

Neocolonial Urbanism? *La Rénovation Urbaine* in Paris

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Abstract: This paper analyses the programme of redeveloping housing estates in France overseen by the *Agence Nationale de la Rénovation Urbaine* (ANRU). Under this programme social housing reconstruction is undertaken in a nationally coordinated fashion in order to “valorize”, “secure” and socially “mix” estates. The paper highlights the political and neo-colonial aspects of this programme and the wider state spatial strategies it is part of. Redevelopment projects not only further gentrifying land-rent valorization, state rescaling and territorially stigmatizing symbolic violence; they also reorganize territorial relations of domination in multiple, also racialized, neo-colonial and partly hegemonic ways. In a longer view, they respond to the “urban revolution” of 1968 (Garnier) and to the “anti-colonial revolution” of independence and anti-racist movements (Khiari). The paper builds on a framework that articulates marxist (Lefebvrian) and anti-colonial (Fanonian) lineages while drawing on research on the neo-colonial aspects of the French state.

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The noise [from the explosion] is frightening. It reminds me of Algeria’s war of independence, when the army bombarded our houses (Inhabitant of *Cité des 4000*, La Courneuve, cited in Abdallah 2001:160).

These projects target the most “sensitive” areas of the municipality, particularly *Les Indes* (Planner, Sartrouville, Interview 7).

One morning in June 2010, I took the suburban train to Sartrouville in the western Paris suburbs. I arrived just in time at housing estate *Les Indes* to witness the spectacular implosion of the three central residential towers there. The implosion felt like a military operation. The residents were separated from the site by barriers and riot police. When asked about what they felt about the implosion, older inhabitants and teenagers, mostly with African backgrounds, expressed sadness (about losing their places of residence and the memories associated with them) and mistrust (of politicians’ promises to tackle segregation). Their resignation was not surprising. By 1991, when inhabitants took to the street after a security guard of a nearby supermarket killed Djamel Chettouh, *Les Indes* had joined other “infamous” projects that symbolized the purported need of the state to restore order and prevent “ghettos” from forming in France. By then, demolition had already become a tactic to “valorize estates” and counter “social disturbances”, be these localized confrontations with police or mass mobilizations like the *Marches pour l’égalité et contre le racisme* from 1983 to 1985 (Abdallah 2001:161; see also Abdallah 2008).

Rather than an architectural necessity, social housing demolition in France is part of an urban policy that anticipates political threats (Bachmann and le Guennec 2002; Butler and Noisette 1977; Dikeç 2007; Tissot 2007a). Researchers highlight different kinds of threats. Those focused on *la politique de la ville* foreground state responses to anti-racist movements and argue that urban policy reacts to the challenges of decolonization (notably the Algerian war of independence) and post-colonial migration (Abdallah 2005, 2012; Bouamama 1993, 2009; Bouamama et al. 1994). Here urban policy is part of a *colonial* counter-revolution (Khiari 2008). Others borrow from Henri Lefebvre to argue that gentrification in central Paris and adjacent industrial suburbs is an *urban* counter-revolution: a response to the failed urban revolution of May 1968 that reinvents a much older ruling-class strategy to diffuse the revolutionary potential of working class Paris (Garnier 2010, 2011; see also Clerval 2012; Hazan 2002). By using the language of revolution, both sets of analysts indicate that terms like depoliticization or social control do not suffice to grasp the spectre of revolution that has loomed large in imperial France. Indeed, one may argue that both counter-revolutionary strands of pacification converge in a longer history of Paris as war against civilian insurrection (Hazan 2003).

Situated in French debates, this paper traces the political meanings of the national programme of redeveloping housing estates *Programme Nationale de la Rénovation Urbaine* (PNRU) between 2003 and 2014. Under this programme, which was recently renewed, social housing demolitions are undertaken in a nationally co-ordinated fashion, not sporadically as in the 1980s. Yet they continue to tie physical redevelopment to the socio-political purpose of mixing up resident populations. The paper focuses on 18 redevelopment projects in 13 municipalities in Greater Paris. This geographical focus makes sense given the strategic significance of Paris for the French state. It also makes it easy to understand redevelopment in all its diversity given the disproportionate weight of social housing there. The projects differ in terms of size, morphology, position in regional land and labour markets, political history and current electoral representation.¹

Complementing empirical research with a comprehensive range of French research, I will discuss the relevance of the main Anglo-American theoretical currents that have been applied to equivalent cases of social housing redevelopment and social mix planning (Arthurson 2012; Bridge et al. 2008). With qualifications, it is certainly possible to interpret PNRU projects in Paris as cases of municipally managed gentrification (Hackworth and Smith 2001), state rescaling (Brenner 2004), and the symbolic violence of territorial stigmatization (Wacquant 2008). However, these interpretations miss the *political* character of redevelopment as an anticipation of subaltern threats. And they give short shrift to the racialized and neo-colonial dimensions of social mixing. To lay the ground for these arguments, the first section of the paper outlines a framework built on marxist and anti-colonial lineages (embodied in Henri Lefebvre and Frantz Fanon) and complemented by a rich literature on the neo-colonial aspects of French state intervention since 1962. In the main section, I show that *Rénovation Urbaine* in Paris today links class, gender and “race” to articulate “urban” with “colonial” forms of “counterrevolution”.

State, Capital and Neocolonialism in the Production of Space

In *De l'Etat*,² Lefebvre treats the modern state as a contradictory complex of social relations, which, albeit hierarchical and centralized, also takes on diffuse, everyday dimensions. He underlines the centrality of state formation to the development of capitalism and imperialism. The state is key to ensuring the relations of equivalence necessary to generalize commodity exchange. This also means enforcing primary accumulation: land enclosure, the destruction–incorporation of pre-capitalist cities, transformations in the city–countryside relation, and colonial plunder. This starting point helps us understand Lefebvre's argument about the state's role in producing abstract–homogenous, fragmented, hierarchical–space: coordinating the flux of capital (fragmented by private property) and organizing domination (through hierarchical territorial relations). Focusing on the role of the state in organizing relations between dominant (central) and dominated (peripheral) spaces clarifies that domination and accumulation are closely linked aspects of state space. And it helps us understand that the urban (as form of centrality/difference) is infused by political relations between centres and peripheries. While coercive, these territorial relations are potentially hegemonic.

