

# Urban renovation : Exil for the working-class ?

*The Parisian experience*

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Birth of Urban melancholy*

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville  
Change plus vite, hélas ! que le coeur d'un mortel) ...

(...) Paris change ! mais rien dans ma mélancolie  
N'a bougé ! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,  
Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie,  
Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.

Baudelaire, *Le Cygne*, 1861

*The Old Paris is over (the pattern of a city changes faster, alas, than the heart of a mortal. (...) Paris changes. But in my melancholia nothing has changed. New palaces, scaffoldings, blocks, old suburbs, everything turns into allegory for me, and my dear souvenirs are more heavy than rocks.*

# ***Aesthetics or social relations ?***

Où est-il mon Moulin d'la Plac' Blanche ?  
Mon tabac et mon bistro du coin ?  
(...) Où sont-ils les amis, les copains ?  
Où sont-ils tous mes vieux bals musette ?  
Leur javas au son d'accordéon ?  
(...) Mais Montmartre semble disparaître  
On démolit nos vieilles maisons.  
Sur les terrains vagues de la butte  
De grandes banques naîtront bientôt

(Vincent Scotto, sang by Fréhel in *Pepe le Moko*, Julien Duvivier's movie, 1937)

*Where has gone my wind-mill, Place Blanche, my tobacco shop and my pub round the corner (...) My friends and pals? My old popular dance hall with javas on accordion? Montmartre quarter seems to disappear, they destroy our old houses. On the wastelands of its Hill, big banks will soon be born.*

# *Exile from what ?*

- Baudelaire 1861 (and Mérimée, Unesco...) : aesthetics, memory of landscape and buildings
- Frehel 1937 : solidarity, memory of working-class sociability and fairs
- And in Fordist times (1945-1985) ?
- And today ?



# I. BARON HAUSMANN'S ASSAULT ON PREINDUSTRIAL POPULAR BOROUGHS

(XIXe century, 2<sup>nd</sup> Empire, Paris)

- Paris urbanism before Hausmann : Middle-age heritage, vertical social division of space within buildings, yet growth of craft-workers suburbs inside official City and its fortifications (“faubourgs”).
- Street riots against monarchist restorations or bourgeois political transitions :
  - 1830 : popular victory in 3 days, but betrayed revolution (from absolute monarchy to constitutional one)
  - 1832 : popular defeat (*Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo)
  - 1848 : popular “unanimous” victory in February (Social Republic), working-class defeat in June. (*The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850* by K. Marx)
  - 1871 : (La Commune) : total defeat in front of French army supported by German Army.

# ***People weapons : barricades in narrow streets of popular quarters***

- ***Hausmann' answer (as Prefect of Paris for Napoleon III, 1853-1870) :***
  - Destruction of old boroughs,
  - Large avenues or boulevards
  - Extension of Paris City to its fortifications (inner suburbs)
  - Development of “the Zone” (outskirt industrial suburbs, mainly shanty towns) outside the city wall



**1832 barricade**





**Rue du  
Faubourg du  
Temple  
June 1848:  
3 barricades**





**Same spot,  
today**





***Jour de pluie in  
Paris,  
G. Caillebotte***





**Boulevard  
Haussmann,  
today**

# 2. THE MAKING OF WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBOURHOODS

## (Third Republic 1871- 1940)

- ***The new Parisian social division of space :***
  - Mainly horizontal (lifts + public transportation systems)
  - Popular Inner suburbs ("*faubourg*")
  - After WW I : destruction of the fortifications, growing popular outskirts suburbs ("*banlieue*")
  - Beginning "Red Belt" (socialist, communist municipalities) around Paris, absorbing "the Zone".
- ***The new Parisian building model :*** the "*courée*" (housings around an inner yard , with windows towards inside (and community).
- ***The working class villeggiatura :*** the "*guinguettes au bord de la Marne*" (the balls on the river Marne)
- ***The Working class dream*** at the time of Front Populaire : "*La Belle équipe*" (J. Duvivier, 1936)



**La Belle équipe: A summary of “Front populaire” urban space**

1. Mobilization through the windows  
industrial Seine

2. Fiesta in the yard

3. Walking to countryside along

4. Finding the place...  
“quinquette”

5. ... By the River Marne

6. Inaugurating the cooperative





# *A universal model : « la courée »*



Bourgeois courée  
(today)



Working-class courée  
with work-shop  
(today)

