

Noisy-le-Sec, gentrification under pressure. Report from Paris's supposed gentrification front line

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Introduction

The paper which we are presenting here will give an account of a work in progress which was conducted within the framework of a joint Franco-British research project on the position and role of the middle classes in the greater metropolitan areas of Paris and London. In it we will analyze the relationships between the different parts of the middle classes and other social groups in the urban space. And we will present the preliminary results from one of those territories, Noisy-le-Sec, a working class suburb north of Paris. What we are interested in here in this particular city is the arrival of households belonging to the middle classes. We examined them from two different angles: on the one hand we questioned the nature and scope of the social transformation brought about by those new arrivals, and on the other hand we examined the effects the local environment had on the newly arrived households. What kind of social relationships are created between the different groups which come to live together, working classes and middle classes, but similarly what about the different levels within the middle class? How do these different groups spread across and fill the available space, with what degree of isolation or conversely, with what degree of social contact? And what are the risks and rewards that motivate the middle classes in their approach to their new social and physical environment?

Within this framework, one question in particular got our attention during the case study of Noisy-le-Sec: to what degree can one even talk about gentrification? To what extent may the local social mix, the local consumption infrastructure and the housing market evolve the way the gentrification theories predict? To answer those questions, we first of all have to define gentrification. As there is an abundance of literature on the subject of gentrification. The following notes gather the elements that are indispensable to our presentation.

- (1) The term *gentrification* arrived fairly late to the lexicon of French urban sociology, while the notion of “bourgeoisification” (*embourgeoisement*) has long been preferred (Fijalkow, Preteceille 2007). A large portion of French cities centers, as opposed to their Anglo-Saxon equivalent, have in effect remained bourgeois and privileged neighborhoods and the return to the city doesn't seem like such a remarkable phenomenon. Still, there has existed, notably since the 1970s, a process of social transformation, in central or peri-central working class or socially mixed neighborhoods, leading toward a preponderance of upper middle

class families in those areas. These processes have been analyzed in large cities like Paris, Lyon and Marseille and have resulted primarily in actions to restore decaying buildings rather than in efforts aimed at renovation.

- (2) In the 1980s the term *gentrification* was introduced into the French sociology lexicon and then adopted by French sociologists through works on the “new middle classes” or the “alternative classes” which described these groups according to the professional affiliations of their members and likewise by their cultural models and by their methods of involvement (Bidou, 1984, Chalvon-Demersay, 1984). These social groups are presented as actors of social change, the bringers of innovation, individuals who promote the values of conviviality and exchange. One of their particularities depends on their relationships with the area, with the neighborhood, which is viewed in some ways as a village, socially mixed and even somewhat cosmopolitan. But recent works show that for certain segments of the population this village is only a convenient exterior décor, which in fact contributes to ways of avoiding other groups, and is a convenient vehicle for controlling diversity and keeping creation to themselves (Charmes, 2006). Differing relationships to urban and social space can thus co-exist side by side depending on the trajectories of individual households, and the structures linked to gentrification are reflected in the structures of the various groups themselves and to their social limitations.
- (3) If the notion of gentrification is today one of the most important themes in French urban research, its extensive use in very diverse contexts nevertheless remains a hotly debated topic, because it categorizes within a single term the process of transforming multiple urban conditions and involves many different social groups and spaces.
- (4) Concerning the situation in and around Paris, several works have described the process of gentrification which is currently underway in traditionally working class areas such as Belleville or La Goutte d’Or. The theory of a gentrification front line has been put forward -- a front line which would progressively sweep across the map and erase from it all the working class neighborhoods in a kind of offensive action which would push the lower classes further out toward the suburbs (Clerval, 2010). Recent works might suggest that this gentrification front might be extended to working class cities all across the first ring of Parisian suburbs and one could easily assume a widening of the Parisian model of the gentrification front (Collet, 2008). The work of Prêteceille shows furthermore that cities in the suburbs are more affected by the process of bourgeoisification than are the Paris arrondissements.

