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The struggle to belong.
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LIVING AND PLANNING DIVERSITY
PLURALISM NEGOTIATION IN BARBES-LA GOUTTE D'OR (PARIS)

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ABSTRACT

The Paper questions the North-Parisian neighbourhood of Barbes/La Goutte d'Or as a scene of cohabitation for multiple forms of *inhabiting*, a place of coexistence for different residential "carriers", family configurations and cultural inheritances. In this paper, Barbes/La Goutte d'Or is used as a case study of social mixity and diversity in global cities, following a double approach that carries the analysis from the inhabitants' point of view to institutional polices, in order to discuss pluralism both in everyday negotiation and as an element of urban planning.

Barbes is a historical working class neighbourhood, which has been playing, for more than a century, the role of a "migrants centrality" (Toubon et Massamah 1990) with a specific everyday life, combining density and diversity of population that makes it one of the most cosmopolitan areas in Paris. Barbes is, in fact, known as a North and sub-Saharan African centrality (Bouly de Lesdain S. 1999) in Europe. While the media never misses a chance to confirm the "exception" of this Parisian area, creating a stigmatized reputation that reinforces the idea of an insecure zone of the city, a public urban policy (named "La Politique de la Ville") is "working on" this area since the '80s to provide basic infrastructures and socio-economical development. More recently, the arrival of a middle class population, a last contribution to a territory in constant evolution, set off the strongly debated gentrification process in Barbes (Baqué 2007).

Focusing on **public space sociability and planning**, this paper aims to investigate social mix in Barbes at two levels. Firstly, we will concentrate on individuals and their ways of *coop* with diversity in order to understand on what the co-existence in this neighbourhood has been built and how it is negotiated on a daily basis in public space. Through a microsociological/ethnographic observation of public sociability, the paper shows the dynamics of social mixing and social avoiding. Using *walking-through* interviews, this study questions how the public space of Barbes, through the constant confrontation with diverse "others" (defined by class, ethnic origins and gender…), produces (or not) a feeling of global/local belonging, shapes individual and collective identity as well as constantly involving the inhabitants in a complex game between proximity and distance, which shakes local categories of "other" and "self".

The second question we will rise: How do we plan a pluralist public environment? Here we will focus on the delicate process of "planning diversity". Dealing with a neighbourhood as Barbes, how do institutions imagine its future in the context of contemporary social change and economical crisis? From inhabitants to local community organisations, from the voluntary sector to the policy-making institutions and local political figures, the diversity of and within this neighbourhood is under discussion, between the rules of hospitality and the need for identity reconfiguration.

Focusing on public space sociability and planning, this paper aims to question how mixity is discussed in Barbes, how this term is covering a particular meaning in contemporary discourse in and on the neighbourhood. The intention here is not to contribute to a theoretical or political debate about gentrification and urban transformation process but to discuss how a specific place in a specific moment is pushing us to rethink "social mix".

THE CONSTITUTION OF A "BORDER LINE PLACE"

Allthough our aim here is not to focus on the procees of constitution of Barbes/La Goutte d'Or as a migrant centrality, it is important nonetheless to make a quick summary of the urban and social history of this place which confirms the high connection between social and urban changes.

Barbes is a *historical* working class and migrant neighbourhood, within the 18th arrondissement, just next to Sacré-Coeur and very close to the Gare du Nord, in the northern part of Paris. Similarly to its famous neighbour, Montmartre, Barbes-La Goutte d'or was initially developed as an agricultural area. From 1837, the area was quickly urbanized by private promoters. Within a few years, all the streets were traced and the aim of this new urban area was to welcome migrant waves from the French province as well as workers pushed away from inner Paris because of the Haussmann renovation plan. Modest buildings were built to welcome low income family or single male workers that had came to compensate for the shortage of manpower during the construction of the Nord Rail Way. For similar reasons, a lot of "hotel meublé" (furnished rooms hotels) opened in the neighbourhood establishing it as a convenient migrant arriving spot, which remains true today. French migrants arriving during the industrialization boom were subsequently followed by Belgians, Italians, the Spanish and the Portuguese. At the end of the XIX century, the first North Africans started to arrive in the neighbourhood. The miserable conditions and alcoholism in this working-class district have been portrayed by the French writer Emile Zola in his master piece "L'Assomoire" (published in 1877): this romance gave a very precise example of life in a "faubourg" in the second half of the XIX century, between the centre and the periphery, where prices were lower then elsewhere in Paris because its location outside the tax limit wall. This area was finally integrated into the core of Paris at the end of the XIX century; when the frontier of the capital was displaced a few km further under Haussmann's urban plan (1860). This first Parisian urban plan, following military and hygienic principles, inspired by the urban plan for London, reshaped completely the French capital. It gave to Barbes its actual borders by constructing the most important Parisian train line in the East (Gare du Nord, 1846) and two big boulevards in the south and west. Somehow Barbes resultd from what was "left over" from Haussmann's intervention.

Meanwhile, Barbes kept developing as a working class and migrant area. Starting from the 1950s, significant migrant waves arrived from North Africa establishing themselves especially in the southern part of Barbes. Later on, other arrivals from West Africa, Yugoslavia, Asia contributed to the neighbourhood's melting pot ambience. Barbes, working already by then for a century as a "Immigrants Centrality"[1] (Toubon et Massamah 1990), progressively became, also thanks to its centrality within the transport network, an important trade centre for international migrants network. The sub-section Château Rouge in particular started to work as an "African centrality"[2] (Bouly de Lesdain S. 1999) well known in a national and international scale. Due to the conditions of the population and the turnover of landlords, real estate and sanitary conditions became more and more critical. A public urban policy (named "la politique de la ville") started to "work on" this area in the 80s to provide basic infrastructures and socio-economical development. This moment marked the starting

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[1] Toubon, Jean-Claude et Messamah, Khelifa, (1990 a) : *Centralité immigrée. Le quartier de la goutte d'or, Paris.* Ciemi-L'Harmattan.
[2] Bouly de Lesdain, Sophie (1999) : « Château Rouge », une centralité africaine à Paris, *Ethnologie française*, n° XXIX (1) pp 86-99.

