The “New Gate of Paris”
Planning, Topography, and Queer Affect in the 18e Arrondissement

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Abstract

This research inquires into contemporary urban regeneration (*renouvellement urbain*) in the majority immigrant and working-class 18th district of Paris. Drawing from black geographies, anthropologies of infrastructural space, queer and feminist analytics, this work proposes an anthropology of western power that locates coloniality and colonial governmentality within (rather than outside) the French capital. Based on two years of ethnographic and archival fieldwork in urban expertise, urban informality, and local queer and immigrant spatiality, it examines how urban experts practice urban renewal as a project of topographical as well as sociocultural engineering. Experts develop a particular urban desire for abject space insofar as it allows them to deploy technologies of diagnostics, experimentation, and remediation. They consider queer cultural programming as crucial to this process of remediation and, namely, to transforming local Muslim social fabric and fostering social mixing. This discursive framing and the technologies of socio-spatial engineering it relies on, such as third place (*tiers-lieux*) start-ups and tactical urbanism (*urbanisme de préfiguration*), facilitate a local normalization of the question of sexual and cultural tolerance, while simultaneously reconfiguring, rather than remediating, urban stigma that surrounds both queer and Muslim communities. I track this ambivalence within departmental and municipal archives of hygiene and sanitary policy, as well as prefectural archives of sex work surveillance, to show that the co-constitutive dynamic of urban abjection and desire is a key feature of modern planning power's relationship to urban margins.

The dissertation is structured in five chapters that serve as varying entry-points into the field. Chapter 1 focuses on urban expertise, recasting the production of infrastructures of urban social mixing (*mixité*) in light of the colonial and urban management of difference in France and empire. Chapter 2 looks to the social promise of community gardens (*jardins partagés*) and showcases the moral and political tensions that course through the vegetal regeneration of interstices. Chapter 3 focuses on third places (*tiers-lieux*) as sites of *mixité* engineering wherein abject and desirable forms are potentially hybridized. Chapter 4 focuses on queer affects and shifts the inquiry toward street space and semi-public places, putting into relief how the 18th arrondissement's immigrant neighbourhoods already constitute resources for queer ethical poiesis. Chapter 5 turns to archives of sex work *réglementarisme* to engage a queer idiom of memory.

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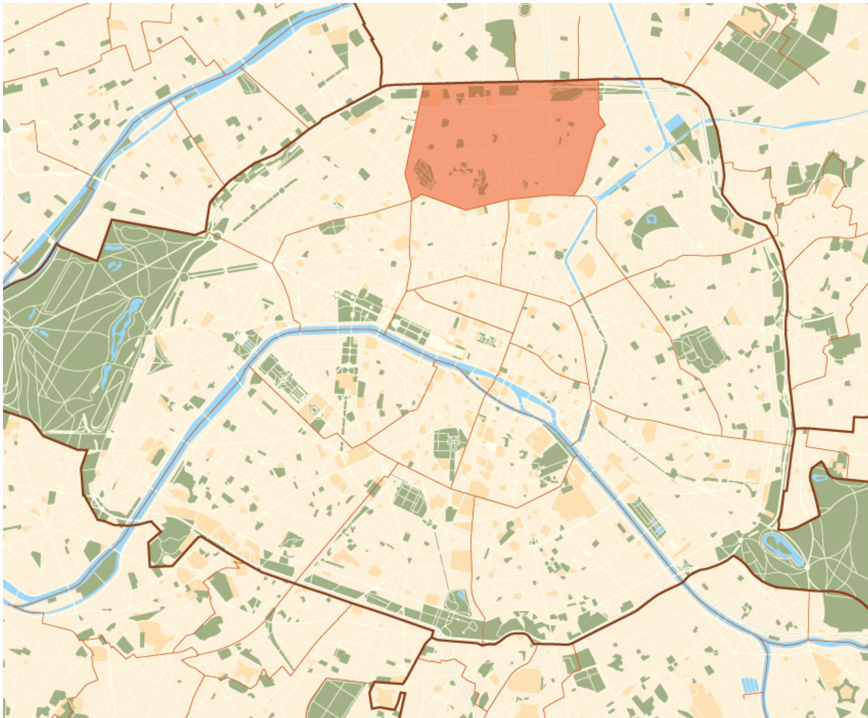
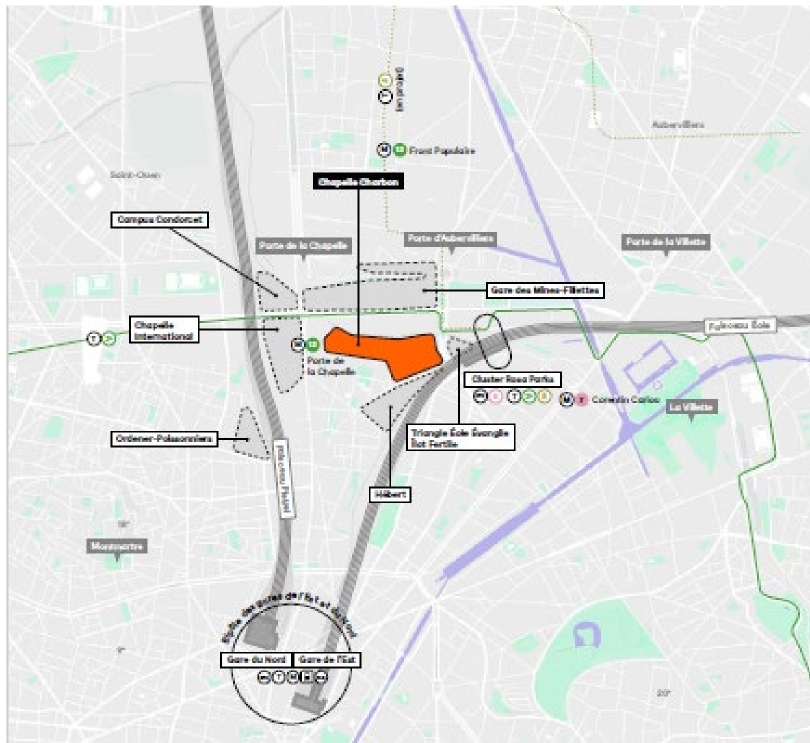
Maps. Locating Paris 18th arrondissement



[Figure 1. Maps of Paris with the 18th arrondissement highlighted. Map made by The Promenader, Creative Commons License.]

[Figure 2. Satellite view of the 18th arrondissement. The topography of the arrondissement is defined by the dip and rise of, respectively, the Montmartre Cemetery and the Butte Montmartre in the South-West, on the one hand, and the railway of Gare du Nord and Gare de l'Est that surround La Chapelle, on the other. Source: Atelier parisien d'urbanisme, 2021, *Synthèse du diagnostic territorial 18e arrondissement*.]



[Figure 3. Detail of urban developments in La Chapelle. Source: P&MA.]

Introduction

We cannot represent ourselves. We can't be represented.

Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons*

What does it mean for sexuality to be lived as orientated? What difference does it make 'what' or 'who' we are orientated toward in the very direction of our desire? If orientation is a meter of how we reside in space, then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as 'who' or 'what' we inhabit spaces with.

Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*

Question: Police, Polis, and Eros

"In looking for antecedents of Black radicalism," Cedric Robinson writes in the opening pages of *Futures of Black Radicalism*, "we should consider our individual moments of awakening" (Robinson and Robinson, 2017). Paris is a city that takes its toll on the people that come to it. But the 18th arrondissement is a place that gives; it offers shelter, it teaches lessons, which can be tough and bruise, but it is generous to the people that, for however long, take the time to look it in the eyes. Willing to learn certain lessons, in need of shelter, I found in the 18e this gift-like quality when I moved there to pursue a Masters in sociology in 2015. Living in the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood and undertaking work on the policing of public spaces provided the space for my "individual moments of awakening." By examining stop-and-frisk as a choreography of racialization, I learned what being an Arab in France meant – what that position entailed when faced by two police officers in the streets of the Zone. Thus, I encountered Paris by re-encountering my body, assessing my self in light of the ways certain spaces, in the street and in institutions, received me. This confirmed, at a personal level, that "the audacity to be somewhere we don't

belong, the racial taunts and aggressions experienced repeatedly must be factored in to the formation of racial identities" (Robinson and Robinson, 2017). I found myself inhabiting a community of experience alongside Black and Arab young men and boys, who were intimately aware of police contact being the grounds for non-consensual pat-downs and forms of unspoken sexual violence. *Normal, c'est normal, kho*, I heard an Algerian cigarette vendor say one day after a police patrol had left one vendor particularly shaken.

[Figure 4. Blurred detail of a military police officer holding an assault rifle while standing watch in front of a gendarmerie van, near the informal market of Barbès at the intersection of Boulevard Barbès and Boulevard de La Chapelle. Photo by Author.]

"But the critical moment," Robinson continues, "comes when we realize the political, historical, and social connectedness of those experiences and move from the personal, however important it may be, to the necessity of engagement, to the Black radical tradition" (Robinson and Robinson, 2017). What this "moment of awakening" taught me is that the sexual violence that police officers often direct at young men of colour – the potential,

the phantasm of police brutality, and its actualization through practice, the real violation inscribed on the body – is at the heart of the social script of policing. In its traumatic generosity, this experience taught me a sense of study as an actualization of the "necessity of engagement" that Robinson writes about. I learned this sense of study as I walked, during ephemeral connections and furtive conversations, in watching the streets move around me. I learned as I fell in love, and "remember[ed] that this is not only about pain, but also about shared knowledge, joy, and humor that are integral to those experiences" *(idem)*. I learned study by turning to archives, the ones that we find in North African music stores' bootleg cassettes; the ones you can buy from the informal book vendor who sets up his table on Place de Clichy every Thursday; the ones you have to be granted access to by certified archivists.

I found that the historical and political terrain on which I was learning (to study, to be myself) was rife with colonial war and industries of sex work, a lesson that historicized the police's uncanny erotic. In the 1950s, the infamous brothels of Rue de la Charbonnière were seated next to the informal interrogation cellars set up by Paris Police and its Algerian auxiliary force where suspected members of the Algerian National Liberation Front were being tortured. I found a city peopled by undesirables, tethered to the flux of colonial empire. In reading the works of historian Louis Chevalier (1973, 1980, 1985), I saw in the 18th arrondissement a site of socio-political struggle and experimentation, albeit one that had been persistently stigmatized.

Moved by the idea that "our pasts are not dead" (Robinson and Robinson, 2017), I envisaged a future where that palimpsestic city would come to life. But as I moved back in the now, continuing to engage in study through the street, I found disquiet rather than hope. The deployment of police checks as ceremonies of degradation (Garfinkel, 1956; Blanchard, 2014) was concomitant with the emergence of sexual tolerance as an object of urban policy, placing women and queer people at

odds with a more-than-spectral – Muslim, masculine, lumpen, migrant, and so on – racial other. That is to say, the historical and spatial relationship that may have existed between independent women living outside of marital tutelage, queer people, and colonial workers in the 18th arrondissement is being laboured upon by technologies of urban citizenship. With this disquiet, I shift the focus away from the police and its practices, and turn instead to the *polis* as a regime for ordering space and citizenship simultaneously.[1]

This dissertation treats with the urban regeneration process underway in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. It considers urban renewal (*renouvellement urbain*) in its moral, social, and political dimensions, as well as a project of infrastructural engineering. It focuses on certain urban objects – abandoned infrastructure, wastelands, the street, public interiors – and the ways in which they are invested (or not) by moral, social, and spatial engineering. Taking up urban policies of *mixité*, prefigurative urbanism, and *tiers-lieux* as key instruments of urban renewal, this dissertation examines how abjected spaces and subject positions are being reconfigured and recast in light of neoliberal desirability. In this work, urban expertise is a point of entry into the "vast moral project"

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[1] I mobilize the term *polis* rather loosely, to signal a form of political order that grants specific rights and access, and of which the structuring principles play out in the everyday between city-dwellers, be they citizens or not, through various forms of statutory embodiment (or "community"). I am aware of the debates, in Ancient Letters and Greek Studies, that oppose various definitions, illustrating how the concept can be used to refer to a variety of contexts in Ancient Greece and tends to be recast into the contemporary in inaccurate ways. The *polis* may be confused with a politico-legal order or constitution (i.e. the polity, πολιτεία), alternatively with a given community that may be supra- or infra-political (i.e. the people or ethnos, ἔθνος), or, finally, with the state as such. I use the notion in a way that collapses all three, while considering as the most important part of the *polis* that it be a territorialized entity, denoting a polity in which the state organizes the distribution of people, producing hierarchies and statuses unequally granted and relationality based on residence and mobility. See Sakellariou, 1989, Hansen and Nielsen, 2004 (for a general definitional discussion grounded in Ancient Greek Studies) or Castoriadis, 1983 (for a historical discussion more firmly grounded in political philosophy). "The object of the institution of the *polis*," Castoriadis writes,

> "is for [Pericles] the creation of a human being, the Athenian citizen, who exists and lives in and through the unity of these three: the love and 'practice' of beauty, the love and 'practice' of wisdom, the care and responsibility for the common good, the collectivity, the *polis*" (Castoriadis, 1983: 112).

As a concept for interrogating contemporary political arrangements, *polis* puts into relief how politico-legal frames work toward processes of subjectification, in a way that echoes the concept of governmentality that Foucault developed to examine modern forms of government and conduct.

of colonial Empire (Asad, 1992: 345) as one in a "totality of forces that converge to create (largely contingently) a new moral landscape" (Asad, 2003: 216). While I am particularly attentive to the ways queer people and cultures and African and Muslim residents are brought into the fold of policy, more than their practices as such, what I am interested in are the structures and conditions that mediate practice.

As an object of study, inquiring into urban policy in the 18th arrondissement highlights the ways in which coloniality and colonial governmentality continue to labour the French *polis*. Working with Brian Noble's (2015) reading of Eduardo Quijano (2007), I frame coloniality as "oppositional encounter" and as "apparatus or milieu" (Noble, 2015: 429). With the former, "coloniality can be thought of as the tendency of a 'self' in an encounter to impose boundary coordinates – such as those of territory, knowledges, categories, normative practices – on the domains of land knowledge, ways of life of an other who have prior, principal relations with those lands" (Noble, 2015: 429).

The definition Noble proposes is premised on the assumed indigeneity of the "other who have prior principal relations" with the spatial or cultural domain at stake. In the case of the neighbourhoods in the 18th arrondissement this dissertation is interested in, there is no evident temporal or spatial claim that can be made to describe the current inhabitants – even if their location is "historical" – as having "prior, principal relations with those lands," i.e. with priority neighbourhoods. However, prefigurative urbanism and *tiers-lieu* as instruments of *mixité*, framed as exemplars of "coloniality as encounter," highlight how coloniality "makes an additional move to rationalize the dominant presence of this [colonial] self within those [spatial or cultural] coordinates and to make the presence of the other subordinate to it" (Noble, 2015: 429). Noble further develops the concept by showing how coloniality "operates as an apparatus of modernity, a workaday containment field for defining, constraining and incorporating persons, as well as delimited populations and polities"

(Noble, 2015: 430). Noble thus "seats coloniality as a constitutive procedure of modernity," considering it central to subject formation.

Racial minorities are assigned to specific "territories, knowledges, categories, and normative practices" in ways that are largely bound up with dominant, state and market, ascription. Descendants of colonized peoples, now French citizens or immigrants in France, are indeed ascribed to what geographer Mustafa Dikeç (2007) called the "badlands of the Republic" and which can be understood as the imposition of "boundary coordinates" that Brian Noble describes. Prefigurative urbanism highlights how the process by which these coordinates go from being sources of stigma to potential resources for territorial diagnostics is also a process of renewal of colonial ascription, as their presence on these territories is both a given and something that must be changed, that which is in fact at the heart of the urban renewal process.

And so, with this work, I asked: what does it mean to make urban space desirable? Specifically, what is the substance of this desirability, what are the phantasms that give it its form? This research is interested in how technologies of urbanistic policy recompose the moral and spatial terrain upon which minoritized subject positions are meant to form and operate. As an inquiry into the colonial and the modern – as historical and contemporary notions – this research tracks how abjection and desire are constituted as targets and horizons of urban policy.

Paris 18 as Surrounds and Desirable Abject

It was while completing my fieldwork on policing (2015-2017) that the young Black and North African Arab men and boys I interviewed conveyed that they lived "in the shadows" (*dans l'ombre*) of Paris and wished to remain there. They intuited that although their "lives are necessarily geographic," in the sense that they participate in the commercial and cultural fabric of their

neighbourhood, they must also "struggle with discourses that erase and despatialize their sense of place" (McKittrick, 2006: xiii) as planners and policymakers erase or recast them in the mainstream image of Paris, in particular through the discourses and policies meant to foster social and functional *mixité*. Taking seriously these "shadows" – and the tension between opacity and legibility that they reveal – this dissertation builds on anthropologies of subjectivity and political rationalities (see Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Foucault, 2009; see also Foucault, 2000; Rabinow, 2003; Rabinow & Bennett, 2012; Stalcup, 2016) to examine how urban *mixité* – its techniques and rationalities – contributes to urban governmentality as "an activity designed to produce effects of rule" (Scott, 1999: 25). Specifically, taking hue from Black feminist scholarship (Gilmore, 2007; McKittrick & Woods, 2007; Shabazz, 2015; see also Ferreira da Silva, 2016; Weheliye, 2014, Wynter, 2003), this dissertation is animated by the idea that "racism […] undergirds socio-spatial organization" (Hawthorne, 2019: 9) and, as a corollary, that coloniality is key to understanding both the urban design process and the reconfiguration of the role and place of sexual and racial minorities within the polity.

Contemporary urban planning in the 18th arrondissement, specifically the current framework of prefigurative urbanism orientated toward the institution's desired outcome of social, functional, and morphological mixing (*mixité sociale, fonctionnelle, et morphologique*) can be understood as an attempt to reign in – to harness – "spatial formations of the disparate," (Simone, 2022: 4) which bring together various overlapping and oft contradictory "housing, commercial, industrial, logistical, recreational, entrepreneurial, and governmental projects" (*idem*). If "the consideration of these disparate forms is not just a matter of space but one of time, of things coming and going, appearing and disappearing and reappearing again, dependent on the practices through which they

are engaged," as AbdouMaliq Simone suggests, then the *surrounds* is the type of potential and liminal spatiality that this dissertation engages with.

[Figure 5. Renovation of the Collège Maurice Utrillo on Boulevard Ney. Photo by Author.]

This dissertation begins in dormant construction sites, poorly designed plazas and streets, wastelands, and repurposed urban objects. But rather than use the vocabulary of the *délaissé*, which suggests a rather neutral form of abandonment and is the conventional term used by city officials to refer to wastelands and other related spaces (Leray, Plottu and Plottu, 2024), I consider the surrounds of the 18th arrondissement as "abject spaces" (Isin and Rygiel, 2007; Russell, 2017). I do this to signal the moral tonality of urban zoning and the stratification of the city, as a general

matter of argument. This concept also denotes local specificities of North Paris, wherein certain neighbourhoods, backstreets, commercial activities, and aesthetic performances have the "ability to trouble and threaten boundaries" by destabilizing notions of integrity and impermeability (Russell, 2017: 558).

Abject space, as Amy Russell uses it, signals a sociopolitical relation between the abject and urban geographies of sex work. The streets of the Goutte d'Or, La Chapelle, and other neighbourhoods of the 18th arrondissement acquired disrepute through its association to street-level sex work – as opposed to *maison close* in-house sex work – and not, as it is common to assume, because of Muslim immigrants' presence, although contemporary assemblages of African and Muslim life absorb historical stigma. Isin and Rygiel developed "abject space" to investigate the relations between exception, abjection, and space. Russell applies it in her ethnography of human trafficking and urban sex work to highlight the regimes of visibility and invisibility that abjection structures. Abject space is "the space between private and public which simultaneously hides and renders visible the individuals it contains" (Russell, 2017: 558). And so, I conceptualize these spaces as abjected to underline the moral parameters that define and give urban marginality its boundaries, visibilities and opacities, and to put into relief a local history of sexual tolerance, regulation, and prohibition. However, in the way I use, the abject does not necessarily connote a negative form of human existence; I mobilize it to address the ambivalent relation that state and market actors – those who determine the parameters of inclusion – maintain with their own margins. The abject thus serves as a conceptual device to highlight how the excluded is always-already included as such. In that regard, I draw on a reading of Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical work on the notion.

In her work, Kristeva (1980) addresses the ambivalence of abjection, as one that involves both phobia and *jouissance*. They signal an attraction to the abject as one of the constitutive activities

of subjectivity; to reject and to be drawn to. Kristeva's work is in dialogue with the psychoanalytical writings of Jacques Lacan and she distinguishes both *jouissance* and phobia from desire. Broadly, in his theory of desire, Lacan argues that human desires are determined and always-already involved in and representative of social forms. Because our subjectivities enter the social world through language, they are determined by language and the symbolic order that structures it. The implication is that desires are therefore mediated by the symbolic order of language, such that even our "unconscious" desires illustrate phantasms rather than "real" objects. Actualized or accomplished desire does not exist as such in the sense that it results in a disillusionment, destabilizing both the symbolic order that feeds into phantasm and the subject's relationship to existing objects of desire. This interruption in the process of projection of desire is what Kristeva calls abjection: a disruption of the symbolic order by the eruption of the real.

I suggest that the ambivalent attraction that abjection exercises on subjectivity and the impossibility of actualizing desire without conjuring the abject reality of phantasm point to a central mechanism of power and diagnostics in contemporary urban governance. "[B]ecause the surrounds does surround," Simone argues, "it is in a relationship with what we feel certain about, what we claim to know, and it is from this vantage point that the identification of what populates the surrounds remains elusive" (Simone, 2022: 23). As a concept, the surrounds thus tether the research in this space of ambiguity, where abject qualities (subject positions, imaginary figures, tropes, practices, spaces and places) are re-presented, experimented with and on, and ambivalently brought into the fold of the urban project as an asset, a discharge, a reconfigured object of desire and abjection.

The surrounds refer to that which "exceeds definition and coherence and what insufficiently consolidates clear definition is an interstice of momentary possibility: a possibility for propositions and the rehearsal of experimental ways of living that circumvent debilitating extraction,

surveillance, and capture—for the time being" (Simone, 2022: 6); and it is specifically such spaces of potential that this dissertation turns to. It does so considering that such spaces of potentiality are key to the renewal not only of urban form but of contemporary regimes of citizenship. They are central to the re-territorialization of the norms and forms of inclusion and exclusion, of desirability and abjection. Put differently, urban policy continues its undertaking of capture by intervening directly within the surrounds, turning excess into resource.

Considering the surrounds as both being outside and inside, always within the fold and an unfolding of the project simultaneously, I refer to it to draw temporal, spatial, and relational threads. The Zone, the Maquis, the brothels, the alleyways, the campsite, the *épicerie* grocery shops, the drug markets, and abandoned infrastructure all constitute spaces that both sit outside and within the cultural, sexual, and commercial industries that give Paris its rhythms, textures, and fixtures. They are its surrounds inasmuch as they are kept in ambivalent regimes of visibility and relegation, both abject – as sources of potent affects of fear, repulsion – and desirable – as spaces of excess, creativity, improvisation and experimentation. These desirable qualities of poesis and adaptation are some of the ways residents "write themselves into a milieu that otherwise might seem to marginalize them" (Simone, 2018: 24); they also constitute the surrounds as a resource, home to an informal "platform providing for and reproducing life in the city" (Simone, 2004: 408). This dissertation is thus concerned with the enfolding of informal urban practices and modes of relation into policy. It is, therefore, oriented toward abolition as a political project "about eliminating all possibilities of capture" (Simone, 2022: 24; Gilmore, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The undertaking of this research relied on a set of concepts, which I have used to navigate and orient fieldwork. These concepts inform the ideas developed in this dissertation to the extent that they have scaffolded the production of research materials. They remain, however, methodological concepts: the writing mobilizes these concepts, sometimes explicitly, often implicitly, but turns to other notions, in particular colonial governmentality and abjection, which are more relevant analytical concepts. The following passage explains how I envisaged and engaged with fieldwork; it sets the stage for the dissertation's key arguments. These methodological concepts respond to a problem-space, which both reflects current socio-political blockages in France as well as the three dimensions through which urban life has been theorized: time, space, and relation.

Queer Assemblage: Inquiring into the Sexual Borders of the Polis

For this, I build on Mehamed Amadeus Mack's work on French sexual nationalism, and his suggestion that racialization be analyzed as a form of domination "that requires erotic subjugation" (Ferguson, 2004: 28 in Mack, 2016). Mehammed Amadeus Mack (2016) explains that the figure of masculine and virile French Maghrebi youth has become the object of national sexual fantasies, in the wake of sexualized reactions to the formal end to Empire (see Sheppard, 2017). Mack moves beyond a binary consideration for gender and immigrant sexualities in order to inquire into the emergent reformulation of French national borders, or what he names a *Sexagon*. Mack's underlying argument is that both homosexual and heterosexual immigrant practices work against the grain of national sexual culture. In a sense, they *queer* national culture; and by making them the topic of his research, Mack informs his analysis of French national—not minority—sexual culture.

Queer theory takes up the question of domination and power as processes, wherein material and symbolic forms of violence are enmeshed with contradictory phenomena of eroticism, sensuality, and pleasure. Building on Mack's work, queer theory invites me to consider political formation as implicated in an ethical process: the making of humans as subjects, whose queer relationality to political order implies an undetermined form of "ethical autopoiesis" (Faubion, 2001: 20).

Queer theory proposes a vocabulary for thinking of and with subject positions that are potentially subversive or transgressive, a transgression which emerges amidst a conflation of institutional designs and subjective desires. If queer theory struggles with the risk of its own sedimentation, as Mack notes, then perhaps the concept of queer assemblage can work against the fixing of categories and bodies in space.

Taken from the work of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980, 1986), assemblage is derived from the French word *agencement*, which can be understood as both an action, a mode of disposing and combining various heterogenous elements, and as the resulting arrangement of the combination of these elements. As Anthony Stavrianakis explains, "assemblage was conceptualized as a means of disrupting a tendency in psychoanalytic and philosophical practice and reflection to stifle and impede the ensembles […] that desire, action, and speech can produce" (Stavrianakis, 2021: 69). This does not preclude analyzing historical or state-level processes. Rather, it posits that the assemblage in question "has the form of existence that it has because of the speech and desire that sustain it" (Stavrianakis, 2021: 69).

Deleuze and Guattari define assemblage as having "two sides: it is a collective assemblage of enunciation [as well as] a machinic assemblage of desire" (1986:81). This ambiguous formulation is best understood when contextualized in Deleuze's tenuous relationship to structuralist thought.

He was, as Jon Bialecki explains, interested "in seeing structure as a net of potentiality, nodes of which are only transitorily inhabited by particular actualized figures" and which are subject to "the tempo and rhythm of the time and events that are the expressions of structure" (Bialecki, 2018: 4).

Paul Rabinow further developed the concept to operationalize for anthropological field- and concept-work. In his formulation, "assemblage" is an "experimental matrix of heterogeneous elements, techniques, and concepts" (2003: 56). Rabinow considers assemblages to exist as "secondary matrices from within which apparatuses emerge and become stabilized or transformed" and which stand "in a dependent but contingent and unpredictable relationship to the grander problematizations" (Rabinow, 2003: 56). The work of assemblage analysis within an anthropology of the contemporary then consists in "identify[ing] conjunctures between and among these diverse objects, and between and among their temporalities and their functionalities" (Rabinow, 2003: 56). I draw on this anthropological equipment and understand assemblages as a flexible and provisionally vague concept. Assemblage-thinking and -analysis considers how sociopolitical structures impact subjectivities without reducing the latter to mere reflections of the former.

Working with Deleuze's metaphor of assemblage as *machine désirante*, authors like Puar (2007), Saldanha (2006, 2010), Swanton (2010), and Weheliye (2014), have used the concept of assemblage to describe "processes of racialization that influence how bodies encounter each other in space and how they mobilize sets of meanings that feedback into socio-spatial orders and strategies of governance" (Kinkaid, 2019: 459, 462; see also Chen 2012). Specifically, Weheliye conceptualizes racialization as an ambivalent process, both volatile and persistent, lodged between "technological assemblages of humanity" and "racializing assemblages" wherein "flesh" emerges as an idea that "networks bodies, forces, velocities, intensities, institutions, interests, ideologies, and desires in racializing assemblages" (Weheliye, 2014: 12). The intent, here, is to engage

Foucault's biopolitics, Agamben's bare life, and Mbembe's necropolitics (Weheliye, 2014: 1-2) without eluding the "alternative critical, political, and poetic assemblages" that emerge outside the modern and racial bounds of "Man" (Weheliye, 2014: 12; Wynter, 2003).

Taking the example of a police pat-down, I could de-compose the frisking movements of the police officer in terms of collective enunciations (like the homophobic police doctrines officers operate in) but also in terms of machinic desire (as that which articulates police doctrines with homoerotic and corporeal sanction during pat-downs). Taking police practices as elements of a racializing assemblage, the differentiated subject position that emerges as otherness are such not because of natural or static characteristics, but, thinking with Weheliye and Stavrianakis, it "has the form of existence that it has because of the speech and desire that sustain it" (Stavrianakis, *op. cit.*).

Queer assemblage is then the heterogeneous matrix that gives form to contemporary queerness, and informs my analysis of the *polis*. I propose to mobilize the concept of queer assemblage to approach *polis* as heterogeneous historical and topographical processes which involve speech and desire (*eros*) enmeshed with violent phenomena. I focus on the relation between queer assemblage and *polis* (and its apparatuses and problematizations), rather than typify queerness, and instead allow queer assemblage to guide me through space and time in the 18th arrondissement.

Archive and Trace: Inquiring into Mnemonics

In an article on "colonial aphasia," historical anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler (2011) notes that research on the historical underpinnings and contemporary articulations of "France's own racialized polity" have rarely, if only recently, been taken up by French researchers (see however Dorlin, 2009). Colonial aphasia refers to "an occlusion of knowledge, […] a difficulty generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts with appropriate things" (Stoler, 2011:

125) when it comes to contemporary French historiography of colonialism. Colonial aphasia precludes critical analyses of biopolitical othering such as racism, and thwarts potential avenues for addressing residual and actual forms of coloniality in contemporary France.

My premise is that, beyond questions of form, access or national memorialization, this predicament emerges from what historian Todd Sheppard has called "the invention of decolonization" during and following the Algerian war of independence (1954-1962). Part of our difficulties in speech, conceptual and analytical, has to do with the invention of decolonization as a linear and concluded narrative. Building on Sheppard, if decolonization was invented to conceptually explain the formal end to Empire, it also allowed for the persistence of colonial governance to go uninterrogated. In other words, French colonial aphasia emerges from the process of simultaneously maintaining "overseas" *départements* as active remnants of its colonial empire, alongside metropolitan differentiated territories such as the ZSP, while narratively framing the present as post-decolonization.

Colonial aphasia can thus be qualified as a contemporary predicament, one "within which old and new elements take on meaning and functions" (Rabinow, 2007: 24) and work to produce particular mnemonic, conceptual, and affective barriers to inquiry. I turn here to an anthropology of the contemporary, and situate the contemporary (see Rabinow, 2007: 2-5) as a preferential site to inquire into shifting modes of subjectivation, as moving through time and space. Anthropologist Paul Rabinow takes the contemporary to mean a "moving ratio of modernity, moving through the recent past and near future in a (non-linear) space that gauges modernity as an ethos already becoming historical" (Rabinow, 2007: 2). Bridging an anthropology of the contemporary with a historical anthropology of colonialism, I propose that in archives of urban planning, hygienic and police sciences, I can discern traces of the ways in which subjectivities have been formed and

reformulated in their movements through time and space. This archival trace-work, along with my other modes of inquiry, then allows me to characterize such modes of subjectivation, as moving between the past, present and future, and to account for the "effects of rule" (Scott, 1999: 25) of colonial governance, without assuming a given form to be studied.

By engaging coloniality through an anthropology of the contemporary, I am attentive to ways in which reflexivity has allowed for both forms and topics of anthropology to evolve considerably (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Since the end of the Second World War and the gradual accession to formal independence of most British dependencies, anthropology has had to "reinvent" itself (see Hymes, 1972; Asad, 1973) as colonialism became "a distinctive problem for anthropological knowledge and anthropological practice" (Scott, 2018: 2232). As the critical concern shifted in the 1980s from the role of the discipline in colonial rule toward the colonial forms of knowledge produced by anthropologists, so did anthropologists move toward questioning their modes of representation and their textual practices (see Clifford and Marcus, 1986). This came with a renewed attention to various forms of resistance to colonial governance (see for instance J. Scott, 1985).

This shift worked alongside the Subaltern Studies Collective's "re-interrogation of liberal and nationalist accounts of colonial rule," which "resonated with the anthropological discontent with universalism and Eurocentrism" (Scott, 2018: 220). By the 1990s, anthropologists were then inquiring into the relationship between modernity and colonialism (see Asad, 1992; D. Scott, 1997). Rethinking the relations between the modern, the colonial, the national, the sovereign was connected to Michel Foucault's work on governmentality (see notably Foucault, 2004: 111-112). Out of this disciplinary history emerged the concept of "colonial governmentality" crafted by

David Scott to analyze "those way in which colonial power is organized as an activity designed to produce effects of rule" (Scott, 1999:25).

Building on Scott's concept of colonial governmentality and Foucault's archeo- and genealogical method of inquiry (see Rabinow, 1998), I engage the French colonial state as involved in knowledge, government, and subjectivation processes. If colonialism can be studied as an "activity designed to produce effects of rule" (Scott, 1999: 25), I consider that the French colonial state, as a governing state, can be studied when and where such "effects of rule" between colonial rationalities, spatial arrangements, and subjectivations take place.

I take this up by being attentive to the history of French urbanism, as an exemplar of colonial circuits that have affected contemporary metropolitan urban topography (see Rabinow, 1995; Wright, 1991), and as a field of state intervention emerging in 17th century France and concerned with the creation of a sovereign *polis* and its regulative policing techniques (Foucault, 2004: 321-348). I suggest that focusing on modern and colonial urbanity is a strategic move to consider, as Talal Asad, David Scott and others do, how modernity "involves the reformation of subjectivities and the reorganization of social fields in which subjects act and are acted upon," (Asad, 1992: 337). I therefore conceive of the 18th arrondissement of Paris as such a field-site for inquiring into the "reformulation of subjectivities" and propose the concept of archival trace to orient my movements through Time.

Investigating queer assemblage in its historical and spatial movements requires that I think through the archive in a dynamic way. As David Scott explains, for Foucault an archive is not only the object that historians turn to, it also consists in "the dense network of allusions, events, concepts, images, stories, figures, personalities, that inhabit the sub-terrain of statements, animating them,

giving them sense as well as force" (Scott, 2008: vii). This suggest that inquiry should focus on "archiving as a process" rather than assume archives as repositories of historical data (Stoler, 2002: 87). Indeed, Stoler engages archives "not as sites of knowledge retrieval" (2002: 90) but rather, and by being attentive to their forms and circulations, as "epistemological experiments" (Stoler, 2002: 87). Stoler turns us to archives' "peculiar *form*" (author's emphasis; Stoler, 2002: 90); which I take up as an opportunity to "anthropologize the West" and make "those domains taken for granted as universal […] seem as historically peculiar as possible" (Rabinow, 1986: 241).

This interrogation of archival form, to think with David Scott, consists in a work of archeology whereby the archeologist "participates in the construction of what might be called an *institution of memory* and an *idiom of memory*" (Scott, 2008: vii). I am also aware that my engagements with the archive and with memory are intimately tied to silence and omissions—to something that is not yet known or understood, and perhaps can only be unknown as they remain "outside the boundaries of the archive" (see Hartman, 2008). To engage this liminal space of absence and presence, I turn to the concept of trace. Thinking with Napolitano, I consider that the "trace is at once an analytical tool and an ethnographic site for inquiry" (Napolitano, 2015: 48) that allows me to investigate "when particular lingering histories of attachments and marginalities have a material form, but cannot be conveyed by existing structures of meaning" (Napolitano, 2015: 47-48).

Following Jacques Derrida's volatile and indefinite conception of traces as limitations in language and indications of absences, I engage anthropology's disciplinary archive and propose the concept of archival trace. For this, I build on prior concept-work with Robert Desjarlais, who mobilizes traces to investigate distant and recent lingering phenomena of political violence (Desjarlais and Habrih, 2022). I will use archival traces to construct genealogies of the elements that compose queer assemblage, focusing especially on the interweaving of erotic and violent phenomena. As

such, archival traces may be found in the urban space I traverse and live in (as for example Finkelstein, 2019), the bodies-subjectivities interlocuters and I inhabit – as Singh (2018) suggests – or through investigating conventional archives of urban planning, hygienic and police sciences, as well as musical, cinematographic, literary documents found or set in the 18th arrondissement.

Affective Topography: Inquiring into Space-in-the-Making

During one interview with a key queer interlocutor named Amnesia, as our walk through the 18th arrondissement came to an end, Amnesia spoke to me of a demonstration that had taken place in June 2020. I had also attended it, although we had not seen each other there; the demonstration had been organized by the Comité Adama in support of Assa Traoré and Bagui Traoré, both siblings of Adama Traoré, a young man of Malian descent killed in July 2016 while being chased by military police (*gendarmerie*). Thousands had rallied in front of the Paris High Court at Porte de Clichy. Although we had wanted to parade through the streets, the gathering had quickly been blocked by anti-riot police and devolved into a small riot leaving burning garbage cans on the boulevard.

I had gone home that night; Amnesia had gone to a friend's apartment in La Chapelle for an *apéro*. Many had left the main demonstration and paraded in groups through the 18th arrondissement. Upon seeing them, Amnesia had joined them and conveyed to me the excitement and joy of demonstrating in the 18e, a *quartier populaire* where denizens clapped from the windows and encouraged them. For my part, I had been pulled out of the apartment, along with a friend and neighbour, by the sound of stun grenades and rubber bullets. We had walked around and came across dozens of *gendarmerie* officers running in formation and descending upon the arrondissement toward the Boulevard de La Chapelle, likely chasing the small groups of demonstrators Amnesia had joined.

“You have a biographical relationship to this space,” I noted.

“It’s true,” they replied, “you could totally do an affective cartography of the city of Paris, relying on these general emotional relationships to the city, anecdotes about everyday life, break-ups, nights-out, drag performances in the streets… I wonder how you’d untangle it all, though.”

As we reached the Rotonde de Stalingrad, at the limits of the 18th and 19th arrondissement, we recalled demonstrations we’d participated in alongside railway workers, during the movement against the 2016 labour reform. We spoke of the waves of privatizations that had occurred since, and how the Grand Paris public works seemed to oddly seal off that era. “Le Grand Paris,” Amnesia concluded, “it’s Haussmann in the 21st century, absolutely titanic (*titanesque*).”

Anthropologists of space, since the 1990s and the “spatial turn,” have built on the work of geographers (such as Massey and Allen, 1984; Agnew and Duncan, 1989), phenomenological theories focused on the body and sensorial perception and experience of space (for instance Merleau-Ponty, 1962), as well as neo-Marxists’ focus on the political economy of space-making (see Harvey, 1973 and Lefebvre, 1991). Mateusz Laszczkowski argues that while anthropology generatively engaged this scholarship, it also inherited a set of binary notions that “may impede the understanding of the social dimensions of space” (Laszczkowski, 2016: 14-15).

For one, anthropologists engage with *space* and *place* alternatively. For some, “places are secondary subject constructs carved out from objective space” (2016: 15; see Casey, 1996). While for others, “space is a practiced place” (de Certeau, 1984: 117). This distinction between place and space carried over to other modes of conceptualization, distinguishing between the material and the subjective, between social production (of physical space) and social construction (of phenomenological place).

These binaries serve the dialectical analysis that structures Lefebvrian urban studies and, in that sense, have contributed to considerable efforts in spatial analytics. For instance, research on the Republican penal state (Dikeç, 2006, 2007), on the "spatialization of social problems" (Tissot and Poupeau, 2005), on the making of urban categories by the State (Tissot, 2007), on the territorialization of the penal state (Villanueva, 2018), and on the processes of territorial stigmatization (Wacquant *et al*, 2014) concentrate on State processes and their effects on social groups in way that highlight the State's production of space through the definitive creation of territorial zones.

In a distinct, but similar engagement with spatial production and power, the work of American scholars on *Black geographies* "disclose[s] how the racialized production of space is made possible in the explicit demarcations of the spaces of *les damnés* as invisible/forgettable at the same time as the invisible/forgettable is producing space—always, and in all sorts of ways" (Woods and McKittrick, 2007: 4). To think with George Lipsitz (2008), Black geographies highlight the dynamics of *how racism takes place*. They also engage the interstices of the seen and the unseen, and the ways we understand and qualify certain spaces in binary impermeable ways, i.e., as racialized or not, as gendered or not.

I build on this and follow urban geographer Lorena Muñoz and her suggestion that *queering* "street-scapes" can offer "a more expansive framework for understanding the fluid constructions of race, class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity in space and place" (Muñoz, 2010:58). A queer inquiry, understood as both an analytic and an ethical process, can then "facilitate understandings of 'pseudo' heteronormative spaces as fluid temporal queer space" in a way that is attentive to the "multiple positionalities, identities and perspectives of the marginalized 'other' in gendered, classed and racialised spaces" (Muñoz, 2010:58).

Building on queer and Black geographies, and following Lazsczkowski, I want to engage "places and spaces as complex, multivocal and dynamic" and to move away from splitting space into "separate planes of matter and 'meaning'" (Laszczkowski, 2016: 17). For this, I look to an anthropology of space that engages affects and subjectivity as spatially constituted, and constitutive of space.

I understand affect as allowing me to engage "social formation[s] […] at the very edge of semantic availability" (Williams, 1977: 132). In turning our attention to "social experience which is still *in process*" (*idem.*), Williams turns to feelings to "mobilize an entire affective register […] in order to enlarge the scope and definition of materialist analysis" (Ngai, 2005: 360). In line with such affective materialist analysis, anthropologist Yael Navaro-Yashin generates and uses the concepts of affective geography to interrogate the circulation of affect between landscapes, objects, and subjectivities (Navaro-Yashin, 2009: 4). Grounded in a historical reflection on the aftermath of war and displacement, the concept of affective geography puts into relief the subjective and affective processes by which space is produced, constructed, and imagined (see Navaro-Yashin, 2012).

With this understanding of affects, I build on Navaro-Yashin's anthropology of affective space and propose the concept of *affective topography*. Topography, from the Greek *topos* for place, is defined as "the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area" (Oxford definition). An affective topography would consist in interrogating the circulation and accumulation of affects in urban space and how these reflect, inflect, and shape subjects' relationships to urban space. The notion of topography allows me to account for the multi-dimensional and multi-directional arrangement of urban space as it appears and as it is and has been invested by urban planning.

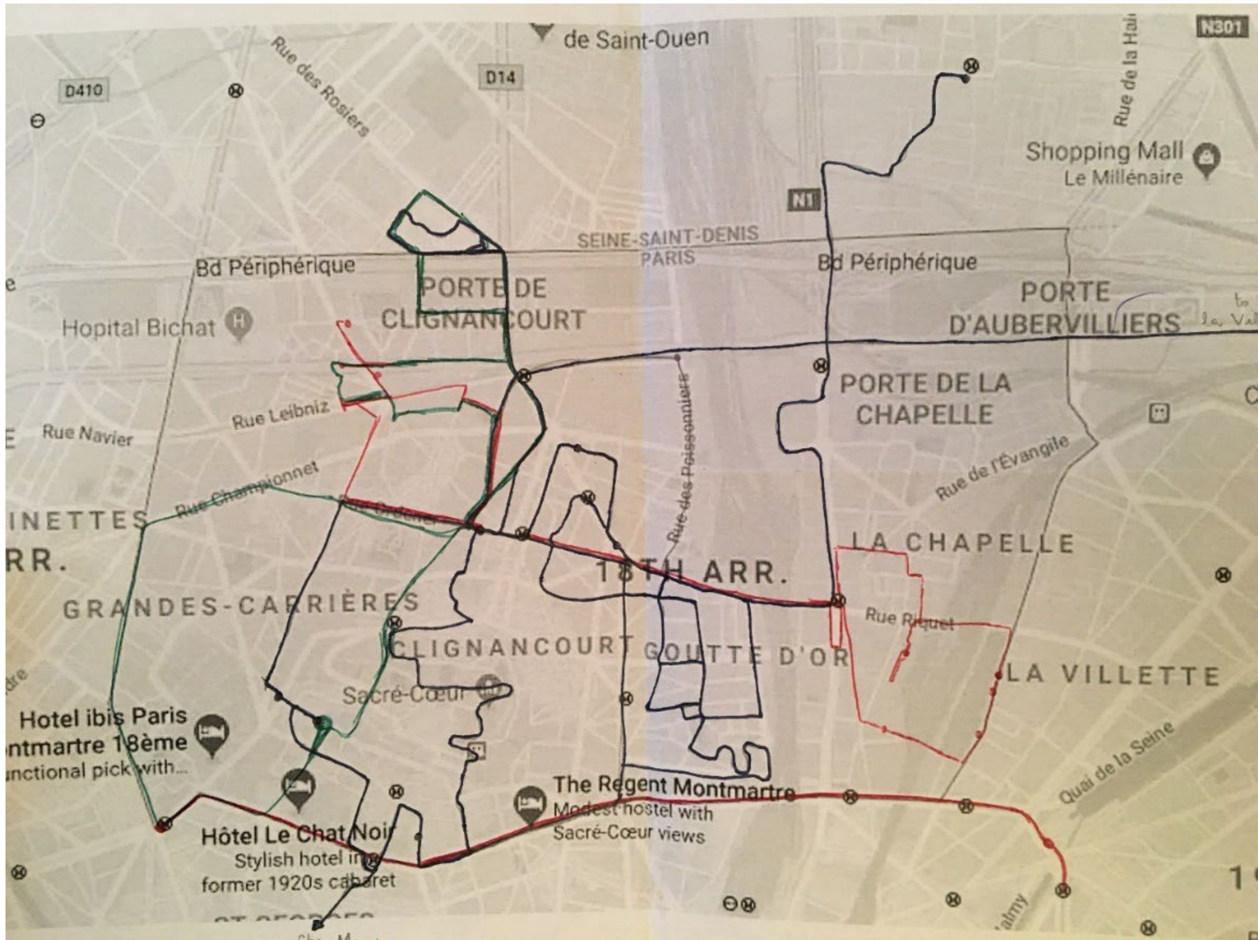
It should be duly noted that the 18th arrondissement is divided into neighborhoods by stairs and vertical slopes, which often signal passage between spatialized forms of stigma or prestige, such as class or racial hierarchies. These topographical elements of the arrondissement are invested by urban planning, which renews and changes "the arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features" of *topos* on the one hand, but which also reflect different forms of affective accumulation and sedimentation, on the other. I use affective topography to inquire into the affective territorialization of the *polis* and to ground my inquiry into queer assemblage in a spatial field.

Methods

I put these concepts – queer assemblage, affective topography, and archival trace – into motion by taking up conventional and experimental ethnographic methods. In addition to interviews and chance conversations, photography, and archival research, I relied on urban drift (*dérive urbaine*) as a key mode for producing fieldwork materials.

Urban drift (*dérive urbaine*, see Khatib, 1958, Debord, 1956, Desjarlais and Habrih, 2022; see also Careri, 2002, Jacques, 2015, Macherey, 2009) constitutes both my entry into fieldwork as well as a recursive method I employed to revisit locales within my field-site. Solitary drifts allowed me to get lost in an urban space that has, through the years, become more-than-familiar. It fostered the sort of radical openness that ethnographic work requires. Put differently, the *dérive* forces one to engage in what phenomenologists would call "bracketing" (Desjarlais and Throop, 2011): a momentary suspension of judgment meant to allow for the unexpected to emerge from one's engagement with time and space through relations with others (*autrui*). I combined drifting with a practice of "floating observations" (Pétonnet, 1982), which relied on a shifting of scale and focus during my drifts to "access the underlying logics and tensions that organize urban space" (Pétonnet,

1982: 39). This modality of observation meant that I spent a considerable amount of time "hanging out" (Driessen and Janssen, 2013) in public places to establish, at times, research relationships and, more often, engage in chance conversations.



[Figure 6. A week's worth of drifts traced on a Google Map print of the 18e. Source: Author.]

With *dérive urbaine,* I try to adopt a method that specifically addresses how the "open space model" of urban planning in Paris has "engendered practices of control and policing in the absence of spatial separation" (Kleinman, 2012: 568). I am interested in the ways segregation is being reconfigured in Paris, relying less on physical separation – through, for instance, walls (see Brown, 2017) – and more on a refined

approach to proximity and segregation (Kleinman, 2019, 2020).[2] With this method, the dissertation examines the ambivalent relations between marginalization and built environment, contemporary and colonial urbanity, and the impact of policy on the ways urban spaces and minoritized subjectivities take form.

Significantly, I conducted drift-interviews with key queer interlocutors in public space, without pre-determined scripts or questions. The decisions of my interlocutors provided the interview guide, as their relationships with 18^{e} affective topography – physical places, memories, and the condensed emotions they conjured – provoked and structured these “situated engagements with epistemic partners” (Marcus in Rabinow et al, 2008: 71). I used this mode of interlocution with three participants: Deluxe, a French citizen of Lebanese descent, who I met in 2015 on the encampments of the 18th and 10th arrondissement where he founded and coordinated a support group for queer asylum seekers; Amnesia, a French, lesbian drag performer, whom I met in 2016 during student protests against the labour reform known as Loi Travail; and Abdellah Taïa, a gay Moroccan novelist whose work draws on semi-autobiographical narratives grounded in the 18th arrondissement and other immigrant neighbourhoods of Paris.

I conducted conventional, semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 2006) with urban experts: urbanists, architects, engineers, start-up managers, landscapers, botanists, all working for a variety of private firms, cooperatives, and local government offices; gardeners coordinating local grassroots community gardens (*jardins partagés*); and welfare workers operating locally in social housing estates on behalf of the national urban policy known as *politique de la ville*. These

[2] I made a case for considering gentrification in the Goutte d’Or as a process of refinement of segregation through physical proximity and renewed modalities of intercultural (im)permeability, in a Master thesis presented at the Institute of Politcal Studies in 2017 (*Sur la gentrification de la Goutte d’Or. Proximité physique et ségrégation fine*, Sciences Po. Paris, 2017).

interviews often took place via calls on Zoom or on the phone, interlocutors often letting me know of their busy schedule and squeezing me in between two meetings or field interventions in a housing estate or an ongoing construction site. Some, however, agreed to meet in their office – as was the case with most officials speaking on behalf of the city of Paris or the Mairie of the 18th arrondissement – or in cafés close to their place of work. Others, coincidently the ones that had a similar schooling as me, offered to meet within infrastructural projects, ongoing worksites or delivered developments. These interviews, although not drifts as such, were organized along the same lines of drift-interviews in the sense that topography – in these cases, the ongoing transformation of space and reformulation of spatialized semiotics – ordered our mutual engagement.

Finally, an outlier in this mode of interlocution is Marie-Pierre Pruvot, a former cabaret dancer and one of France's first trans women to publicly undergo a legal and medical gender transition. Commonly known by her stage name Bambi, Marie-Pierre offered to meet in her home in a housing estate north of Paris. I had offered to meet in public, curious, as I had been with other queer interlocutors, to see where she would choose to meet, but the nearly 90-year-old retired teacher was particularly solicited by journalists and cabarets, and, as one would expect, she was too tired to walk around the city in the way I had suggested and preferred a more intimate setting for our conversation.

A last, important component of the work is archival. My research into the archive consisted in working on online archives, particularly visual archives, namely photography and painting, spanning the *Belle Époque* to the 1960s. This work focused on representations of queerness and women, relying primarily on works depicting sex work and sex work adjacent nightlife. I followed this thread into State archives, consulting a number of boxes at the Archives de Paris (municipal

archives) and the Archives de la Préfecture de Paris (police archives) in person, focusing this time on urban hygienism and the registries of the "vice squad" (*brigade mondaine*). I also consulted archives in person and online at the Bibliothèque nationale de France and its online platform Gallica, as well as the Criminocorpus database, to corroborate elements found in both State archives and on unofficial online archives.

Working with the idea of "bounded field-site" (Candea, 2007) as a way to ground the multiplicity this project was bound to encounter, I decided to limit my inquiry to the 18th arrondissement of Paris. I considered it a privileged vantage point from which to study the cultural and racial politics of urban government and I had developed a privileged relationship to it, by living there for nearly a decade. In deciding to engage a space that was both familiar and familial, however, I needed to equip myself through techniques of disorientation: I engaged in more or less planned drifts to encounter new aspects of space that I had not noticed before and I began extensive archival fieldwork to develop a new historical consciousness of the 18th arrondissement. This research thus began with an archive in hand, something that tethered the different conceptual approaches I had assembled for fieldwork. Entering the work through public space, I wandered in the 18th arrondissement with a set of addresses of stores, cabarets, and restaurants that stood out as public places of sociability for trans women in the 1980s: the *Almanach des Transsexuelles et Travesties*.

The places in the list had all changed; some had changed owner, a bar becoming a CBD cannabis shop; others no longer existed, windows boarded up or a completely new building in its stead; significantly, several venues were now *tiers-lieux,* commercial and cultural venues central to contemporary urban regeneration in France. This short-lived attempt to construct my inquiry with trans interlocutors through my engagement with this archive oriented me toward another approach:

to continue thinking about queerness, about the place of queer people in the 18th arrondissement, not as a coherent identifiable social group sharing an identity

This was further motivated by the refusal of trans women's and sex workers' grassroots organization to participate in the research. As an already overstudied group (Bonté, 2021), I welcomed this refusal[3] as an invitation to respect a degree of opacity; to move away from a queer anthropology focused on sex acts and gender transition (Boellstorff, 2007). Yet, in moving about urban space with the *Almanach* in hand – and later, in mind – I was attuned to trans and queer public life, noticing the everyday movements of my trans and queer neighbours, while "looking away" (Stevenson, 2020). I began "to consider how a queer and/or trans method of reading urban space – beyond a focus on queer and trans people – might provide useful analyses of how racialized gender and sexuality script urban neighborhoods and their patterns of use and development" (Knittle, 2022: 454). And so, instead of focusing on queer sex acts or trans trajectories, I look to urban sites, wherein contemporary regimes of visibility of queer, racialized, and abject modalities

[3] What I refer to as refusal does not relate directly to existing anthropological literature concerned with ethnographic refusal. In this literature the refusal of the subject to be textually captured may be understood as a form of resistance, a refusal of the authoritative function that ethnographic knowledge plays in situations of colonial sovereignty (Simpson, 2007; Simpson, 2017). It may also refer to the analysts' deliberate or unwitting refusal to describe a given context in-depth, through an ethnography of cultural "thickness" (Ortner, 1995). In my case, the refusal I write about is more procedural and although it has political implications, its virtue is not so straightforward. The refusal of grassroots organizers to engage in this research project is related to the problem of "overstudy" (*surétude*) that queer communities – in particular, trans women – face in Paris. A relatively small community, that frequents a few venues, is thus highly visible and whether or not people and locations are anonymized, it is safe to assume that most studies undertaken since 2015 in France involve the same group of people. And so, refusal appears to be a logical outcome to dubious scientific interest. In the case of Act-Up, the refusal to respond to social scientists is related to issues of misrepresentation: in fact, scholars are part of a list, alongside playwrights and scenarists, of people that are most likely not welcome, unless they want to join the organization. The latter point is also echoed by ACCEPTESS-T. There, scholars are welcome but their research must respond to the immediate needs of the organization by, for instance, proposing a study of the social determinants of sex workers health or conducting a qualitative and quantitative analysis of oestrogen hormone replacement therapy. In either case, an ethnography *qua* experiments in methods, theory, and textual composition is, rather understandably, out of the question. However, this refusal has the incongruous consequence of favoring conventional approaches to research, in such a way that ethnography or sociological surveys would yield legible data, which could then be use as leverage toward state and biomedical institutions. While I understand the importance of such "hard" knowledge dictated by necessity, I do stress that this form of refusal is entirely implicated in contemporary regimes of representation and identity, which rely on transparency and forego any attempt to develop an ethnography through "opacity," as Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation suggest.

of public life are being shaped, while showing that "attention to dominant conceptions of racialized sexuality and gender is integral to an accurate articulation of infrastructural, sociopolitical, and cultural patterns in contemporary cities" (Knittle, 2022: 454).

Because the day-to-day of fieldwork consisted primarily of hours of *dérives* in street space and semi-public places, chance conversations and short-hand note taking, I often found myself wandering, mentally and physically, uncertain of the path the argument would take and how. I came to use photography and visuals as a kind of therapeutic or palliative to tether the research process in a form that I could revisit and reconsider as I moved forward in time. From photography, I went on to attend drawing sessions in the basement of a Montmartre bistro, and attempted to sketch bodies and spaces as I could recall them or based on images. Well after fieldwork, I turned to Google Maps' "street-view" feature to visualize anew the drifts that I had logged in my notes. To echo this aspect of the work, I have included a number of visuals, photographs, screenshots of "street-views" and other digital materials, along with drawings of interlocutors, street space, or objects.

Applying methods is always an exercise in experimentation, of engaging one's corporeality and psychic life with a given context to allow for materials to emerge. In the case of this work, this experimentation led to surprising encounters. Rather than encounters with marginality or oblique spaces – I was prepared for such encounters – what surprised me was finding urbanists, city officials, and architecture students wondering the streets in similar ways as I was. These encounters – I would at times linger, listening to a professor lecture in the street to his students or to a city official present territorial diagnostic to a group of experts – left me with a sticky feeling I could not shrug off. What does it mean that my inquiry, of which the sensibility is somewhat oppositional,

that the methods I used, however experimental they might be, in fact resemble the methods of knowledge production deployed by urban experts and political authorities?

[Figure 7. Local business actors and city officials huddle around a map during a visit of Montmartre as part of its UNESCO Heritage Site application. Photo by Author.]

The methods we work with may be enmeshed in technologies of power, of diagnosis and intervention, while continuing to emerge – in their singular, momentary form – from the sensibility and practice of the person who engages in the work. In that way, I remain attached to the idea that this research into urbanity may be construed as an "embodied experience governed by the ways infrastructures produce the ambient conditions of everyday life" (Larkin, 2013: 336-337). Tethered to a critique of the colonial production of otherness, this could then be construed as a project of legibility that goes against the grain of government legibilisation of abject space. If "[t]o read

something – a poem, a building, an expression, the room – is to critically interpret its communicative details" (Rich, Rizzuto and Zieger, 2022: 3) then, despite legibility and transparency being accessories of government, reading can be an activity that renders "infrastructures legible as the aesthetic and political spaces of inequalities" (2022: 5).

[Figure 8. Spray painted graffito on a window sill near the Saint-Pierre market: "urban reading" (*lecture urbaine*). Photo by Author.]

During an extensive visit of a housing development that had recently been delivered near Porte de la Chapelle one interlocutor explained how, years prior when he was a student in architecture, he had wandered under the highway underpass of the Boulevard Périphérique to write a sensory

narrative (*une étude sensible*) as part of his coursework. He contemplated the distance he had travelled, from his days of poetic explorations of Porte de La Chapelle to his meetings with government officials in chauffeured cars speeding on the Boulevard Périphérique, discussing the millions of euros invested by Espaces ferroviaires to transform dormant rail infrastructure into vibrant neighbourhoods; he conveyed a feeling of vertigo produced by a moral-ethical question he had yet to resolve.

As Marc Vachon explains in a review of drifting as speculative method, Situationists' formalization of *dérive urbaine* was an attempt to stabilize and rationalize the practice, to deliberately engage in spatial experimentations and "provoke desirable situations" (Debord, 1996: 86). Apart from my own sensibility, which I believe fails to align with the political and logistical objectives of contemporary urban policy, I could not find a convincing way of distinguishing my way of producing urban knowledge and theirs. This tension – between ethnographic methods and territorial diagnostics, statistics and other modes of State and market knowledge production – animates the writing here; an unresolved, but critical and generative, issue.

Chapter 1

Infrastructures of Mixité

Entre Saint-Ouen et Clignancourt
Je suis rev'nue hier faire un tour
Sur la zone.
Quel chang'ment alors j'ai trouvé :
On démolit de tous côtés.
Quel cyclone...
Plus d'bosquets, plus d'baraqu's en bois,
Plus d'ces chansons qu'étaient pour moi
Une aumône.
Et devant mes souv'nirs détruits,
Tout' seul' j'ai pleuré dans la nuit
Sur la zone.

Between Saint-Ouen and Clignancourt
I came back yesterday for a stroll
In the Zone.
What a change I’ve found there:
They’ve demolished on all sides.
What a cyclone…
No more groves, no more wooden sheds,
None of these songs that once were my
Alms.
And in front of my destroyed memories,
I cried all alone in the night
In the Zone.

