Tom Avermaete

From *Bidonville* to *Ville Nouvelle*: The Built Heritage of Migrant Workers in Post-War France

In 1971, the renowned French photographer Robert Doisneau captured the most remarkable image of the municipality of La Courneuve on the periphery of Paris (fig. 1). In the background of the photograph, Doisneau captured the new and modern concrete architecture of the Cité des 4000, a housing estate that is emblematic of the numerous *grands ensembles* and *villes nouvelles* that were built in France in the 1960s. Initiated by the city of Paris and designed by the architects Clément Tambuté and Henri Delacroix, the Cité des 4000 encompassed four gigantic slabs and housed 4,000 families that the city centre of Paris could not accommodate, including returnees from North Africa.

In the foreground, Doisneau exposed another reality equally present on the periphery of Paris: the urban figure of the *bidonville*. Constructed from light-weight materials and without much infrastructure, the *bidonville* known as La Campa was initiated by Roma gypsy families. If, originally, it was used as a temporary residence, the *bidonville* soon became a permanent part of the urban landscape, and the municipal authorities closed their eyes to the realities of its daily life. From the mid-1960s onwards, Portuguese people, whether economic immigrants or political exiles, settled massively in La Campa, followed soon by other immigrant labourers coming from Spain, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Yugoslavia. In 1966, the *bidonville* of La Campa boasted no fewer than 2,600 permanent inhabitants.

1 La Courneuve, Cité des 4000 and La Campa bidonville, Robert Doisneau, 1971

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Doisneau's photograph not only captures the coexistence of two distinct urban realities, but raises the question of urban heritage in the French territory. After all, the *bidonville* of La Campa was not exceptional. On the periphery of Paris, as well as on the fringes of other major French cities, tens of thousands of immigrant workers lived in *bidonvilles* during the post-war period.[1] Just as in La Courneuve, these *bidonvilles* were often in the direct vicinity of the *villes nouvelles*, the construction sites of the French welfare state on which these immigrants were working. While immigrant labourers were key actors in these two urban realities, the stories about their relation to this heritage remains largely untold.

In order to understand their role in the *ville nouvelle* and the *bidonville*, it is worthwhile to consider the novel *Les Boucs*, by the Moroccan writer Driss Chraïbi, published in 1955. In this book, Chraïbi describes the departure of Yalann Waldik, a Moroccan teenager who «persuaded his father to sell his last goat, explaining that with the price of this goat he could buy a thousand in ten years. And he sailed for France.»[2] This young man dreamed of starting his adult life as an immigrant worker in the Metropole. Like many others, Yallan Waldik took the boat from Casablanca to Marseille and travelled by bus to his final destination, where he found himself working on a construction site, like La Courneuve on the periphery of Paris, and living in a *bidonville* like La Campa on that same periphery.

The trajectory of Yalann Waldik was no exception. It is a prime example of how the circulation of construction labour became intensified during the post-war period. Construction workers and craftsmen migrating to play a key role in the construction industry of a foreign country was, obviously, not a new phenomenon. German immigrants, for example, played a major role in Dutch construction in the second half of the nineteenth century, while Italian masons started to emigrate to France in the 1880s and consolidated their place in the French building sector during the interwar period.[3] However, it seems that the large labour migrations of the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries were tempered in the years between 1914 and 1945.[4] The years after the Second World War saw a true ‹renaissance› of the global flows of workers, and this was not a coincidence.[5]

Propelled by the atrocities of the Second World War and supported by the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, which became a key tool for the international protection of migrants, the post-war period saw an enormous rise in the migration of refugees and asylees in Europe.[6] This was paired with processes of decolonisation, which moved former colonial ruling classes back to their home countries, as well as by the international flows of economic labour migrants who became indispensable to bolstering and speeding-up the reconstruction of devastated countries.[7] Foreign labour migrants or so-called ‹guest workers› – from inside and outside the old continent – were recruited to reconstruct Europe and to compensate for the unprecedented shortage of labour caused by the Second World War.[8]

Building construction would, time and time again, be a key sector for immigrants arriving in their new countries. Construction sites were not only places where the workers could sell their labour, but also where they could acculturate. As the sociologist Roger Waldinger has argued, for many labour migrants, «construction represents the quintessential ethnic niche».[9] Immigrants often gravitate towards construction trades because in this ‹niche› they could develop not only their economic capital, but also their social and human capital. Working in shifts with co-ethnics implies that communication in non-official languages is possible.

