not seem to propose an occasion to institutions to develop any projects and enroll populations in its process.

Consequently, by-products seem to offer more freedom to occasional users than wastelands where a "capture" is always possible. However, as we have seen in the case of the teams of rowers, the process of renovation itself offers a motive susceptible of being used precisely to escape institutional control. In any case, we can see that wastelands are subject to renewal projects while by-products are merely subject to surveillance.

This difference is in fact directly related to the temporal dimensions of the interstice. Wastelands, which are diachronic residual spaces, often show a quite occupied ground. However, their temporal suspended state offers opportunities of passage not so much to someplace else but rather to the same place in another time. On the other hand, by-products, which are synchronic interstices, do not authorize a projection in time. However, since their space is not subject to projects, they remain free for a passage more akin to a "shortcut" to some other place.

3. Interstitial framework: a point of view

These observations on visibility bring forth new questions about the definition of the interstice or at least about its properties. Since what makes the potentiality of the interstice is its ability to remain invisible, we now have to admit that this condition depends as much on the actual physical configuration of the space as on the tactics and strategies developed by people in the interstice and by others outside of it. Of course, in some cases, such as the Beltway fort, spots are so invisible that whoever the people and the activities taking place, they will remain invisible. However, in the case of the Senegalese peddlers, we have seen that the interstitial quality of their activity depended a lot on their ability to mask their presence not only from video cameras but also from the BID police in order to minimize local offense to the gathering (Goffman 1963) that the sale automatically produces. In this

situation, we could think that the vendors were themselves more interstitial than the place they were operating in.

In fact, a new way of bringing these two aspects of the interstice together would be to consider the interstice as a "point of view" on the changing environment made out of both the place wherefrom you can look and the gaze that looks; a combination of an eye and a position in space. One that doesn't look will cross the interstice without noticing, just like a tourist in Times Square or a reader going to the library.

3.1. Pure mobility

The combination of both the agency and the location calls back the idea of affordance as it was suggested by Gibson as a concept bridging the usual dichotomy between subject and object. In a certain way, interstices constitute affordances made out of the encounters of a site and a person. This combination produces a "team" where places, objects and people are dependent on one another.¹³ In Times Square for example, Senegalese peddlers team with each other and with the blind spots of the spectacle. On the Pier 84, rowers team up with the boat and the water. On the riverfront in Paris, inhabitant team with the site and their shacks while further down the Seine, longboarders team up with their skateboard and the tarmac.

On the contrary, policemen and maintenance crews do not team up with the site. They are equipped and come to the interstice to transform it in a way that maintains a distance with the space.

The formation of an interstitial team calls for a transformation of the relation between people and space comparable to an encounter where rhythm plays an important role. It is

¹³ In Behavior in Public Places, Goffman suggested the possibility of a "team without members" opening the way to a notion of the team defined more as a relation between different people, objects and places than a mere grouping of people under predefined rules.

only when the people passing adopt the right speed that that they can finally connect with the site in such a way that a reversal of perspective happens. Suddenly, it is not the passer-by who is moving anymore but the whole environment surrounding the interstice itself immobile amidst a global movement of the city. The process that best describes this situation was first evoked by Robert Park, himself inspired by Bergson. "Pure mobility" is "just the idea of motion which we have when we think of it by itself, when, so to speak, from motion we abstract movement" (Park 1967). In our case, the "pure mobility" is the state attained by people in the interstice that manage to find themselves in synchrony with the terrain to such a point that they are able to view the movement itself of which this space is a residue. This is what we can call the interstitial "point of view", following Deleuze and his theory of the fold. "From a branch of the inflexion, we determine a point that doesn't follow the inflexion anymore, nor is the inflexion point, but the point where all the lines perpendicular to the tangents meet. It is not exactly a point but a place, a position, a site, a linear focus, line made out of lines. We call it a point of view insofar as it represents the variation or the inflexion. This is the foundation of perspectivism. It does not signify a dependence to a predefined agency. On the contrary, will be an agency that comes to the point of view, which stays at the point of view. [...] Between the variation and the point of view, there is a necessary relation. Not simply because of the diversity of the points of view but because any point of view is a point of view on a variation" (Deleuze 1988 : 27).