point of an official process of urban change defined by sociologist Donzelot as a process of "urban inclusion"[3] that was to last throughout the 90s. Meanwhile, in the last ten years a new population of inhabitants seems to show that Barbes, as other former working class and immigration areas of Paris, is going through a process of gentrification, but which is still very uncertain in this specific neighbourhood[4] (Bacqué, Fijalkow, 2006). Although the lack of ethnic statistics in France has always made it difficult to precisely picture the type of population actually living in the area, constant changes of population and the consequent visibility of diversity became an element of continuity in the social history of Barbes-La Goutte d'Or. The presence of people from diverse cultural and social horizons determines a stratification and sedimentation of its urban and social *landscape* that makes it a multicultural and mulsti-social neighbourhood of exception. In March 2007, the French State, Municipalities and Social Investors (social landlord) signed up to a new partnership for the following 3 year phase of intervention called "Contrat Urbain de Cohésion Sociale" (Urban Contract of Social Cohesion). Barbes, with 10 other neighbourhoods, is again a priority territory for political and economical interventions aiming to rebalance inequalities in urban areas. In times of deindustrialization of cities, Barbes-La Goutte d'or seems to face a new phase of its evolution within the national context named "the new urban question" [5](Donzelot). After the earlier public policies providing urban standards in terms of infrastructure and public space, we still have to clearly understand what nowadays constitutes the "otherness" of Barbes and which conception of the city is driving public intervention.

LIVING DIVERSITY

"*It is not like when you arrive at La Motte-Picquet, or anywhere else in Paris. When you arrive at Barbes, you can feel that things are happening here, that things are going on, that people have stories to tell, it's alive, it's rich!*" (Julien, student). This is one thing people could agree on: Barbes[6], is definitely, for the good or the bad, an **exceptional** place. Public religious celebrations take place regularly following different calendars, and different selling habits are juxtaposed on market days: exotic fruits are sold in boutique stands, while fake Christian Dior glasses and Louis Vuitton bags are sold by street sellers holding their merchandise or exposing it on the roofs of parked cars. From the way of dressing, to the odours coming out of restaurants and the rhythms of music played in shops, on the streets of Barbes there is a high mutual visibility of people belonging to different cultural worlds that altogether contribute to a different atmosphere. One of its characteristics is its **density**: "*I remember the first time I arrived in the neighbourhood: I got off at Chateau-Rouge; there were people everywhere, it was crazy, everybody standing and talking around the metro exit. In that moment I asked to myself "where am I"?* (Gérôme, architect, living in the neighbourhood for the past 20 years). The density you can perceive arriving at the metro stations *Barbes* or *Chateau Rouge*,

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[3] Donzelot J; Estèbe ,P. L'Etat animateur, essai sur la politique e la ville, Paris:Seuil, coll. Esprit 1994

[4] Bacqué Marie Hélène, Fijalkow, Yankel (2006) : « En attendant la gentrification : discours et politiques à la Goutte d'Or (1982-2000) » dans *Sociétés contemporaines,*3, pp 63-83

[5] Donzelot J, La nouvelle question urbaine 1999 Revue ESPRIT

[6] This neighbourhood is named in different ways by different actors: Goutte d'Or, Château Rouge, Barbes are the three official names that are used to indicate the whole territory or a specific part of it, depending on the context. Its denomination is indeed part of its complexity. In this article I will not investigate this aspect, which I developed in my PhD research. IN the following pages I will refer to the area as "Barbes" which is, according to my results, the most "urban" and inclusive denomination. By contrast in the quotations I will respect the way interviewées are addressing to the neighbourhood.

[6] Toubon, Jean-Claude et Messamah, Khelifa, (1990 a) : *Centralité immigrée. Le quartier de la goutte d'or, Paris.* Ciemi-L'Harmattan.

the two "entrances" of the area, is highly disorienting combined with the **diversity** people get in contact with: "*Here the population is very different from the rest of Paris: lots of Arabs, lots of Black people. It is true that the first time I came to visit the apartment* [where he lives now] *I was astonished and preoccupied passing by the northern part of the neighbourhood. It is true that you feel in another universe. But all these peoples don't bother me, this folkloric touch don't bother me at all!*" (David, dance teacher, recently moved in). This *universe* is definitely **strange** for new inhabitants like David, a young white man that suddenly experienced what it feels like to be part of a visually perceived minority. For others like Malik for example, a Senegali student of La Sorbonne University, Barbes is by contrast the place to be in order to feel at **home**. "*When I used to come to the neighbourhood before moving here, it was because of an atmosphere that reminded me of the neighbourhood life in Senegal. There is something there that you will never find here* [*in Paris*] *: in the evening people get out of theirs houses, they sit in front of theirs doors, they talk, they drink some tea. Life is not like here* [*in France*]. [*In Barbes*] *you cross somebody on the street, you speak with him, you ask him some questions, you say hello, you laugh together, and then he goes off. And it's not only the Senegalese that do that, they are just people from here. Sometimes they are French or of other nationalities, not only Africans. So I had to ask myself: is it because the people that come to this neighbourhood decide to do the contrary* [of what they normally do], *they get rid of what they really are to join the atmosphere of this neighbourhood during their stay here, afterwards to go back to another atmosphere?*" (Malik, student, recently moved in). For Malik, if this area plays the role of a surrogate home, its definition is stretched beyond the description of an African environment because he doesn't build it on an ethnic definition when he recognizes that everybody is participating in, and therefore some how producing, this **way of life**. In fact, Malik is talking about an **urbanity** (a public sociability) that he feels comfortable in but that he doesn't describe as being exclusive to African users. This would suggest that it is not the fact of being an African neighbourhood that evokes for him a sense of belonging but rather the particular openness of the neighbourhood's public space to **incoming cultures**. The complexity of the neighbourhood with respect to the dynamics of identification is confirmed when other African interviewees state that for them, by contrast, this place doesn't work at all as a surrogate home: "*Barbès??? It's dirty! I would never go to live there. Too many people, it is dirty!*" told me a Women from Congo Zaire I met in Belgium, a woman that regularly goes "*down to Chateau Rouge*" from her home in Charleroi (Belgium) to make her provisions of African goods. The exceptional dirtiness and density of the area are here pointed out as characteristics that prevent her identification with the place that she nonetheless uses as a consumer. If the role of Barbes as an "African commercial centrality" in Europe is a matter of fact, although not valorised by institutions, its identity as an African neighbourhood is rather problematic.

