

IMMIGRANTS IN TWO DEMOCRACIES
French and American Experience

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An American Academy of Arts and Sciences Book

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NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York and London

1999

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IMMIGRANT HOUSING AND INTEGRATION IN FRENCH CITIES

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With respect to the integration of immigrants into French cities, neither general nor targeted housing policies are the major factor. Immigrants are primarily involved in the private housing sector, which is controlled by the free play of market supply and demand and only slightly affected by local or national public officials. We can best evaluate housing as a route to integration by considering social stratification and tendencies toward segregation in the housing market itself, on the one hand, and social and ethnic segregation—the stakes and circumstances of multiethnic or mixed housing—and social relationships within the neighborhood, town, and region on the other hand.

Since immigrants have benefited little from welcoming services during the period of their massive arrival, it is more relevant to talk about population relocation and management policies. But these policies are not based solely on social considerations. They are also linked to settling or mobilizing the labor force, to urban renewal and planning, and to efforts to rationalize or adapt the production of housing to economic changes. Legislative and regulatory measures concerning immigrant housing can be legitimately analyzed from any of these points of view. Moreover, approaching this problem from the point of view of housing policy as such is not the best way to understand what encourages or discourages residential integration for immigrants.

HOUSING POLICIES FOR IMMIGRANTS?

Since World War II, measures concerning immigrant relocation have vacillated between two opposing approaches that were in fact combined in several ways, depending on the period. The first approach relies on law to integrate immigrants, while the second targets specific action.

In fact, we find few direct measures before the 1950s. Until then, the priority given to construction at a time of housing shortages cut out the most desitute populations, especially immigrants (though they were relatively few at this point) (Ballain and Jacquier 1987).

Until the 1970s public housing construction, but even more, private construction, began to solve the inherited postwar quantitative crisis. But there continued to be a qualitative problem: those in poor housing, in substandard or dilapidated settlements and in shanty towns, were generally thought of as “the casualties of population growth.” Immigrants, and their families who joined them, rarely obtained housing and swelled the ranks of inhabitants of haphazard settlements, such as illicit rooming houses.

Urban renewal and the expansion of relocation policies in subsidized housing—constructed on the outskirts of towns in order to minimize property costs—provoked the exodus of lower-income populations occupying small, uncomfortable housing in urban centers. The standards for housing for the working class varied according to the resources of the beneficiaries and according to social goals. The National Construction Association for Algerian Workers (SO.NA.CO.TRA) in 1957, and then the Group for Social Action for Muslim Algerian Workers in France (F.A.S.) in 1959 were originally created to respond specifically to the problems of immigrants from the colonies. Their scope progressively expanded during the 1960s, with the considerable growth of immigration, to include all workers and migrant families. They played a fundamental role in creating and managing hostels for individual workers and in subsidizing housing programs (at normal and reduced rates)—especially the “transitional cities” designed to encourage progressive adaptation to collective housing.

The fight against shanty towns and substandard housing (1964, 1966, and 1970 laws) was clearly successful when it came to shanty towns (the biggest ones will disappear in the next few years); there have been less clear results against substandard housing. This policy groups together reduction of substandard housing, land recovery, urban renewal, and relocation for the “fringe” populations.

Between 1965 and 1975, as a result of the combined effects of relaxation of the housing crisis, measures to gain access to property, and regulations

requiring that 6.75 percent of new housing go to families from substandard housing (adopted in 1968 but not applied until 1971), the most underprivileged classes of society succeeded very gradually in infiltrating the “standard” low-income housing developments, progressively vacated by the middle classes who had occupied them. Immigrant families followed close on the heels of French working-class families.

The situation has not changed much since the mid-1970s, with the economic recession and the financial housing reform, adopted in 1977, which helps individuals (making demand creditworthy) rather than supporting construction (improving the supply). It is no longer a question of providing access to public housing for the working class—including immigrants—but of helping them achieve circumstances under which they can obtain and remain in decent housing.