The ties among entrepreneurs and co-ethnic workers are vehicles for not only the distribution of jobs, but also the circulation of information on their new country of residence. At the same time, in the building construction niche, many of the skills that were acquired before migration are usually recognised and new skills could be learned on the job.

As a result, from the 1950s and 1960s onwards, numerous labour migrants started to work on the construction sites of large European cities like Paris, London and Brussels. The new housing estates, public buildings and infrastructures of the post-war European welfare states were largely constructed by immigrant labourers. Even when the European welfare state model started to crumble, migrant labour continued to play an important role in the construction of buildings, neighbourhoods and cities all over Western Europe. In a city like West Berlin, for instance, where migrant construction labour dates back to the eighteenth century, almost 100,000 migrant workers were employed in the building sector in 1989, coming mainly from Poland and Southern European countries like Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy.[10] This circulation of construction labour during the second half of the twentieth century was not only evident in Europe, but also occurred in cities like New York, where West Indians and Koreans slowly replaced Italians, and Miami, where Latin Americans, especially Cubans, largely dominate.[11] The examples of foreign construction labour playing an important role in the construction industry are countless and may extend to Canada, Australia and South Africa.[12]

Building the French ‹Thirty Glorious Years›

To fully grasp the impact of this global circulation of construction labour, it is worthwhile to have a closer look at the conditions in post-war France. When the novel *Les Boucs* came out in 1955, France was in the early years of a period that later came to be known as *Les trente glorieuses* or ‹The thirty glorious years›.[13] This period of economic growth, prosperity and abrupt social change ranged from 1945 to 1975, or more accurately, from the Liberation of France in 1944 to the economic downturn triggered by the oil crisis of 1973. During this era, France experienced a substantial growth in its urban population that was largely caused by two main factors: augmenting demographics and a rural exodus.[14]

This growing urban population was confronted with a meagre housing stock, a result of war-time destruction but also of dilapidated buildings. In 1945, dwelling conditions in French cities were little different from those in the nineteenth century. The housing stock was old and lacking modern amenities such as bathrooms, kitchens and running water.[15] Overcrowding was a major problem. As late as 1962, a census classified one flat in four as overcrowded, and recorded that 60% of all housing stock predated 1914.[16] Hence, the period of the ‹Thirty glorious years› was marked by a continuous shortage of – and a large demand for – new dwellings.

In post-war France, *modernisation* was a wide-ranging phrase. The expression represented the vast project – propelled by the state and market economy – that was targeted at countering the devastation caused by war and enemy occupation in the decades after the Second World War. The priority of this project was the recovery of industrial production, and the key words were *remise en marche* and *redémarrage*.[17] The injunction was to ‹*produire!*›. French modernisation was extremely swift and intense, turning the country «from a rural, empire-oriented, Catholic country into a fully industrialized, decolonized and urban one».[18] During these ‹Thirty glorious

years›, the building and public works sector was one of the main vectors of job creation in France. The extraordinary demand for manpower that animated the labour market during this era owes much to the near doubling of the construction industry's workforce between 1949 and 1970. In barely twenty years, the number of jobs rose from 1,043,800 to 1,992,000.[19]