Entre Saint-Ouen et Clignancourt, 1933 written by Maurice Aubret, interpreted by Edith Piaf

… a stock of accumulated goods devoted to the production of other goods; a city serving as the seat of government; most serious, punishable by death.

… an encircling anatomical structure; a region or area set off as distinct from surrounding or adjoining parts; a territory created for a particular purpose.

“Capital” and “Zone” entries in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary online

Introduction

This chapter examines contemporary urban design process, paying special attention to how public-private capital is invested in urban renewal and how these capital-intensive investments reshape Paris as a Capital city. I focus on the northern parts of the 18th arrondissement where urban developments extend the limits of desirable Paris, in particular around the Porte de La Chapelle, to understand the techniques, scientific and cultural, involved in the (re-)production of the city as a cultural and spatial commodity. As Keller Easterling writes in *Extrastatecraft* (2014), "[w]ell rehearsed theories, like those related to Capital or neoliberalism continue to send us to the same places to search for dangers while other concentrations of authoritarian power escape scrutiny" (Easterling, 2014: 22). I thus remain attached to capital, while considering, alongside Walter Benjamin, the ways in which the city itself becomes a commodity-on-display, perceived through an array of cultural and technological phantasmagorias. The cultural problematic at the heart of capital-intensive spatial build-up consists in part in the phantasm of commodity; as any play on light and opacity, it also involves shadows and spaces of relative darkness, a negative of the desirable commodity. A way of working with these regimes of visibility and desirability is to contrast Paris-Capital with the "Zone" – a space of informal dwelling and commerce that circled Paris, within the space that now sits under or within the Boulevard Périphérique[4] – to signal the dialectic that animates Paris in general, and the 18th arrondissement specifically, between the informal and the formal.[5] *Entre Saint-Ouen et Clignancourt,* a song Edith Piaf lent her voice to in

[4] The Boulevard Périphérique is an urban highway that follows the perimeter of the City of Paris. It constitutes a symbolic and material separation between Paris proper – referred to as Paris-intramuros – and Paris suburbs – commonly known, in French and in English, as *la banlieue*. This boulevard which is not one was built between 1956 and 1973, when it was inaugurated by Prime Minister Pierre Messmer. Built over the Zone, this "modernization" project finalized a nearly century-long process of expropriations and construction, which had culminated during the German Occupation of Paris and the nazi administration of Groß-Paris, using the sanitary imperative of legislation on "insalubrious lots" (Backouche, 2019). For an overview of this local history, see Cohen and Lotie, 1992.

[5] The Zone, abbreviation of the *zone non aedificandi* (non-constructible zone), was a space of prohibited construction around the Paris fortifications built by Adolphe Thiers in 1841. Until its final destruction and replacement with the

the 1930s, included in the exergue of this chapter, sits as a reminder scaffolding a critique of capital/*capitale*.

[Figure 9. Jewelry in an arcade of Faubourg Saint Denis. Without its commodities, the phantasmagoria of lights is put on display as such. Photo by Author.]

Boulevard Périphérique in 1973, the Zone was home to informal dwellings, non-regulated commercial activities, and home to marginalized or criminalized groups. Parts of it served as semi-rural retreats for working-class *banlieusards* primarily in the South and West of the city, while the North and North East came to be associated specifically with criminality and political subversion. As Jérôme Beauchez (2022) explains in his social history of the Zone, this urban belt around Paris was crucial to reformist – both conservative and progressive – movements of the turn of the 20th century. It served as a space of indeterminate political experimentation for its inhabitants and fugitives, and, in a clear dialectic, served the-same experimental purpose for policymakers: to experiment with legal and policing measures to control this ungovernable population. In both – fugitive and policy – cases, the "Zone" was exported to other spatial and symbolic terrains, influencing what sociologists call subcultures and the policies meant to monitor them. To this day, the term *zonards* is used to refer to lumpenproletarian men, generally racialized, not unlike *lascars*, who people public space in French metropolises and their surrounds. For more see Beauchez, 2022; see also Beauchez and Zeneidi, 2019; Backouche, 2021.

I thus conserve Capital/Zone as a spectral conceptual backdrop, while turning in fact to the concept of infrastructure. I invoke infrastructure because it is overwhelmingly present in my field-site. I turn to contemporary theoretical and ethnographic work, because it has become clear that infrastructure exists in relation to its surrounds. The dialectic relationship between infrastructure and surrounds is analogous to the one around which I had initially sought to structure my argument: *la capitale* of Paris as the seat of political, cultural, and economic power and *la zone* of Paris as the belt of informality that surrounded Paris along its inner and outer city limits.

[Figure 10. View of a dwelling inside the Zone near Porte de Clignancourt commissioned by Agence de Presse Meurisse in 1928. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Estampes et photographie, EI-13 (2825).]

In mobilizing infrastructure as the conceptual grounds of this chapter – the architectural and affective structure on which the argument roams – I want to offer a reading of the sociocultural engineering required by contemporary urban renewal. Namely, considering how the policy-orientation and political imperative of *mixité sociale* is implemented through projects, built volumes and citizenship equipment, reveals "how infrastructures designed to circulate goods and services also enforce biopolitical regimes of uneven racialization" (Rich, Rizzuto and Zieger, 2023: 12). Focusing on *mixité* highlights the collaborative work that social innovation and *économie sociale et solidaire*[6] are meant to facilitate and signals a form of extraction that considers humans as repositories of natural resources. Cultural programming undertaken by queer and racialized cultural entrepreneurs thus suggests participation into equipment and an opening of citizenship to certain structures of feeling as necessary for stabilizing agonistic affective relations, that is, to promote *vivre ensemble*. It can also be read as an extractive activity: the dynamic relation to territory that urban diagnostics rely on then illustrates a process of extraction shifting "from static structure to dynamic transfer" (Rich, Rizzuto and Zieger, 2023: 6). In this chapter, I examine urban design process, the technical stages of planning and construction as well as in the affective and aesthetic dimensions of such work, in light of the colonial history of urbanism as a discipline and urban policy as a stake of government.

The 18th arrondissement is representative of the complex forces that define Paris as a city: extreme forms of poverty and wealth, artistic and cultural innovations, historic monuments and architectural rhythms, and multi-tiered industrial and post-industrial topography give form to an affectively and infrastructurally rich cityscape. Being one of the most densely urbanized and poorest sectors of

[6] Along with *mixité*, both these notions – *innovation sociale* and *économie sociale et solidaire* – are central to contemporary urban, social, and economic policy. I will provide more detail later on in this chapter.

Paris, the 18e also invokes imaginaries of insecurity and its residents, a significant number of whom are immigrants and racialized, are often othered in media and institutional representations. This research asked what does it mean to make urban space desirable? Specifically, what is the substance of this desirability, what are the phantasms that give it its form? Here, I focus on the perspective and practices of urban planners, their conceptions of urban space, otherness, and their work of re-presentation and development of the 18th arrondissement of Paris. Working on this territory, urban planners set out to re-compose space, repurposing stigma and abjection towards a form of desirability and economic attractiveness.

[Figure 11. Promotional prospectus by Call'immo Agence Immobilière found in the gutter of rue Marcadet, Paris. Side A: a quote from Simone de Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity*, which reads "It is desire that creates the desirable, and it is the project that brings its ends." Side B: "Sun-bathed room, office space for video-calls, balcony… patio! For your desires to become reality, let's start with a free appraisal of your real estate, which will only take 48h." The contact information lists two out of three Paris locations in the 18th arrondissement. Photo by Author.]

The prospectus above highlights, in an almost grotesque way, how planners and other conventional actors of urbanization and urban policy have taken up the political idiom of social change through spatial change, using aesthetic tropes of progressive – feminist and queer – politics toward capital intensive urban development. At the surface level, urban planners have developed an inclusive discourse about urban citizenship, which integrates elements of social justice with a general impulse to "revitalize" and "revalorise" a district left in the in-between, neither Paris proper nor the banlieue as such.

The 18th arrondissement, and the surrounding neighbourhoods in North and North-East Paris are, to think with Andrew Newman, at "the confluence of empire, immigration, housing, and deindustrialization" (2015:xlii). As with any urban project, analysis must be attentive to the "politics of the urban design process" (2015: xliii). In this case, and considering this confluence, social change through spatial re-composition can be understood as an iteration of pre-existing modes for transforming sociality through significant territorial planning; a mode of colonial governmentality re-emerging within an interstice of Empire.

This is not to say that the various political and spatial techniques deployed by the French State, local authorities, and an array of private market actors can be read as a direct continuation of French colonial policy. While time leaves its mark on institutions and cultures of expertise, time also wears on certain patterns and introduces new ones in their stead. For instance, Andrew Newman (2015:vxii) finds that the political strategies deployed in the renewal of the Jardin d'Éole in Paris "amount to often conflicting attempts by people of varying sociopolitical positions to realize what Lefebvre called 'the right to the city.'" He goes on to add, citing David Harvey, that the "right to the city" is "a right to change ourselves by changing the city" (Harvey, 2012:4 in Newman, 2015:xvii). Contemporary urbanism in the 18th arrondissement draws heavily on these political

vernaculars; in fact, it is precisely because the notion of *rights* and in particular the *right to the city* undergirds the political aesthetic of urban renewal that outside commentators and institutional actors can so easily present it as a progressive and generous form of urban intervention.

However, should not these stakes of citizenship be problematized? Do they not signal an attempt to change urban space in order to alter both the general form of the polity and the individual behaviours of denizens? Rather than adopt the conceptual and political language of Lefebvrian urban citizenship – to perhaps highlight where the politics of urban design fail to accomplish their promise of inclusion and social uplift – I believe it might be interesting to take that language seriously without adopting it wholesale. Rather than consider how residents of the 18^{e} are changing themselves by changing the city, to paraphrase Harvey's astute comment, we might instead consider how city planners are re-assembling urban space to alter the city's social fabric. Attempts by government to alter social life at the level of subjectivity and practice can lead to violence as much as utter failures; and so, rather than deploring shortcomings in the provision of new rights, we might in fact celebrate the failings of a potentially deleterious urban policy.

After decades of relying on an urban programme made up of welfare and security objectives, contemporary urbanism in North Paris underwent a significant shift. Disused industrial facilities that sat outside of public space are now being repurposed and remodeled for housing and commercial activities. Using territorial stigma in creative ways, urban planners deploy marketing and engineering techniques to commodify a certain ethnic urban "cool" as an aesthetic element of this remodeled space. Commodification here signals the manufacturing of new objects from existing elements, re-composed, and inserted within capitalist markets. This commodification has managed to make the ruinous landscape of urban renewal attractive for cultural consumption, social experimentation, and, ultimately, attractive for real estate investors, businesses, and new residents.

Specifically, this anthropology of urban expertise in the 18th arrondissement reveals a set of structural dynamics that may be instructive for understanding urban renewal and its relationship to the surrounds, the excess space that sits outside the built environment and expectations of city planning. It offers a view into the ambivalent relation between desire and abjection. As abjection is both understood as morally rejectable but also in need of remediation, abject space and abject subjects enter the *polis* as objects of experimentation. It is through experimentation – spatial and social experimentations that are key to prefigurative urbanism – that the city's marginal districts can be brought into the fold of the real estate market and enter the luminous space of the city as a commodity-on-display. This ambivalent relationship, however, is not new and in fact echoes the historical dialectic that has long structured the city of Paris: the Capital, on the one hand, and the Zone – a non aedificandi zone of military servitude that encircled Paris before the *boulevard périphérique* was delivered in the 1970s, and which continues to live on in contemporary imaginaries of criminality and marginality. A number of contemporary urban projects in fact sit within this historical zone and its surroundings. This chapter thus offers a number of insights into contemporary urban governmentality, understood as a set of projects and practices meant to produce effects of rule in the form of new individual and collective conducts.

Meeting the Plan

On February 23, 2022, after a string of emails and phone calls, I made my way to the Urbanism Office of the *Mairie du 18e arrondissement* in Paris. I was expected at 2pm by the project manager who served as the main interlocutor for projects related to urbanism, housing, and tenant life. I entered the sumptuous city hall building built in the 1880s and spoke to a receptionist. "Monsieur Habrih is here to see Monsieur L." she said on a phone, then nodded at me to take the stairs in Aisle C. Deeper into the building, as I looked in front of me, palm trees lined a temporary exhibit

displayed in the main hall, while above elaborate reliefs carved in stone framed the skylight industrial high ceiling made of glass and steel. I took a small flight of stairs lodged in one of the side aisles and walked up to the 5th floor.

I stood in front of the locked office door, looking at a view of the Sacré Coeur and the northern flank of Montmartre. I had never seen it from this perspective and wondered what it might be like to work on the city and witness such a unique view of it, everyday. A secretary opened the door and let me in. CL, a Frenchman in his thirties, sporting a white dress-shirt and corduroy brown pants, arrived hurriedly. He repositioned his long hair in a bun and apologized for the wait; I nodded and thanked him for his time. We walked in. The office, which I had expected to be rather small, was a labyrinth of conference rooms, offices, and employee coffee rooms. When we reached his office, I was baffled by the view – the same perspective I'd seen just before, but through a wider window. On the wall, which was otherwise bare and beige, a large map of the 18th arrondissement faced the window, indicating the most up to date cartography of urban renewal. As we spoke of contemporary city planning in the 18th arrondissement, Monsieur L.[7] would walk around the office, moving between the map to localize urban projects and the window to illustrate the arrondissement's distinct topography.

Over the months of 2021 and 2022, I met with various actors of urban renewal in the 18th arrondissement. I started by reaching out to local actors of the national urban policy known as *politique de la ville* who intervene in neighbourhoods designated as "priority neighbourhoods"

[7] Most of the interlocutors in this dissertation have been partially or entirely anonymized, and I designate them with their initials, and then with either the first initial or their title followed by the second initial. Partial anonymization seemed adequate for officials who are relatively public, in the sense that their information can easily be found on government websites or LinkedIn, but who might not want to be explicitly named in a research document that might be critical of their work on behalf of public and private actors. Some interlocutors in the last chapters of the dissertation, namely Abdellah Taïa and Marie-Pierre Pruvot, were not anonymized at all because they preferred to remain public.

(*quartiers prioritaires*). By asking for contacts from each new interlocutor, I began to map a professional milieu of experts who work to transform the city. Specifically, all understand the space they work in as needing diagnostics to identify social or formal ills and new strategies to implement social and urban transformations.

[Figure 12. Map of the 18th arrondissement in the office of Monsieur L. located at the Mairie of the 18th arrondissement of Paris, on rue Ordener. Photo by Author.]

This milieu of experts brings together project managers and cabinet directors working for the City, architects and urbanists managing projects on behalf for the real estate development branches of large private owners, such as the SNCF (National Railroad Society) or the BNP (National Bank-Paribas) and engineers working for public-private contractors such as Paris&Métropole

Aménagement. Then came in landscapers, architects, and botanists working in architecture or landscaping firms commissioned by the City and private developers. Finally, I spoke with urbanists working in experimental urban design firms (such as Plateau Urbain and La Preuve par 7) who have introduced new ways of planning the city and using the phases of engineering for temporary occupation of vacant lots. Some of these temporary activities are in turn managed by hybrid commercial structures known as "tiers-lieux."

[Figure 13. Construction of the Chapelle International urban development near Porte de La Chapelle. This project is part of a large-scale rehabilitation of aging social housing and disused railway infrastructure from the Porte de Saint-Ouen to the Porte de La Villette. Photo by Author.]

For city planners to make the 18th arrondissement desirable, they have had to engineer its commodification: territorial marketing schemes were deployed to re-brand it, while vacant lots that sit outside the real estate market were "activated" and re-introduced into the local market as cheap, temporarily available infrastructure for multimodal experimentations. This process of "valorisation" relies on the existing topography and socio-cultural reputation of the 18th arrondissement. Specifically, conventional public and private actors believe they can learn from residents' resourcefulness and ingenuity and, significantly, harness this resourcefulness in official narratives. Relying on the city's reputation, however, means that urban experts continue to be haunted by the possibility of an uncontrolled public space, which they imagine mired by theft, informal encampments, and drug-related activities. Although they draw on a discourse of openness, diversity, care and inclusion of marginalized communities, planners continue to project an image of Paris as the Capital and its antithesis Paris as the Zone, thereby excluding unconventional modes of dwelling; excluding that which does not fit its reconfigured image.

Post-war Reconstruction, Cités de transit, and Segregation

Urbanism emerged as a professional field in France during the end of the 19th century. Although Haussmann's renovation of Paris is often considered to have inaugurated urbanism in the form of modern, visionary planning, the discipline's techniques and technologies in fact settled into place during the 1910s and 1920s, following the emergence of colonial urbanism and the colonial license to experiment with urban forms and norms (Rabinow, 1995).

During and after WW2, a technocratic and centralized model for urban planning became the *modus operandi* of French planning. *Villes-nouvelles* were built throughout the country, envisioned as a panacea to a landscape still profoundly altered by warfare and as an aesthetic of French modernization (see Vadelorge, 2005 and more generally the issue edited by Querrien and Lassave,

2005). This centralized model of urbanism worked along the lines of post-war State voluntarism or what is called in French *dirigisme*. This political-economic doctrine – and a practice of government – relies on modern short-, mid-, and long-term planning: planning of the national industry, its specialties, and specificities, of the levels of production, of monetary and fiscal policy (for an historical overview, see Mény, 1982). The *urbanisme de plan* that emerged after the Second World War, thus accompanied a process of "political modernization" contributing a spatial form to social reform (Gaudin, 1989: 297-298) where "urbanistic intervention is meant to modify social milieu while stimulating citizen participation" (Gaudin, 1989: 298). For Jean-Pierre Gaudin, planning "can be analyzed not only as the product of contradictions that must be managed, but also as the vector of a new rationalization of action and the modernization of the democratic game" (1989: 298).

This model continues to impress itself in France, both on the political culture of French policymakers and regular citizens alike, and on contemporary urban space as extant urban form and architecture (see Mollard, 2019).[8] The orientations that Gaudin identified at the end of the 1980s, precisely when this model was undergoing significant reconfiguration (Schmidt, 1988), explains how citizen-concerted urban design and prefigurative urban intervention would emerge

[8] Specifically, the question of segregation as a spatial and political issue is entangled in a history of spatial and political aesthetics, central to the debates that accompanied the emergence of urbanisme de plan and grand ensemble urban models. "People in charge were lucid," architect Manon Mollard writes,

> aware of the country's failure in addressing its housing crisis and shamefully acknowledging the inadequacy of the concrete fortresses on site at the time – yet contributing to their construction. The word segregation appears in the mid '50s, with parallels drawn between the *grands ensembles* and the '*univers concentrationnaire*'. Plight, revolt and crime soon start to hit newspaper headlines, much before unemployment rates escalate. In the '60s the Minister for Construction Pierre Sudreau attempts to stop this uncontrollable machine, warning against the extension of a new banlieue, the birth of dormitory suburban rings, the alignment of characterless buildings and desolate houses where human life cannot flourish. 'A phenomenon afflicts all foreigners: France is becoming ugly, progressively and, in some cases, outrageously', he declares, emphasising that, 'this phenomenon is characterised by its amplitude'. Tarnished by the 'sad uniformity' of its housing, the country's image is 'disfigured'" (Mollard, 2019).

out of a longue durée history of urbanism and urban policy. However, Gaudin leaves aside the colonial history of the discipline, siloing *urbanisme de plan* within European circuits of influence and practice.

Significantly, one of the socio-spatial terrain on which *urbanisme de plan* took place was the destruction of shantytowns and the rehousing of its residents in transitory housing estates. By the 1950s and throughout the following decades, the *bidonvilles* that patched French urban fabric, sometimes encircling large industrial hubs, had become a key element of political and media discourse. Televised declarations by government officials[9], charitable clergymen pleaded for national surge in solidarity, technocrats and security personnel devised plans for slum clearance and the surveillance and re-education of the populations that dwelt in this *habitat indigne* (see Pouvreau, 2003). Most if not all of bidonville dwellers were immigrants, and a consequential portion of them were Algerian colonial workers and their families, such that the *bidonvilles* and its policies became associated to the latter. This crucial moment of French urban history and the history of French urbanism as such coincides with the Algerian revolution, a temporal overlap that has left a lasting imprint onto French spatial order. The Algerian War of Independence was thus fought within the *bidonvilles* in France[10] as well as in Algeria proper (see Cohen, 2014). The term *bidonville* itself was a colonial import, initially used to describe informal suburban housing around

[9] I am thinking here of an interview of then Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas, in 1971, after his visit to the *cité de transit* in Nanterre. He describes walking through destroyed *bidonvilles* and making his way to the newly built *cité*. As he stands in front of cameras, speaking, reels of his visit punctuate his narration, showing him walking surrounded by cabinet members and local officials along with a crowd of North African children, which he describes as "*enfants du bonheur alors qu'avant ils étaient les enfants de la pouillerie*". Source: Office national de radiodiffusion television française, Institut national audiovisual (https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclaire-actu/video/caf97511603/jacques-chaban-delmas-dans-les-bidonvilles-de-nanterre).

[10] One could examine the relations between the *cités de transit* in France and the system of forced relocation of Algerian civilian population in military *centres de regroupement* in Algeria, which would reframe urban segregation through socialized infrastructure as a modality of counterrevolutionary architecture (Henni, 2017).

large colonial urban centers such as Casablanca and Algiers (for more on this historical juncture, see the issue of *Métropolitiques* edited by Gilbert and Vorms, 2012).

One central figure of this history is social reformer Eugène Claudius-Petit: one of the architects of post-war social welfare, Claudius-Petit was nominated Minister of Reconstruction and Urbanism in 1948, and presented his director-document *Pour un plan national de l'aménagement du territoire* in 1950, which would orient French land planning and use for the following decades. In 1956, two years after the beginning of the Algerian revolution and as the *pouvoirs spéciaux* were granted to the French military to police Algeria, Claudius-Petit founded the SONACOTRAL: the *Société nationale de construction de logements pour les travailleurs algériens* or the National Society for the Construction of Housing for Algerian Workers.[11] The SONACOTRAL was central to the rehousing of Algerians living in shantytowns, providing segregated housing that fragmented self-organized communities in order to both separate them from the French public and to monitor their contact with National Liberation Front (FLN) operatives in France.[12] Significantly, the men charged with managing such facilities were recruited "among former police officers and former military officers and non-commissioned officers (*sous-officiers*) that had made their career in North Africa and knew the language and Muslim way of life" well enough that they could monitor and enforce housing guidelines (Giraud, 2008; see also Bernardot, 2008; Hmed, 2014).

[11] This *société* has changed names several times throughout its history, dropping the Algerian specificity following Algerian independence, and now known as Adoma (a contraction taken from the Latin *ad* and *domus* to mean towards the home), and specializes in "inclusion through housing" (*l'insertion par le logement*) writ large. See this article in *L'Express*: https://www.lexpress.fr/economie/la-sonacotra-devient-adoma_1352617.html (Neumann, 2007).

[12] Claudius-Petit would later disavow the segregative effects of these housing institutions and the state policy that orientated their urban interventions, considering them to be the fault and consequence of his successors, and arguing that his policy orientations were not designed to segregate North African workers from the general population. Source: Interview in *Du côté de chez Fred* on public television channel Antenne 2, Institut national audiovisuel (https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclaire-actu/video/i17026095/eugene-claudius-petit-a-propos-de-la-segregation-sociale).

The *foyers de travailleurs* workers' housing built by the SONACOTRAL primarily resettled lone workers, while families were transferred to so-called *cité de transit* or transitory estates. While post-war reconstruction – large-scale socialized housing, *grands ensembles* located within or in the surroundings of *villes-nouvelles* (Fourcaut, 2006) – today represents the urban form of immigration in the national imaginary, colonial workers and their families accessed this type of housing only partially. Indeed, a segregative mode of housing was preferred to avoid potential racial tensions, in particular with colonial citizens now living in metropolitan France, as French Muslims were theoretically entitled to the same rights (see for an ethnographic account Pétonnet, 1968; and an historical review Blanc-Chaléard, 2012; for work on the Parisian *banlieue* city of Nanterre, see Collet, 2019, Sayad and Dupuy, 1995).

Cités de transit thus became the preferred mode of resettlement of Algerian communities used by French authorities, while other immigrant communities – Spanish, Portuguese, Italian – progressively entered the general public and private housing markets. By the 1970s, this urban apparatus became the ubiquitous form of immigrant housing and had already garnered opposition from social theorists (for examples, see Labbens, 1969; Liscia and Orlic, 1974) and inhabitants alike (Abdallah, 2006; see also the graphic novel by Maffre, 2019) both of which sought "to break with ideologies of service and pedagogy that postulate the redressing of a population's poverty through appropriate psychosocial interventions" and "to denounce the practices of tutelage that such ideologies too often legitimize" (Tricart, 1977: 602). As *bidonvilles* had been home to tens of thousands of Algerians – estimates reach the hundreds of thousands with about half of metropolitan *Français musulmans d'Algérie* living in shantytowns at any given time until Algerian Independence – by the 1970s, *cités de transit* had effectively replaced the former informal mode of dwelling, with immigrants being represented in analogous proportions.

These *cités* were considered to be transitory insofar that immigrants – North and West African Muslims – were deemed to need not only rehousing but re-education and social intervention meant to ready them for regular housing. A 1971 *circulaire* in fact argued that "the access in permanent housing [for these families] could not be envisaged without a socio-educative intervention destined to foster their social insertion and promotion." A 1972 *circulaire* echoed the former and completed it, arguing that such action was necessary to prevent their "rejection" by social housing residents (on the former figures and the legal *circulaires* see Cohen and David, 2012).

The differential legal status of colonial subjects eventually gave way to the differential legal status of foreigners. With the "invention of decolonization," discussion about the inheritance of colonial urban policy was foreclosed. Yet, what is clear here is that such a colonial mode of urban management of difference – a difference structured along legal, racial, and cultural lines – was indeed established within France proper. Its impact on the communities targeted was quantitative. It was also qualitative in that it was meant as a political and socio-cultural mode of intervention, designed as an apparatus not only meant to facilitate separation and police-military surveillance (Rigouste, 2007), but also – in official discourse and legal texts – as a temporary mode of dwelling geared toward training (post-)colonial subjects into French citizenship.

Arguably, this form of social engineering was not oriented toward transforming colonial subjects into French citizens, rather it was to imprint onto these communities a sense of half-belonging, something of an in-between status that continues to be a fixture of the French sociopolitical experience. As a spatial form and administrative category, c*ités de transit* were eventually destroyed or banalized and rebranded as conventional, permanent social housing, throughout the 1980s. Yet the segregative process continues to structure the material and symbolic organization

of urban spaces in France, which is evident in the 18th arrondissement and throughout the Parisian region.[13]

Because of this initial association of *Français musulmans d'Algérie* and bidonville, later of North African families and *cités de transit*, and finally through the entry of African immigrant families into the conventional social-public market, Islam has come to be associated not only to a form of racial and cultural otherness but also a spatial and aesthetic one. Or, as Sylvie Tissot writes, *banlieue* comes to be associated to otherness and racialized immigrants in particular, conjuring "the image of housing projects, with young people hanging around wearing baseball caps and sweat suits, smoking joints, perhaps standing beside a burning car. Banlieues," she continues, "have become the symbol of a bleak urban environment, deviant youth, and segregated communities" (Tissot, 2008: 1 in Beaman, 2017: 57) thereby shifting the imaginary of otherness from small urban enclosure (the *bidonville* and the *cités*) to whole swaths of suburban *villes-nouvelles.*

It is also because of the temporal overlap of, one, the transfer and translation of colonial policy into the metropolis and, two, the emergence of national urban policy, that contemporary social

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[13] What I refer to above as a recategorization of *cités de transit* as conventional social housing is all relative, as *cités de transit* would enter the "*parc de logement social*" as the lowest strata of housing, accessible to the households earning the lowest allowable income. That is, while *cités de transit* no longer retained their cultural and ethno-racial specificity – that of having been designed to rehouse African families – because of the stratification of social housing, the same families entered the conventional public market through the bottom of the ladder. Indeed, social housing estates, in French referred to as HLM (*habitations à loyer modéré*), are organized according to income strata, which determine the type of rent one is able to pay and, therefore, the type of facility one is entitled to. PLAI (*Prêt Locatif Aidé d'Intégration*) are attributed to the most precarious applicants; PLUS (*Prêt Locatif à Usage Social*), referring to the standard HLM, are attributed to higher earning household; PLS (*Prêt Locatif Social*) are attributed to households that do not qualify for HLM but that have difficulty accessing the private rental market; and PLI (*Prêt Locatif Intermédiaire*) are attributed to households that, despite earning more than PLS applicants, still have difficulty finding housing in the private rental market. For more on these categories see the guide by Action Logement (a public-private *dispositif* meant to facilitate social housing attributions): https://www.actionlogement.fr/guides/trouver-un-logement/logements-plai-pli-plus-plus. This institutional language of social housing stratification in fact describes a form of organized income segregation, with the PLS and PLS and PLI household being more mobile and able to move as their income grows, while PLAI and PLUS households, assuming their incomes do not grow at the same rate, have less capacity to move. Through this stratification, certain housing blocks concentrate PLAI – as is the case in a number of housing estates around the *Portes* of North Paris – producing what Eugène Claudius-Petit termed a *ségrégation scientifique* (c.f. the previous footnote).

engineering efforts continue to target the spaces and communities that have inherited this history. This likewise explains North and West African communities' contemporary mnemonics, which code sociopolitical exclusion in colonial terms.[14] And this, in turn, reflects dominant sociopolitical ascription of social, cultural, and political problems to specific abject spaces, what geographer Mustafa Dikeç analysed as the "badlands of the Republic" (Dikeç, 2006, 2007; see also Tissot, 2007, Kokoreff, 2007).

Encroaching Neoliberalism and the Modernization of Aménagement

The architectural models used for the construction of grands ensembles all observed similar visual and formal rhythms, metaphors of a better, more modern life were meant to appear clearly on the cement walls of a brutalist aesthetic. Modernity, here, is not just a philosophical category, nor is it simply a temporal or ethical bracket: it also signals a certain dismissal by experts and policymakers of various modes of dwelling and architectural negotiations that everyday residents of France (unhoused proletarians, displaced refugees, colonial subjects) had conceived to make their lives more livable and practical.[15] By rendering spatial planning one of the components of centralized *dirigiste* policy – as per the importance of sanitary housing and functional infrastructure for industrial production – a whole array of informal ways of making the city were wiped off the ruined landscape of post-war France.

[14] I would thus wager that the centrality of the colonial as a signifier in contemporary antiracist politics – and more generally in the collective memory and encoding of history and contemporary injustice – have less to do with the ethnic ascription of racialized communities but all to do with the colonial inheritance at the heart of modern social housing. The exclusion of African communities and their association to specific urban and cultural forms is a consequence of policy that, when investigated, can be traced back to the colonial situations of urban development in North and West Africa. The persistence of colonization as a mnemonic reference to frame contemporary injustice is thus related to a socioracial status rather than ethnicity proper.

[15] For more on the relationship between the Modern architecture movement, *bidonvilles* and informal urbanization, see Crane, 2013. In this piece, Sheila Crane shows how the movement spearheaded by Le Corbusier emerged from a working group based out of Algiers, and which documented and monitored the Mahieddine bidonville in Algiers as part of a large-scale urbanization project during the last throes of French occupation (see also Çelik, 1992).

A centralized model of government, one could assume, leads to a simplification of urban intervention. While the modes of building appeared rather simple and systematic, they entailed a complex social process of displacement and re-housing in modern buildings, on the one hand, and a multi-pronged technical beast of urbanization composed of several *corps de métiers* tasked with distinct missions to dig and *assainir*, to link up with gas and electricity, to build the outer structures, to provide livable interiors, and so on.[16] This assembling of urban form falls under the term *aménagement*, which denotes a specific strata of planning and the process by which land is transformed into urban (or otherwise, agricultural, industrial, etc.) space.

Aménagement is an umbrella term that roughly translates as "land use planning" and designates more specifically the infrastructural work undertaken by urban planning. Today, the main agency tasked with *aménagement* is Paris & Métropole Aménagement (P&MA), a mixed capital corporation (*société d'économie mixte*, meaning its capital is in large part owned by the State or by local authorities) that oversees several of the urban developments where I conducted fieldwork. P&MA, who works on behalf of the City of Paris and is presided by Mayor of the 18th arrondissement Éric Lejoindre, is the *maître d'ouvrage*, meaning it oversees operations and connects all the actors and *corps de métiers* (tradecraft) that partake in an operation. The *maître d'ouvrage* designates a *maître d'oeuvre* who is tasked with the actual work of conception, direction, and control of construction, in response to the various imperatives set by the *maître d'ouvrage* included in a *cahier des charges* (a guide-document) often conceived in collaboration with

[16] I sourced most of this overview (which I, of course, corroborated with my expert informants in Paris) in *L'aménagement urbain* (1992) by Denis Rousseau and Georges Vauzelles published in the collection *Que sais-je ?* edited by the Presses universitaires de France. I found the book in the informal book market run by a Senegalese man on Place de Clichy in the 18th arrondissement (a form of informality tolerated by city officials). A useful resource to understand the institutional assemblage of actors, from the urban design process to the construction phases is a rather old manual that has not aged as I would have expected. The fact that the institutional language has shifted and that the neoliberal ethos of innovation ecosystems now dominates expert parlance, while the civil engineering of it all has not considerably changed, is rather telling. *Seasons change, mad things rearrange, but it all stays the same*.

collectives of residents or during participative “local democracy” workshops. Eventually, the *maître d’oeuvre* delivers a development, its public spaces and *équipements* (amenities), to the *maître d’ouvrage*.

These two actors are inherited from a long history of tradecraft in France, going as far back as the building of cathedrals and other large urban projects. Other actors, often trained in a discipline related to urban engineering (*génie urbain*) and working within a specific *corps de métier* include urbanists, landscapers, architects, and a series of specialized engineers. These actors of conception and direction work alongside qualified workers operating in the field of BTP (*bâtiments et travaux publics*, building and public works) who intervene successively, during distinct phases of engineering and construction: plumbers, carpenters, tilers, electricians, crane operators, painters, locksmiths.

Urbanism is thus a complex[17] field for policy. Since the 1982 Law on Decentralization, actors like P&MA have become key operators of spatial planning, developing locally sourced solutions to what are understood as local problems. In line with this overall reform of French land use planning, a specific social policy grounded in territorial policy emerged: *Politique de la Ville*. This phrase, which roughly translates as “urban policy” but also denotes a specific “politics of the city,” emerged in the 1970s in response to the deterioration of living conditions in the grands ensembles that had been built after WW2, in particular the political and social unrest that emerged and crystallized around police brutality and repeated spontaneous revolts[18], and as the centralized model for urbanisation appeared to be inadequately creating dysfunctional urban peripheries.

[17] I use the term complex, here, in the sense of both *complicated* or *difficult to understand*, and as a system of variables that observe localized rules and interact in non-linear ways, making the results of urban planning hard to predict decisively. For a review of the use of complexity in anthropology see Lansing and Downey, 2011.
[18] The word *émeute* is etymologically derived from *émotion* and frames riots as epiphenomena driven by passion rather than rational political thought. That is not to say that political action relies exclusively on rational calculation. Indeed,

These cement cities, often brutalist in their architectural style, had become focal spaces of inequality, crystalizing French society's image of segregation of working-class and immigrant communities. Unemployment, lack of sociocultural equipment, and police harassment led to tense political terrain, punctuated by demonstrations, riots, and a long-term conflictual relationship between the police and racialized communities. As a reaction, equipment was built and some of the grands ensembles of these aging "new cities" were demolished in spectacular dynamite explosions, an alternative policy orientation emerged. This policy, which began as dispersed local initiatives, eventually made its way into a coherent national policy and a national ministry was given the task to "reduce inequality between territories and restore Republican equality."[19]

emotion is central to conscientization and action. However, it denotes, on part of commentators, an assumption that riotous protest, specifically when it is the result of low-income, racialized young men and boys, is an incoherent and irrational act, incompatible with the reason driven ethos of Republican debate. Riots are also commonly framed as *violences urbaines* or urban violence, denoting a distinct localization of this form of political action; not unlike "urban culture" or *cultures urbaines*, it stands in as a racial, class, and gender signifier without directly referring to these social and political categories as such.

[19] The institutional language cited here is taken from the online brochures disseminated by the National Agency for the Cohesion of Territories (*Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires* or ANCT), which pilots *politique de la ville* when no ministry is given a direct tutelage over this policy. For more see their webiste: https://agence-cohesion-territoires.gouv.fr/politique-de-la-ville-97

[Figure 14. Screen shot of a newsreel showing the demolition of the Debussy Towers in La Courneuve, North of Paris in 1986. Source: France 2 INA Archive]

Two laws, in 2003 and 2005, inaugurated a new orientation, the *programme national de rénovation urbaine* (PNRU) of which the expressed goals were to rehabilitate, destroy, and build housing, alongside social, commercial, and cultural equipment. The key notions of social mixing and environmental sustainability appeared central and signalled a will to profoundly restructure majority immigrant and working-class neighborhoods. What institutional discourse understates is how central the question of otherness is for these policy orientations. In fact, considering the longue durée of urban policy in France, *Politique de la ville* and the urban planning discussed here could be analysed in light of governmental attempts to regulate difference and to give it a spatial and social form in line with Republican political order.

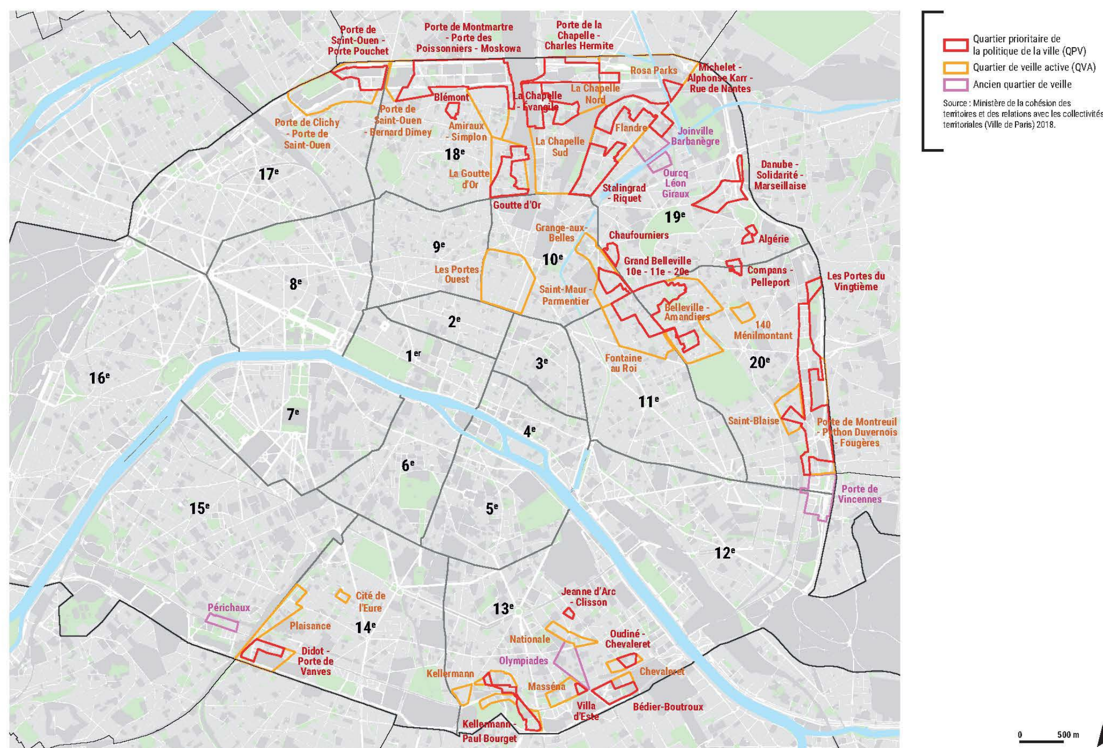
Mixité is a key element of this urbanistic and political grammar. *Mixité* is the sociological and political idea that mixing different social classes, racial and gender groups, can reduce social inequality and isolation. The concept widely circulates from economic and urban policy to private and grassroots actors (see the brief volume edited by Charmes and Bacqué, 2016). In terms of urban planning, significantly, *mixité* is not only a discursive category, it also plays a key role in the urban design process: it impacts the way urban space is imagined by planners and plays a determining role in shaping physical space. This impact is significant because underlying the idea of *mixité* is a set of problematic assumptions about the urban spaces that are targeted for spatial and social transformation. Certain neighbourhoods, like the *quartiers populaires* of the 18e arrondissement, are designated as being in a process of ghettoization, or in other words as being ethnically, culturally, and socio-economically homogenous.

As Marion Lang puts it in her review of Charmes and Bacqué's volume, *mixité sociale* is tasked with the remediation of neighbourhoods and populations perceived as disenfranchised and to "reestablish 'Republican integration' in neighbourhoods perceived as hubs of *communautarisme*, extremism, and other radicalizations" (Lang, 2017: 1). This image can only be taken seriously – or believed – if we disregard the extant heterogeneity of these urban spaces and accept the ideological imaginary of a Republic besieged by Islam. The diagnosis of a lack of *mixité* in diverse spaces[20] signals a will to not only attract new, supposedly high-income earning white European citizens, but also to intervene within the existing social fabric, to open it up to "diversity" and render it more legible to the French polity. The choice of the neighbourhood as judicious scale for diagnosing a lack, a surplus, or a balanced situation of social mixing is questionable as such (Charmes and Bacqué, 2016). Yet this, too, signals the operationality of urbanistic grammar: the idea is to intervene in concrete ways within a delineated territory, in order to effect spatial and social transformation, through the engineering of a mixing of social groups, economic and infrastructural functions, and architectural forms (*mixité sociale, fonctionnelle, morphologique*).

Initiated shortly before the presidential mandates of Nicolas Sarkozy, who was then minister of the Interior, the PNRU, the ANRU (its funding agency, known as the *Agence nationale de renouvellement urbain*) and the mode of urban renewal through demolitions came to be associated to Sarkozy's particularly virulent political discourse and modes of operation. As a new generation of civil servants took their posts within the various strata of urban planning, a shift occurred. These

[20] The contributors to Charmes and Bacqué's *Mixité sociale, et après ?* deconstruct some of the ideas proposed by sociologists such as Loïc Wacquant (2007) – that French housing estates are unlike American ones in that they are more ethnically diverse – and point to a process of ethno-racial segregation currently underway. I do not necessarily disagree with this deconstruction of the myth of ethnic diversity and class homogeneity, however I do wonder how racial perceptions blur the existing diversity *within* Muslim and African communities. Is a neighbourhood not "diverse" when one can drift in its streets and hear some twenty languages spoken, various religious rites observed, and so on? What is at issue is perhaps not so much a lack of diversity but rather a question of illegibility to urban experts, a recalcitrance to expertise and diagnosis generally.

civil servants had developed a reflexive discourse regarding demolitions and the use of blatantly violent forms of urbanization. All had read Bourdieu, it seems, and most were keen on being able to rely on denizens' support for urban renewal. Progressively, inhabitants would be conceived of as actors rather than – or not only – as repositories and sources of social problems.[21]



[Figure 15. Map of the urban policy neighbourhoods (*quartiers politique de la ville*) in Paris. Source: Atelier parisien d'urbanisme, 2024 (https://www.apur.org/fr/geo-data/quartiers-politique-ville-paris-qpv-2015-2023).]

[21] I am relying here on my interviews with urban experts working specifically in this field, bridging welfare and urban policy, and a synthesis of my fieldnotes.

Out of this shift in institutional sensibility emerged a renewed *Nouveau programme national de renouvellement urbain* financed through the ANRU and its addendum the ANRU+ tasked with financing innovative urban programming. The new national programme for urban renewal was launched in 2014 and programmed to end in 2030. On the official website of the ANRU, the brochure opens by explaining that the NPNRU prepares "the profound transformation of more than 450 *politique de la ville* priority neighbourhoods by strongly intervening on *habitat* and public equipment, to promote *mixité* in these territories."[22]

This socially inflected urban policy thus involves the State, and its satellite agencies tasked with the distribution of funds throughout the French territory (in the *métropole* and in certain of its overseas departments in the Caribbean Sea and the Indian Ocean). The agencies work with the *corps de métiers* that have historically intervened on urbanistic interventions. They also work alongside a variety of institutional State and non-State actors, such as the City of Paris, the Ile-de-France Region, the Prefecture of Paris, the Police Prefect of Paris, the Republic's district attorney (*procureur de la République*), the Rector of the Academy (in charge of elementary and secondary education), Pôle Emploi[23] (the national unemployment agency), the Regional Health Agency (*Agence régionale de santé*, ARS), the *Mission locale de Paris* (an outreach agency tasked with orientating vulnerable publics toward employment and welfare programs they are entitled to), the *Caisse d'allocation familiale* (a national agency that provides egalitarian welfare benefits for all families), the *Caisse des dépôts*, and social housing corporations (*bailleurs sociaux*) operating in Paris.

[22] The institutional language is cited from the website of the ANRU and its brochure on the NPNRU. For more, see: https://www.anru. fr/le-nouveau-programme-national-de-renouvellement-urbain-npnru.
[23] Referred to as France Travail since January 1, 2024.

[Figure 16. Signage outside an urban development on rue Belliard. Projected social, functional, and morphological *mixité.* Photo by Author.]

All these actors are signatories of the "City Contract" (*contrat de ville*) and play a specific role, often reflecting their general mission as institutions, in the overall coordination of *Politique de la Ville* in Paris. But *Politique de la Ville* is not only an assemblage of already established actors; it also has its own distinct *fonctionnaires* who work at the hyper-local level: namely, members of the

Équipe de développement local or the local development team (EDL) who intervene within designated neighbourhoods and provide diagnostics. The EDL relays its territorial expertise back to institutional actors who generally lack precise information and draw plans based on national policy objectives. In the 18th arrondissement, as members of this team explained during interviews, the EDL actualizes urban policy's apparatus *Gestion urbaine de proximité*, which brings urban management (*gestion urbaine*) closer (hence *proximité*) to its existing field of intervention in housing blocks and public spaces. In facilitating "local development" in collaboration with the City and prefectural delegates, the EDL is meant to foster a coherent cultural and commercial fabric in priority neighbourhoods. As one EDL member explained, they work directly on housing and take up climate change as an opportunity to modernize building materials and resorb housing considered insalubrious. All these actors have as a stated objective to foster *mixité* in the 18th arrondissement: a mixing of urban functions (by diversifying urban logistics, commercial activities, and sociocultural equipment, *mixité fonctionnelle*) and a mixing of sociocultural and socioeconomic groups (by renovating social housing estates and building developments that include various income strata and modes for accessing public and private leases as well as property, *mixité sociale*).

Renewing Urban Renewal

The budget and the stated objectives of the national programme are largely the same as the 2004-2020 PNRU. The NPNRU introduces three key elements: a two-timed contractualization (through a prefiguration protocol followed by an operational convention); the coordination of projects at the conurbation rather than municipal level to foster "territorial rebalancing"; and "a strong ambition" to associate residents to the conception and implementation of urban projects. Both the PNRU and

the NPNRU were funded through the ANRU, each programme benefitting from 12 billion euros of grants and loans.[24]

The new program, however, has a distinct component: innovation (economic, social, and cultural) as the central concept to transform the social fabric of priority neighbourhoods. The ANRU+ coordinates – at the national level – funding for innovative projects implemented locally. The agency is a specific apparatus within the ANRU, which implements some of the NPNRU's objectives in terms of socio-cultural, economic, and logistical urban projects to foster public-private investments in designated neighbourhoods. It draws on the ANRU's internal funding as well as on *Programmes d'investissements d'avenir* (Investments for the Future Programmes), with up to 121 million euros. According to official brochures, the ANRU+ constitutes a *supplément d'âme* (which can be roughly translated as the social soul of the programme).[25]

The ANRU+ takes form locally through other agencies, namely the Innovation Arch (*Arc de l'Innovation*), Paris & Co. and its incubator the Urban Lab, which insert emergent businesses and organizations in a "structured network" of incubators to circulate their most "innovative, efficacious, and relevant" practices. It is not entirely clear, at the level of institutional discourse – nor is it necessarily clearer as we get closer to specific local initiatives – what is meant by innovation, restructuration, and transformation. What is clear, however, is that such terms signal a form of urban renewal that intervenes on built environment, as well as on the social, cultural, and economic morphology of urban space. The social engineering element is most evident, at the level of discourse, in how innovation is understood as a privileged point of entry (or a useful category)

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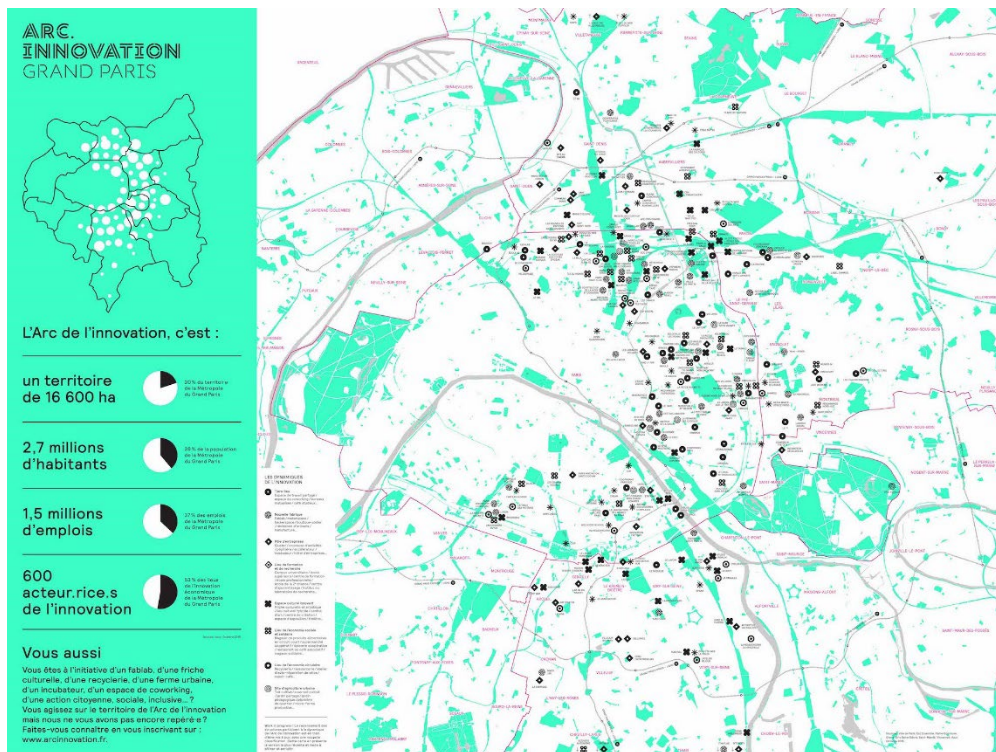
[24] The institutional language is cited from the website of the ANRU and its brochure on the NPNRU. For more, see: https://www.anru.fr/le-nouveau-programme-national-de-renouvellement-urbain-npnru.

[25] Here again, the figures are taken from official information available online. See previous footnote.

to identify and work with local actors toward the "profound restructuration of these priority neighbourhoods."[26]

After a careful study of the *organigrams* of the different bureaus of the City of Paris, I decided to write to key technocrats of the Arc de l'Innovation. The first series of responses I received were negative. Some of these potential interlocutors feigned a certain ignorance: they failed to see the relation between desirability and urbanism, which I was interested in. I would, in a near-paranoid state, wonder if I had contacted the wrong person, only to find that their bureau was indeed the one tasked with economic attractivity. The link was nothing if not evident. As I was losing hope to ever obtain a meeting with one of these hyper-technicians of economic policy, one project manager working at the intersection of economic and urban, real estate policy answered and agreed to meet in person.



[Figure 17. Map of the Innovation Arch, which wraps Paris from the East, North- and Southward. Source: Arc de l'Innovation.]

[26] The language is taken from the website of the agency, see: https://arcinnovation.fr/arc

M., who works as a project manager at the City of Paris bureau that overseas complex real estate transactions and urban programming (*montages immobiliers et programmation*), locates the beginning of the Arch in the first open “calls for projects” emitted by the City of Paris in 2014 and 2015. The *Réinventer Paris* campaign called for innovative economic and cultural initiatives to take place in city-owned real estate. Most of the selected projects focused on *mixité fonctionnelle* and *sociale*, she explained. The Arch works in continuation of these campaigns. A technical committee was set up, bringing together delegates from all the bureaus of the city, from other municipalities of the Grand Paris, and various state agencies and levels of administration (region, State, and ministries), which oversee the selection of initiatives and the development of projects at the Grand Paris level.

The Arch has three main objectives which are (1) for emergent businesses and organizations to learn the norms in use in the French market (logistics, accounting, networking) through “incubators” and “nurseries,” (2) to render visible to city planners and private investors innovative projects that already exist on the ground through local entrepreneurs’ storytelling (*mise en récit*), and (3) to foster institutional actors’ grounding (*ancrage local*) in the territory undergoing urban renewal. The Arch works in practice through monthly meetings of a *comité technique* (a committee bringing together representatives from all Paris bureaus and State actors involved in “piloting” the Arch and assessing its effectiveness).[27] Innovation signals a social program grounded in novelty.

However, technicities and precision aside, M. was not entirely convinced by the social mission of the Arch. Although she acknowledged that there was undeniably some value in representing local narratives of entrepreneurial ingenuity and innovation, the whole scheme was not going to

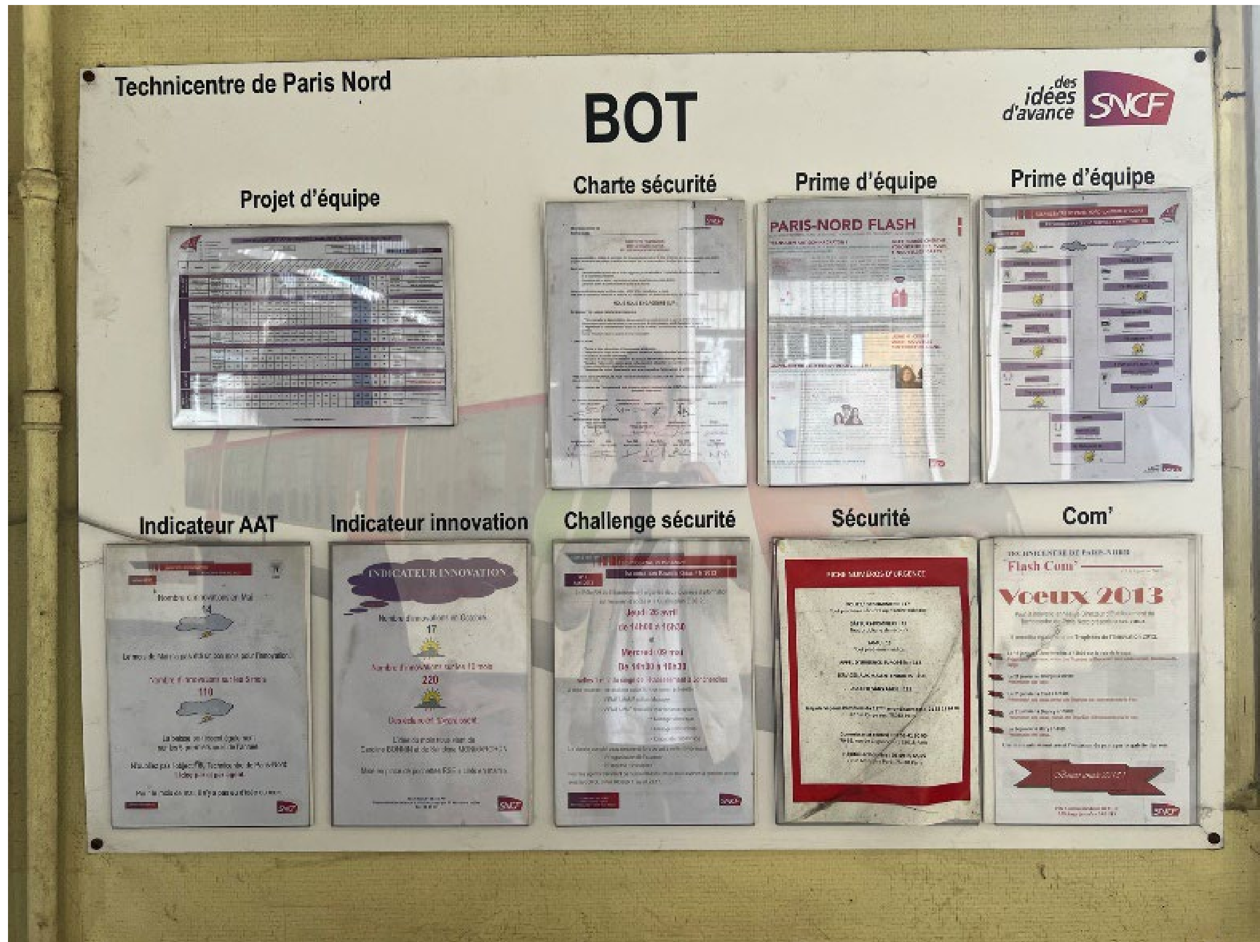
[27] The institutional language here directly reflects my interlocutors synthesis, but it can also be found in official brochures available online, notably: https://www.parisandco.com/

revolutionise Paris's territorial "imbalances," a term she used to echo a common euphemism employed by experts to refer to segregation. If anything, it might be an effective way to gentrify North Paris, she conveyed.

Novelty, here, thus does not refer precisely to newness. Rather than the emergence of something new, it signals a shift in perception and institutional discourse, which reflects the current centrality of *mixité* as a fix-all concept and policy-orientation: a coherent lexicon for power to self-refer through the notions of dynamism, solidarity, and environmental sustainability that circulate in videos, brochures, reports, and during the fieldwork interviews I conducted. In other words, "novelty" shouldn't be taken to mean currently new, and it should not be understood to have emerged recently.

For instance, during the visit of a construction site still rife with is past histories, the project manager I was walking with pointed to a series of posters on a wall of the disaffected SNCF maintenance facility: on it were listed "innovation objectives" that all the railway workers were tasked to meet every month. My interlocutor, although acknowledging he was working on the side of the railway company that had contributed to the erosion of railway workers' historical identification with the company, could not help but shake his head at the site of the posters. What a ridiculous conflagration of neoliberal and working-class cultures, he deplored: highly qualified workers were infantilized into a rather incongruent discourse of innovation. The poster bore a date in May 2012; months later the facility closed and most of its workers either had to transfer their skills into other logistical functions within the SNCF, retired, or were let go and re-oriented toward another trade altogether. What appears as new, then, in this language of innovation, is not exactly the practices as such; it is more so the vision of policy makers for territories that they now consider

as repositories of potential for urban change and the managerial options that have become available to them.



[Figure 18. Signage from the SNCF facility. One poster reads, under a stormy cloud: "The month of May has not been a good month for innovation. Don't forget the goal of the *Technicentre de Paris-Nord*: One Idea Per Agent." The technicentre closed months later. Photo by Author.]

For Monsieur M., a project manager at the Local Development Team (EDL) of the Politique de la Ville working on the 18th arrondissement, the key objective of the Innovation Arch, as far as the 18th arrondissement is concerned, is to change the Northern Gates of Paris into large public places that would represent the open face – the *vitrine* or storefront window – of Paris, rather than the

“backdoor” (or the *arrière boutique*) of the city. For him, the question is as much one of territorial marketing and rebranding of the district, as it is an intervention on the social composition of space and on what are considered social ills that must be remediated. In conjuncture with these diagnostics, the Arch and its various actors consider such stigmatized areas and their stigmatized constituencies as resources: resources for innovative practices, resources for new economic models, resources for new ideas for urban renewal.

This shift from stigma to resource, from abject to desirable, relies particularly on *mise en récit* and involves shifts in representation. The work of representation, especially when it appears restorative or reparative, *feels* good, particularly in an environment where mainstream media representations are either lacking, strictly derogatory and negative (through a focus on organized crime, violence, and regular controversies about the practice of Islam in France). However, these approaches to “changing the image” of neighbourhoods long stigmatized create a puzzle, since stigmatization continues to take place regularly in the media and, significantly, in the agendas of national and local governments. Likewise, the production and visibility of “new” narratives – new because they are rendered visible to outsiders – is taking place within a larger process of justification of France’s socio-economic shifts: as the restructuration of public services and of the French welfare model continues to cause widespread reticence if not resistance, through protests and union activity, market and State initiatives such as the Innovation Arch work to create a vast, locally grounded network of entrepreneurs as much as it serves to highlight how some of French society’s most stigmatized and marginalized members have continued to “thrive” and “create” their own means for penetrating and participating in the legitimate market.