Lefebvre's emphasis on territorial hierarchies allows us to approach the problem of state scale somewhat differently than Neil Brenner (2004) or Manu Goswami (2004). Calling the organization of territorial relations of domination a form of “colonization”, Lefebvre suggests that one can analyse it at multiple scales to shed light on geopolitical relationships between nations, inter-regional forms of uneven development within national contexts, and spatial relationships within urban regions. The term “colonization” is not only metaphorical. Under the influence of anticolonialism, Lefebvre insists that spatial organization in the colonies is comparable with the territorial organization of “colonies” in the imperial core, both before and after independence. As to “colonization” within urban regions, Lefebvre says that planning methods like Haussmannization in the 19th century and functionalism in the 20th can be studied to compare not only Bordeaux and Lyon but also Paris and Algiers. This trans-scalar conception of “colonization” explains Lefebvre's understanding of urban revolution as a global convergence of struggles against neo-imperial capitalism, a convergence deeply feared by the architects of counter-revolution against communism and Third World liberation (Leroux 2013/2014).

Given that Lefebvre's insights about “colonization” followed observations—and wishful thinking—about a convergence of struggles in neo-capitalist France and the shantytowns and ghettos of the Americas, I can extend his analyses to hypothesize that post-functionalist urbanism responds in part to the struggles of the “long” and worldwide “1968” with urban reforms and projects to reorganize territorial hierarchies along neo-colonial lines. For this insight, I need to reorient Lefebvre with Fanon's (1975:33) view that racism is a key “modality” of colonization. This reorientation is philosophically plausible given that Lefebvre and Fanon shared a dialectical humanist perspective on emancipation and spatio-temporal appropriation. For Fanon, racism as an experience of alienation takes on a particularly ossified form through spatial organization: segregation in the colonial city, city–countryside

relations in colonies, and inter-national relations in imperial contexts. These spatial forms are co-produced by colonial and imperial states: structurally violent blocs of social forces whose agents—soldiers, policemen, urban planners—enforce the colour lines between colonized and colonizer. In this light, multi-scalar territorial relations can only be called “colonial” if they are co-determined by racialized hierarchies, neo-colonial or otherwise. In turn, claims to the right to the city/difference challenge “colonization” only if they transform spatial forms of racialization like segregation and other forms of bodily confinement.

Lefebvre’s and Fanon’s works were shaped by postwar colonial and neo-capitalist modernisms. Today, their arguments can be concretized with research on the imperial dimensions of the French state before and after 1962 (the date of Algerian independence) (Cooper 2005; Elsenhans 1974; Gallissot 2006; Gallissot et al. 1994; Le Cour Grandmaison 2005, 2009; Rosenberg 2006; Sayad 1991, 1999). This research shows that urban policy, architecture and planning cannot be understood properly without reference to imperially networked institutions, ideologies and personnel. Although largely ignored by formative scholarship (Benevolo 1993; Harvey 2003; Hazan 2002), the Haussmannian reconstruction of Paris was informed in part by France’s resurgent, now capitalist imperialism. Not only was “Haussmann” an export product facilitating the reorganization of property relations, infrastructure, spatial relations and city-building principles elsewhere, also in colonial cities (Çelik 1997; Picard 1996); Haussmann’s Paris (and its precondition, the suppression of the 1848 revolution) was itself built upon military expertise such as Marshall Bugeaud’s doctrine of civilian warfare, which was developed during the conquest of Algeria (Bugeaud 1997; Le Cour Grandmaison 2005: 310–332).

In the 20th century, the development of what Lefebvre called the “model of isolated units”—functionalist architecture, zoning and master-planning—was influenced by colonial experiences in both early and late Fordism. Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakesh and Algiers were sites of experimentation for early French modernists like Henri Prost (Abu-Lughod 1980; Çelik 1997; Hakimi 2005; Rabinow 1989; Wright 1991). Consolidated in a conjuncture bracketed by the Battle of Algiers (1957) and the Battle of Paris (1961) (Einaudi 1991), postwar planning in De Gaulle’s fifth Republic was influenced by colonial citizenship statutes and colonial personnel before being generalized after 1962 (Blanchard 2011). Postwar urbanism developed in part through imperial networks. The Gaullist technocrats responsible for regional planning in 1960s Paris had made a last attempt to keep Algeria French with the *Plan de Constantine* (Deluz-Labruyère 2004; Elsenhans 1974; Fredenucci 2003b; Leroux 2013/2014). And the housing types where migrant workers were policed and “acculturated” prior to joining regular social housing (*HLM*)—shantytowns (*bidonvilles*), hostels (*foyers*) and transitional social housing (*cités de transit*)—were also manned by lower-level colonial personnel (Sayyad 1991, 1995).

What about the period since the 1970s? The selective shift away from functionalism, *dirigisme*, and standardized social housing production was of course not a mechanical reproduction of colonialism. The move to place-based planning, social mixing, decentralized “governance” and creeping neoliberalism in the 1970s and 1980s responded to struggles (“1968”, radical struggles against urban renewal in the 1970s, and the second left) and structural contradictions (the crisis of Fordism,

the impasse of Gaullist technocracy) that were not reducible to French imperial pasts and presents. However, French urban, spatial and housing policy have also selectively reinvented neo-colonial practices. As we will see, social mixity, policing, architecture and physical planning were adapted in part from late colonial state repertoires that dealt with the “destabilizing” effects of post-colonial migration.

La Rénovation Urbaine: Gentrification, State Rescaling, and Neo-colonial Management

[This] does not mean that we have left behind representations based on racial or ethnic presuppositions. On the contrary, they have been displaced. A good example, in my opinion, is the currently fashionable notion of social mixing ... But in municipalities which already have a high proportion of social housing [as opposed to rich ones] ... the point is to modify the sociological composition of the social housing stock, that is, to diversify the now majority poor inhabitant population to make room for the middle classes. In this logic, “social mixing” becomes a euphemism for “ethnic mixing” ... Consciously or not, this logic takes up the notion of tolerance threshold [*seuil de tolérance*], which led the communist mayor of Vitry-sur-Seine to bulldoze, in 1980, a hostel for immigrant workers where Malian workers had moved in. In short, social mixing means concretely that poor families are no longer rehoused in social housing neighbourhoods. It even becomes a justification to discriminate against the families one does not want to rehouse. Seemingly by accident, these are immigrant families. I see another implicit justification for social mixing: that poor residents adopt, mimetically, the norms and ways of life of the middle classes (Abdallah 2005).