Migrant Labour

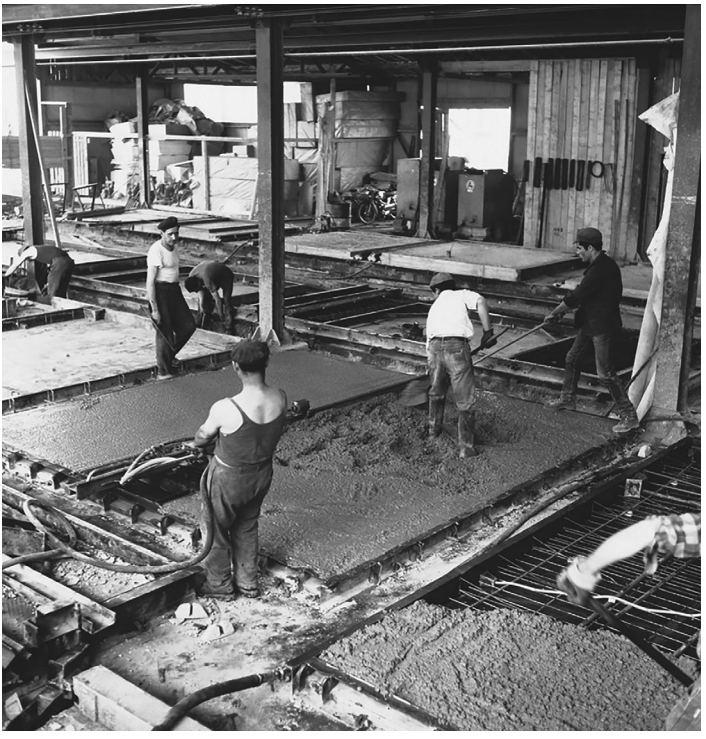
To fill all of these jobs, extraterritorial labour was needed.[20] Between 1950 and 1970 the metropolis attracted large numbers of young men from Africa and the Mediterranean basin to come and work in France with the promise of a better standard of living.[21] These were mostly poor men who were neither trained nor very demanding. Moreover, since their income was very low in their own countries, they were very receptive to France's call. In addition, there were other factors that stimulated the migratory flows to France. For example, the arrival of Algerians was accelerated because of the freedom of movement allowed after the war, and Morocco in its turn encouraged emigration, having had to cope with an enormous growth in population.[22] Taking advantage of the freedom of movement enjoyed after 1962 (the end of the Algerian War) by the ‹French Muslims›, Algerian immigrants constituted a large and growing group. They numbered 210,000 in 1954, 460,000 in 1964, and more than 700,000 in 1975.[23]

In the light of these figures, the French government established a legal framework to regulate and accelerate immigration in the post-war period. The National Immigration Office (Office national d'Immigration, ONI) – established in 1945 – centrally controlled the recruitment of foreign permanent and seasonal workers who were employed in several categories: construction, heavy industry, agriculture and mining. The best represented national groups were Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese, accounting for 82 % of all ONI controlled immigrants to France.[24] Besides Europeans, France relied heavily on colonial workers. In particular, North Africa became a ‹reservoir› of inexpensive extraterritorial workers who, in turn, saw in France a safe place during economic agony.

Propelling the French Construction Industry

Construction was the most common source of work for immigrants to France, as the industry required a large manual workforce (fig. 2). Around half of all the migrants registered with the ONI worked in the construction trades. Italians formed the largest group of migrant construction workers in 1960, before being overtaken by Spanish, Portuguese, Moroccan and Algerian workers in the mid-1960s.[25] In 1967, some 47.5 % of the 320,000 people employed in infrastructure and building construction in France were non-French nationals.

Recruitment was first and foremost a matter of government initiative, but private parties also took action to attract migrant construction labour. In 1963, the large construction company Entreprise Francis Bouygues, for instance, established a special office wholly dedicated to the recruitment of foreign workers. Companies like Bouygues distributed leaflets among immigrants that already lived in France, but representatives also travelled abroad to recruit the labour forces directly in their home countries. French construction companies would travel, for instance, to Morocco to hire workers, sometimes selecting large groups of 300 men at a time. These men would be registered, photographed, and checked medically up to five



2 North-African Workers on a Construction Site (Alsace), author unknown, 1955

times before they were offered a contract.[26] Mouhammad, a Moroccan man living in the La Folie *bidonville* in the early 1960s, for example obtained a legal work contract with a large public works company that visited his home town before he moved to France.[27] Companies like Entreprise Francis Bouygues largely relied on immigrant labour recruited from rural Algeria, Morocco and Portugal. In the 1970s, 80% of the company's staff were immigrants.[28]

In general, construction and civil engineering companies hired more migrant workers than any other industry, but these trades also demanded the longest working week and paid the lowest salaries. Work on a building site was also dangerous and insecure. Pierre Bideberry, director of the ONI, argued that French people had dismissed «*penible*» (hard) and poorly paid jobs, and that therefore a foreign labour force was needed.[29] Some immigrant construction workers reluctantly assimilated this perspective on their role in the building industry. The fitter-welder Lakhdar, for instance, maintained that: «France needs foreigners when it comes to digging excavations and the like, because the lads are paid less, and anyway the French would not do that [sort of work] out of pride, you see».[30]