Other characteristics of the public space of the neighbourhood are underlined by the experience of other inhabitants: "*The first time I was here I found myself pointing out that I was the only woman on the street and the only white one. Sometimes it is strange especially if you came from the province, because you are not used to that. The crowd, the very diverse neighborhood*" (Corinne, living in Barbes since 2001). It looks like this area works as a space revealing people's identity. Suddenly we discover that we are white, female or male, that we are African, French or both and a very subtle game of self and external identity attribution or identification starts on the street of Barbes. This "identifying" and "othering" process takes place also at the level of social class belonging: "*At the beginning, it was hard for me to do my shopping at Franprix, I would hesitate to buy this or that product 'cause I would run into the guys that had in their basket 3 litres of milk, one baguette and some sugar, every night, every night the same thing. After a while, I changed place cause it was too hard. I can not buy some labeled product*

in their presence, I changed place to do my shopping and actually I never went back to do my shopping there." (Valerie , she works and lives in the neighbourhood since 1992). What Valery and other inhabitants experience everyday is the **otherness** in terms of social class that reveals her own belonging to a different economical class. Informal street selling, very common in the neighbourhood is another visible sign of **precarity**. In fact, this daily use of public space to buy and sell is one of the most peculiar aspects of Barbes. This **informal market** that occupies a few streets of the neighbourhood and attracts thousands of people especially during the weekend contributes significantly to the characterisation of the area provoking the sympathy of some and negative reaction from others.

"*You can not even imagen how organized they are, and how much money they do per day. They go weekly to Dubai buyng staff and they sell it here…there is not such a place in Paris, this is why it is so famous. Is a very complex network, and we still think they are poor*" (Philipe, Phd Student living in the neighbourhood)

 "*What is not allowable and what is most disturbing in the neighbourhood is the dereliction and I really do not agree with that. We can not allow the informal market; ok, it is contributing to the folkloric atmosphere, ok, we can say that they don't have anything else to live on but you can not allow that. Because if you have liberté, fraternité, égalité, a law is a law! I think this is bothering more than everything here*". *(*Gérôme, architect, living in the nh for 20 years). In this conversation with Gérôme, Barbes emerges as a **place out of order**, where the Law doesn't seem to be effective, an exception on the French territory not respecting the principles of the French republican spirit.
This impression of a place beyond the of Law is confirmed by other practices visible in public space like drug addict and prostitution that take place on the Boulevard Barbes.

Yet the neighbourhood is **not an immobile setting**. On the contrary, for at least 40 years it has been a permanent work in progress. "*The neighbourhood has changed and the way I look at it as well. Since I live here now I have my habits, I feel at home here. At the beginning I didn't feel at home, it was not my environment, I was not used to that*" *(*Corinne has been living at 36 rue Polonceau since 2001 and she comes from the Haute Savoie region*)* It is interesting to track the evolution of the area through the biography of the inhabitants that can measure a change in their own feelings or that can talk about their life through the life of the neighbourhood. "*I don't know, all I knew no longer exists, there is not that much left, everything has changed, the neighborhood I knew is gone. And it is still changing, but what do you want, we must do something against insalubrity*" " (Baptiste, employed by the health service centre, works and lives in Barbes since 1975)

The evolution provokes **ambiguous feelings** between structural problem solving and social change, and it can increase or decrease a feeling of being at home. "*The area is evolving well, for instance the area around the Saint Bernard Churrch where they renovated the square, is amazing! I think it's going to evolve in a certain way that we are going to like more, more conformed to our way of life and that the* neighbourhood *will look in 10/15 years more like what we imagine, like what we are used to, maybe with more shops like in the XX* neighbourhood *that was once like this. But at the same time you also ask yourself how is it going to be for these people because it's their area at the moment and in relation with Parisian life, how Paris is gonna evolve you ask yourself , and afterwards will I still pay only 400€ rent? Is it gonna be like this for us as well?* (David, dance teacher, recently moved in). While recognizing that the **future face of the neighbourhood** is for David a more known one than the present one, he also doubts that he will be able to live there in terms of economical costs. That is to say that a higher

identification with the neighbourhood does not automatically go hand in hand with a projection of the self in its future. On the contrary, some people can feel that the place is changing its identity and anticipate that they might not feel at home anymore: "*Slowly they are renovating but I have the feeling that this is no longer gonna be a working class neighbourhood people feel very well that the neighbourhood is changing, that it is increasingly less of a working class neighbourhood and that what we knew before is gone.*" *(The* butcher "le Cochon d'or" Rue Dejean-Rue des Poissoniers.)

The experience of Barbes public space is without discussion the acces to a multitude of different people where citizen experiment the desity and diversity of urban population and get involved into proximity with foreners/strangers people and practicies. In urban public spaces of equal complexity we can ask from what this diversity results and what it produces? Which are the rools of "living together" that allowd cohabitation within these spaces, and which rools emerge from this copresence game?

Figures of inhabitants and production of public space

Barbes can be a residential place either chosen or imposed, a place of roots or of episodical uses. How do inhabitants or regular users cope with everyday immersion in diversity in public space, in commerce typologies, in density uses and in street practices that each user contributes to producing? By which process and thanks to which competences do people transform this highly diverse nieghbourhood into their neighbourhood? How is the "art to coexist with partners", as De Certeau, Giard, Mayol (1994 : 17) defined "neighbourhood", reorganised locally in Barbes, where a "neighbour" is defined, despite reciprocal spacial proximity, by topological proximity (Levy et Lussault 2003)? Barbes works like a space of intersection of different individual and collective networks and its public space is a scene produced by differents practices and interpretations of what public space constitues. How is the practice of this common space contributing to the construction of the self and of the "other"? Also, in terms of citizenship and belonging: what is interesting to point out is the constant negotiation that occurrs in this public space where proximity and diversity adjust. This is why Barbes serves as an excellent case-study to analyse the complex relation between the production of public space by people as well as the production, through space, of relations between people.