Contemporary urbanistic innovations, such as the ones deployed by the urban experts I interviewed, highlight the will for established actors to harness that energy and, by way of grounding

themselves, penetrating a socio-economic fabric, which, apart from policing and welfare, is otherwise left alone: thereby creating value, culturally, socially, and economically for mainstream Paris. Considering all these actors and agencies as infrastructural and institutional vectors of *mixité* – be it functional, social, or morphological urban mixing – the spatial implementation, throughout the urban design process and the physical build-up of urban developments need to be explained more thoroughly.

Phasing Urban Engineering and Prefiguring Urban Uses

As Madame AC, director at the Paris & Métropole Aménagement public corporation, explained: the different *corps de métiers* involved in an urban project work in phases, each one intervening after the other. For instance, land must be excavated for sewage and water distribution to be put in place, followed by the electrical systems, and the gas system that must be linked to the general city distribution network. Each one has to do with a particular set of engineers and trained workers. Only then can the volumes be built above ground, followed by workers that apply the vision developed by architects, gardeners that green space with vegetal volumes. And so on and so forth until all the spaces are inhabitable, and the equipment and amenities can be used by residents and serve their designated purpose. The sequence of intervention on a construction site is called the *phasage*, or phasing. Phasing, the director of PM&A explained to me, describes the administrative practice of breaking up a large-scale project into several stages. *Phasage* also involves a particular management of the technical and temporal relationship between each of the cumulated and consecutive stages of construction.

Tactical urbanism has thus emerged in contemporary urban planning as a distinctive and effective way of putting dormant sites – dormant between different phases of engineering – to work. By allowing artists, architects, and gardeners to temporarily invest spaces that are in ruination or in

construction, planners aim to make the construction site accessible to the public in order to produce the types of public spaces in which *mixité sociale* can be rendered visually, in an institutionally legible form. It also serves as an alternative to conventional participative workshops, where developers publicize their plans.[28] It is thus in part through tactical urbanism or what city officials term *urbanisme de préfiguration* (prefigurative urbanism) that planners innovate and experiment, testing out practices and spatial configurations that may then become permanent once the development has been delivered. Temporary occupations also bring together different constituencies, namely former and current residents, and high-income earning newcomers. Through this, urban planners negotiate new ways of urbanizing and of defining acceptable forms for dwelling and occupying space, thus, in their philosophy of institutional practice, they *prefigure* a new Paris. Prefiguration denotes a "will to accompany an urban mutation" and venues to "see what will happen" (Collectif Fil, 2020: 7), a mode of projection that takes the design process outside of the maquette and into urban space (see also the 2018 *Carnet pratique* published by the Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme and the *Carnet de l'innovation* published by ANRU+ in 2021).

The innovations that are highlighted by public and private officials should not be overstated, but some of them are worth mentioning. There is, for instance, an overall focus on climate change, and the need to adapt the practices of "urban users" to a "resilient city," which include energy-use reduction and consuming locally produced goods and services. While these evolutions might revolutionize how Paris is lived in, currently nothing suggests that such a radical shift will be taking

[28] During a series of workshops I attended in the Évangile estate near the Chapelle-Charbon urban project, I was struck by the fact that participants and experts already knew each other well. The scene appeared almost rehearsed, with the knowledgeable architects disarmed by their interlocutors' everyday expertise and specific wants. As is to be expected with such participative apparatuses, the residents who show up to these workshops tend to be the same over the years, becoming familiar with the process and monopolizing speaking time.

place there. But prefigurative urbanism, insofar as it involves spatial experimentations with urban farming, agriculture or other "greening" initiatives such as gardening, could be construed as moving toward such transformative goals and as adapting the city to face climate change and shifts in global circuits of crucial goods.

[Figure 19. Sketch of a Zoom interview with a member of the *équipe de développement local*, with the interlocutor in the foreground and a map of the 18th arrondissement and ongoing urban projects in the background. Sketch by Author.]

Another significant element of the *cahier des charges* of prefigurative urbanism is to keep traces of what used to exist before it was destroyed, rebuilt or considerably altered in form and in function. This has been called by architects, urbanists, and city officials as *construire sur l'existant*. This phrase translates as "to build on that which exists" which is rather ambiguous. To built on that which exists suggests a process of destruction, followed by a rebuilding on that which used to be

there. For experts it signals a mode of urbanism that breaks with past modernist plans that, indeed, consisted in building large structures as if nothing had been there in the first place.[29]

Perhaps taking hue from this precedent, perhaps in an attempt to quell residents who might feel alienated from the aesthetic of contemporary urban and architectural rhythms, the importance of *construire sur l'existant* is now part of the *cahier des charges* given to the *maître d'oeuvre* in charge of designing and producing new urban spaces. As my contact at the Mairie, Monsieur CL, explained to me, traces of what was once there are kept within the design of the new space: the red bricks of an 1930s building may be used in the lintels of the new building, signaling its past aesthetic, or used in the rubber mixture that covers children's playgrounds. Similarly, the space itself might keep traces of its former urban function: such as the *Square du 122 rue des Poissonniers*, in which the linear disposition of trees is inherited from its former use as a parking lot. These ways of building on what exists today, of keeping traces of its former appearance or function, reflect a certain desire to care, to demonstrate a caring urbanism to an otherwise suspicious public.[30] *Construire sur l'existant* also highlights the narrative tendencies of architects and urbanists. Indeed, Monsieur L., in telling me about these examples also advised me that I should not be fooled by his or other experts' storytelling.

[29] The social housing blocks built in the 1990s in the Goutte d'Or neighborhood of the 18e are a good example of recent *tabula rasa* urbanism: the old *faubourien* buildings, reminiscent of the neighbourhood's historic working class immortalized by Émile Zola in *L'Assommoir* and the location of Paris's first Algerian community and the struggle for Algerian independence in metropolitan France, were destroyed and replaced by cement volumes that largely erased that history. No plates commemorate the area's tumultuous history and older residents who know of this history, such as JL the gardener and guide who you will meet in the following chapter, hypothesize that the destruction was indeed meant to erase that which existed: the spatial memory of the Algerian war of independence as it took place in the streets of Paris.

[30] Although I do not formally engage with the notion of care in my anthropology of expertise, it is worth paying attention to it as there exists an emergent concern within expert discourse in Paris, which focuses specifically on care or *soin* and *souci* (which respectively refer to the *caring for* and the *caring about* components of care). For more on typologies of care see the inaugural piece by Tronto, 1998. The notion has also been taken up by urban scholars. For more on the latter, see Binet et al, 2022, Davis, 2022, Fitz et al, 2019.

[Figure 20. Archive photograph of *cheminots* in the SNCF facility glued to one of the locomotive entryways, as part of the Railway Museum temporary urbanistic intervention. Photo by Author.]

Echoing this advice, Monsieur NP, a project manager in charge of the Ordener-Poissonniers project on a former SNCF locomotive maintenance facility, both mirrored the city official's reservations and, perhaps against his own better judgement, displayed architects' tendency for such storytelling through spatial design. As he rolled and smoked small cigarettes during a visit of the dormant site, he explained to me how the phrase *construire sur l'existant* was being put to use. The site, which had existed since the late 1800s and redesigned in waves in the mid-20th century, he explained, highlighted the functional separation of Haussmannian Paris: three levels existed side by side without communicating. The level of dwelling, accessible through the street, which was itself

separated from the level of industry. This three-tier stratification involves not only a conceptual separation between three modes of city-life but also an actual topographical organization, with the industrial space being under the other two. *Construire sur l'existant* first meant that Espaces ferroviaires, the SNCF's private real estate branch, had to design ephemeral occupations of the site that spoke to its history. After a failed attempt, with a nightlife venue that garnered complaints from neighbours, an ephemeral railroad museum (*musée du rail*) was put in place, as a way to honour its former logistical function and the generations of railroad workers (*cheminots*, a significantly politicized and militant sector of French industrial workers) that had laboured there.

[Figure 21. Jardins des Mécanos. Espaces Ferroviaires SCNF Real Estate project on rues Ordener and Poissonniers. Former locomotive maintenance facility. The site saw two temporary

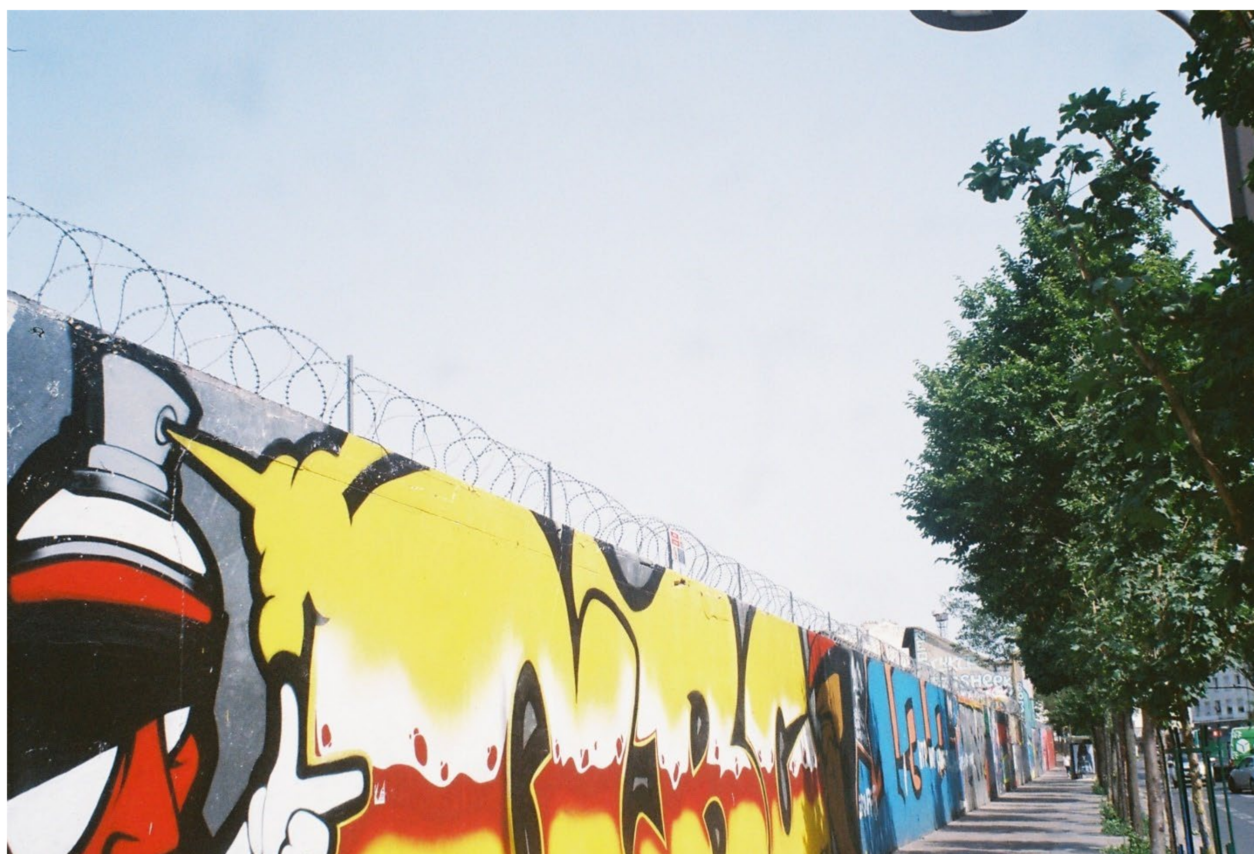
occupations facilitated by the owner and the City: a night life venue (2015) and a museum on railway workers (*cheminots*). Photo by Author.]

As we walked around the site, N. gestured to one room, and to another, explaining how the structure would be conserved, the internal form of the facility kept as such and repurposed into a large workshop for design students, propelling the site toward the future and simultaneously keeping with its former, historical role for industry. One moment struck me in our drift within the worksite: he pointed to a large wall slightly above us, at street-level. There, he explained, a large entryway would lead to the new building, with a skylight arcade leading to a garden, on either side cultural, economic, and educational equipment; beyond the garden a housing estate with mixed-income housing. All three tiers of the Haussmannian Paris would be fundamentally altered yet traces of it – the built environment of separation – would be kept as a spatial, formal trace.

The spatial re-composition of urban space relies on these techniques, which are necessary to contemporary planning, but not altogether sufficient as cultures of expertise influence how certain concepts and techniques are applied in practice. For instance, N. was trained as an architect, only to become dissatisfied with his training. He later shifted and acquired training in urban planning in the strategic territorial policy Masters of the Sciences Po. Paris Urban School. His trajectory influences the way he tells spatial stories since he is trained, as most architecture students are, in producing sensory studies of urban space. The fact that he is wary of architects but also displays some of the key features of his training unwittingly perhaps highlights the synergetic cultures of expertise that give this milieu of actors their coherence and shared substance, despite their sometimes-agonistic interrelations.

While we visited the project, I held back a question: what was to become of the large wall that separates the Goutte d’Or neighbourhood from the tracks below? The question felt personal and

anecdotal: the wall signaled segregation, a neighbourhood barred off by a large wall. It also signaled the beauty that can spring from such spatial separation: the wall, dubbed *Le Mur de la Scred* boasts large murals, street art, vast graffiti works, and countless small signatures (*flops*). I thought my interlocutor might mention it. He did not, and in leaving it aside, he might have indicated what constitutes *l'existant* for planners and, conversely, what is considered outside of the domain of that which exists and should be inserted in the new spatial arrangement of the 18th arrondissement.



[Figure 22. The "Mur de la Scred" on Rue Ordener, near the Marcadet Bridge. Photo by Author.]

North Paris has had a long history of squatting, from the trailers and makeshift homes built in the Zone, to the contemporary squatting of disused building and the informal encampments created by artistic communities, displaced migrants, and Romani communities. Such informal and often

criminalized urban practices oddly fall within the scope of what one might consider tactical urbanism, and they are part of *l'existant* to the extent that practices may be considered as part of extant urban space. While some students of urbanism and cities argue that tactical urbanism constitutes the most significant innovation in 21st century urban planning (such as Lydon and Garcia, 2015), what could be considered a breakthrough, here, is that planners attempt to harness practices that have long been part of the genesis of urban space, in an attempt to govern the process of prefiguration. The inclusion of this spontaneous mode of urbanization into the conventions of institutional urban genesis is the innovation – not the practice itself.[31]

Colonial Urbanism in Contemporary France

Contemporary urban planning and the implementation of *mixité* in public spaces rely on what city officials call prefigurative urbanism, or *urbanisme de préfiguration*, as a method to extracting value from dormant or disused urban surrounds while testing uses, forms, and modes of governance via temporary occupations. The proliferation of ephemeral activities, spatial structures, and atmospheres has become, since 2015 and more decidedly after 2021, one of the ways that city planners prefigure the city of tomorrow, according to their political horizon. By prefiguration here we should understand a form of urbanism, which relies on temporary – malleable and modulable – urban projects to experiment with spatial form, cultural innovation, to "strengthen social links" (*renforcer le lien social*) and to prefigure – plan, test, and implement – the forms and norms of social life. Institutional discourse – at all levels of actors – mobilizes categories of otherness and

[31] I would like to frame these transfers from the marginal to the institutional as elements of a policy of *mixité*. There is much more to be said about their relationship to contemporary neoliberal doctrine in France and the specific constituencies of *mixité* – Muslim and queer – which I will expound on more specifically in the following chapters. In the following section, however, I ground my argument historically, turning to what Paul Rabinow (1995) terms a colonial form of technocratic cosmopolitanism, illustrated by the urban planning operations of Hubert Lyautey while he governed Morocco as the Resident-General of the French Protectorate.

difference to frame its desired outcome: a form of social mixing (*mixité* and *brassage*) of class and socio-racial groups, displayed in large public spaces and semi-public places (such as repurposed infrastructure).

Once a privileged strategy of social movement actors, Leandro Minuchin argues that "prefigurative urbanization [now] denotes a logic of producing space in a post-democratic context," echoing Swyngedouw (2011), because "representative structures lack the ability to channel and implement alternatives to accelerated commodification of urban space and where, instead, a plurality of agencies rely on the construction of infrastructures to experiment with other ways of occupying urban space" (Minuchin, 2021: 6). The Parisian case, with its expertise located in the in-between of technocratic governance and utopian experimentation, suggests that prefiguration entails not a retreat of the state (or representative structures) but rather a reconfiguration of how local and national state actors envisage urban social life and how to scaffold its renewal and regeneration. Thus, prefigurative urbanism appears as a judicious technique for public actors to collaborate with market actors towards redefining urban citizenship. This program takes up some of the key questions – and answers – of colonial urbanism, a particular type of cosmopolitan colonial urban planning, that sought to produce the spatial form of colonial citizenship, a socio-spatial organization of proximity and separation along cultural and racial lines.

L'urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux features a number of communications and reports from the international congress of colonial and tropical urbanism, which were honorifically presided by Marshall Hubert Lyautey, former resident-general of the French Protectorate in Morocco. The texts were assembled by Jean Royer, synthesized by Henri Prost, and introduced by Édouard Vivier du Streel; all these men were key figures of the French colonial Empire, working as administrators, architects, published intellectuals and key actors of national and local policy in

post-war continental France. They are, in the words of Paul Rabinow, "technicians of general ideas" (Rabinow, 1995: 232), engineers of the spatial and social architecture of France as empire.

[Figure 23. Photograph and autograph of Hubert Lyautey on page 6 of Jean Royer's copy of the volume. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France.]

This document is of significance for two reasons. One is simply conjunctural: the congress took place around the same time as the Colonial Exhibition of 1931, which consecrated French Empire as a civilizational enterprise, an undertaking considered by its colonial actors as one that would last

for centuries to come, as the centenary of the beginning of the conquest of Algeria was celebrated in the metropole and throughout the Empire. Second, this congress formalized a discipline of urbanism that was still, then, in a process of formation: it brought together architectural concerns focused primarily on the safeguarding of heritage, alongside the sanitary imperatives of the French hygienist movement, while also centering the role that spatial form was to play in the production of norms of citizenship. Because of its colonial quality, this document repeatedly centers the notion of race – not only in the sense of race as population, which was common in French political and medical thought at the time, as in "the French race," but also – as a marker of difference. In that way, this document is key for understanding how racial and cultural difference suffused the discipline of urbanism and structured the concerns of socio-spatial planners around notions of "norms and forms" of modern citizenship.

Indeed, Lyautey writes in the opening preface addressed to Jean Royer, that two concerns animated his "long colonial career," that is the *politique indigène* (Native policy) and urbanism. His understanding of *politique indigène* attests to the French model of associationism (as opposed to the British "indirect rule"), which he considered to be the condition of "our colonial life, our progression, of pacification, of the adhesion of the populations, of our union […] that gives our colonial action its *grandeur* and its *noblesse*." Urbanism, he goes on to write, is the natural continuation of Native Policy, in that it brings about an "ease of life, comfort, charm, and beauty."

The language here is particularly laudatory. But rather than debunk its validity with an exposé of colonial crimes perpetrated by Lyautey and his mentor Joseph Gallieni, I would like to stress how adjacent his discourse is to contemporary notions of *vivre ensemble, faire ensemble*, and *construire sur l'existant* that animate contemporary urbanism in France, and which I have shown in this dissertation.

In the following pages, Édouard Vivier du Streel synthesizes Lyautey's urban policy as one built on both a bringing together of Europeans and *indigènes* through manufactured spaces of encounter across difference while also observing the imperative of "never mixing within one urban agglomeration the indigenous population and the European population," out of "concern for the health of whites." He argues for the creation of urban forms that are pleasant for "urban dwellers of the white race," which allow for contact between colonial and colonized constituencies while also maintaining a degree of separation, as a way of favouring European settlement. In his *Compte rendu général*, Royer situates this undertaking as one emerging from millennia of urban experiments, from Arab urban genesis after the conquest of North Africa, to French *villages-colonies* in the first decades of French occupation in Algeria, and the "enormous effort currently underway for the creation of agricultural Zionist cities in Palestine."

In his *Rapport général*, Henri Prost echoes these concerns and their stated historicity by formulating twenty-one "wishes" for the future of urbanism in European colonies. These wishes include the establishment of general protocols for the urbanization process, in cases both of urbanism *sui generis* and for the extension of existing cities, such as the formalization of institutional processes of decision-making, the orientation of buildings to the North, the creation of public spaces, sidewalks and arcades, hygienic norms, etc. Some significant components here include the use of green spaces to signal separations between urban zones within a city, such that European and indigenous quarters would be delineated without impeding the "contact and collaboration of races" (*troisième voeu)*, while "respecting the beliefs, mores, and traditions of the races that make up these agglomerations" (*deuxième voeu*). A number of *voeux* pertain to the creation of Institutes that would allow for the circulation of knowledge and techniques across French, British, and other colonial empires.

These prescriptions use the language of their contemporaries: a time when Empire was envisaged as a form that would last for centuries to come, as the ideal form for the propagation of modernity and hybridized European civilization across the planet. Considering the crumbling of the administrative structure of Empire that took place in the following decades – Algeria, for instance, accessed independence some thirty years after the congress was held – it is striking that some of these "wishes" continue to organize contemporary concerns about urban life in France. One key homology between these two contexts – the colonial one and our contemporary situation – is the centrality of informal housing. Prost writes, for instance, that the "improvised encampments of these men, simple and primitive, around the cities, constitute the most dangerous grounds for contamination, despite the incessant intervention of Hygiene Services" (1931: 24). The "happy solidarity and fecund emulation" of Congress participants, he concludes, gives him hope that the "anguishing problem of indigenous housing" may be brought to bear on future urban policy.

Echoing the debate between Paul Rabinow (1995) and Janet Abu-Lughod (1981) about the means and ends of colonial urbanism, colonial "technicians of general ideas," not unlike the experts I interviewed, worked with two potential outcomes in mind: a form of cosmopolitan urban life relying on a refined form of segregation through housing and socio-spatially engineered encounters across difference – the interpretation of Lyautey's work that Rabinow proposes – or, in contradistinction, a regime of apartheid, as Abu-Lughod's historical analysis of Rabat suggests. In either case, the extant terrain colonial experts acted upon was one of "dual cities" (Abu-Lughod, 1965) produced, through dispersion and partition, in conquest.

Colonial urbanism, however, was not a discipline that solely looked to colonial territories. If the latter constituted large-scale laboratories for imperial *métropoles* – "again and again they were called '*champs d'expérience*' or experimental terrains" (Wright, 1991: 12) – it was because

“[s]ocial imperialism would not only pacify the colonies and make them more productive; it would also provide a way to revitalize metropolitan France, regenerating politics and culture with new leaders, fresh ideas, and proven methods” (Wright, 1991: 3). I argue that the concerns laid out in this key document – *Urbanisme aux colonies et dans les pays tropicaux* – have been transferred into metropolitan France during the formal end of Empire and since. Specifically, because this form of urbanism was premised on a management of racial and cultural difference, and because such management no longer took place in the colonies but in France proper (and the overseas territories that remained within French sovereignty), they continued to be the object of debates about how to organize cities and how to include or exclude colonial subjects (who accessed citizenship in the last throes of Empire, before being included into the polity as foreigners). Today, urban policy and urbanists are thus tasked with the reconfiguration of a situation they’ve largely inherited, to remediate the social and spatial segregative effects of shantytown resorption and to re-engineer the geography created by post-war *grand ensemble* and *ville-nouvelle* urbanization.

This “transfer” also has to do with the internal dynamics of urbanism and urban design, as Gwendolyn Wright argues, in that the new directions that the discipline qua policy took in colonial situations rippled into continental France. “Urban policies,” Wright explains,

> “took on a new orientation [at the turn of the 20th century], at once more technocratic and more cultural, which extended into many aspects of daily life. With the advice of architects and sociologists, art historians and geographers, colonial administrators sought to exert greater control over such matters as family life and working conditions, industrial growth and cultural memory” (Wright, 1991: 7).

The history of post-war reconstruction and the dispersal of Algerian shantytown dwellers arguably took on these concerns and adopted a hardline approach, opposed to Lyautey’s “techno-

cosmopolitan" projects, and which favoured transferring colonial workers into separate urban zones. Both approaches, however, involve a component of social engineering: bringing those marked by difference and defined through a lack of modern conduct into the fold of modern urban citizenship. This constitutes what David Scott defined as colonial governmentality, not only because it functions as a milieu for encounter (Noble, 2015), but also because of it is meant to produce effects of rule. As immigrants came to be the object of citizenship training, from the socio-educational component of *cités de transit* to contemporary *tiers-lieu* neoliberal social welfare,[32] the "Muslim" continues to exist within the French *polis* as a target of urban projection; generative projects meant to produce effects of rule, to interpolate minoritized communities via encounters across difference. This governmentality, because of the historical sequence that saw Empire formally end and colonial workers remain in France ascribed to a new, reconfigured differed political status, continued to structure the organization of the *polis*.

This modality of colonial governmentality works to 1) maintain a dynamic relationship between territory and government by 2) establishing constant feedback of information in the form of territorial diagnostics. This production of knowledge is contingent on the proliferation of 3) locally anchored grassroots venues. Through institutional pressures exercised in part through the subsidy process and as a result of contemporary cultural trends, these venues tend to be framed as 4) "third places" (*tiers-lieux*), a hybrid economic model and modulable spatial form, that constitutes itself as a venue for commercial, cultural, and social activities. These techniques are part of a governmentality thus works on space to change it and, significantly, to alter the social fabric of urban space, to experiment new forms and norms of citizenship, to produce "social links."

[32] I will elaborate more on these components in Chapter 3.

Considered as a nuance of Republican doctrine, “the politics of difference in northeast Paris constitutes a reworking of republicanism that is often more humanistic than hegemonic assimilationism espoused as it ‘actually exists’ to function in the in the context of globalized, multiethnic city” (Newman, 2015: xxxii). Urban experts’ utopian bend – the Saint-Simonian, Fourierist, Marxist, and otherwise concern for social reform – mirrors the “humanistic” Republicanism *politique de la ville* conveys on the ground. Alluding to the past forty years of relative social mobility and political visibilisation of immigrant communities in France, Andrew Newman highlights that “many of France’s immigrants and Muslims (as well as generations [of French citizens] who were raised in France by immigrant parents) have been organizing and protesting for access to the rights enshrined by France’s core republican values, not against them,” (Newman, 2015: xxxi) sometimes moving across class lines, into state institutions to work on behalf of *politique de la ville*. Contemporary prefigurative urbanism and “open programming” urban policy thus reflect this long-term dynamic; furthermore, despite apparent discontinuity, it also attests to the actualization and maintenance of “the ways that urban cultural policies were bound up with [the] political concerns” of the colonial situation (Wright, 1991: 13).

Conclusion

Technicians of policy, project managers, urbanists, architects, and association-based experts are part of a technical and political assemblage, which intervenes on spatial composition, and which reveals larger trends in France. The first is the re-emergence of French corporations investing in their “social promise” (a *supplément d’âme* giving them a *raison d’être*). By funding socially and environmentally local initiatives, multinational corporations re-brand their image through philanthropy: this has been the case for Veolia (water), Total Energies (oil), BNP (real estate and investment banking), SNCF (railways). All have developed talking points that largely echo Saint-

Simonian precepts of socializing industry and have funded tiers-lieux in the 18th arrondissement, across France and overseas.

Second, a distinct mode of knowledge production has emerged in the form of social and territorial diagnostics, whereby social and economic actors (ranging from the State, to corporations, start-ups or local associations) produce, share, and map data before, during, and after intervening in urban space. The re-emergence of corporate social mission and social and territorial diagnostics indicate a third dynamic. Although the focus on cultural programming of the city is revealing of the social component at the heart of *Politique de la ville*, it also signals an adjacent process: as urban interstices are being commodified, certain social programmes conventionally provided by the State are experimented in a privatized form within the margins of the market.

Contemporary city planners have capitalized on the release of marginal real estate back into the Parisian market – something of a breakthrough considering how dense North Paris already is. It has harnessed some of the creative dynamism of informal modes of dwelling and has attempted to include local economic actors into the formal start-up economy. The ingenuity of residents in dealing with scarce resources, and local cultures of *débrouillardise* and hustle, have unsurprisingly found a place in contemporary narratives of local entrepreneurial revival.

Encampments and unregulated informality continue to haunt planners while tactical urbanism oddly momentarily adopts certain elements of the forms of informality to better structure the re-assembling of urban space. During one of our meetings at the Mairie, Monsieur CL explained that the City is particularly interested in the creation of large public places alongside tiers-lieux to showcase and render visible social mixing. But "every time we recreate a public space," he added, "we have this *hantise*." *Hantise* refers to a haunting or, more precisely, an obsessive spectral fear. For Monsieur CL and others, their *hantise* is that the public space in question will be invested by

unhoused refugees, displaced Romani communities, street-based sex workers or occupied by addicts (*toxicomanes*) to congregate, sell, buy, and use. The activation of dormant sites that could otherwise be squatted and, later, the activation of delivered public spaces and equipment is all the more necessary for planners. Socio-spatial engineering allows for commercial and cultural activities to "animate" space and foreclose undesirable modes of occupying and dwelling in space. What does this tell us about the Republican notions of "mixité" and "vivre ensemble"? What of the emergent interest of French urban policymakers to align Paris with standards of sustainability and resilience? For whom is the new city being built and toward what ends?

The process of making the 18th arrondissement a new centrality of the French Capital is a spectral endeavour. Not only does planning involve specific professions tasked with design and projection – arguably akin to the ghost summoning qualities of Robertson's phantasmagoric apparitions – but it requires all involved to project potentiality when working. To think with Derrida, all work is always-already spectral and that of urbanists, architects, and others is undeniably such work of sensing and engineering potential spaces. Another phantasm is that of the commodity-on-display, the cultural form of capitalistic market consumption that Benjamin had identified: the new neighbourhoods have their own commodity-aura. They shine and secrete social promise. Due to the nature of stigma in the 18th arrondissement, however, these phantasms, derivatives of market desires, are mired by additional phantasmatic presences: of those that have not been brought into the fold of commodity.

[Figure 24. Mural titled *HARRAGA* depicting a woman hand stretched out toward shadowed figures waving to her from a small boat, on the "Mur de la Scred" on Rue Ordener. Photo by Author.]

These phantasms are powerful, perhaps because of the fear they summon, perhaps because they are phantasms of eruptions of the unregulated within spaces of planning and regulation. Finally, there are those who live within this phantasmagoria, which this chapter does not speak to – and barely speaks of. They are specters to the planners whose access to residents through participative workshops only gives them an oblique sense of who it is they speak to, speak of, build for – or against. They are, however, real, living, residents of North Paris, often understood through the specters of poverty, of radical alterity, either a threat or a resourceful partner. The cultural and spatial experience of these subject positions, although more-than-spectral, is draped in the veil of a certain otherness.

Chapter 2: Interstices and the Social Promise of the Garden

Au pied d'une colline au manteau verdoyant,
Des Jardins Ouvriers l'œuvre sainte et bénie
Étale ses fruits mûrs et sa paix infinie
Loin des cafés fumeux et loin du bourg bruyant.

Tandis que, délaissant leurs enfants et leurs femmes,
D'autres au cabaret gaspillent leur santé,
Nos ouvriers, l'outil sur l'épaule jeté,
Gagnent le frais jardin qui sourit à leurs âmes.

Là, par un saint travail assurant l'avenir,
Oubliant les soucis écrasants de la vie,
Ils goûtent, par surcroit, en leur âme ravie,
Ce champêtre bonheur qu'on se peut définir.

Et Dieu même, oui, Dieu, de l'éternel dimanche
Quittant parfois pour eux les grisantes splendeurs,
Sème la paix la plus exquise dans leurs cœurs,
Fait leur corps plus robuste et leur âme plus blanche.

Et puis voici venir les femmes, les enfants,
Et tous, mêlant leurs chants au murmure des choses,
Goûtent un bonheur pur de tous pensers moroses
Et puisent la santé sous les cieux triomphants.

Soyez bénis, ô vous dont l'âme généreuse
Aux pauvres ouvriers veut faire tout ce bien ;
Votre œuvre est bien française et son but bien chrétien
C'est de semer chez nous une semence heureuse.

Cette semence, un jour, en fruits saints éclora :
Les riches secourant les indigents, leurs frères,
Substituant la joie à leurs noires misères,
La question sociale enfin se résoudra !

Et Dieu vous le rendra ! . . . . Dans les célestes plaines
Du Paradis, le Dieu des ouvriers, un jour,
De bonheur enivrant et d'indicible amour
A jamais gardera vos coupes toutes pleines !

At the foot of a hill and its emerald coat,
The Workers Gardens' holy and sanctified labour
Spreads its ripe fruits and its infinite peace,
Far from the smoky coffeeshops and far from the loud city.

Meanwhile, neglecting their children and their wives,
Others waste their health in the cabaret,
Our workers, their tool thrown over the shoulder,
Reach the fresh garden that smiles at their soul.

There, through holy work that ensures the future,
Forgetting the crushing worries of life,
They taste, all the more, in their replenished soul,
This pastoral happiness that one cannot define.

And God even, yes, God, of the eternal Sunday,
Sometimes leaving for them the exhilarating splendor,
Sows the most exquisite peace in their hearts,
Makes their bodies more robust and their souls whiter.

And here come the women, the children,
And all, mingling their songs to the murmur of things,
Taste a happiness free of morose thoughts,
And draw health under triumphant skies.

Blessed be you, whose generous soul
To the poor workers wants to do all this good;
Your work is truly French and its goal truly Christian
It is to sow in us a happy seed.

This seed, one day, in fruits will bloom:
The rich will rescue the indigent, their brothers,
Replacing black miseries with happiness,
The social question will be solved!

And God will give it back! … In the celestial plains
Of Heaven, the God of Workers, one day,
With intoxicating happiness and untold love
Will forever keep your cups all filled!

Poem by Monsieur J. Santo published in the report of the first congress of the Oeuvre des Jardins Ouvriers, held on 25 September 1898.

Introduction

The garden is an object of utmost importance for contemporary urban planners and city-dwellers. Large boulevards adorned with tall sycamore, chestnut, lime, and maple trees distinguish the affluent sectors of Paris from the mineral and metallic environment of working-class housing. Not only do green spaces constitute one of the necessary elements of pleasant urban dwelling, but they have also increasingly been construed as an urban solution to climate change. Parks and other spaces, once conceived of as spaces for quaint, bourgeois strolls, today enter the city's bioclimatic strategy as purveyors of fresh air, which clean the polluted capital's atmosphere and cool down the ambient temperature in "heat islets" (*îlots de chaleur*) during heatwaves. In asking the question *what does it mean to make the city desirable?* or *to desire the city?* a clear and simple answer appears to be: it means to green the city, to beautify it (*l'embellir*) by freeing land from cement and rock, and planting trees to make the city more liveable, more enjoyable, more beautiful. Indeed, early royal edicts ordered hedges be planted and cared for around Versailles, for purposes of both *embellissement* and for the security of the royal family, to protect their privacy, signalling here the longue durée of pleasure and power, leisure and security.[33] This chapter moves away from Versailles – although the École nationale supérieure du paysage located in Versailles remains spectrally present. Rather, I study a specific urban object: the *jardins partagés* or community gardens. What does this process of greening of the city entail in contemporary Paris? Who is involved in transforming Paris from a mineral to a vegetal urban space? What local and global dynamics appear to the fore of this apparently progressive endeavour? If desire encompasses a consideration for the abject, then what is the place of abjection in the garden?

[33] Royal Act of 29 April 1664 signed by Louis XIV King of France: *Ordonnance du Roy prescrivant, tant pour l'embellissement du jardin du Palais Royal que pour la sûreté de sa maison, de faire fermer toutes les vues des maisons attenantes et de rehausser les murs dudit jardin*. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, F-23612 (754).

Landscaping and the Artistic Ordering of Space

Parks, urban forests, enclosed squares[34] and botanical gardens took on a distinctive form as the discipline of urban planning emerged and congealed throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, to its now familiar form. In Paris, as in much of Western Europe, plots of land belonging to wealthy landowners such as abbeys and parishes were often cultivated by the clergy and sometimes used as urban commons for landless workers. By the end of the 19th century, in particular following the complete re-organization of Paris under Second Empire prefect Eugène Haussmann, the urban garden became a fixture of what an organized and pleasant city ought to look and feel like. Such gardens, considered as objects of spatial composition, involve art, landscaping, and botany in an effort to curate non-human life for the enjoyment and pleasure of city-dwellers. This garden brought into the fold of European modernity pre-existing conceptions of Abrahamic gardens of unbounded pleasures and abundances: Quranic descriptions of heaven as a garden enmeshed with the actual practices, in North Africa and in Southern Europe, of gardens as locales for the expression of desire, public gallantry, and sexual pleasure.

The garden as a spatial object is all these things. And surely, it is and has been a crucial part of human life to tend to space and to cultivate its appearance in specific ways. Ways that both reflect a particular cultural setting or collective ethos, and that inflect such collective forms. We are shaped by the way we curate the natural elements around us as much as such curatorial and curative work shapes us as humans. That being said, the gardens that I studied in Paris emerge from a specific temporal, spatial, and sociopolitical context. Indeed, as Jacques Rancière (2020) elaborates, the

[34] The word "square" should be read with a French accent (something like *skwar*) and refers not to a square shaped park but, rather, to a park of any shape, relatively small in size, often composed of a central gazebo or floral arrangement and enclosed. Like all parks and green spaces (such as cemeteries) managed by the City of Paris, squares are closed and monitored every evening to prohibit nocturnal activities or temporary settlement by unhoused people.

modern European garden emerged from what the French philosopher calls the "aesthetic revolution of the 18th century" (*révolution esthétique*): when the garden entered into relation with "*un certain type de modèle*" or what we might take to mean a certain order, or a certain conception of what order must look and feel like.

Although acknowledging its relation to a form of art that emerged in early modern Italy, Rancière offers two competing models, which should be familiar to anyone who knows Paris: the French model and the English model. The garden *à la française* is characterized by rigidity and angles. The garden *à l'anglaise*, conversely, invokes curved lines, rather than angles, and "soft" contours, as opposed to rigid and straight pathways. These characteristics describe the overall organization of a landscape as well as the way plants are tended to. The aesthetic revolution that Rancière locates in the 18th century consisted in claiming that artistic inspiration ought to be sourced in *le monde sauvage*, in what is considered to be natural. By natural, Rancière – and the landscapers and philosophers, like Immanuel Kant, which he comments – takes to mean that which is untouched by Man or civilisation. The garden should thus be a space of coexistence, not only between various humans and non-humans, but also between deliberate rational intervention and nature, two ontologically different forms of life.

Landscaping, in French *paysagisme* or *l'art du paysage*, is then conceived of as a combination between artistic freedom (*liberté*) and nature. It is, Rancière argues, an art form that exceeds conventional definitions of fine arts, mechanical arts (engineering or what the French call *génie*), and liberal arts. As a discipline, Kant argues, landscaping is the synthetic outcome of the competition between architectural arts and pictural arts, such as painting, on a canvas – land – that exceeds both forms. As an elite art form, *paysagisme* does not escape the tendency to create exclusive spaces, meant for the leisure and affective enjoyment of erudite and wealthy patrons.

Indeed, beyond the question of artistic form and spatial form, the aesthetic dimension is a political concern for Rancière. In fact, while he writes of the 18th century, the philosopher's contemporary imaginary is rooted in current political stakes around land-use in France and the emergent political strategy of "Zone à Défendre." These *zones which must be defended* or ZAD are a response to industrial megaprojects, such as airports (in Nantes), radioactive waste management (in Bure), or water containers (in Sainte-Soline). The stake for such movements, as Rancière conveys, is to practically marry the notions of landscape and free use: to be able to witness a landscape and let one's imagination freely roam from the dual position of seeing the land and caring for it. This approach has lately been at the center of landscaping and gardening experiments, particularly in the spatial and conceptual work developed by Gilles Clément (see Clément, 2014).

This chapter does not sincerely engage with radical political movements, such as the ZAD, not because they are not compelling or that I am not sympathetic to them. Rather, they did not appear central to my interlocutors' concerns, the *jardin partagé,* nor in the ways green spaces are created, invested in, and used in the 18th arrondissement. Rancière's history of the idea of *paysage* is nonetheless important. Indeed, the 18th arrondissement, along with other urban spaces that resemble it – in terms of topography, working class heritage, built environment, and contemporary Rom, North African, West African, and other immigrant communities – have become crucial to urban, botanical, and landscape architectural experimentations. There is, in that sense, a political stake: one which involves an ordering of the polity and an ordering of urban morphology.

This stake is not new, although city experts' concern for climate change and their considerations for "bioclimatic" planning is indeed a feature of current times. But as historian of land planning Robert Home (2013) argues, the arrangement of green spaces as gardens, plantations, and road verges were crucial to the establishment and expansion of colonial cities, giving Empire a global,

standardized socio-spatial form: that which made London and Hong-Kong similar, or Paris and Algiers alike, was thus not just the cachet of architecture but also a certain disposition of greenery in urban landscapes. Serving a practical function as well as an aesthetic one, Lyautey, Prost, and other actors of the urbanization of French colonies in North Africa likewise considered green spaces as necessary to signalling points of separation and encounter "between the races," ordering space and orientating city-dwellers accordingly.[35] Gardens, to continue thinking with Rancière, thus play a political role – they give the *polis* a key feature of its aesthetic – and, to think with Home, they may today continue to imbue city planning with a certain coloniality. Walking through the 18e as Monsieur JL represents it – in the following pages – I would like to keep these considerations in mind, and bring to the fore the political, cultural, and affective topography on which experiments in spatial composition are being conducted in contemporary North Paris.

The gardens that I studied in Paris involve various aspects: from the artistic practice of landscaping to the creation of new, spontaneous urban objects, and the politics of maintaining budding contemporary urban commons, the garden is not simply a space for enjoying nature. It involves a variety of antagonistic actors, who negotiate the creation of beautiful and pleasant spaces, often with the idea that such spaces might help make the city anew and allow for city-dwellers to transform their own subject positions. What does it mean to make the city desirable? What is the place of gardens in urban desire? The imminence of climate catastrophe appeared central to my interlocutors; I thus also ask: What are the means through which city-dwellers and city-planners are conceiving and planning a city that can withstand both social and environmental violence? Answering these questions involves taking a rather critical position vis-à-vis what common sense

[35] I have explored the colonial history and contemporary coloniality of urban planning's physicial and social engineering in the last section of the previous chapter.

would construe as an undeniable good. What story does the garden tell us of the unequal distribution of pleasure, leisure, and comfort in contemporary progressive politics?

[Figure 25. Street view of Place de La Charbonnière where giant flower pots "green" public space while obstructing the informal market known as *Le marché aux voleurs*. Source: Google Maps.]

Meeting the Gardener

I had lost track of time strolling in the streets of the Goutte d'Or. I rushed back onto the boulevard Barbès and followed it downhill to the meeting point that Monsieur JL had indicated to me by email. I was to meet him, along with a group of amateur gardeners from the 6th arrondissement, in front of the Louxor Cinema, at the intersection of boulevard de la Chapelle and boulevard de Magenta. Crossing the small plaza in front of the Barbès Métro station, under the overhead railway, I gently shoved my way through a crowd of bewildered tourists, local Parisians and *trabendos* or contraband street vendors. One vender turned around and showed me the packs of Marlboro cigarettes he was selling. *Non, merci* I said to him, before he turned to other potential clients.

Monsieur JL was standing at the entrance of the cinema, towering above the group of gardeners who, for the most part, were elderly white women. I waved from a distance and he gestured for me to join them. He was telling the group about the history of the Louxor venue. The Louxor opened in the 1920s, at a time when cinema was thriving in France. Its distinct "neo-Egyptian" architecture made it stand out and, perhaps due to its aesthetic flair, it managed to stay open after the Second World War. By the 1970s, however it was forced to sell and came into the hands of Tati – the low-cost department store that owned the shops across the Barbès-Magenta crossroads. Once a Caribbean nightclub called *La Dérobade*, which roughly translates as "the escape," it was forced to close, Monsieur JL deplored, after complaints from neighbours that "large groups of black people" were congregating outside. But, for better or for worse, this led to the creation of the *Megatown*, one of 1980s Paris's largest and most popular gay nightclubs managed by David Girard, figurehead of the gay business and newsprint milieu which emerged after the *dépénalisation* of homosexuality in 1982. By the end of the 1980s, the club had closed again, as 31-year-old Girard died from a devasting opportunistic cancer related to an acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome. "But now," Monsieur JL concluded, "thanks to the petitions brought by a local collective to the City of Paris, Le Louxor is once again a cinema."

The elderly women nodded emphatically and inspected the architecture, as they peered at the crowd of North African men around them; I imagined they were confused by this Neo-Egyptian architecture fitting so well with the current face of the neighbourhood. A few furtive glances made their way to me… Monsieur JL, remembering I had arrived, gestured to me, and explained to the group that I would be walking along with them.

"Khalil is an anthropologist and today he will be studying us, is that right?" he asked me cheekily.

"Well, I won't be studying you as such, I'm studying urban change and so gardens are an obvious point of interest," I replied, rather formally. "It's your relationship to the city, and to this neighbourhood in particular that I will be attentive to. And, by way of introduction, is it all right with all of you if I take notes, photos, and record some of this visit today?"

Everyone nodded, some of them staring wide-eyed at the anthropologist who, I assumed from their perspective, hardly looked any different from the scenery they were now encountering. Their inquisitive gaze preceded a series of questions; each of the women asking me what I studied, if I was from the 18th arrondissement, what my background – intellectual and ethnic – was.

Our walk took us around ground *zéro* of community gardening in Paris, as Monsieur JL called it. We walked for several hours in La Goutte d'Or and La Chapelle neighbourhoods, in self-managed gardens, public or private, visible from public space or hidden in social housing blocks' courtyards, in vast city-planned parks or in wastelands. One of the women, a small but vivacious old lady, grabbed my arm to slow me down and asked me about my research. As I started answering her questions, she nodded as if she already knew it all and interrupted to give her own impressions of the 18e: how interesting this place was, she conveyed, so foreign and mysterious to her, yet within Paris. While this had been a visit to examine gardens and learn new practices for her group of amateur gardeners, it had unexpectedly turned out to be an exploration and set of encounters, cultural and ethnic in nature.

Monsieur JL thus worked as a translator, making the 18th arrondissement more legible to a privileged Parisian public, which could only apprehend and comprehend it through otherness. He brought the history of the arrondissement, its distinctive architectural rhythms, its commercial and cultural public life, to the fore of his presentation of *jardins partagés*. While he was particularly attentive to the botanical composition of the gardens and the arrondissement in general, he also

conveyed how central wastelands and interstitial urban space are to the morphology of the 18e and how the gardens that take root in such spaces play a political and social role.

"You see how neat this is?" Monsieur JL said, pointing to a bare tree blossoming pink and magenta flowers, along the rue Polonceau. "It is wisteria climbing up an Ailanthus."

"*Oh bah ça alors !*" the group said together, "that can't be true…"

"And here," Monsieur JL continued, "we won't see Ailanthus leaves. It looks like a jacaranda, but it's wisteria. Anyway, so, here we're on rue Polonceau, we're at the top of the Goutte d'Or hill. Here, there used to be a row of five mills, and this house, which is not aligned with the street, is probably the oldest house in the Goutte d'Or. It likely dates from the 18th century; a miller's house. You can get in there, from the street, or from the side. […] When the current owners took it over, there was still a hole in the roof to put the miller's ladder, you see?"

He paused briefly, and continued, "So, it's very old. This too," he added, pointing to a different building, "is very old. You can cross the street and look more closely. You'll notice the very sophisticated decorations. But right next to it, here, a bomb was dropped in April 44 – an American bomb – when they were bombing the railroad at Porte de la Chapelle. There are a number of bombs that fell by mistake on Montmartre and the Goutte d'Or. That's why the buildings there dates back to the 1950s, because the bomb fell here and touched this angle of the house [destroying part of the decoration]."

[Figure 26. Monsieur JL, wearing a cap, pointing out a wisteria growing on the branches of an Ailanthus as the amateur gardeners of the 6th arrondissement look up. Photo by Author.]

Botanical Gaze, and Other Forms of Ethical Attunement

Living in Paris is nothing if not overwhelming. Not only is it historically dense, rife with archival form. But one can easily feel submerged not only my form but also by the city's polyrhythmic pulses.[36] Living in Paris consists of a constant negotiation of these rhythms; a work of finding rhythms for oneself and settling into a rather unsettling routine. The metonymical practices of Paris

[36] In *Traces of Violence*, Robert Desjarlais and I used the metaphor of neuralgia to convey the shifting, uneven intensities that give Paris this distinctive pulsating affect.

– the drink in a terrace, the morning coffee by the Métro station, the brisk outing to fetch the day's baguette, newspaper, and halal rotisserie chicken – all are examples not of Parisian consistency, but a sort of Parisian attempt to create small, manageable rhythms for oneself.

Every Sunday morning, the street market of the Poteau and Duhesme streets, lodged between the Clignancourt and Grandes Carrières neighbourhoods, is the site of such rhythms. Older men sip on a coffee, a beer, or a glass of wine at the Portuguese owned bistro on Place Charles Bernard, Catholic families stroll about in their blue and white Sunday outfits, as the Moroccan "Marché de Montmartre" boasts some of the arrondissement's most beautifully curated seasonal produce. Within this postcard image of an everyday Paris, M. peregrinates religiously to meet with a familiar presence. Every Sunday, an elderly Roma woman sets up an ephemeral flower shop across from the Bistro and the Market. "*Ma chérie*," the lady says, rolling her [r] like Edith Piaf, when she sees M. walk down rue Duhesme. Every Sunday, M. picks up a bouquet of flowers, and their insect companions, for a meager 2 to 5 euros. The lady always gives her a small discount, a kindness she rarely extends to other customers, much to their disgruntlement.

Not unlike the *biffin* community of contemporary ragpickers, the Romanis of Paris are known to collect objects, artefacts, plants, and other marketable goods that they sell in informal markets. Flower picking is one such practice that is ubiquitous throughout Europe. In Romania, where anti-Romani racism is hardly considered a sin, the racist trope goes that such flowers are gleaned in cemeteries – where burials consist of a tomb and open earth enclosed in cement where flowers or bushes are planted and cared for to honour the buried dead – and sold off to unsuspecting God-fearing Christians.[37] I am unsure if such tropes have made their way to France, but here too anti-

[37] I gleaned this information during a walk with my grandmother in the streets of Timisoara, as we made our way to my grandfather's grave, some years ago…

Romani racism is a secular virtue. On rue Duhesme, the bouquets the old Romani woman sells change from week to week, shifting with the seasons and, likely, with where the flowers were picked. A bouquet might be composed of marguerite daisies and lush greens picked in one of the small *bois* in the 16th and 12th arrondissements of Paris or in the woodlands in the outskirts of the Paris basin. Alternatively, a bouquet might be made up of Frangipani (also called *plumeria* named after Charles Plumier, a botanist in the court of Louis XIV), lilies of the valley, amaryllis, anthurium flowers, or even heliconia… indicating that the flowers were gleaned from some curated garden neatly landscaped and composed of a panel of exotic plants, likely managed by the city of Paris in one of the central arrondissements of the city. Being attentive to plants is one of these practices that help one manage the incessant and mind-busting rhythms of Paris; a weekly ritual, one that awakens the senses to fragrances, and allows M. to join in on a timeless urban practice.

Plants, as "guerilla" gardeners argue, help us ease[38] our relationship to the city and to ourselves. In connecting with other people and with the *other* lifeform that plants constitute, we engage in a practice of ethical formation. Ethics, here, indicates a deliberate – although not necessarily prepared – work on the self. In a mineral city such as Paris, caring for a plant helps develop such a practice of the self. It helps counter the dry air that makes up the city: dry because of people's anonymous form of belonging, dry because its form is largely made of modified stone, rock, argyle, and plaster, alongside glass and steel. A weekly encounter with a caring, cheeky, old lady who hands you a bouquet of everchanging flowers, winks as she discounts the price, and wishes you a beautiful week, *ma chérie*, reminds M. that she is not entirely alone; we are many, alone-together.

[38] I use the verb "to ease" as a translation of the French *apaiser*, which is a central notion of contemporary French policy and political discourse. All political formations – from the center-left to the extreme right wing – often campaign on a program of *apaisement* to mean a combination of tranquility and pacification of social relations.

As I began to work on green spaces, and met gardeners and botanists, I was first taken aback by their ethical attunement to more-than-human lifeforms. Interested in how they live in the city, how they make the city a playground of curiosity and naïve amazement, I too attuned my gaze to notice wildlife in the city, not just pigeons and rats, but hawks, falcons, and woodlands Rodentia – all protected species that dwell in the breaches of the 18th arrondissement and use the railroad as a relatively unobstructed pathway to go to and from Paris. I too attuned my gaze to see the city through a botanical lens. And the city became filled with surprises and (un)familiar presences.

In her anthropology of ruderal spaces in Berlin, Bettina Stoetzer proposes to unpack the various dualities that structure how we – as social scientists and city-dwellers – perceive, experience, and analyse urbanity. The opposition between infrastructure and ruins, between active technology and passive matter, she argues, appear to play a similar melody, although through a different modality, than that of the opposition between nature and culture within the city (Stoetzer, 2022: 9). This divide is also salient in Paris, and in particular within the expert cultures of urban renewal: indeed, the city of Paris is often perceived as being composed of antagonistic and unevenly distributed mineral and vegetal spaces.

Un espace minéral refers to a topography that is largely devoid of greenery: think of an empty quarry, leaning against the bedrock of a mountain or a so-called Zen Garden, a Japanese *karesansui* (枯山水) composed of gravel, rocks, and moss, with very little other plantlife. A vegetal space, or *un espace végétal* in contradistinction, is composed of plants either planted in *pleine terre*, directly in the earth, or in *bonne terre* healthy black soil placed in pots, buckets, or above an impermeable layer of mineral ground atop gas, water, and electricity networks.

Stoetzer argues, as much of contemporary anthropology does, that such divides should be questioned, and perhaps entirely reconsidered, for such categorical binaries play out in rather

ambivalent and ambiguous ways in urban spaces as they are lived in and constituted affectively and physically. In the case of Paris, it might then be judicious to unpack the duality between mineral and vegetal spatial textures. For one, the vegetal volumes of the city are often used as adornment of an otherwise mineral space: this in part why a space being greened denotes practices of care for space, and why green often means wealthy and healthy. Plant life in urban space thus denotes comfort, pleasure, leisure, and care, which are unevenly distributed within Paris. Apart from the politics of how urban space is maintained, there are no fundamental differences between mineral and vegetal volumes. That is, to construe one as artificial and the other as natural constitutes a misconception. This brings me to a second point, which is that 18th arrondissement Parisians – particularly those who dwell in apartments built before the ubiquitous use of cement after the Second World War – live in the geological matter that once made the Paris basin's unearthed undergrounds. The mineral volumes of Paris are concretely and metaphorically sourced in its underground.

In *Tableau de Paris* published between 1782 and 1788 shortly before the city would erupt in revolutionary riots, and arguably inaugurating a new genre of urbanography, Louis-Sébastien Mercier offered an incisive and compelling description of a crumbling Ancien Régime Paris. The author, a *petit bourgeois* who wrote prolifically, gave a striking description of Paris topography in the Fifth Chapter of the first volume of his *Tableau*. He writes (Gallica, pages 20-21), "*Pour bâtir Paris dans son origine,*

> *il a fallu prendre la pierre dans les environs ; la consommation n'en a pas été mince. Paris s'agrandissant, on a bâti insensiblement les faubourgs sur les anciennes carrières ; de sorte que tout ce qu'on voit en dehors, manque essentiellement dans la terre aux fondements de*

la ville : de là les concavités effrayantes se trouvent aujourd'hui sous les maisons de plusieurs quartiers ; elles portent sur des abymes.

> To build Paris originally, it was necessary to take the stone in its surrounds;[39] such consumption was not starved. As Paris grew, we insensibly built the suburbs (*faubourgs*) on the former quarries; such that everything we see above is essentially missing from the earth at the foundations of the city: thus, the frightening concavities that are found under the houses in several neighbourhoods today; they are borne by abysses.

Mercier's description, while it does not encompass the 18th arrondissement, which at the time would have been a set of small towns, villages, and hamlets outside Paris, still holds true. Particularly given the fact that Montmartre was one of these locations, *dans les environs*, in the surrounds, where gyps and stone were sourced. The 18th arrondissement neighbourhood *Grandes Carrières*, meaning "the great quarries," evokes this history in unambiguous toponymy. Parisians, thus, do not live in artificial mineral spaces, which need a remediating intervention to bring more natural vegetal volumes. Rather, they dwell in the recomposed geology of what was once under their feet.

All urban spaces are curated and assembled. In the case of Paris, and other urban spaces that are heavily intervened upon through policy imperatives and various technologies of socio-spatial engineering, the assembling of green spaces (*espaces végétaux*) is as artificial and plastic as other forms of built environment. In the city of Paris, specifically, green spaces constitute an *artifice*, which accessorizes the city. Even in the case of a wasteland that would give way to a ruderal elm

[39] I equivocate deliberately, using the term "surrounds" instead of "surroundings" to translate *environs*, to convey the historical depth of the concept that Simone (2022) deploys in his study of urban fugitivity and capture.

grove, Monsieur JL argued during one of our meetings at a bistro in Château Rouge, "untouched nature does not exist."

Social Promise, Lien Social, and Urban Policy

On August 27, 2023, in the botanical garden of Tourcoing, a historical mining hub in the North of France, minister of the interior Gérald Moussa Darmanin made his *rentrée politique* and convened a number of national and local officials to his constituency. Darmanin, known for his virulent stance regarding anti-crime policy and immigration – along with a string of lawsuits for sexual misconduct and sexual assault – had drafted an odd speech, perhaps with the idea that this would be the beginning of a long campaign for the 2027 presidential elections. Indeed, he focused his attention on the working classes (*classes laborieuses*) of the North; he positioned himself as a "successor to the Abbot Lemire, disciple of social Catholicism who sometimes fought against his own bishop, against his friends, against capital that was a bit too selfish."[40] Darmanin's turn to social discourse might be jarring to some, however it illustrates how central social reform is to French politics. Although France is perhaps unique in how explicitly and systematically the "social" is mobilized, it is not a French specificity: all political systems, be they governed by progressive or conservative political formations, offer specific social models, and work tirelessly to implement and maintain their desired form of sociality. By bringing this up I want to dispel the idea that a social discourse necessarily indicates a socialist posture or brings about objects, spaces, and practices that necessarily constitute collective goods or budding commons. Indeed, the history of Abbé Lemire and the social policy of gardening that he favoured for the working classes of his constituency in Northern France, tells a story of social Catholicism working against the spread of socialism in

[40] Here, I am citing Darminin directly; all quotes are taken directly from his televised speech.

mining communities; a story, also, of the moral mission of government against a backdrop of what was perceived as socio-moral dangers, debauchery, and rampant alcoholism.

"You well know that in France we have the *jardins ouvriers* (workers' gardens)," Monsieur JL explained during the group visit I attended, "which became 'family gardens' and which were created in the 19th century as incentive for men not to go to the bistro or the cabaret, waste their time and money there, and instead to garden to grow vegetables to feed their families." Around us, the sounds of *maraîchers* and *commerçants* created a halo of familiar sounds, as workers on the nearby construction sites could be heard yelling instructions at each other in Arabic, in Portuguese, in Romanian, and in Wolof. "So, indeed, what we call workers' gardens were born in urban peripheries. Notably, there was an abbot, yes *L'abbé Lemire* the *Ligue du Coin de Terre* and I-don't-know-what, I've forgotten… Anyway, all this was sort of re-adapted at the end of the 1990s" (for more the continuities between the *Ligue* and contemporary community gardens, see Dubost, 2018).

[Figure 27. Drawing of a memory, my grandfather tending to his plot in a workers' garden. Sketch by Author.]

By bringing up Abbot Lemire, Gérald Darmanin conjured this historical precedent, one that is often considered

generously: workers' gardens, which the Abbot promoted in his constituency, and which eventually became a staple of working-class life in France, are seen as a common good. As Monsieur JL noted to his groups of gardeners-visitors, the *jardins partagés* of the 18th arrondissement are very much part of this history; its current, contemporary form.

As French historian Béatrice Cabedoce (see Cabedoce and Pierson, 1996) notes, collective gardens emerged at the end of the 19th century and served three purposes: to foster physical hygiene by giving working class families access to fresh air, to maintain the good health of workers by promoting a balanced diet, and, third, filling a moral mission by orientating workers to their gardens rather than other social venues such as cafés, cabarets, or *estaminets* (see also Cabedoce, 2018a). They were initially experimented with in the city of Sedan, near the Belgian border, by Félicie Hervieu, a bourgeois woman who took to heart the working working-class families she sponsored. Disappointed by charity, she worked with municipal officials to create land allotments that working class families could labour, harvest, and extract both foods and additional revenue. A first attempt was successful, with a family becoming self sustaining and no longer needing her charity. She then created the *Oeuvre pour la reconstitution de la famille.* Félicie Hervieu thus set the stage for what would eventually become France's model of *jardins ouvriers* (Guillaume, 2014).