Paris was a migration magnet in post-war France.[31] The massive urban expansion and restoration of the capital absorbed the bulk of the labour forces coming from abroad. In 1968, up to 38% of the 264,000-strong building workforce in the Paris region were non-French. Within the frame of the French welfare state, these migrant workers would construct new housing estates, the so-called *grands ensembles* or *villes nouvelles*, but also new public buildings such as schools, hospitals and cultural centres, as well as new infrastructures. All of these showpiece projects of French

modernisation strongly depended on the circulation of construction labour from various parts of Europe and North Africa to the Metropole.

Anybody taking a peek at a construction site in post-war Paris would have seen an ethnic mosaic of workers, and this condition would continue throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Immigrant workers would often be in the majority on construction sites, though their composition would change over time: the Italians, who dominated during the first half of the twentieth century, would in the post-war period be replaced by Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians, Portuguese and Poles. This condition was not limited to Paris; in other large French cities, such as Marseille and Lyon, the diversity of national origins of the construction workforce would also have been quite noticeable.[32]

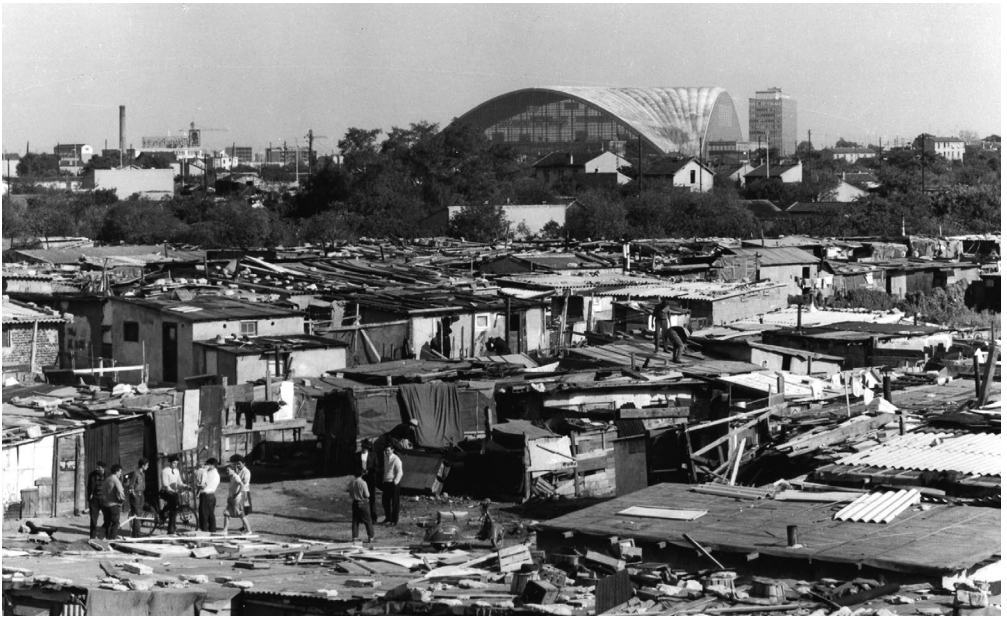
The *Bidonville*, or Housing the Global Workers

That the impact of the migrant workers on the French territory was not limited to the construction of the beacons of the French welfare state becomes clear from an image of the La Défense area of Paris that photographer Jean Pottier took from the Rue de La Garenne in Nanterre. (fig. 3) The photograph shows in the background the newly finished Centre National des Industries et des Techniques (CNIT) in La Défense. This avant-garde project was the first gesture of a much more ambitious urban scheme for a business centre on the outskirts of Paris, which was connected with a ‹triumphal way› to the Champs-Élysées to the west. The impressive concrete shell structure of 22,000 m² was designed in 1956 by the architects Robert Camelot, Jean de Mailly and Bernard Zehrfuss as a celebration of French industry and technical knowledge.