In the following anaysis, I point out 4 "Figures of inhabitants", 4 different ways of perceiving, practicing and therefore producing public space. I analyse different ways of being in public and of being at home in public space to understand from what this public life of Barbes results.

-*Barbes l'Africaine*: a surrogate public space

"*La première fois que je suis arrivé c'était comme une bouffée d'air. Je suis venu ici parce que un ami m'a donné rendez-vous ici et depuis j'y viens tous les jours. Il y a une forte communauté sénégalaise qui est là, mais il y a aussi des guinéens, des maliens, des ivoiriens, des algériens. En ce qui me concerne, vu que je suis des deux cultures, je suis sénégalais d'origine guinéenne, j'ai pas mal de famille ici que je vois.*" *(interview avec Monsieur Tibo.)*

"*Avant d'y habiter je venais ici pour les fêtes, voir des amies ou rencontrer des amis sénégalais, pour faire des courses parfois avec des parents qui sont sur Paris, pour des produits qu'on trouve qu'ici, des cassettes de musique. Les gens sont ici mais ils peuvent vivre au Sénégal tout le temps, avec la télé, la musique, les pièces de théâtre qui sortent là-bas, les journaux qu'on vend ici; finalement il y a tout; il y a vraiment une vie que les gens se constituent qui fait qu'au point de vue temporel les gens ici vivent dans le temps sénégalais*" *(promenade commentée avec Monsieur Malik)*

This area constitutes for some users a place of a cultural return to the roots, of mental replenishment. Everyday meeting place or spot for rituals during particular celebrations, the public space of this neighbouhood offers the space for different ways of gathering, consuming, selling and buying, following the rhythm and codes of interaction that allow a connection (Amselle, 2001) with a cultural universe situated elsewhere. This specific way of practicing the urban space as a place of cultural resource produces in a way a surrogate African public space. Especially during the weekends, the Goutte d'or and Château Rouge transform into an open air commercial and cultural space. It's a dense spot for socialization, for people that find here not only material goods but also a way of being together, a way to belong : circulation of pedestrians is dense; shops are full, benches on the boulevard Barbès welcome the tired bodies of passers by, their hands full of shopping bags. For this occasion, frequented mainly by African or French clients with African origins, the neighbourhood gets overwhelmed by an ambience that stays latent during the week. What is pushing people to frequent this palce is a relational modality, which is suddenly shared by a majority of people and that becomes dominant in public space. This is coupled with leaving behind a censured posture: it is the occasion to reconnect with a familiar way of being in public: the self-presentation, in the Goffman sense, seems to find here a reassuring context, a setting in accordance, thanks to the variety of ways of dressing, talking, boutique names, and their specific ways of window dressing. The neighbourhood becomes an archipel of different socialisation pôles (bars, shops, appartements) that become a specific "context of action", a place for the developpement of a mutual recognition, where the lenguage works either as a way to connect with others or as a way to deconnect, helping the displacement towards a geographic elsewhere. For these inhabitants, (far more numerous than the actual African residents of the neighbourhood) Barbes is not only a place of circulation and trade; it is a "speakers' corner", a place and a space for discussing state affairs and of artistic production. Dense interaction between family, friends, professionals and political ideas is intertwined here. Far from being homogenous, this time-space of interaction, also reproduces diversity within the African continent (and diaspora…) or at least its francophonic part. Diversity means also class distinction, which is adding complexity to this place of "socialization by substitution". What is transmitted and embodied is also the capacity to recognize differences in nationalities, regions, languages, ethnicity, and by consequence the capacity to present the self, following this distinction codes. Barbes is a place of "hébergement" of differences, of synchronization of international migrants networks and, for all, the possibility of a "surrogate public space".

-The place of "others" or the art of « Faire avec »

"…Au début tu te poses des questions, est ce que c'est dangereux? et rentrer la nuit? C'est quand même un quartier où il y a une énergie spéciale aussi. Les gens un peu drogués ou les vendeurs de cigarettes, il y en a beaucoup ici sur le boulevard Barbès et autour de l'entrée du métro là. Je me suis habitué à faire mes petits trucs sans pour autant sentir une certaine crainte parce que je sais qu'ils vont pas venir m'agresser ou me demander mon fric, il y a pas cette énergie-là. Au début tu te sens dans une insécurité, puis j'ai pris l'habitude que voilà, ils sont là, ils font leurs choses que ça te plaise ou que ça te plaise pas, tu fais ta vie avec! Mais au début tu te demandes s'ils vont être agressifs avec le blanc qui est là quoi." (Promenade commentée avec Monsieur Daniel)

Almost as a "reverse shot" of the public space we have just presented, in the space left over by this exotic world, another neighbourhood emerges, and with it other relations to the self and to the public. For some inhabitants, the practice of the space is defined by a localization of others' culture embodied by others' way of being in public space in Barbes. Space is therefore qualified and shared in different ethnic or gendered atmospheres: and this geography of diversity is a way to justify choices in public space use and habits. This description and distribution of "ethnic atmospheres" reveals an understanding of public space

as a place of coexistence of different degrees of alterity, unequally "acceptable", connected to different self-definition also unequally admitted: for example the use of gender categories is, among my intevievieuws, more frequent then ethnic one.