Pure mobility for example, allows Senegalese peddlers to fish the flow of moving tourists while remaining immobile in the interstice from where they can see the overall movement of Times Square (not only the crowds but also the visual capture of the crowds).

3.2. Tangential mobility

"Point of view" is not only a perspective on the surroundings of the interstice. It also shows access to other interstices beyond the site. This is how the teams of rowers could connect different residual spots along the New York Waterways and thus constitute a network. This is also how the library skaters could envision the whole city of Paris as a skate camp organized by the slant degree of its slopes and come up with a repertory of "spots" where they would migrate once the teams were formed in the library triangle. This is also how the homeless inhabitants of the Paris riverside could walk and travel across a good part of Paris and its suburbs without ever coming out into the street. And this is finally how the Senegalese peddlers were able to "fit in" and out of the crowd and thus surreptitiously link the selling spots of Manhattan Midtown.

This second characteristic of the point of view calls for another mobility, a "tangential mobility". It is the capability of passing from interstices to interstices in a minor mode.

3.3. Interstitial networks

Together "pure mobility" and "tangential mobility" constitute the modes of entering and exiting the interstices as well as going from interstice to interstice. Their combination observed in fieldwork has led to the identification of interstitial networks corresponding each time to an activity with a singular relation to space that has been called a "team."

Following these observations the interstice no longer appears as a place to be transformed, as the general opinion tends to think, but rather as a transformative place where people go in order to change their relation to space and acquire a new mobility. The interstice therefore plays the role of a gate to networks usually invisible in the city. These networks are interesting from an urban theory point of view because they are neither dependent on familiar relations such as the one that can be found in a family or a small neighborhood, nor

are they dependent on pure anonymous relations such as the ones that can be found in the big city streets. Rather the interstitial network is based on a team spirit each time founded on a singular space practice such as skateboarding, peddling, rowing, gardening or squatting. The relations within a team are short lasting but imprinted with solidarity. The team rules are adapted to the context and the activity and do not extend beyond it. Interestingly enough, interstitial networks seem to provide their users a place comparable to the early Chicago school "moral regions," a kind of intermediary public world between the anonymity of the streets and the familiarity of the home.

4. What to do with urban interstices?

This last observation finally brings us closer to an answer to the question that first guided this research. What to do with urban interstices?

First, we can now suggest that interstices play a non negligible role in the organization of the city. They provide access to relations with other people and spaces based on a team solidarity, a temporary sharing of means towards personal goals difficult to find within the home world or the streets. Wasn't it precisely the goal of a number of architects and thinkers to find this intermediary place? Neither empty, nor encumbered by pre-existing social relations? In this case, the best solution seems to abstain from judging the interstices as disorderly places and calling for their renewal.

However, as we have seen in the conclusion, it might not be the interstice so much as the interstitial network that plays an important role in the city. And, as a matter of fact, interstitial activities that were already well connected did not suffer much from the disappearance of their original interstice. What this suggests is that interstices are not merely residual places in the city but rather a self renewing time-space network finding

place precisely within the urban decay and renewal processes. As a consequence, there is no point in protecting interstices from renewal as the interstitial networks feeds itself on this process of urban planning.

For all its findings, this research finally brings no new direction to planning, nor does it show any striking difference between Paris and New York City. Rather, if interstices do indeed have to play a role in the redefinition of urban social relations, the direction followed by planning on either side of the ocean seem to leave room to a vivid interstitial life (but no vivid streets, unfortunately).

But should we at least try to design good interstices? And "how do you engineer undesign" to repeat a question raised by Rem Koolhaas' AMO ?

The beginning of an answer to this question lies in the difference between suburban interstices now proliferating at a scale never seen before (Atelier 2000) and more contained and constrained urban wastelands and by-products. Actually, one of the hypothesis and findings of this research is that interstices are not empty spaces but rather controlled and contested ones. And it is precisely this complex of constraints that contributed to make these spaces lively and interesting in several aspects. Besides, the liveliest interstices observed had a shape that was always reduced in one of its dimensions, thus bringing to a close the surrounding spaces. And it is indeed from the surroundings that the constraints emerged and influenced the interstice. Therefore, we can doubt the richness of suburban interstices, so numerous that they do not occupy a minor part of the territory but tend to constitute one of the main components of its fabric. In this case, residual space cannot be considered a place where passage is an obligatory motive since the network of surveillance cannot be as tight as in the city.