The construction of this project not only demanded a massive investment, but also a large workforce of white-collar experts such as architects and engineers, and an even bigger group of blue-collar labourers. The latter group consisted largely of migrant labourers. These global workers not only worked on the French territory, but also had to be housed on it. The effects of this ‹housing question› can be observed in the foreground of Pottier's photograph: the *bidonville* of Nanterre.

Pottier did not capture an exceptional condition. On the contrary, all over the Parisian and French territory a new urban reality emerged. It consisted of dense and poorly constructed settlements, often built in the immediate vicinity of the working places of their inhabitants. In the margins of the large-scale heroic construction sites of the European welfare states – such as the RER tunnel and the office buildings at La Défense in Paris – numerous prosaic urban settlements emerged to house the labourers that were at work on these very *chantiers*. As a result, place-names such as Saint-Denis, La Courneuve, Aubervilliers and Montreuil came to stand simultaneously for shiny modern housing estates and for the shabby living environment of the *bidonville*.

Living near or under the walls of the construction site avoided costs for commuting, an important motivation for those migrants who were accumulating savings for their families in their home countries.[33] Paradoxically, the construction sites of the *villes nouvelles* of the French welfare state also provided the very material basis for their counterparts: the redundant and discarded material of the *chantiers* would become the building bricks of the huts in the *bidonville*.[34] As such, the *bidonville* became in many ways the Janus-face of the French welfare state, while at the same time maintaining a clear physical and cultural detachment from French society. The living conditions in shantytowns were dreadful, with either inadequate or absent



3 Rue de La Garenne Nanterre, Jean Pottier, 1964

urban infrastructure and low hygienic conditions, as an Algerian inhabitant of a *bidonville* in Paris argued:

> If I were not ashamed, I would take my five children, my wife, sixth, and I, seventh, and I would go to the police station … Why? Because here there is no light, no water. You see, [when] I come home from work, I'm going to line up for water like everyone else, and I don't come back for an hour, an hour and a half, sometimes two hours.[35]

Living in the *bidonville* implied coping with the poorest of dwelling conditions, as Driss Chraïbi explains:

> Stretched from wall to wall, tangled up, strings supported everything that the beds could not hold – and it was an art, which could not be learned, but was innate, to get into bed and lie in it. You had to be content with your limited space, with the few air intakes allocated, only snore if the others had been snoring for a long time, and even then snore like them, at their measure and according to their intensity. If fleas and bugs stung, one should not scratch, because a simple scratch dislocated the whole house of cards; and besides, it was a waste of time and energy to try to kill these parasites which, along with cockroaches and moths, were abundant, tenacious and perennial. Yes, there was a light bulb hanging from the ceiling, with an anti-theft latticework, which the Boss would turn off at will, according to his mood.[36]

For the global workers, these housing conditions were a dehumanising experience: «No critical sense would have distinguished them from each other; life had made them prisoners of their anger and equal in misery. Once they had a name.»[37] It was no coincidence that the newspaper *France-Soir* branded the *bidonvilles* as «*les ilots d'enfer de la ville lumière*» (the hellish islets of the city of lights).[38] As a socio-spatial antithesis of the local and the global, the formal and the informal, and the rich and the poor, the *bidonville* manifested one of the most prominent urban paradoxes in the post-war period.[39]

That *bidonvilles* were not an exception, but rather the recurrent architectural expression of the presence of global labour in the French territory, emerges from the so-called *Carte des bidonvilles* which was published in 1968 by the French Ministère de l'Intérieur.[40] In this map, the Ministry defined the *bidonville* officially as «an *ensemble* of light constructions, built with makeshift materials on an undeveloped plot of land, fenced or not».[41] Excluding smaller settlements of shanties or so-called *micro-bidonvilles*, the experts of the Ministère de l'Intérieur counted no fewer than 255 settlements on the territory of the Metropole, with more than 90% of the inhabitants being immigrants. 119 of these bidonvilles were situated in the region of Paris, as portrayed in Robert Bozzi's film, *Les Immigrés en France* (1970).[42] In the French capital region, up to 35,000 people were living in *bidonvilles*, and up to 28,000 lived in less official forms of *micro-bidonvilles*.[43]