However, it seems that she was eclipsed from the story now told of *jardins collectifs* in France. Indeed, while she is credited with this "social innovation," other actors of the French moral reform movement are in fact credited with its national reach: Abbot Jules Lemire, Frédéric Le Play, an engineer known for his sociological and ethnographic monographies of European working-class families and his work as a moral reformer, and Gustave Lancry, a doctor practicing social medicine in the North of France.

While the garden initially appeared as a remedy to inadequate charity and the absence of welfare institutions, it quickly became part of the moral and political demands of the social reform movement in France. In a study written by Lancry and published in 1899, the latter develops the political and social idea of *terrianisme* – which we could roughly translate as "earthism." Terrianisme, Lancry writes, is a "social doctrine, which advocates for the redressing of the French nation (*patrie*) by the return to the land and to the ancient national traditions" (Lancry, 1899:2). In the late 1890s, this return to the earth was not only meant to better the life and prospects of working-class families, it was meant to repair what these reformers considered as the destructive and destabilizing revolutionary process France had undergone for a century, since 1789: and this remedy would consist in re-rooting French citizens to the land.

In the preface of this same book, Abbot Jules Lemire writes that, concretely, this doctrine would legally ensure that "each man possesses an allotment on this land that was given by God for the whole race, to make sure that this man may live on the land, thanks to the land, that he may find his subsistence and his establishment" (Lemire in Lancry, 1899: iii). Lemire's argument relied on political ideas grounded in the notion of land, and specific peoples having more or less stronger relationships to their land. For instance, he opposed maritime and nomadic peoples alike, which he considered to be inconsistent and unable to root themselves. In contradistinction, "For the races of the North," he writes, "the country (*patrie*) is both the family and the land, it is even mostly the land of the father: *Vaderland*"[41] (Lemire in Lancry, 1899:vii-viii). This doctrine is thus spatial and social, as much as it is one concerned with the nation, with the vitality to the nation and its relationship to territory. Terrianisme, Lemire continues, is "tasked with giving patriotism its primary object and indestructible basis: the land" (Lemire in Lancry, 1899:ix).

[41] Lemire uses the German term for fatherland in his argumentation.

The model of allotments granted to workers appears to have first emerged in Germany in the 1860s, following the writings of Moritz Schreber on the physical and moral hygiene of German youths. For Schreber, the allotments would become the site for physical activity, thereby allowing young men to exercise their excessive energy, avoid pollution (to mean masturbation), and become morally sound.[42] Although it is unclear whether French reformists were directly inspired by the German experiment, they bore the German model a certain affinity, on more than the question of gardens. Indeed, the doctrine of Terrianisme, as Lemire and Lancry advocated, was opposed to capitalism and to "cosmopolitan offensives:" land would become a currency that could weigh in against an ever-moving capital and its cosmopolitan elites.

Lancry worked in a particular context. By the end of the 1890s, the disciplines of demography and social and moral hygiene were considered of utmost import. They had gained not only scientific legitimacy but had also sparked national interest. Indeed, legislators and journalists were concerned with the depopulation and the moral degeneration of the French nation. In *Terrianisme*, Lancry writes that the decrease in birthrates in France amounts to the "supreme evil for our race" (Lancry, 1899:8). The similarities with national-socialist ideology might now be apparent. And indeed, it is rather striking to consider that this common good that collective gardens constitute may have emerged alongside racial and racist doctrines. As France was stabilizing its political regime, in the form of a Republic, it likewise stabilized the set of concepts, practices, and institutions which would eventually become the fixture of modern French normativity. At the time, as Michel Foucault (2004) explains, the concept of race came to be used not only in a derogatory way – to refer to the *other* in alienating racial language – but likewise to refer to the French body politic. *La race*

[42] The history and publicity of the Schreber family is worth a brief detour. Moritz Schreber is remembered as a founder of the Schreber movement and what came to be called posthumously "poisonous pedagogy." In 1903, one of his sons, Daniel Schreber published his *Memoirs of my Nervous Illness*, upon which Sigmund Freud later based his studies of psychosis in *The Screber Case*. See Gavarini, 2022.

française is thus what Lancry and Lemire refer to when they speak of the race and the perils it faces. The French body politic, understood as a race, came to be considered as a population, not only taken to mean a number of people, but rather meaning an assemblage that constitutes the flesh of the body politic, with its biological, social, moral, and political health, ailments, and remedies.

Thus, the *Ligue du coin de terre et du foyer* (League of the Plot of Land and the Homestead) was created in 1896 by the Abbot Jules Lemire, Gustave Lancry, and Frédéric Le Play (see Menapace, 2019). Like in Germany, and like the model inaugurated by Félicie Hervieu, the *jardins ouvriers* were part of a socializing and moralizing enterprise. The objective of the allotments was to foster family savings, access to land, and the building of homesteads, an "ideal" and "natural" place, as Cabedoce (2018b) explains, for the maintenance of social order. It was a way to make working families *more social* and *more moral* such that they would turn away from charity, from debauchery, and from political agitation. In that sense, such gardens constitute "modern equipment," both in the sense that French planning gives to this notion – *équipement* as a stratum of infrastructure that everyday city dwellers may use – and equipment as in παρασκευή (paraskeue) to mean "a toolkit of maxims and practice that take on material existence" (Stalcup, 2016: 146) as the "embodied dimension of one's existence" (Rabinow, 2003: 10-11 in Stalcup, 2016: 146). This becomes particularly clear when we consider it against that which Lemire conceived of gardens.

Indeed, the garden, in Lemire's words – and in the poem in the exergue of this chapter – is conceived of in opposition to the cabaret. To garden for one's family was an alternative to socializing in cabarets. The cabaret was – and arguably may still be – considered a place rife with sex and immorality; but reformists opposed it not exclusively because workers might spend their wages on alcohol and sex work: cabarets were also places where men and women could meet, regardless of class, where they could talk about politics and current events, where they could

organize, unionize, and plan protests. To steer workers away from the cabarets and toward the gardens was therefore also a means to defuse working class revolts.

Main Verte: From Interstitial Gardening to Municipal Green Policy

As we walked along the Boulevard Barbès, Monsieur JL gestured to various buildings, tenements or bourgeois apartments, telling bits and pieces of their stories and, through anecdotes, telling the larger history of a stratified, working-class, industrial Paris. Police sirens, ambulances, scooters and delivery trucks zoomed by us, while a shopkeeper yelled on an employee in Tunisian darija; a symphony of public life that paced our walk, much to the bewilderment of our visitors.

"It's a bit like a pilgrimage, isn't it?" Monsieur JL said to one of the elderly women. Then, to the whole group, he continued, situating us in the streetscape of the 18th arrondissement. "You see, we crossed rue de la Goutte d'Or (Golden Drop Street) and now we are on rue des Poissonniers, former Fishers' Road. So, why do we call it the golden drop?" He told the urban legend of a village famous for its vines that produced white wine, which was only but a half-truth. In fact, the Goutte d'Or took its name from a tavern once located there, that bore a golden drop as its name to indicate it served white wine. As fishers made their way down the route des Poissonniers and into Paris, they would often stop there to grab a drink. Monsieur JL likened it to other taverns and hostels that bore a golden lion (hostel *au lion d'or*), a visual play on words that could be read *au lit, on dort* (*au lion d'or* is a homonym) and which served as a visual cue for travelers looking for temporary lodgings. The Goutte d'Or, he explained, was put on the map when this part of Paris was mobilized into Napoleon's war efforts: the gyps of Montmartre's underground, mixed with urine, was transformed into artificial saltpetre or potassium nitrate, used for explosives. "So, here there was a small hamlet that was named hamlet of the Golden Drop under Napoleon […] so it has little relation with wine as such. So that's the little story, now let's go see our first *jardin partagé*…" The vibrations of a

truck passing by covered the voices of the women asking him follow-up questions, but I could hear him begin an answer and quickly get distracted by birds nesting above the *lambrequin* on the *store-banne* of a local fishery of the rue Dejean market.

As we arrived at a wasteland rehabilitated into a community garden, on rue des Poissonniers, Monsieur JL gave us a brief history of these gardens and their emergence in Paris.

"At the beginning, shared gardens mostly started in urban wastelands (*friches urbaines*). So, imagine, we could make a parallel between New York gardens and Paris gardens. In New York City, in the 1970s, the city was in a panic and many people started gardening in front of their buildings, to be able to live and to eat, in working class neighbourhoods (*quartiers populaires*) in what is called, over there, *community gardens*. And all this became a structured movement, notably thanks to an activist whose name was Liz Christy, so much so that the city of New York drafted a charter that is called the Green Thumb Charter or the *pouce vert*," he translates in French, "to create and organize the relationship between the city of New York and these shared gardens or *community gardens*," Monsieur JL adds, in English this time. "So later, by the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, in Paris, the first *jardins partagés* appeared - they weren't called that yet – mostly in wastelands like this one, often taken over by artists." He gestured to the wasteland behind him.

"So, *en gros*, the artist would make the wasteland his own (*s'approprier la friche*) but in the end, rather quickly, local kids would come and play, adults would come in the evening too, we made pools, concerts, and that's how the first *jardins partagés* of Paris were born."

"When, did you say?" one lady asked, pushing on the back of her ear to hear him better.

"End of the 1990s, early 2000s," he said loudly, and continued. "So, later we'll evoke the pioneers like the Jardin Ecobox[43] or the Jardin du Ruisseau on the Petite Ceinture, near the Porte de Clignancourt, which is also very old. So that's how all this was born. And later a national organization was created to structure all these shared gardens."

This history of community gardens in France is crucial to understand how a local grassroots movement gathered knowledge from other urban experiments in Canada, in the US, in Germany, and benefitted from changes in local government. Madame LB heads one of France's largest federations of community gardens. She currently plays a central role in shaping *jardins partagés* in the 18th arrondissement, specifically in the Goutte d'Or neighbourhood, and in the Paris region more broadly. Monsieur JL first introduced me to Madame LB as a key actor in the emergence of the *Main Verte* charter; a key actor who continues to play a crucial role in brokering partnership between German and French community gardeners. We first met in person at the *Graine de Jardin*'s locale in the Goutte d'Or and again in a bistro across from the locale. She offered an overview of the emergence of *jardins partagés* in the late 1990s and early 2000s; a narrative that foregrounded the institutional evolution of this urban and policy object, and which showcased how her own biography had become intertwined with the gardens.

By the end of the 1980s, Madame LB narrated, France was the site of persistent unemployment. Unable – or unwilling – to propose an alternative to Thatcherite policy's impact on European and French economies, the socialist governments headed by President François Mitterrand's prime ministers crafted a large-scale, comprehensive sociocultural policy. This policy consisted in the construction of large sociocultural equipment across France – museums, libraries, and universities

[43] The Jardin Ecobox was first opened by the Atelier d'architecture autogérée (a self-managed architecture workshop, AAA), with modular boxes and industrial pallets used to place arable earth over the inert soil of a wasteland, in the 18th arrondissement. Its modular form allowed it to move, in accordance with City prescriptions for land use.

– which came to be known as Mitterrand's *grands travaux*. This build-up of sociocultural equipment involved both the construction of venues and facilities, in concordance with funding opportunities for minor actors. This specific confluence of a social need – the idea that long-term unemployment was affecting the social fabric of France's working communities – and of funding opportunities to thwart the deleterious effects of global economic shifts, is what allowed for gardens to emerge as a tool for social policy interventions at the local level. By the end of the 20th century, several initiatives emerged in France, under the leadership of figures such as Éric Prédine or Franck David, which merged gardening with social policy: gardens, in these initiatives, served to socialize long-term unemployed constituents, as a way of offering them an activity and, in some cases, a source of revenue as produce could be sold on local markets.

In the 1990s, noticing that initiatives were emerging spontaneously throughout the country, and after a year of informal discussions in Paris, the Fondation de France decided to organize a congress during which these various actors could meet and devise a national document to structure these emergent initiatives into a budding network. The Fondation de France is a private agency, created by the French State in 1969, with the stated objectives to structure private philanthropy and coordinate private funds in France. Its role in the structuring of *jardins partagés* in France is not unlike the role played by private philanthropists in the emergence of workers' and familial gardens at the turn of the 20th century.

In 1996, the Fondation funded a trip to Montreal, for French community gardeners to meet Canadians operating *jardins communautaires*. At the time, Madame LB was pursuing graduate studies in California and, although looking from a distance, she was eager to join the initiative. A year later, in 1997, Madame LB returned to Paris and started interning at the Fondation de France, notably to draft calls for proposals targeting gardening initiatives. She traveled throughout France

and Europe to document innovative gardening initiatives, as a way of garnering a comprehensive perspective on gardens that the Fondation de France could work with – and as a way of documenting local practices that could be used to structure the movement in France.

Although she had intended to pursue doctoral studies on the matter, she was not able to find a thesis funder and resorted to working as a consultant for various initiatives. Using her skills as a research assistant and urban ethnologist, Madame LB began the work of structuring urban gardens into a large-scale municipal, then regional and national, organization focusing on *mise en réseau* of existing community gardens and focusing on their social mission (*à vocation de liens sociaux*). By 2001, she co-founded the association *Graine de Jardin* ("garden seed") and has worked there for the past twenty years. That very same year, the City of Paris held municipal elections that saw a Left-wing coalition take the head of the central municipal government[44]. This coalition, composed of socialists, communists, and ecologists from the Green Party, reached out to local gardeners to draft a document modeled from New York City's Green Thumb charter.

On a fateful day, as Madame LB recalled, members of the Parks and Gardens Cabinet (*direction des espaces verts*, DEV) led by Yves Contassot, came to meet her and other community gardeners while they were picnicking on the Petite Ceinture in the 18th arrondissement; from that initial meeting emerged a collaboration between Madame LB and other local actors of gardening working in tandem with city officials to draft the *Chartre Main Verte*. Since then, Madame LB and *Graine de Jardin* have continued to work to structure and coordinate gardening initiatives: this work

[44] Paris is divided into twenty "arrondissements" with each having their own city hall and local urban policy. The City of Paris, however, also has its own city hall, which oversees and directs the city as a whole. That is to say, Paris can be led by a socialist coalition, all the while certain arrondissements, such as the 16th arrondissement or the 7th arrondissement may be headed by a conservative Right-wing municipal list.

primarily consists of scouting (*repérage*) and networking (*mise en réseau*) of various initiatives, eventually funneling them toward accessing institutional funding opportunities.

This brief contemporary history of *jardins partagés* shows how this local, dispersed practice of gardening eventually entered the cogs of urban and social policy. Through the temporal and temporary assemblage of contingent elements – for instance the convergence of the Fondation de France's interest in the matter, the electoral *alternance* that ousted the Right in favour of a Left-wing coalition in Paris, and Madame LB's own personal expertise and movements across North America and France – gardens became a crucial piece of contemporary spatial innovation in Paris and France. However, this narrative only tells us the story of the institutional synergy that occurred then (see also, Baudelet-Stelmacher, 2018). Just as this was true in New York and elsewhere, the emergence of *jardins partagés* in the 18th arrondissement also occurred on a certain fertile ground: wastelands, rundown housing estates, and working-class immigrant communities bent on finding footing in Paris, with ambivalent outcomes.

"So, imagine," Monsieur JL narrated, as the gardeners entered the rue des Poissonniers wasteland, "in the past, there were two old buildings here. And in the building that was here, in 1975, there was a very pious Malian man, Monsieur Moussa Diakité, who set up a mosque in the basement. He later did his pilgrimage to Mecca in the 1980s where he met a rich Saudi who agreed to buy the whole building, which became a mosque managed by the Diakité family. Eventually, this building had become unsanitary. The City of Paris pre-empted the two buildings and destroyed them, and had a small temporary mosque built. And when a new mosque was open in former barracks near Porte des Poissonniers, we destroyed this temporary mosque. And here, we were then supposed to have the Institute of Islamic Cultures."

The gardeners did not know about this Institute and they were rather perplexed by the idea that French institutions would be involved in the building of mosques and Muslim institutes. Monsieur JL explained that the Institute exists today, in two venues in the Goutte d'Or.

"It is a City of Paris venue that is concerned with the cultural aspect of Islam without necessarily treating religion as such. Nevertheless, the idea was that, within one building, we would have a coffeeshop, a restaurant, an auditorium, a library, but that the first floor would be sold to a Muslim association to be used as a prayer room. This is what exists now at the Institut des Cultures d'Islam on rue Stephenson. The first floor was bought by the *Société des Habous et des Lieux Saints de l'Islam* (Society for Awqaf and Holy Sites of Islam), which has been managing the Paris Great Mosque since 1926. But [in 2016], we could not find an association rich enough to buy the first floor. So, the City of Paris said, all right, we won't have a mosque, we'll renovate the old location on rue Léon, and here, we'll see, we'll wait. In the meantime, a local association called La Table Ouverte (Open Table) managed the wasteland. So, you see, here in that place, which is usually free, you can come have tea in the afternoon, children come and play. Here, you have a small garden and there, a chicken coop. You can hear the colony of sparrows that nest in the building next door, that come here to feed. So, for biodiversity this is all very good. There is also a very important social purpose because this *Table Ouverte* manages a community restaurant (*restaurant associatif*) on the ground floor of the ICI rue Léon. So, they have professional kitchens. And here, during Ramadan, we pack all these bags for the needy. So, people enter through the door there, take their bag, and leave through the small door. And every day, we delivered… I don't know how many-"

A volunteer, a young woman, approached the garden from the street, and Monsieur JL interrupted himself.

"Hello beautiful child," he said, "are you coming to work?"

"Is it open here?" she asked.

"Not necessarily."

The small exit door was closed and the volunteer walked around the fence to the main entrance. Monsieur JL continued his narrative.

[Figure 28. The *jardin partagé* on rue des Poissonniers, where the grassroots kitchen "Table Ouverte" distributes free meals, particularly during the month of Ramadan and throughout the lockdown orders at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic; one of the amateur gardeners inspects the plantation. Photo by Author.]

“So, indeed, you see, there’s the Table Ouverte, which has its own core members (*noyau dur*). But this young woman is a volunteer, so am I. During lockdown (*le confinement*), for instance, I spent all my time here – now less because I work a lot – but… so, the Table Ouverte has its core members but anyone is welcome. And, so, I distributed thousands of meals during lockdown. You see, community gardens can also have this social role to play. In certain neighbourhoods, that are rather privileged, it can mostly be for locals and work as a closed circuit; few people going in, we don’t really know what happens in there. In working class neighbourhoods (*quartiers populaires*), by contrast, it becomes almost vital for people to have places like this. We see that schools come too, for children to see rabbits and hens in real life, when some don’t have the money to travel to the countryside. *Donc, vous avez compris le principe?*”

The young woman he spoke to a moment ago had made her way through the entrance and walked past us to get her bike, from behind the chicken coop.

“How are you?” Monsieur JL asked.

“I’m just getting my bike,” she said.

“Ah, you’re not coming to serve meals?”

“No,” she replied, timidly.

“No, me neither,” he said, reassuring her, “we’re just visiting briefly, we’re having a walk through the community gardens.”

“You’ve got wonderful weather!”

“Ah yes, we’ve been lucky,” Monsieur JL agreed.

“*Bonne balade !*” the volunteer said as she biked away.

“So, that was our first *jardin partagé*. You’ll see, they are all different, because it depends on the configuration of the site itself, it depends on the collective that manages it. Each collective or association has its own internal rules and procedures. Some opt for one collective plot, others for individual plots. In the end, each community garden has its own rules and its own personality, so to speak. But it will often look like this. That is, a bit of DIY (*bric-et-broc*), lots of recycling and reusing. We’re tolerant of wild plants, there are a bit of them everywhere. See, there we have strawberries, some fruits.”

Monsieur JL trailed off, listing the different crops being cultivated on the site, mumbling slightly.

“The man who started this garden, you see the balcony over there,” he said, pointing to a building on rue Polonceau, “it’s a man of Egyptian descent whose name is Abdel, who has a green thumb, and he started this garden here. We might meet Abdel in another garden. He was recruited by another collective called the Green Drop (*La Goutte Verte*) so we might see him in another garden today.”

As Monsieur JL trailed off again, I stepped away from the group to take a few photographs of the site.

“Any questions?” I heard him ask. “If not, let’s get moving!”

The Garden as Paradise; for whom?

During one of our meetings in a bistro in Château Rouge, Monsieur JL explained that the garden, as an ideal object, is conceptually tied to the image of paradise: paradise as a garden of endless bounty, the garden as a paradise for humans to connect to life and pleasure. This affinity between how revealed religions have conceived of paradise and how human societies have poured material and symbolic labour into the creation of pleasurable green spaces, for Monsieur JL, is most clearly

illustrated by the Mediterranean and Persian traditions of landscaping and gardening. At a purely linguistic and symbolic level, Monsieur JL explained, in Islamic cosmology, “jannah” (جَنّة) means both garden and heaven. Muslims, he told me, not only share with Judaism and Christianity the origin story of the Garden of Eden, but the delights and pleasures of heaven are also represented in the form of a garden. In contrast, the terms “firdaus” (فردوس), along with “samawat” (ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ), refer to paradise as a distinct celestial space as in “the heavens and the earth” (or ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ). The “oriental” garden, from Morocco to Ancient Persia, constituted the abstract space within which the modern garden was conceived; Europeans used the Muslim conceptions of the “garden as heaven and heaven as garden” to *orient* their own landscaping experiments. The *Jardin d’essai du Hamma* in Algiers, he told me, is a good example of this historical admixture: a colonial garden used to acclimate plants, in line with the theory of French biologist Lamarck, it is now a fixture of Algiers city life, a space where young couples can publicly flirt and engage in gallantry where delights and pleasure have their place.[45] A garden is thus meant to elicit pleasure; the orientalist and romantic *récit* of gardens being glimpses of paradise is compelling, to the extent that it describes a certain sensibility.

But to approach this sensibility critically requires that we ask *for whom?* Who dwells in this paradise and, assuming there exists a particular distribution of the sensible, for whom is it anything but a paradise? The story of how the Bois Dormoy came to be tells us a different *récit*. The Bois Dormoy sits near the Porte de la Chapelle. This gate of Paris is a historically working-class and immigrant district, home to large social housing estates, disused industrial infrastructure, and urban logistical equipment in use to this day. This area recently took center stage as migrants camped out

[45] The orientalist sensuous language here is borrowed from my interlocutor, as I have never strolled in the Hamma.

on the boulevard de la Chapelle (to the South) and the boulevard Ney (where the Chapelle Gate is located).

The Bois Dormoy emerged out of a sequence which saw a set of buildings demolished by their owner. Plans to build over it were dropped and the plot of land that had been cleared became a wasteland. Tenants living in the adjacent building sowed the first seeds, by spitting the kernels of fruits outside their windows, fostering a budding ruderal patch. The same tenants, retired immigrants from North Africa, cleared the wasteland of debris and garbage. Setting up chairs and tables, they began to use the space to meet and hang out, thereby effectively transforming it from a dumping ground into a ruderal surface. As birds nested and brought with them seeds that they spread through their droppings (*fientes*), the wasteland became greener and greener. The residents signed a convention with the City, who in turn put up fences and delivered some "good earth" (*de la bonne terre*) for the area to be cultivated and planted with comestible vegetables and plants.

The small plot of land entered the successive cycles of ruderal surfaces: a first set of plants grew, small trees took root, these trees grew and overshadowed smaller seedlings thereby clearing the ground of smaller plants. The space generated and regenerated itself, illustrating what landscaper Gilles Clément has called the *génie naturel*, or nature's capacity for engineering spaces with minimal human intervention. In parallel, the residents cultivated fruits and vegetables and decorative flowers. The *jardins partagés* of the 18th arrondissement are often described as *convivial*, welcoming sites for socializing with friends or meeting new people. In addition to gardening, the Bois Dormoy also hosted an art installation devised by a local artist and "socio-educational facilitator" (*animateur socio-éducatif*) and constructed collaboratively with former drug addicts.

[Figure 29. The installation in the Bois Dormoy. Photo by Author.]

The installation is a mosaic composed of broken tile and mirror fragments. The centerpiece, in the image above, is a *khamsa* – also referred to as the hand of Fatma (*main de Fatma*) in France – a North African apotropaic symbol, used by North African Muslims and Jews alike to ward off the evil eye (*mauvais oeil*). The orientalist *récit* that Monsieur JL conveyed to me, appeared through a different angle here. The North African immigrants' care for that space, the spontaneity of ruderal spaces' regenerating capacities, the *khamsa* that stood out on a grey and uneven wall; the aesthetics

of an earthly جَنَّة seemed far away, yet the orientating quality of an imagined "Orient" still stood out.[46]

In 2015, as migrants made their way from Sudan, Syria, and Afghanistan to seek asylum in Paris, informal encampments formed in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. The 18th arrondissement became a centrality for several reasons. For one, it had long played a role for migrants seeking to take root in the city, from rural migrants during the first industrial revolution, to Mediterranean and Eastern European Jewish immigrants before the Second World War, and later colonial and postcolonial immigrant communities from North and West Africa. More significantly, however, asylum seekers had to submit their applications through France Terre d'Asile, an NGO based in La Chapelle neighbourhood. Due both to its history (and stigma as an immigrant centrality) and its institutional fabric, police pushed migrants into the 18e. In the summer of 2015, the Prefectural authorities began to evacuate encampments, loading migrants in buses, to be dispatched in triage centers, emergency housing facilities, and immigrant detention centers. During one such evacuation, as migrants from the boulevard de la Chapelle fled from the police round-up, the gardeners who managed the Bois Dormoy opened the fences and let them in. Monsieur JL, while seated in the bistro, called it a manhunt (*une véritable chasse à l'homme*). The men who had made it to the Bois Dormoy used the installation and the mirror fragment to shave, using hoses to wash their bodies. The experiment lasted but a few days, by which time hundreds of people had come to seek refuge in the garden; overcrowded, the overwhelmed gardeners decided to close the garden, as other encampments were forming, awaiting their evacuation order and makeshift relocation.

[46] I am thinking here with critical scholars of orientalism, such as Said (1978) and Yeğenoğlu (1998), and more specifically Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenological approach (2006), considering in particular the ways in which these scholars examine orientalism as an orientating device. In their work, the Orient is not simply a conceptual or geographical site to be dominated but, rather, it inhabits Europe as an aspirational space: to be (un)like the Orient involves the elaboration of affinities, desires, and what Ahmed investigates as the spatial quale of libidinal orientation.

The story of the Bois Dormoy highlights some of the key functions and limits of *jardins partagés* in the 18th arrondissement. If gardens are meant to elicit pleasure, or to serve as spaces in which public displays of delight may take root, it is, first and foremost, because they are composed of multiple elements, which, taken together, create a dense space of fragrances, lights, and opacities. They are a space in which one can hide and express oneself while having a measure of control on who may see, without being forced to submit to the gaze of an unwanted voyeur. In the specific case of the 18th arrondissement, gardens play an ambivalent sociopolitical role. For one, they serve to maintain and strengthen social links between residents, affording them a place to meet and talk, in a semi-public space that does not require they buy anything to enjoy it. They become locations in which flora and fauna can bud and affect the aesthetic experience of being in public space, as both the elders and the birds came together to sow the first seeds of this ruderal forest. Taking form in an urban space that already has its own dense network of socio-cultural and para-social work facilitators, the Bois Dormoy also highlighted how such gardens can become places for addicts, long-term unemployed workers, and other marginalized people to develop a practice of care, through art or through gardening as such. The moment of solidarity that occurred in 2015 between the gardeners and migrants fleeing from the police captures the sort of political aesthetic that guerrilla gardeners might wish to sow in urban spaces.

Within institutional language – often used *verbatim* by local gardening collectives – all these sociopolitical and sociocultural uses of green space serve a social purpose, or a *rôle de cohésion sociale*, thereby playing a role toward social cohesion. This specific language is ambiguous. Although it might appear that to maintain social cohesion is a good thing, ensuring that people live together in peace and tranquility, it actually signals a process of ordering of urban space. Just as Rancière explains that the aesthetic arrangement of a garden tells us the story of a particular

sociopolitical order, the production and maintenance of *jardins partagés* in the 18th arrondissement also tell the story of local and national government's attempts to re-order urban space. It is important to note that, contrary to North American urban space which tends to be entirely privatized, public space in the 18th arrondissement – its streets, alleyways, and plazas – is still densely peopled with street vendors, markets, and residents who appropriate and use public space as their own. There is, in other words, no fundamental lack of public sociality, as appeared rather clearly during Monsieur JL's visit to the *jardins partagés* (and which will be more evident in the following chapters).

In fact, the gardens are part of a vaster, persistent process of re-ordering the 18th arrondissement. Wastelands and the gardens that take place there are considered to be *délaissés* by City officials. By *délaissés*, one can understand something that has been abandoned. The word is structured around the verb *laisser*, which means to leave, and the prefix *dé-* emphasizes this leaving. To *délaisser* thus means to abandon without recourse. This institutional language has certain moral implications. Because it is central to current institutional discourse, it also renders these spaces available for state intervention, thwarting the indeterminacy that they initially fostered (for an example, see Leray et al, 2024).

And so, rather than use the vocabulary of the *délaissé*, I consider the interstices of the 18th arrondissement as "abjected spaces." I do this to signal the moral texture of urban zoning and the stratification of the city, as a general matter of argument. To consider the spaces of interstitial gardening as abject also denotes local specificities of North Paris. The streets of the Goutte d'Or, La Chapelle, and other neighbourhoods of the 18th arrondissement acquired disrepute through their association to street-level sex work – as opposed to *maison close* in-house sex work – and not, as it is rather easy to assume, because of Muslim immigrants' presence, although contemporary

assemblages of African and Muslim life absorb historical stigma. And so, I conceptualize these spaces as abjected – as the emergent product of a process of abjection – to underline the moral parameters that define and give urban marginality its boundaries and to put into relief a local history of sexual tolerance, regulation, and prohibition.

Gardens – and particularly the ones that have been brought into the fold of municipal policy and local urban planning through the *Main Verte* charter, allow the city to reclaim these *délaissés*. In contemporary French institutional parlance, this process of reclaiming abandoned spaces is called *reconquête*. The notion of *reconquête* – reconquest – suggests that urban spaces as such can be *délaissés* while certain populations can also be *délaissés* and may require more engagement from the State, or that they may in and of themselves be the source of the *délaissement* in the first place. This is the case for instance when wastelands are invested through gardens with a specific target population such as recovering drug addicts or pedagogical activities oriented toward immigrant youth. Conversely, these same populations may be considered the source of the *délaissement* and their practices and uses of urban space must be fought against, through a *reconquête*[47] of urban space and the ordering of how space is used and to what purpose. This is the case in places where wastelands are use by French or Romanian Romani communities, as one landscaper conveyed, wherein the gardening and reconquest of the *friche* also serves a security goal of disallowing informal uses of interstices.

[47] The term *reconquête* plays a key role in contemporary French politics, bridging political formations from the center-left to the extreme right wing. To reconquer urban space is a central goal of French policing, in particular in *zones de sécurité prioritaires* and neighbourhoods designated as *quartiers de reconquête républicaine*. The policy is a longstanding fixture of French policing reforms since the 1980s but has since the mandates of Nicolas Sarkozy (in the 2000s) and Manuel Valls (in the 2010s) accelerated. The term *reconquête* is also the name of a political party created by Éric Zemmour (a literary critic turned fascist ideologue), as an echo of these Republican policies of law and order and a nod to the *reconquista*'s expulsion of Iberian Muslims in the 15th and 16th centuries.

[Figure 30. Former site of the Romani encampment near Porte de Clignancourt. Photo by Author.]

Conclusion

The garden, as a specific urban object emerging within the urban topography of Paris's 18th arrondissement, is thus warped into a larger process of reordering Paris's northern gates. To think with geographer Marion Ernwein (2019), the *jardins partagés* of the 18th arrondissement sit at the intersection of three processes: what Ernwein calls *écologisation* or the inclusion of ecological and vegetal concerns within urban governance, *participation* or the production of consultative and participatory processes inclusive of citizens writ large, in particular on questions of urban planning and construction, and *néolibéralisation* or the process by which urban governance is increasingly

subjected to market imperatives and, to an extent, privatized. To think with political scientists Béatrice Hibou (1999) and Achille Mbembe (1999), *jardins partagés* that collaborate with city officials do the complex work of negotiating territorial policy at the ground level. They are, in other words, "discharges" of State responsibility: private actors that partake in activities that might otherwise have been the responsibility of the City and the State.

Whether they are brought into the fold of urban policy or exclusively the fruit of a local initiative, gardens thus play an ambivalent role in regulating urban space. As Monsieur SG put it, not without a certain awkwardness, gardens *de facto* exclude certain ways of living in the city. As the president of a local collective of gardeners which was granted a concession on the Petite Ceinture, co-managed by the City and by the RATP, Monsieur SG looked forward to creating an hybrid space – what he, along with landscaper Gilles Clément (2020) – calls a *tiers-jardin*. This concept refers to a hybrid space and in fact describes existing *jardins partagés* composed of cultivated areas, ruderal space left to regenerate itself, and commercial and sociocultural activities. "Better us than someone else," he admitted during a phone-call interview, although he deplored that, in fact, occupying a space formerly used as camping grounds by Romani families meant that the expelled Roma community would not be able to come back, unless it be to garden.

The exclusion of the Romani community, along with other people that use interstitial public spaces for dwelling, is particularly striking. For Madame LB, however, this exclusion is not so straightforward, specifically when considering another form of "undesirable" public presence: drug trade. If large gatherings of drug users are made more difficult when there is a constant community presence, in the form of activities around gardening and urban agriculture, drug users nonetheless constitute one of the target populations of urban greening's social promise. Indeed, for gardening collectives and grassroots welfare providers – who work with the unhoused, with migrants, with

drug users – gardens offer a soothing[48] social space, where *toxicomanes* can come and develop a social life centered around plants, around the time space of gardening, and away, however briefly, from the social life of urban drug use.

And while most gardeners do deplore local drug dealing, Romani and migrant street camps, and other forms of "nuisances" identified by police and city services, they do not perceive themselves as actors of policing as such. To illustrate this point, Madame LB recounted the story of a contract she received from a city in the 91 Essonne Department, South of Paris. There, she was asked to assist a local gardening initiative and to set up a garden along the model of Jardin Ecobox.[49] She had initially been apprehensive, knowing that the housing estate in which the project was taking place was also the location of a small informal drug market. She hoped, as she recalled, that neither the police nor drug dealers would interfere with the initiative. Much to her surprise, and delight, the young men employed in the local drug economy were more than happy to help, carrying pallets and bags of dirt. For her, this signalled that drug trade, which has over the recent decades become more professionalized – with, for instance, specific job hierarchies and functions, daily salaries and commissions – is interested in keeping public space clean and orderly, building respectful relationships with local residents, and keeping the police at bay by keeping violent crime low.

Madame LB, however, deplored that by the end of the project everyone but the young men employed in the local drug trade could enjoy the garden. "And all this worked very well," she concluded. "And trafficking also worked very well," she added, laughing. The garden, in other words, did not perturb local drug trade, nor did it participate in the form of policing and spatial

[48] Again, as with my previous use of "to ease," I use "to soothe" as a translation of *apaiser*, which denotes appeasement but is also a cognate of *pacification*.
[49] The Ecobox format involves putting boxed earth atop any type of land, permeable soil or not, such that an urban garden can be constituted anywhere. The Jardin Ecobox was first created in the 18th arrondissement in a parking lot by members of the Atelier d'Architecture Autogéré.

ordering that one might expect. In fact, arguably, both gardening and drug trade, as spatial interventions, partook in ordering urban space such that policing by institutional policing agents was not necessary as such.

But this narrative, which I am indeed sympathetic to, only tells the story of one small suburban city and its housing estate in the periphery's peripheries. In a space like the 18th arrondissement, which constitutes a particular central periphery, related spatially and culturally to the outskirts of Paris because of its working-class and immigrant social make-up yet seated within the municipal limits of Paris-*intramuros*, gardeners are unfortunate actors of spatial regulation. Gardeners who work within interstices – such as disused rail tracks – understand others once dwelled there and that their working and rehabilitating that space through a greening practice will in fact exclude other *others*. Considering *jardins partagés* as one element within an assemblage of desirable urban planning forces one to contend with the unequal distribution of leisure, pleasure, and comfort in contemporary progressive politics.

Chapter 3: Tiers-lieu and Thirdness

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the concepts of third place, third space, and tiers-lieu. Specifically, I am interested in how these concepts overlap in Paris and within so-called *tiers-lieux* in the 18th arrondissement. Beginning with an ethnographic vignette deliberately de-centering its use as an institutional category, I then outline how this concept became a key component of contemporary territorial policy in France. I draw on some of the sources cited in policy documents to critically engage institutional discourse about the notion. Situating the emergence of tiers-lieu within the larger assemblage of prefigurative urbanism, I tease out some of the cultural dynamics that *mixité* relies on, in particular the ways in which Islam and queerness are mobilized as antagonistic yet complimentary components of urban experimentation. In so doing, and drawing from the work of Mayanthi Fernando on French *laïcité* and neoliberal reform, I consider the role that tiers-lieu plays in the neoliberal expansion of the market through public-private interventions in the economic and spatial margins. Finally, this chapter also offers theoretical reflections on the idea of hybridity as formulated in post-structuralist cultural critique, specifically that of Homi Bhabha (1994). Recasting my argument within a queer assemblage of desire and abjection, I interrogate the validity of third space theory and the hybridization of norms per tiers-lieu cultural programming.

The distinct concepts of third place, third space, and tiers-lieu all refer us back to notions of hybridity, citizenship, and intermediary spaces of idiorhythmic belonging. Here, idiorrhythmy may be understood as a feature of third spaces, as Bhabha (1994) conceptualizes them in *The Location of Culture*. Idiorrhythmy refers to the possibility of inhabiting a space with many others yet at one's own pace; a "collective solitude" that allows for the form of belonging (*vivre ensemble*) to rely not on ordered collective scripts but instead on an assemblage of individual movements. In that way,

idiorrhythmy refers not only to a mode of being oneself but also qualifies how one place may be traversed and used in multiple, emergent, and overlapping ways. As with the epistemological root of rhythm, which refers both to fluid, successive movements and to an overall form, the notion of idiorrhythmy refers simultaneously to modes of moving in space and to the spatial form that allows for such modalities.[50]

Roland Barthes (2012), in his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in 1977, found in this concept a critical tool for thinking about "Living-Together" and how such collective life might be attained. The notion suggests both the work of description, because such multiplicity in social rhythms exists. It also suggests a form of political and philosophical rumination, because idiorrhythmy is likewise an aspiration; suspended and utopian. This chapter does not strictly address idiorrhythmy, although, in addressing what a tiers-lieu is and does to urban space, it engages with similar a conceptual, political, and social problem-space as Barthes's idiorrhythmy: the interstice between an ethics of belonging and the phantasm of life in common (Rouquayrol, 2020). In that way the idiorrhythmic aspiration of tiers-lieu engineering mirrors the lack at the heart of urban desire's libidinal movement.[51]

Further, I use the category of *thirdness*[52] to both dispel equivocation and deliberately equivocate on the notion of *tiers-lieu* as a government concept. *Third* refers to the liminality of urban life, its

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[50] My presentation of idiorrhythmy is a gloss of Roland Barthes's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France and subsequent seminars offered in 1976-1977. The published rendition of these lectures is a set of augmented notes that Barthes used as the basis for his spoken discussion of concepts and authors. Unlike Michel Foucault's published lectures, based on recordings and transcripts, Roland Barthes's *Comment vivre ensemble* does not lend itself easily to direct citation.

[51] Perhaps this duality is what makes Republican *vivre ensemble* a never-ending cycle of projections of otherness, with French Muslims perpetually cast as being held back by tradition (today understood primarily through the prism of sexual intolerance) and unable to "adapt" (*adaption* being a key notion of French colonial civilizational doctrine) to French modernity.

[52] I use the notion of *thirdness* to examine this "third" that *tiers-lieu* (third place) and third space invoke. I was not initially aware of the work of Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce was an American phenomenologist, who notably trained John Dewey, and established some of the bases of American pragmatism in the social sciences. He developed three categories through which he considered human experience: Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. As Sonesson

interstices, and, frankly, to most of the public space that have been rendered abject to Paris' respectable society. Mirroring the concept of third space that Homi Bhabha (2004) develops, I also take up *thirdness* as a conceptual space of hybridity, considering the ways in which tiers-lieux are involved in formalizing informality. Some of the questions that I wish to answer here are rather straightforward: What is a tiers-lieu? What is its stated purpose, from the perspective of policymakers? How does this policy concept relate to existing scholarship? What does the absorption of this concept (and some of its existing forms) into public policy indicate?

This last question brings me back to the central concern of this dissertation: the ambivalent relationship between desire and abjection, or the crucial role played by abject objects in the State's ability to renew its forms of power, sovereignty, and government. This chapter begins contrapuntally, with an ethnographic vignette, to present an*other* space of thirdness, which I argue leaves some of the clean and utopian discourse of tiers-lieu somewhat undone. From there, with the abject in mind, I will move the writing into the existing spaces that have been labeled tiers-lieu and that partake in the urban renewal process.

Third Door on the Left

An anonymous street. Shop windows filled with stacks of colorful fabric, bags of grain. Tainted apartment windows, a silhouette inside, reclining in front of the lightworks of a television screen. A windowsill, a can of beer, a half-smoked hashish joint still fuming a thin line of grey smoke. Large wooden doors painted red signal the entrance of the building. One door is always left slightly open, which is unusual. Puddles of piss next to large, black garbage bags. Ugly tags written with a

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explains, "Firstness is something that exists in itself, Secondness must be related to something else, and Thirdness requires a more complex relation, either a relation between three things, or a relation between relations, or perhaps both at the same time" (Sonesson, 2013: 306). I do not use *thirdness* in a Peircian sense although a case could be made to construe tiers-lieux in such terms, as Peirce's Thirdness involves the representational and mediational registers of human experience.

Sharpie or carved with a pocketknife into the plaster list nicknames and price rates for hashish resin and flower buds of cannabis.

What's good? he asks.

Nothing new, I say.

After going there several times, I understood the buzzer meant to open and lock the large red door was broken and never fixed, the wires visibly ripped out. Across from the door, on the other side of the street, a group of West African delivery workers met around mopeds and bikes and hung out between their deliveries. Most of them worked for restaurants or for delivery apps like Uber or Deliveroo. Often, they would also make delivery rounds of hashish for clients contacting them on Telegram or Snapchat. That is where I met one young French man of Malian descent, Djibril.

We'd meet at least once a week, sometimes more, and talk while seated on a moped. He'd wait for a hashish delivery to arrive and would leave to make his rounds. When he wasn't near the mopeds, I would walk into the building, through the entrance hall, past the staircase and broken mailboxes, and into a courtyard at the end of which stood a small building reminiscent of the 18th arrondissement's once-pastoral topography. A garbage can on one side, along a cement wall full of breaches and cracks; on the other side, a small wall of uncut stones, lined with wild vines; to my back, the building and its red doors, as I faced the two-storey Louis-Philippe era building. I would sometimes find Djibril there, seated in one of the first-floor apartments with his elbows resting on the windowsill, waiting for clients to pick up a gram or two of hashish.

I told him I was an anthropologist; between two deliveries we would talk about racism in France and in North Africa, and French colonial history. There was always a latent *why* that undergirded our spontaneous conversations. During more meaningful but more rare conversations, he would

volunteer personal anecdotes, putting into relief his own experiences as a young Black man in Paris. *What did it mean to be Muslim and live as we did?* he often asked, uninterested in answering the question. He thought I was an odd specimen of an expert. I thought he had more valuable expertise to share with the world than I did; I told him so.

That's plain dumb, not true, he said.

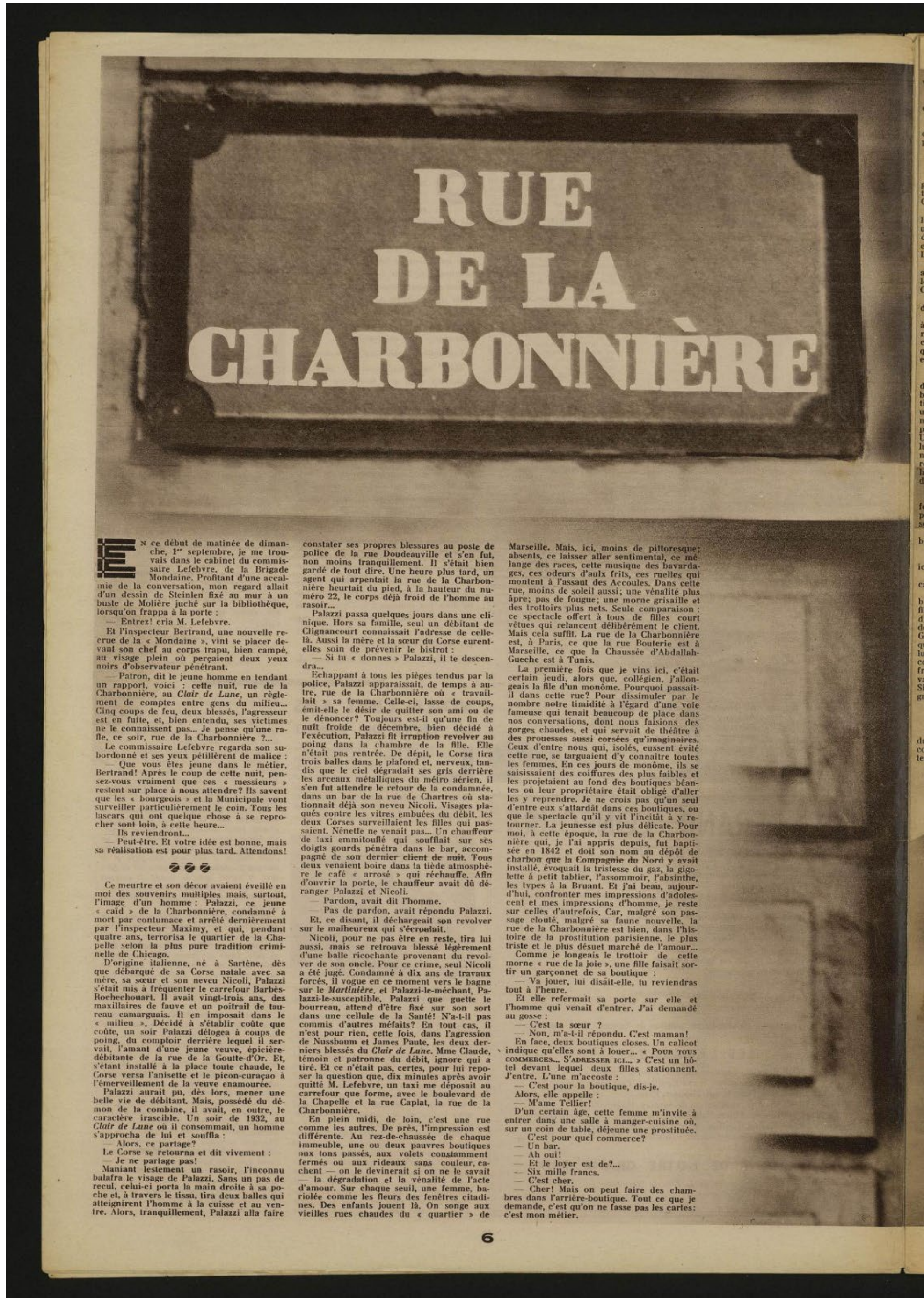
One afternoon, the street was empty and the courtyard silent, I decided to wait a moment in case someone showed up. That is how I met Mei. We exchanged some words as she walked into the courtyard, coming from the street, and I quickly realized she worked out of this courtyard too, as a sex worker servicing men in a small studio adjacent to the apartment where Djibril stocked hashish and weed. She asked, rather straightforwardly, if I was here for her. I shook my head, evidently blushing. She pointed to the khamsa around my neck: *Musulman* she said, half-asking half-telling me so. I nodded. One man arrived, she gestured to me that she would leave and guided the man into the small building. We never spoke again but for silent recognition in the form of a bottle of water, a can of Coca-Cola, or a couple cigarettes, diligently taking turns in our cycle of gift-giving. But, regardless, I continued to witness her going in and out, while I sat on a moped in the street or leaned against a garbage can in the courtyard, speaking with Djibril.

One of the textile shops' storefronts had a backroom that gave onto the courtyard. Employees would come out, letting gusts of cigarette smoke and hot coffee aroma swell up into the staircase, and use the water closet in the courtyard to relieve themselves and wash their genitals, performing *wudu* using the pump fountain to wash their hands and forearms, their face, flushing out their sinuses, and rinsing their feet. Almost systematically, the same man would quickly go back to the shop and come back with a plastic prayer rug, laying it on the cobbles to pray in the courtyard. The man bent his body and lay his head on the ground. I could hear his whispered prayer mingle with

the forced laughter and conversation – a soundscape of sex work – coming from the building. The hybrid scene was recurrent: clients would come and go, going into the small building for drugs or sexual services, while residents and employees used the courtyard for their own purposes.

The street, while anonymous and rather bland to a passerby, was sometimes the scene of quaint scenes. Once, I arrived and witnessed a group of boys play fighting with long wooden sticks. The two boys at the center held sticks almost as tall as they were, surrounded by a circle of other boys who chanted and clapped their hands in a melodious polyrhythm. The scene resembled a type of martial art practiced in North Africa, called *matrag* in Algeria or *'assa* in Morocco (both of which translate as "stick" in English), and which consists in a joust between two fighters. A car passed in the one-way street and the children moved, splitting into two groups, one on either side of the road, before regrouping in the middle of the street.

The space, from the street to the more intimate courtyard, was one of labour – everyone there came to make money one way or another – while also being a place of sociability, outside the home, a place to hang out. There are obvious commercial components that make this a workplace, a factory. The pimp showed up one day with another sex worker, an imposing Tunisian woman. He looked at me sideways, upon seeing me standing there, leaning on his cane and tilting his head. *It's fine*, Djibril said. A young man arrived, another dealer working with Djibril. He walked into the small building in the courtyard, entering the apartment through the window, and turned on the TV, a gaming console, and mechanically grabbed a remote controller. The sex worker smiled at him, calling out, reaching for his face. *You don't visit me anymore like you used to. You remember?* He shrugged and shifted his chin away from her. *No, I don't auntie, I don't want to*. She scoffed and teased. *That's not what you said last time*. He laughed and blushed.



RUE DE LA CHARBONNIÈRE

En ce début de matinée de dimanche, 1er septembre, je me trouvais dans le cabinet du commissaire Lefebvre, de la Brigade Mondaine. Profitant d'une accalmie de la conversation, mon regard allait d'un dessin de Steinlen fixé au mur à un buste de Molière juché sur la bibliothèque, lorsqu'on frappa à la porte :

— Entrez! cria M. Lefebvre.

Et l'inspecteur Bertrand, une nouvelle recrue de la « Mondaine », vint se placer devant son chef au corps trapu, bien campé, au visage plein où perçaient deux yeux noirs d'observateur pénétrant.

— Patron, dit le jeune homme en tendant un rapport, voici : cette nuit, rue de la Charbonnière, au *Clair de Lune*, un règlement de comptes entre gens du milieu... Cinq coups de feu, deux blessés, l'agresseur est en fuite, et, bien entendu, ses victimes ne le connaissent pas... Je pense qu'une rafle, ce soir, rue de la Charbonnière ?...

Le commissaire Lefebvre regarda son subordonné et ses yeux pétillèrent de malice :

— Que vous êtes jeune dans le métier, Bertrand! Après le coup de cette nuit, pensez-vous vraiment que ces « messieurs » restent sur place à nous attendre? Ils savent que les « bourgeois » et la Municipale vont surveiller particulièrement le coin. Tous les lascars qui ont quelque chose à se reprocher sont loin, à cette heure...

— Ils reviendront...

— Peut-être. Et votre idée est bonne, mais sa réalisation est pour plus tard. Attendons!

Ce meurtre et son décor avaient éveillé en moi des souvenirs multiples mais, surtout, l'image d'un homme : Palazzi, ce jeune « caïd » de la Charbonnière, condamné à mort par contumace et arrêté dernièrement par l'inspecteur Maximy, et qui, pendant quatre ans, terrorisa le quartier de la Chapelle selon la plus pure tradition criminelle de Chicago.

D'origine italienne, né à Sartène, dès que débarqué de sa Corse natale avec sa mère, sa sœur et son neveu Nicoli, Palazzi s'était mis à fréquenter le carrefour Barbès-Rochechouart. Il avait vingt-trois ans, des maxillaires de fauve et un poitrail de taureau camarguais. Il en imposait dans le « milieu ». Décidé à s'établir coûte que coûte, un soir Palazzi délogea à coups de poing, du comptoir derrière lequel il servait, l'amant d'une jeune veuve, épicière-débitante de la rue de la Goutte-d'Or. Et, s'étant installé à la place toute chaude, le Corse versa l'anisette et le picon-curaçao à l'émerveillement de la veuve enamourée.

Palazzi aurait pu, dès lors, mener une belle vie de débitant. Mais, possédé du démon de la combine, il avait, en outre, le caractère irascible. Un soir de 1932, au *Clair de Lune* où il consommait, un homme s'approcha de lui et souffla :

— Alors, ce partage?

Le Corse se retourna et dit vivement :

— Je ne partage pas!

Maniant lestement un rasoir, l'inconnu balafra le visage de Palazzi. Sans un pas de recul, celui-ci porta la main droite à sa poche et, à travers le tissu, tira deux balles qui atteignirent l'homme à la cuisse et au ventre. Alors, tranquillement, Palazzi alla faire constater ses propres blessures au poste de police de la rue Doudeauville et s'en fut, non moins tranquillement. Il s'était bien gardé de tout dire. Une heure plus tard, un agent qui arpentait la rue de la Charbonnière heurtait du pied, à la hauteur du numéro 22, le corps déjà froid de l'homme au rasoir...

Palazzi passa quelques jours dans une clinique. Hors sa famille, seul un débitant de Clignancourt connaissait l'adresse de celle-là. Aussi la mère et la sœur du Corse eurent-elles soin de prévenir le bistrot :

— Si tu « donnes » Palazzi, il te descendra...

Echappant à tous les pièges tendus par la police, Palazzi apparaissait, de temps à autre, rue de la Charbonnière où « travaillait » sa femme. Celle-ci, lasse de coups, émit-elle le désir de quitter son ami ou de le dénoncer? Toujours est-il qu'une fin de nuit froide de décembre, bien décidé à l'exécution, Palazzi fit irruption revolver au poing dans la chambre de la fille. Elle n'était pas rentrée. De dépit, le Corse tira trois balles dans le plafond et, nerveux, tandis que le ciel dégradait ses gris derrière les arceaux métalliques du métro aérien, il s'en fut attendre le retour de la condamnée, dans un bar de la rue de Chartres où stationnait déjà son neveu Nicoli. Visages plaqués contre les vitres embuées du débit, les deux Corses surveillaient les filles qui passaient. Nénette ne venait pas... Un chauffeur de taxi emmitouflé qui soufflait sur ses doigts gourds pénétra dans le bar, accompagné de son dernier client de nuit. Tous deux venaient boire dans la tiède atmosphère le café « arrosé » qui réchauffe. Afin d'ouvrir la porte, le chauffeur avait dû déranger Palazzi et Nicoli.

— Pardon, avait dit l'homme.

— Pas de pardon, avait répondu Palazzi.

Et, ce disant, il déchargeait son revolver sur le malheureux qui s'écroulait.

Nicoli, pour ne pas être en reste, tira lui aussi, mais se retrouva blessé légèrement d'une balle ricochante provenant du revolver de son oncle. Pour ce crime, seul Nicoli a été jugé. Condamné à dix ans de travaux forcés, il vogue en ce moment vers le bagne sur le *Martinière*, et Palazzi-le-méchant, Palazzi-le-susceptible, Palazzi que guette le bourreau, attend d'être fixé sur son sort dans une cellule de la Santé! N'a-t-il pas commis d'autres méfaits? En tout cas, il n'est pour rien, cette fois, dans l'agression de Nussbaum et James Paute, les deux derniers blessés du *Clair de Lune*. Mme Claude, témoin et patronne du débit, ignore qui a tiré. Et ce n'était pas, certes, pour lui reposer la question que, dix minutes après avoir quitté M. Lefebvre, un taxi me déposait au carrefour que forme, avec le boulevard de la Chapelle et la rue Caplat, la rue de la Charbonnière.

En plein midi, de loin, c'est une rue comme les autres. De près, l'impression est différente. Au rez-de-chaussée de chaque immeuble, une ou deux pauvres boutiques aux tons passés, aux volets constamment fermés ou aux rideaux sans couleur, cachent — on le devinerait si on ne le savait — la dégradation et la vénalité de l'acte d'amour. Sur chaque seuil, une femme, bariolée comme les fleurs des fenêtres citadines. Des enfants jouent là. On songe aux vieilles rues chaudes du « quartier » de Marseille. Mais, ici, moins de pittoresque; absents, ce laisser aller sentimental, ce mélange des races, cette musique des bavardages, ces odeurs d'aulx frits, ces ruelles qui montent à l'assaut des Accoules. Dans cette rue, moins de soleil aussi; une vénalité plus âpre; pas de fougue; une morne grisaille et des trottoirs plus nets. Seule comparaison : ce spectacle offert à tous de filles court vêtues qui relancent délibérément le client. Mais cela suffit. La rue de la Charbonnière est, à Paris, ce que la rue Bouterie est à Marseille, ce que la Chaussée d'Abdallah-Gueche est à Tunis.

La première fois que je vins ici, c'était certain jeudi, alors que, collégien, j'allongeais la file d'un monôme. Pourquoi passait-il dans cette rue? Pour dissimuler par le nombre notre timidité à l'égard d'une voie fameuse qui tenait beaucoup de place dans nos conversations, dont nous faisions des gorges chaudes, et qui servait de théâtre à des prouesses aussi corsées qu'imaginaires. Ceux d'entre nous qui, isolés, eussent évité cette rue, se targuaient d'y connaître toutes les femmes. En ces jours de monôme, ils se saisissaient des coiffures des plus faibles et les projetaient au fond des boutiques béantes où leur propriétaire était obligé d'aller les y reprendre. Je ne crois pas qu'un seul d'entre eux s'attardât dans ces boutiques, ou que le spectacle qu'il y vit l'incitât à y retourner. La jeunesse est plus délicate. Pour moi, à cette époque, la rue de la Charbonnière qui, je l'ai appris depuis, fut baptisée en 1842 et doit son nom au dépôt de charbon que la Compagnie du Nord y avait installé, évoquait la tristesse du gaz, la gigolette à petit tablier, l'assommoir, l'absinthe, les types à la Bruant. Et j'ai beau, aujourd'hui, confronter mes impressions d'adolescent et mes impressions d'homme, je reste sur celles d'autrefois. Car, malgré son passage clouté, malgré sa faune nouvelle, la rue de la Charbonnière est bien, dans l'histoire de la prostitution parisienne, le plus triste et le plus désuet marché de l'amour...

Comme je longeais le trottoir de cette morne « rue de la joie », une fille faisait sortir un garçonnet de sa boutique :

— Va jouer, lui disait-elle, tu reviendras tout à l'heure.

Et elle refermait sa porte sur elle et l'homme qui venait d'entrer. J'ai demandé au gosse :

— C'est ta sœur ?

— Non, m'a-t-il répondu. C'est maman!

En face, deux boutiques closes. Un calicot indique qu'elles sont à louer... « POUR TOUS COMMERCES... S'ADRESSER ICI... » C'est un hôtel devant lequel deux filles stationnent. J'entre. L'une m'accoste :

— C'est pour la boutique, dis-je.

Alors, elle appelle :

— M'ame Tellier!

D'un certain âge, cette femme m'invite à entrer dans une salle à manger-cuisine où, sur un coin de table, déjeune une prostituée.

— C'est pour quel commerce?

— Un bar.

— Ah oui!

— Et le loyer est de?...

— Six mille francs.

— C'est cher.

— Cher! Mais on peut faire des chambres dans l'arrière-boutique. Tout ce que je demande, c'est qu'on ne fasse pas les cartes; c'est mon métier.

6

[Figure 31. Article retrieved from *Détective* (1935, no. 361:6), a rather crass police narrative of sex work and banditry in the Goutte d'Or, specifically on rue de la Charbonnière. When the first Algerian shopkeepers and café owners settled in Barbès in the 1920s and 1930s, the neighbourhood was known as a stronghold of Corsican grand banditisme. Source: Criminocorpus.]

Such scenes filled the love I felt for them, and for the street they peopled, with a sharp grief. Between month-long stints in prison, Uber or hashish deliveries, clients seeking sexual services, I witnessed them struggle to save up and stick to legally salaried activities, call their families in Africa, Asia or the Americas, and reassure them. The opacity that we had maintained around ourselves – a protective gesture – and each other – a respectful one – meant that we could not meet elsewhere and that we would not recognize each other. There was in these relations something that Lisa Stevenson (2020) describes as "looking away." But more than a method for "just" ethnographic writing, to look away was something that they afforded me, perhaps more than I them.