We would like at this point to discuss this theory of a gentrification front by first of all showing that the process of social transformation in Paris’s urban space is without a doubt much more complex and leads to the creation of a social landscape resembling more a patchwork than a wave spreading from the center. Furthermore, while touching areas still rather removed from the heart of the Paris metro area, the processes of gentrification change in nature. While they were once considered as the consequences

of a return to the city and as a desire on the part of the middle classes to be centrally located (Bidou, 2003), nowadays they are more associated with a departure toward the suburbs. That being the case, the gentrifying households bring to bear on their social environments and on their lifestyles a clearly less enchanted regard than those who have participated in the gentrification of working class neighborhoods in the center of Paris. In particular, those households have mixed feeling about the lower-income populations with whom they are sharing their neighborhoods. If the social changes at work in the Paris suburbs can, with some reservation, still be associated with gentrification, they are clearly being carried out more and more under some sort of pressure.

Our initial observations rely on an empirical work consisting of a body of about forty interviews and the analysis of various documents.

We will first analyze the social, urban and political context of Noisy-le-Sec. We will highlight which are the middle-class households arriving in Noisy-le-Sec, how they differ and how they resemble the urban middle classes who had already initiated such a move some twenty years before to suburbs that are now more highly valued. Then we will describe how these households selected this area, how they constitute a social group and the relationship they are building with other groups and even with the municipality itself.

Noisy-le-Sec: formerly a city of workers in the vicinity of Paris

The city of Noisy-le-Sec lies to the northeast of Paris in the department of Seine Saint-Denis, the famous “9-3” for rappers, the epitome today of an impoverished immigrant inner suburb. A city of workers which came into being with the arrival of a railroad (1849) and the installation of the railroad company’s factories and workshops which for a long time would represent one of its principal bases of employment (approximately 2300 salaried workers in 1914, down to 800 in 1974), Noisy-le-Sec historically was one of the cities which made up the Parisian so-called “red suburbs” (since 1935), characterized by the connection between a social culture of workers and a political culture, a “parochial communism” (Fourcault, 1986). Like its neighbors, Noisy-le-Sec took the brunt of the movement to de-industrialize which began in the 1970s, and the subsequent weakening of the Communist Party marked the end of municipal communism.

Furthermore, since the beginning of the 20th Century the population of Noisy-le-Sec has been far from homogeneous. There existed a local bourgeoisie and, unlike in many other communist cities, it was by a “plural” majority that communist mayors were elected after 1959. The municipal list headed by a communist was beaten by the right in 2003. A list of a leftist coalition, this time headed by the Socialist Party, was elected in 2008 but following internal dissension among the municipal group of administrators, new elections were called in 2010 and the right took over command of the city.

Out of this period of communist management there remains an important stock of social housing (44%), a municipal structure of social facilities, a library, contemporary arts center, leisure centers... but there is also a local political and associative elite that was created by this municipal experience.

The urban fabric of the city consists of workers' housing units going back to the period between the two world wars, a sizable block of public housing built after the Second World War, but also of bourgeois homes and buildings partly in ruins and former farm houses.

The transformation of rail service into commuter rail service in 1999 helped to contribute to a change in the urban status of Noisy-le-Sec within the Paris metro area by putting the city only 15 minutes from the center of Paris and giving access to it. But at the same time, as certain interviews and recent highly publicized incidents in the Noisy-le-Sec rail station will testify, the RER commuter line and its station actually contribute to the establishment of a suburban polarization in the center of the city, reinforced of late by the arrival of a new tramway which will service the first ring of suburban cities around Paris and whose completion is being done on the basis of a regional and departmental project, in spite of the reservations of the previous mayor.

Two conflicting social dynamics

The population of Noisy-le-Sec, like that of the majority of cities in the department of Seine Saint-Denis, consists of two opposing dynamics. The social specter tends therefore to spread out and the differences tend to get accentuated:

- (1) On the one hand, there is the impoverishment and concentration of at risk populations and populations of foreign origin into social housing but similarly within a portion of older social housing which is now degraded. The proportion of workers has been in constant decline (17.2% in 1999, 15.7% in 2006). In 2008, the rate of unemployment reached 19%.
- (2) On the other hand, there is a rise in the ranks of intermediate professions, executives and intellectual professions and higher positions (see the figures below) which at once results in rising local trajectories and more Parisian households coming.

	1999	2007
Self-employed	4,9%	4,2%
Executives and intellectual professions	9,3%	12,2%
Intermediate professions	23,6%	24,2%
Employees	35,9%	36,4%
Blue-Collar	26,06%	22,9%
TOTAL	100	100

Social categories in Noisy-le-Sec (source : national census, INSEE)

This double movement is quite prominent in the depictions offered by the inhabitants who, depending on their own trajectories, emphasize one or another of those dynamics. These two dynamics of social transformation are furthermore well circumscribed spatially, with each dynamic having its own area. While the impoverishment concerns above all the social housing segment, the arrival of the Parisian middle classes seems to have had a relatively restrained effect on the territory: a large rectangle accessible on foot from the station and in large part in a great supply of individual houses with yards which represents a real estate product highly sought after in the inner suburb of Paris. This gentrification, as we are going to see, remains relatively embryonic and barely perceptible.