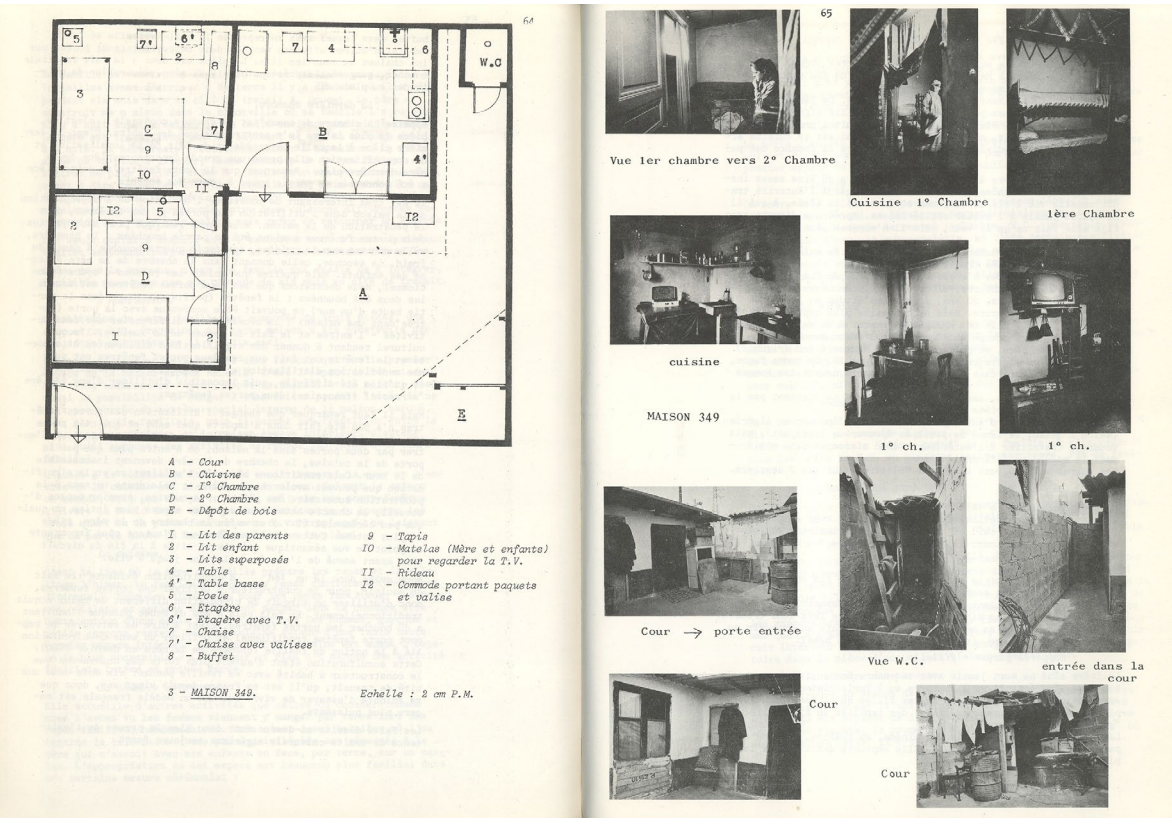
La Défense and La Folie: Confronting Socio-Spatial Realities in Nanterre

One of the most noteworthy *bidonvilles* in Paris was La Folie in Nanterre, a self-built settlement in the shadow of the Parisian business district of La Défense. La Folie embodied one of the most radical urban spaces of inequality of the French capital, providing a home to 10,000 people as well as to some prominent members of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN).[44] In 1962, 10% of all the inhabitants of the municipality of Nanterre lived in *bidonvilles*. La Folie was known to house a large ethnic diversity, with North African families in the west, Portuguese families in the east, and single people of diverse origins in the centre. It would become the subject of an in-depth investigation by the sociologists Monique Hervo and Marie-Ange Charras between 1967 and 1968.