This way of perceiving and acting in public space is constructed around the principle of the "lesser scrubbing" (« moindre frottement » de Toubon et Messamah 1999): a way to react to the proximity of others with the rules of distance. We can observe tactics of avoiding such as a planified bypass of certain areas or introversion that come with a "I'm busy", "I'm late", or in any case "not available" attitude. This « faire avec » attitude seems to be constructed around a "focalized inattention" (focalized avoidness) to ensure the necessary desengagement in order to "pass through" without stopping, without getting involved. A certin corporal device accompanies this "unavailability" posture that make possible a sort of isolation from the context: the habits of walking with headphones, a typical practice of isolation in a context of not sought for but imposed proximity like in public transport, is an exemple. The neighbourhood public space is "tranversed" as an obliged parenthèsis to reach another place recognized as more potentially domesticable and domasticated (where they work, they study, they consume). Everyday practices, usually called "practices of proximity" are delocalized. This implies an overestimation of the neighbourhood's neigbourhoods…(Montmartre in this case, or the 9th district) that create a sort of dependency of Barbes on its surrounding context and on its trategic position in the transport system: city-scale mobility is a condition sine qua non for these inhabitants to live here; Barbes is reduced to a dorm and this attitude of (non)circulation in the public space is more similar to the classical attitude of a metropolitan citizen than the one of a "neighbour". The neighbourhood's frontiers, as frontiers within the neighbourhhod, are well established and stay still: when entering the neigbourhood, people like Daniel feel part of a minority. Owners or low rent dwellers, they are somehow inhabitants of another neighbourhood, often not geographically far from Barbes but clearly economically unaffordable. They are like "hanging inhabitants" in a place of others, in nothing corresponding to their needs and wishes for consumption, nor stimulating their curiosity. The register of weak ties gains on socialization and at the same time neighbourhood relations in their most essential form of salutation and mutual recognition are presented as "normalizer" elements of the relations with the neighbourhoodand giving the right to be there, limited to the right of "passer by". Living here imposes at least a visual recognition of inhabitants and of streets figures, that ensure this right to pass by in the same way as the buildings work as a resource for local relations in the intermediate spaces or time, such as the stairwell or a coop meeting. Beyond the residential streets, the neighbourhood works for them as "a universe of foreigners, in which the other is first of all the one whose presence impedes my claim of identity (identification) because it bursts in as an interference" ("*univers de l'étranger dans lequel autrui est d'abord celui dont la présence met à mal ma prétention à l'identité parce qu'elle fait irruption comme une interférence*" (I. Joseph 1998 : 37). Not only do other populations of the area have a destabilizing power (by sending back and revealing an image that people are not allways ready to admit, accept, or elements that we have the tendency to forget: for example the fact of being white), but equally, the whole neigbourhood seems to play the same role in this "defaulting identification". "Faire avec", means acceptation of proximity lived as a forced proximity. They live the neighbourhood waiting for its evolution, they hope/expect a more "similar" space that will transform the neighbourhood in a space closer to their "us" of reference.

-Territory of serendipity

« *Je ne pourrais pas vivre dans le 16ème prout prout quoi. C'est mort là-bas. Avant j'étais à Porte de Clignancourt. Ça faisait 6*

ans que je louais, puis ça c'est dégradé. Avant c'était bien, il y avait de la prostitution sur le trottoir, il y avait de la vie en fait. Depuis que Sarko est passé cette partie du 18 c'est devenu un peu glauque, je trouve. Les putes sont parties ailleurs, et moi je trouvais ça vachement bien de dialoguer avec cette population, ces femmes qui étaient là, moi je trouvais bien de leur dire bonjour. La résidence s'est dégradée où j'étais aussi. Dans le sens qu'ils ont tout mis sur la sécurité. L'immeuble avait perdu l'âme d'avant quoi. Et donc j'ai acheté ici. Château Rouge ça fait peur à des gens mais moi ça me fait pas peur, moi j'aime quand je sors du métro, toujours du mouvement, toujours des choses qui se passent...(Promenade commentée avec Monsieur Mathias)

This neighbourhood can also be lived as a succession of different "micro-territoires", attraction to diverse "spectacles" and available for a form of consumption of and in the public space. The valorization of a cosmopolitan neighbourhood goes with a "discovery attitude" that recalls the figure of the "flanneur" of the big city. The neighbourhood is then perceived and produced as a place of exception at different levels. By contrast, with the securitarian dispositions that appeared to gain public space in Paris, Barbes became the place of possibilities, real or imagined for a different socialization with respect to the dominent one in the capital.

The instability of the built environnement accompanies this perception of a suspended place between past and future, a place for ephemeral freedom, of which we should be the witness and actors in the present. A generalised curiosity, guided by a soft form of exoticism and a taste for "popular" environment that can recall P. Simon's category of "*Multiculturels*, volunteer inhabitants of a diverse neighbourhood that produce this area as a "discovery" territory. In the Barbes case, the general atmosphere of the public space is valorized. This kind of inhabitant frequents the neighbourhood with a particular disposition and disponibility to encounter other inhabitants and users of the public space. In the words of P. Simon, these inhabitants «reject uniformity and escape proximity with whom, of a similar social status, vehicule a very different social project" (rejettent l'uniformité et fuient la proximité avec ceux qui, de même statut social, véhiculent un tout autre projet de société»(Simon 1998 : 204))

It is the "working class neighbourhood" which is here valorized through the hyperdensity of activities in proximity to one another. This "figure of inhabitants" evolves in the neigbourhood, engaging in relations with a complicite openness that takes the form of "counter culture". As a mirror of their image of the nehigbourhood, they resist to the coldness of urban relations with an availability to talk, to circumstantial discussions, to argotique expressions, private jokes aiming to customer loyalty. The village athmosphere is valorized. This figure of inhabitants is looking for, by a daily engagement, a local social existance. Enlarged neighbourhood relations participate in this way of being in public that aims to construct a place by multiplying situations of interaction in specific areas of the neighbourhood: the streets become a sea of "familiar strangers" with whom the shift to a "direct form" of talking is fast. This way of being in Barbes is also characterized by a taste for "being witness to": there is always something to see, to observe, to consume. Public space is perceived as a scène, a permanent show, that we can observe as priviledged spectators by being inhabitants, accustomed to the right to astonishment, to serendipity, a process that valorizes the fact of finding something that they weren't looking for. Barbes is a place where direct reletion between territory and identity is mise entre parenthèse; an occasion to inverse of a socio-spatial dominant order. As under Elija Anderson's Cosmopolitan Canopy, "*people are encouraged to treat others with a certain level of civility or at least to behave themselves*", a place where people become spectators and actors of others' way of being. Such inhabitants think themselves mutually under this cosmopolitan canopy, a "*public space within cities that offer a respite from this weariness, settings where a diversity of people can feel comfortable enough to relax and go about they business more casually*".