Such spaces are evidently places where one is socialized, where one submits to certain social dynamics, certain normative imperatives, and, sometimes, allows oneself to be shaped by them. Socialization is not as such a component exclusive to third places. That much is clear. But I would like to consider the hybridity of these informal street spaces, existing against the grain of legality and formality, in their thirdness: in the commercial aspect, they are much like tiers-lieux that combine different crafts in one place, they are modulable and can easily be changed and change the texture and atmosphere of a place; they can become momentary homes, shelters when one is on the run; they are more often than not places of sociability, places of work where some come simply to meet and hang-out as I did countless times. Of course, taking up the notion of the third place to describe this hybrid brothel is provocative; it is, I should say, a deliberate provocation.

The angle of my provocation, however, is not to romanticize informality, or specifically criminalized informality, although an argument can me made for telling such stories otherwise. Rather, my experience of fieldwork and my reading of certain social scripts and performances of self, suggests that these surrounds are crucial spaces for fugitivity. I understand fugitivity, from my reading of *Stolen Life*, as a modality of refusal that relies on a "stuttered, melismatic, gestural

withdrawal from that subjectivity which is not itself, which is not one, which only shows up as a thwarted desire for itself" (Moten, 2018: 243). This, as I understand it, means that fugitivity is a movement of retreat – in the sense of moving away from something – into a space only obliquely available for description, analysis, diagnostics and remediation.

Spaces of informality, interstices and abandoned sites, are not necessarily fugitive as such – in fact they are ideal spaces for state experimentations in sociospatial recomposition – but they hold the potential for social forms that exceed urban design and refuse to be rendered legible to state and market actors. The expectation for one not to snitch to the authorities is an example of this practice of non-legibility. One, which I believe is crucial to the political and human value of the surrounds. Likewise, that is not to say that informality is nonnormative. Quite on the contrary, the informality within public spaces that city planning disrupts is constituted by multiple sometimes competing normative and relational imperatives. However, these normative and relational imperatives play out through improvisation and therefore have a quality – diagnosed as a problem for legibility – of being rather intractable. This intractability is what allowed me to be welcomed there.

While Mei and Djibril could have apprehended my presence as that of a client, they allowed me to enter and inhabit that space according to my own changing rhythms: I could walk in as I pleased, whether to talk or sit silently and smoke cigarettes, sharing space as time moved slowly forward. It was in part the informality of the space – a highly normed informal – that allowed for this idiorrhythmy. It was also, I should stress, thanks to the generosity of my interlocutors who found, as I had found, a wealth within our (silent) interlocution.[53]

[53] My point of entry into this urban interstitial space happened outside of fieldwork, during the multiple lockdowns and curfew orders decreed in Paris at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like all residents of France at the time, I was allowed to walk within an area that did not extend beyond one kilometer from my place of residence. The street, the third door on the left, the courtyard fell within that perimeter. During that time of confinement, I rekindled my appreciation of the public spaces of the 18th arrondissement, in particular the people that resort to daily improvisation

The care that I received – underspoken, unacknowledged – was precious to me because it was secreted in darkness, outside the bounds of legibility, within abjected space. In a gesture that sidelines – or highlights, rather – the instrumentality of desire as movement, the hint of relation that I became a part of in that courtyard was a *khôra* of love. This produces a "conundrum," the world that produces such abjection "can neither be redeemed by the practices of those who have endured without [being afforded belonging to humanity], for they offer only the hastening of the end they have already experienced, nor can that world remake itself without those very practices" (Simone, 2018: 89-90). "This conundrum – not being able to turn to those who have been the subjects of abjection nor to disavow their possibility of 'inheriting the earth' –" Simone continues,

> "is the grounds of creation in darkness. It is not a matter of simply 'handing over the keys' to the oppressed. For, they have already (been) driven off. It is not a matter of starting over, here or somewhere else, or of evacuating the sense of humanity altogether in arriving at the Singularity. Darkness is both condition and cover, and under the cover of darkness emerge forms of "rogue care" and strange alliances, inexplicable and provisional, a trinity, then, of darkness" (Simone, 2018: 90).

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and give these streets their distinctive visual and sonic textures. Significantly, I developed a silent relationship with one of the sex workers in this brothel specifically because she afforded me an asexual encounter, casting my non-desire for her as something that was both queer and reassuring to her. When I started fieldwork as such, this affordance that she had granted me was something that seemed impossible in other sectors of the 18e such as Pigalle or Porte de Clignancourt, where I could not approach sex workers without being construed as a client – and when I made my non-commercial intensions clear, I was dismissed as a waste of time. What Mei and Djibril allowed was for me to articulate my *love* for the 18th arrondissement's surrounds, one that I could divorce from desire. There was, in this love, something that escaped enunciation: I did not move with desire's aspirational speech acts, nor did they. And in that sense, the relationship they crafted with me, ephemeral, oblique and to an extent opaque, did not dissolve with the potential actualization of desire.

[Figure 32. Ephemeral inscriptions on rue de Chartres, featuring the nicknames of *harraga*[54] street vendors who sell contraband in Barbès's so-called Thieves' Market. Source: Author.]

In *How to Live Together*, Barthes argues that the regimentation of life in orderly rhythms is a characteristic of power in that "the first thing that power imposes is a rhythm" (Barthes, 2012: 35). In contradistinction, he notes that "[t]he demand for idiorrhythmy is always made in opposition to power" (Barthes, 2012: 35). Thinking of the tiers-lieu as a space of potential idiorrhythmy, and holding as equivalent – at least conceptually – the third place of the contemporary brothel (the abject) and the third place of urban renewal (the desirable), it becomes apparent that there exists an ambivalent relationship between the two. One specifically tied to issues of legibility, transparency, and opacity. As one tiers-lieu start-up impact strategist put it during an interview, tiers-lieux are tasked with bringing marginalized sociality into the light, out of the darkness of the cabarets and the alleyways. What does the emergence of the third place as a government concept, a trademark, a public policy instrument say of this aspirational and politically subversive potential? What does the concept itself, decontextualized from its institutional use, say of the hybridity of abject spaces? What forms of citizenship come to be represented? And against what forms of otherness?

[54] *Harraga* is a term that refers to Algerian migrants who cross the border between North Africa and Europe through irregular pathways. The term itself is a darija neologism constructed from the Arabic root H-R-Q meaning to burn. In *argotique* French, *brûler* shares with *harrag* this connotation of using commercial or public transport without paying. "To burn" may also refer to the practice *harraga* are said to have – disseminated on Algerian social media accounts – of burning their identification papers at the beginning of the dangerous crossing to Spain. Expanding on Abdelmalek Sayad (1977) and his examination of the "three ages" of Algerian emigration, Michael Collyer (2012) proposes to think of the *harraga*, now a dominant form of migration, as the fourth "age" of Algerian emigration to France (which we could expand to Europe more generally). In contradistinction, emigration to North America does not follow the same irregular routes, which suggests modalities of citizenship mediated by means of arrival.

Tiers-lieux in Government Program

In Paris, and in France more generally, tiers-lieu refers to a specific place that has received a government label, designating it as such: one may think of a public venue composed of a café, a library, and DIY carpentry shop; or, alternatively, a semi-public repurposed office building, now hosting a variety of activities, from administrative assistance for asylum seekers, to yoga sessions or a budding architecture practice...[55] The notion, however, derives from a sociological concept developed by Ray Oldenburg in *The Great Good Place* (1999) to describe public or semi-public places that are neither one's home nor one's place of work and where sociability for sociability's sake may take place. With this open definition of a third place, Oldenburg mapped places of sociability in an otherwise atrophied North American public space. Cafés, libraries, and the like all constitute third places.

The concept was progressively imported into France, not to refer to existing social infrastructure such as libraries or cafés, but to describe emergent spaces of sociability and economic production, quickly making its way into national policymaking and territorial development (Nadou, Badelle and Demazières, 2023). In a doctoral thesis on the topic, sociologist Antoine Burret defines tiers-lieu as a "particular social configuration where individuated entities encounter each other and intentionally engage in the conception of common representations, in other words, shared responsibility" (Burret, 2017). For him, the tiers-lieu suggests a specific mode for living together (*vivre ensemble*) and for producing in new, collective ways (*faire ensemble*). And so, as he takes

[55] These examples are taken from my fieldnotes and multiple visits and interviews in tiers-lieux engineered by Plateau Urbain or by Sinny&Ooko. The examples can also easily be found online, on government platforms or the webpages of the urbanistic and cultural programming firms.

up the concept in terms of social configuration, his definition falls in line with the current institutional program of tiers-lieux in France.[56]

In a 2021 report on the matter, inaugurating the current centrality tiers-lieux have taken on in territorial policy in France, tiers-lieux are defined as "built by the involvement of a community and its collective action in the territory, they distinguish themselves as spaces of free practice (*libre pratique*) where the 'making' is the prime objective, they develop themselves thanks to the mixing and hybridization of activities" (Lévy in France Tiers Lieux, 2021: 3). Third places, as tool for territorial planning, are thus, first and foremost, considered places of economic production; a panacea for bringing France into 21st century modes of production. In fact, tiers-lieux are considered to be "pioneers" in the emergence of a new economic, cultural, and social model for France. The report serves mostly as a promotion tool and, by citing a long list of examples, show how tiers-lieux have become key sites for economic growth and social outreach. For instance, faced with a shortage of protective equipment at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March 2020, "nine tiers-lieux out of 10 participated in solidarity actions" (France Tiers Lieux, 2021: 4), making masks, visors, gels, respirators, etc. "These initiatives," the report goes on to say, "helped maintain

[56] The representational element of Burret's definition – that tiers-lieu are spaces where common representations may emerge thanks to collective practices and pooling of resources – appears at first glance to echo Bhabha's "third space." Setting aside the fact that for Bhabha third space is "unrepresentable in itself" (Bhabha, 1994: 56) the cultural hybridization which takes place in tiers-lieu is closer to "the articulation of cultural difference" (Bhabha, 1994: 56) than the emergence of "common representations" (Burret, 2017). As a matter of argument, I do not believe Bhabha considers third spaces as necessarily emancipatory. We could imagine a certain third place – let us take the so-called *café arabe* as one of these locations in which politics and culture shifted and enabled the emergence of revolutionary forces within the colonized Algerian people in the 1920s to the 1950s – that is also a third space: a hybrid space, decidedly shaped by colonial power yet within which the ground of supposed European cultural superiority are absorbed subversively by the abjected and powerfully repurposed. But this possibility – or its existence as historical fact – should not lead us to assign valence to it as such. As Bhabha writes, "[i]t is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space [he refers specifically to the work of Guyanese writer Wilson Harris] have a colonial or postcolonial provenance" (Bhabha, 1994: 56). Third space, in Bhabha's theoretical framework, is thus necessary for cultural enunciation, but it is not sufficient for the inversion or unsettling of extant hierarchies based upon cultural identity. I do find it relevant to the discussion of tiers-lieu – as spaces of economic production and cultural hybridization – that modern hybridity be so intertwined with the emergence and subsequent dereliction of colonial situations. That being said, I am not a partisan of cultural purity as a necessary element for anti- or de-colonial struggle.

social links and cohesion, thanks to an implication grounded in *le faire*, in hyper-proximity action, and on open and collaborative [production] models" (2021:4). Taking this mobilization as exemplary, tiers-lieux are framed as key spaces for building the utopian *monde d'après* (the world after COVID), a form of collective action through which "civil society has already taken its destiny into its own hands" (2021: 4).

Through tiers-lieux, it appears that policymakers are able to represent within one place – or within one key concept – the demands of the day: ecological concerns, food security and health, dissemination of information, training, and inclusion in the labour market, and the relocalization of manufacturing production in France. At the same time, in a sort of institutional reflexivity, the report argues that the "*tiers-lieux* phenomenon [...] profoundly interrogates the role of institutions, their relationship to civil society, and the way for building territorial policy as public policy to accelerate necessary transitions" (2021: 5). Although one could see in the third place a desire to make and live otherwise, the interrogation suggested in the previous passage signals a reformist move, one meant to give new vitality to public policy. Tiers-lieu "is the illustration of civil society's capacity to build concrete, pragmatic, and operational responses to the challenges of the 21st century" (2021: 5) and proves to State actors that the gaps and discrepancies of public policy, particularly in matters of economic production and welfare services, can be filled by non-State organizations.

The Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires (ANCT), in its online entry on Territory Makers (*Fabrique de Territoire*) presents tiers-lieux as key "service platforms that contribute to the vitality of all [French] territories: rural, peri-urban and urban territories, and *quartiers de la politique de la ville*" (ANCT, 2021). From the position of the anthropologist, having used these spaces and interviewed some of the people who make and manage them, such laudatory presentation largely

exaggerates the everyday impact these venues have in the 18th arrondissement. Undoubtedly, they allow marginal economic actors to access facilities and to establish their activities for a much lower rate than in the conventional market: craftsmen can use spaces in collaborative ways to limit production costs by sharing rent, artists can access studio spaces without taking on formal and expansive leases, etc.[57] However, what I consider to be significant, here, is that tiers-lieux allow government to intervene through territory, rather than on it. By harnessing a chain of actors at the grassroots level, policymakers have a way of influencing territory in ways that appear to be bottom-up.

This mode of intervention is adaptive in the sense that – as the Agency argues – it seeks "not to prescribe, not to normalize, but to accompany, by accelerating and giving tools to all involved actors" (ANCT, 2021). The idea that there is no prescription or no normalization is rather misleading. Indeed, local venues are being shaped, and in turn shape themselves, through the institutional pressures exerted by the subsidy process and in accordance to current trends of desirable social, cultural, and economic hybrid venues.[58] And so, through calls for projects (*appel à manifestation d'intérêt*), 45 million euros have been invested in *tiers-lieu* projects across *quartiers de la politique de la ville* and rural areas considered to be lacking welfare services and economic activities.

Some urbanists have recently specialized in this specific practice of repurposing dormant sites. AL, development director at Plateau Urbain, first gave me a visit of a site that had been developed in the East of Paris, before explaining the economic and spatial engineering undertaken there. AL

[57] These venues are generally useful to non-salaried people, such as students or the unemployed, as it generally offers warm facilities and internet access.
[58] This was conveyed to me by members of a local filmmaking association that has had to reshape its institutional form, statutes, and sociocultural programs, and, significantly, to re-brand itself as a tiers-lieu in order to access new subsidy schemes as the older ones progressively disappeared.

sported a long black trench coat, black jeans, a black turtleneck sweater and black Doc Martens. She reminded me of the classmates I had met in undergraduate and graduate studies.[59] As we walked through the repurposed factory, AL explained how the facility was run: with one point person coordinating all the new actors who had taken up a spatial slot there to develop their cultural or commercial activity. Pointing to blueprints and schedules taped to the walls of the facility, she highlighted how it had been spatially altered to fit the exponential increase of functional mixing: from a single-use factory to a multimodal space for contemporary "makers." Indeed, the former paint factory had been divided into two large halves. One held common spaces, a kitchen, and meeting rooms. The other side, a large factory shed, had been completely redesigned and this redesigned space housed over 20 distinct activities. Plateau Urbain had built a 2-storey wooden structure that had multiplied the available surfaces. The resident-participants, AL explained, pay for the bills generated by their activities (water, electricity, gas) and a surcharge meant to cover the costs of Plateau Urbain employees working on that site. Each site, AL continued, pays for the employee working there such that accounting is rather simple and the salaries of Plateau Urbain's project managers are sourced directly in the projects where they work. The owner of the facility, then, does not actually make money based on rent, but has energy bills covered by the tenants, she concluded.

This form of urbanism, AL explained, consists in doing as much as possible with few means, and reducing costs for all those involved. Certain plots of real estate sit outside the market, often accumulating costs for the owners, while smaller entrepreneurs do not have the means to develop

[59] Her simultaneously formal and laidback aesthetic, a last name that indicated aristocracy, and her expert tone in discussing prefigurative urbanism were offsetting at first. The uncanny feeling that I was meeting a peer, someone I might have gone to school with or worked with was disconcerting. As with other interlocutors who evoked the same feeling in me, I put on the face and displayed the codes of my social training at the Institute of Political Studies of Paris, striking a balance between familiarity, informality, and a sort of expert nonchalance striving for synthetical understanding.

their activity in a legitimate storefront or office space. Plateau Urbain seeks out such dormant sites – or is called upon by public or private actors – and activates them by bringing together small businesses that have not found a workspace on the conventional market. Temporary occupants cover maintenance expanses, while the owner phases the project. For AL and others at Plateau Urbain, using the phasing of urban development for low-capital temporary activities is politically interesting in that it includes marginalized economic actors into the conventional market. It serves a double mission: to push the frontiers of what the market is and render visible and profitable certain of its margins, and to push a social mission where new actors are included in the market and certain social missions of the State are progressively taken up by these marginal market actors. As we sat outside the repurposed factory, AL conveyed that behind these stated missions lies a certain Marxist sensibility. Brushing aside her initial hesitation, she explained that for Plateau Urbain, these types of inexpensive high value producing urban techniques could hypothetically move us toward the abolition of ground rent (or, in French, *l'abolition de la rente foncière*).

This new model for interstitial urbanism emerged out of the convergence of several dynamics. For one, urbanists came out of training with a desire to work differently, to engage in hyperlocal interventions, and to develop a mode of urbanism that invests the margins of the market. At the same time, the City of Paris and the SNCF released previously inaccessible real estate to developers and investors. Finally, the ANRU+ and its local declensions indeed allowed for new economic actors to emerge and benefit from temporarily repurposed infrastructure.

A crucial aspect of discourse around *tiers-lieux* is decidedly social. While "third places are physical spaces devoted to "doing together" (*faire ensemble*)," which indeed signals an institutional attention to renewing economic manufacturing models, they are also presented as "new places for social relations, emancipation, and collective initiatives." As socio-economic venues, "they

contribute to the vitality of our territories." Because they are not simply a gadget, an aesthetic component of policy discourse, but a real tool used for territorial programming, *tiers-lieux* have, since 2022, been organized around "Fabriques de Territoire" or territory makers.

Tiers-lieux are considered to be important, indispensable venues for fostering sustainable environmentally, socially useful, and culturally promising economic growth. But not all *tiers-lieux* are the same, and not all of them may be used as crutches for government intervention in the same way. Specific venues are thus labeled as Territory Makers: they are "structuring *tiers-lieux*, meaning they are able to increase the capacities of other *tiers-lieux* in their territory." These Territory Makers act as a "resource" for other *tiers-lieux* and local actors; they "must be beneficial to the entirety of the ecosystem that animates the territory." They are, in other words, crucial components of neoliberal desirability inasmuch as they serve as conduits for the local "ecosystem" of urban renewal and social innovation (discussed in Chapter 2). Finally, bridging the economic, social, and cultural, with the tools of government intervention, "these hyperlocal initiatives around a physical place […] constitute a means for fostering social links for certain precarious publics that government action has difficulties reaching."[60]

The term *territoire*, repeated consistently throughout contemporary French policy, be it urban or not, is significant. Territory, in *Le Robert*, is defined as the "extent of the Earth's surface on which a human group lives," or as the "scope of a country over which authority or jurisdiction is exercised." The definition of territory thus involves space, the political boundaries that delineate it, and the political authority that is exercised within and onto it. In the contemporary conception

[60] All the language is borrowed from the 2021 report cited previously and the institutional brochures of the ANCT and the ANRU+.

of territory, as illustrated by the label Territory Makers, the production of territory (*faire territoire*) is not only a question of space and authority, it is also a question of social relation.[61]

In an odd semantic slippage, the way government considers territory as a space of social relation (*lien social*) mirrors the philosophical architecture of Deleuze and Guattari's work on territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization, inasmuch as territory, in their work refers to an assemblage of relations, which can be decontextualized and recontextualized.[62] The tiers-lieu as an object of territorial intervention is one such tool of de- and re-territorialization: it allows for models of relations to be assembled, tested out through experiments, and replicated elsewhere. We are then, here, in the domain of the polis as both space of sovereignty and space of

[61] I do not use the notion of territory as it has been deployed in Latin America, by political movements and within scholarship, although there may be affinities between French notions of *développement territorial*, *ancrage local* and the ways in which *territorio* "can shed light on power relationships in space, triggered by the confrontation between glocal forces on the one hand and local, place-based, or 'territorially anchored' groups on the other" (Sandoval et al, 2017: 43). Instead, I turn to the French philosophical backdrop that accompanied the emergence, in France, of *territoire* as meaning more than land within given boundaries, but rather, thinking with Guy Di Méo (1998, 2008), a product of action. From a managerial perspective, "territory prives to be a socio-economic construct in which interactions between local players take place, with the aim of carrying out a joint project to develop the territory" (Peres, 2020: 10). I assign to the term *territoire* a certain negative value, as I am wary of participating in a state-building project of territorialisation. Part of this reticence is the analogy I draw between the contemporary ambitions of local and national institutions to "revitalize" territories through local development and historical colonial plans of *mise en valeur*. Indeed, the latter, under the objective of building the appropriate infrastructure for colonial expansion, exploitation, and extraction, also implied the civilization of colonial territories: that is, the establishment of permanent civilian communities and the transformation of annexed, often militarily controlled outposts into French socio-spatial entities. *Mise en valeur* eventually gave way to what we have come to designate in the postcolony as "development." The notion of *territoire* involves these two – spatial and social – prongs, in such a way that the contemporary revitalization of territories involves infrastructural build-up and socio-cultural engineering. Such a combination of technologies of power, specifically when it is aimed at postcolonial French and immigrant communities, provokes my suspicion. For an historical anthropology of the (dis)continuities between *mise en valeur* and international development, see Chauveau, 1985. For an example of the French colonial ideology of *mise en valeur* as it relates to racist government in colonial West Africa, see Sarraut, 1923.

[62] In *Capitalisme et schizophrénie*'s second volume *Mille plateaux*, Deleuze and Guattari write "Tout agencement est d'abord territorial. La première règle concrète des agencements, c'est de découvrir la territorialité qu'ils enveloppent, car il y en a toujours une" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980: 629). I am not certain that the authors assign a positive – as in liberatory – valence to assemblage, territory, and so forth. The apology of nomadism that they formulate, particularly when it is recast as neoliberal state policy, has something of an ominous quality. I can imagine that neither Deleuze nor Guattari would be thrilled by the proliferation of references to their work in state offices. I am thinking here of various (mis)uses of their concepts, from the Rhizomes Festival that takes place in the 18th arrondissement every summer, to Brigadier General Shimon Naveh's colonial *machines de guerre*. On the latter, see Weizman, 2007.

citizenship: to make territory (*faire territoire*) in contemporary spatial planning goes hand in hand with making social relations (*faire du lien social*).

Tiers-lieux in the 18th Arrondissement

It is thus not insignificant that tiers-lieux would find such traction within urban renewal programs and specifically within spaces considered to be both lacking in state services and lacking in adequate citizens. Although it is promoted as a model of *Économie sociale et solidaire*, a socially responsible form of economic production, which is not limited to *quartiers de la politique de la ville*, tiers-lieux are key to the reshaping of these neighbourhoods. Because of their modular quality, they are easily inserted within the phases of engineering and yield a social – rather than exclusively physical – engineering of urban change. In the 18th arrondissement, these tiers-lieux are not all funded through the same institutional mechanisms. While most benefit from government labels, some are exclusively financed through subsidies, when others are sponsored by large conglomerates such as Veolia, Vinci, Total Energies, and others. Some lean toward the provision of social services, while others are more evidently commercial in character. Overall, they all illustrate the emergence, within the social discourse of "responsible market actors," of a public-private business model composed in part of grassroots organizations' progressive turn toward commercial sources of revenue and the reliance on private sector investors, either for funding or for accessing dormant real estate in the process of being developed. They highlight two structural shifts in France: the privatisation of local social services through a discharge of services from the state to civil society and private actors, and pooling of resources (*mutualisation*) as an economic, social and cultural project.

As exemplars of prefigurative urbanism, tiers-lieux often survive the engineering phases, becoming a permanent fixture of the delivered urban development. The tiers-lieux that Plateau Urbain

develops and manages are usually the fruit of a formal agreement with an owner for a given amount of time set in advance. Several tiers-lieux exist in the 18th arrondissement in disused industrial sites, being rented out by Espaces ferroviaires the real estate branch of the SNCF before partial demolition and development. The tenants are often social or cultural associations, but some, like the Recyclerie are owned by Sinny & Ooko, a start-up specialized in cultural programming and tiers-lieux engineering.

[Figure 33. La Recyclerie tiers-lieux. Former train station of Ornano on the Petite Ceinture, Porte de Clignancourt. Photo by Author.]

As most of my expert interlocutors explained, the cultural programming of urban developments and tiers-lieux are meant to provoke encounters between segregated constituencies. This staging of encounters is meant to "bring people together" toward them "living together" (*vivre ensemble*). Vivre ensemble is an important notion of contemporary Republican doctrine; under the guise of a society made of caring relations, the impetus is put on certain of its elements, namely "immigrants," to better fit the norms of this "living together." Significantly, Muslim constituencies in the 18th arrondissement as in the rest of France are considered to be particularly intolerant, misogynistic, and homophobic. The encounters across difference envisaged by government are thus not simply ethnic in nature, but also reflect these tropes about Islam and immigrant communities: *tiers-lieux*, as one interlocutor put it, facilitate contact between *des homosexuels* and *des homophobes*.

La Station-Gare des Mines is one such venue. La Station is a tiers-lieu managed by local artists' collective Collectif MU. MU was contracted by the real estate branch of the SNCF to offer cultural programming in a disused coal distribution station.[63] Their musical programmes often feature raves marketed as queer, trans, and feminist. Along with a daytime resting area (*aire de repos*), which offers psychological support and artistic activities for young migrants transiting or living in Paris, La Station is an example of a successful tiers-lieu within the framework of tactical urbanism. For city planners, it is exemplary of socially engineered urban change: the venue's queer clientele encounters residents of the adjacent Cité Charles Hermite, one of the poorest social housing estates of Paris, thereby creating what planners consider to be generative situations of people confronting themselves to difference. Yet, the idea that mixing different people will create a more inclusive

[63] The Collectif MU applied to the *appel à manifestation d'intérêt* (call for proposals) emitted by SNCF Immobilier in May 2015 (SNCF, 2015), and they were awarded the lease of the coal distribution station of Aubervilliers. In a press kit targetting professionals, the contractor Paris & Métropole Aménagement noted that, as an example of successful prefigurative urbanism, La Station would remain permanently at Porte d'aubervilliers past the develery of new urban developments in 2030 (PM&A, 2024).

environment relies on common sense assumptions that working class Muslims are necessarily homophobic and that queer Parisians – apparently construed as white, upper-class slumming dandies – embody modern individuality and freedom. The converse is rarely if ever mentioned: when the refugee street camps, and later the crack drug market, was displaced by police operations along the gates of Paris – from La Chapelle to La Villette – raving Parisians would get out of their Ubers, walking through the encampment before reaching their concert.[64]

Dwelling on the latter, rather than the former, situation of encounter, suggests that the tiers-lieu is not a place of neutral sociability. It is a space meant to provoke the reflection of the intolerant subject, construed in terms of cultural and ethno-racial otherness. But it also participates in the actualization of otherness: while privileged Parisians are aware of marginalized modes of living in the city, through pop culture and mediatization of social distress, going to a tiers-lieu in the 18th arrondissement brings these symbolic imageries into the realm of experience.[65] This may lead to one's shifting of perspective, perhaps yielding to processes of politicization unforeseen by policymakers. But it may also, surely, reify material and symbolic hierarchies within contemporary regimes of citizenship. In a cynical way, this confirms the France Tiers Lieux agency's promotional talking point, that tiers-lieux are where "our future is being made."

[64] This is something I have witnessed first while I worked with La Chapelle Debout ! from 2015 to 2018, in the street camps on the boulevard de la Chapelle. This specific anecdote, about La Station, describes a situation that took place between 2020 and 2022, and was shared with me during an informal conversation with a former volunteer.

[65] Whether the "real" is witnessed as such is another question altogether. Through informal conversations in La Station, and other tiers-lieu, a recurrent mode of interlocution is that of guilt or shame of having sold oneself out or having partaken in the destruction of the neighbourhood's social and spatial fabric. But the self-flagellation of the so-called gentrifier does not necessarily give way to an oppositional stance and may, quite on the contrary, sediment the latter's social positioning. I should add however, that one of my queer interlocutors, Amnesia, apparently decided to stop attending these venues and began to consider alternative ways of creating oppositional art, after we had discussed the economic and political forces that fund and shape these venues now favoured by queer Parisians.

[Figure 34. Signage in La Recyclerie. *Attention aux pickpockets. Merci de ne pas laisser vos affaires sans surveillance.* Beware of pickpockets. Please do not leave your belongings without surveillance. Photo by Author.]

This idea of futurity and the idea that tiers-lieux are spaces projecting toward future ways of living together emerge from the utopian bend of the people who make and manage them. Madame MF, a bubbly Frenchwoman working as "impact strategist" at Sinny & Ooko, conveyed that she and the creators and managers of tiers-lieux working with her fully embrace the utopian vision of their start-up. Evoking the writings of Charles Fourier on the *phalanstère* and Saint-Simon's doctrine of industrial social promise, Madame MF highlighted how by manufacturing encounters, tiers-lieux rendered queer and immigrant cultures visible, taking them out of the cabaret or the alleyway into the hybridity of an "open space." The next step, for them, she concluded, would be to develop their independent tools for social and territorial diagnostics to better calibrate their local impact. The language and vision conveyed by Sinny & Ooko appeared to largely echo institutional discourse. Indeed, Monsieur FP and Madame AW, two city officials working in 18th arrondissement Mayor's cabinet, agreed that tiers-lieux have become necessary components to contemporary urban planning, although both smirked at the mention of Sinny & Ooko's social promise.

For Plateau Urbain and other urbanists, tiers-lieu temporary urbanism offers a spatial form and a spatial technology to extract value from the margins of the market. For local associations, the tiers-lieu form offers a stable economic model that would allow them to both continue to benefit from

public and private funding and develop their own resources via commercial activities. Sierra Prod, a local filmmaking collective that organizes screenings and cinematography workshops for children in the projects of Porte de Montmartre and Clignancourt, are operating such a shift toward the tiers-lieu model. Speaking with Madame JL, the director of the association, illuminated some of the tensions of institutional discourse.

Sierra Prod received the label *Fabrique de Territoire* (territory builder) and was given access to the City's incubators. "It's all bullshit," Madame L. said of the start-up environment put into place by the Innovation Arch. "We learned what we needed to learn," she added, "by doing it. The incubators provide a networking space where we're supposed to share resources, but there was no real expertise to rely on." They don't know how to "build territory," she conveyed. However, Sierra Prod, with over a decade of filmed footage of urban renewal, workshops with residents, restitutions of documentaries, and so on, had developed an expertise about the Gates of North Paris. Madame L. and her team indeed prided themselves in having everyday relationships with residents; the institutional label placed them in strategic positions as cultural and social brokers between planners and the communities targeted by urban renewal.

This situation, which allows them to present and, in many ways, act as intermediaries between the "ground" and the "institutions" is not unlike the role played by other State organizations, such as the *équipe de développement local* of the *Politique de la Ville* and the *Gestion urbaine de proximité* apparatus. However, while the EDL and the GUP are part of an institutional structure, from which they emanate, organizations like the Sierra Prod are progressively brought into the fold of policy. That is to say, as the State diversifies the actors to which it turns for diagnostics, expertise, and action grounded in limited sites of intervention, these diverse actors are also moving toward the emergent assemblage of State, market, and non-State social actors tasked with urban management.

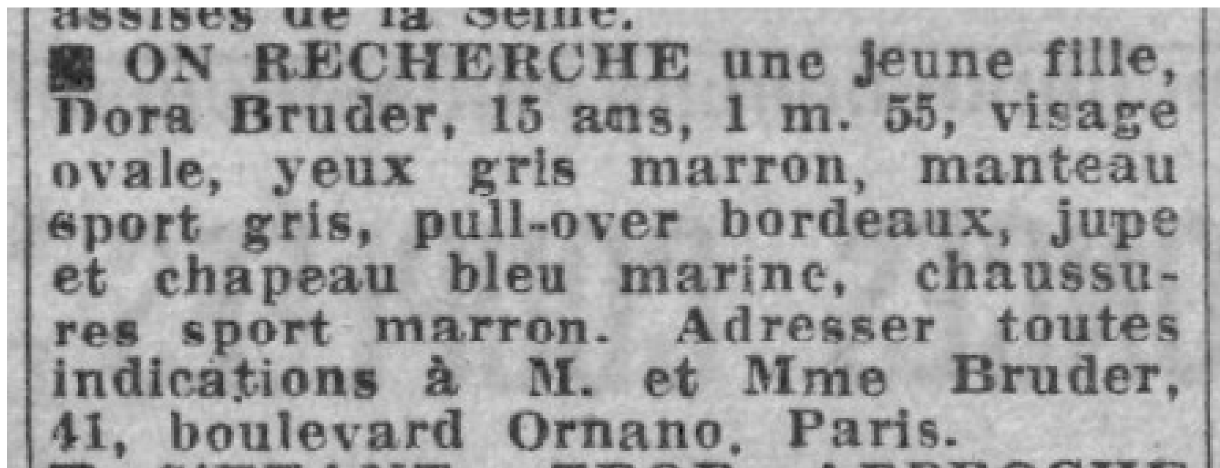
The tiers-lieu socio-economic model enables this rapprochement: as the director of the association demonstrated, while they all share a certain disdain for the authorities and have documented tens of hours of film attesting to the deleterious effects of urban renewal for low-income residents, they must respond to certain formal demands and diversify their sources of income. They may continue their social action while becoming a registered company of French “social and solidary” economic market. Their position as a broker is, in that way, both an opportunity and a forceful process of institutional, aesthetic, and political formatting.

During an event held at the Hasard Ludique (French for “playful chance”), members of Sierra Prod organized a restitution of some of the documentary and creative visual work conducted with children of the Porte de Clignancourt and the Porte de Montmartre. The event was indeed playful. Documentary films were screened, some of the children put on a Hip Hop performance rapping about their impressions of life in the Gates of Paris; the organizers showed a certain familiarity with the attendees that proved – to me – that they indeed worked “on the ground,” despite not necessarily living in the 18th arrondissement of Paris. The event had all the elements of an ethically conducted participative filmmaking process. The venue, however, left me with a certain disquiet.

The Hasard Ludique is located at the intersection of the Petite Ceinture and the Avenue de Saint-Ouen, at the Western end of the 18e. It was once the Gare de l’Avenue de Saint-Ouen – like the Recyclerie was once the Gare Ornano on the Petite Ceinture. I consider this space, and particularly the adjacent rue Belliard, as a public space often occupied by Romani men. Vivid memories flooded my mind as I walked down the stairs to the terraces that had been set up around the rail-tracks: Romani men, sitting on benches and cement stairways of the nearby Promenade Dora Bruder with their trolleys, carrying fresh herbs, bouquets of wildflowers, tuning a violin, fixing a loose C-key of an accordion, taping over the damaged cord of a sound amplifier.

[Figure 35. View of Le Hasard Ludique’s outside space on the Petite Ceinture. Photo by Author.]

The name Dora Bruder is significant, for me, as a reminder of the considerable damage – lost people, lost stories, lost histories – inflicted upon Paris during the German occupation of France (1940-1944). It is a reminder, also, that this urban space, fraught with violent phenomena, processes of erasure, and *mise en récit* was a site of the destruction of European Jewry. Seeing the name Dora Bruder on urban *signalétique* also grounds this historical consciousness within my field-site. Dora Bruder’s life – or rather the lack of records of her life are a central concern of Patrick Modiano’s biographical and autobiographical investigation into her life and death (*Dora Bruder*, 1997). She and her parents lived on the Boulevard Ornano, near the Porte de Clignancourt; her mother and her grandparents were domiciliated in the town of Sevran, at least as far back as the 1920s.



assises de la Seine.
■ ON RECHERCHE une jeune fille, Dora Bruder, 15 ans, 1 m. 55, visage ovale, yeux gris marron, manteau sport gris, pull-over bordeaux, jupe et chapeau bleu marine, chaussures sport marron. Adresser toutes indications à M. et Mme Bruder, 41, boulevard Ornano, Paris.

[Figure 36. An *avis de recherche* published on December 31, 1941 in *Paris Soir*, on behalf of Dora Bruder's parents. The eight-liner is not easy to find in a dense print filled with Nazi and Pétainiste propaganda and anecdotal *faits divers*. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Droit, économie, politique, JOD-235. Retrieved online *via* Gallica.]

The biographical and geographical elements are not altogether relevant, although they convey a certain affect, lodged in this Parisian – and Greater Paris – topography. Seeing Romani men use space, before going on their rag picking rounds, busking in the métro, or going back to their encampment, brings to the fore a history of place, its norms and forms, which continue to be considered problematic by local authorities. Such considerations are not wanton: the encampments of Romani communities in the 18th arrondissement, when they are not lodged in the interstices of highway turnpikes, are built on the abandoned railroad tracks of the Petite Ceinture, where a number of tiers-lieux have been opened, displacing these communities through policing or cultural programming, perpetuating cycles of forced nomadism. As I reached the tracks of the Petite Ceinture on which the Hasard Ludique is located, I noticed the floor had been covered with plastic colourful rugs (Senegalese *bassang*, what would be referred to as *tapis africains plastiques* in French), a standard floor covering I associate to makeshift mosques and large family gatherings at

the beach. The overlapping of histories, textures, and affects in that limited location gave me a passing, but intense, vertigo. I quickly left the venue.

[Figure 37. Signage prohibiting the use of the Petite Ceinture to stockpile trash. The article noted at the bottom of the sign was decreed in 1942, during the German occupation of Paris. Key urban policies meant to "clean up" Paris, such as the acceleration of expropriations in the Zone, were undertaken during the war and continue to play a role, in this case affecting Roma encampments. Photo by Author.]

I associate this sense of vertigo to the palimpsestic nature of spatial re-composition at work in the 18th arrondissement of Paris and elsewhere. What appears as a technocratic engineering of cosmopolitan urban planning plays out in real life, composing aesthetic forms that sometimes

exceed the expectations of planned projections. *Construire sur l'existant*, here, takes on a personal and specific meaning: small elements of urban life and personal biography find themselves in the spatial arrangements of a tiers-lieu. As I watch the Spanish, German, and Dutch tourists, alongside hipster Parisians and neighbourhood youths, I am filled with a feeling of alienation. What I could claim as mine feels distant. Like a North African wool rug in the apartment of a Brussels technocrat, the *bassang* used to line the ground of the terrace is there, a touch away, yet it is far, and rendered – to me – as *other*.

Carnavalesque Third Space

The concept of tiers-lieu as it has been taken up by various institutional and grassroots actors thus involves a set of specific dynamics: a governmental program aiming to produce and sustain dynamic interventions within Paris's *quartiers populaires*, the alignment of grassroots organizations with this category and, as a result, the harmonization of their economic models to the criteria of tiers-lieu labeling. Finally, the tiers-lieu is conceived of as a panacea to various social and cultural "problems" and, specifically, the regulation of difference within citizenship.

The latter aspect refers us back to one of the key objectives of territorial policy in contemporary France, which draws on a longue durée history of social policy in France: the initial framing of the polity as a social entity, followed by the will to harness, shape, regulate, and control social relations, or what French policymakers call *le lien social*. I have already mentioned some of these trends and have related them to a form of colonial cosmopolitanism, which aims to determine the norms and forms that would allow for modernity and difference to cohabitate.

Setting this argument aside, I would like to focus on an aspect of third spaces in the 18th arrondissement, specifically: nightlife venues as ephemeral places of queer hybridity. Part of the

ambivalence of contemporary prefigurative urbanism in the 18e is that it pits the figure of the queer subject against that of the racialized, Muslim subject. As a result, not only do queer cultural entrepreneurs participate in a process of urban change in which long-standing residents are losing out – either by displacement or by living in a profoundly altered economic, social, and cultural fabric – but they also implicate potentially emancipatory spaces in such a process.

Indeed, nightlife venues such as La Station in Porte d'Aubervilliers or La Machine du Moulin Rouge in Pigalle, through the queer programming they offer, have become crucial locations for young queer Parisians' sociability and, for some, necessary thresholds for reconfigured gender performance. Spaces in which the ephemera of queer performance is enabled – the tentative aesthetic and ethical experimentations that allow for queer people to assemble subjectivity and presentation – are indeed crucial for queer people to live out queer affect, however momentarily, outside the space of intimacy. But what does it mean that such desirable spaces for queer desire be so tightly associated to governmental policy?

I would like to dwell on this ambivalence by going back to a distinction drawn by Mikhail Bakhtin between the *carnaval* and the *fête officielle*. The latter refers to public holidays and celebrations decreed by the State and the Church, as a mode for socially and culturally consecrating political order and its hierarchies. The carnival, on the other hand, as a cyclical celebration existing outside of institutions, allows for a subversion of such hierarchies. The carnival, in the work of Bakhtin, works against the consecration of inequality, bringing in one common space all the castes and stratum of society as equals. It is unclear whether the carnival involves a momentary inversion of hierarchy, a hybridization of hierarchized norms, both, or neither. But this categorization is a helpful heuristic to understand the role played by tiers-lieux in particular when part of their purpose is to bring different people in one space, to subvert dominant forms and norms of presentation.

[Figure 38. Collage made by the Paris-based collective "Les Colleuses Féministes" near La Station-Gare des Mines; it reads in French *Tous.tes les queers détestent l'État* or All queers hate the State. Photo by Author.]

"The ward, the Bottom, the ghetto," to think alongside Saidiya Hartman's work on Black life at the turn of the century, "is an urban commons where the poor assemble, improvise the forms of life, experiment with freedom, and refuse the menial existence scripted for them" (Hartman, 2019: 4). And it is such experimental improvisation – the work of the planners and thinkers of the Undercommons, as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney have put it – that draws the dominant, the bourgeois citizen to the abject space of urban relegation. "The ghetto is a space of encounter,"

Hartman adds, where "[t]he sons and daughters of the rich come in search of meaning, vitality, and pleasure" (Hartman, 2019: 4).

The production of places of encounter on the mode that queer *tiers-lieux* have adopted thus highlights the ways in which the political – the production of the polity and its internal organization along lines of belonging and difference – relies significantly on love, on desire, on libidinal impulse and sexual attraction. All those present there are moved by and move with such desire. And it is because of such desire – or because desire has such a role to play – that *thirdness* is fundamentally ambivalent.

Bakhtin apparently conceptualized the carnival as a literary category to describe a process of hybridization: carnivalization as the hybridization of literary practices, as the interpenetration of the sacred and the profane, the emergence of popular forms within official discourse. This hybridization has something of a revolutionary component, in that it subverts and renders inoperative the hierarchical structure of literary discourse. But it also strikes me as a generative and dynamic way for order to renew itself. As the term revolution implies, there is a profoundly circular quality to subversion.

Taking up the idea that literary forms are ever renewed by carnivalization, and that such a process can be analyzed as emerging within the space of sociopolitical hierarchy, what does it mean to "live in" the carnival, to "live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect" (Bakhtin, 1984: 122)? Bakhtin writes that "Carnival is the place for working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a new mode of interrelationship between individuals, counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of noncarnival life. The behavior, gesture, and discourse of a person are freed from the authority of all hierarchical positions (social estate, rank, age,

property) defining them totally in noncarnival life, and thus from the vantage point of noncarnival life become eccentric and inappropriate. (Bakhtin, 1984: 123).

Such a depiction of the carnival, taken as a metaphor applicable to third spaces, is compelling and indeed has a descriptive quality in the sense that the "inclusive" regulation of nightlife suggests such an erosion of hierarchical social categories, at least during the carnivalesque – ephemeral – moment of the party, in which transgression becomes the norm. Spending the large part of the night in a repurposed facility such as La Station, during an event where transness is not only allowed to exist but serves as the common grounds for constructing a collective aesthetic, indeed, appears to work as an ephemeral (but not chimeric) transgressive event.

In an early critical essay on the matter, Julia Kristeva writes that "In fact, this 'transgression' [...] is only possible and effective because it gives itself an *other law* (*une loi autre*)" (Kristeva, 1967: 446). Kristeva goes on to distinguish this *transgression se donnant une loi* from *la loi prévoyant sa transgression*. This latter mode of transgression, as a specific component of the order of things, does not reflect "the revolutionary problematization of dialogism [as per Bakhtin] which implies a formal rupture from the norm" (Kristeva, 1967: 446).

What I find striking, again, is that transgression and revolutionary potential appear, either way one presents them, as elements toward the renewal of order. They appear revolutionary and transgressive insofar as political order reacts to them allergically and energetically. Otherwise, specifically when policymakers adopt an *otherwise* mode for territorial policy as is the case in contemporary Paris, spaces of transgression no longer subvert the law. Rather, they become manifestations of the law preparing its own transgression. The hybridity of queer tiers-lieux thus consists not in a subversion of political order. On the contrary, inasmuch as they work within the

framework of urban *mixité* and provide spaces of encounter across difference, their thirdness serves the renewal of political order.

As we passed by the renowned Moulin Rouge venue, Amnesia tapped me on the shoulder and said, pointing to the cabaret hall:

“So here, I have a little anecdote to tell you – it’s *La Machine* right next to the *Moulin*, right?”

“Right.”

“I ended up here one night, at 4am, alone, sitting on the porch, waiting to sober up.”

I nodded, waiting for their next sentence, but Amnesia’s thoughts seemed to trail off, as their eyes wandered about the plaza, not quite remembering. And so, rebounding awkwardly, I told Amnesia about some of the research I had been doing on *tiers-lieux culturels* and the network of start-ups and urban policy initiatives, of which La Machine and its parent start-up company Sinny & Ooko is a key player. Amnesia told me they hadn’t known about this institutional framework when they first started going to concerts and raves at La Machine. For them, this place was not part of an emergent socio-economic model; it only existed in their personal mapping of the city as a key nightlife venue for Paris lesbians. Every month, an artistic and cultural collective called Barbiturix organizes a rave party by lesbians for lesbians, called the Wet4Me or La Wet for short. Amnesia called this event a *rite de passage pour toute lesbienne qui se respecte*, almost sardonically. Despite this being a rite of passage, Amnesia – who is indeed a *lesbienne qui se respecte* – had never actually been to La Wet and had no particular desire to go there. As I too am rather wary of such initiatory thresholds or necessary transitions, I spontaneously remarked that it was perhaps a good thing to not feel the *need* to go.

"For sure," Amnesia agreed, "especially because these are spaces where we go to make out and pick up someone to finish the night with. And if you don't want to hook up with a stranger, suddenly it's a lot less enticing."

While we both agreed, there seemed to be a note of melancholy in Amnesia's voice. The young lesbians and queer people who attend La Wet are often very young; I sensed Amnesia thought they had aged out before being able to pass through the important threshold that this rite of passage constitutes for young Parisian lesbians. My thoughts, which I shared with Amnesia, were that such venues probably branded as queer occasionally, to attract young, artistic, and LGBT customers. But otherwise, they were venues like any other, capitalizing on the current visibility of queer people in Paris. It was, we both agreed, something that is more ephemeral than anything.

"If we knew who finances these venues, I don't think we'd be attending these events with such *insouciance*," they said as a moped zoomed past us, its muffler banging and echoing loudly through the boulevard. More than the possibility of altering the neighbourhood's working class and Muslim sociality, it was the fact that by attending such venues one partook in a neoliberal project that irked Amnesia.

Neoliberalism *à la française*

France is rarely considered as a centrality of neoliberal thought, perhaps because of the inheritance of *dirigisme* and the importance of social discourse in the field of politics. And yet, the genealogy of neoliberal doctrine that Michel Foucault (2010) elaborates in his 1978-1979 lectures at the Collège de France, or the sociological critique of neoliberal policy and social suffering that animated much of the career of Pierre Bourdieu, offer important insights into neoliberal ethos. French political culture indeed values and resorts to social discourse; for instance, elected officials,

whatever their doctrine, are expected to have a vision of the French social model, the nature of solidarity, the cultural aspirations of France as a society. This imperative persists in perhaps deceptive ways, while neoliberalism as public policy, ethos, market relations, etc. impacts the political rationalities that govern and shape French society.

In this section, I would like to confront some of the salient anthropological and scholarly literature on neoliberalism to the French context and, rather than to consider France a haven of social thought impermeable to neoliberal structural adjustments, to see it as a particularly successful assembling of neoliberal, social, and utopian doctrines within a complex but effective institutional and political assemblage. That is, France is not impermeable to neoliberal reform; French social discourse is in fact but a component of French modern political thought and exists in dynamic and generative relation to neoliberalism.

Although this was not intended in the design of this research, an approach focused on urban expertise appears to be a judicious point of entry to studying "actually existing neoliberalism," and intervene in debates about French neoliberal policy and form. This inquiry was initially limited to the city; in fact, limited to a specific field-site within the city of Paris and asked broad questions about the nature of urban expertise and urban renewal and what this culture of expertise might teach us about political power and desire in France today. This focus on a specific problem-space pointed me to forms of knowledge production, experimentation, and spatial re-composition that reach and source themselves at a much more global level, for hyperlocal interventions, which in turn feed back into less grounded forms of expertise.

Urban expertise and its coherent milieu of actors constitute an exemplar of what Stephen Collier, Aihwa Ong, and others call a "global assemblage" (Ong & Collier, 2005). By that, they take to mean "the actual configurations through which global forms of technoscience, economic

rationalism, and other expert systems gain significance" (Collier, 2006: 400). The city is an ideal site to identify such assemblages, as urban form, to echo the work of Lefebvrian urban geographers, tends to become a "planetary" object. A concrete example of this global scale is the movement between a variety of situations of actors, who circulate through the 18th arrondissement to learn practical skills or test out new urban uses, to build and thicken a corpus of diagnostic analyses and intervention methods as expertise applicable elsewhere in French cities and overseas territories, and elsewhere in the world.

In France, neoliberal reforms have been carried out somewhat covertly. Few would advertise the neoliberal creed of their policy in order to garner political support; and this seems to hold true for politicians on the left and the right of the political spectrum. This is not to say that neoliberal reforms have not been carried out. Two modes for neoliberal policy can be identified in the past 40 years of right-wing and left-wing government in France. The first one characterizes the right-wing parties and focuses on the flexibilization of the labour market, particularly in striving to shed some of the regulation that organizes labour, such as limitations on legal work time or legal retirement age. The second one characterizes the left-wing parties and consists in decentralizing some of the decision-making processes within local and national governments and within the workplace.[66]

Two laws, the 2015 Loi Macron and the 2016 Loi Travail, signalled a convergence between these two modes of neoliberal reform. A key component of the 2016 law is that it inverses the hierarchy

[66] The fact that neoliberalism is barely coming out of the closet in France is the source of much debate. Recent literature in the field of political economy saw two major works pushing oddly complimentary but opposing theses. In *Why Neo-Liberalism Failed in France*, political scientist Kevin Brooke (2021) writes of the absence of neoliberal ideas in France. His argument is convincing when we think at the level of *ideas* in a clinical sense. However, what he describes is not so much the absence of neoliberalism as its stealthy emergence in France. Bruno Amable's *Structural Crisis and Institutional Change in Modern Capitalism* (2017), translated into French as *La résistible ascension du néoliberalisme* (2021) provides an analysis of institutional crisis in France and the emergence of a new center-left *bloc bourgeois* to explain the eruption of Emmanuel Macron's presidential party and his successive and successful neoliberal reformist mandates. It is perhaps because of the absence of an explicit and cohesive neoliberal movement in France that contemporary reforms appear paradoxically timely and jarring.

of norms proper to French labour negotiations. That is, rather than national bargaining between the State, the labour unions, and the national business owners' syndicate (the MEDEF) determining working conditions for all workplaces in France, the 2016 reform puts the burden of bargaining on workers' representatives and human resources within each workplace. Labour policy is considerably decentralized insofar as it is now reversed, and labour regulations are magically rendered flexible if not entirely deregulated.[67]

Breaking away from the conventional understanding of neoliberalism as a British-American import into France or, conversely, that neoliberal policies are imposed by the efforts of the European Union to harmonize national economies, I consider neoliberalism as being an economic doctrine, both theoretical and highly technical, whose historical origins must be traced farther back in time than the 1970s. As historian François Denord (2001) explains, looking at the birth of neoliberalism in France teaches us much about French political-economic history – rendering a more complicated intellectual history of post-war France – and informs us about the genealogy of what we know today as neoliberal doctrine, understood almost as a cultural extract of American and British capitalism. Denord locates the birth of neoliberal doctrine in 1930s France: the 1938 Walter Lippman Colloquium spearheaded by the Centre International d'Études pour la Rénovation du Libéralisme and freelance economist Louis Rougier. The *colloque* served as a sort of "prototype," Denord argues, of the *Société du Mont Pélerin* that would start meeting in 1947 in Switzerland.

[67] The presidential mandate of socialist François Hollande (2012-2017) in many ways blurred the lines that had distinguished the left and the right in France at the turn of the 21st century, and perhaps prefigured the contemporary configuration of an "extreme centrist" presidential party. Specifically, François Hollande's presidential mandate saw the re-introduction to labour reform (the 2016 Loi Travail that inversed the hierarchy of norms that regulate the workplace, giving managerial regulation predominance over the Russian doll of legal regulations), security reforms (the state of emergency decreed in 2015, which opened the door to further security reforms since 2017 and the inclusion of exceptional measures into the *droit commun*), and the banalisation of extreme right wing platform on conditional nationality. For an early assessment of this trend, see Cos, 2017. The work of Amable (2017, 2021) largely echoes and deepens this critique.

Indeed, considering the intellectual experiment of the Walter Lippman Conference of 1938 in Paris as already a reactivation of older political-economic precepts (concerning the role of the State in the creation and maintenance of competitive markets, the importance of social order and the organization of the social, the crucial place afforded to morality and "civilization" insofar as individual freedom and entrepreneurial spirit can be considered moral qualities) it then appears less jarring, if not altogether logical, that other 19th century political, social, moral, and economic doctrines would also find themselves in contemporary neoliberal policy in Paris. Thus, the solidarism of Léon Bourgeois, the social promise of industry of Saint-Simonians, the harmonious rhythms of collective and individual desire theorized by Charles Fourier, and the externalization of social welfare policies beyond the State and local authorities all mingle with contemporary technical and aesthetic innovations in urbanism.

In her study of contemporary French *laïcité* and Islamophobia, Mayanthi Fernando situates current cultural and political trends framing French Muslim intolerance as a key element of neoliberal reform and restructuration. Paying special attention to the discourses of responsibilization and their policing backdrop, Fernando explains that "neoliberal carcerality criminalizes nonnormative social behavior and sees various forms of deviance as free choices made by bad individuals who must be held entirely accountable for their actions and punished by the law-and-order state" (Fernando, 2014: 199), producing an inversion between personal responsibility and inequality, the latter resulting from the former. In so doing, and "by turning structural inequalities into a matter of personal attitudes, the discourse of tolerance both dissimulates the state's role in producing and maintaining these inequalities and recasts the state as a neutral arbiter among warring minorities: Muslims versus queers, Muslims versus women, Arabs versus Jews, and so on" (Fernando, 2014: 240). She goes on to argue, convincingly, that "the demand that Muslims be tolerant and respectful

(of gay and Jews specifically) makes sense only within a neoliberal or late-liberal conception of society that transfers responsibility for social relations away from political institutions and onto private individuals" (Fernando, 2014: 240).

Fernando's analysis provides an overarching link between neoliberal reform and the specific type of social engineering at play in tiers-lieux. It highlights the roles Muslim and queer cultural forms are set to play, not as a consequence of Muslim intolerance, or of contemporary queer enfranchisement, but as part of a transformation and renewal of the state's and the market's narratives. Similarly, she stresses that "the liberal state's embrace of certain queer subjects […] on the one hand, and the production of Muslims as irrevocably homophobic, on the other hand, are twinned processes" (Fernando, 2014: 225, see also Duggan, 2004, Puar, 2007).

The cultural engineering at work in tiers-lieux, prefigurative urbanism, and urban renewal in the 18th arrondissement can then be understood as a component of neoliberal reform. While I consider all the actors of urban change together – from the experts in their offices or their interstitial spaces of intervention, to the queer cultural entrepreneur, and the Black and Arab criminalized economic actors – I do not ignore the existing hierarchies that separate them, as their speech acts do not hold the same sway in the French public sphere. Taken together, however, they allow us to glimpse a queer assemblage, in which minoritized subject positions are (at least for now) taken up by policymakers as important vectors of remaking the city. This momentary and syncretic form of neoliberal urban policy is best illustrated by the emergence of prefigurative urbanism within official spatial planning: a modulable and relatively open modality for creating spaces of encounter that fit into a (post-)colonial architecture of difference and statutory access to urban space; thereby secreting hybridity as a form of *mixité* that neutralizes the threat of racial danger.

The project of urban renewal then appears without surprise – or analytical conspiracy – as one tasked with spatial transformation as much as with social engineering. The utopian horizon of tiers-lieu as *phalanstère* is meshed with the pragmatics of social discourse and spatial composition to affect the socio-cultural fabric of urbanity. In that way, it is not simply the exclusion of those who are already marginalized; it is a bringing into the fold of utopia of these same subjects, as exemplars of the social nature of urban transformation. This suggests that conventional strategies of opposing neoliberal reforms through a mobilization of the "social" as a category for political change will not be effective. Neoliberal discharge (Hibou, 1999; Mbembe, 1999), by gaining the support of local actors to develop social policy tailored to territorial diagnoses, highlights how certain social functions of the State are absorbed into the market.

Rather than disappearing, the social State is being reconfigured; it continues to exist and attempts to resuscitate it may well be a vain effort. If social discourse and social justice may no longer be considered adequate political tools, another concern impresses me with disquiet. Urban policy is not only able to exclude, or as in the case of *grands ensembles* and *villes nouvelles*, to alter the lives of re-housed residents. It is also able to absorb elements of pre-existing, informal practices and cultures of *débrouillardise*. What appears as an option – an alternative from the infertile opposition between social and neoliberal ethos – might then be to maintain and care for the substance secreted in informal interstitial spaces, against the complete absorption of the informal into neoliberal space.

Perhaps this critique could be extended conceptually: in what ways does the carnivalization of dominant forms *actually* contribute to the erosion of hierarchy? And, more to the point, does carnivalization – understood as a deliberate hybridization of dominant and dominated forms and norms – instead describe the process by which political order renews itself in periods of crisis?

Going back to *the third door on the left*, where I met Djibril and Mei, the carnival of queer cultural programming in tiers-lieux appears less as a transgression, suggesting something of a renewal of order through hybridization. Taking seriously the fact that sex work and drug dealing are part of the margins of market, and that tiers-lieu engineering invests these same margins to expand the market and involve minor actors into local economic production, it makes sense, from a conceptual and material perspective, that both the hybrid brothel and the multidisciplinary cabaret would have affinities both aesthetic and economic. Neoliberal deregulation and welfare discharge can take place specifically in the margins because these spaces act as frontiers of public-private experimentation: criminalized or not, it is their informal form – the lack of stability, a certain exuberance of potentiality – that make them ideal configurations for spontaneous experimentation and prefiguring a new and liberalized Paris.

Conclusion

What does it mean to desire the city? as a central question guiding the inquiry here involves several registers and scales: state intervention into urban space, grassroots organizations meeting such interventionist policy in key infrastructure, and ambivalent processes of hybridization. If the tiers-lieu is both a third place and a third space, where hybrid representations of the social emerge, as ephemera or conversely congealing into stable, reterritorialized forms of social relation, then we ought to engage with such spaces not through the utopian laudation present in media and government reports, but instead through critique.

Working with the concept of *queer assemblage* to orient the inquiry through this milieu of urbanistic experimentation has put into relief the role that queer cultural entrepreneurs and queer people writ large are being made to play in the territorialization of such *lien social*, as key – although minor, in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari – actors of socio-spatially engineered

encounters across difference. This last element reflects not simply contemporary tolerance toward sexual difference and queerness in France, but also signals to the instrumentalization of queerness in organizing the French *polis*, as analyzed by Mehamed Mack (2016).[68]

Bringing the work of Kristeva into the writing works toward such a critique: the third place described in the first section of this chapter echoes her work on the abject and invites consideration for such abjection being rejected by emergent social innovation. In fact, the tiers-lieu appears to reconfigure social relations along lines of citizenship already well established. The abject continues to be thrown out in front us, as an object to be perceived – as the street camp – as available for hybridization into the utopian idiorrhythmy of tiers-lieu. The abject continues to inhabit the imaginary and real space of inclusive representation; inclusion, even when it plays with and blurs borders of belonging maintains a residual abject in its horizon.