It's the same logic as Haussmann's ... They create the space necessary so that the police can charge more rapidly (Neighbourhood facilitator, Haut Montreuil).

In 2003, the Chirac government passed *La Loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la ville et la rénovation urbaine* (Gouvernement de France 2003). Named the Borloo law after the minister in charge, the legislation set up an agency, *Agence Nationale de la Rénovation Urbaine* (ANRU), to coordinate the reconstruction of social housing in target districts (mostly in *Zones Urbaines Sensibles* [ZUS]). Implemented by means of contracts with local authorities, *rénovation urbaine* was mandated to promote social mixity (*mixité sociale*) and sustainable development by demolishing, rehabilitating, reconstructing, and redesigning physical form while diversifying the housing supply by including market-rent and ownership housing on the redeveloped sites. The law replaced the *Grand Projets de la Ville* (GPV) policy from 1998, which coordinated local redevelopment nationally at a more significant scale than its predecessors, the *Grand Projets Urbains* (1991) and *Banlieue 89* (1983). Building on the GPV, the Borloo law did away with the “taboo” of using demolition to promote socio-political goals (Baudin and Genestier 2006; Driant 2012; Kirszbaum 2013). Focused on breaking up housing estates, it was the Right's response to the Socialist *Loi relative à la solidarité et au renouvellement urbain* (SRU) in 2000, which aimed to redistribute social housing territorially by obliging all but small towns to have at least 20% social housing (Desponds 2010:49).

The Borloo Law enshrined the methods of socio-spatial integration that superseded the techniques of functional separation of the postwar “model of isolated units” (Lefebvre). The *Programme Nationale de la Rénovation Urbaine* (PNRU) coordinated by ANRU confirmed the rise of housing redevelopment to the centre stage of the post-functionalist *politique de la ville* (Kirszbaum 2004; Tranb 2005). Until the late 1990s, social housing redevelopment was an important but secondary and often punctual element in place-based strategies. These policies (of education, labour-market training, community policing) targeted a patchwork of “sensitive” zones defined by a dizzying, frequently amended array of indicators (ranging, as in the designation of ZUS, from poverty and unemployment to citizenship). With the concurrent decentralization reforms, place-based policies were implemented through complex inter-governmental arrangements. Given its national focus and bias towards market housing and physical planning (over social policy), demolition (over reconstruction), and security-conscious attempts to redesign and separate private from ill-defined public space, PNRU was seen as a recentralization of France’s policy landscape (Epstein 2012a; Viviano 2005) and an example of the revanchist turn of the 1990s (Dikeç 2007:120–124).³ As I will show, ANRU projects also reinvent (neo-)colonial state strategies.

“Valorization” = Gentrification?

“Valorization” is an overarching goal of redevelopment. Consistent with the class-biased shift towards market housing since 1977 (Lambert 2015), “valorization” includes strategies to valorize land rent and facilitate market-oriented residential upgrading—gentrification in the classical sense. Real-estate dynamics and land developers play an important, if, in comparative terms, limited and often indirect role (Kirszbaum 2008:31–32; Lelévrier and Noyé 2012:188–199). Strategies to exploit rent gaps are most obvious at the existing gentrification frontier. This is true in the 18th *arrondissement* of Paris, where officials accept real-estate pressures as an obvious background condition (Interview 8; Clerval 2012:92–112), in La Courneuve (Belmessous 2007:147) or at *Franco-Moisins* (St Denis), next to the office districts surrounding the Stade de France, “where even a rotten building is worth gold” (Planner, Interview 4). It is also true in remote but transit-rich areas with white-collar jobs and middle-class residences (new town Cergy; Epstein 2008) or where high vacancy rates forced planners to leverage private investment to finance a high proportion of rebuilding (*La Coudraie*, Poissy).

The weight of land-rent driven redevelopment is very uneven, of course. On very large, isolated estates or in municipalities with a very high proportion of social housing and precarious working class inhabitants, new market housing can be limited to one or two rental buildings (provided by payroll-tax-financed non-profit *Association Foncière Logement*) or small enclaves of private ownership housing. This holds for *Les Indes* (Sartrouville), *La Cité des 3000* (Aulnay-Sous-Bois) or *Val Fourré* (Mantes-la-Jolie), 50 km west of Paris, where, in planners’ words, “real estate developers don’t come the way they do in Nanterre” (adjacent to business district La Défense) (Interview 9). In these cases, land-rent valorization means building strategic beachheads, bases for future market-oriented development. In these cases, links to new

tramways (in Sarcelles, Sartrouville, Haut Montreuil, St Denis, Gennevilliers, La Courneuve) or the Grand Paris Express subway (in Clichy-sous-Bois/Montfermeil) may help close rent gaps.⁴

“Valorization” is not reducible to profit-oriented residential gentrification, however. It also describes ways of “upgrading” social housing or providing the infrastructural, security-related or symbolic conditions for future private investment. In “red” suburbs—St Denis, Gennevilliers, Montreuil—redevelopment follows city-wide or inter-communal strategies to counter deindustrialization by attracting new employers, workers, and residents (Bacqué and Fol 1997; Masclet 2006; Tissot 2007a). Also, the bulk of housing-related “valorization” takes place within the social housing sector itself. New units built by social housing providers tend to be in categories that require fewer subsidies or allow inhabitants to acquire their units after a period of social renting (*accession sociale à la propriété*) (Comité d'évaluation 2008).⁵ In these cases, design strategies *mimic* or *anticipate* private property by enclosing building envelopes or public space. In the rare cases where ANRU projects target 19th century areas with little social housing—the 18th district in Paris, Bas Montreuil next to Paris—new social housing displaces crowded private rental units and helps clarify property titles in the process, a precondition for private investment. These cases demonstrate the multisided role of the state in gentrification in Paris (Clerval 2012:43–60, 173–207).⁶