William H. Whyte (1980) had understood this well when in his "praise of odds and ends" he was nevertheless wary of shapeless space. "Not more than 40% of the total area of a residential plaza on a zoning lot shall be developed as residual space." It is finally not the void that matters but the precise definition of its boundaries. An urban fabric without precise limits, such as "edge city" cannot yield interesting interstices. On the other hand, a tightly drawn space, with all its rigidity and inevitable mistakes is probably a lot more fertile for urban social life.

Appendix

The Extras of Times Square

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On June 10, 1998, the NBA Finals (Chicago Bulls versus Utah Jazz) were shown in actual time and almost actual size on the giant Panasonic screen of the Times Tower building in the center of Times Square. Quite unusually, the pace in a limited area slowed down to a full stop. A group of homeless people had set up a TV lounge with knocked over BID (Business Improvement District) orange trashcans. Two young guys were sitting on mailboxes. A larger group gathered around the information panels behind the army recruitment booth. A couple stopped to watch the game, placing their hands on a light pole. When, carried away by the spectacle, the woman ventured a few steps on the sidewalk to get a better view, her partner reminded her: "The pole! The pole!" and grabbed her, pulling her back in place, to prevent her from getting swept away. In fact, each person at rest was anchored by a piece of urban furniture to this island amidst the rushing flow of Times Square. Suspiciously, the cops started to drive in circles around our momentarily crystallized territory. Suddenly, we were standing out. We were still. That day, I understood that Times Square was all about flows. I also understood why there I sensed a feeling of vacuity. Times Square was an empty space, constantly passed through, with no place to stop.

To explore this problem, I wanted my questions about change in Times Square to avoid the well-worn path of "Disneyfication." Instead, I turned to the concept of "interstice"

inspired from Georg Simmel and the Chicago School of Sociology. It seems that each urban mutation produces its own interstices, temporary gaps where people can produce innovative responses to the disorganization provoked by change. Times Square is a perfect example of a current mutation, the digital revolution, the means of infinite reproducibility of information. However, because of the ongoing street traffic, it also feels empty.

Is Times Square an interstice of the global city? Is it totally controlled or is it also proposing innovative responses? The concept of interstice poses the metropolis as a mentality and the stranger as its analyst. It is a zone of “pure mobility.” It describes the ability of being in between two or more different situations without moving. As the city is in constant evolution, disorganization is a permanent challenge and mobility a constant answer. Mobility is social as well as spatial. It is the ability to move from one place to another, from one social status to another, from one neighborhood to another. Pure mobility is “just the idea of motion which we have when we think of it by itself, when, so to speak, from motion we abstract movement”¹⁴. An interstice is an immobile zone that nevertheless is in contact with a number of other places. Because of this, it is in constant becoming and can generate innovative responses to change. I decided to look for pure mobility in Times Square. I quickly found a guide in the Senegalese peddlers. By observing them, day after day, I learned to look at Times Square through the lens of mobility.

Despite all the efforts of the City and the communications industry (through BID) to control and cleanse Times Square of the disorder of public life, the “Crossroads of the

¹⁴ Park, Robert E.- *On Social Control and Collective Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

World” is still alive. The very effort of transforming Times Square into a “Virtual Entertainment Center” of the world ignores the *physical* spatial interstices from where vitality springs. Of course, this energy is almost always considered an unauthorized use of public space. The Senegalese peddlers, besides stealing revenue from the IRS, are commonly seen as sidewalk obstacles and, therefore, as a threat to the public. But who are we speaking about? Who is the public? In this case, it is a crowd of disembodied humans whose unique goal in life is to browse smoothly through our communication networks. The public of the New Times Square is composed of tourists who are also TV watchers. Advertisers, rather than tourists, now pay for Times Square. This public is standardized and categorized. It must behave and look good.