The arrival of gentrifying families?

With real estate prices surpassing, on average, 8.000 Euros per square meter in the city of Paris, large numbers of households in their thirties or forties with children were forced to leave the center of Paris in order to find a larger home, and even more so if they wanted a home with a yard. It is difficult to measure the scope or numbers of these families among the sum total of new arrivals in Noisy-le-Sec. The data from INSEE are assembled in such a way that it doesn't allow for an estimation of the numbers of these households, but according to what real estate agents have said, they represent a very large proportion of home buyers. And more often than not, these families acquire a former working man's home or else buy a home which had until then been occupied by a family of the local bourgeoisie.

The arrival of these families does not correspond to the pattern described in the studies on gentrification which would make it seem as if the gentrification had been initiated by households without children, often belonging to an artistic milieu. To those already residing there, these new arrivals could in certain aspects appear as the "gentrifiers." What are their principal characteristics?

- (1) They belong to the intermediate or upper middle classes, enjoy relatively high incomes with regard to the rest of the community: between 40 and 70,000 Euros per year for a family with two children, as opposed to less than 20,000 Euros per

year on average for the rest of the households grouped together. In our sample, we find salaried workers both in the public sector and the private sector.

- (2) They largely see themselves on the political left
- (3) They distinguish themselves from the local middle classes by the fact that Noisy-le-Sec is not at the core of their spatial reality. The choice to locate themselves in Noisy-le-Sec for the gentrifiers is the results of a compromise between the desire for more living space and accessibility to the city center, as circumscribed by Paris city limits. From this point of view, the presence of a rapid rail line with high frequency is a key element. The relationship to Paris and to its practical and symbolic resources is essential. The relationship to the commuter rail RER is, as already pointed out, more restrained among the local middle classes: certainly the arrival of the RER has improved the possibility of getting around by public transport and therefore increased the ties to Paris, but the train station (especially now that it has become the end of the line for a tramway route) is perceived as a meeting point for the inhabitants of neighboring suburbs and thus adds an element of insecurity.
- (4) Their decision to live in Noisy-le-Sec is a choice, then, almost by default, determined by the prospect of home ownership, whether it is the case of a first time acquisition or merely to have a larger home. Many were already living in arrondissements which had been or were in the process of being gentrified in the east end of the city of Paris and, before looking for housing in Noisy-le-Sec, they first looked at communities in the nearer suburbs already in the advanced stages of gentrification, notably Montreuil or les Lilas.
- (5) They express definite and distinctive expectations with regards to their environment.

Distinctive expectations

Practically all the gentrifiers express dissatisfaction with what is offered in terms of commerce, material and services. Noisy-le-Sec is nonetheless a suburban community blessed with significant offerings: a contemporary arts center, a sizable library, a theatre, a main commercial street which is well-stocked, but it lacks several practical (and also distinctive) resources found in Parisian neighborhoods and notably those neighborhoods most highly prized by the gentrifiers. The theatre, for example, is not a national stage or a place for experimental theatre and few of the new arrivals frequent it.

There are three things lacking which are particularly singled out:

- (1) The shortage of “nice” cafés. There are to be sure a number of cafés and restaurants in Noisy-le-Sec, but not cafés attractive enough to the gentrifiers whether that be in terms of clientele or ambiance or opening hours (particularly in the evening).
- (2) A local bookstore. This type of enterprise has been in the process of being well developed in Paris over the past few years and was lacking in Noisy-le-Sec. This

type of business is sought after as a place to go when out for a stroll. It is also about being able to buy books, not only for oneself but also for one's children (these gentrifying families are avid consumers of children's literature) or to buy books as gifts.

- (3) The scarcity of high end food shops including a store selling organic products (a lack compensated for by the existence of local associations organizing direct farm-to-consumer exchanges, called "AMAP"), even if certain households emphasize that the regular market tends to offer a selection a little more extensive.

To this can be added the weakness of a commercial apparatus in general, for example stores offering articles likely to be used as gifts...