Recentralizing State Intervention? Rescaling and Local Relations of Force

Estate redevelopment entails a selective recentralization of French urban policy, which, since the decentralization reforms of the 1980s had come to resemble a *mille feuille* of cross-cutting intra-state relations. The capacity of ANRU to leverage finance and engage localities in a competition for contracts gives it the power to standardize local projects (Epstein 2012a:238–256, 304–334). Its template-like approach pushed left-leaning municipalities to demolish more aggressively and deemphasize social policy interventions, according to decision-makers (Interviews 1, 4, 5, 11, 13). ANRU's approach is facilitated by a cross-partisan consensus about the assumptions of redevelopment: the idea that social mixing is necessary because of the pathology of concentrated social problems (“ghettos”) and the “dysfunctionalities” of postwar physical planning. Planners and politicians in left-leaning towns sometimes couch redevelopment in different terms: as projects for social cohesion and territorial equality (Interview 1), or as a way to build upon the existing “social mix” of multicultural working class districts (Interviews 6, 8) instead of maximizing demolitions, privatizing tenure, replacing resident populations or worshipping the gods of “security”. But these qualifications are variations on one theme: the imperative of “mixing” qua reconstruction (Epstein 2012b).

If the upward rescaling of the state is built on a national consensus, it is also partial and mediated by local relations of force. Since mayors and social housing providers remain crucial players in the implementation of ANRU contracts, local realities matter. This is most evident in municipalities where electoral majorities

alternate between the right and the left (Aulnay-Sous-Bois, Poissy) and within the left (Montreuil). It is also true where redevelopment projects predate *PNRU* or furnished “laboratories” for earlier national policies, as in La Courneuve and Mantes-la-Jolie (Interview 10). If national strategies to build *grand ensembles* were initially forged through local experiments (Le Goullon 2014), the policy to redevelop said estates is thus also refracted by varying political histories. One can identify two axes of differentiation. First, the commitment to rebuilding (or expanding) social housing in Socialist or reform Communist municipalities like St Denis, Sarcelles of Nanterre contrasts with a will to squeeze the social housing stock in right-wing towns like Mantes-la-Jolie and Sartrouville (Interviews 4, 9). Second, local commitments to the “Republican” project of mixing existing inhabitants with others on site and beyond vary (Kirszbaum 1999, 2013). In part, this is because the right is more likely to culturalize or ethnicize social problems (Belmessous 2007:154). However, those who advocate for ethnic dispersal and those who prefer to manage existing populations come in various party colours, as will become clear below. Both types of local variation show that state rescaling is not a simple matter of linear re-centralization.

Social Recomposition and Redesign as Conquest: Class, “Race” and Neo-colonial Dynamics

They are in the process of cleansing the city (Activist with the *Forum social des quartiers populaires*, Interview 3).

Starting tomorrow, we are going to subject the project to industrial cleaning (President Sarkozy at the *Cité des 4000, La Courneuve*, 19 June 2005, cited in Hugues 2009).

Loïc Wacquant (2008:163–198) underscores that place-based policies often build on “territorial stigmatization”: thick assumptions about the “problems” that supposedly inhere in the physical and cultural characteristics of particular places. He sees this process, in Bourdieu-esque fashion, as an exercise of symbolic violence. In France, territorial stigmatization is state policy—it is projected by the territorial targets and maps by which the state focuses urban policies and thus conceives space in environmentally determinist ways (Tranb 2005). Territorial stigmata show their weight in the frequency by which local decision-makers invoke the need to “change the image” of a particular project or municipality so as to turn them into “normal” neighbourhoods or cities. As a longstanding planner in “red” Gennevilliers said, “from the beginning in the 1970s, the main theme [of redevelopment] was to change the image of housing estate *Le Luth*, [and, with it] the image of the *banlieue rouge*”. Why? To stimulate economic development, diversify housing tenure, and thus return to a “traditional”, “European” city (Interview 5). Territorial stigma thus contrast with desired norms. As planners, activists and politicians indicate, these norms vary: street-related buildings, street linkages to adjacent areas, mixed land use, attractiveness to new residents, average levels of social housing or immigrants, and “civil” public space (Interviews 3, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12; see also ANRU 2004, 2007a, 2007b).

Insisting that territorial stigmata are variegated and need not replay the racist culture of poverty in the US, Wacquant (2008:188–190) is right to underline the importance of “youth” as a category of stigmatization in France. However, the use of this category to justify a “reconquest” of neighbourhoods and its inhabitants (who are often vilified as scum or uncivilized brutes: *racaille*, *sauvageons*), testifies to the comparative specificity of racialization in France, not its absence. If Wacquant depicts the African-American ghetto in a somewhat stylized way (Gilbert 2010), he also underestimates ethnically absolutist and racialized dimensions of urban policy in France (Sala Pala 2013). These dimensions of French urbanism are not imported from the revanchist US, as he suggested (Wacquant 1999). They are entrenched in state practices that re-articulate French histories of class warfare and imperial colonialism (Kipfer 2012; Tévanian 2003: 155–157; Tissot 2007a, 2007b). Next to current debates in France (Fassin and Fassin 2006), one can thus also draw on older Francophone anticolonial traditions to understand segregation, bodily confinement and daily humiliation in France today (Lapeyronnie 2008). This explains why Fanon’s analysis of the spatial mediations of racism is crucial to redirect Lefebvre and grasp the neocolonial dimensions of territorial reorganization today.⁷

At the most basic level, racism works in un-announced ways, through the silent effects of state strategies. ANRU projects were designed mostly for districts (*Zones Urbaines Sensibles*) that were statistically co-defined as areas with concentrations of immigrants and their French-born descendents far above the national or regional averages, reaching 64% in the Paris region (ONZUS 2011).⁸ Indeed, ANRU targets areas in ZUS where the proportions of immigrants, non-citizens, unemployed and low-waged are particularly high (Lelévrier 2010a:132; Lelévrier and Noyé 2012:186–187). Immigrant or citizenship status underestimates the presence of nonwhite residents. The ANRU projects I visited are not homogenous in class and “race” but clearly dominated by a diversity of people of colour. As officials in Montreuil and the City of Paris admit, focusing redevelopment on areas with high poverty and unemployment tends to have disproportionate effects on immigrants and non-citizens (Interviews 13, 14), undocumented workers (who do not qualify for replacement housing) (Interview 12), or African retail stores (which officials with a bias for stereotypically “French” bakeries, wine stores and flower shops do not see as proper neighbourhood stores [*commerces de proximité*]) (Interview 8; ANRU 2007a).