***Misery  
in Belle  
Époque  
e: slums  
on  
Montmartr  
e inner  
slope***





***Misery in Belle époque:  
Le quartier National  
(Paris 13)***



# ***Too poor or too much community? The bourgeois reaction***

- Back to Frehel : the competition for “good places” destroying working class communities
- Two social housing policies (in the name of social hygienism) :
  - Loi Loucheur (1924): subsidizing private self-made houses. The nice side of the Red Belt (the Erik Satie / Robert Doisneau Gentilly)
  - Low-cost State-subsidized flats : Habitations à Bon Marché (ancestors of Habitation à Loyer Modéré, HLM)

***Loucheur  
houses in  
near  
countryside***



***HBM "Art déco"  
on destroyed  
fortifications***



***In levelled ex-Zone :  
The Gentilly of  
Doisneau  
HBM + Loucheur House***



# ***The Ilot National (and Cité Jeanne d'Arc) case: bourgeois offensive against mobilized communities***

- Area declared (ineffectively) as unhealthy in 1911 and January 1934
- Antifascist “riot” 1934, May the 1<sup>st</sup>
- Beginning of the destruction in 1935 under police protection



**Place  
Nationale  
e  
and  
rue  
Clisson  
1900**



982 - Place Nationale et Rue Clisson (XIII<sup>e</sup> arr<sup>t</sup>)