La Défense and La Folie, literally ‹The Defence› and ‹The Madness›, stand for two socio-spatial systems that were confronted in the territory of Nanterre: one a fortress of the French values of progress and modernisation, the other housing the global workers in the wildest of urban conditions. In the 1960s, the socio-spatial contrast inside the municipality of Nanterre was once again sharpened when a new university campus was constructed next to the administrative and commercial La Défense area and La Folie, as immortalised by the French director Jean-Luc Godard in his 1967 movie, *La Chinoise*.[45] The University Campus of Nanterre manifested the educational policies of the French welfare state. It was considered a national symbol of the democratisation of higher education. In contradistinction to the old universities such the Sorbonne, the Nanterre university campus was not located in the city centre, but on the periphery of Paris. The famous French sociologist Henri Lefebvre described the university as «a ghetto of students and teachers situated in the midst of other ghettos filled with the ‹abandoned›».[46] He portrayed Nanterre as a heterotopia of differences, ghettos and socio-spatial conflicts:

> En attendant, misère, environnement de bidonvilles, de terrils (travaux du métro-express), de H.L.M. prolétariennes, d'entreprises industrielles. Curieux contexte, paysage désolé … Au sein d'une civilisation fondée sur la Ville de la Cité antique à la ville historique de l'Occident européen ne serait-ce pas un lieu maudit? Bien plus qu'un spectacle attristant, la banlieue avec ses bidonvilles se présente comme un vide. L'anomique, le «social extra-social» se mêle à l'image de la société. L'absence, c'est le lieu où le malheur prend forme.[47]

It was not only sociologists like Lefebvre, Hervo and Charras who reacted, but also architects. Architecture students Isabelle Herpin and Serge Santelli visited the *bidonville* of Nanterre in the spring of 1968 and made precise photographic and drawn surveys



4 Study of *Maison 349* in Bidonville Nanterre by architects Isabelle Herpin and Serge Santelli, 1971

of the streets, houses and rooms, producing a complete urban plan. (fig. 4) Just as some CIAM architects had done in early 1950s with the shanty towns of North Africa, they studied the *bidonville* as a valuable urban environment and argued that it echoed traditional housing patterns in the Maghreb. In their book they maintain:

> The slum always has a negative connotation: it is built of heterogeneous materials, informal and chaotic, with muddy and dirty streets, and its image is one of great poverty and exclusion. No one could imagine that beyond the miserable appearance of the two shantytowns of the Rue des Prés in Nanterre, with their density, their dead ends and their courtyard houses, there is hidden a significant architectural structure stemming from a specific urban and architectural tradition, that of the Maghreb.[48]

Santelli and Herpin tried to illustrate how the global labourers had transposed certain dwelling patterns and forms to the territory of Nanterre, underlining that, at least in their everyday dwellings, they did not conform to French standards and customs, but rather left their own imprint on the territory. The two architecture students maintained that the *bidonville* was also the expression of a certain autonomous agency of the global workers in the built environment: «to realise that the inhabitants had been able to build a specific, ordered and structured urban and architectural environment. Self-construction had thus made it possible to build, within the regulations and administrative constraints, a physical framework adapted to the needs and culture of the inhabitants.»[49]

5 A belt of *bidonvilles* surrounds Paris, *France-Soir*, 29 October 1957

The popular press also paid ample attention to the global construction workers and their dwelling environments. In 1957, the newspaper *France-Soir* thundered, in block-letters, that «A belt of *bidonvilles* surrounds Paris», and gave a voice to the neighbours, who often lived in terraced houses and maintained that they «did not dare to go out at night».[50] (fig. 5) Reports in the popular press instilled a sense of fear, discrimination and anxiety, claiming that immigrant workers «would remain "encysted" like indigestible foreign bodies within the urban tissue».[51] While, on the other hand, newspapers like *Le Parisien libéré* labelled the global workers and their poor settlements as «*Verrures honteuses pour Paris*» (Shameful eyesores for Paris) in 1964,[52] policy advisors like Georges Mauco stressed that the assimilation of African and Asian migrant workers was «physically and morally undesirable».[53] These racist viewpoints would reach their first climax on 17 October 1961, when one of the most brutal massacres in modern Paris's history took place. A demonstration of Algerians, many of them from the Parisian *bidonvilles*, was cruelly suppressed. The 316 deaths and seventy-three people missing capture the gravity of the racial conflict.[54]