The criticism of what's available commercially can be found in the local middle classes as well, but it is expressed differently, often in terms of the city's decline. So, while the lack of a bookstore might be pointed out, it is interpreted as a sign of advancing decay, for there used to be a bookstore in Noisy-le-Sec and people regret its disappearance. The question of cafés is not raised, on the other hand, no doubt for reasons of differing social practices, and less marked by the Paris city experience.

Generally speaking the local middle classes would say that the city is socially on the decline. The closing (earlier) of the bookstore is one piece of evidence among many others of that decay. Another sign often cited is the development of businesses in the hands of immigrants: Turkish restaurants (selling kebabs) carry a particular stigma.

Gentrifiers and local middle classes: conflicting perceptions about the future and about school issues

This differing perception about the evolution of shops and local businesses serves to put into perspective the differing perceptions about social change. The locals don't perceive – or hardly do – the bourgeoisification or the gentrification of Noisy-le-Sec. They tend to consider that the working class nature of their city is becoming more and more noticeable and a number of them characterize Noisy-le-Sec above all as a poor city. This perception is the result of objective factors -- that is to say of heightened social difficulties – combined with factors clearly more subjective – which is to say that the inhabitants of these working class areas, while on the same social level, are more visibly foreigners (black and North African).

The gentrifiers see things in a different way. They often express it in ways that seem confused, but they feel themselves actively part of a groundswell of social transformation and imagine that the community will evolve because of this groundswell. Without ever being fully certain of this movement, and while still emphasizing, for some of them, that it is difficult to "live in a poor city", they expect the advent of services, facilities and new businesses which will better correspond to their needs and desires. The gentrifiers thus

situate themselves with a viewpoint the opposite of that which sees decline. The expected transformation of the commercial infrastructure corresponds just as much to a need to respond to practices of consumption as to a symbolic production which would indicate a “work of gentrification” in progress (Bidou, Collet).

One can find this difference in perception and expectation with regard to school. Public school and more specifically its student body are a source of worry for all middle class parents. The question arises especially in working class communities such as Noisy-le-Sec, with a strong presence of first or second generation immigrant households. It is a question that manifests itself, however, a little bit differently for locals and for the new arrivals. The local middle classes, whether we’re talking about the traditional lower middle class or the rising middle class, seem to think that the situation is in long term decline and tend to a certain extent toward avoidance. In this case too, the assessment of decline turns up regularly. A part of those interviewed having gone to primary and secondary schools in Noisy-le-Sec, they justify their assessment by comparing their time in school to the present.

The gentrifiers for their part imagine that things can be changed. And so they get together collectively, following a model of “colonization” strategies, as demonstrated by Agnès Van Zanten (2009). In order to avoid that each household individually decides for its child (and often decides not to enroll the child in the local public middle school after having placed him or her in public primary school), the parents get together and try to get special treatment for their group of children (putting them essentially into the same class). The result is not always conclusive and many parents take their kids out of local public schools entirely after year 7 (in the UK; sixth grade in the USA), but the expectation of change remains and the desire to provoke the change remains as well.

The efforts carried out are even more important since the gentrifiers purport to have values which would seem to strongly encourage them to favor the choice of public school and, furthermore, since for families new arrived with children, school is a key place of sociability. It is through school that parents get socialized into their community and meet people (the other vector being close proximity). On top of which, circles of acquaintance get constructed first of all between parents who belong to the same social milieu, which reinforces this realization and this strong expectation that social change is underway.

Political investment or alliance with local middle classes

Local investment is carried out through political and associative engagement. From this point of view, one can observe alliances being put together between the newly arrived and a segment of the local middle classes. Gentrifiers get involved with certain associations, particularly associations of the parents of students, participate in the development of an AMAP or in local festivities. Many talk about the richness of the

sociability they discover in Noisy-le-Sec which takes place, nonetheless, within a tightly defined circle which is socially homogeneous. Recent municipal electoral campaigns have been opportunities for some among them to participate directly in local debates and sometimes to get involved with municipal terms of elective office. The large majority define themselves as “leftist,” to a large extent in the ecology movement (several are members of the Greens, today “Génération écologie”). They are tightly linked in relationship with the intellectual middle classes who have lived for a long time in Noisy-le-Sec, the next generation of the leftist movements promoting self-management, who have built up a political sphere “off to the side” of the Communist Party. The development of a municipal project does not seem to have provoked much debate, however: the principal orientations are focused on the affirmation of the necessity of social mixing and improving the quality of urban life.