In France, the notoriously vague category of social mixing (*mixité sociale*) is often coded in ethnic or “racial” terms (Belmessous 2006; Kirszbaum 2008). Planners in left or right municipalities hesitate discussing if *mixité sociale* refers not only to a mix of housing tenures, income groups, and labour-market status but also to a veritable ethnic or “racial” mix (Interviews 7, 13). Why? To avoid legal sanction (“racial” targeting is prohibited) or to hide racialized fractures in the indivisible Republic (which also helps explain the absence of census data on ethnicity and “race”). Yet the silence on ethnicity and “race” does get broken (see also Kirszbaum 2013). Some documents suggest that renovation will shrink the “weight” of the immigrant population (ANRU 2004; Portes 2006). In Poissy, a planner says that the ethno-racial interpretation of mixing is “clearly in play; it is even quite explicit in the [former]

mayor's discourse" (Interview 11). In Montreuil, the local planner says this about the Rue de Paris, an African-defined streetscape:

The general environment on *Rue de Paris* is pretty repulsive; in general it is a built form characteristic of *faubourgs* [19th century suburbs]; it has always been an immigrant neighbourhood ... and today it is the neighbourhood [in Montreuil] with the highest proportion of immigrants; this presents a bad image ... it is rather difficult to mix senior managers in suit and tie with immigrants living in a hostel ... The existing mix and ethnic concentration is the problem (Interview 12).

In this case, residential and commercial concentrations understood in immutably ethnic categories are seen, together with disrepair and fragmented ownership, as obstacles to developing a "proper" social mix with real estate investment and new residents.

Explicit or coded, the racialized aspects of social mixing are most concrete in two state practices: the allocation of social housing units and security. The commissions that decide who is rehoused in which housing units often argue against concentrating "social problems" in buildings or sub-districts in ways that discriminate against low-income residents, single-parent families, and non-European residents (Sala Pala 2013; Simon 2003; Tanter and Toubon 1999; Tissot 2005). Planners in both right- and left-wing towns confirm the bias of these commissions (and their most influential members: the mayor or the social housing agency) against the recreation of "ghettos" or the concentration of "large families" in rebuilt social housing (Interviews 5, 6, 7). A facilitator in *Bel Air* and *Grands Pêchers* estates in Montreuil is frank: "Ethnic criteria are forbidden ... but they are used ... in a neighbourhood with a lot of people from Mali, they'll put fewer people from Mali ... We know because people are on these committees and tell us. It is not written down" (Interview 14). In St Denis, where the presence of nonwhite immigrants has been a factor in decisions to demolish social housing since the 1980s (David 2014:324–326), a project manager says: "in France, ethnic mixing is taboo ... [But] social housing officials are going to be hyper-vigilant not to reconstitute a 'village' in a section of a tower block" (Interview 4).

"Security" is another crucial element in the redevelopment of estates, some of which, like *Les Indes* in Sartrouville, are described by planners as no-go areas for the police. A key priority is to make projects "open", "legible", "accessible" and "permeable" for the police, which by law must approve design plans (Interviews 7, 11; ANRU 2006; Garnier 2011:26–33; *Le Parisien* 2009). "Insecurity" or "sensitivity" is coded in terms of class, "race" and gender. It often describes how un- or under-employed youth appropriate public space. The spectre of loitering youth is racialized: it typically focuses on groups of young men that are defined by African teenagers (though they may also include white proletarians) (Abdallah 2012; Khiari 2008:194–198; Rigouste 2012:12). In the *Grand Pêchers* estate in Haut Montreuil, a facilitator recalls that redevelopment was justified by the moral panic created by a few dozen young men hanging out in public (Interview 14). In Sarcelles, planners reveal that urban redesign helps confront teenagers who "occupy entrance halls" and engage in "uncivil behaviour" (Interview 6). Called *résidentialisation*, measures to "normalize" the projects by design enclose entrances and demarcate private

from public space with fences and other dividers. The norms underlying this version of planning for defensible space (*prévention situationnelle*) are vague images of village life or Haussmannized sections of central Paris (Lelévrier 2010a:96).

As these examples indicate, there are explicitly political dimensions of social mixing and physical redesign. Social mixing is often hoped to facilitate paternalistic social control: disciplining “problem populations” by subordinating them to role models: the new inhabitants. This paternalism has class, gender and “race” dimensions, treating inhabitants as second-class citizens. The expectation is that “an unemployed person amidst tenants with jobs...will be spontaneously pulled upwards” (Gilles Poux, mayor of *La Courneuve*; cited in Belmessous 2007:146) or that people “weighed down with social problems” such as single-parent families or people with the lowest incomes “may show a little more responsibility towards the collectivity” once immersed in a “mixed” environment (deputy mayor of the 18th *arrondissement*, Paris, Interview 8). Here inhabitants are deemed incapable of taking matters into their own hands; they require the presence of socially respectable—and “responsible”—neighbours.

Social mixing by demolition can aim at undermining or preventing resistance. As an activist with the *Forum social des quartiers populaires* says in historical hindsight:

... In certain neighbourhoods, certain struggles were organized, be that against police violence, against the *double peine* [deportations of immigrants charged with a crime], around housing and work issues, against discrimination in housing and all that ... in a way, they are erasing these struggles ... The best way to erase them, to make sure that they don't emerge from these neighbourhoods, is to smash them; this is the goal of the *rénovation urbaine* ... They destroy the memory [of struggle] ... they destroy families ... it is violent (Interview 3).

In projects with well-known political histories (Val-Fourré, Mantes, and Francs-Moisins, St Denis), past housing demolitions often targeted the most riot-prone parts of the projects. At Val-Fourré, planners recall that “the first actions were demolitions, and they were linked to the riots that took place in 1991, they destroyed the buildings next to the skating rink, where the riots took place” (Interview 9). In Sartrouville, memories of the 1991 riots help explain the current focus on the most “sensitive” project in town: *Les Indes*. In Poissy, where residents mobilized to stop the original plans to totally demolish their neighbourhood, *La Coudraie*, social mixing not only aims at undoing the concentration of French-Moroccan tenants. According to a planner, mixing is intended to avoid that that “*La Coudraie* remain an isolated pocket of resisters” (Interview 11).