Beyond the popular press, labour unions also reacted against the poor living conditions of the global workers. The Confédération générale du travail (CGT), as well as the more specialised Fédération nationale des travailleurs du bâtiment (FNTB), lamented the poor working circumstances and pitifully low wages of immigrant workers, but also their problematic housing in the *bidonvilles*. The union's newspaper, *Paris-Construction*, described the living premises in the *bidonvilles* as «scandalous conditions» and connected them to the «illegal and racist» attitudes of employers.[55]

Politics and the Badlands of Modernity

In response to all of the attention on the *bidonville*, in 1964 the French Government promulgated the Debré Law. This law was supposed to mark the end of the so-called Badlands of French modernity.[56] Beginning with an argument about the lack of hygiene and public order, but also about the threat to French identity supposedly posed by the global workers, this new law proposed a total demolition of the French *bidonvilles*. The «insalubrious housing» and their expropriated lands should be substituted by subsidised housing – such as *Habitations à loyer modéré* (HLM) – that could absorb the inhabitants of the *bidonvilles*. With violent processes of extirpation and harsh operations of destruction, the French police erased the living environments of the global workers from the French territory one-by-one.

In 1966, the realisation of an extra 15,000 HLM housing units were programmed in the city of Paris.[57] This this architectural solution seemed to satisfy both sides of the argument about *bidonvilles*: those who wished to treat immigrants like humans, and those who feared their ‹malign› influence on French identity. Though improving the living condition of many families that formerly lived in the *bidonvilles*, these huge housing structures paradoxically also persisted in segregating the inhabitants from the rest of the citizens in the French territory. From informal debris-made shelters to modern concrete constructions, from *bidonvilles* to *villes nouvelles*, the architecture of the migrant workers continued to deprive them from their right to the city.

This continuing segregation of the global labourers would in France become a subject of interest, a place of political dissensus, but also a kind of emblem of broader struggles on urban space, immigration, and social welfare. A poster of June 1968 that announces a debate organised by ‹students and professionals in the field of urban planning› is a typical example. (fig. 6) Under the headline *No to slums, no to slum cities*, the poster urges the reader not to allow urban planning to remain the reserved domain of the state and experts, but to claim it as a critical terrain where

6 No to slums, no to slum cities, Poster, Authors unknown, May 1968

political commitment could be directly expressed. The pair of oil barrels or *bidons* it depicts, one topped by a makeshift chimney and the other divided into a uniform grid of window bays, in equal parts visually criticised the poor material living conditions in the *bidonville* as well as the homogenising character of the architecture of the *grands ensembles* and *villes nouvelles*, which were replacing the shantytowns. It was a visual synthesis of how global labourers had been situated in the French territory.

La Campa or the Erasure of Heritage

The story of migrant construction labour ends where it started: at the La Campa *bidonville* of La Courneuve on the periphery of Paris. Propelled by the death of five Africans in a *bidonville* in Aubervilliers on 1 January 1970, the French clearance policy was accelerated and led to the passing of the Vivien Law of 10 July 1970, which introduced special urban planning procedures to facilitate the removal of slum dwellings. In September 1971, an official survey registered no fewer than 86 *bidonvilles* in the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis, including La Campa, which was destroyed the same year and replaced a few years later by a large green recreational area: the Georges-Valbon Park. The families who lived in the *bidonville* were relocated, notably to the large housing estates surrounding the site, such as the Cité des 4000. On 29 June 2013, in the presence of former inhabitants of La Campa, the President of the General Council of Seine-Saint-Denis inaugurated a special plate in the Georges-Valbon Park, a minor index of the many entangled histories of migrant workers that had constructed this territory.

Notes

1 In 1966, an official census by the French Ministry of Interior Affairs counted that 75 346 people were living in bidonvilles in France: Droit et Liberté 277, 1968, p. 21.
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3 Paul Th. van de Laar: Vier eeuwen migratie: bestemming Rotterdam, Rotterdam 1998, p. 146–71; Dominique Barjot: Les Italiens et le BTP français du début des années 1860 à la fin des années 1960: ouvriers et patrons, une contribution multiforme, Cahier Des Annales De Normandie 31, 2001, No. 1, p. 69–80.
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17 Kristin Ross: Fast cars, clean bodies: decolonization and the reordering of French culture, Cambridge, MA 1999, 47.
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