

# The hidden fourth dimension of integration : Neighbourhood identity as a resource for the Urban Poor

Élise Palomares, Patrick Simon

▶ **To cite this version:**

Élise Palomares, Patrick Simon. The hidden fourth dimension of integration : Neighbourhood identity as a resource for the Urban Poor. In S. Musterd, A. Murie, C. Kesteloot (eds.). Neighbourhoods of Poverty Urban Social Exclusion and Integration in Europe, Palgrave Macmillan, pp.120-138, 2006, 978-0-230-27275-0. halshs-01293200

**HAL Id: halshs-01293200**
**https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01293200**

Submitted on 24 Mar 2016

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Palomares Elise, Rahbi Hakima et Simon Patrick, (2006), « Paris: Neighbourhood identity as a resource for the Urban Poor », In S. Musterd, A. Murie, C. Kesteloot (eds.), *Neighbourhood of Poverty, Urban Social Exclusion and Integration in Europe*, London : Palgrave Macmillan, pp.120-138.

Version auteur

# The hidden fourth dimension of integration : Neighbourhood identity as a resource for the Urban Poor

Elise Palomares, Hakima Rabhi, Patrick Simon (INED, Paris, France)

## Introduction

The decline in the Fordist model of production has initiated the industrial restructuring of the French economy at the turn of the seventies—rapid and costly in terms of job losses—and transformed the customary forms of waged labour (Castel, 1995). As a result, France experienced massive rising unemployment, affecting growing numbers of low-skilled workers, women and young people who are denied access to the labour market. Where once exploitation in the workplace was the main issue, social and economic exclusion seems to have replaced it. The "struggle against exclusion" has became a key objective for the public policies at the beginning of the '90 and this new leitmotiv has been largely debated over in the media and between the social scientists. The welfare state alleviates poverty in the weakest sections of the population by extending its social safety nets. Never before has France known such a proliferation of schemes to assist people excluded from the labour market—from financial support (minimum welfare support, incentives to encourage integration and solidarity) to courses in professional training and social integration.

In this context, the concentration of ethnic minorities and deprived population in urban clusters is seen as a symptom of the breakdown of the welfare state's social safety system, and as embodying the ongoing process of ethnic and social segregation. As they emerge, the so-called "ethnic enclaves" or deprived neighbourhoods are perceived as the sign of the failure of -and simultaneously, a threat to- the French model of integration, i.e the universalist republican model. The outbreak of urban riots, with gangs of youths fighting the police, burning cars, looted supermarkets and vandalized facilities, has shown to all that urban "marginality" breeds in a specific type of environment. Along the lines of the "social break-down" (*fracture sociale)* theme, whereby people with low social status are "abandoned" and kept apart from the more successful groups (through processes of "disaffiliation" (Castel, 1995) or "disqualification" (Paugam, 1991)), segregation is seen as the geographical illustration of the disintegration of social ties. In this context, the word "ghetto" became widely popular in reference to areas where segregation processes have produced high level of concentration of ethnic minorities or/and deprived population. Critics have often denounced the exaggerated use of this word, pointing out that it lacked precise definition and was often

improperly used to describe situations far from what, historically, came to be called "ghettos" (Wacquant, 1992). The stigmatisation of the neighbourhoods described as “ghettoes” is one of the main burden that urban and social policies have to tackle. Nevertheless, this vague concept now plays a central role in the symbolic management of social conflicts and underscores two strategic issues: 1) the recognition of ethnic diversity and of its impact both on social organization and national symbolic representations; 2) the management of the territorialization of social inequality, in other words the attempt to control a segregative system, whereby populations are confined to specific areas according to their socioeconomic status or, which is worse even ~~in~~ from a French perspective, to their position in the hierarchy of ethnic origins.

The perception of social disorders as linked to specific areas has gained consistency ever since the elaboration, in the early 80s, of local social development policies under the cover-all label of "Urban Policy" (*Politique de la ville)*. Spatial concentration and social disadvantage thus became increasingly amalgamated, in such a way that causality is inversed : the segregation of "disqualified" populations is no longer considered as a consequence of social deprivation, but the cause of it (Simon, 1995). Observing the social and urbanistic disintegration of post-war social housing estates—and the deepening social and ethnic segregation leading to concentrations of increasingly impoverished groups in run-down housing projects lacking in basic urban services and amenities and located in depressed labour market areas—the government launched a programme of positive discrimination toward so-called “ sensitive areas ” or “ deprived neighbourhoods ”. The programme strives to restore balance to the resources of these deprived areas by boosting the necessary funding and other means. The *Politique de La Ville* is a truly multidimensional programme, tackling housing (measures to combat residential segregation, urban regeneration) and integration—both social (community support, access to urban rights) and economic (tax assistance for companies, local training and integration schemes, education support). Its application is designed to take place at local level and, despite the fact that the policy has been devised and is being financed by central government, municipalities—and even neighbourhoods—are putting their own schemes in place. The *Politique de La Ville* has set itself some pretty ambitious targets and focuses the bulk of public action on combating “ exclusion ”.