Rehabilitating old housing and restoring deteriorated public housing has taken the place of urban renewal. But, when residential development is brought to a halt by the recession, construction slows considerably, public financing becomes hard to find, public housing deteriorates, and the homeless reappear. The housing market is once again strained, and competition sharpens. Social and sometimes ethnic segregation increases in urban and peripheral zones in both the private sector and public housing, bringing with it residential discrimination and, sometimes, tensions between immigrants and French native occupants.

A policy for resolving these crises, adopted in 1977 under the name “Operation Living and Social Conditions” and broadened in 1982 under the name “Social Development of Neighborhoods,” tried to deal simultaneously with these related problems.¹

The measures adopted for immigrant housing essentially follow general housing policy and its evolution. Some specific measures were adopted one by one² to deal with the situations caused by a lack of foresight, often after dramatic incidents (such as the death of five African workers in a substandard hostel on 1 January 1980) and sometimes as a result of public opinion and media pressure (Delcourt 1977).

We can see, however, a shift towards adopting specific measures during the 1960–1975 period: regulations, institutions, management, financing,³ procedures, and types of specialized housing multiplied, although their results did not always match the effort invested, except in certain cases (well out of reach of immigrants or even poorly housed people) where the goal was urban renewal or the opening up of a new urban area, gradual elimination of shantytowns, creation of a service industry, or construction of new towns.

But the negative effects of these particular measures finally surfaced. The

rent strike in migrant workers' housing settlements from 1974 to 1976 is particularly revealing. It was the result of residents' discontent with housing costs, but even more with the discriminatory social treatment they received. They protested the authoritarian methods of management and the control of managers, and demanded participation by resident representatives in management and normalization of residential status based on the model of landlord status. The strike can be considered the most important urban struggle of this period in France. In low-income subsidized housing, intended to help people adapt to "standard" subsidized housing, the "transition" often didn't work and families remained stuck in fairly precarious housing conditions that rapidly deteriorated. The correlation between maladapted and immigrant families contributed to a persistent marginalization and stigmatization of inner cities and their inhabitants.

Since the end of new immigrant workers' entry (July 1974) and the increase in family reunifications in spite of measures designed to hinder them, official orientation is towards normalizing treatment of immigrant housing and equalizing immigrant housing conditions with those of French citizens in the same socioeconomic categories (Secrétariat d'Etat aux Travailleurs Immigrés 1980). It is in this framework of efforts to place immigrants in normal situations (the fight against illegal immigration being its corollary) that the effects of economic recession on the residential real estate market and on the current housing situation for these populations can be seen.

2. IMMIGRANTS IN THE HOUSING MARKET

Improving housing conditions for the French, although obviously unequal for different social classes, was common enough to permit "the conquest of standard housing" by the working class, as Michel Verret says. Immigrants did not benefit from this movement at the same time, nor in the same way, as did the native French. The majority, especially those from underdeveloped countries or old colonies (in France just as in the rest of Europe), live "wherever they are tolerated" (Delcourt 1977).

First they occupied vacant spaces, either those abandoned by the French during residential development or those not yet developed. With time, and with the "settling process" of immigration, the gap diminished: general living conditions for immigrant workers, primarily laborers, progressively moved closer to the conditions for French laborers. But they were a long way from being equal.

As we have seen, immigrants are largely housed in the private sector, in particular in the rental sector. The influence of the private market on immi-

grant housing obviously mitigates the effects of both specific measures and general housing policies.

The impact of various immigration waves on the housing market is explained by a dual process of segregation:

- social segregation, which, for both immigrants and French nationals, links place of residence (location, type, size, comfort, conditions for occupation) to socioprofessional status. Thus, the socioprofessional background of each immigrant nationality helps explain its living conditions.
- ethnic (or "racial") segregation that places each immigration wave in an unequal position with respect to French nationals of the same socioprofessional category, and thus determines their place in the hierarchy.

Both these factors are in operation, but ethnic segregation is stronger as it is combined with social segregation. The gap between the living conditions of an unskilled native French laborer and an unskilled immigrant laborer is greater than the gap between a French native who is a supervisor or technician and his or her foreign colleague. In both cases, the difference is even greater when the immigrant is of an origin that is particularly discriminated against (see Section 3 following).