These new arrivals thus bear out a real local involvement, like the “daily adventurers” written about by Catherine Bidou in the 1980s. They also demonstrate their social goodwill which corresponds to values of solidarity. But at the same time, the stakes of reproduction remain decisive as soon as the question of scholastic orientation arises. Furthermore, local political demands are dominated by their aspirations when it comes to consumption and urban imagery which find no resonance in Noisy-le-Sec.

A gentrification which will remain embryonic?

As we have stated, for now gentrification in Noisy-le-Sec leans toward households with children. This is a family oriented gentrification, barely tied to students, to young adults without children and in the same way not tied to professional “creative” activities (which is different from lower Montreuil, an inner suburban neighborhood close to Paris, which is frequently mentioned to support the thesis that a front of gentrification is expanding beyond Paris city limits). However these social categories and these activities play a key role in the development of the cafés and restaurants the gentrifiers are waiting for. So, in Noisy-le-Sec, gentrification takes pains to make itself visible in the central space, and more specifically, in the main shopping street (with, notably, the existence of a bookstore and a “nice” café). It isn’t noticeable to the locals and no doubt no more so to households searching for housing. It acts as a brake whose importance remains to be seen and evaluated, but which is without a doubt significant.

Furthermore, with the groundswell being carried along by households with children, the gentrifiers are particularly sensitive to questions of education. However Noisy-le-Sec is a fundamentally working class community (44% of the housing is social housing) and who goes to what schools reflects this situation, since there is strong avoidance on the part of the middle classes. This evidently acts to slow the arrival of gentrifying households. Finally, in the case of Noisy-le-Sec, gentrification results in a strong sense of limitation, marked by distance from Paris and from its symbolic and practical resources.

From the return to the city center to the departure toward the suburbs

In the French literature on the subject, gentrification is often associated with a “return to the inner center” (see especially the work of Catherine Bidou). And in fact the first neighborhoods to be gentrified in the big urban centers in France were those neighborhoods in the city centers of the metropolitan areas. Then, little by little as the return to the inner city intensified, the neighborhoods on the edges of the center of the cities were affected. But today the neighborhoods or communities which are the most affected can hardly be classified as inner city. From an objective point of view, as from the point of view of the gentrifiers, it becomes more a question of suburban neighborhoods or communities. The residential mobility which is at the origin of the nascent gentrification in Noisy-le-Sec translates not as a return to the inner city but rather, for households who used to live in the city center – Paris, in this case -- a departure for the suburbs.

The remarks collected during the survey clearly express the importance of that separation from Paris city. At first, as we have seen, households indicate without hesitation that they came to Noisy-le-Sec because housing prices in Noisy-le-Sec was cheaper. Then and above all they underscore that they left Paris city reluctantly. In particular they regret having had to cross over Boulevard Périphérique, the ring road which is a symbolic boundary but which is very important in determining who lives in Paris proper and who does not. This boundary is even more important since it corresponds more or less to the administrative city limits of Paris.

The gentrifiers certainly stress that they remain tied to Paris center by a public transport system which is very efficient and effective, but it is a question of the RER commuter rail line. However, there again it was a question of a strong symbolic rupture with the centrality of Paris. The RER is perceived by Parisians as an infrastructure element designed above all for the transportation needs of suburban dwellers. The inhabitants of Paris city use the metro. In the case of lower Montreuil, gentrification has allowed and has been made possible by a re-definition of the symbolic boundaries between Montreuil and Paris, a re-definition which has been much more difficult in Noisy-le-Sec.

The limitation of distance makes it more difficult to utilize the working class social environment as a source of personal enrichment (via the discussion on social mixing). The well-known elements of the gentrifiers’s argument about social mixing have been taken up by the people encountered in Noisy-le-Sec, but they have expressed certain doubts – a lot more clearly than their Parisian counterparts in Belleville or in the 18th Arrondissement. Several households encountered have said without hesitation that they would have preferred suburban communities less working class (Nogent-sur-Marne or Vincennes, for example). And even for those who deal less with the neighbors of bourgeois households, the working class character of Noisy-le-Sec often seems too

pronounced. As one of the persons interviewed had said, “we’ve had enough of living with the poor.” By saying that, this person criticizes the consequences of poverty in terms of public services, quality of education and local taxes (one pays more dearly for fewer services).