Besides the routine movement of tourists and workers, there are two different mobilities indicative of the changes in Times Square. The first one is located outside the flow. It is quicker and captures the flow. It is represented by communication networks and real estate development. The second one is located inside the flow. It is slower, interstitial, and unauthorized. It is represented, among others, by the Senegalese vendors. Both affect the public order of Times Square.

The unique position of the Senegalese vendors, who constantly shift between two different involvements, helped me to distinguish these two mobilities. First, as peddlers, they stand out and hail the public. However, their activity is perceived as disrespectful to the gathering at large. According to the Midtown Community Court of Justice, it is a crime against the “quality of life.” As pedestrians, then, they make an effort to fit in, to become part of the flow. They merge into the crowd as undercover vendors. For this purpose, they

must pay a great deal of attention to their field of vision. They rely on a double field of visibility: from the bottom looking up (the pedestrians' eyes) and from the top looking down (the corporate buildings and their employees). In looking at the vendors' tactics for evading capture by the police and by the cameras, I started to uncover a whole network of visual authority. I suggest that Times Square is a huge apparatus designed to capture images of an excited crowd at the "crossroads of the world." Cameras are everywhere, held by tourists, anchored on buildings, moving through the streets. This is the first type of mobility.

The main consequence that the New Times Square has on public order is the redefinition of the physical place as a visual background. It supposes that there is another space, the foreground, controlled by the commercial world of capital flows. The investors and entrepreneurs are mostly communication networks such as Warner Brothers, Disney, Virgin, MTV, Reuters, Bertelsmann, and ABC, who confer the roles of extras to members of the public. These companies use the image of Times Square as a background for their own image. MTV is the most obvious example. Its studios, on the second floor of one of the new buildings, overlook the square, and they have not only transformed their facade into a giant screen, but also into a huge camera lens. On MTV's "Top Ten Countdown," you can see the host of the show on the foreground, which is set against the movement of the square in the background. The camera then starts travelling and fades into a video clip on a television set a few feet away.

Times Square's apparatus extracts rough images, just as the mining industry extracted ore in the 19th century. Pedestrians are the miners of the digital age. Their labor is less

physically intensive and more rewarding. However, it is not paid. Pedestrianism is a part-time job where work and play are one and the same. Strolling up and down Times Square is actually very enjoyable. It provides a powerful feeling of participation and involvement in a global dynamic. Young people are probably the ones to feel this most zealously, taking pride to give their best performance as “extras.” Times Square depends on this population to maintain the value of its images. Therefore, the “foreground” must trust the actors, especially the walk-ons who do not get paid. To be allowed in the scope of a big company camera is thus a form of trustworthiness. It is a kind of cooperation between multinational corporations and the public. Times Square provides pedestrians with the powerful experience of feeling as if they are at the center of the world. The colors, the movement, and the noise work together to construct this atmosphere.

Only global organizations that have the connections to exploit the place differential between Times Square and the rest of the world can afford to invest in Times Square real estate. The flow of tourists and youngsters captured in the afternoon by MTV is redistributed that same evening nationwide. Images of people travel much faster than their models. By the time you get home to watch TV, your passage there is already history. It has been documented, distributed, and possibly archived. Times Square works best as a complement to the dullness of suburbia.

However, there are some drawbacks to this quite enjoyable situation. Times Square realizes the greatest possible relative surplus value, and companies can produce highly valuable images with limited costs. This constitutes an appropriation of work because a movement in space that produces a commodity should be considered labor. However, the

“extras” get no wages for their work. In terms of surplus value, this entails a huge increase in productivity—compared to professional actors, for example. For if the laborers do not get a salary, the entire profit goes to the entrepreneur.

Another interesting consequence is the path of money. The real clients of Times Square are the companies who use its background to enhance their image. Thus Times Square derives its profit from companies who derive their profits from the financial markets, from people who buy their products and from people who make them. Money, therefore, is exterior to the physical site, although you can still spend your salary there if you wish. In this way, Times Square can be described as a tax-exempt zone. The State agrees to help maintain the necessary visual order and to waive taxation on real estate and on labor, in exchange for a more productive global economy that brings taxes at another level.