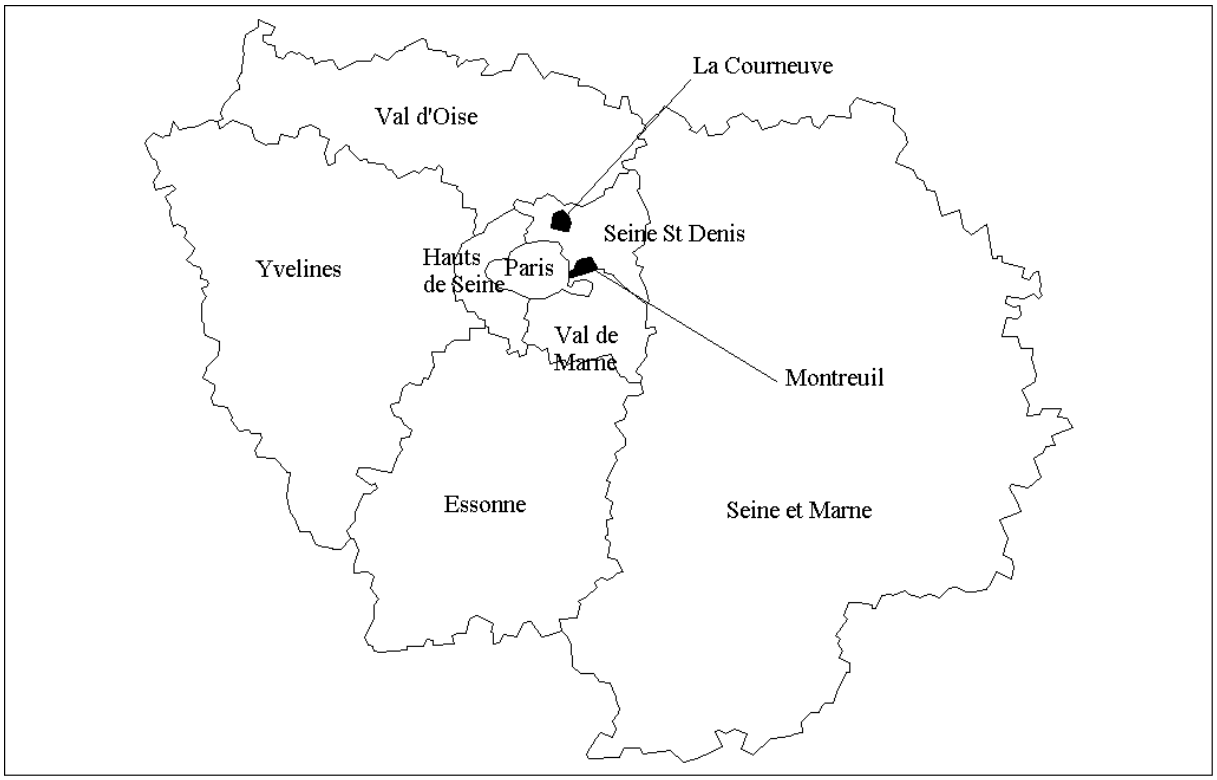
The development of these “territorial social policies” is relying on the strong assumption that neighbourhoods matter, or to use a more scientific concept, that there is a neighbourhood effects on social exclusion (Ostendorf et al., 2001). In a certain way, the whole Urbex project is concerned by the debate on the neighbourhood effects, initiated by the totemic Wilson’s book *the Truly Disadvantaged* (1987). The question whether inequalities are due essentially to individuals characteristics or can be in part explained by the additional effect of the concentration of deprived population in particular areas, is a crucial one (Jencks and Mayer, 1990). It has been addressed by sophisticated mathematical models, which have reached ambiguous answers (Ellen and Turner, 1997; Buck, 2001). The objective of the Urbex project to analyse the spatial dimension of social exclusion takes place in this debate, and this chapter aims to bring some insights from the Parisian case.

### *Fieldwork in the poor neighbourhoods of the Paris metropolitan area*

In 1999, the Paris area was made up of 396 municipalities containing 9.6 million inhabitants. This massive entity has extremely strong spatial and social differences and, just like the other major metropolises in the world, it is highly polarised. It is therefore easy to find neighbourhoods where disadvantaged populations are concentrated and whose socio-urban

characteristics match the criteria defined in the URBEX project. However, the rationale behind the distribution of functions (political, administrative, economic, residential and leisure functions) and of social and ethnic groups is based on a centre-periphery pattern (Paris-suburbs) crossed with a western-eastern opposition (roughly speaking, the bourgeois South and West versus the proletarian North and East).

For the purpose of this study, we have chosen neighbourhoods in two emblematic *communes* of Seine St Denis, a departement located at the east-north periphery of the city of Paris : La Courneuve and Montreuil. These two towns differ by their urban structure and social dynamics. Whereas Montreuil is an old industrial neighbourhood who is undergoing a process of gentrification, La Courneuve is one of the poorest cities of the Parisian outskirt and received on its territory a huge social project built in the sixties, les *4000*.




Map of Ile-de-France, with the two neighbourhoods of Montreuil and La Courneuve

The department of Seine St Denis lies against the eastern and northern borders of the city of Paris (see map). It is considered as one of the departments confronted with the greatest difficulties, to such an extent that it is now widely seen as epitomising urban and social crisis, as shown by its major socio-economic indicators (in 1999):

1. More than 32% of social housing as opposed to 21% in the whole Ile-de-France region;
2. A 14% unemployment rate (versus 9.3 % in Ile-de-France), 53% of which is long-term unemployment;
3. A proportion of industrial workers and employees which remains high: 66% of the working population as opposed to 52% in the whole Ile-de-France region;
4. A rate of people on minimum income benefit (RMI) and of isolated people facing hardship twice as high as the regional average.

5. A remarkable presence of immigrants, both in terms of demographic figures (immigrants counted for 29% of households in 1999, the highest rate in France before the city of Paris), of their visibility in public spaces and of their contribution to the social organisation of many neighbourhoods.

## 1- Gentrification in the Bas-Montreuil : protection and risks

Located in the eastern periphery of Paris, Montreuil – 90735 inhabitants – is the main town in the department of Seine Saint Denis and the third in the Ile de France Region in terms of population. Next to the residential bourgeois enclave around Vincennes, Montreuil is part of the "red belt" or "banlieue rouge" as, until very recently, it featured some its stronger characteristics: big industrial business activity on its own territory, an over-representation of industrial workers in the working population, large areas of social housing and a communist majority in charge of the municipal council since 1935. The municipal authorities have implemented a policy oriented towards the working class until recently.

Through its own history, geographic settings and social characteristics, the Bas-Montreuil neighbourhood differs from the other districts of Montreuil. Located next to Paris, enjoying Métro stations and the "Périphérique" ring road running on its western side, the Bas-Montreuil is a former extension of the Paris Faubourg de Saint-Antoine and features similar urban characteristics (intertwined workshops, factories and residential buildings).