In her work, Kristeva addresses the ambivalence of abjection, as one that involves both phobia and *jouissance*. They signal an attraction to the abject as one of the constitutive activities of subjectivity; to reject and to be drawn to. Kristeva's work is in dialogue with the psychoanalytical writings of Jacques Lacan and she distinguishes both *jouissance* and phobia from desire. Broadly, in his theory of desire, Lacan argues that human desires are determined and always-already involved in and representative of social forms. Because our subjectivities enter the social world through language, they are determined by language and the symbolic order that structures it. The implication is that desires are therefore mediated by the symbolic order of language, such that even our "unconscious" desires illustrate phantasms rather than "real" objects. Actualized desire does

[68] Further, as the archive suggests, the proximity between eros and polis is not new; in fact, tourism – in the colonies and in Paris – relied in part on the infrastructures of sexual exploitation and pleasure, in the regulated brothels and informal sex work quarters of Paris, as in the segregated prostitution cities of the Empire such as Bousbir in Morocco (see Taraud, 2003).

not exist as such in the sense it would constitute a disillusionment, both destabilizing the symbolic order that feeds into phantasm and the subject's relationship to existing objects of desire. This interruption in the process of projection of desire is what Kristeva calls abjection: a disruption of the symbolic order by the eruption of the real (see Kristeva, 1980). Taking up this discussion as informative of the way urban policy plays out in Paris, I suggest that the ambivalent attraction that abjection exercises on experts, and the impossibility of actualizing urbanistic desire without conjuring the abject reality of phantasm, point to a central mechanism of power and diagnostics in contemporary urban governance.

This desirable abject remains as a horizon of policy because it holds "real" social forms that constitute the potential space of the *polis* (what Lacan or Kristeva would call the "symbolic order"). The desire to remediate the abject – as a gesture of renewal of abjection and enfolding – gives urban renewal its *raison d'être*, it offers potential social forms that can be enfolded into policy, and signals social forms that rely on informality and nonregulated activity, to which it maintains ambivalence and (il)legibility. These surrounds – the spaces and social relations – that prefigurative urbanism renders available for remediation also constitute another urban potentiality, which can be read against the grain of urban policy: the commons And so, it may be in the abject space of the informal brothel, on the *third door of the left*, that forms and norms of belonging that escape citizenship may yet emerge, outside of state territoriality, radically open. Against the idea that the *tiers-lieu* brings the immigrant alleyway and the queer cabaret into the luminous space of democratic inclusion, I hope that we may yet continue to live – or let live – in the darkness, in the shadows, in places where the light of social relation remains unseen, where the gaze of the policymakers, cultural entrepreneurs or ethnographers like myself remains unable to breach the boundaries of assumed and accepted opacity.

Chapter 4: Affective Topography and Queer Relation

Introduction

This chapter takes up the question of desire and urbanism not from the subject position and political rationalities of expertise but, instead, from the position of interlocutors who experience the 18th arrondissement through their queer affects. Significantly, these interviews all took place in the street and in public places. The three interlocutors featured in this chapter stand against a backdrop of institutional actors and discourses. They are, however, part of their context, in the sense that they participate in the dynamic process of prefigurative urbanism and the social engineering of *mixité sociale*. Nonetheless, the affects they embody and cultivate towards the 18th arrondissement are at odds with the desirability that city officials and urban experts wish for and engineer into existence.

If the first three chapters engaged with techniques of representation and engineering that go into the production of built environment – or infrastructural space – this chapter walks us through infrastructure to access its aesthetic dimension. It is more precisely focused on the "aesthetics of infrastructure," on the affects of *topos*. Some of the key debates that institutional discourse mobilizes to represent the 18th arrondissement (and particularly its northern *portes*, La Chapelle, La Goutte d'Or, and Pigalle) have to do with public space and its affects: the fact, which has been documented through territorial diagnostics and mediatized in the press and television, that women and sexual minorities writ large tend to *feel* unsafe or unwelcome in the working-class and immigrant quarters of the city.

Against this backdrop of expertise and diagnostics, I propose to assemble a queer profane perspective on topography, through topography. This chapter does not exactly debunk civic discourse about sexual tolerance, nor does it deny that women may not feel safe in the streets of

Paris's poorest districts. However, it complicates these simplified readings by letting a queer critique emerge from my interlocutors affective and reflexive relationship to urban space. Walking in a drift exclusively of their choosing, Amnesia, Deluxe, and Abdellah used topography as a prompt and, together, offer a glimpse into the affective topography of the 18th arrondissement. This topography is subjective, to the extent that it emerges from one's engagement with a given space in an intellectual and spatial activity. However, it is also an objective construct, in the sense that topography secretes and condenses certain affects, which in turn take part in collective intellectual and spatial activity. Going back to the anthropological interpretations of Deleuze & Guattari's concept, affective topography is an assemblage of material and semiotic statements.

I met Deluxe, a French Lebanese gay man who grew up in North Paris banlieue, years before undertaking this research, in 2015 when we both volunteered in asylum seekers' street camps in the 18th arrondissement. He was a medical student and had founded the LGBTQ+ section of the Bureau d'Accueil et d'Accompagnement des Migrant.e.s (BAAM, a Paris-based NGO that was created in the early 2010s as a response to the absence of State policy to house and process asylum seekers' applications). When we met again, years later, he had gone on to open his own clinic in a city in the North of Paris. Amnesia, a Parisian lesbian of bourgeois upbringing, I met around the same time, although in a different political context: the student movement against the 2016 Labour Reform. When we met again, in December 2021, Amnesia was pursuing a Masters degree in dance and they were preparing an application to start doctoral studies in dance and performance theory. Both, in their respective way, illustrate successful paths in French institutions while maintaining an oppositional stance toward contemporary State politics. Abdellah stands apart from these two interlocutors; he constituted a more spectral presence, his novels set in the 18th and elsewhere in Paris, telling the stories of gay Arab men in France, had accompanied earlier phases of fieldwork.

Our encounter was anything but expected. And, while he is inarguably part of the milieu of French literature and edition houses – a local and global elite – the affective topography that he conveyed both textually, in his novels, and during our meetings in Barbès, stand in contrast to contemporary expertise.

These interlocutors stand apart not only because they are queer; they do not cohere into the voice of queerness in this text. What they do in concert to this work is that they allow me to experiment with urban *dérive* as a method of interlocution and inquiry into social relationality. These interlocutors are significant in that they enabled my access to affective topography through the street and through semi-public spaces, bringing to the fore the ways in which urban surrounds are constituted as resources by city dwellers, and showing how the stakes of *mixité* policy play out in public forms of sociality.

The street, in the Oxford Dictionary, is "a public road in a city or town that has houses and buildings on one side or both sides." It is a contextual place, defined through its function and in relation to a larger ensemble. The street may also refer metonymically to "the ideas and opinions of ordinary people, especially people who live in cities, which are considered important." The street, according to Webster this time, may refer to "an environment (as in a depressed neighbourhood or section of a city) of poverty, dereliction, or crime." One can thus become associated with the street, becoming an exemplar of ordinary public life or, alternatively, an embodiment of social ills.

To drift and walk the streets, as a method for research and interviewing, is a mode of inquiry into topography that orients one's attention to both the functional and metonymical dimensions of the city: it orients one toward infrastructure, representation, and, significantly, to public manifestations of otherness (or that which has been othered, abjected). Indeed, the idea of walking as a scientific and aesthetic practice, in particular in the streets that I chose to walk in, evokes certain figures of

public life, fixtures of social and commercial fabric and hauntive characters of institutional fears: that of street venders (in French *vendeurs à la sauvette* or *vendeurs ambulants* both of which evoke that act of running and walking, respectively) and other street service providers. Significantly, "walking the streets," as Oxford notes in the idiom section of its definition, refers to sex workers. In French, sex workers were once commonly referred to as *péripatéciennes*: a word that refers to Aristotle's school and his practice of walking as a dynamic form of thought production as well as to the profession of "walking the streets." Walking, and in particular drifting as a practice of getting lost to find one's way, invokes these various conceptions of the street. Methodologically, it forces my awareness. Through the street, topography appears already densely layered with meaning.

Although this chapter is written against the grain of a certain expertise, there remains a tension within the method that I could not evacuate. Indeed, walking is a common practice of urban survey, one that students in urbanism and architecture are taught in university and one which I witnessed regularly during fieldwork. More specifically, one of the ways that territorial diagnostics take place is through *marches exploratoires*, explorative collective walks during which participants survey a designated urban area or transportation system while being particularly attentive to issues of "security," amenities maintenance, and – although not always – public expressions of sexism and the *sentiment d'insécurité* of women. In *Femmes et espaces publics*, a report commissioned in 2017 by president of the Île-de-France Region Valérie Pécresse, Marie-Pierre Badré, Pécresse's special delegate for *égalité femmes-hommes*, explains that these *marches exploratoires* were first tested out in Toronto and Montreal before progressively being adopted in various cities in France as part of their territorial diagnostics instruments. As a modality for diagnosing sexism in public urban spaces, the idea is "to constitute a group of women that will be able to express their critiques and

make a diagnosis on local public space, through a number of walks (*déambulation*)" (Badré, 2018: 17).

The word used in the original French is *déambulation* which in fact translates as "wanderings."[69] *Déambulation* describes an unplanned walk undertaken randomly (*au hasard*). The term thus signals a method for spatial experience and documentation that emerges from philosophical and artistic practice. Further in the same *Femmes et espaces publics* report, Badré interviews the coordinator of the NGO *Genre et ville*, Chris Blache, who prefers the term *marche sensible* or "senory walk" to describe this method of diagnosis. She argues for a mode of diagnosis that breaks, at least partially, with the normatively masculine framework of "urban function." The city, she explains, "is not just going from one place to another, it is not just a question of mobility (*déplacement*), it is also a question of ambience, reaction to climate, atmosphere, feelings, it is [made up of] sonic and olfactive elements, it's a universe much richer than what it is reduced to constantly" (Chris Blache in Badré, 2018: 19). This perspective, Blache explains, relies on the idea that *Être sur un territoire, c'est vivre ce territoire*, concluding that aspects of their work involve concept- and experiential work on flânerie as a modality for "sensory walks" (*idem*).

Since 2014, these collective walks have become instruments of national policy as well as municipal diagnostics (*idem*). As Badré notes, rather critically, "the experimentation is exclusively focused on politique de la ville neighbourhoods [like La Goutte d'Or and La Chapelle in the 18th arrondissement], which raises certain questions" (Badré, 2018: 18). In a 2020 methodological guide on *marches exploratoires* the authors note that "[i]n France, the first exploratory walks appeared at the beginning of the 2000s in politique de la ville neighbourhoods in Arcueil, Lille, and Paris. In

[69] The word "walk" basically captures how an "explorative walk" takes place, and so I chose to translate *déambulation* as "walk."

2009, the municipalities of Drancy, Dreux, Île-Saint-Denis and Montreuil responded to a call for projects launched by the General Secretariat of the Comité interministériel des villes (SG-CIV) [the committee which coordinates politique de la ville at the national and local levels when no Ministry of Cities is instated by the government] to experiment with this dispositif" (Ministère chargé des Transports, 2020: 5). Understood as a diagnostics tool, these *marches* are key to *politique de la ville*, for the maintenance of a dynamic relationship and feedback loop of information in "priority neighbourhoods," the diagnosing of issues related to security, and the implementation of *mixité*. This use of sensory and affective method for policy-oriented diagnosis illustrates how neoliberal urban expansion in fact conscripts collective affects into policy (Kern, 2010) and it signals a specifically racist mode of urban survey, which targets Muslim men – without naming them as such – and centers, in an instrumental way, the subject positions of women and sexual minorities (Biarotte, 2017: 32; Hancock and Lieber, 2017; more generally, see also Fassin, 2010b).

In a review essay of *dérive*, Marc Vachon explains how the method emerged from the aesthetic experiments of artistic avant-gardes in Paris. Building on the figure of the *flâneur*, artists (namely, Dadaists and Surrealists) developed methods to "observe" and "transform everyday life on the basis of chance, coincidence, the subconscious, and desire" (Vachon, 2005). With their formalization of *dérive urbaine*, Situationists sought to stabilize and largely rationalize drifting. For them, *dérive* is not simply a means to experience space, it is also meant to entail spatial experimentations in "behaviours, forms of decoration, architectures, urbanisms and communication meant to provoke desirable situations" (Debord, 1996: 86). It seems that urban *dérive* was already, before it would be absorbed into new modes of sensing space and constructing urban policy, geared toward the

production of desirable spatiality. Thus, there remains a tension between *dérive* as territorial diagnostic and *dérive* as generative transgression (for more on the latter, see Chardronnet, 2018).

Because of my attempt to limit my dissertation fieldwork's affinities with the powers of planning, my engagement with this method is thus both more modest and more cautious. I would like to consider how Amnesia, Deluxe, and Abdellah conjured distinct – although often contiguous – affective topographies of the 18th arrondissement. I would like to consider how, in the act of sharing their individual relationships to the 18th arrondissement, they revealed a collective experience of space, constituted through shared queer affects that dynamically emerge from and ground themselves in a topography in-the-making, both imagined and real. This assembling of meaning and matter is hooked to the same political rationalities of spatial engineering that I have outlined in the previous chapters: an assemblage of techniques, affects, and practices by which we extract value from an already constituted space, while infusing it with more material and semiotic objects, and, in this two-way street of a process, we produce ephemera and memory, displacement and market value.

All three interlocutors interact in dynamic ways with urban space. The 18th arrondissement constitutes a significant resource in their lives, one which is at once material (where they once lived when they could not live elsewhere, a refuge of sorts), affective (in the sense that it became a venue for their own affective relationships, with other people and with urban space itself), and, finally, artistic (as textual or performative acts were born by street space, its competing normative imperatives, and its social fabric).

In the narratives that I have assembled here, as an attempt to put into writing an extent queer assemblage, I put deliberate effort in "*not* dislodging queerness from race and ethnicity," as José Munoz once counselled. I also refuse to take up queerness as a category of identity altogether. I

take up the concept of queer assemblage insofar as it "resists queerness-as-sexual-identity […] in favor of spatial, temporal, and corporeal convergences, implosions, and rearrangements" (Puar, 2005:122). While my interlocuters reveal – if it had not already been evidenced – how one can indeed live life as a queer person in an Arab, Muslim spatiality, the central argument of this chapter focuses on a structure of feeling. That is, for Amnesia, Deluxe, and Abdellah, what makes Barbès – since it is central to our *dérives* and to their own lives in Paris – so affectively dense is a queer assemblage that exists before they have suffused it with their own queer experiences. In other words, the possibility of being queer and Black, and Arab, and Muslim, and so on, does not need be evidenced by embodied subjects whose identities overlap in these ways. It is, already.

The Birth of Amnesia

I forgot exactly when and where we had met. But both Amnesia and I knew the context in which we had first recognized each other: during protests against the 2016 Labour Reform, in what came to be called the "cortège de tête," the head of syndicalist protests composed of unaffiliated demonstrators, pacificists and "violent anarchists" alike. When I wrote to Amnesia to discuss this research, we had not spoken for years, and I was curious to know how they had metabolized the political experiences we had lived side by side.

We met at Place de Clichy, a touristic and commercial hub where the 8th, 9th, 17th, and 18th arrondissement meet. "At first," Amnesia explained, "I thought we could start in Barbès – I told you about it last time. But then I looked on a map and it would've made for a really short drift since I also wanted to walk toward where I live [Southeast Paris] and that would have gotten us out of the 18th really quickly. So, I decided to start higher up [on the boulevard], which is convenient since I take Line 13 [from Saint-Denis-Université métro stop] and I get my connection to Line 2 [at Place de Clichy]. I mostly know the arrondissement through its métro stations, and specifically

through métro Line 2.” Choosing where and how to drift reveals key elements of one’s relation to a given space. For Amnesia, this relationship was largely structured through public transport infrastructure. While they regularly saw the street from the overhead *métro* platforms and rails, this time we would walk in it, momentarily relinquishing conceptions of the street as a place of circulation to favour instead its quality as a place to dwell in.

[Figure 39. Amnesia, when we met for our drift in December 2021. Sketch by Author.]

As we walked past erotic supermarkets, sex shops, and strip-tease joints, Amnesia noted that, although they had never shopped in these stores – too shy to walk in casually – there might be useful accessories for their drag king performances.

[Figure 40. Commercial signage on Boulevard de Clichy. Photo by Author.]

"I mostly go to thrift stores. Mostly at the Guerrisol," they explained, referring to a Paris-based second-hand clothing shop. One of the last affordable thrift shops in Paris, its clientele is largely mixed, from the local, struggling residents and artists, to the well-to-do Parisians who commute there to find a unique piece and mingle with Paris's poorest denizens. "There's one in Barbès,"

Amnesia listed, “one in Aubervilliers,” right across Paris’s northern border, “and another one near the BHV [Bazar de l’Hôtel de Ville] next to the City Hall.”

I noted this geography as being particularly significant. For Amnesia, these thrift shops are resources for developing the material layer of their drag aesthetic. Interestingly, their mode of engagement, although artistic, is adjacent to that of other artists and queer people who use thrift shop to self-fashion, and significantly, gender non-confirming people for whom they constitute more affordable and anonymous venues for buying clothes. “And how did you come to be interested in clothing?” I asked.

Amnesia nodded and explained how they had started using their grandmother’s clothes for their drag performances. Their outfits were composed of classy *tailleurs*, sharp shouldered suits with straight skirts and squared out blazers. I pictured something like 1980s office fashion. “I love *tailleurs*,” Amnesia expressed. “I also have an aunt who is a stylist, and so, a seamstress.” And, consequentially, with a certain taste for this aesthetic came an interest for the underlying craftsmanship, which Amnesia invested, appropriated, and repurposed for drag performances.

Drifting[70] on the question of how they construct their aesthetic – for drag, but beyond drag for themself as a young non-binary lesbian – Amnesia started talking about the decision to shave their head and how that, more so than attending a specific nightlife scene, had grounded them in their own understanding of self. A police patrol rolling by interrupted our conversation as we both

[70] As we passed place Pigalle, I noted a married couple arguing. Both had wedding bands on their left hands; easily seen as they raised their arms in dramatic movements of despair, anger. They moved like an accordion, insulting each other in Algerian *darija* their faces almost touching, before moving apart in a breath-like synchronous movement; no one paid them any mind. I wondered if Amnesia was ignoring them actively or if they had not noticed them. A flux of women walking around us, elbows locked, were chatting vivaciously as they made their way toward the Goutte d’Or. With the Tati store closed, all the other fabric stores on the boulevard – wedding and traditional Mediterranean dresses, rolls of fabric and scraps, shoes – were busy as ever. Lone men still punctuated our walk. These ones, however, were not catcallers but instead whispered the names of the contraband they sold *iPhone, Chanel bleu, Legends, Marlboros* repeated and forming a constant, ambient sound loop.

looked at the officers pass us by. The sight of the police reminded me of Amnesia's drag persona Amnesia La Casse, or Amnesia Wreckage in English, a direct reference to riots and violent political action. And so, I asked about Amnesia's *mythos*.

"Well actually," they responded, "Amnesia, she's got an aesthetic and an anger that are rather close to that of public protest (*la manif*). With an approach that relies largely on the slogan. And so, there's a whole imaginary of ACAB-land that's been there since the very start. I did my first drag performance in my drag mother's apartment, across from the police precinct [on rue de la Goutte d'Or, in Barbès]. So, I mechanically incorporated this into my drag. And then I went to Australia [for a year of study-abroad] and I sort of moved away from [violent demonstrations]. And when I came back, I had lost contact with all that and so I mechanically integrated it into my performances. And, concretely, at the end of my performances, I wrap my head in a t-shirt [hiding all but the eyes] and I lift up a fake Molotov cocktail."

It was clear that Amnesia's drag relied on an evocation of propaganda by the deed. Interestingly, in both remaining elusive about their past political work, we engaged in a deliberately amnesiac evocation of wreckage. "Amnesia is really angry." And this anger is manifested through Amnesia's choreographed devolution from rigid and orderly French bourgeois femininity into a raucous stage performance of gender- and genre-bending "female masculinity," to think with Jack Halberstram.

Amnesia had taken shape in the apartment of a drag queen who, at the time, lived on rue de la Goutte d'Or, across one of Paris's most infamous police precincts. "When we left in drag," Amnesia recalled, "we'd walk throughout Barbès to go to our party." We paused briefly, before they continued, explaining how the sight of the police, perhaps more so than their anarchist activism, had given shape to their drag.

"It's significant, to see the police, like that [casually]. We'd get ready, have a drink before heading out. And around 6PM, you see the patrol arriving, one group that enters the precinct, another that leaves. They would often be with dogs, barking, excited to go out on the patrol."

They paused.

"It's a space of police aesthetic," they continued, about Barbès and the rue de la Goutte d'Or, "between the bike patrols, which do look quite ridiculous, it's true, and on the other end of the spectrum, the police vans [where they temporarily detain arrestees], cops in full gear, and *voltigeurs*," this last one referring to a notoriously violent motorcycle brigade. "There's a whole array of French law enforcement that you can see on this tiny street of Paris. And so," they concluded, "we would be having our *apéro* drinks, with the window looking out onto the street, waving at the cops there as we smoked a joint. *C'est pas banal, quoi*."

Police presence, for Amnesia, created a strong ambient affect. The sight of the police was not simply a material fact; it brought with it something out of the ordinary, out of banality. What Amnesia referred to as a "police aesthetic" defining the street, we could consider as the ambient affect that police presence settles on the topographical space they invest. And this affect, this aesthetic had become a *resource* for Amnesia's drag. Conversely, as the *mythos* of Amnesia La Casse was precisely to have been born in the rubble of the Goutte d'Or, they incorporated into their drag traces of police aesthetic.

Amnesia looked pensive as we walked towards Barbès, I could see them scan the street and pause briefly on North-African men, standing in small groups engaged in conversations we could not hear.

“You told me, last time,” they said, “that you were interested in what I thought about large groups of men in the streets. And I thought about it and, you see, I’m not scared of these men. I’ve never – I’ve rarely ever – been scared. Only when it’s very late at night and someone’s following me. But that’s never happened to me in Barbès. I don’t get scared, I get angry. Because some heckle me and continue to call me Miss (*mademoiselle*) and it pisses me off to see these kinds of displays of masculinity. What’s the point? Stop! And, you see me, I present as a dyke (*gouine*) and I work hard for that to be clear. And, yeah, they annoy me. But it doesn’t induce fear. Whereas the police, yes, they scare me, and their presence brings up memories [when I really feared for my life].”

Amnesia moves through the 18th arrondissement in such a way that they are moved. They can feel the shifting normative imperatives that settle and shape urban space. They are moved in the sense that the performance of gendered norms *affects* them and leaves an impression in the form of an emergent feeling; they are moved to the extent that they are interpellated, called into space, summoned to respond to an anonymous greeting. This interpellation, in Amnesia’s retelling of it, centers on their gender, in a way that underscores the very ambivalence of gendered interpellation. The interpellative process that Amnesia describes, in its ambivalence, reflects Judith Butler’s “symptomatic” reading of Louis Althusser’s theory of ideological interpellation (Althusser, 1971; Butler, 1997: 106). While Althusser presents a clean scene where the subject, in responding to an authoritative interpellation (a policeman hailing an individual in the street), both actualizes oneself as subject and recognizes the authority of the hail, Butler effectively queers this theory, suggesting a messier scene, one in which misrecognition is central. That is, one is compelled to answer to the authoritative interpellation because it misrecognizes the subject; one is compelled by its failure to accurately interpellate.

Amnesia, in bringing experiences of street heckling while foregrounding an affect at odds with contemporary discourse on the safety and access of women and sexual minorities in public space, highlights this failure of interpellation. To an extent, "[t]he very processes that demand our submission at the same time enable our resistance, with our agency being produced *within* this system of subject, misrecognition, and desire" (Davis, 2012: 884-884; see Butler, 1997: 12). This "system," in the context of urban renewal, can be understood as the infrastructures of *mixité* and the discursive and spatial management of difference, that I have examined in the previous chapters. In a way that responds and corrects both Althusser and Butler's assumption about subjectivation, Amnesia refuses to act *within* this "system." While they are, as a white, queer, upper-class student and performance artist, positioned in particular ways in Parisian topography, their queer affect does not reflect contemporary discourse on women, gender and sexual minorities, and security in Paris's immigrant neighbourhoods. On the contrary, it suggests that queer performance precedes the arrival of prefigurative urbanism, tiers-lieu queer cultural programming, and more generally infrastructures of *mixité.*

The affective topography of the 18th arrondissement[71] is, in ways that are historically attested and perhaps recast and misrecognized in the contemporary as novel, already constituted by and constitutive of sexual, racial, and otherwise minoritized communities of experience. This is significant because women have been the object of much talk, from mundane conversation and press articles, official territorial diagnostics, to art installations, political speeches and policing measures, which frame the "right to the city" of women as being under threat, in specific

[71] I am thinking specifically of an "infrastructure of feeling," a term Ruth Gilmore uses to describe the cultural production of the oppressed. I consider that Amnesia's ambivalent position is not exclusively related to a racial and class hierarchy. It also reflects this infrastructure and suggests that queer and Muslim infrastructures of feeling emerge in common terrain, one that *mixité sociale* policy likely obfuscates in favour of redrawn lines of separation, proximity, and mutual opposition.

neighbourhoods and streetscapes considered to be too masculine, a consequence – sometimes explicitly formulated – of Muslim men's uses of public space. Amnesia's rejection of this assumption and deliberate reframing *away* from feelings of fear (and the *sentiment d'insécurité* that such feelings conjure) are important speech acts. They also signal both the problematic interpellation of woman through policy and the stigmatising representation of Islam, and Maghrebi men, it relies on. This reflects the constatation that intolerance in France is structured around a triumvirate of "presumed homophobia, anti-Semitism, and misogyny" (Fernando, 2014: 224). French Muslim, Fernando explains, are thus summoned (and more generally compelled) "to prove their secularity, modernity, and commensurability by denouncing th[is] triumvirate of intolerance attributed to Islam" (Fernando, 2014: 224). Amnesia, in that sense, responds to the modality of interpellation Fernando describes, by refusing some of its key parameters and rerouting feminist critique away from security concerns.[72]

[Figure 41. Graffiti "révolte transféministe putes en lutte" on Boulevard Ornano. Photo by Author.]

[72] Refusing this mode of citizenship is significant, considering the proliferation of police zones grounded in this type of pseudo-feminist rationality, such as the *zone de sécurité prioritaire* or the *quartier de reconquête républicaine*, two police zoning *dispositifs* that target deviant uses of public spaces, specifically, those of Muslim (or assumed to be Muslim) men and boys.

Moreover, women are a key part of public life in these neighbourhoods of the 18th arrondissement. It is true that one can easily perceive gendered uses of spaces: men will be seen, standing alone or in groups, engaged in commercial activities or ordinary sociability, while women will engage in such practices by moving between various semi-public interiors, also alone or in groups. With the exception of elderly women, vendors in the informal markets, and sex workers, women will rarely be seen standing in one place for hours. What is at stake, then, is not so much a lack – of access or safety – but rather the existence of different normative imperatives expressed within and through spatial practices (Deschamps, 2017; Lieber, 2002).

However, when considering public commercial activities, such as street vending and sex work, the gendered distribution of public space is less straightforward and clearly cut. While some streets are apparently managed by men who grant or withhold vendors access to a street corner, other streets are organized by women. For instance, the informal market in Barbès is managed by Algerian men, who coordinate contraband tobacco products (who sells, in what location, using which hide-out to store the goods, etc.). While the informal market of Château Rouge is overseen by Congolese women, who manage how stands are organized. In both cases, people who would like to use the market to sell goods – whether they be men or women – have to refer to whoever is in charge. In both cases, the marketplace is diverse in terms of gender, as is the clientele. It is, however, often composed primarily of older shoppers, immigrant elders, referred to as *anciens* or *anciennes* in French (*chibani* in Arabic or simply *hajj* in the Muslim vernacular shared by North and West African communities living in the 18th arrondissement).

Amnesia described the space in a way that coheres with what I have sketched just above: they do not feel unsafe when heckled or approached by an Arab man in the street. What unnerves them is the interpellation into a gendered position which they actively reject, as they work on themself to

feel and move otherwise. This rejection, as they formulate it, is deeply relational in that they also consider the heckling as potentially degrading for the men in question. These men who call out to Amnesia in the street, meowing like cats or whispering the names of recreational hard drugs, understand Amnesia's queer performance of self as grounded within a sexed organization of space. Amnesia thus describes a friction between multiple normative imperatives, a friction or tension which can be generative as such. The security imperative that considers these Arab men as crucial targets of law enforcement – the law of keeping "women" like Amnesia safe – in fact disallows this ambivalence, instead working to disallow Amnesia's lesbian relational imperative to generatively rub against the normative imperatives of street life and, namely, of Maghrebi public masculinities.

"It has to be in the 18th"

When I met Deluxe for the first time, as part of this research, we quickly spoke of the police. It came up spontaneously, as we walked past the balcony of his apartment, which gave onto the boulevard near Simplon métro station. *Vue-sur-rue*, I noted.

"Yes, we have a great view on the street," Deluxe replied, nodding. "And you can imagine we see police checks [stop-and-frisk and vehicle searches] all the time. Ah, and here's one!" he added shifting his head to a car being taken apart by police officers while the driver, a chubby Arab man, looked on, his palms open. "And so, here, with car searches, we know who gets stopped by the police; always the same people."

Not unlike Amnesia, Deluxe brought up policing and homophobia in tandem, as contrasting yet related phenomena. "Throughout the years I've lived here," Deluxe recalled, as we walked past a bistro on boulevard Ornano, "the only time that I've really felt uncomfortable in public space was

earlier this summer." The bistro we had just walked by had brought up the memory two men heckling him when he had gone out wearing a cropped shirt, which he recounted as we left the place behind. As soon as we'd let more distance between us and the restaurant, Deluxe went back to thinking out loud about police presence in the arrondissement and the ways in which police officers regulate public space. "The two times when I got stopped and searched by the police, I was wearing a full track suit, I had taken off my earrings, and I had a cap on my head." In other words, Deluxe had been profiled as young and unambiguously Arab, "straight."

"So, *voilà*," he continued, "I think when police officers see a *pédé* [fag] they don't react in the same way as when they see an Arab man…" Deluxe brought up his own brother, who lives in the Seine-Saint-Denis department, where they both grew up: "he gets stopped at least once a week," he said. As we walked past the *Café Lomi* on rue Marcadet, Deluxe explained that whenever he dresses how he wants to, in a way that may be read as queer or *pédé* – as he self-refers – there is a sort of protection that is afforded to him. He is generally not looked at or singled out by non-White residents of the arrondissement. He is not, however, protected by the police nor by residents; rather, he no longer is a police target and is still able to navigate the street seamlessly.

"It's not so much a question of homophobia," he said, "and more a question of groups of cis men being present in public space. I get worried when I see a group of men, anywhere [in Paris], worst if they're cis men from a business school," he added, laughing. "But," he continued, "we're not going to deny that there's homophobia or transphobia [in the 18th arrondissement]. But, at the same time, it's complicated. Anywhere you go in Paris, a group of Black and Arab *pédés*, it scares people. A group of Black and Arab people in general is disruptive, it bothers people who look with insistence. Here, that's not the case, not in the same way. It's as if I didn't have to worry about my

Lebanese identity when I'm here, it helps, actually, and my queerness is not so relevant after all, when elsewhere it's the fact that I'm queer and Lebanese that's a problem."

For Deluxe, the 18th arrondissement is a significant spatial resource, in which he is able to suspend some of his racial experience and live out a life in which he is *de facto* less scrutinized than if he were to live in a majority white, upper class neighbourhood. This lessened social scrutiny also allows him to suspend – although precariously – the work of controlling how he presents. That suspension, which brings about a certain relief, is precarious because, as he tells us, presenting as too *pédé* makes him more conspicuous and a potential target of street heckling, conversely presenting as not *pédé* enough – in a way that makes him enter police racial typologies – makes him a target of police profiling and ID checks. For these reasons, or perhaps against them, he has made the 18th arrondissement his home. After crashing on friends' couches while he volunteered in street camps, and moving into a *colocation* with friends, Deluxe doesn't see himself live anywhere else. "It has to be in the 18th," he said, nodding.

One of the reasons Deluxe accepted to work with me, he said, was that he knew I would not be interested in making a conventional narrative pitting the figure of the homophobic migrant against the figure of the emancipated queer. But, in saying that, Deluxe was not denying the existence of homophobia and transphobia in the arrondissement. He wanted to let a more nuanced narrative emerge and to focus on a certain untold ambiguity, which he considered we both had in common. He mentioned a friend of his – a white gay man – a prolonged conversation they had together. The friend had interrogated him about his experience of homophobia in the 18th arrondissement: how he found people looking at him insistently, how he found people overall hostile to his presence.

[Figure 42. Collage the window of a shop in Château Rouge, faces of men and women meant to represent North and West African residents match the letters of the verb *Habiter* (to dwell). Under the collage, tagged with white paint pen, is the phrase *Bienvenue dans le four*.[73] Photo by Author.]

"I can understand," Deluxe conveyed, as he recalled the conversation with some distance. "But it bears asking: why mention it [homophobia in public space] exclusively when it's about racialized people, immigrants, or working-class neighbourhoods?" If homophobia exists everywhere – and Deluxe was adamant about his own individual and collective experiences of public hostility, including in Paris's more affluent neighbourhoods – then his friend's focus on the 18th

[73] The word *four* literally means oven but is used colloquially to refer to drug markets. Small indications like these guide clients toward a given location, a courtyard or a wasteland, where salaried daytime street dealers sell pre-packaged product.

arrondissement was not critical of homophobia as such. Rather, it was, at best, a way of discussing cultural difference and racial othering.

As we turned on rue Marcadet, making our way toward Barbès – the Algerian centrality – Deluxe paused, apparently remembering an adjacent story. Earlier in his life, when he came out to friends and family as gay, Deluxe was often confronted with his friends' questions about how his Christian Lebanese family had reacted. *Do your parents know you're queer? How did they react? You should come-out if you haven't, it's really empowering*. As we waited at a crosswalk, Deluxe turned to face me:

"There's always this impression people have 'Ah, it must be so hard for him with his Arab family.' But you realize that *it's okay*, you know, *it's okay to be queer*.[74] […] Coming-out is not that central [in my experience]. Your parents are still going to love you… I wouldn't bring my partner home to meet them but at the same time I have a real relationship with my family, my parents. And at the time, I was mostly surrounded with white gay people. It was as I met more queer racialized people that I came to ask myself different questions [about being gay] and that coming-out became less central."

Interestingly, Deluxe did not deny homophobia: he wanted to be critical of the tendency within contemporary queer cultural practices to single out racial others as key sites of homophobia, ignoring how non-French (and in particular Muslim, African, and Arab) cultural idioms may not value the speech act of coming-out but still make room for people to live their lives as they fashion them. But Deluxe did not stop there, and in a way refused to leave himself out of his own critical gaze. His position as a gay man – and his ability to present as gay while existing within the aesthetic

[74] Italicized transcription here indicates that Deluxe said these specific words in English and not in French.

codes that emerge from the North-African and West-African spatiality in the 18th arrondissement – allowed him a certain protection from the violence of public space. The story he told me, of having to deal with homophobic insults from a local bistro, is paradoxically a strong illustration of his ability to walk about with a certain comfort. Women, he explained, and particularly trans women, are not afforded the same ease of mind.

"It's an ambiguity that serves us," I said, tentatively.

"Yes, there's an ambiguity that serves us and that we sometimes use [to our advantage]. We just live with it, but at the same time it's problematic when we exist in this context, within the violence of gentrification, of border policing, of trans sex workers getting harassed and murdered…"

Drifting in *Arab Melancholia*

There is then a certain ambivalence, which Deluxe illustrates in his rarely hindered access to public space in the 18th arrondissement. Deluxe described how minoritized subjects come to negotiate their position, concede, accept, and eventually use the levers of power that they are being afforded. There is, in Deluxe's self-analysis, a personal sense of tension, of being implicated in power, becoming a participant in border and gentrification politics, both of which extend into the North of Paris.[75] For Deluxe, the 18th arrondissement is a haven of sorts, a shelter away from the inquisitive gazes of racist Parisians, a place where he can be gay and Arab and benefit from local normative imperatives that value masculinity, even when it is queer in its expression.

For Abdellah, the 18th arrondissement is a place to which he comes to replenish himself. While Deluxe lives there and benefits from it as a home, and Amnesia grounds part of their artistic practice

[75] Indeed, international borders extend within Paris-proper: the Gare du Nord is site of a border between France and the United Kingdom, placing border policing not only at France's territorial limits but within the capital itself.

there, Abdellah conveyed that it was not only a source of literary inspiration but also, quite simply: it makes him feel better, lighter. Abdellah's mode of resourcing himself there is, in his words, through the body (*par le corps*) and by being in relation to other bodies (*parmi les corps*). There is a strong aesthetic element, that Abdellah, like Deluxe and Amnesia, appreciates in the normative assemblage constructed by Algerian commercial and cultural presence in the neighbourhood. For him, they constitute "bodies that still resist France's diktat." "They are glorious," he told me not without a certain giddiness, as we walked through the dense crowd of men and women packed into Barbès's informal market.

[Figure 43. Street view of Place de La Charbonnière, a public space where one can be alone among many. Source: Google Maps.]

Abdellah had first come to live in the 18th arrondissement in the early 2000s, when he had found a small apartment rented out informally, and decided to move there with his lover, Slimane. This lover, and this story of life in the 18th arrondissement, is the autobiographical source of the literary

narrative Abdellah wrote in *Arab Melancholia*.[76] Our drift together was a *pérégrination* as Abdellah called it, into their past in the 18th arrondissement. It was also, a phantasmatic experiment of affective topography, as we moved through the places of the book and the places of his life.

[Figure 44. Street view Boulevard de La Chapelle and Rue de Chartres, a public space where one can be alone among many. Source: Google Maps.]

As we walked past their apartment, he recalled it had been *the most* – "the most intense, the most beautiful, the most free, the most tortuous, the most" – romantic relationship he had lived. "The most… everything happened here," he said pointing to a red brick apartment building across from the rue de Clignancourt police precinct. The romantic narrative of *Arab Melancholia* takes place against the backdrop of a racist Parisian topography, a *topos* that, despite everything, he had come to love. He recalled that the building next to his apartment housed a community of undocumented workers, all of whom hailed from the same city in Egypt, and which he had come to know

[76] I had read *Arab Melancholia* during my drifts in the 18th arrondissement. Abdellah's stories had taken on a certain spectral dimension in my daily drifts. When we met in person, what was once spectral became incredibly concrete: he let me into the affective topography of *his* 18th arrondissement. In that sense, I believe the affective or semiotic dimension of topography, which I've explored in this dissertation, does not break with a materialist analysis of space.

personally, helping out occasionally with paperwork and administrative visits. Pointing to the apartment window above us, he told me of a neighbour who was very fond of Slimane and him.

"A former sex worker," he explained, in French *ex-prostituée*. "She brought us *ta'am* (couscous dish) often. She was lovely and she loved us."

Abdellah's story is striking for two reasons. One is derived from my accessing the author's biography, the space of experience from which his literary work emerges from. There is something humbling about interacting with the artist, whose presence was spectral until the encounter, and his willingness to open up, quickly, without reserve. The second reason, almost going against the grain of the first, is that the affective topography Abdellah conjures is not unlike the one Deluxe conveyed to me. There is something of a contingency – such as how informal living conditions become a resource for two young gay Arab men when navigating a saturated and expensive rental market – that somehow becomes a defining event for self-making.

Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, Abdellah has come to the 18th arrondissement and specifically to its North-African hub to care for himself and for the small although significant wounds that being in France inflicted on him. In 1999, Abdellah and Slimane met each other at the Folies Pigalle, a nightlife venue located along the boulevard de Rochechouart. A local grassroots organization called *Kelma* (speech in Arabic), founded by journalist Fouad Zeraoui, threw a weekly party called BBB for *Black Blanc Beur*. The BBB catered to a gay Maghrebi clientele, men who, apart from being targeted by homophobia, also found themselves excluded from gay nightclubs.[77] Abdellah saw Slimane in the crowd and gravitated towards him.

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[77] Discrimination *à l'entrée* in nightclubs is a staple of Black and Arab men's experience in France, with bouncers commonly refusing entry to Black and Arab patrons. The BBB were meant to respond to this by proposing a recurring venue open to all and in which Black and Arab gay men would not be discriminated against.

“The sublime,” Abdellah told me of his relationship with Slimane, “was Arabic.” Speaking Arabic together, and loving each other in that language, “created places of love that France could not limit.” While Abdellah was young and bent on making it in French literary circles, Slimane – a factory worker turned baker and butcher, and father of three – would persistently struggle against that tendency, to elevate their relationship beyond the *petitesse* of French high culture, away from the belittling it required from its immigrants. And although this recurrent argument in many ways is how their relationship expired and ended, it is one that grounded them both in their spatial context, “among Black Africans, Tunisians, Algerians, Moroccans…” For Abdellah, the 18th arrondissement, beyond the material constraints that brought him there, was of value to him precisely because he would be living among people that he related to, and around whom he would feel at home. The idea that homophobia would be worse there did not sit well with him all; he considered it to be utterly Islamophobic and racist. The budding love that he and Slimane created flowered everywhere, there. And although, as Deluxe explained, their experience of space as gay Arab men is not free of homophobic scrutiny, Barbès remains a “place that gives.” It is not simply a form of nostalgia for love lost.

“I haven’t come back here since 2001,” Abdellah said as we walked into a Libyan-owned bakery on rue des Poissonniers. “Well, no,” he corrected, “I come back here often, but not with this will that I have with you, to revisit things.” Coming to Barbès is also a way of re-encountering a place where he already exists and where he can, as he walks, and depending on his mood, find traces of love (*traces de l’amour*, in Abdellah’s words). In walking with me, Abdellah explained to me, but also to himself, what made him gravitate so unwaveringly. Although Abdellah does not come back to Barbès on this evocative and recursive mode, during our peregrination, as he called it, he re-encountered *a place that gives*; a place, more specifically, that gives back. In that back and forth,

Abdellah revealed how he traveled through affective topography, bringing into the present a past life, bringing into speech what he had once relegated to the text of *Arab Melancholia*.

Un endroit qui te donne quelque chose, a place that gifts you something.

"It's the only place in Paris that replenishes me," Abdellah told me as we walked to a restaurant he and Slimane used to go to on boulevard de la Chapelle. "It isn't so much that I come with the will to replenish myself," he continued, "but as soon as I've arrived—" He stopped abruptly and, turning to a street vender waving packs of Marlboro cigarettes, said "no, thank you," before continuing: "it makes me forget myself and all the will I have to affirm myself, and all this identity existential fuss."

While he feels alienated from other places in Paris – he feels like the city takes from him and leaves him wrung out – here in Barbès, it is the opposite; he leaves it feeling like it has filled him up. It restores the relationship between the body and place, between the body and other bodies in that place. Specifically, it is a generous encounter for him because he enters in relation with anonymous bodies and feels the feeling of knowing without knowing (*connaître sans connaître*).

[Figure 45. Street view of Boulevard de La Chapelle and Rue des Islettes, at the intersection of which is the restaurant Abdellah and I shared lunch. Source: Google Maps.]

We walked into the restaurant. The place was clean and felt familial and familiar. Clear white tile on the walls and floor. I noticed a man, seated toward the back of the restaurant, facing the entry. He was wearing a long indigo dress, that covered his whole body, and a *tagelmust* (*cheche* in French or *litham* in Arabic) wrapped around his head and half of his face. He tucked the indigo tagelmust under his chin and began eating a lamb and potato dish. Another man, wearing a worn out worker's outfit and sporting a thick moustache, looked up from his plate, his eyes peering above his yellowing glasses, as we walked in.

"I want the same thing as him," Abdellah said to the clerk at the cash booth near the entrance, his hand extended toward the man's plate. "What is it called?"

"*Méchoui agneau* (grilled lamb)," the clerk replied, "*avec haricots et pomme à l'ail* (with string beans and garlic potatoes). *Wahda* (one)*?*"

"Wahda (one)," Abdellah nodded and, turning to me, "*wa enta* (and you)*?"*

"*Wah* (yes), I'll have the same thing. Two, please," I said to the clerk.

As we moved to sit down, Abdellah said "Before it was Moroccans [who owned it]. Now, it's Algerians. It's changed." He looked briefly at the man sitting next to us, the same one whose dish we had ordered. Picking up the conversation where we had left it in the street, Abdellah told me more about his disagreements with Slimane – *petit dans sa place, grand et beau dans ses idées*, belittled in his social status but tall and beautiful in his ideas – and the many contingencies that brought them to live there in the 18th arrondissement. The man looked at us, his eyes shifting

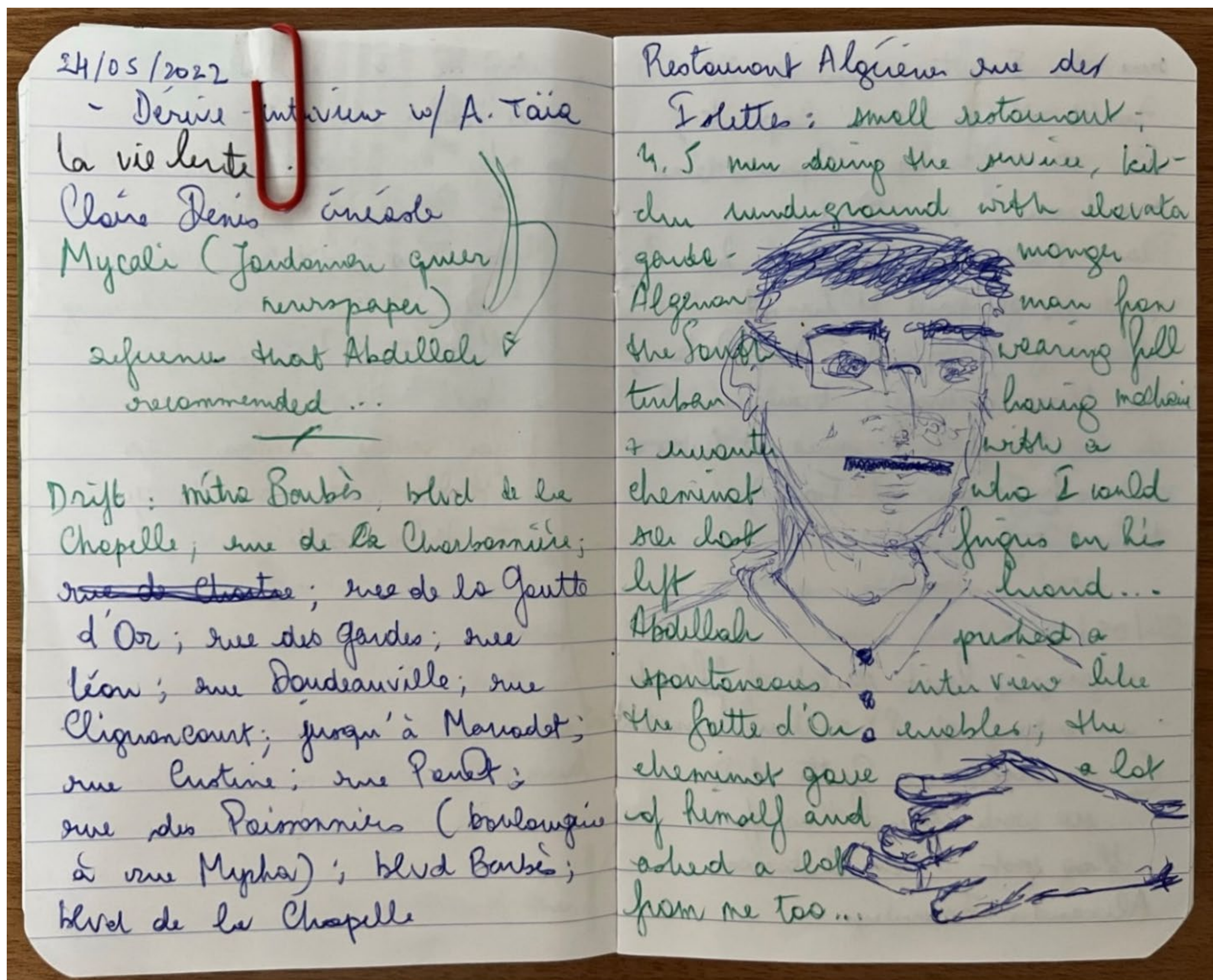
discreetly from behind his glasses. He listened closely; I caught him nodding, shifting his head to hear us more clearly.

Abdellah and I both got up to wash our hand in the faucet at the back of the restaurant. As we sat back down, the older man was cleaning his plate with a piece of bread. He cleared his throat and asked us who we were and where we were from. Thus began a long conversation. The man told us about his experience of exile (*al ghorba*), moving away from his home city of Boumerdès in Algeria and settling in a working-class city North of Paris. After a lifetime of factory work in France, he told us how, since his retirement, he had spent months at a time in Algeria, with some of his children and grandchildren and extended family. He was a retired *cheminot*, a railway worker. I noticed he was missing two fingers on his left hand.

He finished his plate and brought it to the clerk before going to wash his hands and face. He sat back down and continued talking with us. He shared with us his thoughts about politics, in France, weighing in on what Abdellah had been telling me a moment before. Then, he continued with questions about geopolitics, culture, and language, wanting to hear our opinions, debating and continuing to share his own reflections. Leaning over the table, he spoke with me directly, about learning Arabic and Algerian darija, as a matter of knowing the world; but he also cautioned me about being careful with who I learned and although it might be seductive to learn darija through the street, not all the people I would meet *ta'na* (among our community) were good, reliable people. This lasted until, upon looking at his watch, he told us he had a train to catch and must be getting on his way.

Reflecting again on what brings him to Barbès regularly, Abdellah described the man – along with the encounter altogether – as beautiful, curious, moving (*il était beau, curieux, émouvant* were Abdellah's words). He displayed, Abdellah told me, "A quality that Arabs – poor Arabs, not rich

ones – have." These last remarks came up later, as we continued to walk, and as Abdellah tried to comprehend the man's apparent distrust for other Algerians and Arabs. I shared that I had been told to be aware of who I chose to spend my time with, to not build trust only on a real or perceived shared background; advice that had come from my family as well as elders I had met during my years living in the 18th arrondissement. So, the man's comments sounded familiar and familial.



[Figure 46. Fieldnotes: "Algerian restaurant on Rue des Islettes, small restaurant, 4-5 men doing the service, kitchen underground with elevator *garde-manger*. Algerian man from the South wearing full blue turban, having *mechoui* + encounter with a cheminot who I could see lost fingers

on his left hand. Abdellah pushed a spontaneous interview like the Goutte d'Or enables, the cheminot gave a lot of himself and asked a lot from me too…" Photo by Author.]

For Abdellah, it had the taste of internalized racism (*un racisme intra*). He dwelled on this for a time as we walked to the bench where he and Slimane would come to after arguments. For Abdellah, the type of distrust this man expressed is a consequence of colonialism, of the breaking up of ties, kinship, trusting relations. What this man expressed – a strong sense of pride and distrust – left Abdellah perplexed. It is not so much the cultural script that should be relevant here. Rather, what I want to point out with this ethnographic encounter is, for one, that an urban space considered abject because of the men that people it is a place of beauty, one that gives itself without asking for anything back, as Abdellah put it. It is a space that, in more ways than one, procures a sense of healing. This healing is not metaphorical or simply symbolic; it emerges from the fact that these encounters both exceed institutional territorial policy and constitute the basis for social relationality in Barbès. The advice, the concern that this older man displayed toward Abdellah and, in particular, towards me, is evidence – however ephemeral – of normative imperatives being negotiated, explained, and passed on during fleeting encounters. The *lien social* of policy does not account for these moments of thirdness during which what is abject for some may be a treasure for others, or, in this case, for me.

After we finished eating, Abdellah, who was on his way to an interview with a Jordanian journalist working with the queer magazine *My Kali*, suggested we meet the following day at a hammam on boulevard de la Chapelle. The peregrination, as Abdellah called it, through the streets of the Goutte d'Or was necessary to establish a particular kind of public intimacy, one which is not grounded in desire but something closer to love. The love Abdellah had once felt for Slimane, the love the elderly Algerian cheminot expressed in his curiosity and care, the love for the peopled streets of

the neighbourhood we both shared. The following passage, which moves from the street into the hammam, continues to tell this story of transmission, healing, and social relation. The interlacing of scenes of public intimacy, featured in these passages, suggest a certain queer ephemera that falls within the scope of what José Muñoz described in his work, while delinking such queerness from sexual orientation and desire. What distinguishes my interlocution with Abdellah (as well as Amnesia and Deluxe), on the one hand, from my interviews with experts, on the other, is this feeling of love (and the love that is born within friendship). Queer affect, at least in these pages, is one grounded in love, while the technologies and socialities that emerge alongside prefigurative urbanism rely on desire.

Hammam

I arrived a little in advance with my bag neatly packed. I sent Abdellah a text message to let him know I was there, waiting by the staircase that leads up to the Barbès métro station, among the small crowd of men selling discounted métro tickets. I waited there for a moment, until he arrived, greeting me like an old friend. As we walked toward the bath house, he asked me, casually,

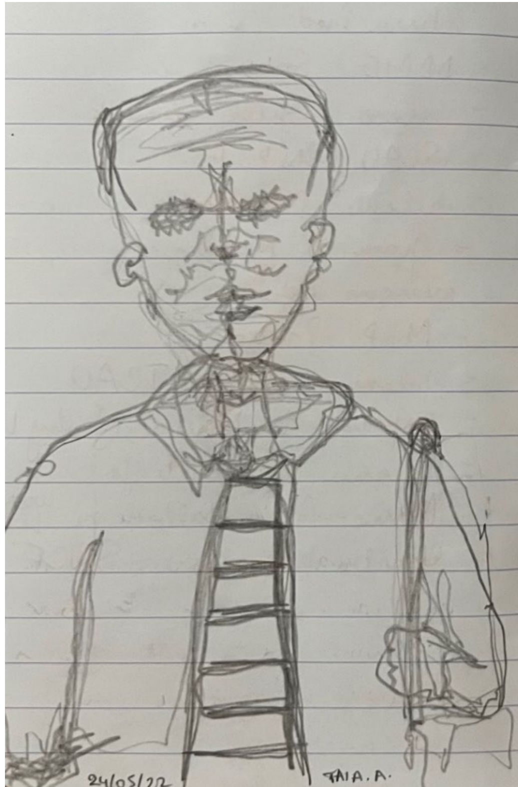
“So, when was the last time you went to Algeria?”

“I’ve never been,” I said, shaking my head, a certain sadness in my voice. I wanted to explain why, how I waited to go back with my father, who had refused to, without ever saying no straightforwardly. I wanted to explain, how my grandparents’ strategic decision to maintain their children focused on being French had rippled and birthed in me a sense of exile that I could not claim or name. I said nothing of that sort.

Abdellah, slightly bewildered, turned to me, looking me in the eyes. He wrapped his left arm behind my back and, with his right hand pointed to the door of the hammam, said:

"Welcome to Algeria!"

In a way that I had perhaps not fully understood in the moment, the long drift Abdellah and I had gone on together, the day prior, was in fact a necessary passage toward this moment we were about to share.



[Figure 47. Abdellah on the day we met, wearing a marinière and sporting a tote bag on his shoulder. Sketch by Author.]

The hours spent peregrinating inside a world that Abdellah felt was precious to him – and it was, in biographically distinct ways, also precious to me – were both necessary and sufficient for him to come into a different role. He no longer engaged with me as an author might have done, a famous novelist there to perform a rather conventional revisit of his work, guided by the avid questions of a curious reader. Although neither one of us had truly obeyed such a script, we had both responded to it, following it loosely and going back to it when our drift was in need of structure.

In any case, this modality of interlocution – the interview – had given way to something altogether different. Abdellah, I felt, had decided to pass something on, something of a transmission, a filiation; a unique occasion for me to be introduced to an aspect of my culture – the hammam as a space that offers a particular combination of self-care and care for others, collective discussion, and a form of nakedness and vulnerability from which springs a certain modality of equality –

something that might be understood, within a Western reading, as the commons. Entering a space of public intimacy, particularly one seated within the orientalist archive, is a sensitive matter. In part because it is a space that also sits ambivalently within the queer archive, and because its actual spatiality, its cultural and corporeal significance, do not adhere to legible (orientalizing and sexualizing) tropes, I turn to the hammam in the hope that it may highlight "how the delicacies of religious ritual echo precarities of queer love" (Kasmani, 2019: 37; see also Kasmani, 2022).

[Figure 48. Photograph of an oil painting by Rayan Yasmineh and a visitor pointing out the detail of the hairline of the painted subject. The piece was part of *Silsila, le voyage des regards* held at the annex of the Institute of Islamic Cultures (ICI) in 2022. This annex of the ICI is located in a former hammam bathhouse on Rue Léon. Source: Author.]

We approached the door on the Boulevard de La Chapelle, greeting a street vendor who offered us contraband cigarettes. Abdellah waved him off and gestured to the door and the "HAMMAM" sign. The cigarette vendor nodded apologetically, smiled, and stepped aside. I rang the buzzer and we entered the building. Like most buildings in the 18th arrondissement, there was a first lateral entrance that led to residential apartments. A covered arcade led to an open courtyard, at the end of which we found the entrance of the bathhouse. I followed Abdellah, looking around – I thought Algiers might have looked similar. Merzak Allouache movies set in Algiers may have indicated as much. I shook off the idea and, as my wandering thoughts settled, I realized the owners recognized Abdellah and greeted him warmly. I let Abdellah do the talking; I did not know what to ask for and listened to him, as if to remember what to say when I would next be there, alone. No massages, no special services; just access to the baths, was the mental note I made to myself right then and there.

"Now," Abdellah warned me, "when I come here, I stay until closing time. I hope you're ready."

I laughed and said I was there to shadow him, nothing less, nothing more. He nodded; it was a deal, then. I reached toward the lady at the reception, angling to pay for my share. But Abdellah put up his hand as a barrier; he meant this, I had suspected, to be a moment of mentorship and he insisted on paying. Otherwise, it would not be the same, he told me with a soft grunt of disapproval. We were given keys to locker and walked down circular staircase to the locker rooms and the baths. As we descended into the insides of the bathhouse, I noticed the tile on the walls, shaped like a *khamsa*. It reminded me of the motif of another hammam on boulevard de la Chapelle, which had since closed. It also reminded me of home; the home I carried with me everywhere, the symbol around my neck.

I studied the architecture of the place and its organization: several sections, each with a different purpose of self-care, cleaning and cleansing, quiet or friendly conversations. I tried not to look too

closely at people, listening and feeling instead. After undressing and dropping off my belongings in a locker, I picked up a thin piece of cloth, which I wrapped around my waist. I looked to Abdellah discreetly confirming I was doing the same thing he was; being attentive to his movements as much to understand how the space worked as to make sure I was appropriately responding its normative and bodily imperatives.

We walked through a dimly lit lounging area where men laid with their eyes closed, apparently asleep but – I thought – surely awake. The bathing area was composed of two large sections. A first one served as a vestibule of sorts, with toilets, showers, and sinks. One could brush his teeth there, washing his nose by inhaling and exhaling water, his chest vibrating with deep guttural sounds as he would spit out mucus. He would then open the tap and wash the whole sink with soap in an expert and economical gesture. The second section, where the bathing as such took place, was a large open space, covered in golden coloured tiles and lined with seating spaces punctuated by small sinks. A large cube-shaped island sat at the center of the room. A man would lay there, most likely on his belly, a loin cloth covering his buttocks, while the hammam employee in charge of handling the space would rub his back and massage him vigorously. This room extended into a smaller steam room. I noticed the man giving massages also handled a broom stick, at the end of which he had attached a squeegee, and a bucket of bleach. On his shoulder, I thought admiratively, rested the responsibility of servicing this clientele, both in keeping the space clean and responding to their personal needs. I found myself filled with a strange form of happiness; almost as if I was encountering something I remembered, but only vaguely.[78] The atmosphere was dense, it

[78] In fact, I did remember my grandmother showing me certain techniques of the body that I was re-encountering there, and which I had re-encountered since moving back to Paris after spending my adolescence in Canada.

enveloped me kindly, filling up my nose and lungs with thick air. Although my body was entirely bare, but for a loin cloth, I felt held.

"I like little nooks and corners like this," Abdellah said to me, as he guided me to a small corner hidden next to the entrance of the bath. "I like to be able to see without being immediately noticed."

I smiled and said, "Me too, this is a good spot."