This kind of global business necessitates control on the ground. It requires a heavy surveillance of Times Square. Consequently, the BID, with its police forces, cleaning teams, and site publicity, can be viewed as stage manager and producer. They make sure that the extras behave, that the flow proceeds uninterrupted, and that the set remains aseptic. Enlisted for these tasks are two NYPD precincts, a special midtown task force, mounted police, BID police, Guardian Angels, and undercover agents. While some unusual behavior is accepted and even encouraged (Ricky Martin fans yelling in the middle of the square, Black Jewish preachers), a whole range of activities are not (homeless people, peddlers, hustlers). In other words, you can be normal or eccentric, but you cannot neglect your role as extra. I like to call this the discipline of the image, be it the image of a person or the image of a place. This is quite an important move in our society. One important restriction is on

images of poverty because these do not fit into the companies' vision of the New Times Square. Therefore, any images of a "third world market" are forbidden. Another restriction is on "hanging out." Stillness corrupts the flow. This is why the Senegalese peddlers have become unauthorized in Times Square. However, they are still here. They are not remnants of another time, but rather the parasites of the New Times Square. They have proliferated thanks to an interstitial mobility which has its own effects on the place. This mobility is the background noise in the picture, as opposed to the foreground mobility of big companies.

The vendors are dangerous for two reasons. First, they corrupt the picture. If they get captured by a camera, they rupture the compatibility of the background with the foreground projected by the communications networks. Second, they slow down the flow and lower the density of excitement captured in Times Square. The first danger is entirely structural. The reproduction of images does not distinguish between the good and the bad. It reproduces the vendors along with others and distributes them widely. Thus the risk of corruption of the image by poverty spreads with the acceleration of communication technologies. This problem has led to a specific distribution of space within Times Square. Except when they venture out of their usual places, the vendors are mostly pushed to the blind spots of the camera. Assigned police officers occupy the borders of the designated areas, dissuading the vendors from entering this field of vision, and thus protect the money shots. This occupation has led to a particular spatial distribution of cops and vendors. However, in reality, there is no single corner exempt from the camera because tourists, armed with cameras, cover the entire square. Later, they may display their pictures on the Internet. Therefore, the position of the Senegalese vendors in Times Square is far from insignificant. It is, in fact, simply the least dangerous compromise for everybody involved. This tells us a

great deal about the spatial lines of tension. The visual is not an internalized uniform field of power as discipline is in the Foucauldian sense. It has its interstices, margins of maneuver for “others.”

The second danger is more general. Along with others, Senegalese vendors slow down the flow of pedestrians. They even sometimes provoke a little congestion. Although it may seem unimportant at first, it is actually a big problem for both the companies and the City who work together in Times Square. For companies, it is useless to have connections at speeds of hundreds of megabytes per second if the flow is stuck at the source. This breach of the flow can severely impair the apparatus of capture. For the City, circulation is more a question of public order. As a partner to the companies, the City has the responsibility of maintaining a steady flow. This is not new. In 1906, Mayor McClellan already faced this problem. The peddlers, he noted, “should remember that they have not a vested right to use the streets for the purpose of trade, that the streets are highways and are intended solely for that purpose.”¹⁵

This general emphasis on the visual is just another step towards more stimulation that produces reserve between people. If these “matter-of-fact attitudes”¹⁶ are adopted, it is not because they are an expression of our essence, but because it helps us resist the overwhelming stimuli and, thus, stay open to a manageable amount of contact opportunities. Therefore, reserve is good. However, as people seem to enjoy the excitement of Times

¹⁵ Mayor George B. McClellan, “Statement With Regard to the Push-Cart Situation,” June 6, 1906, MGB-117. Quoted by Bluestone, Daniel M. (1991). “The Pushcart Evil: Peddlers, Merchants, and New York City’s Streets”, 1890-1940, in *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 18 No. 1, November 1991, 68-92.