(un espace où les personnes se posent en spectateurs des modes de vie des uns et des autres)

-Place of engagement

> *"C'est pas agressif ce que je fais. Même sur Richomme, la pissottière du quartier, à qui que ce soit,même aux fumeurs de crack, au risque de me prendre un coup de poing, moi je leur dis "On ne pisse pas là!" (Extraite de promenade commenté avec Monsieur Gérôme).*

This last category of public space production presents a specific adjustment to public space in the neighbourhood. What caracterises it is a high porosity between the public and private spheres. The experience of public life in Barbes is for some individuals' trajectory, the place of a growing conciousness of inegalities and social diversity among neighbourhood inhabitants. The constant scrubbing against "others" can manifest as a transfer of behaviuour particular to the private and public sphere. Active role in local schools, participation in political party life, and in local democractic decision processes are different paths taken to "find a place" in the neighbourhood by chosing different "*cadres de mobilization*" (Bacqué 2006).

The investment in neighbourhood buissness can transform a simple inhabitant into a "local figure". The recognition of this investment is perceived as a foundamental step in the integration process within Barbes. Choices that belong to private life are also affected by the public environnment. For instance, the choice of schooling children in a local public school is therefore constructed as a militant act. For these inhabitants, public space is not a place of return to the roots, of consumption, of avoidance, but of confrontation (debate) . Political or associative engagement is a way to react to the paradox that arises from spatial proximity and social distance. They become actors of an active citizenship as a way to construct a common world. It's a form of militantism on a daily scale by talking in public, reacting on others' behaviour, a strong interaction with and in public. They react to a social world that they percive as un-perfect and problematic but also lived as a ressource, a positive exception to be preserved, provided that it maintains this aspect of openesses to change.
Space of a mutual exhibition, public space is lived as a public good (I. Joseph, 1998 : 42). They assimilate their permanency into the neighbourhood as a "career (Becker,1985) of inhabitants. This sequential model sudgests that to be engaged is a way to stabilize their belonging in the neighbourhood, a kind of "obliged passage" to stay. The experience of living (in) Barbes provokes an idea of another World in the sense of an acute perception of something englobing beyond specific belonging and that must be built together through confrontation.

"Otherness" as an urban condition...changes as a horizon.

At the opposite of the others' neighbourhood typology very common in our contemporary urban world, characterized by a huge "protection" from the external world or by a blinding homogeneity, in Barbes we are constantly rubbing ourselves against the World. The World is somehow inhabiting Barbes (I think here about any international political episode and its repercussion on daily relations and interactions among inhabitants). We could almost say that the "*The Weight of the World.*" (P. Handke) is stronger here. Barbes is a place that puts in crisis a common experience of the City. With its excessive urbanity resulting from the

combination of diversity and density, it provokes a deep experience of the self and forces to renew our perception of being a stranger or feeling at home. Constant urban and social transformations seam to play a role in this "feeling or not feeling at home" in a plural environnement. The future transformation of Barbes becomes a varible of habitability of the place. In the future Barbes, will I feel more or less at home? Will I be able to stay, or will I be forced to go? The past, present and future of Barbes are producing globality, singularity and otherness at the same time, in a complex game of proximity and distance.

In our discussion about the struggle to belong I would like to make a shift form the question of social mix to the one of common places. Beyond each of these ways of living the public space of Barbes we can find different interpretations of what is a public space and of what is a common place. Each practice and discourse seems to affirm the prevalence of one of the qualities of public space. In practical and aesthetic categories of judgements that inform and orient actions, behaviours, a way of getting engaged in relations, a circulation mode, one potential dimension of public space is underlined: transitorial space, freedom, temporary appropriation, political discussion, all qualities of public space that we can decline, concerning the prioritarian modality of relational engagement, as space of copresence, accessibility, replenishment and cooperation. This is also related to very different competences of togetherness that citizens have to develop in order to live together: self-presentation, recognition of others, healing gestures, strategy of alliance or of distancing. Barbes is a territory of production of interactional rituals guided and justified by different interpretations of public space.

In this neighbourhood not only do diverse persons live together, but they also vehicule, produce and defend different perspectives in regards to a normative use of commun space.
What creates the debate in Barbes is not only the presence of differet "others", it is also the sense that each person gives to shared places and common spaces. The complexity of "social mix" we observe in Barbes does not result from the fact of socialy and culturally different peole inhabiting the same neighbourhood, nor does it result from the wish for diversity or from the concieusness of a commun humanity but it results from the coexistence and interaction of differents forms of relations to diversity and the acknowledgment that all these forms actually compose a common world.

The parallel analysis of all these different ways of perceiving and producing public space in a single neighbourhood confirms the need to think and study spaces of copresence as places of emergency and construction of a commun World. This means to put the accent on the sense of public space within the context of the social mix as urban condition debate.

PLANNING DIVERSITY

After observing how social mix in public space is experienced, understood, promoted, encouraged, or not, by individuals we will now focus on policies. If social mix is generaly connected with the idea of fight against "ghettoisation" or "segregation" by mixing inhabitants from different social classes, what we observe in Barbes nowadays is an existing mixity among inhabitants (of wihch we sow the visibility in the chapter above). Therefore a first queston rises: what are we fighting against in Barbes? Beyond social mix housing program that somehow "accompain" an existing social mix, what do we observe when it comes to public space transformation? Parallel to social mix in housing program there is a new "sector" in with the term of "mixity" is used: the commercial one.