Immigrant housing conditions reveal a socioethnic hierarchy. Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, neither the history of migratory waves, nor the history of individuals, nor the cultural adaptation of those most discriminated against, nor even family migration—all of which tend to improve immigrant housing conditions—can alone explain this hierarchy, which clearly arises from distinctive social treatment.

Subsidized housing acts more and more as a competitive market. Immigrant penetration into this sector dates generally from the 1970s. It is, however, uneven, and varies locally, depending on the amount of available publicly assisted housing and its "desirability," linked, notably, to more central or more peripheral location, available public transportation, and proximity of shopping and cultural or recreational facilities, but also to the general social image of the neighborhood.

Access to subsidized housing and the criteria for its allocation are legally and officially blind to the origin of the applicants and unaffected by the constraints of private sector profits. However, for quite some time they have in fact been biased against immigrants. First, immigrants have to wait in turn for their housing applications to be considered, and sometimes they also have to fulfill a residency requirement in the department or county where they make the request. Then there is a wait because immigrant families do not have money for the rent and other expenses (which have all risen in recent years),

especially in the most comfortable and best-established subsidized housing. This lack of resources is insufficiently compensated for by credit aid.

Even now, other factors continue to keep immigrants at a disadvantage:

- inadequate subsidized housing for people in categories who have a “right” to it (a reduction in construction over the past decade, and the arrival on the residential market of immigrants’ children risk increasing this shortage);
- inadequate quality for many immigrant families because of the scarcity of large apartments;
- growing explicit or latent refusal to have immigrants share public housing because of images and stereotypes concerning the immigrant lifestyle, or the lifestyle of certain nationalities, and fear of reduction of status or image;
- politicization of immigrants’ presence and an unofficial (because illegal) but often barely hidden (in the electoral process) use of quotas, limiting the burden of immigrants on society. The role of local elected officials, sensitive in varying degrees to pressure from their constituents, in managing and distributing subsidized housing, brought about a noticeable reduction in the number of immigrant families obtaining housing. The fact that foreigners in France continue to be deprived of citizenship at the local, regional, or national level has not yet been compensated for by naturalizations nor by the fact that many children of immigrants, French by birth or by choice, are voters.

Immigrant representation in subsidized housing is below what one would expect on the basis of their numbers in the lower classes of the population, for whom this housing was created. In all, 23.5 percent of foreign “households” living together, whether related or not, live in low-income housing⁴ (INSEE 1982), as compared to 12.7 percent of “households” that are French by birth, but over three-quarters of employed foreigners are laborers or service workers. These differences are even more noticeable in some areas: when the stock of low-income housing is small and/or when it is attractive, it is still primarily occupied by families of moderate incomes (skilled workers, technicians, supervisors, employees) and immigrants have great difficulty gaining access. For example, in Paris, 7.5 percent of households of foreign laborers live in low-income housing, as opposed to 21 percent of households of French laborers; for households carrying out intermediary jobs, these percentages are 7 and 13 (Champion 1987); when the housing stock is more adequate—but the supply is not equal to the demand—it becomes a stratified market, with immigrants concentrated in the inferior sections of stock. In publicly supported housing,

is in the private sector, a large number of immigrants has an effect on market stratification; it is a devaluating factor.

1. HOUSING CONDITIONS

Statistics that allow us to evaluate housing quality are in short supply. The descriptive criteria used, partly linked to administrative and regulatory norms, are based on “average” comfort standards. For a population usually “disadvantaged,” it is often less the “quality” (in the positive sense) than the defectiveness of the housing that should be evaluated. We especially need to consider features such as humidity; natural lighting; general condition of the building; doors and window frames; the electrical, heating, and ventilation systems; infestation by bugs or vermin, etc. Certain studies, thorough but selective (and thus less representative than censuses), show that immigrants are clearly more exposed than French nationals to these faulty conditions.

Furthermore, the statistics supplied by INSEE are not informative about living conditions, by socioprofessional category and by nationality. This shortcoming hinders the analysis of the available data because it prevents us from pinpointing what arises from the socioeconomic situation, and what from ethnic discrimination.