Square, they might forget that the reserve they feel toward one another is a product of the overwhelming stimuli and confuse it with something deeper. In other words, people might get caught up by the visual dictatorship and forget that reserve is nothing but a means of managing interactions in public space. When it becomes a way to miss interaction, nothing happens, and real vacuity takes over.

Luckily, the Senegalese vendors in Times Square remind us that this is all a game. In opening their attaché-case, they disclose their disruption. They transform the whole background into a site rich with potentialities. Above everything else, they force pedestrians into an awareness of their situation. They hail them and, incidentally, show that there is something more than pure image. Not something beyond the visual but something short of the visual. In 1998 and 1999, the 42nd Street Redevelopment Project organized an exhibition entitled "The People of 42nd Street," sponsored by the Durst Organization, developer of the Condé-Nast building, and the Empire Development Corporation. The exhibition featured an extensive collection of actual size portraits displayed along the wooden fence of the construction site. Faced with all these virtual people, I wondered if we, the actual pedestrians, would soon be replaced by our pictures. Luckily, hologram technology has not yet reached that stage of development.

One reason to get rid of parasitic bodies would be to eliminate the risk of coagulation. This is another reminder provided by the Senegalese vendors. By slowing down the flow, they save the possibility of a mass takeover of Times Square. In this regard, they are the

¹⁶ Simmel, Georg. "The Metropolis and Mental life" and "The Stranger" in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, translated from German, edited and with an introduction by Kurt H. Wolf, Free Press, New York, 1950.

would-be catalyst of a solidification of the stream. Traffic jams are not such a problem on the road. The cars still protect people from interacting and the flow from crystallizing. In suburbia, the risk is limited. On the sidewalk, the risk is far greater. The NBA Finals in 1998, which brought movement to a halt in Times Square, is a good example of how technology can backfire. It proved to me that Times Square was still alive, that it was possible to hang out, that space was still public. This is what the Senegalese vendors symbolize in an everyday perspective. If public space is to be accessible, it should not only be passed through, it should be occupied. Our cities propose only two alternatives: getting stuck in a ghetto—be it East Harlem or Soho—or stuck in motion.

Even if small sidewalk jams do not lead to confrontation, much less to revolution, they are sites for social innovation. The Senegalese vendors have reinvented a centuries-old social economy. Instead of informal labor, such as the low-wage labor of undocumented immigrants, theirs can be described as marginal labor in a precise sense. Marginal economies were originally the practice of traditional societies. They were based on the principle of exchange and did not require money. The value of the merchandise was defined by the next-to-the-last object exchanged. The Senegalese vendors are constantly selling their next-to-the-last item, waiting to have enough money to return home and settle down. The crucial notion here is stock. The Senegalese vendors do not have stock, either in merchandise or money. They acquire their stock through the last transaction, which is immediately converted into a house in Senegal or is sometimes used to secure immigrant status in the US.¹⁷

Times Square is the theater of a double economic play between global capital and a marginal economy. The relationship between the two is not complementary but extremely contextual. Times Square's marginal economy lies in the interstices of the global apparatus. It stands in a position of exteriority (pure mobility) in the heart of its space. The Senegalese vendors show that the city is not merely the territory of the State or of global capital. They reinforce the idea that a metropolis is above all a state of mind and not a simple economic and/or administrative settlement of populations. They show that interstices pervade even the most technological tools of capture. The pure mobility of the interstice shows us that the public exists in the possibility of acceleration and deceleration. The public lies in the differential of speeds, in the realm of contextual action.

The space of the New Times Square is still enjoyable. What is threatening is its foreground. The public of Times Square is still alive, thanks to the intervention of certain people operating from its material interstices. The image of Times Square, distributed around the world, does not offer the same possibility. It only injects the feeling of excitement into contexts, which is not always reflected at the level of experience. Therefore, corporations print their trademarks on the foreground and encourage people to buy excitement in the specially designed malls of their neighborhoods, excitement that has been brought to them directly from the "Crossroads of the World." Suburbia becomes the modern outskirts of Times Square.

¹⁷Deleuze and Guattari (1980).- *Mille plateaux, capitalisme et schizophrénie*, Editions de Minuit, Paris.

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Times Square

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