The history of state intervention in this area shows that efforts have been made by authorities in order to transform this "foreign" part of the city into "a neighbourhood as all the others", first by the interventions into its infrastructures and social situation aiming to deal with its poverty and precarious material conditions. Interventions on public spaces were made punctually during the last 30 years restoring streets, parks and playgrounds. More recently, the local government of the 18th district has displaced its efforts to the commercial sector whith evident effects on future public space.

I selected two field examples that illustrate the shift in talking about "social mix" in contemporary Paris and that can illustrate the different uses of this notion to accompany social change. The following examples are interesting case studies that show the debate on Barbes at different social and political levels, all somehow reaffirming the diversity of Barbes and showing different ongoing tentatives of "domestication" by the introduction of "mixity" within the neighbourhood. What I'm intereste in is articulating the analysis of public diversity I just described and the actual transformation of the urban contexte that contain it and participate into creating it.

Commercial landscape, or "where do I buy my baguette"?

According to their data, out of the 490 shops existing in Barbes, 395 sells African goods and this "homogeneity" that they call "monoactivity" is now under discussion.

Communication papers of the municipality, as much as the local newspaper express the necessity of reinsert "mixity" into the commercial offer in Barbes and in local neighbourhood assemblies the debates frequently raise the issue of the lack of "proximity shops" (commerce de proximité). In the contexte of this commercial urbanism program the municipality publicly defends the strategy not to give new permission to "ethnic" or "exotic" sellers. The Mayor of the district himself argued few months ago in the monthly public administration meeting of the 18th municipality during a discours about the new commercial plan for the area "*The situation is complex but it is true that I personally don't know myself where to buy my baguette*". Visible changes in the neighbourhood are the empty ground floor spaces waiting to be attributed to new commercial offers and a few new small supermarkets. For the past 4 months we can, at least in my boulangerie, buy a French baguetetd branded as "*French tradition, nobility of territory*" …

Inside/outside: A Market of the 5 continents

The local municipality of the XVIII district together with the Municipality of Paris is, for more than five years, working on the project of creating a Market of the 5 continents to concentrate exotic trade in one place in order to free Barbes from the traffic created by all the small sellers displaced within the neighbourhood. It is not by chance that the place chosen to host this new commercial spot is an ex industrial area out of the actual Parisian border, in the north suburban area. The project slowly gains in critics among inhabitants, shops owners and local associations: on one side the project is accused of being a strategy to accelerate the gentrification process. On the other hand, it is considered as a necessary step to solve traffic problems in the area.

Diversity of Barbes versus mixity in Barbes.

These two parallel processes at different political, administrative and temporal scales are very interesting in understanding how the term and logic of "mixity" is used in this contexte.

First of all, it is interesting to understand the tenor and the meaning of "mixity" opposed to an image of "homogeneity" applied to the same neighbourhood which is valorised by the Municipality itself as "*the symbol of contemporary mixity of cultures*" in the French capital (Site Nuit Blanche 2007). Secondly, "Proximity" is here opposed to "exotic/ethnic": despite the ethnocentric connotation of all this definitions, the simple question "proximity to what"? and "exotic for howm" spontenieusly rises. Despite the connection of the first to an idea of everyday neighbourhood consumption practicies, and the second to a cultural sporadic consumption, in this dychotomy a logic of topography is mobilized agains a topologic one.

Morover "exotic/ethnic" is opposed to "traditional" which is creating another ambiguous dichotomy, finaly revealing the debate that lies behind this new commercial urbanism. Behind all this slippering definitions we can easily and uncomfortably perceive a discussion about identity. The "mixity" they are talking about is the reintroduction of "normality" within the neighbourhood. Commercial mix, at the moment in Barbes, means introducing "french shops", and reestablishinf more "french" use of public spcace.

And finally, what I find very interesting from an urban point of view, is what appears if we cross the first attempt to change the commercial paysage of Barbes with the idea about where to put what we have to "remove". This process materialises the invisible boundary that still characterises the geography of Paris between what should be inside and what should be outside the French capital; what would fit and what is not fitting the image of Paris within the so called process of general gentrification of the city. [7]And it is indeed interesting to outline that this last step of "integrating" the neighbourhood into Paris seems to pass by the decentralisation of what seams to characterize it the most, outside the present, yet under discussion, frontiers of the capital. This game of inclusion and exclusion reveals not only the unfinished process of Barbes "normalization", but also the persistence of the opposition between Paris intra and extra muros.

What is nowadays under discussion is Barbes it the effect of an African trade centrality in the production of public space. This necessity for a different "diversity" that seems to inform the narratives of this most recent debate in the area, move between logic of valorisation of its otherness and the call for its normalisation, aiming to find an unbalanced equilibrium between an exotic territory and a Parisian place. The territory of Barbes appeard then as a figure of accumulations that makes the relation with and the definiton of diversity fluctuation between a way to talk about the inside social and cultural mix and as a definition of the whole neighbourhood as "different" from the rest of the city.

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[7] As you might know Paris is in the last few years passing trough a delicate process of reconsidering its own bounders. "Metropolotan Paris" project of the Municipality of Paris and Sarkozy's "Grater Paris" project are at this very moment, and not without competition, driving different initiatives to study the possibilities of enclose suburban areas into the City of Paris. It is very interesting to analyze if and how this is affecting Barbes that will apparently loos its peripherical geographical position

Rethinking "mixcity": the importance of distances.

I would like to conclude my presentation with a remark: for a few years we have been facing a slow and silent process of smoothing and polishing of public space, which takes place via public policies and juridical laws (by defining what is allowed and not allowed to be done in public space for example) but also via urban planning choices. In fact both these disciplines are taking part in the process of constructing and organising spaces of our society from a social and spatial point of view. The tendency is to reduce spaces of incertitude by their normalization that comes together with a homogenisation of the users and a standardization of legitimate uses.