Social Mixing as a Neo-colonial Project

The reconstruction of social housing is thus a multifaceted—also racialized—exercise to reorganize relations of domination territorially. Given my theoretical starting point, I must now ask: in what ways can the racialized dimensions of territorial reorganization be called neo-colonial in the concrete historical sense? There are at least two ways to answer this question. While fully developed only when immigrants (from the colonies and Southern Europe) entered regular social housing in

large numbers (from the 1970s into the 1980s), social mixity in housing has a longer history. In the 1950s and 1960s, towns like Nanterre and Argenteuil started to experiment with “quotas” and “tolerance thresholds” (*seuils de tolérance*) to limit the spatial concentration of migrants (particularly Arab and Kabyle Algerians) and thus not provoke local inhabitants. In this racist logic, immigrants are blamed for “native” French hostility, which is taken for granted. The term “large families” was used already then as a code for migrants, particularly those from the colonies (Blanc-Chaléard 2012; Blanchard 2012; de Barros 2005; de Rudder 1991; Masclet 2006). Red municipalities like Gennevilliers or St Denis wanted to redistribute transitional housing for migrants and social housing for the poor across the region. These Communist towns saw immigrants not as their social base but as a burden for local welfare states, and, with the rise of the *Front National* in the 1980s, an electoral liability (David 2014; Masclet 2005, 2006; Stovall 2003; Tissot 2005).

Like social mixing, policing and counterinsurgency also recompose late colonial urban strategies. As documents and planners reveal, redevelopment is often couched in military language, as a *reconquest* of “sensitive” areas (Interview 12; see also ANRU 2004, 2005). This language is not innocent. It stands in a tradition of treating migrants from the colonies as political risks. Indeed, in the 1950s, strategies to manage or dissolve migrant concentrations (in shantytowns, hostels, transitional housing, and occasionally, regular social housing) were informed by colonial personnel, tactics, and population classifications, notably from Algeria (Blanc 1983; Cohen and David 2012; De Barros 2005, 2012; Hmed 2006; Viet 1999). After 1962, these colonial practices were adapted to control and “civilize” migrants with state branches sometimes linked to housing officials: social security, immigration, citizenship, regional planning, civil engineering, local policing, internal security and the military (Belmessous 2014; Blanchard 2011; David 2014; De Barros 2007; Fredenucci 2003a, 2003b; Hajjat 2012; Laurens 2009; Math 2000; Rigouste 2012:21–49; Sacriste 2012; Spire 2005). These strategies responded, in part, to mobilizations of migrants in workplaces, shantytowns, hostels and neighbourhoods like the Goutte D’Or (Hervo 2012; Hmed 2008; Kawtari nd; Pitti 2008; Taalba nd; Viet 1999).

Notably in areas with recent histories of rioting (Clichy-sous-Bois, Villiers-le-Bel, Grenoble), redevelopment creates opportunities to experiment not only with securitized design but also with aggressive policing by mobile, semi-autonomous police units (*Brigades Anti-Criminalités* [BAC]) and paramilitary counterinsurgency. These methods racially profile inhabitants and try to keep local resistance apart from broader social movements (Belmessous 2010; Rigouste 2012). Counterinsurgency, which is used for urban warfare in non-European conflicts, is based on state security doctrines that have shed their cold war anti-Communism but still treat people of colour as internal threats (Rigouste 2011). And the hyper-masculinist practices of BAC units to provoke, chase and humiliate inhabitants redeploy neo-colonial forms of policing in states of exception (Blanchard 2011; Rigouste 2012:137–171). One can thus understand why the BAC is perceived as an occupying force perpetuating quasi-colonial state contempt (*hogra*) (Abdallah 2012:12; Belmessous 2010:124). And one can see why spectacular demolitions evoke memories of colonial war among older residents (Abdallah 2005:160)—or Gaza, the Sahel and West Africa

among younger inhabitants. Fanon's insight holds: in (neo-)colonialism, territorial hierarchies are built on police-enforced colour lines.

Don't Believe the Hype: The State and its Contradictions

The *rénovation urbaine* is remaking the ghetto, just more tidily (Yazid Sabeg, President of the *Comité d'évaluation et de suivi de l'Agence nationale de la rénovation urbaine*, 2012).

They have demolished a lot here, and every time, the problems [drug trafficking] moved elsewhere (Abdel, resident of *Cité des 4000*, La Courneuve, cited in *Le Monde* 2010).

Rénovation Urbaine helps break up stigmatized housing. It does so not by complete destruction and mass displacement but shrinking the most subsidized housing stock, differentiating housing tenure (with selective additions of market or subsidized ownership units), and decentralizing some new construction. Yet *PNRU* does not improve residents' economic conditions (Jérôme 2012), nor does it lead to social integration, political harmony, or a territorial equalization of "social problems". Instead it produces social fragmentation, fine-grained segregation, and differential residential mobilities on the redevelopment sites and beyond (Comité d'évaluation 2008; Epstein 2012b; Lelévrier 2010a, 2010b; Lelévrier and Noyé 2012; Oblet and Villechaise 2012). In the words of one planner, reconstruction encourages "those with resources (be those financial or in the form of networks) [to leave]", thus undermining existing income mixes (Interview 14). According to another planner, projects entail a "kind of social sorting ... between those who can afford the new housing [the less poor] and those who are rehoused in old apartments ... [which] are always in the same place [on existing or comparable sites]" (Interview 4). Over-represented among re-segregated low-income households are large, single-parent or immigrant families (Lelévrier 2010a:46; Lelévrier and Noyé 2012:207).

Why this combination of re-segregation and socially segmented mobility? First, the bias towards "revalorized"—smaller and more expensive—social or market housing, the difficulty of attracting new residents to some sites, and the imperative of maintaining property values in capitalist land markets, real or simulated, all militate against fine-grained spatial integration. Second, high land costs and mixophobic (racist or class-based) resistance in other areas block the dispersal of the most subsidized housing units, as planners in left- and right-leaning towns indicate (Interviews 4, 9; see also Bacqué et al. 2010; Belmessous 2006). Third, securitized design—gating new buildings, enclosing entrances, playgrounds, and parking—eliminates places where "mixing" could actually take place. A form of "bunkerization" (Belmessous 2010), securitized design intensifies the fearful habit of new (and old) residents to avoid each other on site and in the school system (Interview 9, 14). As we know from the early years of the *Grand Ensembles* (which also tried to prevent proletarian concentrations) spatial proximity of different groups does not typically yield social integration (Bernard 2009; Chamboredon and Lemaire 1970).