With a surface of 200 hectares, the Bas-Montreuil hosts a thousand companies and nearly 20 000 inhabitants. Between 1990 and 1999, the neighbourhood lost 3.5% of its population (the loss was 4.3% in the whole town). This move is all the more significant as between 1982 and 1990, the population in the neighbourhood had increased by 5%, and had received new immigrants through the "families reunification" scheme. In 1990, the age structure of the population was rather focused on working age: 20-59 year olds made up 60.1% of the whole population. Households of less than 2 people were dominant (71% of the total number of households with an average size of 2.1; Montreuil: 65% and 2.3) because of a high proportion of single households with widely differing characteristics: elderly people, immigrants without their families and young working people. Lone parent families who made up 13% of the population were over-represented compared to the other districts of town.

Although it is undergoing renovations, the total available accommodation of the Bas-Montreuil remains very old (71% of housings have been built before 1949), dilapidated and basically made up of small apartments (57% of flats have just one or two rooms). In 1990, the available accommodation was by and large made up of buildings which included few social housing apartments (13% of accommodation; Montreuil: 28%). The supply of furnished accommodation is still relatively high (4.3%; Montreuil 1.3%), showing the persistence of a traditional form of housing of isolated immigrants. In a vast majority of cases, households rent their accommodation, but social housing is relatively scarce.

By and large, the socio-economic characteristics of Bas-Montreuil residents paint much the same picture as those of the city as a whole—albeit with a more marked representation of manual workers (33% of the total labour force—versus 30% for Montreuil) to the detriment of clerical staff (25%—29% for Montreuil) and middle-ranking professionals (18.5%—20% for Montreuil). The fact that the balance is tipped more in favour of the lower-skilled occupations explains the higher rate of unemployment than in the rest of the city—13.3% versus 11.4%. Having said that, from the standpoint of trades and professions, Bas-Montreuil

features a certain degree of genuine social mixing, tying in with the area's industrial calling. Rare indeed are the Bas-Montreuil housing blocks where one will not find mixed communities combining every groups of the population. The mobility of the population has remained rather high over the last 20 years: 56% of the inhabitants in 1990 did not live previously in Montreuil in 1982 and similarly, between 1990 and 1999, the population has been renewed by 54%.

The rental market in Paris and in the near suburbs is experiencing outstanding pressure. In this context, Montreuil becomes an "attractive place" as the average rent in private housing is lower than in Paris and it provides nice places for rehabilitation. The pressure is therefore all the more strong as the rehabilitation of older buildings or the transformation of factories into loft apartments offers new opportunities. The general re-appreciation of the neighbourhood considerably improved its attractiveness for middle and upper class house

With the gradual reduction of dilapidated private accommodation, households living in this type of housing (insalubrious buildings, furnished hotels, homes) and facing the most precarious conditions are gradually rehoused in social housing. The access to social housing for the deprived population and ethnic minorities relies on emergency housing procedures. Household of these groups are offered a place in the less attractive sections of social housing where one can find high vacancy rate (Menard and *al.*,1999). The trends in private and public housing alike are characterised by a gradual eviction of the least well-off households and their replacement by middle and upper class households coming from the Paris area or from other neighbourhoods of the city: a typical gentrification process.

*A restricted local job market*

Local opportunities are relatively marginal as the relevant geographic level for both job seekers and employers is the region. This is confirmed by looking at the occupational trajectories of the people we met : only two of them got access to the local job market through contacts in the neighbourhood. Most of the others work or have worked through opportunities located in other areas. Those with a part-time job spent commuting more than two hours a day.

The neighbourhood offers sometimes some opportunities for work. This is true of many ethnic bars, hotel-restaurants and shops. Numerous informal activities (either partly or totally unregistered, undocumented employees and/or with no residence permit) started thriving in the neighbourhood: "illegal" hairdressers, garages or cigarette and alcohol sales with equally illegal opening hours and various cases of trafficking stolen goods in connection with the flea market. The relative tolerance, which allowed these economic niches to expand, has decreased with the gentrification of the neighbourhood. The common idea is that commercial areas should be "normalised" and "gentrified" (quality, opening hours) by means of a renovation policy and by reducing the allocation of commercial leases. In the same way, a municipal decree has declared illegal the market inside the Malian migrant hostel.

Following Hatzfeld who studied ethnic shops in the Faubourg Saint-Denis (Hatzfeld et alii, 1997), one may hypothesise that recruitments through community networks reach far beyond the neighbourhood. The "labour pool" of Kabyle bars, which also includes the 20$^{th}$ arrondissement of Paris, seems to operate pretty much in this way. In the past, these bars used to be informal "job centre" for the unemployed industrial workers who attended them. Today, however, they no longer offer an alternative for long-term unemployed industrial workers to

find a job, neither do they provide relevant information on the job market. In the case of the only person we met who managed to get temporary access to the job market through ethnic networks, both the job and the employer were located in central Paris and contacted through business networks with no connection with the neighbourhood.

The people most actively looking for a job, who have also the highest academic degrees and/or the most extensive professional experience, were considering working in Paris or in the residential part of the western Paris region. They never even thought of the possibility to mobilise ethnic networks. People relying on redistribution for their income and for assistance in finding a job seemed quite unlikely to take advantage of these opportunities which do not seem to represent any real alternative to the "mainstream market". The informal market do not seem to offer a real alternative for the most precarious individuals of the ethnic minorities.

The neighbourhood's artists and the managers of small enterprise in the graphic, cyber and audio technology are an exception to this. They combine their professional life, housing and sociability in a small perimeter that can be described as a local community (Hatsfeld et alii, 1997). Their networks include people in work with various qualification levels, and provide a favourable context for the emergence of job opportunities for unemployed people with any kinds of skills in the related fields. Their idealisation of the neighbourhood, of the work/housing proximity as an alternative way of life, of local professional relationships based on mutual help, and the joint achievement of common projects with interchangeable positions, participation in local associations, the series of emblematic rallying places and the active support from the municipality, all in the end make up a dense network over the whole Bas-Montreuil, even if such networks reach far beyond to the neighbourhoods of eastern Paris. Still, one should not overestimate the potential of integration brought by these networks to the most precarious individuals: older long-term unemployed people, especially, have no access to them.