This hyper organization of places involves a reduction of fortuitousness/casualness and an increase of a certain "entry selection". Places where we run the "risk" of finding ourselves next to an unknown person (socially unknown) very different from us are decreasing. We could summarise this saying that there is a progressive reduction of social distance that lies between people finding themselves in a same place; the reduction of this distance means that we live, without noticing it, within worlds that are smaller and smaller, where the impression that the World we live "it's a small world" is nothing else than the result and the measure of the effectiveness of contemporary segregational forces.

It is not that the world is small, it is that we have developed more and more techniques to direct ourselves into affinity networks that make us evolve in a very homogeneous environment, less and less able to interact with the great diversity that is waiting for us outside our network. At the opposite side of this protective tendency of contemporary urban worlds, Barbes stands against as an exception. In this neighbourhood, people keep rubbing and taking on "Others" and the "World" daily and therefore questioning the self.

A. Germaine wrote in her analysis of multicultural Montreal, "*the more ethno cultural diversity is the object of everyday experience, the less it is source of inhibition and malaise*"[8] (A. Germaine, 1997). Accordingly, we should recognize and defend the "socialization function of public space" such as the Barbes one, a formative space that involves a displacement, an identity reconsideration and questioning (adjustment) for the inhabitants as for the visitor. Within this place of otherness, there is, between people, a distance. A passage of French geographer M. Lussault "Homme spatiale" can help us to reconsider in a positive way this distance[9] that is so discussed within the debates about cohabitation, "social mix" public policies, cosmopolitism's contradictions and surprises of gentrification. Lussault quotes H. Arendt, "*La politique prend naissance dans l'espace qui est entre les hommes, donc dans quelque chose de fondamentalement extérieur-à-l'homme. Il n'existe donc pas une substance véritablement politique. La politique prend naissance dans l'espace intermédiaire et elle se constitue comme relation*"[10] (Arendt, 1995: 33 in Lussault 2007 : 54). Politics result from what is separating people (in what people are parted from) and therefore requires from people a relational effort "*in order to treat the problem of space between them*"[11] (Lussault 2007 : 54). This confirms the social efficiency of distance in social relations against the over-valorisation of proximity and mixity,

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[8] Germain, Annick (1997) : « L'étranger dans la ville *» Canadian Journal of Regional Science/Revue canadienne de sciences régionales*, XX12, Printemps 1997, p.237-254.

[9] As the monographic number about "social mix" of the french review "Espace et société" shows, there is a long history of sociological productions that trayed to shows how social mix is an ambiguieus answer to social problem such segragationa and social injustness. See in particular the introduction of Maurice Blanc et Chatherine Bidou-Zachariasen and article of Philippe Genestier. Espace et Société 140-141, n1-2/2010

[10] Hanna Arendt, Qu'est-ce que la politique ?, texte edited by Ursula Ludz, translated by Sylvie Courtine-Delamy, Le Seuil, Paris, 1995.

[11] Lussault Michel, (2007) *: L'homme spatial. La construction sociale de l'espace humain*, Seuil.

for what we have shown above. This tendency of polishing public space seems dangerous to me for it is limiting occasions for experimenting otherness within the space and between people. And yet, it is indeed this otherness that plays a heuristic role, in terms of knowledge and politics, for it is involved in the construction of commonness. According to what Isabelle Strengers (1996) defined as "*cosmopolitical proposal*", public space in global cities must be reconsidered not through a normative definition, extremely connected with a French and western conception of civic space, but through a descriptive approach ready to recognize what a common space is, and the fact that "*the existence of "others" is not makeing our life complex, but is pushing us to understand the complexity of life*" (Strengers[12])

And it is indeed because of this heurisic role that it is appropriate to call them "public heterotopias". In his text "Of Other Spaces : Heterotopias" (1967), Foucault talks about a desire for "*a science that would, in a given society, take as its object the study, analysis, description, and 'reading' (as some like to say nowadays) of these different spaces, of these other places. As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live, this description could be called heterotopology*" and he adds " *But among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect*". This notion of heterotopias recalls another notion employed by French Anthropologist Michel Agier, studying the function of Carnival in Brazilian cities[13]. He speaks about a space-time producing different ranges of symbolic invention and imagination, likely to distance and deform reality more than to invert it or transform it (as common theory about the carnival supposes). It is this potential of distancing (detachment) that interests me, this form of possible deformation of reality that seems to take place in the streets of Barbes. Piero Zanini, an Italian geographer, in his book about "border areas" prolonged the quoted passage of Foucault and defined heterotopias as "places of objectivity"[14] (Zanini XVII, 1997). Taking the example of frontier places, he argues that those are places where a certain objectivity can emerge (taking the shape of relativism, cosmopolitism, pluralism, citizenship) bringing out a larger idea of community beyond differences and belonging, or radicalized identities under the forms of localism and communitarianism. Heterotopy either relativizes or radicalises identities. I would rather define these kinds of neighbourhoods as places of objectification that allow a detour revealing the "self" and the structure in which we evolve.

These neighbourhoods are places where the "identity-otherness" game is played at all scales (from individual to politics and media) unlike that which we observe in our new global urban context of "affinity urbanism"(Donzelot). In Paris, Barbes is the exception that proves the rule, a laboratory for the empiricism of the norm. The uncanny (Freud) public space, considered as a heterotopia (Foucault), works as a "carnival" space (Michel Agier,2000), an inversed mirror of the city (i.e. system), constituting a counter-example in terms of the potential and spontaneous use of public areas.

Somehow, like the classical sociological figure of the stranger, with his outsider perspective and his different way of being, as Simmel pointed out almost 100 years ago, migrant centralities remind us of the constructed and therefore arbitrary essence of our world and its conventions.

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[12] Personal translation from www.geco.site.ulb.ac.be/Telecharger.../36-The-Cosmopolitcal-**Proposal**.html

[13] Agier, Michel, (2000), *Anthropologie du carnaval. La ville, la fête et l'Afrique à Bahia.* Marseille, Éditions Parenthèses/IRD, 256 p.

[14] Zanini Piero, (1997), *Il significato dei confini*, Bruno Mondadori Editore, (4 ed.), Milan