PNRU illustrates why analyses of place-based policy should not take for granted the intentions of public policy or the effectiveness of the official discourses that

circulate among policy makers. Following Lefebvre's and Fanon's dialectical perspectives on state and colonialism, we must pay attention to the fissures within the state and the potential contradictions between planners' conceptions and daily spatial practices. In France, a focus on the contradictions of state intervention is vital to grasp how local decisions differ in their interpretations of the central state's "Republican" goal of promoting integration with social and ethno-racial mixing (Kirszbaum 1999, 2013). These examples clarify, again, that state rescaling entails not a return to the *status quo ante* of Gaullist centralism but a new mix of national and local-regional forms of state intervention.

Municipalities like Poissy and Sartrouville are committed to breaking up existing concentrations of non-European inhabitants to prevent what in France is considered the opposite of indivisible Republicanism: a politics based on minority identities ("*communautarisme*"). According to planners, these municipalities aim to disperse many existing inhabitants and prevent ethnic group formation by refusing to build prayer spaces (Interviews 7, 11). Others, however, have no such qualms about ethnic community formation. In Mantes-la-Jolie, a left-wing politician argues that:

For the racist right, the objective is not to mix; here, we are caught within a logic of ethnic management ... a rather *communautariste* model [where] everybody stays amongst their own ... and the strategies attempt to encircle the Val-Fourré estate ... effectively adding to ethnic concentration (Interview 10).

For right-wing Mantes, "building mosques [on reconstructed Val-Fourré] ... is a way to buy social peace" (Interview 9) and prolong clientalist relationships with ethnically essentialized inhabitant groups *without* necessarily dispersing them (Interview 10; see also Kirszbaum 1999:106). As a result, social mixing sorts out existing inhabitants based on class: those who can move into newly built ownership housing on site (Zappi 2015). In Socialist Paris, support for an Islamic prayer space in Goutte d'Or/Château Rouge allows the City to differentiate itself from the fascist right (which mobilized against Muslim street prayers there). According to the district deputy mayor, redevelopment symbolically approves of the existing "working class and multicultural" "mix" even as it wants to dilute and control the African character of retail, housing and public space (Interview 8). As an activist with the *Parti des Indigènes de la République* mentions (Interview 2), supposedly colour-blind Republicanism co-exists in practice with its seeming ideological opposites.⁹

Demolition as Hegemonic Project? Structural Violence, Opposition and Incorporation

Urban movements do not survive if they only seek economic demands on collective consumption: they must represent something more or they fade (Castells 1983:96).

Inhabitants resisted manifestations of structural and symbolic violence in reconstruction: the enclosure and commodification of social housing, the loss of home and memory, neighbours and social supports. Resistance reminds us of Lefebvre's and Fanon's emphasis on the role of space and time in mediating collective action.

In our cases, resistance drew upon preexisting, complexly gendered repertoires of appropriating space in housing estates (Bouamama 2009; Da Silva 2004; Lapeyronnie 2008). Depending on the context, this meant refusing to leave units, throwing molotov cocktails at construction sites (Interview 4), or setting up post-eviction camps (Muhammad 2011). Renovation seems to have increased participation in the 2005 riots, which were more intense in places with ANRU projects (Epstein 2008:287–292). Most often, organized opposition made urban trade union demands (Castells): no needless demolition, more reconstruction, easier relocation. As indicated by campaign materials and planners, these demands were carried by local or *département*-wide organizations tied to the political infrastructure of the “red” suburbs (*Confédération nationale du logement* [CNL]; Interviews 4, 5, 6, 11; see also Collectif Logement Val D’Oise 2007; Yvelines En Lutte 2007).

Mobilizations against plans to totally destroy *La Coudraie* in Poissy and partially demolish the *Cité Rouge* in Gennevilliers stimulated attempts to link local resistance in a broader network (*La Coordination anti-démolition des quartiers populaires*) and a national umbrella group of working-class neighbourhoods (*Forum social des quartiers populaires*). Organized with the help of housing advocates at *Droit au logement* (DAL) and anti-racist militants in the *Mouvement de l’immigration et de la banlieue* (MIB), these two networks tried to overcome localism (*quartierisme*). As is evident from interviews with activists from both movements, these groups developed sharp critiques of demolition as real estate speculation and social cleansing (*épuration* or *nettoyage social/e*). They also analysed redevelopment as an attack on the banlieues as sources of livelihood and opposition for working class immigrants (Interviews 3, 15; see also CAQP 2008; FSQP 2008a, 2008b; Kipfer 2009). These efforts at networked resistance articulated the collective consumption concerns of tenant organizations with anti-racist traditions of struggle embodied in autonomous movements (Boubeker and Hajjat 2008) and non-profit organizations (*associations*) (Withold de Wenden and Leveau 2001).

In Poissy and Gennevilliers, opposition had direct effects, stopping full demolition or reducing the number of demolished units, improving the relocation process and the quality of reconstructed units (Interviews 5, 11). Indeed, real or *anticipated* resistance explains, in part, why demolition in the Paris region is almost always partial (reaching 100% only at Croix-Petit in Cergy; Interview 7). However, it has been difficult to sustain collective opposition beyond partial demands directed at individual projects. Why? Concerted redevelopment is hard to oppose *in toto* by associations and inhabitants who are forced to cope with everyday precarity (Abdallah 2005). Also, relocation atomizes residents, who leave or make sure to stay on good terms with the housing provider (Deboulet 2006; Oblet and Villechaise 2012). Finally, reconstruction tends to tilt the balance of power in favour of newcomers. In Goutte D’Or, for example, gentrifiers further social recomposition by calling for a “calmer” neighbourhood where diversity in public space is perhaps applauded but reined in (Bacqué and Fijalkow 2011:127–131).