*Public policies and the dynamics of the local job market*

Most employment policies encompass wider territories than the one of Montreuil, like the national young people's job scheme (emploi-jeunes): 50% of the young people hired in Montreuil are not living in the city. The local employment agency for young people (*mission locale*) is shared between several municipalities. This agency and the job centre (*ANPE*) do not consider that the home/job proximity is a priority criteria.

With the emergence of new service businesses in the context of the gentrification, territory-based urban development policies are attempting to establish Bas-Montreuil as a working area designed for the least qualified workers. Through a partnership with recent businesses and collaboration with local associations for economic insertion, the municipal services try to increase the attractiveness of the neighbourhood. The urban social development programme mentions two types of measures to attract "citizen businesses" who care for their environment: creating businesses offering services for companies and their employees (restaurants, day-care centres, sports activities) and organising local recruitment procedures (recruitment clauses, direct placement, training schemes matching existing needs …). The purpose of this is to avoid a gap between the deprived section of the population and a flourishing economy.

*Redistribution, reciprocity and the local identity*

The local identity is built by the multiple social and cultural events coming up regularly in the neighbourhood's collective life and the municipality's active communication policy. Despite a high residential mobility, the sense of belonging to the city and to the neighbourhood is shared by the different social and ethnic groups. This identity feeling, which partially transcends ethnic and social cleavages, does not in any way lead to a generalised exchange of goods and services. While only exceptionally offering direct opportunities to the most precarious households, it is nevertheless favourable to a development of formal and informal forms of associative or militant life. Numerous activities of this kind are carried out by various figures on the local scene : some of them come from the long tradition of communist and trade union militant action, others belong to middle class circles who have recently moved to the neighbourhood while others are members of former or recent immigration groups. Relative mutual acquaintances between these voluntary groupings of people produce collaborations of either a short or long-term kind. Authier (1999) stressed that *"contrary to a common representation, the categories with the strongest feeling of identity relative to their place of residence are young graduate students (in a phase of residential mobility), and white collar workers or intermediate professions (well established) – who are also the people with the strongest connections to their neighbourhood, who have most deliberately chosen to live in it, and who most accurately identify it -; and certainly not elderly people, women or any members of the "captive" groups."* The presence of many such better off households in the Bas-Montreuil makes it a lively neighbourhood but only produces low opportunities for precarious groups.

National social policies are made more efficient as being echoed by many local parameters: a very dynamic associative and militant set of activities improves and diversifies access to redistribution. Apart from this process, when groups with better social and cultural assets get involved in the neighbourhood's life, the benefits for deprived groups are mostly of a symbolic nature. However, the resources of the neighbourhood are not systematically used: several women surveyed had a very negative relationship to the neighbourhood and chose to focus their strategies (in terms of job, residence, social networks) on the "city centre" or on more well-off cities in the area. Rejection of the neighbourhood is based on a strongly racialised perception of it: a Senegalese respondant thinks that the concentration of "Africans and poor people" in the neighbourhood strengthens her stigmatisation, and two others living in social housing were trying to escape from the neighbourhood as they refused to live next to ethnic minorities, regarding it as degrading and even dangerous. *"I don't like living in Montreuil, it's a… dark neighbourhood. I can't stand all these people in the rue de Paris staring at me. When I went to Annecy* [a city in the French Alpes]*, I don't mean to say that everybody is rich there, but, well, things look … brighter. Here in Montreuil I am feeling… stuck".* Such a negative perception of the neighbourhood is based on the feeling of being outcast in comparison to their initial social position.

*Scarce Reciprocity from family and friends*

Reciprocity between individuals, beyond public and semipublic initiatives in the neighbourhood itself, are very unusual. Diverse socialisation places of course are constitutive of common or distinctive symbolical reference spaces, but they are actually tools for the construction of an identity ("Montreuil" or "neighbourhood" or "Kabyle" places …) rather than a real base for exchange of commodities and services. Moreover, most marginalized people, hardly if at all (or no longer) take part in the numerous daily exchanges or in the short term excitement over local events.

Direct exchanges of commodities and services (financial help, furniture, clothes, food) are more generally limited to the family, and the local dimension is therefore no longer very relevant. On the contrary, spatial proximity actually reinforces the daily reciprocity of those very few people who have family links inside the neighbourhood. Household solidarity between precarious neighbours, on the other hand, are usually inexistent or very unusual.

Finally, family and friends' networks are often of little extent and what's more, they provide virtually no information on the official job market as in many cases, the people in the socialisation network have little opportunities available. Apart from offering temporary housing at the time when immigrants arrive to France, the pragmatic help, especially financial, is often provided by one single family member or friend and their spatial localisation is then fairly unimportant to the process.

## 2- The "4000" : Can the neighbourhood be an obstacle to getting jobs ?

La Courneuve—pop. 34,139—is a traditional working-class residential area mainly inhabited by manual labourers. It used to be an important industrial site but is now having to contend with the difficulties of redevelopment. With the highest unemployment rate in Seine St Denis—25% of the labour force—and the largest number of RMI claimants in 1993, La Courneuve and most of the surrounding *communes*—barring Le Bourget—stands at the heart of what the *Caisse d'Allocations Familiales (*CAF : Office for Family Benefits) refers to as a " poverty zone ".

The neighbourhood is sectioned off by the A1 motorway in the north and the A86 in the south. Its housing stock divides into two distinct areas separated by the " Six-Road " crossroads: the more outlying Northern District—skirted by the A1 and the La Courneuve landscaped gardens—containes the " 4000 " housing project plus a few local shops; the Southern District—situated in the far west of La Courneuve and bordering on the *commune* of Saint Denis—is closer to the town centre and equipped with a shopping precinct and cultural amenities. The commercial infrastructure of the neighbourhood has undergone a severe collapse since its construction. All the shops in the commercial centre of la Tour - whose ambition in the 1960s was to attract customers from the whole department – have now come out of business.