COLLECTION F. FLEURY  
paris1900.lartnouveau.com



***Mobilization  
in Cité  
Jeanne  
d'Arc  
(May the 1<sup>st</sup>  
1934)***



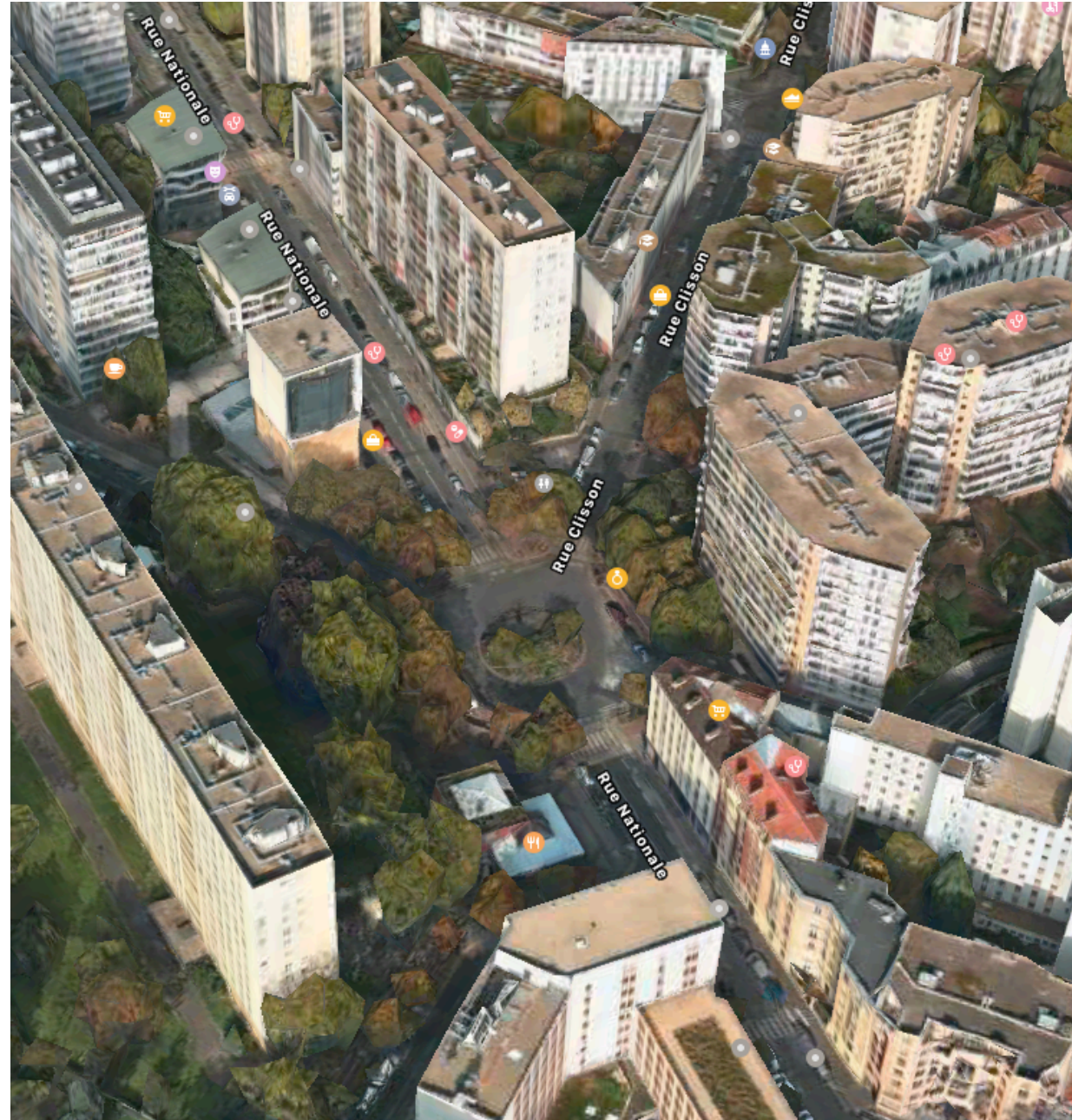
***After the riot***



Sur la rue Nationale, la bagarre a passé



***Place  
Nationale  
(and rue  
Clisson)  
today***



# 3. THE FORDIST PERIOD (1945-1981)

- Concept of Fordism : mass production, mass consumption (*American Way of Life*)
- Plus, in France : intensive rural exodus
- Social mobilizations, urban demobilization.

# ***The reconstruction of Quartier National after WW2***

- Towers with windows on the void (and cars circulation) = inversion of the “courée”. Battle for balconies.

- ***Path-breaking book in urban sociology : “Rénovation urbaine et changement social. L’ilot National”*** (Henri Coing 1966) :

In Quartier National, household consumption as a counterpart for housing isolation

- ***Generalization : “La vie quotidienne dans le monde moderne”*** (Henri Lefebvre 1968) = individual and isolated housing as a constraint to the Fordist consumption model and “colonization of everyday life” (TV, domestic devices + Car + Summer holidays)



**Second  
generation  
buildings  
rue  
Nationale :  
the  
balconies  
(Remember  
“La Belle  
équipe...”)**



***The  
outburst of  
ousskirt  
social  
housings :  
La Cité des  
4000  
(The 4000  
Flats City,  
in La  
Courneuve,  
north of  
Paris)***



# *Popular reactions*

- ***No social value*** for new buildings (“Sarcellite” )
- **But strong** (and generally defeated ) ***mobilizations for “old” working-class boroughs*** against “ZAC”  
A “Zone d’Aménagement concerté” is a Zone of urban development concerted between public administrations and private developers, **not** with the pre-existing community. Destroys former social relations.
- Beginning of gentrification of old popular neighborhoods by “bobos” : “Bourgeois Bohèmes”, trendy lefties, intellectual petty-bourgeoisie.



# 4. TODAY : THE GREENING of POPULAR HERITAGE (1981-2018)

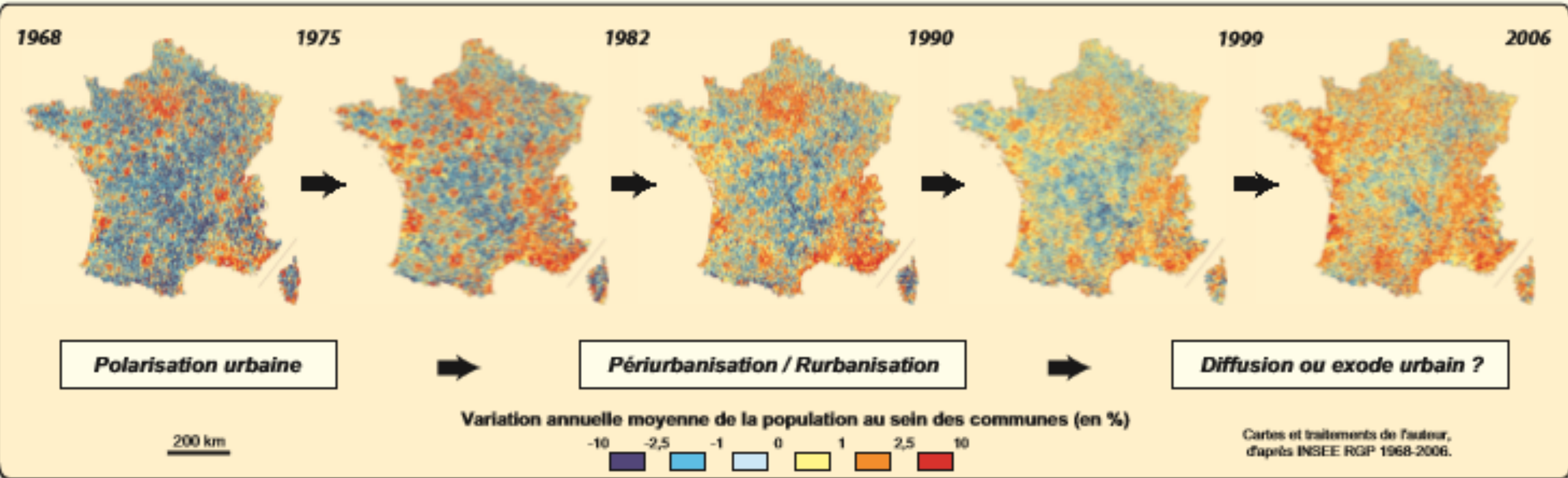
- **French “liberal productivist”** post-fordism : still productivist, less social
- **Deepening** (more inequalities) and **widening** (bigger quarters) of social division of space
- Colonization of Fordist popular developments by **drug traffics**
- Increasing **ethnic segregation**