Such conditions of subaltern fragmentation (Clerval 2012:208–228) facilitate the capacity of politicians and planners to manage opposition with a mix of coercion and incorporation. In “red” Gennevilliers, for example, City Hall reactivated its paternalist relationship with voters by convincing activists not to leave the proverbial

political roost ("*la mairie-poule*") (Interview 5). In St Denis, Sarcelles and Montreuil, consultations were tightly scripted or built upon a few "reliable", handpicked tenant representatives (Interview 6, 14). And, in Mantes-la-Jolie, an opposition politician argued that "urban restructuring represented an opportunity" for former mayor Bédier to deepen clientalism by doling out contracts and fortifying links with local religious leaders (Interview 10). ANRU projects thus illustrate the role of urban intervention (*urbanisme*) in reconstructing hegemony by fostering subaltern passivity (Lefebvre 2003:184–186). They did so by renewing with paternalistic political repertoires that deem workers and neo-colonized inhabitants incapable of historical agency (Memmi 1985:114).

Conclusion

Territorial and cultural proximities thus do not facilitate collaboration and negotiation (Simone 2010:314–315).

Drawing on Henri Lefebvre, Frantz Fanon and French research on neo-colonial state intervention, I have suggested that social housing redevelopment projects in Paris are not reducible to neoliberalism. They are not only attempts to rescale the state to facilitate accumulation and land-rent valorization; they also recast territorial relations of domination. Partly in response to or anticipation of political struggles, they try to reorganize relations of class, gender and "race" through spatial relations of proximity and diversity. To the extent that social mixing and post-functionalist physical planning recast state repertoires developed during and in the wake of anti-colonial struggles, May 1968 and anti-racist movements since the 1980s, they represent counter-revolutionary strategies of "recolonization" in the specifically racialized and neo-colonial senses of the term. Of course, redevelopment is contradictory: it often leads to micro-segregation, not social peace. However, by destructuring housing estates, these projects further a broader fragmentation of subaltern social spaces, including those of nonwhite inhabitants (Lambert 2015:28–32). They thus attest to the role of urbanism in organizing bourgeois rule and raise questions about the prospects for the right to the city. Once destructured, can peripheries like the "*banlieues*" remain bastions of popular mobilization that lead to broader forms of political convergence, as both Lefebvre and anti-racist militants have assumed? And, given the state's role in social mixing from above, how can desegregation still be a means of emancipation, as Lefebvre and Fanon thought it was (Kipfer 2013)?

The political character of redevelopment in Paris in part reflects the role of revolutionary history in France and its colonies in politicizing urban policy and inflecting pacification with counterrevolutionary meanings. However, my emphasis on some specificities of the Paris case is not meant to suggest that urban redevelopment elsewhere is devoid of political and neo-colonial dimensions. Spatially nuanced projects of "slum" rehabilitation, state-managed housing redevelopment or military urbicide in other parts of the world also show that the forcible de-segregation and dispersal of subaltern groups does not bring emancipation but new forms of political domination. (Neo-)colonialism is an important force in many of these cases, albeit in

historically variegated forms and not always in the political explosive ways characteristic of Paris and France (Kipfer and Goonewardena 2007, 2014). Moreover, state spatial strategies in Paris are not mere derivatives of a French “model”. French Republicanism is contradictory not the least because it is refracted by sub-national politics (Amiriaux 2010) and embedded in imperial histories, French and otherwise. While French urban policy developed in response to the spectre of the African-American ghetto (and its supposed British equivalents, Brixton and Toxteth), it is also an export model, serving as a negative foil (the danger of the “banlieue”) and a positive model for pacification in less revolution-prone Euro-American cases (Ronneberger and Tsianos 2009; Saberi forthcoming). One may thus say that French urbanism remains a reference point for neo-colonial strategies elsewhere. Rather than a unique case, the Paris is best seen as a crucial entry point for relationally comparative research.

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Endnotes

¹ The projects chosen were Cité des 3000 (Aulnay-Sous-Bois), Croix-Petit (Cergy), Cités des Bosquets and Forestière (Clichy-Sous-Bois/Montfermeil), Cité des 4000 (La Courneuve), Le Luth and Les Grésillons (Gennevilliers), Val Fourré (Mantes-la-Jolie), Bel Air and Grands Pêcheurs (Montreuil), Goutte d’Or/Château Rouge (Paris), La Coudraie (Poissy), Francs-Moisins, St Rémy, Floréal-La Saussaie, Pierre Sémar (Saint Denis), Les Lochères (Sarcelles), and Les Indes (Sartrouville). Research included site visits, primary documents (legislation, news articles and contracts (*conventions*) between towns and ANRU), and 15 open-ended interviews with planners, politicians and activists conducted between 2008 and 2012. Selected with the snowball technique, interviewees were confronted with the same questions about the goals and early effects of redevelopment, the meaning of social mixity, and the political dynamics of the planning process.

² The following three paragraphs are based on Kipfer (2007) and Kipfer and Goonewardena (2013).

³ In 2014, the Hollande government extended *PNRU* to 2020 with a broader mandate but fewer resources and narrower territorial targets (Gouvernement de France 2014).

⁴ On *Paris Express*, see Kipfer et al. (forthcoming) and Rigouste (2012:75–76).

⁵ French social housing is complex. It is centred on public and non-governmental HLM (*Habitat à loyer modéré*) agencies but extends to seniors’ homes and workers’ hostels. It includes multiple categories of construction finance and rental subsidies for a range of income groups. With the end of the era of big estates (*grands ensembles*) and the shift to market housing and targeted subsidies in the 1970s, social housing has undergone internal fragmentation but still houses a broad mix of inhabitants and remains less residualized than in North America and Britain. This is crucial to understanding redevelopment (see also Rowlands and Murie 2009:248–250).

⁶ Further showcasing the institutional complexity of working-class housing in France, redevelopment in *Clichy-Sous-Bois* and *Montfermeil* concentrates on *co-propriétés*, multi-residential private ownership housing that functions in effect as rental housing for precarious households (Le Garrec 2014).

⁷ Building on the transnational perspective of Fanon and his contemporaries clarifies that the space-time of racism in France is not reducible to segregation, let alone ghetto-formation (Kipfer 2012).

⁸ Segregation by class and “race” in France is complex. The majority of migrants and their descendants do not live on large segregated housing estates, the ZUS included

(ONZUS 2011; Prêteceille 2009). Many live as minorities in private housing (Belmessous et al. 2006; Lambert 2015).

⁹ Strategies of managing residents along explicit ethno-racial lines have a long tradition in immigrant workers' hostels (Béguin 2014).

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