The combination of long, 15-storey blocks set perpendicular to one another, small 4-storey blocks and a 26-storey tower block make the neighbourhood something of an enclosed space. This may be seen most clearly in the south where the large north-south blocks loom like 16-level barriers between the housing project, the old town and the rest of the urban fabric. Aubervilliers train station is a five-minute walk away, and from there it takes about 12 minutes to get in to the centre of Paris by the RER suburban railway.

The neighbourhood owes its name—" 4000 "—to the 3,700 homes built there by the City of Paris public housing department from 1956 on. It houses 12,300 people—i.e. 36 percent of the commune population, yet 44 percent of foreigners aged 15 to 41. The neighbourhood is central to the life of La Courneuve, not only because of its demographic contribution, but rather as it became a symbol of the "high rise projects" (to such an extent that the whole town has been identified with it), with a dereliction of social life, an atmosphere of insecurity which is fed off by a partly real and partly fantasmatic delinquency. Finally, a strong immigrant

population of various origins and highly visible in public places gave the neighbourhood the reputation of being an "immigrants' neighbourhood", a perception which is further strengthened by the fairly recent emergence of associative or business structures facilitated by some immigrants' groups. Large households -one in five households living in the " 4000 " project is a couple with three or more children, i.e. three times more than in the region as a whole- and an overrepresentation of young people (the 15s-to-24s accounted for half of the total population) characterized the population in the neighbourhood.

More than a third of the neighbourhood labour force and half of the 15s-to-24s claim to be out of work. Long-term unemployment is also a marked feature here, with two in three of the unemployed belonging to that category. Three in five single parents are unemployed. Neighbourhood households can largely be described as deprived: half the monthly incomes per unit of consumption coming to less than 580 €. Earned income counts as the chief source for 60 percent of households—yet only half in the case of single-parent families: another quarter of whom remain reliant on social benefits.

The estate of the *4000* was a pioneering neighbourhood for the enforcement of "politique de la ville" urban policy programmes since its early phase in 1977. Since then, the 4000, and therefore the town of La Courneuve, have gained a terrible disrepute and are considered as "the" typical deprived neighbourhood[1]. The estate of the *4000* went through every territory-based public policy schemes since and was considered as a laboratory for evaluating their effects. The town's three secondary schools were included in the territorial positive action scheme called *ZEP* (Zone d'Education Prioritaire : priority education zones). A regeneration project for one of the high rise building was initiated in 1984, involving the state, the municipality and the inhabitants.

In spite of these heavy intervention programmes, the neighbourhood seems to continue an seemingly unstoppable decline. As social issues remained unsolved, the authorities decided to move to another dimension in handling the tower block. The demolitions has become a strategic mode of intervention on the neighbourhood: in the initial projects of urban redevelopment, the total or partial destruction of five buildings had been planned. Actually, the "Debussy" housing block (370 apartments) was demolished, in February 1986, as a prelude to the construction of the urban development zones (ZAC) of the l'Orme Seul. A second 360 apartment housing block (Renoir) was torn down by dynamite in June 2000. The pulling down of the "Presov" and "Ravel" housing blocks are scheduled for 2003. The last operation has been highly publicized, which has contributed to the emergence of a memory of the estate of the "4000". On this occasion, the history of the building has been re-appropriated and stimulated the formation of a collective identity.

*An inexistent local job market and an inaccessible regional market*

As in the case of the Bas-Montreuil, the relevant scale in analysing the dynamics of the job market is the whole Paris region. The town of La Courneuve alone has 1400 shops and commercial companies, 4% of which represent 50% of the jobs. The economic fields of small local businesses are widely diversified (biotechnologies, textile industry, food processing industry, precision engineering …). From this perspective, the location and the excellent transport connections of the estate of the "4000" are certainly not an obstacle for reaching the labour pools. The main causes behind the high local unemployment rate and

[1] On the public representations of the estate of the "4000", see Bachmann and Basiere's book (1989).

underemployment are not of a territorial nature, but rather the region's massive de-industrialisation, the increasing precariousness of the type of jobs available and the mismatch between the skills wanted by employers and those offered by long-term unemployed people. The neighbourhood's very high stigmatisation, however, and however uneasy its statistical evaluation may be, (living at the wrong address), certainly increases the ethnic and racial discrimination of ethnic minorities on the job market[2].

The discrepancy of a local job market is a twofold reality, both in terms of job supply and demand, and if nothing is done to reverse the social "disqualification" of the inhabitants, any installation of businesses may fail to create jobs for the local unemployed. The employees of the local branch of a bank and of La Poste (the national postal service also involved in banking activities) in the neighbourhood live outside the neighbourhood. A nearby fast-food restaurant has no inhabitant of the estate of the "4000" among its employees. Still, a majority of the employees in question have very limited qualifications, which confirms the above hypothesis of discrimination against the inhabitants. In the same way, the nearby supermarket, the shopping place for many inhabitants of the estate of the "4000", has only one employee from the neighbourhood. The "hard-discount" store in the neighbourhood closed down alleging a "*lack of personnel"* but it seems that security matters was the real reason behind this failure.

In addition to the scarcity of the job offers in the neighbourhood or in its vicinity, the very strategies of the unemployed is based on other towns of the Paris region, or on the "focus town" itself. Irrespective of the duration of the unemployment period , the value of work is internalised, even though short or middle term opportunities seem limited or inexistent. In this respect, getting a job outside the neighbourhood is an ideal " first stage" for escaping the neighbourhood and its twofold, stigmatisation in terms of residence and status. But this stigmatisation is precisely one of the obstacles in entering into the job market.

Existing "community" networks in the neighbourhood are not job providers for unemployed people from ethnic minorities: solidarity is more effective in terms of providing accommodation to immigrants at the time that they arrive in France, of socialisation and monitoring for administrative procedures.

The size of any illegal activities is, by its very nature, difficult to evaluate. Still, these were mentioned over and over again by the inhabitants and the interviewed. This illegal business seems to consist mostly of receiving stolen goods, such as clothes or cars, and drug trafficking – recently, drug trafficking is said to have shifted from hard drugs to soft drugs. The economic fallout of trafficking are equally impossible to assess. Social workers often mention the discrepancies between the value of domestic appliances or common consumer goods in some families and their official earnings. A parallel economy actually exists in the neighbourhood, but it can only be approached through a complex and long lasting research strategy.