We unpacked our cleaning supplies and arranged them around our respective sinks. We both had our *mhaka* to scrub the dead skin off our bodies. Abdellah took out a washcloth, and I took out my *luffah* (لوف), a dried plant of the Cucurbitaceae family, a gourd, which when dried can be used as an exfoliant sponge. I then took out my *mechta* – a round comb, also called Tazi brush – to comb my hair and exfoliate my scalp. We filled our respective sinks with hot water and, using small plastic bowls we had brought, I began to wash my body, as he did his.

Abdellah had insisted we walk around the different rooms, *it will be good for your thesis, no?* he asked and told me at the same time. Once we had sat back at our sinks, and while I was beginning to soap my *luffah* he raised his hand softly and said, as if remembering it, that we had to steam our bodies beforehand, to loosen the derma.

As we entered the sauna, a voice called out from behind me.

"*Akhwan*," brothers, it called out to us, "here, before you go in, take some of my black soap." I understood, from the crystal-clear Arabic this man was speaking that he was Sudanese. He told us to take as much as we wanted. As he offered to help me reach the middle of my back, he explained that the exfoliation would be much more effective if I applied a bit of grease – the soap – before entering the steam room.

"*Hada min Hlib*," the soap, he told me, was from Aleppo.

I thanked him for his generosity as I lathered soap on my body. Slightly bewildered, I felt that the sense of being held by the heat of the space was both a bodily sensation and an emotional one. The man's generosity had touched me profoundly and I shared my impression with Abdellah. He was not as phased as I was, evidently, but he nodded in agreement and said:

"Yes, they are good people, but this sort of generosity is the norm here."

The air in the steam room was thick, the vapour filled my nose, my mouth, my throat, and lungs. The warmth loosened my muscles immediately. The steam was thick enough to hide whoever was lying or sitting there. I could make out the vague shape of a man, in a corner, his eyes opened slowly – that is how I noticed him – and he nodded to greet us and, getting up ever so slowly, he eventually left.

Time, in the steam room, is as if suspended. The loosening of the muscles, the opening of the pores, the filling of the lungs with heat, is immediate. Abdellah completely reclined and rested his whole body against the tile, lying down entirely, vulnerable and restive. I cracked my neck and back, and, imitating him, I rested the back of my head against the tile, my whole body reclined as well. I am not sure how much time had passed when I opened my eyes and noticed that Abdellah had turned onto his belly, his head held in his hands, his arms extended and his elbows resting against the tile. He looked at me and asked if I was ready to go. I nodded and we got out.

The bathroom, which felt hot when we first entered it now felt almost cold. The bodies moving around us carried with them a cooler air and the fresh fragrance of cider and peppermint. One man entirely lathered in soap, a 6-foot-tall assemblage of foam, walked to the small antechamber to use one of the shower stalls there. Taking my cue from my surroundings, I began to imitate the men around us and, relinquishing any type of shame that one could associate to bathing in public, I

walked back to our sinks and began to scrub my body with my *mhaka*. A layer of dead skin accumulated progressively on the rugged glove; small pieces that I rinsed off with my plastic bowl and washed away toward the drain at the center of the room. The man who kept the place clean walked toward us, stopping a yard away and spraying some of his cleaning liquid where our soapy water was flowing, using the broom to push it toward the drain.

Abdellah, barely speaking, gestured to the floor in front of him.

“Sit at my feet,” he said. I shook my head instinctively, and he shook his in response, his hand stretched out and his eyes looking at the *luffah* in my right hand.

I sat at his feet, feeling a profound sense of inadequacy and inappropriateness. I had been reading his novels only a few days prior, his existence but the spectral shape of the novelist, a rhythm of sentences and plot, nothing more. But, in that moment, in this bathhouse, in the undergrounds of the Goutte d’Or in the 18th arrondissement of Paris, I was handing him my *luffah*. As I reflect on this particular feeling, I believe I was concerned by the way this could be read, by him, by the other patrons, by me – also. Abdellah had offered to go beyond the interview setting and gifted me with a form of transmission.

Not unlike the *cheminot* in the restaurant the previous day, Abdellah was being generous. Knowing that we had overstepped what a Review Ethics might consider to be an interview but that everything we did existed within the boundaries of a certain ethic of mutual respect and friendship, I accepted the offer and decided to open up to whatever this moment of transmission, of mentorship might reveal. Abdellah pulled on my limbs, cracking my joints, making my arms reach above his shoulders, pulling back. I gasped and he released. He then pushed me forward, away from him to reach for my back. As he did so, I noticed the man who had been holding his mop a moment before,

was now giving a man a massage, on the central ceramic island. The scene, I thought, was precisely like the one I was undergoing. Whatever feeling had held me until then released; public intimacy, bodies amongst bodies, a place that gives but barely takes. This is what Abdellah had wanted to share with me. I gestured to Abdellah to sit at my feet, as he had gestured to me, and proceeded to clean him with the same care he had just extended to me. I sensed, again, that we may have been conspicuous, ostensibly queer, perhaps. But, considering the feeling once more, I washed it away by pouring a bowl of hot water on my face.

[Figure 49. Hammam El Baraka, under foreclosure, on Rue de Timbouctou. Photo by Author.]

One man, across from our sinks, was indeed staring – and his gaze might have been the one that alerted me. However, he seemed to be staring through us rather than at us, his eyes looking into a space I could not see. Tears rolled down his cheeks, mingling with the water and sweat tracing lines down his forehead. His lips moved quickly in what I recognized to be a prayer. He brought his hands to his face and gently wiped away an invisible layer of dirt; his lips slightly apart mouthed

the word *Ameen*. I looked away realizing that, all too self-absorbed by the potential of being seen and judged, I had been the one staring, stepping into other people's vulnerable nakedness. Tears rolled down my cheeks too as I whispered *Astaghfirullah*. Abdellah, who had been rinsing the soap off his body, opened his eyes with a sigh of pleasure and, upon seeing my eyes, asked if I was still feeling good. I nodded and smiled. Almost as if to dispel any and all of my qualms, several of the men there walked up to Abdellah and asked him to scrub them too. He acquiesced quietly and, one after the other, they sat at his feet. As one was getting rubbed, another would arrive and reserve the next wash. The hammam employee, standing with his broomstick and his bucket, heckled Abdellah playfully.

"*Tu me voles mon boulot*," you're stealing my job, he said to Abdellah, who replied cheekily that he would gladly take over his position if offered to.

The hammam is not a quiet place. The locker room and the resting area are silent, as some men take small naps before going back in to continue their washings. And sections of the locker room light up with motion sensors and so remain bathed in darkness otherwise. But the shower space – the antechamber to the bathing room proper, with all the skins leading to the steam room – is loud and well lit. Men discuss geopolitical stakes, interspersed with comments about their wives, their mothers, or their sisters. Some of them yell out interventions from the shower stalls. All ask each other where they are from. A Moroccan meeting an Algerian will comment on on-going border disputes, on Morocco's normalization of diplomatic relations with Israel, on the corrupt military government in Algeria, or the repression of the Rifan *hirak* or, in a complimentary way, on the limited success of the 2019 Algerian *hirak*.[79] Often, whatever comment ends with a consensual call

[79] The *hirak* can be loosely translated as movement, in the sense of a relatively uncoordinated social movement. The root H-R-K signifies mobility, as in the movement of a group of people. During the French colonial occupation of Algeria and the French protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, the term *harka* designated highly mobile military

to peaceful relations, *we are all brothers,* one might say. *Hna chaa'b wahid maghribi ou ifriqi*. We are one people, Maghrebi and African.

[Figure 50. A man lifts a plastic bowl, readied to be poured over his body, a *mechta* and a bar of soap on a plate at his feet. The chain around his neck features the name of God. Sketch by Author.]

The more serious conversations have to do with these men's sons. Comments about the women all have facile misogynistic undertones. Their spectral presence in the space – underscored by their actual absence – serves as an icebreaker that leads to serious conversations. That is not to say that the misogyny is unimportant. It is, in fact, structuring the rhythm of conversations, like punctuation.

contingents of Muslim soldiers fighting under the French flag; then known as *auxiliaires* or as *tirailleurs*, the Algerian men who fought under French banners during the Algerian war of independence came to be known as *harkis*. A cognate term can today be found in the name of the Islamic Resistance Movement, *harakat almuqawama alislamiyat* commonly known as Hamas.

They – the women – are often invoked as part of jokes, the tone of which might be perceived as endearing, at other times as insulting. When they – the men in the bathroom – mention their sons, however, their voices are grave and sad. *Useless, good for nothing, bum, delinquent, unemployed. How will they marry, how will they provide for themselves and their families*. Many questions, which bring about no concrete answers, no consensual geopolitical statements. Palestine, after all, is easier to speak about; the grief is shared, the answers are clear. The man with his bucket and his broom speaks the loudest, moving between rooms, conveying to the men who could not hear what has been said, such as a good joke or an incisive political statement.

"Abdellah, does this place remind you of home?" I asked once we had sat back near our sinks.

"Home?"

"Morocco, back home. And home, as in before you left for France in the 1990s."

For me, this space was indeed one that "reminded" me of home. A home I did not know firsthand, one that I had inherited partially, through my grandparents, and their children, my father, who had reluctantly passed on a certain experience of being Algerian in France. I do not, however, source my "roots" exclusively through familial transmission. The café, the shop, the street, I told Abdellah, are perhaps more important. Small public places like these, like this hammam, are where I find ways of reinventing my personal filiation to exile. Abdellah had noticed how the man at the restaurant had opened up to us, how he had claimed me and had been touched by our encounter. Such encounters, I explained, are how I continue to inhabit exile, not as a burden or a wound – not only – but also as something sweet, like the fragrance of jasmine before the night sours the flower.

"Yes, it does remind me of home," Abdellah told me and explained that he had grown up in an impoverished district of an impoverished city called Salé (or Sla سلا), located across from Rabat,

on the right bank of the Bou Regreg River. Growing up, he narrated, his family had had limited amounts of water, as service was sporadic and unpredictable. He and his family would go to the hammam to bathe their whole bodies, once a week. The rest of the time they would simply do *wudu* – ritual purification before prayer – several times a day. I nodded knowingly. At the hammam, they would experience abundance (*al-kawthar* الكوثر)[80] splashing hot water over their bodies. *Like this*, he said as he emptied his plastic bowl towards me, lifting the bowl and stopping abruptly: the water continued the motion and washed off on my face.

"This," he explained, "is home."

I asked if he would like me to splash him in a similar way. He nodded and I filled my bowl with hot water and mimicked his movement.

"This," he repeated, "*is home*."

"I used to do this with Slimane," he recounted, referring to his lover,[81] the main protagonist of *Arab Melancholia*. "I remember one man, here, had stared at us the whole time we were washing each other. Perhaps the man could tell we were lovers and not simply friends. But there was no anger, no disgust in his gaze. I saw longing, perhaps envy, jealousy almost; something of a longing for what Slimane and I had: real care, real love, real understanding. Longing for something real."

In French, Abdellah used the words *véritable* and *vrai* to describe his and Slimane's relationship, to convey not only reality but *truth*. As hours passed, Abdellah asked me to say more about myself.

[80] Most of the words I include in more than one language were said in that language – in French or in Arabic. In this case, Abdellah used both the French and the Arabic terms, and asked if I knew the term, which I indeed know. In doing so, I believe he was situating me and my familiarity with the culture and language. He also shared the word because of its beauty; Kawthar is a beautiful name and a concept that has cultural, spiritual, and religious importance. To use it is in the way he did signals something akin to divine bliss.

[81] Again, to clarify, Abdellah gave me the full legal name of his lover during our conversations, but I use the name that he gave him when he wrote *Arab Melancholia*.

Where I had grown up, who my father was, my mother, my life in Paris. I told him more than I would like to recount here, as a gesture of trust and vulnerability. He had been more *true* to the interaction than I had and I felt compelled to respond in currency. We spoke about coming out as gay to our families. For him, it had occurred through his books. His mother, he told me, did not understand why he wrote and why he shared, in a fictionalized mode, elements of his family's history.

"She understood, and forgave me, before she died, and I forgave her, too," he told me.

I nodded to indicate I understood, but I recognized in his statement the staging of a cycle of conflict and forgiveness that many in his generation, in North Africa and in the diaspora, have had to their parents. It reminded me of my own family, and others like mine. I replied that for me there was no need to share that with my family: I did not seek their compassion, rejection or understanding.

"But," he replied, with the weight of being twenty years my elder, "you should tell them, your father may want to understand you better."

We went back and forth, between our sinks, the steam room, the showers, and the long chairs to lie down and rest in cooler air, before starting the cycle once more. As the hours passed, we spoke less and less. Resting our eyes, gently gesturing to the steam room or the showers. We began to end our cleaning cycles by washing our heads. Abdellah took my *mechta* and used it to comb my hair, using it to scrub and exfoliate my scalp. I returned the favour and massaged his shaved head with my knuckles. One last man came to ask for a massage. I noticed his hands and feet were entirely callused, the steam and heat staining them with white. The man sat and underwent Abdellah's skilled scrub. He cried silently when Abdellah pulled his arms up and stretched out his chest.

"You repair the bodies of workers," I said, as a matter of fact.

“*Shweya*, *juste le peu que je peux*” Abdellah replied, a bit, only as much as he could provide.

The experience of going to the hammam is as intense as it is also generative of release: it is a sensorial, corporeal, affective, and mnemonic experience. Being there with Abdellah has taught me much. This place has entered my own personal realm of exiled existence, between and betwixt France and Algeria, both and neither. I inhabit that space on a personal mode as well as a methodological one; it is as much part of my intimate narrative as it is part of my fieldwork. This experiential thickness points to an experience shared by all the men there. It is a place to replenish one’s soul, as Abdellah put it. Indeed, he described the neighbourhood and his immersion in the steady crowd of North African men along the same lines as what the hammam effectively provides: a sense of togetherness, an ephemeral moment of sensual and sensory intimacy, an effective healing of the body. The men who come here engage in a completely naked, vulnerable moment of collective intimacy, to speak about politics, about their families, about their workplace, and in the process scrub dirt and calluses off their tired limbs, stretching their muscles, resting their backs against the hot tiles of the hammam.

As we got dressed silently in the locker room, I noticed two young men exchanging words in French, English, and Algerian darija. Their large bodies that seemed both carved in stone and incredibly soft were unlike the young men in France, I thought, and the few words I caught in English suggested they might be from the diaspora in the United States. I noticed their gestures of tenderness for one another and looked away. As I got dressed, I could feel my clothes had become much heavier than when I had first taken them off. Abdellah was also visibly worn out.

“Not too tired?” he asked, laughing.

The man who had given us our keys and towels looked at us get dressed, seated on a lazy chair, picking at his nails or, alternatively, at the buttons of his paisley patterned shirt. He winked and nodded as I chucked the towels and loincloths in a laundry basket. One after the other, Abdellah and I thanked him, as he, in turn, brought his hand to his chest, lowering his gaze and returning the thanks to us.

Conclusion

Inquiring into affective topography involves one's relationship to place and, as such, is a process of inquiry into an already abstracted space, yet real; real in that it is layered with meaning. The affective dimension of a topographical space renders places as already altered, mediated phenomena. Because of that level of remoteness from what one might be tempted to call the pre-semantic materiality of space, or perhaps thanks to it, staging unstructured interviews within topography – in the street – appears as an ideal mode for understanding how matter and meaning, infrastructure and semiosis, give urban spaces their shape, their texture, their scope and scape; or what Rich, Rizzuto, and Zieger (2023) have framed as the "aesthetic life of infrastructure."

Amnesia, Deluxe, and Abdellah all offered distinct but adjacent entry points in *the* affective topography of the 18th arrondissement. There are, of course, significant differences that I do not wish to flatten or ignore; difference in class, race, and gender, that distinguish them from each other and from the street in which they find inspiration, refuge, and potential. Indeed, Amnesia was granted access to the world through whiteness along with bourgeois femininity. Yet both of these modalities for privileged access to citizenship constitute an inheritance that Amnesia works against, in their artistic practice and in their practices of self-making, in particular through the re-fashioning of their gender expression and the appropriation of abject, subaltern motifs in their drag performances. This work does not go unnoticed, and sometimes becomes the object of heckling,

when Arab men call out to them and attempt to re-inscribe Amnesia, however momentarily, in a certain ambivalent heterosexual relationality. Deluxe and Abdellah, albeit with a certain self-awareness, unequivocally benefit from this type of public space; but unlike Amnesia's interface with the public norms of sexual desire, their existence as racialized men limit their access to pleasure and leisure elsewhere in the city. There is a tangibly unequal distribution of leisure and pleasure – both of which, arguably, city-dwellers seek – that draws a social, racial, and gendered map of the city; and this, among the other elements present in this dissertation, is affective topography.

These differences are important but restating them as such appears as ineffective. Not only am I concerned it might be of no significant use, I also worry that such rehearsed statements participate in the production of a sterile political environment of recognition, tolerance, and appeasement. It feels – or, *I feel* – as though stating them, almost ritualistically, brings about no generative political outcome. No word, no act, no image that stirs the collective renewal of world-making practice. Why? Answering that question, although a trivial question, might be more interesting than rehearsing an already well-documented backlog of racist and sexist inequality. Why is this ritual of anthropological and political critique ineffective?

I would wager that the emergence of critical discourse *within* rather than against neoliberal ethos and the production of inclusive spaces has blurred lines such that once abject subject-positions have been endowed with a pass toward citizenship. This inclusion is likely to be ephemeral. But it nonetheless implicates those who might have been potential subverters of political order into actors of the production of citizenship equipment. Indeed, the *tiers-lieu* sociocultural and business model is presented as a panacea to French social problems. And, in the 18th arrondissement especially but that is also true for the rest of France, the contemporary "multidisciplinary cabaret" emerged

alongside formal experimentations within the urban design process and the political volition to use institutionalized *tiers-lieux* as spaces for hybridity and prefiguring cosmopolitan citizenship.

Amnesia, Deluxe, and Abdellah all have an ambivalent relation to emergent queer places. The ambivalence surely erupts from their importance for contemporary queer subject formation. They provide ephemeral locales in which one can present, play, bend, and re-present oneself and what it means for one to be queer. However, they also remain places of normativity that regulate and produce coherent collective identities. In that sense, Abdellah can see them as overwhelmingly white and repudiate them as such while also moving through the cut-throat world of French editors successfully; Amnesia can consider that the Machine of the Moulin Rouge's Lesbian monthly rave is a must *pour toute lesbienne qui se respecte* while having never passed the ritual; and Deluxe will attend these venues only when friends of his, in particular cabaret artists, are featured while his life as a gay Arab man is structured around the queer kinship he has inherited from his time working as a public health student in street encampments.

The ambiguity here is not only in the fact that my interlocutors partake and enjoy some of the cultural and social equipment that urban renewal in the 18th arrondissement has yielded. Their moral imperatives and political commitments do not supersede the desire to live out a pleasant life in the city. However, their experience of the arrondissement and particularly its North-African centrality in the Goutte d'Or goes against some of the basic representations that city experts deploy in their vision of *mixité*. While the depiction of Black and Arab communities as inherently homophobic and sexist abound both in media representations and experts' own imaginaries of difference, all three interlocutors here tell us: one, that it is much more complex than a cultural trait, and, two, that there is perhaps no better place to be queer than spaces that are already understood as abnormal, abject, extraordinary, and excessive. The 18^{e} functions as a mixed space

in which queer people can craft a life for themselves because it is always-already composed of multiple, competing and complimentary, normative imperatives. And so, my interlocutors persist in subverting the very binaries through which citizenship is being constructed. That is, despite their clear implication in the production of contemporary citizenship along the lines of sexual tolerance, they show that their queer affects and the topographies they conjure by living in fraught territory reveals the chimera of such binaries.

Chapter 5: Archives of Abjection and Desire

For now, I am haunted by ghosts: they are trying to tell me what is missing.

Missing from the city and from the photograph.

Missing from stories of structure, of interest, of history.

Missing in the shadows of photographic negatives and in the pauses between spoken words.

There is power and promise in the incompleteness of the archive, with and among the ghosts of "maybe not there."

Maura Finkelstein, *The Archive of Loss* (page 20)

Introduction

In the last chapter of this dissertation, I turn to the archive for two distinct but related reasons. For one, I continue to investigate the relations between abjection and desire, and the political rationalities and technologies that were used to regulate desire, render Paris a desirable city, make the desirable abject available and legible. This drew me towards questions of sex work regulation in the decades preceding the French state's shift to a sex work "abolitionist" stance. The second reason for this historical angle is as follows: if we can argue that contemporary attitudes toward queerness have become less antagonistic than they once were, to the degree that queer cultural production is being explicitly sought out to revalorize and revitalize once-abject urban space, then surely something *about queerness* must have been lost in the process, put to the side. Indeed, the queer assemblage in which minor forms and norms are used as a fuel for dynamic urban policy involves both de-territorialization – in the form of lines of flight, a "becoming-minor" of the urban design process – and re-territorialization – the sedimentation of identity categories, normalization.

As queer opens up possibilities for urban policy, urban policy brings queer into the fold of legitimate citizenship. It is a moment not of abolition of the image of abjection, but of its reformulation. With that, I believe, comes a loss, an absence, a spectral presence that once existed in the "darkness," which is lost as it is brought within the "luminous" third space. This loss, if my assessment is correct, is not only the loss of certain queer affects, which have been evacuated, relegated to the space of freakishness and perversion, which – despite contemporary forms of inclusion – continue to be operative categories for organizing what is appropriate and what is unacceptable. Loss is also the loss of a certain critical acumen, a certain subversive ethos that came, undoubtedly, with the experience of extreme patterns of exclusion, which through this reformulation, may come to lose some of its potency.

I thus turn to the archive with an ambivalent yearning: I look for a coherent and disruptive queer subjectivity, but I am also disquieted by the possibility of what I may find there, whether or not my endeavour is successful. What is more, I may, in my hermeneutic gesture of retrieval, engage in an equally troubling activity: that of typology, taxonomy… taxidermy. I am, in many ways, both interested and wary of reproducing the artistic act of typifying the figure of an anonymous person for aesthetic and political purposes. Some of the methodological questions that accompany my inquiry into queer memory are, as follows: What does the archive disclose and withhold? What impulses for retrieval may be critically interrogated, here? Indeed, what does it mean to desire the archive? What forms does this ambivalence between desire and abjection take within the archive?

My engagement with archives is twofold and involves archives as repositories of materials – the archival documents I accessed in designated institutions such as the Paris Archive or the Bibliothèque nationale de France – and the archive as authoritative and authorizing discourse that scaffolds the way collective memory is constructed, (re-)formulated, and experienced. This

involves archives that may be held in institutions, archives circulated informally online or in makeshift book markets, and embodied archives (or lack thereof) that I attempted to articulate through interlocution.

At the end of our drift along the boulevard de Rochechouart and the boulevard de la Chapelle, Amnesia conveyed that they longed for a queer archive. The endeavour, as they formulated it, would be less about retrieving a coherent image about the past but, rather, to better understand who they were, how they had come to be the way they were. There was, in Amnesia's longing, something resolutely relational. Their own lesbian identity Amnesia had constructed in relation to other people, specific places and the social forms that people them. That is, with other lesbians in Paris, with whom they evidently form a community and sometimes kinship assemblages (*chosen families*), but also unknown others, who, despite being apparently lost and irretrievable, had nonetheless played a crucial role in their self-formation as a lesbian. These historical figures, it seemed, inhabit Amnesia's subject position; they are spectral, only obliquely available for interlocution, but they are there.

"It's important to work on the archive," they said when I shared some of the archival fieldwork I was envisaging. "It raises certain questions, like what is a queer archive? What are the implications that we have a history that doesn't go through the family – as opposed to immigrant or racialized communities – what does it mean that we have to go search on our own to find out about the history of lesbians, for instance?"

Amnesia's own unease and longing for a distinctly queer and coherent transmission of memory can be interpreted in line with David Scott's reading of Pierre Nora's work on *lieux de mémoire*. If there are only places of memorialization, which signal to the viewer who and what matters – and what this memorial value means – if such places are always incomplete orientating devices that

crystallize and secrete an incomplete and unsatisfactory product, it is because memory has, as Scott writes, "been systematically disorganized and reorganized by modern powers" (xi). There is a lack of "mnemotechnics" that is consequential for all forms of memory today; and this is true for the memorialization and transmission of queer histories. The contrast that Amnesia used to frame their yearning, which pit immigrant or racial mnemotechnics (*at least immigrants have parents to ask questions to*) errs in its assumption that Black and Arab French citizens – and Black and Arab citizens of the Caribbean and Africa in their own lived contexts – are afforded some sort of postcolonial mnemonic comfort. As if the existence of familial and cultural kinship made the palliative practices to remediate the absence of comprehensive mnemotechnics any less labour-intensive.

Although the *dérive* with Abdellah can be read against Amnesia's understanding of cultural transmission and collective memory among immigrants, I would still like to investigate this feeling that Amnesia shared with me. While Abdellah (along with the man in the restaurant and the men of the hammam) show how what we often consider as passed on through the family may in fact take place randomly through social relationality experienced in the street and semi-public settings, I want to consider how Amnesia's misgiving is illustrative of a process taking place in France. As colonial history and its counter-memories have incrementally taken more public place in recent decades, this has somehow contributed to effacing the political work undertaken largely outside of family structures (see Lévy-Vroelant, 2022; more generally, Sayad, 1999) to produce a social configuration sufficient for a collective memory of immigrant struggles to emerge in France.

I believe the yearning Amnesia conveyed to me is important particularly if we are to understand that "memory is at once conserving and a condition of criticism, revision, and change" (Scott, 2008: xiv). In their ambivalent desire for a queer memory, they also opened up the possibility for their

own critique. As part of this consideration for the history and memory and queerness in the 18th arrondissement of Paris, I also want to foreground the importance of space as a condition for history and memory. I am thinking, in particular, of events and social environments that were (or are) spatialized yet not commemorated, such as the brothels that were once located in Rue de la Charbonnière and Boulevard de La Chapelle, or the "torture cellars" on Rue de La Goutte d'Or that were used by Paris Police and *harki* auxiliaries during the Algerian revolution.[82] That such events took place there is significant, but what draws my attention is the efforts that went into erasing their spatial traces. I am further interested in what a state archive might have retained. I would like to thus propose something of an archeology of queer memory by focusing on three distinct archival sites and by investigating the idioms of memory that animated my archival work and, simultaneously, emerged from my engagement with the archive.

As Maurice Halbwachs argues in *La mémoire collective*, individual and collective memory are intertwined and rely on the (re-)production of social relations and spatial configurations that can receive and generate memory. As far as cultural formations are concerned, the emergence of collective memory is the process by which individuals acquire a sense of history, of a personal narrative grounded in a collective experience of time and place. Place is crucial to this formation, either in the maintenance of "environments of memory" composed of sociospatial traces that hint and fragmentedly cohere into a memory or in the production of small tokens of memorialization such as plaques. My engagement with the archive is in a sense a reaction to the intangibility of this history when it comes to sexual and gender minorities; however, considering one's "environment

[82] The official recognition and commemoration of the crimes committed in Paris during the Algerian revolution notwithstanding, grassroots organizations and historians have worked to make this history public and available for collective memorialization. Specifically, Jean-Luc Einaudi published *La bataille de Paris* in 1991 and again in 2001 after obtaining authorization to access the Archives de France. The "torture cellars" were also documented in a clandestine documentary, *Octobre à Paris*, directed by Jacques Panijel after the 17 October massacre. See Renouard and Saint-Saëns, 2000). For a firsthand account of that spatial memory, see Anonyme, 2001.

of memory” through absence or lack of tangible traces is, as such, an environment of memory. And I now wonder if I’ve come to understand the 18th arrondissement as a locale of queer history through my engagements with the archive or if I knew this all along; were there hints that I saw and absorbed without accounting them in a deliberate work of perception? If that is the case, then I hope that the following text can be read as a contribution to expanding and nourishing the “spatial framework” (*cadres spatiaux*) of queer memory in the 18th arrondissement of Paris.

This endeavour appears bound to fail; but such a failure may be salutary. Although the following pages may indeed contribute to a larger, collective labour of mnemotechnics, it is more certain that this labour – mine and others’ – will necessarily birth an inchoate memorialization. But this inchoate quale is perhaps an opening, to renew with a tradition that refuses coherence, to reignite forms of criticism that break with contemporary consensus. A refusal that echoes Moten and Harney’s provocative quip: *we cannot be represented*.

Idioms of memory

In an article presenting and reflecting on his work assembling the Marcus Garvey archive, anthropologist David Scott frames his work in that particular moment of archival production as an “*archeology* of black memory.” For him, he explains, “[…] there was an activity of thinking and imagination that opened out vast possibilities not just of memory but of counter-memory: the moral idiom and semiotic registers of remembering against the grain of the history of New World black deracination, subjection, and exclusion” (Scott, 2008: vi). The production of an archive thus involved a thinking *against the grain* of a specific historical process and its narrativization. To tell another story, through the construction of the Marcus Garvey archive, was indeed a conjuring of “the moral idioms and semiotic registers of remembering,” as a mode for re-presenting an-other narrative. I agree with Scott in his assessment that such work involves “[…] a relation between the

idea of an archive, the modalities of memory, the problem of a tradition, and practices of criticism" (Scott, 2008: vi).

If we have constituted a critical tradition of queer subversion, and take this tradition to be true, then what would it mean to engage this tradition critically? What modalities for memory does such a framing of the historical question of queerness allow, or conversely, foreclose? Concretely, I am interested in attempting to remember things that may have been forgotten.

Continuing on this line of thought, Scott explains that "One way of approaching criticism is to think of it as a dimension of a community's mode of remembering, an exercise, literally and metaphorically, of re-membering, of putting back together aspects of our common life so as to make visible what has been obscured, what has been excluded, what has been forgotten." Dispelling critiques that such an approach would necessarily be "antiquarian," or statically situating critique in the past, Scott argues that such memory-work is always a contemporary re-inscription of a "memory-in-the-present." He writes at length that "the exercise of recovery of the past is always at once an exercise in its re-description, an exercise in arguing with the past, negotiating it, a persistent exercise in the questioning and repositioning of the assumptions that are taken to constitute that common life" (Scott, 2008: vi).

"Memory seems to me," Scott writes, "the distinctive temporal idiom of tradition." But what of this idiom when the sense of tradition itself is disjointed? What if the crucial component of the formation and transmission of memory, and byway of transmission the re-evaluation and re-formulation of critique, is only transmitted surreptitiously? In other words, the work of "re-membering […] aspects of our common life" that are, even to their contemporaries, only obliquely available, implicates us in a complex ethical web of refusal and misrepresentation.

Literary critique José Munoz, at the height of the AIDS epidemic in the United States, wrote: "Queerness is often transmitted covertly" (Muñoz, 1996: 6). No clear frames of transmission; only liminal forms of kinship that work through a forgetting of what has been forgotten and why. "Instead of being clearly available as visible evidence," he continues, "queerness has instead existed as innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances that are meant to be interacted with by those within its epistemological sphere—while evaporating at the touch of those who would eliminate queer possibility" (Muñoz, 1996: 6).

Muñoz's description of queer memory is evocative. While it can be read with a certain melancholy – the time of the writing – it also signals modalities of transmission that are protectively oblique. Queerness, in Muñoz's writing, is accessible specifically through ephemera. "Evidence's limit becomes clearly visible," he writes, "when we attempt to describe and imagine contemporary identities that do not fit into a single pre-established archive of evidence" (Muñoz, 1996: 11). Taking Muñoz further, I would argue that the work of investigating queer ephemera is complicated by the existence of pre-established, partial, and serialized archives, such as State and police archives I consult in this chapter, photography and paintings, all of which are inhabited by queer ephemera.

Linking ephemera to memory and performance, Muñoz explains that ephemera is "all those things that remain after a performance, a kind of evidence of what has transpired but certainly not the thing itself" (Muñoz, 1996: 10). Thinking with Raymond Williams, to consider queerness as a structure of feeling, Muñoz writes that ephemera "includes traces of lived experience and performances of lived experience, maintain experiential politics and urgencies long after these structures of feeling have been lived" (Muñoz, 1996: 10-11). These traces are the aesthetic and affective elements that constitute queerness as "a shared structure of feeling that encompasses

same-sex desire and other minoritarian sexualities but also holds other dissident affective relationships to different aspects of the sex/gender system" (Muñoz, 1996: 11).

Rather than claim that queer people or cultures as such have an a priori relationship to ephemera and memory, I build on Muñoz's argument to call attention to a mode of inquiry into memory that necessarily centers an abjected subject position. Taken up as a practice of queer critique, of critique situated within and engaging with queer theory, I am interested in locating queer abjection within the archive of hygienism and policing, and the archive of visual representations of queer sexuality in the 18th arrondissement. I inquire specifically into these two modes of archival representation because they involve distinct – agonistic and adjacent – forms of queer ephemera, highly mediated by the gaze of the painter, the photographer, the surveillant agent, the police officer.

Thinking with Sedgwick (1990), I am interested in the way the "closet" continues to assert power over how queer memory is formulated, namely that elements of what might constitute it as such remain outside the scope of collective memory. Despite the existence of public forms of queerness, a subverbal latency continues to impregnate queer possibility: not everything is said, not everything is acted upon, not everything that is queer may exist despite contemporary shifts in institutional homophobia, contemporary queer cultural programming, the institutional uses of urbanistic ephemera and informality, territorial diagnostics and other expert interventions into abjected urban space. I take up queer ephemera in the archive to dwell on what remains abjected despite having been brought to bear light on prefiguring a new Paris.

In Search of Predecessors

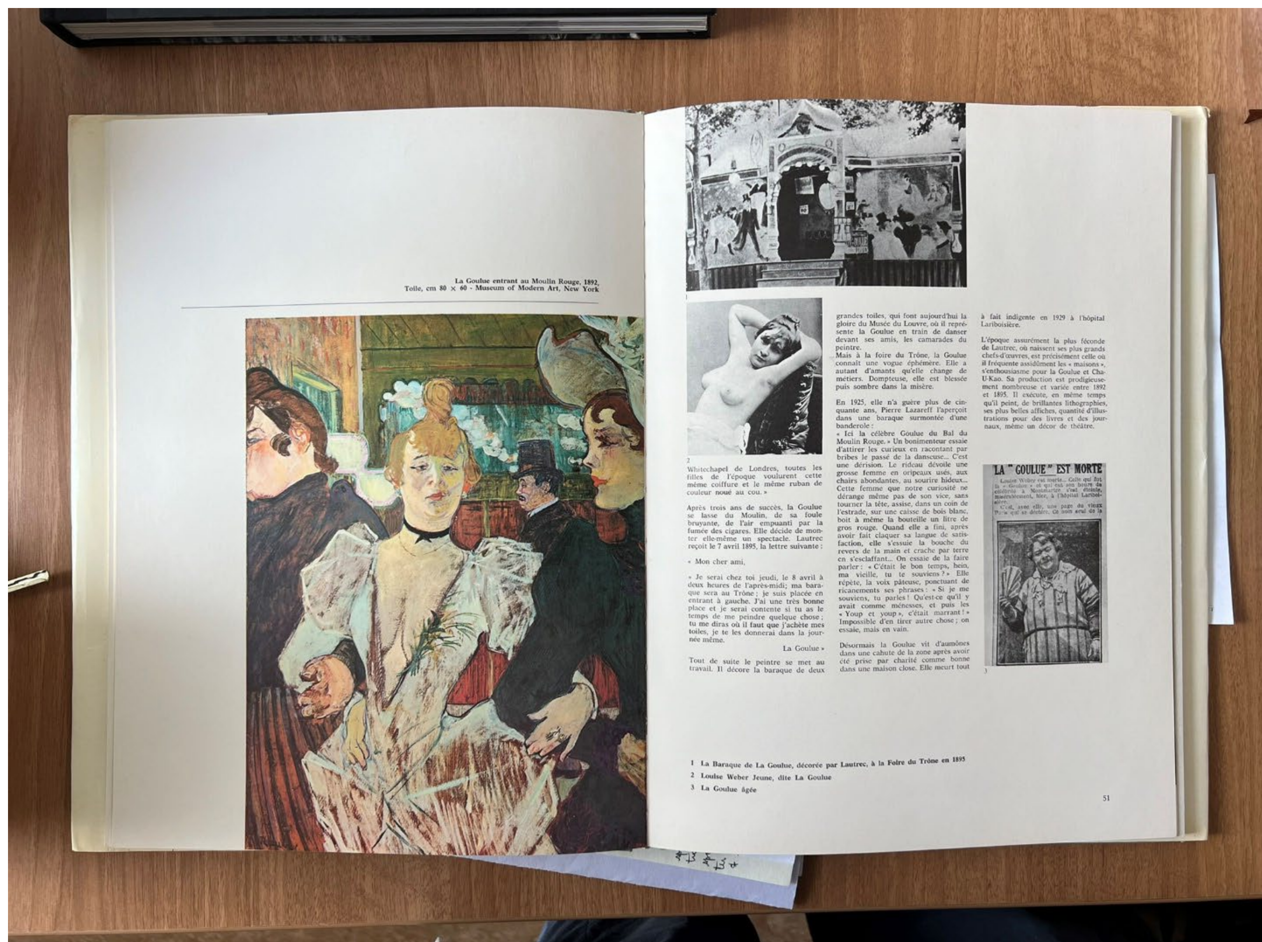
Taking Amnesia's statement seriously, one is tempted to look into the past to retrieve a coherent body, a coherent subjectivity that would have explicative value in the present. "Wayward lives and

beautiful experiments," to think with Saidiya Hartman, that, once identified as such, might assist us in making sense of the innumerable archival traces that inform our contemporary modes of self-fashioning. This, as I understand it, is what motivated Amnesia when they conveyed to me their sense of aphasiac nostalgia. This would be an exercise in localizing in time and space the lives that today have taken the form of archival traces, traces that inform our *habitus-as-memory*: Amnesia's longing for an archive, a yearning not merely for historical narrative but also for the retrieval of lives past, is such a habitus; the trace, there, appears as an absence, yet it appears nonetheless.

Louise Weber is one such subject, apparently there, ready, complete, documented and easily retrievable from France's cultural archive. Louise Weber is known for her performances at the Moulin Rouge, featured in Toulouse-Lautrec's canvas paintings and commercial lithographs. Louise Weber dite *La Goulue* was born in Clichy in 1866 to a Jewish Alsatian family. She worked as a laundress and a model for photographers and painters. She came to enter the archive as a dancer, participating in small public balls in Paris's northern *banlieue*, and featured in a rubric written by Charles Desteuque, which promoted so-called *demi-mondaine*, women considered to inhabit an intermediary status between the sex worker and the *maîtresse*, what we might refer to today as an escort.

She is most renowned for her performances at the Moulin Rouge, dancing the *can-can* and the *chahut*, two dances that involved moves displaying the *culotte fendue* under the dress. The dance, which was performed for an audience largely made of men nonetheless captured an irreverent and oppositional display of sexuality, which she performed in front of Paris's most well-to-do patrons, including aristocrats and royals from all over Europe. Louise Weber's everyday life outside of the spectacle was not memorialized with the same diligence as her performances. Such an opacity is heuristic: Louise Weber likely lived between the immediate *banlieue* of Paris, the semi-rural

extension of northern Montmartre known as the *maquis*, the urbanized boulevards of the 18th arrondissement's south, and the Zone. In effect, her life – retrievable as an over-exposed performer and an obliquely available lower-class Parisian – illustrates the dynamic relationship between a desirable and an abject Paris. Her archival trace conveys the relations between the *topos* of the cabaret – a space that is surveyed, regulated, made available for the phantasms and fantasies of both regular Parisians and Europe's richest men – and the Zone, the surrounds of this architecture of pleasure, a place of abjection and improvisation, which, in fact, was almost entirely demolished and repurposed during and following the Second World War and the German occupation of Paris.



La Goulue entrant au Moulin Rouge, 1892,
Toile, cm 80 × 60 - Museum of Modern Art, New York

1

2

Whitechapel de Londres, toutes les filles de l'époque voulurent cette même coiffure et le même ruban de couleur noué au cou. »

Après trois ans de succès, la Goulue se lasse du Moulin, de sa foule bruyante, de l'air empuanti par la fumée des cigares. Elle décide de monter elle-même un spectacle. Lautrec reçoit le 7 avril 1895, la lettre suivante :

« Mon cher ami,

« Je serai chez toi jeudi, le 8 avril à deux heures de l'après-midi; ma baraque sera au Trône ; je suis placée en entrant à gauche. J'ai une très bonne place et je serai contente si tu as le temps de me peindre quelque chose ; tu me diras où il faut que j'achète mes toiles, je te les donnerai dans la journée même.

La Goulue »

Tout de suite le peintre se met au travail. Il décore la baraque de deux grandes toiles, qui font aujourd'hui la gloire du Musée du Louvre, où il représente la Goulue en train de danser devant ses amis, les camarades du peintre.
Mais à la foire du Trône, la Goulue connaît une vogue éphémère. Elle a autant d'amants qu'elle change de métiers. Dompteuse, elle est blessée puis sombre dans la misère.

En 1925, elle n'a guère plus de cinquante ans, Pierre Lazareff l'aperçoit dans une baraque surmontée d'une banderole :
« Ici la célèbre Goulue du Bal du Moulin Rouge. » Un bonimenteur essaie d'attirer les curieux en racontant par bribes le passé de la danseuse... C'est une dérision. Le rideau dévoile une grosse femme en oripeaux usés, aux chairs abondantes, au sourire hideux... Cette femme que notre curiosité ne dérange même pas de son vice, sans tourner la tête, assise, dans un coin de l'estrade, sur une caisse de bois blanc, boit à même la bouteille un litre de gros rouge. Quand elle a fini, après avoir fait claquer sa langue de satisfaction, elle s'essuie la bouche du revers de la main et crache par terre en s'esclaffant... On essaie de la faire parler : « C'était le bon temps, hein, ma vieille, tu te souviens ? » Elle répète, la voix pâteuse, ponctuant de ricanements ses phrases : « Si je me souviens, tu parles ! Qu'est-ce qu'il y avait comme ménesses, et puis les « Youp et youp », c'était marrant ! » Impossible d'en tirer autre chose ; on essaie, mais en vain.

Désormais la Goulue vit d'aumônes dans une cahute de la zone après avoir été prise par charité comme bonne dans une maison close. Elle meurt tout à fait indigente en 1929 à l'hôpital Lariboisière.

L'époque assurément la plus féconde de Lautrec, où naissent ses plus grands chefs-d'œuvres, est précisément celle où il fréquente assidûment les « maisons », s'enthousiasme pour la Goulue et Cha-U-Kao. Sa production est prodigieusement nombreuse et variée entre 1892 et 1895. Il exécute, en même temps qu'il peint, de brillantes lithographies, ses plus belles affiches, quantité d'illustrations pour des livres et des journaux, même un décor de théâtre.

3

1 La Baraque de La Goulue, décorée par Lautrec, à la Foire du Trône en 1895
2 Louise Weber Jeune, dite La Goulue
3 La Goulue âgée

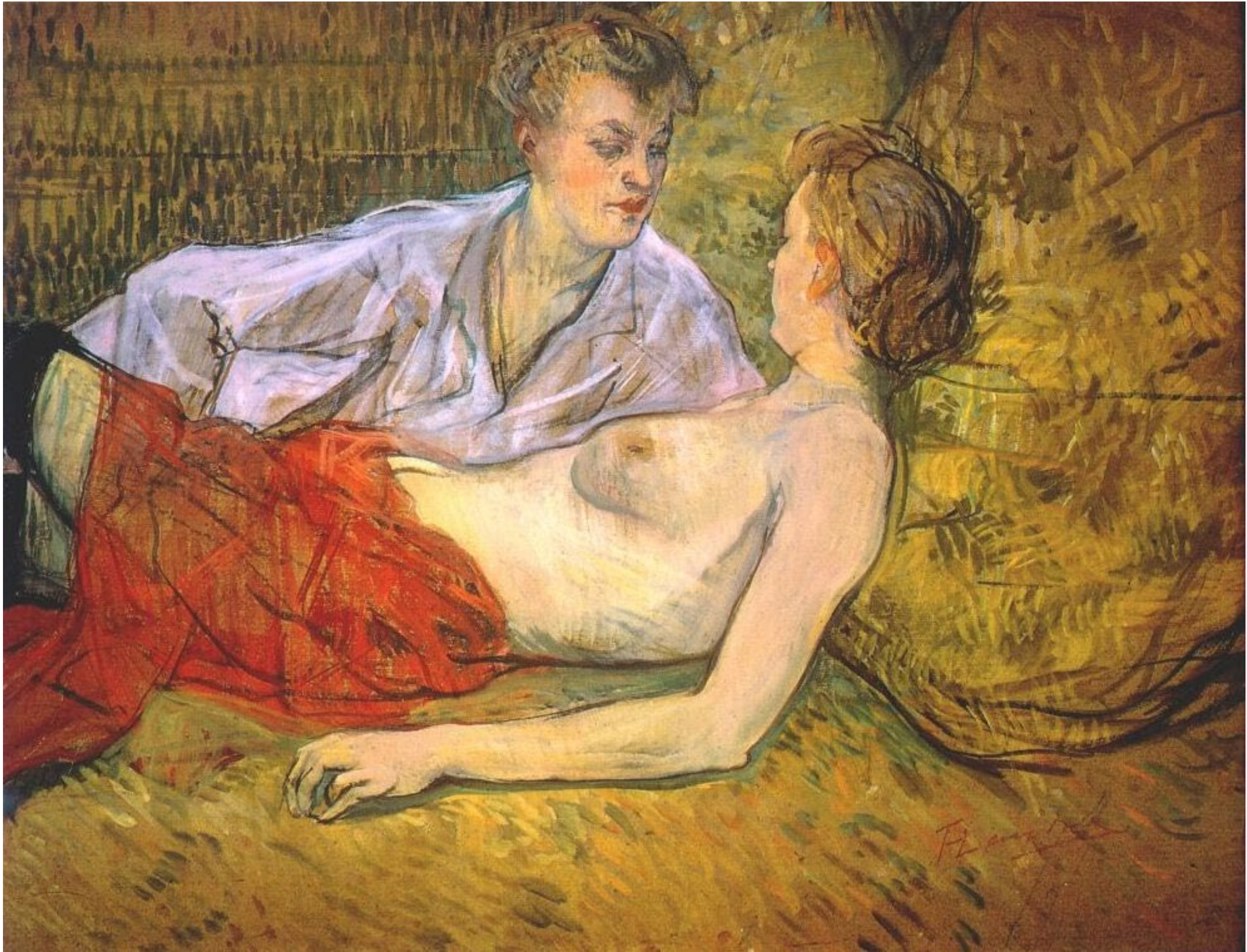
51

[Figure 51. Entry on Louise Weber dite *La Goulue*, one of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's main subjects, in *Toulouse-Lautrec* by Huisman and Dortu (1974) Milano, Italy: Fratelli Fabbri Editori. Photo by Author.]

The last visual record of her existence is a short-film made by Georges Lacombe in 1928. In it, Louise Weber appears aged and ill. She would later die, in 1929, in Lariboisière Hospital, located between Barbès and the Gare du Nord from a brain hemorrhage related to alcoholism. Since February 2021, a garden in Montmartre, formerly known as *square de la rue Burq*, bears her name after a deliberation at the Paris municipal council.

Unarguably, Louise Weber impressed her personality and corporeality onto the Parisian art milieu and its vanguardist epicenter in Montmartre. In fact, it is through her modeling activities that she came to meet one of Montmartre's key postimpressionist painters, one who, despite his short life, would produce the lasting aesthetic of *Belle Époque* Montmartre and Art nouveau writ large: Toulouse-Lautrec.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was a small man, believed to have pycnodysostosis, a genetic illness affecting the growth of his bones. A misfit among his aristocratic family in the South-West of France, he moved to Paris and, living in the Montmartre neighbourhood in the 18th arrondissement, began to frequent cabarets and brothels. Perhaps due to his physical difference, he found among sex workers an affinity, which they reciprocated in turn. He is one of the first painters to represent sex workers as such, as the women working in the sexual industry, rather than as models for other – hagiographic or Hellenistic – forms of conventional representations of women at the time.



[Figure 52. “Les Deux Amies,” 1895. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Source: Stiftung Sammlung E.G. Bührle (Fair Use).]

I note his physical difference because the paintings convey a perspective from a low angle, a *contre-plongé* that puts the subjects of the paintings on a metaphorical pedestal. Seen from below, the women are imposing, suggesting an elegiac – or to put it more mildly, an admirative – gaze on part of the painter. There is, in his depictions of sex workers’ intimacy, an absence of sensationalism, which goes beyond voyeurism. The series commissioned and delivered in the 1890s, specifically in 1894 and 1895, “Au lit” and “Les Deux Amies” are particularly illustrative of this quality in Toulouse-Lautrec’s work. Indeed, through these paintings he was able to convey forms of intimacy

that escaped the gaze of sex work clients. Significantly, he depicted lesbian intimacies that broke with the romantic and Hellenistic cannon of Sapphic representations. This disposition would later be taken up by Swedish photographer Christer Strömholm.

Lautrec's work, however, could still be considered as falling within a genre of pornography. That is, if we consider pornography not as the production or consumption of sexual materials but as the putting into writing (*graphein*) of sex (*pornê*), and in this case into non-sensational visual form. This understanding of pornography as a form of ethnographic undertaking dates back to the work of Nicolas-Edme Restif de la Bretonne, who, as early as the 1760s, proposed to document the activities of sex workers toward their regulation. Depicting the lives of sex workers, in the case of Restif, was a project orientated toward the establishment of what would become the so-called "French System," a legal system of sex work *réglementarisme* designed to seclude sex work from public space yet leave it wholly available for consumption. As Paul B. Preciado argues (2015), this project was envisaged and later implemented as a mode for both social control and spatial organisation: a form of "prophylactic architecture," which Preciado argues fed into modern pornotopia (2019).

Although the work of Toulouse-Lautrec does not reproduce the *pornognomonie* ("a rule for the spaces of vice"), his work is immediately grounded in the heterotopia of the Parisian *réglementariste* brothel: a space of prophylactic regulation and sexual pleasure, a utopia based on "a new European narrative that establishes the modern relationship between power and pleasure, norm and sex, violence and sexuality" (Preciado, 2015). Representations of such prophylactic and policing practices appear in the painter's work, such as "L'inspection médicale," which shows two women, half-naked, waiting in line for their bi-weekly gynecological examination, after which, if there are deemed not to be infected with syphilis, they may return to work. The painting itself is

striking in its reversal of the colour gradient used in “Les Deux Amies.” While the latter features a cold environment, at the center of which lie two subjects in warmer tones, the former places the cold tones of the women’s bodies against the red velvet of the examination space. A reversal that arguably suggests distinct modes of treating that space: one which considers the brothel itself as the utopian place of violence and sexuality, another that conveys the centrality of the women outside the gaze of the client, the doctor, the police officer.

[Figure 53. “L’inspection médicale,” 1894. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Source: National Gallery of Arts, Washington, DC (Fair Use).]

Polis and Police Logs

The Archives of the Police Prefecture sit outside the city of Paris, in the nearby banlieue city of Le Pré Saint Gervais, near the Porte de Pantin. The building itself is a rather small and anonymous building. Overgrown greenery almost seems to camouflage it from the passerby; I walked by the building three times before understanding I had reached my destination. I had come with the intention of surveying several funds pertaining to sex work, the surveillance of sex work and the police mapping of the lives of *filles publiques*: where they lived, where they worked, and the places of entertainment and leisure they frequented to get away from it all. I had gleaned some information from *entre-deux-guerres* police magazines and I hoped – or expected – to find more in the archive.

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n'a pas été inscrite sur les contrôles de la prostitution. Les insoumises ne sont donc jamais envoyées à Saint-Lazare et n'y sont transférées que pour être soignées à l'hôpital, si elles sont malades.

Les punies ne réclament jamais. Elles acceptent avec résignation la punition infligée : elles savent que toute réclamation est inutile, étant admis que les déclarations des agents ne peuvent être mises en doute.

Les filles arrêtées n'ont pas toujours contrevenu aux règlements, et leur arrestation a parfois une cause tout autre que celle énoncée sur le rapport de police qui les accompagne et qui, seul, je le répète, fait foi devant la commission administrative.

Au cours des enquêtes nombreuses que j'ai faites personnellement dans le triste monde de la prostitution afin de me documenter en vue de ce travail, plusieurs filles m'avaient signalé les agissements d'un agent particulièrement sévère à l'endroit des racoleuses susceptibles de gêner le travail d'une fille, grande brune mise avec une certaine recherche, à laquelle il s'intéressait tout particulièrement. Cet agent des mœurs m'était désigné sous le nom de Bel Arthur.

— Et pourquoi, demandai-je, le Bel Arthur favorise-t-il cette fille d'une façon toute bienveillante?

— Mais tout bêtement parce qu'il est son souteneur.

— Allons donc !

— Parfaitement, il en vit. C'est d'ailleurs un sale individu ; non seulement il ne cesse de nous traquer, mais encore, à l'occasion, il essaie de nous soutirer des billets de cent sous. Et si l'une de nous lui plaît et qu'elle refuse de « marcher à l'œil », il est impitoyable : la pauvre fille est alors obligée de changer d'arrondissement si elle ne veut pas être

La « ménagerie » à la prison Saint-Lazare, vue du corridor.

[Figure 54. Photograph of the "menagerie" of the Saint-Lazare Women's Prison in the 9th arrondissement. Detail of an article taken from *Police Magazine* (1930, no. 2: 5) entitled "Les fléaux sociaux" and which treats the institutional (police and medical) surveillance of sex workers and the treatment of syphilis, both of which are construed as vectors of social ills (*fléau social*). Source: Criminocorpus.]

Once I had registered my name and been given an access card by the secretary at the front desk, I sat at one of the monitors to scour through the Archives' digital repository. I selected a set of documents to consult. Waiting awkwardly by the front desk, I saw archival workers shift piles of boxes; I wondered if these were the documents I was going to consult.

"You have to go into the reading room," the receptionist told me, as if responding to my unsaid wonderings. "Here," she added, pointing to the glass door behind me, "you'll give the reference to the archivist, and you'll get your documents there."

I had a long set of documents to look at: the *cahiers d'interpellation* dated 1941 to 1948 (JC3), the *dossiers individuels des tenancières de maisons closes* dated 1870 to 1940 (JC4 to 53), and the *rapports de police relatifs aux établissements signalés comme lieux de racolage*, undated (JC54-n). All these contained police documents respectively pertaining to arrests of sex workers, profiles of brothel managers, and reports documenting solicitation in commercial public places. Another series of documents (sub-series BB) caught my attention: a set of notes kept by the Cabinet of the Prefect's 1st division 2nd bureau, tasked with "vice" (*moeurs*) and the so-called Registry of Galant Dames and Pederasts (*registre des dames galantes et des pédérastes*).

As I sat, deciding where I should start, I eavesdropped on the whispered conversations humming in the small, unventilated space. Two men, which appeared to be a retired police officer and a historian, sat looking through archives of police investigations into sex work. The two men, I understood from their hushed conversation, were interested in looking at police inquests into cabaret performers and their potential activities as sex workers. An archivist walked into the room; they had been waiting for him.

"So?" the retired officer asked.

The archivist, looking slightly frazzled, stepped out again, to speak with a colleague, and came back.

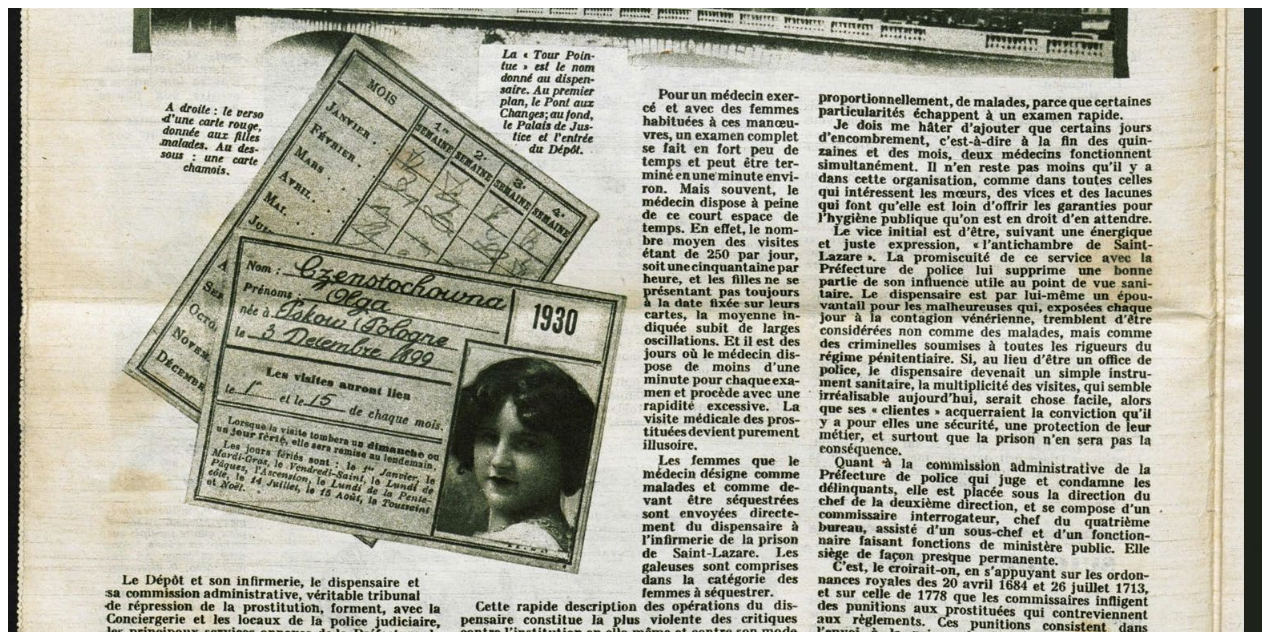
“The contents of that fund are not *communicables*,” he told the two men, explaining that he could not grant them access to the documents they wanted to consult.

“But what’s in there?” the retired officer asked.

“Investigations about the sexuality *des filles*, but they’re not *communicables*.”

“Ah, so you don’t know what’s in them…”

“Yes, I do. I’ve just looked, but I can’t show you.” He went on to explain that some of the documents contained there mentioned sex workers by name, women who might still be alive and who may not want to have their lives as sex workers to become public.



A droite : le verso d’une carte rouge, donnée aux filles malades. Au dessous : une carte chamois.

La « Tour Pointue » est le nom donné au dispensaire. Au premier plan, le Pont aux Changes; au fond, le Palais de Justice et l’entrée du Dépôt.

MOIS | 1re SEMAINE | 2e SEMAINE | 3e SEMAINE | 4e SEMAINE
JANVIER. FÉVRIER. MARS. AVRIL. MAI. JUI… SEP… OCTO… NOVEM… DÉCEMBRE

Nom : Czenstochowna
Prénoms : Olga
née à Pskow (Pologne
le 3 Decembre 1899
1930
Les visites auront lieu le 1er et le 15 de chaque mois.
Lorsque la visite tombera un dimanche ou un jour férié, elle sera remise au lendemain.
Les jours fériés sont : le 1er Janvier, le Mardi-Gras, le Vendredi-Saint, le Lundi de Pâques, l’Ascension, le Lundi de la Pentecôte, le 14 Juillet, le 15 Août, la Toussaint et Noël.

Le Dépôt et son infirmerie, le dispensaire et sa commission administrative, véritable tribunal de répression de la prostitution, forment, avec la Conciergerie et les locaux de la police judiciaire, …

Pour un médecin exercé et avec des femmes habituées à ces manœuvres, un examen complet se fait en fort peu de temps et peut être terminé en une minute environ. Mais souvent, le médecin dispose à peine de ce court espace de temps. En effet, le nombre moyen des visites étant de 250 par jour, soit une cinquantaine par heure, et les filles ne se présentant pas toujours à la date fixée sur leurs cartes, la moyenne indiquée subit de larges oscillations. Et il est des jours où le médecin dispose de moins d’une minute pour chaque examen et procède avec une rapidité excessive. La visite médicale des prostituées devient purement illusoire.

Les femmes que le médecin désigne comme malades et comme devant être séquestrées sont envoyées directement du dispensaire à l’infirmerie de la prison de Saint-Lazare. Les galeuses sont comprises dans la catégorie des femmes à séquestrer.

Cette rapide description des opérations du dispensaire constitue la plus violente des critiques …

proportionnellement, de malades, parce que certaines particularités échappent à un examen rapide.

Je dois me hâter d’ajouter que certains jours d’encombrement, c’est-à-dire à la fin des quinzaines et des mois, deux médecins fonctionnent simultanément. Il n’en reste pas moins qu’il y a dans cette organisation, comme dans toutes celles qui intéressent les mœurs, des vices et des lacunes qui font qu’elle est loin d’offrir les garanties pour l’hygiène publique qu’on est en droit d’en attendre.