Gentrification under pressure

The spatially and socially limited nature of gentrification in Noisy-le-Sec along with the differences in the structure of the movements associated with gentrification, give reasons to revise or even to abandon the theory of the gentrification front. One important question gets raised, however: is the situation fundamental? In other words, aren’t the semi-detached and attached houses neighborhoods near the Noisy-le-Sec train station only the beginning of the process? Aren’t they ultimately going to follow the same paths as the other working class suburbs of Paris whose gentrification is confirmed, following the example of lower Montreuil?

A number of empirical and theoretical elements contradict these hypotheses. In empirical terms, Noisy-le-Sec clearly distinguishes itself from neighborhoods such as Lower Montreuil. First of all, Montreuil directly touches Paris and fits into the direct continuity of an arrondissement in an advanced state of gentrification, the 20th Arrondissement. The gentrified areas of Montreuil are served by the metro, which mitigates the symbolic rupture with the city center. Furthermore, lower Montreuil directly touches a community with a bourgeois tradition, Vincennes, which offers to the gentrifiers very attractive education possibilities for their children (see the work of Agnès Van Zanten), as well as upper end food shops and bookstores for themselves. Added to that is the proximity of a first rate green space: the Bois de Vincennes. Finally, lower Montreuil has at its disposal a large number of local industries which has allowed for the creation of lofts, a real estate offering specific to a special kind of gentrification, and the acceptance of “creative” activities which have gone a long way toward changing the image of the neighborhood. For all these reasons the gentrification of Montreuil has been able to appear as pushing the front lines of Paris beyond the limits of the ring road surrounding the city. In Montreuil, or in other communities adjacent to Paris, real estate agents can say in all seriousness that their sector of activity has become the 21st Arrondissement of Paris. In Noisy-le-Sec, such a proposition would be incongruous and would necessarily remain so, for most of the conditions which have determined the gentrification of lower Montreuil are simply not present.

In more theoretical terms, the change which operates in Noisy-le-Sec through the arrival of families coming from Paris is categorically not the same as the change which has come in various stages to Montreuil. Three arguments can be put forward:

- (1) First of all, the urban situation of Noisy-le-Sec, situated along the second ring of suburbs surrounding Paris and on a tramway line which crosses the northern suburbs, makes this city a suburban focal point whose social and urban future

can not be understood only in the extension of the early dynamics in Paris. The scale of a larger restructuring of metropolitan Paris and of an affirmation of secondary centrality should also be considered. The notion of a gentrification front is therefore problematic since it forces the urban dynamics to be interpreted starting from a single main centrality, that of Paris. Such a reading destroys the importance of secondary centralities and the dynamics which are therefore organized around them. This can be seen in Noisy-le-Sec through the importance of the local middle classes who live their lives less in relation to Paris than to the center of Noisy-le-Sec.

- (2) Next, with the extension of the gentrification front, the return to the city becomes instead a departure toward the suburbs. This movement no longer concerns the same type of household: in Noisy-le-Sec, young bachelors are rarely present and families with children are predominant. And the gentrification is not lived in the same manner: the enchantment with the working class environment with reference to social mixing and its positive values comes less easily. In Noisy-le-Sec, gentrification comes about with constraints. To speak of a gentrification front which advances progressively from the most centrally located working class areas toward the inner ring of suburban communities surrounding Paris is a bit misleading since it would give the impression of including in the same sort of dynamic various transformations and residential movements with different characteristics.
- (3) The thesis of a gentrification front is finally problematic in that it presupposes a continuous push on the part of the middle classes leaving the center of Paris. However the working classes are far from having disappeared; from forms of resistance, to the existence of popular polarities, to the characteristics of taxation and to the typology of construction, it becomes impossible to consider the homogenization of the urban space. In Noisy-le-Sec the arrival of the middle and upper middle classes goes hand in hand with the process of impoverishment. And a similar assessment can be made about Montreuil. If gentrification has reached an advanced stage in the area of lower Montreuil, a large part of the community and notably the ensembles of social housing remain removed from possibilities of gentrification. In Noisy-le-Sec as in Montreuil, gentrification is accompanied by a social cleavage in the heart of the city. But whereas in Montreuil, gentrifiers were able to colonize a neighborhood on a sufficiently large scale to change the image of the whole city, in Noisy-le-Sec, such change remains uncertain. Its popular image may well continue to predominate.

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