*Redistribution : the use of local amenities*

[2] In their work on targeted neighbourhoods in the *Politique de la ville*, Champion and Marpsat (1996) have shown that more than the place, the ethnic origin of young jobseekers is a discriminating factor in access to the job market, even if the residential indicators are controlled. The relative weak influence of the areas on social trajectories has also been pointed out by Fieldhouse and Tye for the UK (1996).

There is a striking concentration of social services in the neighbourhood, which are also used by the inhabitants from the other parts of the town (especially the municipal health centre, the cultural centre and the social security centre). There is no clear strategy for the local authorities to implement territorial development in the neighbourhood. The idea is that any improvements in the amenities in the city centre also benefit the inhabitants of the estate of the "4000".

Access to the national public assistance schemes is locally taken care of by many public institutions, whose offices are located in one single building of the southern neighbourhood. Except for family allowances and the minimum income, however, access to the numerous existing schemes (concerning excessive debt, transportation, telephone and electricity bills, credits, food tickets) is fairly unequal because the schemes are extremely fragmented and opaque. The social care of precarious households is mostly done by the social service of the Familly allowance centre (Caisse d'Allocations Familiales) and, to a lesser extent, by the social service of the social housing landlord. In conjunction with a very well established local semipublic association, both institutions are making up for the obvious deficiencies of the social assistance service.

Most of the surveyed have developed alternative strategies to get information on their rights, mostly by turning to local associations and, to a lesser extent to the communist party. But these organisations may not actually totally compensate existing schemes because they cannot make any direct financial contribution. Integration through redistribution thus complements integration through the community sphere, but the latter is more male-oriented. And one should bear in mind that priority targets of social policies are families, leaving childless households with very little social assistance and highly dependent on the job market.

Lone mothers, all of whom belong to ethnic minorities, more often apply for – and obtain – selective assistance for themselves and their children. The work of the social centre is mostly dedicated to them, focusing on literacy (39% of those older than 18), sewing, cooking, silk painting, pottery work and knitting. The social centre also runs activities addressed to children. The deliberate focus of integration schemes on immigrant women was confirmed by the social service's assessment: out of 456 members using the social centre, 252 are younger than 18 (55% of the public) and 92% of the adults are women.

*Living in the 'Hood : sharing territory on an unequal basis*

Because of the stigmatisation of the neighbourhood's inhabitants, most of the people we met had a very negative representation of it. Very often, people just try to avoid the neighbourhood by either shutting themselves up in their apartment or by making connections outside the neighbourhood or town. The opposite move, i.e. receiving outsiders home – is not an easy one.
In the *4000*, meeting places like bars and restaurants or public places are scarce resources. Exchanges and socialisation take place in inappropriate places, like halls, alleys, squares for children … Appropriation of public places (staircases and parking places) by the 6-15 year olds is very much resented by the interviewed and other inhabitants. Benches and bus stops are home to some of the "older ones", from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, and a few Comoros nationals. By default, the market in the Place du 8 Mai 45 and the commercial centre – two important gathering places, are also meeting places to various groups at different times of day and night. The coexistence between them –usually an uneasy process – is based on this implicit sharing of the territory along gender, generation and ethnic group lines. The

absence of police forces, as repeatedly mentioned in the interviews, reinforces the "let go" feeling among the inhabitants, who see the estate of the "4000" as a different, dangerous and rejected territory. The supposed homogeneity of the collective identity of the estate of the "4000" is mostly at work outside the neighbourhood, whose internal fundamental features are a social and ethnic segmentation (or even fragmentation) and a divide between the northern and southern part of the neighbourhood.

The neighbours' committees created by the local authorities are little popular with the inhabitants who see them as control bodies. One of the most important initiatives of the municipal team for creating more cohesion and identity in the neighbourhood has been to work on the memory of the "Grand ensemble". The idea has been implemented in 1997, at the time of the demolition of the Renoir housing block, with the purpose of magnifying "local history" through its earliest inhabitants. The creation of "resource inhabitants", picked among people who already fulfilled informal mediation tasks, was part of this scheme. The strengthening of the scheme is now being considered through a system of "resource adults" who would be municipal employees and whose task would be a mix of cultural and social mediation between the inhabitants and public institutions. In this perspective, from a stopgap, the status of "resource inhabitants" could be a real strategy for professional retraining.

Inside the neighbourhood, daily socialisation is mostly articulated around women's associations and community and/or religious associations. Muslim prayer centres are socialisation places for adults and increasingly for young people, partly because of the imam's credibility with them, and partly because of the identity "revival" based on religious symbols, especially at the time of the Ramadan.

*With a little help from friends and family*

The length of residence, for precarious households, brings no advantages in terms of local integration, just like the density of the family network (a fairly usual case) does no imply the availability of any substantial assistance. Two common features to the experiences are a major dependency on redistribution and a relative isolation from family or "community" networks. Among various reasons, many women are saying that they are trying to escape from forms of social control which they find too intrusive.

The type of exchanges at work in community networks are mostly based on non financial help (minding children, small services, shopping and delivery, information). Financial help does exist but is not very common, because all in all, households are faced with the same kind of socio-economic difficulties. In the same way, there are isolated instances of solidarity between neighbours, but, according to the interviewed, it is a limited process and most of the time, the relations with next door neighbours won't go beyond saying hello to each other.

Attempts at evaluating the strength of the links between neighbours, and their capacity to bring about some solidarity are very contradictory. One may even hypothesise that the contradictions in the evaluation of relationships with neighbours – sometimes considered to be strong and at other times weak – reflect a deliberate attempt to keep the stigmatisation away by looking at any kind of links with neighbours from a distance. The social attitudes are dominated by isolation, a fear of "retaliation" in the event of "problems" and distancing oneself from the whole situation in order to get rid of the stigmatisation by passing it on to others. In the estate of the "4000", the strategy of seclusion in the domestic sphere is

especially true of lone women, but the picture is not so clear-cut: some people have family members in their own building, and everyday life solidarities between neighbours may occur.