Le vice initial est d’être, suivant une énergique et juste expression, « l’antichambre de Saint-Lazare ». La promiscuité de ce service avec la Préfecture de police lui supprime une bonne partie de son influence utile au point de vue sanitaire. Le dispensaire est par lui-même un épouvantail pour les malheureuses qui, exposées chaque jour à la contagion vénérienne, tremblent d’être considérées non comme des malades, mais comme des criminelles soumises à toutes les rigueurs du régime pénitentiaire. Si, au lieu d’être un office de police, le dispensaire devenait un simple instrument sanitaire, la multiplicité des visites, qui semble irréalisable aujourd’hui, serait chose facile, alors que ses « clientes » acquerraient la conviction qu’il y a pour elles une sécurité, une protection de leur métier, et surtout que la prison n’en sera pas la conséquence.

Quant à la commission administrative de la Préfecture de police qui juge et condamne les délinquants, elle est placée sous la direction du chef de la deuxième direction, et se compose d’un commissaire interrogateur, chef du quatrième bureau, assisté d’un sous-chef et d’un fonctionnaire faisant fonctions de ministère public. Elle siège de façon presque permanente.

C’est, le croirait-on, en s’appuyant sur les ordonnances royales des 20 avril 1684 et 26 juillet 1713, et sur celle de 1778 que les commissaires infligent des punitions aux prostituées qui contreviennent aux règlements. Ces punitions consistent dans …

[Figure 55. Photograph of a sex worker’s government issued “carte,” including positive or negative syphilis results following a gynecological examination undertaken under police supervision. Detail of an article taken from *Police Magazine* (1930, no. 2: 4). Source: Criminocorpus.]

The scholar thanked him; the retired police officer huffed, visibly disgruntled. The exchange indicated to me that the JC series I wanted to consult were likely to be *incommunicables* as well, as some of the sigla they mentioned were the same as the ones I had noted. I decided to ask for the Registry.

The imposing document looked and felt like a codex. Handwritten notes detailed the lives of women suspected of being unregistered sex workers. Between 1804 and 1946, sex work in France was legal and organized around what the French called *réglementarisme*, which came to be known in English as the French System. This system of regulation imposed a strict regimen for sex workers: they had to carry the *carte*, a document including their name and photo – the first iteration of this now-commonplace form of identification was indeed applied on sex workers – alongside a medical note indicating that the worker was free of *plaques muqueuses* or, conversely, afflicted with syphilis. In the latter case, the women in question would be arrested and placed under hold in the hospital of the Saint Lazare women's prison, in the 10th arrondissement. Women who did not comply and refused to be *encartée* and registered were targeted by undercover surveillance agents and harassed by police street patrols. The registry, although it is not the only document that served that purpose, offers a glimpse into the margins of this polis.

In the earliest iterations of the *Registre*, which date back to the beginning of the Second Empire, the form and content of the logs had not yet been standardized. There are no identifying pictures and no clear categories. Rather, the loggers include a set of geographical information such as a place of birth and a current address, along with moral, physiognomic, marital characteristics. Of course, notes about sources of income and sexual practices are also included, although the style of writing, the tone, and the adjectives used to describe the women seemingly change depending on the clerk logging the information. These partial elements nonetheless draw a distinct cartography

of informal sex work, placing these unruly women in Montmartre, in Pigalle, and around Saint Lazare – in an around the historical city of Montmartre, which was progressively absorbed into Paris over the course of its outward expansion.

One woman is described as a "*vieille juive, âgée d'environ 65 ans, demeure rue Saint Lazare*." It is written that she funnels underaged women to the rest of the country. Another is described as an "*accoucheuse*," a midwife who opens her apartment to sex workers and pockets a fee for each trick turned. Physical descriptors abound, often laced in the misogynistic gaze of the surveying officer: a monstrous neck, a crooked smile, traces of syphilis hidden under *maquillage*. Elements of what would eventually become the standard of Bertillonage and anthropometrics apparently took shape in such logs: the abject of sex work, the moral depravity and the sanitary risk of contagion, appeared as a judicious site to experiment the modern power of monitoring, representing, classifying, linking together the now crucial categories of otherness: territory-physiognomy-morality.

I am tempted to imagine the personalities these men had. What type of person is one who works to assemble such logs, patrolling the streets and profiling women? But what actually stirs my imagination are not these men, whose personality apparently peoples all and any archive of bureaucratic activity. Where my personal work of critical fabulation goes is into the reconstruction, from the archival traces these men left, of the social and cultural figure they sought to survey and fix in their logs. I can imagine one woman, arms filled with fabric scraps she would like to use to sow up the tears of dress she wears everyday, and a handful of vegetables for the evening's soup. She is moving through the labyrinthic streets of Montmartre to reach a small furnished apartment, where her friend, with whom she is renting it, waits. The friend in question is a young dancer who sometimes performs in local cabarets but mostly lives off an inheritance from a rich, dead parent. She is Jewish and, although she does not practice many rituals, she has inherited a resolute ability

to navigate through the city's muddy margins. Once, after a terribly violent sexual encounter, the two friends left Paris and retreated to a coastal city, to ease their nerves, heal their bodies. There was suspicion that one was pimping the other to local aristocrats; or that they were lovers – the log made a note of it. Better to leave, then. As she walks up the hilly rue des Martyrs, the package in her arms giving her an imbalanced countenance, the young woman bumps into an officer of the *brigade des moeurs* patrolling this area where unregistered *filles publiques* are known to live. She drops everything and proceeds to pick it all up, apologizing profusely. The officer, elbowing a colleague, scans her appearance. He slurs a series of vulgar comments; one officer remains silent, solemn, but the other two laugh raucously. She continues to apologize.

"A bourgeois woman would have taken offence," he says, before demanding: "Show me your *carte*."

She doesn't have a card and, panicking but also knowing the character of these men who are attracted to what they consider abject, she offers sexual services instead. The officers hesitate, looking for traces of syphilis on her face. But, shaking off the thought, their faces turning into scornful smirks, they grab her and, with *sale putain* on their tongues, whisk her away, leaving a pile of scraps and half-rotten vegetables on the cobbled street.

The logs of the *Registre* tell me about the street, yielding information that could only be acquired through the slow lurking patrol in the city's lived-in topography. The men who arrested her might have made a note, which a young clerk in a stuffy and dark shared office space would then have written into the log. A name "Irma, *dite* Rachel" is written in the margin with a graphite pencil, next to a paragraph describing her physically, morally, sexually; the word Israelite strikes me.

Why are these women important? Or rather: why do I find them compelling? Their existence within the archive answers the longing for a body, a subject that one could retrieve. Being inhabited by and inhabiting queer affects and queer attachments often means haphazardly assembling an identity for oneself. While contemporary nightlife spaces are tailored to such expressions and experimentation in identity and what it means for oneself to be oneself truly, the process can feel untimely – in the sense that it feels out-of-place and out-of-time, as if detached from any cumulative history. The public political discourse of progress – that there are certain rights that have been granted to so-called sexual minorities, which must be preserved – does not offer any contextualization of queer affects outside of the relatively recent opening of Republican franchise to these minorities. I find them compelling because, in a strange way, these women remain outside the franchise; memorialized as irredeemably other, I find their companionship comforting. The comfort of knowing them without knowing them, the idea that the archive never truly retained them.

The women I found in the logs are often described derogatively – in a footnote or in a margin, with graphite rather than ink – as depraved and deviant, not because of their trade but because of their difference, that of being a *tribade* or a *juive*. One can imagine how, within the world of sex work *réglementarisme*, some women were shunned and ushered into the industry because of their apparent or imagined difference. A young woman, from a village or a working-class community, seeking to make a life for herself independently of a man or a family was enough to suggest sexual and moral deviance. One can imagine how, taken up in the highly regimented and exclusionary world of *encartage*, one woman might find support and comfort in sharing intimacy with someone – another woman – who may be able to know her, to care for her and her wounds, with lust perhaps,

but also love, without violence, maybe. The archive, however, does not tell us anything about these relations.

I wish I could write more, to more accurately reconstruct her life with fragments of the archive, fragments of other lives. I have lost her in the crowd of women, between gynecologists, nuns, and police officers, in the courtyard of Saint Lazare women's prison. Because of the archive, because of the fugitive lives that the archive was tasked to capture, my attempt cannot go beyond an attempt to critically fabulate. This mode of archival recovery yields something which "is a history of an unrecoverable past; it is a narrative of what might have been or could have been; it is a history written with and against the archive" (Hartman, 2008: 12). The narrative that I have constructed here is, to think with James Clifford, a "fiction" (1986: 7). This woman has never existed as such, but that does not mean that the elements I sought to describe therein are false. They most certainly took place, on a different street, with a different patrol; her name may have been different, her arms filled rolls of textile rather than produce. The work of critical fabulation, as Saidyia Hartman explains, relies on a careful, at times excruciating attention to the grain of the archive. Regardless of the attentive and minute work involved, "[m]y account replicates the very order of violence that it writes against by placing yet another demand upon the girl," Hartman argues, a sentiment I relate to, "by requiring that her life be made useful or instructive, by finding in it a lesson for our future or a hope for history" (Hartman, 2008: 14).[83]

[83] Hartman goes on to write that, "We all know better. It is much too late for the accounts of death to prevent other deaths; and it is much too early for such scenes of death to halt other crimes. But in the meantime, in the space of the interval, between too late and too early, between the no longer and the not yet, our lives are coeval with the girl's in the as-yet-incomplete project of freedom. In the meantime, it is clear that her life and ours hang in the balance" 2008: 14).

Sanitarism and the Hygienists' Archive

One surveillant officer noted that a renowned bourgeois patron of the arts, known in Paris for the cocktails and arts exhibits she organized in her *hôtel particulier*, also bought services of young women, which she supported into a life of comfort. For the agents of the *brigade mondaine*, such patronage posed a threat to the good health of the body politic: it took young women out of their purview, letting what they considered as a venereal threat roam about, no longer in the cogs of the "French System."

The time between the emergence of French sex work *réglementarisme* and the peak of hygienist policy spans over a century. The mode of surveillance of the spaces of sex work would become more minute, standardized along a set of scientific categories and protocols (for instance, Bertillon, 1893). Later iterations of the *Registre des Dames Galantes et des Pédérastes* thus includes photographs as the logged information became more systematic, less reliant on what initially appeared as the contingent desires of the surveying officers. Before adopting standard anthropometric photography – the US American "mugshot" with the height measurement is a contemporary survivance of these types of pre-biometric photography – the photos were taken from the subjects' own personal collections. Cabaret performers and dancers thus appeared in the log in some costume they once wore during a photoshoot or for an advertisement: a bumblebee, an ant, an odalisque.

With the emergence of more systematic protocols for monitoring and recording abject life came an array of practices that rippled through other institutions and accompanied the rise of Hygienist policy. I consulted a selection of such documents at the Archive de Paris. The case made for hygiene policy was not only reliant on scientific rationality or modernity. Rather, it appeared that the sources of moral, social, and physical "depravity" were necessary to commerce and income

and, therefore, in need not of destruction but remediation. In fact, if the destruction of unsanitary housing was often invoked and used by local government, resorting to that measure was the result of a long process of renovation and refraction (Fijalkow, 1991).

In an undated letter to the members of the Paris Municipal Council, Pierre Carlier, Police Prefect of Paris from 1849 to 1851, argued for the reinstatement of legal gambling in the Capital. His argument, not unlike the arguments supporting the legal regulation of sex work, is that such regulation would not only be a source of income, as the State would be able to tax gambling, but it would also produce reputable establishments and attract wealthy, aristocratic tourists from the rest of Europe. Pierre Carlier went on to organize a legal lottery, progressively reinstating a State-monopoly on gambling activities, the same year as his participation in the *coup d'État* that inaugurated the Second Empire. I mention this anecdote because the relation between morality and salubriousness was key to understanding how the abject poor were construed as sources of both cultural ills and medical threats. In a strange, oblique way, one could see significance in this rather small detail of 19th century regime change: a gamble that inaugurated the Empire of financial capital, of urban renewal, of a city of aristocratic pleasure, department stores, and commodities-on-display. But it also confirms a strong tendency in the management of *illnesses*, be they understood as moral, social or biological ills: regulation as a practice of monitoring, (trans)forming, representing urban life.

This regulatory tendency targets specific practices of leisure, which in fact overlap with modes of making a living, which in turn shape lifestyles: gambling and sex work, and the space where both meet – the cabaret – are crucial targets. Beyond these spectacular targets of *réglementation*, it is the whole city that becomes an object of scientific, statistical, and moral investigation. With this emerges the desire to measure the structural ills of the city; city officials, engineers, architects, and

medical doctors will develop a topographical analysis of illness, or *une topographie médicale* (Fijalkow, 2004; for instance, Lachaise, 1822).

Ville de Paris

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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
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PRÉFECTURE DE LA SEINE

RAPPORT

LOCALITÉ : 72 Boulevard de la Chapelle
Hôtel Meublé

Propriétaire... M. et Mme POULET à PANDY (Indre)

Représentant .

OBJET : Infiltrations pluviales

Vu adopté et transmis à Monsieur le Directeur

Paris, le 30 JANV 1961
L'INGÉNIEUR DIVISIONNAIRE
Chef du Contrôle Technique de l'Hygiène de l'Habitation

B. MONTADERT

Le mauvais état de la couverture de cet immeuble provoque des infiltrations d'eaux pluviales à l'étage supérieur notamment dans les chambres n° 18 et 19.

Pour remédier à cette situation susceptible de nuire à la santé des occupants, nous proposons de prescrire l'exécution des mesures suivantes en application des dispositions du Code de la Santé :

Effectuer toutes réparations ou réfections nécessaires à la toiture de l'immeuble pour assurer l'étanchéité durable de la couverture et de ses accessoires afin de faire cesser les infiltrations d'eaux pluviales qui se manifestent dans les locaux habités et notamment dans les chambres n° 18 et 19.

Paris, le 25 JANV 1961

L'Ingénieur T.P.

R. PERNETTE

29347 Hemmerlé, Petit et Cie. 10000 ex. carré 9-58 42084

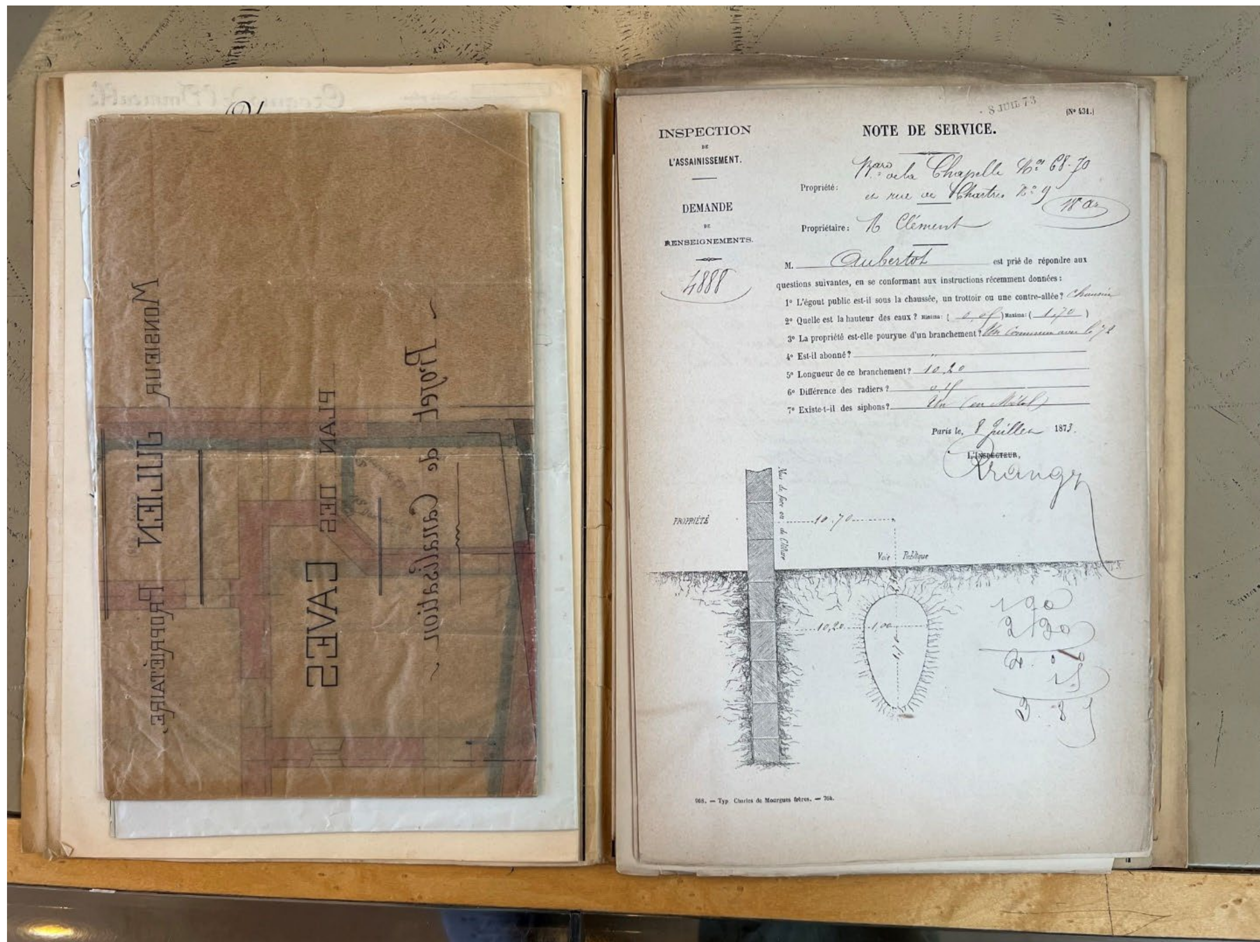
[Figure 56. 1961 report on the 72 boulevard de la Chapelle furnished hotel, likely rented to Algerian colonial workers and non-registered sex workers. Source: Archive de Paris. Photo by Author.]

This medical topography of Paris focused, once again, on these parts of the city that are considered abject. But, before finding ways of standardizing this effort to monitor and shape ill spaces, the unit itself, that which would be remediated or destroyed, was a cause of issue. Municipal urban

rules measured housing units – apartments or rooms – making it difficult for hygienists and statisticians to provide comprehensive assessments at the level of a building or a housing block. Thus emerged two tendencies, which would lead to the creation of the *casier sanitaire*. The first one considered the *appartement* as the standard for morality: it was the home of the family; multi-family occupation, concubinage or informal sharing were considered a threat to moral hygiene. The second one considered the overall arrangement of a *maison* – the name used then for buildings, which continues to exist in the appellation *maison-close* for buildings housing a brothel – and the adjacent street to be key for understanding how illness festers not only in one given apartment but also within a whole building and, through cramped street space, from building to building. The *casier sanitaire* thus became a comprehensive document – an instrument – for the city to measure salubriousness in living units, buildings, and *îlots* composed of several buildings.

Besides social and moral concerns, the archive reveals the centrality of tuberculosis. Although the illness does not appear systematically in the surveys, a look at public records of epidemics in Paris highlights this illness's recurrence and the threat it posed to the health of Paris working-class. Light and air were seen as solutions to poorly built units. In the *casier sanitaire* of housing blocks in the 18th arrondissement, apartments are described as humid, dark, with hallways used as living spaces. A topographical survey of a brothel on boulevard de la Chapelle notes persistent leaks; the state of sewage evacuation, the replacement the roof zinc is of particular concern. Although tuberculosis is not mentioned explicitly, a string of related concerns is present, highlighting its gravitational pull on the gaze of the surveyor.[84]

[84] In fact, an *îlot* in the 18th arrondissement was demolished in the 1920s after a case of plague. A set of social housing estates were delivered by the HBM patronage company at the beginning of the 1930s to replace the vacant block. The standards applied for these new housing units reflected the concerns of the *casier sanitaire*: the apartments had to be well-lit, with windows arranged in such a way that air would circulate and ventilate the unit, with in-apartment sanitation, separated from the kitchen area, with windows in both cases. Significantly, the epidemic that reached Paris



[Figure 57. 1924 note and topographical print found in the *casier sanitaire* of nos. 68-70 boulevard de la Chapelle. Source: Archive de Paris. Photo by Author]

Disease thus appears to be central to the medical topography of the turn of the century, impacting the emergence of hygienist norms for the shaping of space as inhabitable or, conversely, unfit for civilized life. Another, key figure in this emergent spatial and political architecture, is that of the abject body. Indeed, the *casiers sanitaires* that I sought out in the Paris Archives all surveyed

in the 1920s is considered to have emerged decades prior in China, circulating from the port of Hongkong to European ports through imperial, global waterways. Although this epidemic was not particularly memorialized in France, the destruction of this *îlot* and the subsequent construction of an HBM block are immediate consequences, along with the adoption by Chinese authorities of then-emergent biomedical protocols, of the norms and forms of Western public health.

brothels. The circulation of disease, there, takes up hygiene through topographical concerns: light, air, and water are all variables, vectors, vessels of potential illness and health. However, as in the 1920s plague epidemic in the 18th arrondissement, an abject body figures within the assessment: the sex workers and ragpickers of the Zone. The latter, in fact, was considered both the receptacle and potential vector of the plague, a representation that remained in the name given to this epidemic: *la peste des chiffonniers*, the Ragpickers' Plague. In France, this episode fed into two similar but distinct discourses of othering: one that accompanied the moral and hygienist panic surrounding East Asian presence in France – the *péril jaune*, a racist phrase used to stigmatize the presence of Chinese and Vietnamese colonial workers in France – and, second, a reactivation of anti-Jewish biological racism, which considered Jews as vectors of disease (Héritier, 1982; Tonnerre-Seychelles, 2020).

Once again, I am tempted to imagine the surveyor's habitus: a cramped office, the rhythms of archival process – the scratching of pen on paper, the clicking of typewriters, the shuffling of dossiers and reports sliding on the worn-out wood of office desks – the well kempt appearance of the surveyor as he greets the *Madame*, his disdain for the *travailleuses*. Were the women there? Were they working shifts during the survey? Were they rowdy, looking on as this man walked through tight hallways, noting windows, leaks, molding wood? The archive, and the work of imagination that it may spur, does not divulge much of the women there, of their lives, of their sensibilities, of what they thought of their employers, their clients, nor anything about these government officials tasked with monitoring their place of work and – for some who lived their – of life. I wonder what he thought as he walked in the 18th arrondissement; was he moved with an antisemitic sense of abjection, as some today move through the 18e with a repulsion for Black and Muslim public life?

The Ambivalent Queer Kinship of Bambi

I do not take much out of the archive. Perhaps what I sought in the archive could not be retrieved. A humanistic account of the life of a sex worker during the Belle Époque, of her daydreams and the way her queer affects expanded and receded as she lived and died in the city of light, the city of love… Nor was I able to retrieve an image beyond that of abjection. No, such an account would not have been the work of a police agent, one who surely would have oscillated between booking the girl to Saint-Lazare prison or requiring a payment in sex for her to evade arrest. There is little to romanticise there, and much less to expect if one is orientated by a longing for a living, breathing, desiring, body and subjectivity.

Specifically, I was motivated by the possibility of tracing a direct filiation between Jewish public life in the Zone and the 18th arrondissement more generally, and contemporary public life mired by racist representations of otherness (alongside extant forms of difference, competing and combinative normative imperatives, and *illégalismes*). Wishful thinking had led me to a certain expectation that I might find more than piecemeal allusions to some sex workers' or ragpickers' Jewishness in the record; I did not, in fact, find more than piecemeal references. It would be reasonable to consider this a characteristic of the archive, particularly state archives, in that they do not disclose more than representations of otherness and expecting compelling narratives about lumpen, working class, and queer life appears to be rather naive.

However, I would like to stress here that this can also be understood as a specific impact, among other consequences, of antisemitic erasure: the extermination of European Jewry did not only leave material loss in its wake, it also implied that the forms and norms of social life within marginalized Jewish communities who, like today's Muslim communities in Paris, existed in a multiethnic class-stratified urban space, has also been lost, de-realized and de-memorialized. Why remember the

gutters' cultural formations? And yet, I am reminded by Jean-Paul Sartre's depiction of Jewish women as objects of sexual violence that perhaps – surely – the gutter had much to do with how antisemitism and abjection structured genocidal violence, harnessing the ambivalent assemblage of oppression and pleasure, of orientalist othering and sexual desire (Sartre, 1985/1944: 56-57).

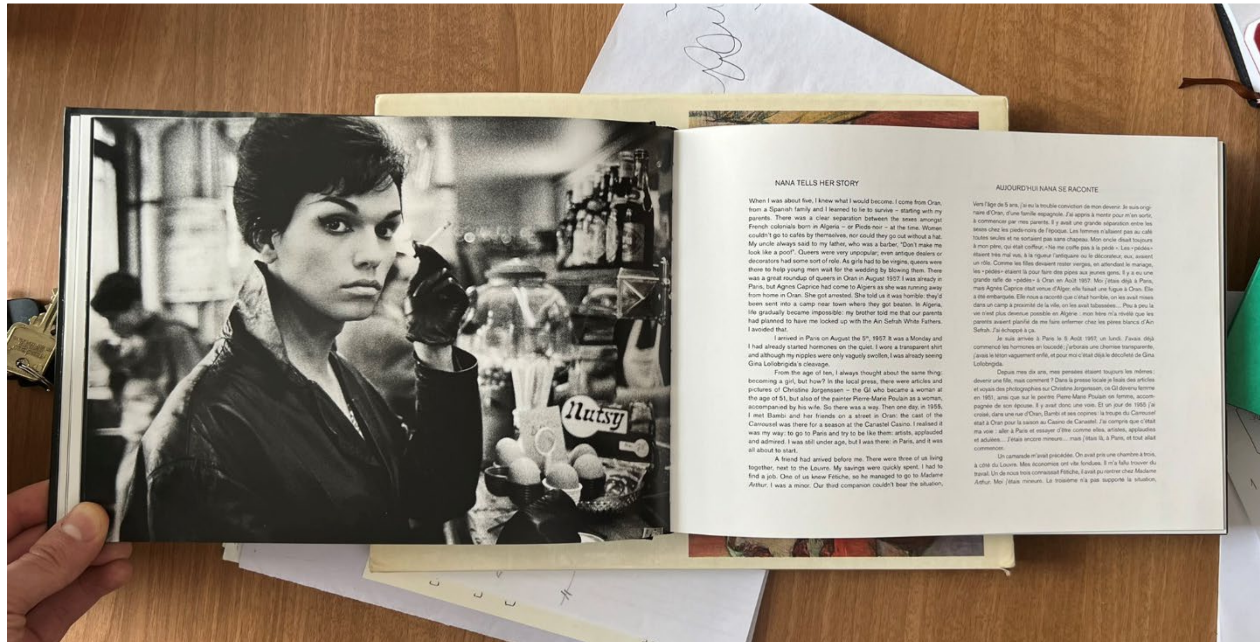
Historian Éric Fournier situates the production of the *belle juive* as a trope of French literary, dramaturgic, and visual production beginning with the Romantic movement in the 1820s. He traces the history of this figure, from the conquest of Algeria started in 1830 to the brothels of *Belle Époque* Paris, locating it within an assemblage of orientalist anti- and philo-semitism, which fed into the representation of famous Jewish performers such as Sarah Bernhardt as well as the ethno-racist imaginary of one Édouard Drumont disparaging Jewish women as cunning, sexual subjects (Fournier, 2009). In a review of his *La « Belle Juive » d'Ivanhoé à la Shoah* (2011)*,* historian Leora Auslander offers an apt critique, suggesting a heuristic comparison between the figures of "Jewish" and "Arab" women in both the French literary cannon and Parisian social history. As a matter of fact, the opening pages of *Thérèse Raquin*, Zola writes that the eponymous character was born in Oran, Algeria to a French father, captain in the Navy, and her mother "a beautiful native woman" (*une indigène d'une grande beauté,* Zola, 1868: 11). The "oriental" origins of the Parisian *bas-fonds,* however deeply buried, nonetheless surface in representations of class-based otherness.

If the state's archives disclose little of the abject subject's ordinary life, then, one must turn to *other* forms of archiving. One such archive, which generously gives despite its distance in time, is one I found in *Les Amies de Place Blanche*. Photography taken by Christer Strömholm of sex workers and dancers that lived and worked in the 18th arrondissement's Pigalle redlight district in the 1950s and 1960s, along with the lengthy testimonial interviews recorded by Hélène Hazéra, form a much more compelling archive of the ordinary life of trans women in a Paris that has since disappeared.

In fact, this set of images and testimonies stands closer – temporally, culturally – to the world of the *casiers sanitaires* as it does to the contemporary in which I retrieved it.

There is something there, however, that brings it closer to us: the voice of these women, their contradictions, aspirations, longing, and – for some – the tragic quality of their lives and deaths. Although Strömholm's work is similar in topic as that of Brassaï, for instance, it shares with its subject an intimacy, which Brassaï does not offer. With the latter, I am invited to imagine the nightlife in Paris, all those "freaks" that made the news of police magazines yet who also found their place in some of the 20th century's most emblematic photographic works. In the photography of Brassai, the photographer is likely seated in the same bistro or cabaret. He might have enjoyed a few drinks himself; he is there, in other words. But he remains distant. That is, I can tell that certain cabarets were places of experimentation and freedom – that, surely, is how queerness came to enter the franchise, as the utmost form of freedom, that to be oneself against all odds – but that is all. The subjects remain distant, unattainable, unknown; a mere representation of queer affect, women embracing women, cross-dressers, and – occasionally – a Black man or woman, smiling in a suspended space of otherness.

It is with these *other* archives and specifically with a copy of *Les Amies de Place Blanche* in my bag that I approached the social housing block where Marie-Pierre Pruvot had invited me to. I had reached out some months prior and, to my surprise, the retired cabaret dancer, one of France's most famous trans women and one in a handful who had undertaken a legal and medical transition in 1950s France, Marie-Pierre, known by her stage name Bambi, had accepted to meet me and discuss my research with her.



NANA TELLS HER STORY

When I was about five, I knew what I would become. I come from Oran, from a Spanish family and I learned to lie to survive – starting with my parents. There was a clear separation between the sexes amongst French colonials born in Algeria – or Pieds-noir – at the time. Women couldn't go to cafés by themselves, nor could they go out without a hat. My uncle always said to my father, who was a barber, "Don't make me look like a poof". Queers were very unpopular; even antique dealers or decorators had some sort of role. As girls had to be virgins, queers were there to help young men wait for the wedding by blowing them. There was a great roundup of queers in Oran in August 1957. I was already in Paris, but Agnes Caprice had come to Algiers as she was running away from home in Oran. She got arrested. She told us it was horrible: they'd been sent into a camp near town where they got beaten. In Algeria, life gradually became impossible: my brother told me that our parents had planned to have me locked up with the Ain Sefrah White Fathers. I avoided that.

I arrived in Paris on August the 5th, 1957. It was a Monday and I had already started hormones on the quiet. I wore a transparent shirt and although my nipples were only vaguely swollen, I was already seeing Gina Lollobrigida's cleavage.

From the age of ten, I always thought about the same thing: becoming a girl, but how? In the local press, there were articles and pictures of Christine Jorgenssen – the GI who became a woman at the age of 51, but also of the painter Pierre-Marie Poulain as a woman, accompanied by his wife. So there was a way. Then one day, in 1955, I met Bambi and her friends on a street in Oran: the cast of the Carrousel was there for a season at the Canastel Casino. I realised it was my way: to go to Paris and try to be like them: artists, applauded and admired. I was still under age, but I was there: in Paris, and it was all about to start.

A friend had arrived before me. There were three of us living together, next to the Louvre. My savings were quickly spent. I had to find a job. One of us knew Fétiche, so he managed to go to *Madame Arthur*. I was a minor. Our third companion couldn't bear the situation,

AUJOURD'HUI NANA SE RACONTE

Vers l'âge de 5 ans, j'ai eu la trouble conviction de mon devenir. Je suis originaire d'Oran, d'une famille espagnole. J'ai appris à mentir pour m'en sortir, à commencer par mes parents. Il y avait une grande séparation entre les sexes chez les pieds-noirs de l'époque. Les femmes n'allaient pas au café toutes seules et ne sortaient pas sans chapeau. Mon oncle disait toujours à mon père, qui était coiffeur, « Ne me coiffe pas à la pédé ». Les « pédés » étaient très mal vus, à la rigueur l'antiquaire ou le décorateur, eux, avaient un rôle. Comme les filles devaient rester vierges, en attendant le mariage, les « pédés » étaient là pour faire des pipes aux jeunes gens. Il y a eu une grande rafle de « pédés » à Oran en Août 1957. Moi j'étais déjà à Paris, mais Agnès Caprice était venue d'Alger, elle faisait une fugue à Oran. Elle a été embarquée. Elle nous a raconté que c'était horrible, on les avait mises dans un camp à proximité de la ville, on les avait tabassées… Peu à peu la vie n'est plus devenue possible en Algérie : mon frère m'a révélé que les parents avaient planifié de me faire enfermer chez les pères blancs d'Ain Sefrah. J'ai échappé à ça.

Je suis arrivée à Paris le 5 Août 1957, un lundi. J'avais déjà commencé les hormones en loucedé ; j'arborais une chemise transparente, j'avais le téton vaguement enflé, et pour moi c'était déjà le décolleté de Gina Lollobrigida.

Depuis mes dix ans, mes pensées étaient toujours les mêmes : devenir une fille, mais comment ? Dans la presse locale je lisais des articles et voyais des photographies sur Christine Jorgenssen, ce GI devenu femme en 1951, ainsi que sur le peintre Pierre-Marie Poulain en femme, accompagnée de son épouse. Il y avait donc une voie. Et un jour de 1955 j'ai croisé, dans une rue d'Oran, Bambi et ses copines : la troupe du Carrousel était à Oran pour la saison au Casino de Canastel. J'ai compris que c'était ma voie : aller à Paris et essayer d'être comme elles, artistes, applaudies et adulées… J'étais encore mineure… mais j'étais là, à Paris, et tout allait commencer.

Un camarade m'avait précédée. On avait pris une chambre à trois, à côté du Louvre. Mes économies ont vite fondues. Il m'a fallu trouver du travail. Un de nous trois connaissait Fétiche, il avait pu rentrer chez *Madame Arthur*. Moi j'étais mineure. Le troisième n'a pas supporté la situation,

[Figure 58. Portrait of "Nana" photographed by Strömholm and the first paragraphs of her testimony recorded by Hélène Hazéra in *Les Amies de Place Blanche*. Photo by Author.]

Marie-Pierre was born in colonial Algeria and grew up between Bordj Menaiel, in Kabylia's Ysser municipality, and Algiers. What I had anticipated as a life-course interview, a rather conventional mode for interviewing an 80-year-old woman, quickly turned into a conversation. The relationship between interviewer and interviewee flipped and I found myself answering questions about my life in Paris and, specifically, my experience of anti-Arab racism in France. There was an ambivalent kinship that structured the flip. I looked at Marie-Pierre as a former colonial citizen, wondering what the implications of such a status had been for her; I dared not ask directly. In turn, I sensed, she thought of me in a similar way – I told her, after she asked, that my grandparents were both from Kabylia, and both would have been about the same age as her. The colonial filtered our mutual recognition.

In pulling the conversation back toward a historical Paris, which I assumed she had known, Marie-Pierre's response was a joyful quip. *Je ne connais pas toute l'histoire*, she said, laughing. And

while she shared with me a sense of what had been Paris before her arrival there in the 1950s, it seemed she was not interested in telling me stories about her life. *Vous avez lu mon livre ?* she asked, suddenly bored by her own storytelling. I shook my head answering that I had not found it in bookshops. *Tenez*, she responded after going to her bedroom and retrieving a copy, *lisez-le*.

Part of our conversation focused on transness as such, and in that thematic way we spoke of history. Her relationship to another famous trans *meneuse de revue* in Paris's most renowned cabarets; going to the *dispensaire*[85] to take their over-the-counter hormone doses, real talk in the workroom of the cabarets where they worked, and the spontaneous creation of space of collective self-reflection. Marie-Pierre, with the harshness that can only come with one's judgement of their younger self, referred to that time in her life as *narcissistic* as the mode of self-fascination needed to build character and make the critical, decisive move to transition. She interspersed her recollections with direct advice to me. *Ne vous laissez pas influencer*, she said gravely. And, as I struck her as an indecisive queer, she mentioned the stories of some of her friends who, unlike her, oscillated between the two gendered forms available to them, living as a boy – *comme un garçon* – or as a woman, shifting presentation when they felt.

I recognized in her stories some of the women photographed by Christer Strömholm and pulled out the book *Les Amies de Place Blanche*. Marie-Pierre turned the pages, lingering on the faces of women she had befriended and loved – dear friends. *She's so beautiful, look at her*, she said of one of them. Others she did not care about, flipping quickly through the pages. One woman, which I had read in the testimonies was from Oran, in Western Algeria, Marie-Pierre was not particularly fond of. *Here she is, votre Oranaise,* she pointed out on a page. *You know, once the cabarets toured*

[85] A literal English translation of *dispensaire* might be "dispensary," although the *dispensaire* implies that one not only may receive medicine doses as would be the case in a compounding pharmacy but where one may also receive treatment as would be the case in a discharge hospital.

Algeria – Marie-Pierre had first seen trans women on stage at the Casino de la Corniche in Algiers *– others like me saw themselves in the performers on stage and, like me, made their way to Paris to live their lives as women.* So, she continued, *of course there were many trans girls from Algeria in Paris*. But, she seemed to think, there was nothing particularly colonial about it all. I wondered if Jewish or Muslim Algerian women were part of these movements.

Although I consider it is important to be cautious in the ways we assign colonial character to a subject, situation, or relation, and that for something to be considered colonial it is insufficient to draw on its imperial location, I am still perplexed by the presence of North Africa in the modern trans experience. In the article that inaugurated Transgender Studies, Sandy Stone opens her "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto" (1992) with a topographical description of Casablanca, leading us to the obstetrics and gynecology clinic of Georges Burou. Providing an excerpt of Jan Morris's *Conundrum*, Stone dwells on this "wonderful 'oriental,' almost religious narrative of transformation," (1991: 323) before panning out and bringing the reader into Palo Alto's Stanford Gender Dysphoria Program. I wonder, then, if we ought to consider the ways in which transness was (and is) implicated in colonial imaginaries by way of its localization within imperial geographies or by way of its relationship to otherness, which required a representational passage through the phantasmatic Orient: an object at once abject, fascinating, desirable, and disposable. Location and orientation are both constitutive of Orientalism as an ideological and geographical device, and so perhaps both – the imperial location and the representational orientation – were and continue to be necessary for transness to enter the space of legitimate citizenship.

[Figure 59. “La Danse Mauresque,” 1895, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Source: Musée d’Orsay.]

In fact, two artistic productions come to mind. One is a detail of a painting by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, called *La Danse Mauresque*. At the center of the painting, La Goulue stands tall, throwing her right leg above her shoulder in front of what appears to be a crowd of bourgeois patrons. To the sides, a pianist on the left and two percussionists: all appear to be North African – the name of the painting, *the Moorish dance*, leads me to think so. The woman on the right of the canvas is likely to be a performer named Aisha, the stage name of Emma Saïd ben Mohammed, the

grandmother of Edith Piaf. Another is a pantomime performed by Colette in 1907 at the Moulin Rouge: the performance titled *Rêve d'Egypte* (Egyptian Dream) conveys all the tropes of a mysterious and sensual Orient, which acts here as a threshold toward sexual freedom. The brief performance caused a scandal in Paris and was censored by the vice squad because of a kiss between Colette and her lover Missy, an aristocratic woman who liked to present in men's clothes.

I do not know the whole story, Marie-Pierre told me, perhaps as a way to prepare me, to accept that I would not find in our interlocution a coherent image of a queer, subversive and anticolonial subjectivity. Seeing Marie-Pierre Pruvot in her apartment, surrounded by French literature and the political writings of conservative Republicans such as Charles de Gaulle, Alain Minc, Alain Finkelkraut struck me as evidence of the movement from abjection to desirable citizenship. Suspending for a moment her career as a cabaret dancer under the stage name Bambi and seeing Marie-Pierre as Marie-Pierre – Marie-Pierre the schoolteacher, the literature student, and the conservative voter Marie-Pierre – helped me understand that perhaps, even when speaking with the living and breathing memory of a pre-1968 transsexual Paris, certain things would remain lost.

Vous savez, she said as she flipped through the pages of *Les Amies*, *not all the girls here walked the streets, they were not all prostitutes. And, I think, Christer was misleading here.* A distancing I found telling; telling a story of what is left behind, what recedes into abjection and what is brought into the fold of the desirable. *We never crossed the boulevard Barbès*, she also said. Was it because Barbès delineated the "medina of Paris" and its heavily policed population of Algerian workers? Was it an indication of Paris's medical topography? Or the sex work geography of the city and the infamous *maisons d'abatage*? Was this related to the imperative for dancers like herself, to not mingle with sex workers, lest they bring the attention of *Police des moeurs* into their cabaret's workroom and lose their contracts? A composite, affirmative answer to all these questions perhaps

best describes the affective topography of Marie-Pierre's Paris. A composite, affirmative answer to all these questions may also be key to understanding how the 18th arrondissement continues to sit ambivalently, as a the desirable abject, object of regulation and experimentation, of fashioning and stigmatizing, the Zone to Paris's Capital.

Conclusion

My engagement with the archive is an exercise in mnemotechnics inasmuch as I have attempted to reconstruct a continuity, assembled through discontinuous elements. By discontinuity, here, I refer to a time that would be "out of joint with itself" – Hamlet's words, in Derrida's *Specters of Marx* – or an understanding that temporality is unlike a fine continuous line and rather resembles a fold unfolding and enfolding itself. If there is something continuous it is the perpetual process of protention (the sequence of acts that lead to the production of an archival document, including its classification and categorization as such) and retention (the hermeneutic act of retrieval in the contemporary) that animates the archival trace.

As Maurice Halbwachs writes in his studies of collective memory, "One cannot in fact think about the events of one's past without discoursing upon them" (Halbwachs, 1992: 53). This may be true about one's own memories; it is also true of any activity that seeks to construct narratives from archival retrieval. It is this "discoursing upon" the fabulated yet true stories of past lives that I found disquieting. In a way different but akin to Hartman's grief in "Venus in Two Acts," this exercise of reading and study in the archive left me to write with bereavement. Following Halbwachs, however, my activity of remembrance necessarily engages with a partial archive; the sense of grief, of incompleteness, is a crucial part of the experience. "In this way," Halbwachs writes,

> "the framework of collective memory confines and binds our most intimate remembrances to each other. It is not necessary that the group be familiar with them. It suffices that we cannot consider them except from the outside-that is, by putting ourselves in the position of others-and that in order to retrieve these remembrances we must tread the same path that others would have followed had they been in our position" (Halbwachs, 1992: 53).

Indeed, phenomenologically, the archive relies on two movements: one towards its making, the protention of a hand that extends toward an object and actualizes both the hand and the object as extension of each other; and, two, the movement of retrieval, of retention orientated toward a certain archive, my own movement toward a historical object, which brings it into the fold of the contemporary. The protention that results in archival production is always spectrally present in the contemporary gesture of retrieval. This, perhaps, is why there is an uncanny quality to police archives: their re-presentation is always a conjuring, both a summoning and an exorcising of their original purpose. This work is not unlike a "reaching and an un-grasping" (Spivak, 1999), in which I modestly attempt to echo, in a different field-site of archival records of sexuality, the critical work of historical anthropologist Anjali Arondekar (2009).

In that sense, despite yearnings I may have had, I have adopted a method that does not seek to tell a coherent story; I have, also, and much to my own happy disappointment, failed to retrieve a coherent subject. This relied on the assumption "that historical time is not integral, that it is out of joint with itself" (Chakrabarty, 2000: 16). This *out-of-jointness* feeds into one approach to queerness and a mnemotechnics of queer history. In a key piece of cultural critique, José Muñoz proposed to think of queerness as a possibility, rather than an identity proper, "a sense of self-knowing, a mode of sociality and relationality" (Muñoz, 1996: 6); a something, in other words, whose cultural forms would be ephemeral, "transmitted covertly," through "innuendo, gossip,

fleeting moments" (Muñoz, 1996: 6). Later taken up by Jasbir Puar in her conceptualization of queer assemblage, this suggestive form of queerness is not based on identity categories that are easily legible, the result of which being that there is no congealed form to refer back to. In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz extends this idea to discuss the futurity of queerness as horizon "a metaphorical distance that indicates a visible and yet inaccessible point," a "future temporality because it is ahead in space" (Knittle, 2022: 461). "Queerness is not yet here," Muñoz writes, "[q]ueerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never

> touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. […] The here and now is a prison house" (Muñoz, 2019: 1).

These conceptualizations are politically and methodologically generative. My fieldwork, tethered to specific urban interstices, yet moving within a queer assemblage of expert desire and minoritized and abjected social relations, is in that way indebted to this work. The fact that "the archives of queerness are makeshift and randomly organized," (Muñoz, 1996: 6) an initial source of grief for Amnesia, may in fact be a blessing of sorts: the vice squad officer ruined lives, surely, but he could not document them in a compelling and accurate way. The yearnings of the women I could (not) find in the logs, "illegible [yearnings] because they are so wildly utopian and derelict to capitalism" (Best and Hartman, 2005: 9), remained outside of the archive. And the ones that Christer Strömholm, and later Hélène Hazéra, were able to convey in *Les Amies de Place Blanche* are partial, always incomplete exercises in language. To speak truly – *dire vrai* – about oneself is always an attempt to reach unattainable closure; it is, put otherwise, never successful.

In a way that perhaps echoes the work of Kadji Amin (2017) on outmoded queer attachments, I engage the archive as offering two potential outcomes to the attempt to situate queer cultural forms and norms in Paris's spatial history. One would be to consider the archives' fragmented image of sex workers to be coherent subjects as such; the *casier sanitaire* to accurately describe their place of work and dwelling; and the acrylic, oil, and later photographic work of bourgeois artists to convey the real. It would assume that one can subsume the abject qualities of deviance, crime, what Saidiya Hartman might refer to as "waywardness," into a conception of sexuality and gender as grounds for selfhood, as the definitive traits around which queer people construct their selves.

Another would be to consider sex acts and the transgression of gendered normative imperatives not as the basis for identity but, simply, and perhaps more pragmatically, as components of spatial and social practice. They are elements that give texture to a place; as Amnesia alluded to in our encounter and drift, for them the 18th arrondissement is a queer assemblage of police rundowns, bustling streets, silent break-ups and raucous fights, and acts of mutual care shared within intimacy, near the blind windows of a humid and creaking apartment. The log, the *casier*, the photograph may give us a glimpse into this affective topography; a glimpse, which may be more or less voyeuristic, more or less violent, more or less sadistic in its desire to break, to steal away, to capture. But it may not convey to us something that must be lived in order to be understood. The freedom put on display in the cabaret – be it the cabaret of the *Belle Époque*, the *revue* that Marie-Pierre Pruvot starred in, or the multidisciplinary cabaret of contemporary Paris – is incommensurable with the daily practice of shaping oneself, of taking and making place. *We cannot be represented*.

26-27. *Deux extraordinaires tatouages antisociaux empreints d'un humour crapuleux.*

[Figure 55. A representation of the abject. Photographs taken by Robert Doisneau featured in *Les tatouages du "Milieu"* by Jacques Delarue and Robert Giraud. The caption reads: "Two extraordinary antisocial tattoos imbued with nasty (*crapuleux*) humour." Source: Criminocorpus online database of the *Musée d'histoire de la justice, des crimes et des peines*.]

Conclusion

Through the overlapping and contrapuntal structure of this dissertation, I envisioned a shifting interplay of scales and registers that would both convey how fieldwork was undertaken and offer a partial rendering of the surrounds of the 18th arrondissement, which I have taken up through the methodological concept of queer assemblage. With this, I presented an argument about the way power functions in urban space: a dynamic production of territory that relies on harnessing the potential laced within abjection, used in order to produce a desirable city. By turning successively to the garden, the capitalistic urban development, the third place, the affective topography of the street, and the archival representation queer sexualities, I sought to show how queerness is brought into the fold of urban planning. I understand this "fold," in line with the work of Gilles Deleuze on *Le Pli*, as a way of representing social relations structured around ambivalent modalities of inclusion and exclusion: there is no definite exteriority that one could locate outside of political order, in the sense that what is excluded, whether symbolically or materially, is always included within political order as that which must yet cannot be excluded. This holds true for States built on racial or national exclusion, such as colonial situations or ethno-racial political systems.

This also illustrates the ambivalent "inclusion" of queer symbols, aesthetic forms, and subject positions in the contemporary. The longue durée of this ambivalent relationship between order and queerness suggests such contemporary inclusion is not irreversible; it is, in fact, the continuation of a back-and-forth motion of unfolding and enfolding, of visibility and erasure. As a result, I argue that the current moment of visibility, of what appear to be political and cultural openings for queer communities, requires that we – whatever this *we* may be – pursue a renewal of critique rather than to accept receding into the sociopolitical position that has been granted.

Although blackness is not centered in this dissertation, the perspective developed here echoes the work of Black feminist geography. As Katherine McKittrick has astutely showed, the symbolic and material red-lining of Black life does not mean that such life is absent from the forms and norms of legitimate, dominant citizenship. The surrounds are always latently present, either as a spectral hauntive obsessions of urban

projects or as the grounds within which the project takes place. Yet, despite the intervention of experts into and within abject space, the reconfiguration of these spaces and the social relations that they house implies the creation of new forms of abjection. The territorialization of citizenship is a territorialization of a State-centered model of social relations; and that which exceeds these models continues to be thrown in front of us at distance from which it can still be seen (*ab jectus*). It is my personal, political and affective, hope that such continued ascription to unbelonging may allow for new regimes of opacity, new ways for minoritized lifeworlds to "escape capture." For this reason, I have willfully accepted the refusal of trans sex workers to participate in this work, and by way of this acceptance, to maintain the degree of opacity against the scholarly urge to ethnographically document queer and abjected sexualities.

This dissertation does not squarely engage with phenomenology. But it remains informed by it; although I do not systematically foreground it, my personal, affective and recursively analytical experience of life in the 18th arrondissement is key to the fragmented cartography I have assembled here. This specificity does not emerge from my subjective experience of race, gender, and place – not exclusively. What is decisive here, rather, is the sustained engagement with the political rationalities that determine what constitutes the legitimate subject, and how that subject comes to exist in a given space. If phenomenology posits the importance of lived experience, then I am interested in the techniques of power that render that experience legible and, to a certain extent, produce the material and semiotic terrain on which experience takes place. Ruminating on Sara Ahmed's questioning of "the orientation *of* phenomenology," I investigated the politics of desire that give the city its distinctive affective topography: or, rather, the orientations *of* contemporary urbanism.

Ephemera, as Munoz presents it, "reformulates and expands our understandings of materiality" (1996: 10). Taking this seriously, the key argument is not to perpetuate an ontological separation between matter and meaning, but, rather, it is considers how materiality and semiotics may in fact take place within a common field of world-making: the spatiality in which we, when we dwell, experience space existentially as an engineered physical structure and a dense psychological amalgamation. We project impressions on space,

as spaces impress on us their image. This *we*, which I summon unceremoniously, is a frustrated one, which brings one into the hierarchical space of experts of city planning, grassroots actors of urban development, and residents whose work and life resource and reproduce the city's aesthetic.

While I consider all these actors together, I do not relinquish the existing hierarchies that separate them, as their speech acts do not hold identical sway in the French public sphere. Although I do believe that taken together, they allow us to glimpse a queer assemblage, in which minoritized subject positions are (at least for now) taken up by policymakers as important vectors of remaking the city. This momentary and syncretic form of urban policy is best illustrated by the contemporary emergence of prefigurative urbanism within official spatial planning. The proliferation of ephemeral activities, spatial structures, and atmospheres has become, since 2015 and more decidedly after 2021, one of the ways that city planners prefigure the city of tomorrow.

My central argument is, then, that contemporary urban planning relies on what city officials call prefigurative urbanism, or *urbanisme de préfiguration*. By prefiguration here we should understand a form of tactical urbanism, which relies on temporary – malleable and modulable – urban projects to experiment with spatial form, cultural innovation, and to "strengthen social links" (*renforcer le lien social*) and prefigure – plan, test, and implement – the forms and norms of social life. Institutional discourse – at all levels of actors – mobilizes categories of otherness and difference to frame its desired outcome: a form of social mixing (*mixité* and *brassage*) of class and socio-racial groups, displayed in large public spaces and semi-public places (such as repurposed infrastructure). This program takes up some of the key questions – and answers – of colonial urbanism, a particular type of cosmopolitan colonial urban planning, that sought to produce the spatial form of colonial citizenship, a socio-spatial organization of proximity and separation along cultural and racial lines.

The history of post-war reconstruction and the dispersal of Algerian shantytown dwellers arguably took on these concerns and adopted a hardline approach opposed to Lyautey's "techno-cosmopolitan" projects, which favoured transferring colonial workers into separate urban zones. Both approaches, however, involve

a component of social engineering: bringing those marked by difference and defined through a lack of modern conduct into the fold of modern urban citizenship. As immigrants came to be the object of citizenship training, from the socio-educational component of *cités de transit* to contemporary *tiers-lieu* neoliberal social welfare, the "Muslim" continues to exist within the French *polis* as a target of urban projects; generative projects meant to produce effects of rule, to interpolate minoritized communities via encounters across difference. This constitutes, in my eyes, what David Scott defined as colonial governmentality. This governmentality, because of the historical sequence that saw Empire recede and colonial workers remain in France, continued to structure the organization of the *polis*.

Concretely, this colonial governmentality works to 1) maintain a dynamic relationship between territory and government by 2) establishing constant feedback of information in the form of territorial diagnostics. This production of knowledge is contingent on the proliferation of 3) locally anchored grassroots organization. Through institutional pressures exercised in part through the subsidy process and as a result of contemporary cultural trends, these organizations tend to be framed as 4) "third places" (*tiers-lieux*), a hybrid economic model and modulable spatial form, that constitutes itself as a venue for commercial, cultural, and social activities and, thinking with decolonial scholars, serves as a "milieu" for "coloniality as encounter" (Noble, 2015). These techniques are part of a governmentality that labours space to change it and, significantly, to alter the social fabric of urban space, to experiment new forms and norms of citizenship, to produce "social links."

Working with the concept of queer assemblage to orient the inquiry through this milieu of urbanistic experimentation has put into relief the role that queer cultural entrepreneurs and queer people writ large are being made to play in the territorialization of such *lien social*, as key – although minor, in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari – actors of socio-spatially engineered encounters across difference. This last element reflects not simply contemporary tolerance toward sexual difference and queerness in France, but also signals to the instrumentalization of queerness in organizing the French *polis*, as analyzed by Mehamed Mack (2016). Further, as the archive suggests, the proximity between *eros* and *polis* is not new; in fact,

tourism – in the colonies and in Paris – relied in part on the infrastructures of sexual exploitation and pleasure, in the regulated brothels and informal sex work quarters of Paris, as in the segregated prostitution cities of the Empire such as Bousbir in Morocco (see also Taraud, 2003).

Now, what does this mean for queer people living in the 18th arrondissement, participating in the vitality of these venues? Going against the grain of gentrification literature, I want to stress that queer communities, sex workers, independent women, immigrants, lumpen and working-class people have a long history in the area. Historical precedence and contemporary entanglements suggest a more complex narrative than the one Manuel Castells (1983) proposed about the "regeneration" of San Francisco. Yet, looking at it from a political economic perspective – to follow the money and see what money does, to echo the Marxist feminist approach of Black geographer Ruth W. Gilmore (2007) – it becomes clearer that queerness is brought into the fold of urban change, as a tool, a pretext, a convenient opportunity, but the discourse which opposes a virile Muslim norm to the modern queer experiment is a *trompe-l'oeil*, an optical and discursive illusion.

Queerness is in the fold of Empire, but it is not Empire as such. If we take the concept put forth by Gilles Deleuze, the "fold" describes a specific mode of connection, of articulation of social relations such that the interiority and the exteriority of pollical order are never quite as impermeable as they might appear at first glance. In saying that queerness is in the fold of Empire, I am trying to say that sexual identity and the cultural forms that have sprung from it articulate a specific iteration of Empire, a colonial governmentality exercised within the metropolitan Capital. But the contemporary *desirability* of queer cultural experiments as potential remedies to spatialized social problems relies on the proximity of queerness to the abject. Queerness, in the limited field-site I studied, is not self-same with Empire, yet it is enfolded by it.

What does it meant to desire the city? What does it mean to render the city desirable? One partial answer is that the desire to live in the city is one that is tied up with the modern desire to live as oneself, anonymously, within the crowd, to be queer, to be trans, as one of the key modes for experiencing the urban as a space of freedom. But to render the city desirable is an altogether different process. Oddly enough, the capitalistic protocols for making the city's abject pockets into desirable venues for culture, for capital, for investors, for

denizens, has enfolded those that is considers as outsiders, the once abject subjects that made up the Zone, the ugly, the undesirable streets corners and dead-ends of Paris, into its projection of a future, desirable North Paris. But if we take seriously the notion of the fold, the outside is always constitutive of the inside, there is, in fact, no interiority – even in situations of legal and spatial apartheid – that we could identify that was not constituted through its relationship to *its* exteriors. For Deleuze, the fold refers to this endless process of constitution of interiority through exteriority, which signals to both these categories being rather chimeric.[86]

And so, I want to pose a final argument about this idea of the desirable abject. I have studied policymakers, welfare and urbanism, I have gestured to these experts' targets and attempts to socially engineer new social fabric. I would like to stress that the immigrant communities it targets are not outside the polity; even regimes of exclusions are always modes for including, albeit in a position of inferiority, within the polity. At the same time, the "new" queer cultural programming that has emerged in the past 5 years in North Paris is not an import, an imposition from above. While capital and state are able to shape local dynamics, to monitor them, to give them a desirable form, queer cultures are in no way exterior to the locale. They are, in fact, what gave this space its historical stain, its representation as a space of abjection, a threshold through which many had to pass, working class gays and runaway queers longing for the city, sometimes as a pit stop before getting gender affirming treatment in Morocco, immigrants and refugees making their first steps in France, students, artists, sex workers…

All these people, moving into the city, have contributed to what I consider to be its vitality, sometimes at the cost of extreme forms of surveillance, police checks, arrests, round-ups, building demolitions, displacement… They have contributed to making something that all marginals and artists have sought out:

[86] Deleuze (1993) explains that "[a] fold is always folded within a fold, like a cavern in a cavern." Working primarily with Leibniz's *Monadologie* and its exegetic readers, Deleuze opens *The Fold* with a consideration for the labyrinth as Baroque form. He writes, "a continuous labyrinth is not a line dissolving into independent points,

> as flowing sand might dissolve into grains, but resembles a sheet of paper divided into infinite folds or separated into bending movements, each one determined by the consistent or conspiring surrounds. […] Unfolding is thus not the contrary of folding, but follows the fold up to the following fold" (Deleuze, 1993: 7).

a desirable abject, passed down through innuendos, chance conversations, ephemeral encounters. To see certain modes of space-making be taken up by capital and state experts is profoundly troubling to me, but at the same time, inclusion and social progress always take on the form of a selection that continues to keep certain elements of abjection out of sight; it is, in fact, necessary for certain elements to remain outside of productive representation for representation to do its work. And so, it is my hope that some dark alley ways, obscure cabaret halls, and squatted drug markets will continue to remain beyond the reach of the state's territorialization efforts, in the surrounds of legitimate regimes of identity.

Coda: The "New Gate of Paris"

Deluxe added, as we reached the end of our drift, "yes, there's an ambiguity that serves us and that we sometimes use [to our advantage]," as men walking in an urban space beset by normative imperatives of masculinity. "We live with it, but at the same time it is problematic when we exist in this context, within the violence of gentrification, of border policing, of trans sex workers getting harassed and murdered…"

We turned right on rue Simart as he noticed, "Ah, but we're almost at your place now, no?" he asked, "near city hall?" I nodded but replied I would walk him back to his building to close the loop of our drift. He looked at the time. And, with surprise in his tone, said: "It's already been an hour!" As we crossed rue Ordener, walking toward the Square Clignancourt, Deluxe continued thinking about our shared ambiguity vis-à-vis the city and its normative geographies.

"I know a bunch of queer people who live in the 18th arrondissement and make it their own (*se l'approprient*)." He interrupted himself. "Well, I guess they re-appropriate a space that is theirs, actually, now that I think about the history of the arrondissement, as you said. Queer people have a local history that precedes their moving here."

I stayed silent, wondering if by sharing my archival fieldwork I had overstepped. Or if I was instead contributing to the formation of a certain idiom of memory, something that might ground contemporary queer experience against a collective sense of ahistoricity.

"I wonder what will become of the 18th arrondissement," I said, breaking the silence.

"How so?" Deluxe asked.

"With the Grand Paris project, they want to make it the new center of Paris, the most beautiful Gate of Paris."

"You're joking," Deluxe replied, laughing, a touch of cynicism in his voice.

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