# ***As a result :***

- Flight from the cities but still polarizations on some megapolis
- Increasing fight for “old” (pre-fordist) popular neighborhood, with contradictory effects :
  - New comers and social mix entail better position for popular inhabitants in : schooling, public services, defense against ZAC.
  - But progressive and unwanted crowding out of popular classes from popular historical quarters by “bobos”. Different from the crowding out by plain, no-bohemian bourgeoisie, like in the case of Bords de Marne or river Seine.

# *From rural exodus to city exodus ?*

■ Des reprises démographiques toujours plus éloignées des principales villes françaises...



Average annual variation in communes population. Blue : decrease, red : increase; yellow : 0% ->1%, orange : 1->2.5% (Pierre Pistre)

# Conquest of historical popular quarters in Paris by “Intellectual superior social categories”

**Beware ! : some through ZAC (12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>), some by extension of “beaux quartiers” (9<sup>th</sup>) some through gentrification (“Boboland”: 10<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>)**



(From Anne Clerval)



# Popular Paris turning into museum?

Two actual views of the central spots in:

Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain

More than 32 billions views at world box-office, including its frequent references to Auguste Renoir and his Le déjeuner des canotiers

(Restaurant La Fournaise, ile de Chatou, today appropriated by bourgeois NO bohemians).

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# ***Against the illnesses of Fordist social housing***

- The “Renovation urbaine “ by the State (first generation) : destruction of towers + cosmetic transformations of the remaining buildings.



- Weak nostalgia from formers inhabitant of Fordist social housing.
- Demand for community
- New: Demand for “greening”

# **No “community “ to defend in Fordist HLM**

***In Villejuif (south of Gentilly) , HLM Lamartine quarter (more than 30 % single mother), 70% want to leave, mainly because of control by narcos on their sons, despite of high level commitment of teachers and mothers in scholar life.***





# **“Greening” of popular heritage (1)**

***By demand for community, and for ecological reasons at local level :***

- Defense of urban parks (as everywhere : Grenoble, Istanbul... ) and of Loucheur houses***
- Wave of “shared garden” (mainly for community-building, sometime social economy), both in***

***historical working-class neighborhood***

***and***

***Fordist HLM developments***





# “Greening” of popular heritage (2)

Defense of nearby countryside against “GPII ” (useless and imposed major projects)

- *Hyper-surfaces of commerce (Europacity in “Gonesse triangle” near Montmorency forest, north of Paris)*
- *National stadiums (Plaine de Montjean, south of Paris)*
- *Airports (Notre Dame des Landes near Nantes), motorways...*



In these last cases, mobilization is not limited to the (few) local inhabitants. Regional or metropolitan and global concerns (greenhouse effects).

# Conclusion

## Renovate without excluding

- Urban renovation sometimes necessary because of “poor” physical heritage or lack of social heritage. But :
- Associating REALLY present residents in the process
- Creating or saving community spaces
- Defending and INCREASING “the green” (gardens , parks, forests, truck farming, both in interstices and periphery of metropolis.)