## 3- Local identity matters

Both neighbourhoods under survey offer resources in all three spheres of integration. These, however, are not accessible in the same conditions to any inhabitants. If target groups do not use local resources on an equal basis, the differences are even greater between precarious households as a whole and the middle and upper classes living in the neighbourhoods. In the end, the initial hypothesis should be changed to include the fact that social exclusion *also* has a negative impact on the use of local resources. However, the local configuration (Elias and Scotson., 1965) which underpins and produces local identities, has a definite impact on the individual integration trajectories.

*The local job market as a deceptive alternative*

The lower employment rates in the department of Seine-Saint-Denis have triggered massive unemployment among the least qualified of its inhabitants. Moreover, a socio-spatial segregation has strengthened as people who had lost their job were "forced" into the most depreciated zones. The development of local job markets in order to act against this negative spiral is not a real alternative. The reason for this is because we are faced not so much with a spatial mismatch between the jobs and residence locations, but rather with a discrepancy between available jobs and the low level of skills offered, of the "assets in terms of representation", and of the social networks of the unemployed in order to afford these jobs.

*A sharing of wealth?*

Contrary to initial hypotheses, reciprocity between households is fairly similar in mixed social urban contexts and areas with concentrations of urban poor. In the socially mixed area of the Bas-Montreuil, reciprocity may potentially transfer wealth at the benefit of the poorer population, but in practice networks are highly segmented. The potential benefits for deprived households are limited because functional relations are scarce, except for the connections made in the school context on the initiative of an pupils' parents association and the more or less direct advantages derived from the action of numerous socio-cultural associations. Poverty levels are more significant in La Courneuve, and the objective social and economic conditions are more homogeneous. However, such a concentration of precarious households does not in any way encourage the emergence of more effective collective solidarities: the territory-based ethnic differentiation is even more clear-cut than in the Bas-Montreuil.

*The ubiquitous presence of the Welfare State*

The one typical aspect about the French case is the sphere of redistribution, which, in both neighbourhoods, has comparable levels, with differences in the organisation of the benefits. In both cases, needs are relatively well met, in spite of a deficit in public facilities which is particularly sharp in the estate of the "4000". In the peripheral neighbourhood, municipal structures are more systematically present than in the older neighbourhood, because in the latter case, the structures come as a complementation of existing local initiatives. The history of local social policies in the estate of the "4000" has developed along other lines. In a first stage, public intervention was a compensation for the gradual decline of militant and associative structures which were a real catalyst for the organisation of social life. In a second stage, these structures became "thoroughly dominant": the neighbourhood became an

experimental field for public intervention. At this stage, the public authorities act as a substitute to stimulate the local networks in order to reinforce social cohesion. Following a process of concentration of precarious ethnic minorities, other "community" structures emerged to make up for the failures of standard social policies. But, as the contents and the modes of operation of such gatherings of people are not well perceived by the institutions, complementarity between the two turned out to be limited.

In the end, the historical, urban and social differences between the neighbourhoods have little impact "in themselves" in the three spheres of integration (job market, redistribution and reciprocity), even though interrelations specific to each local context are visibly at work between the three spheres of integration. Moreover, strategies, among the unemployed, aiming at using the neighbourhood's resources are very unusual in both cases.

The choice of our observation protocol, based on the hypothesis of opposing peripheral neighbourhoods and older neighbourhoods, presupposed the existence of different forms of urban operation as a result of different social contexts. We insisted on the importance of challenging the hypothesis on many aspects, but still, it remains quite valid in terms of *the experience of poverty*. The designers of the tower blocks tried to provide quality housing but widely disregarded the environment. The lack of public facilities in peripheral neighbourhoods is in sharp contrast with the integrity of the urban space and its social functions in older neighbourhoods, whose typical feature is the poor quality of housing. On an urban level, the experience of poverty in the estate of the "4000" is having a decent home in a deficient environment, while for the poorer inhabitants of the Bas-Montreuil, it consists in having a timeworn and small home in a relatively better environment. But the differentiation of the experiences of poverty between these contrasted urban contexts is not limited to the above as the neighbourhood's renown is an additional determining factor.

*Could the neighbourhood's renown be counted as a fourth sphere of integration?*

Concerning the various potential local resources, the Bas-Montreuil differs from the estate of the "4000" on one fundamental aspect: the renown of the neighbourhood. Although the location of the Bas-Montreuil in the department of Seine-Saint-Denis - often simply mentioned by its number (i.e. the "93") - is in itself a potential reason for stigmatisation, the town's differentiation and its specific, deeply rooted representation (the media are now calling it the "21$^{rst}$ arrondissement of Paris") gives it a special status inside this "indiscriminate" and depreciated territory of the Paris urban area. The social mix inside the neighbourhood does not provide any special opportunities for the poorer sections of the population of the Bas-Montreuil, and the benefits derived are mostly symbolical: especially, the interclass and interethnic socialisation during festive events, as well as the representation of the neighbourhood stimulate the construction of a positive collective identity. On the contrary, the renown of the 4000 is in total opposition with the case of the Bas-Montreuil: the estate of the "4000" has become a symbol of poverty, degradation and violence, all typical features of the "the 93" in collective representations, and the inhabitants have internalised the stigmatisation closely associated with their place of residence in all aspects of their daily life.

Now, the survey has demonstrated that the representations of the place of residence are a strategic resource at various levels of social integration. Firstly, the disrepute suffered by the inhabitants of the estate of the "4000" by the simple fact that they live "there" has real effects on their access to professional integration. An obvious effect is their discrimination on the job market, and this also applies to the perception by the unemployed of their chances of getting a stable job. This, again, has an impact on the institutional management of "social exclusion":

unlike the Bas-Montreuil, social services in the estate of the "4000" are much more developed than professional integration services. Besides, subsidised jobs are very marginally staffed by local people, and especially young people, whose bad collective renown is too overwhelming.

Secondly, integration into society does not boil down to simply having an apartment, a job and social connections with peers: participation in the local collective life is also a fundamental resource. In this respect, the positive collective identity of a neighbourhood has a comforting effect over the social identities of the most destitute. In summary, inclusion in a positive local identity is a resource *inside* one's own socio-spatial borders and *outside* them, and concerns all aspects of daily life.

This is why we may consider the renown of one's residence place as a genuine fourth sphere of integration. Of course, this additional sphere does not provide any direct access to the job market, nor any significant improvement in Government help or any increase in the volume or quality of the practically exchanged goods and services between households, but by simply providing the most precarious households with a status, it is an essential basis, improving access to all other spheres. If the neighbourhood offers an identity potential that individuals can use to build up a positive social identity in contrast with their real social and economic situation, the urban poor will enjoy a better initial position as a result. The opposite relationship has even more systematic effects: a negative renown is vastly harmful in terms of accessing the job market, participating in exchanges and benefiting from certain aspects of public policies (subsidised jobs, professional integration, improving the school system …). The experience of poverty is all the more difficult in the 4000 because of the poor quality environment and of the negative representation of the neighbourhood.

In the end, the initial hypothesis opposing peripheral neighbourhoods and older neighbourhoods is little relevant in terms of objective differences in access (or denied access) to the three spheres of integration defined according to Polanyi's model. But the expected difference regarding the renown has more significant effects than what we had initially considered. For this reason, we would like to complete this analysis model with a fourth sphere of integration inside which the neighbourhood remains as an equally relevant entity: the local identity.

## Bibliography


Anderson E. (1999) *Code of the street : decency, violence and the moral life of the inner city*, New York : W.W.Norton.

Authier, J.-Y. (dir.) (1999) *Rapports résidentiels et contextes urbains,* Rapport pour le Ministère du Logement, Direction de l'Habitat et de la construction, PUCA. Volume I et II, multigr.

Arbonville D., Palomares E. and P.Simon (2000) *Comparative statistical analysis at national, metropolitan, local and neighbourhood level, France : Paris* , Amsterdam : AME, (Urbex series no.3)

Bachmann C. and L. Basier (1989) *Mise en image d'une banlieue ordinaire*, Paris, Syros.

Bacqué M-H. and Y.Sintomer (2001) « Affiliations et désaffiliations en banlieue. Réflexions à partir des exemples de Saint-Denis et d'Aubervilliers », *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 42-2, p.217-249.

Berthelot, J., W. Jazulot, J. Marillonnet , H.Rey and M.Verone (1998) 'La cité des 4000 logements à La Courneuve' in *Au cœur de la ville, en marge de la société, ces quartiers dont on parle,* Paris : Editions de l'Aube.

Buck N. (2001) « Identifying neighbourhood effects on social exclusion", *Urban Studies,* 38-12, p.2251-2275.

Castel, R. (1995) *Les métamorphoses de la question sociale*, Paris: Ed. Fayard.

Champion, M. and M. Marpsat (1996) 'La diversité des quartiers prioritaires, un défi pour la politique de la ville', *Economie et Statistiques* n°294-295, Paris : Insee.

Duchesne S., F.Haegel, F.Platone and H.Rey (1996) *Les attitudes politiques dans la « cite des 4000 logements » de La Courneuve*, Paris, CEVIPOF.

Duthe G. (1999) *Analyse de la sociabilité des habitants du quartier des « 4000 » à La Courneuve,* memoire de Maîtrise, MST ISHA.

EDA (1998) *Restructuration du centre commercial de la Tour à La Courneuve*, rapport remis à la mairie.

Elias, N. and J.L.Scotson (1965) *The established and the outsiders* Sage publications, London.

Ellen I.G and M.A.Turner (1997) "Does neighbourhood matter ? Assessing recent evidence", *Housing Policy Debate*, 8-4, p.833-866.

Fieldhouse E.A. and R.Tye (1996) "Deprived people or deprived places ? Exploring the ecological fallacy in studies of deprivation with Samples of Anonymised Records", *Environment and Planning A*, 28, p.237-259.

Hatzfeld M., H. Hatzfeld and N. Rinjart (1997) *Ville et emploi Interstices urbains et nouvelles formes d'emploi*, juin, multigr.

Jencks C. and S.Mayer (1990) "The social consequences of growing up in a poor neighbourhood : a review", in *Concentrated Urban Poverty in America*, M.Mc Geary and L.Lynn (ed.), Washington D.C, National Academy, p.111-186.

Lepoutre D. (1997) *Cœur de banlieue. Codes, rites et langages*, Paris, Editions Odile Jacob.

Menard F., Palomares E. and P.Simon, (1999) *Les populations immigrées et le logement à Montreuil*, Mission d'étude pour la ville de Montreuil.

Newman K. (1999) *No shame in my game :the working poor in the inner city*, New York : Russell Sage Foundation and Knopf.

Ostendorf W., Musterd.S and De Vos S. (2001) "Social mix and the neighbourhood effect. Policy ambitions and empirical evidence", *Housing Studies*, 13/3, p.371-380.

Paugam, S. (1991) *La disqualification sociale. Essai sur la nouvelle pauvreté*, Paris : PUF.

Simon, P. (1995) 'La politique de la ville contre la ségrégation ou l'idéal d'une ville sans division', *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine* n°68-69.

Tanter, A. and J-C. Toubon (1999) « Mixité sociale et politique de peuplement : genèse de l'ethnicisation des opérations de réhabilitation », *Sociétés Contemporaines*, n°33-34, p.59-86.

Wacquant, L.J.. (1992) "Pour en finir avec le mythe des 'cités-Ghettos'. Les différences entre la France et les Etats-Unis", *Les Annales de la Recherche Urbaine*, 54, p. 21-29.

Wacquant L.J (2002) "Scrutinizing the street : poverty, morality, and the pitfalls of urban ethnography", *American Journal of Sociology*, 107-6, p.1468-1532.

Wilson W.J. (1987) *The truly disadvantaged : the inner city, the underclass and public policy*, Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

Wilson W.J. (1997) *When work disappears : the world of the new urban poor*, New-York : Knopf.