“Standard housing,” as a percentage of all housing occupied by immigrants, has grown since the 1960s with each census, while the share of “nonstandard housing” (dormitories, rooming houses and hotel rooms, buildings or locations not intended for long-term housing) has diminished. In 1975, 86 percent of foreigners (as opposed to 96 percent of French by birth) lived in “standard housing”; but this overall figure hides important disparities among nationalities; only 67 percent of the Turks, 72 percent of the Moroccans, and 75 percent of the Algerians were in standard housing. Italians and Spanish, who had immigrated in much earlier waves, were housed quite similarly to French nationals (INSEE 1975, 1982; Cealis and Jansolin 1983). Immigrants remain the primary, almost exclusive, clientele of inferior housing, and of housing supplied by employers (company dormitories, worksite camps, servants’ rooms and lodges, and furnished hotels): 7.4 percent of foreign households are housed by their employers, and 5.9 percent live in a rooming house or a furnished room, as opposed to respectively 4 percent and 1.5 percent of all French households.

Immigrants live more frequently than native French—and than native French in the same socioprofessional category—in apartment buildings, which is related to their higher rental percentage (63 percent, versus 38 percent of households of French by birth, and 50 percent of all laborers). They are also

found more often in poorly equipped dilapidated buildings. In the 1982 census, only 51.2 percent of foreign households had both a tub and a shower, indoor bathrooms, and central heat, as opposed to 63.4 percent of households of French by birth, and 60.7 percent of working households in general. Immigrants' houses or apartments are also, on the average, smaller than those of the native French: immigrant households have 3.06 rooms, versus 3.65 for households overall, while immigrant households average 3.34 people, versus 2.7 people in households overall. Consequently they have a much higher density rate: 42.7 percent of foreign households live in overcrowded housing; this percentage is 15.8 for households overall, and 21.8 in laborer-only households. We do not have a breakdown in the 1982 census by nationality, but in 1975, while 20.8 percent of the households of French by birth and 43.8 percent of the foreign households lived in overcrowded conditions, these percentages reached 71.5 percent in Algerian households, 64.6 percent in Moroccan and Tunisian households, 61.5 percent in Turkish households, and 59 percent in Portuguese households.

At the present time 52.7 percent of French households and 41.3 percent of workers' households are property owners, versus only 21 percent of foreign households, with great disparities depending on nationality. For example, 15.1 percent of Portuguese households were property owners, of Algerians only 10.6 percent, and of Moroccan only 5 percent. European immigrants, especially those from the early waves, bought property much more often than did immigrants from underdeveloped countries. But even among the immigrants from underdeveloped countries, the situation varies with the socioeconomic structure of each nationality. Groups of immigrants with a sizeable proportion of skilled workers, and especially groups including lower-middle and middle-class members, have a higher percentage of property owners than the groups made up primarily of unskilled laborers. For example, 20 percent of Yugoslavian households and 13 percent of Vietnamese households live in housing they own.

Immigrant access to property ownership doesn't seem to reduce the degree of overcrowding—on the contrary—but it seems to be correlated with a higher level of health standards and comfort, a bit closer to the level of the native French in the same social category.

4. MULTIETHNIC HOUSING

Interethnic relationships are rarely studied in France, perhaps because community membership and ethnicity have no institutional status and remain essentially without political expression. These relationships have been studied

in housing and daily life, especially when coexistence seems to be potentially or actually causing conflict. Urban subsidized housing and housing developments on the outskirts, in particular, have been the object of investigations by public officials determined to intervene in favor of "social development" of these deteriorated, devalued areas. The economic crisis, which has pauperized the already underprivileged residents, doubtless has helped increase the tensions in multiethnic residential arrangements, which are imposed rather than chosen and which are constraining and for many have become a dead end. In addition to recurring discussion about cultural incompatibility and the differences among lifestyles, recent studies have clarified the material and status elements at stake by identifying and distinguishing among groups and class factions. Fear of social status depreciation and other aspects of "white racism," stimulated by living and economic difficulties, have in certain cases encouraged the extreme right to vote in protest and to call upon the state and political leaders to favor French nationals in employment or housing. However, these conflicts, whether latent or open, and although sometimes quite real, are often exaggerated by their own protagonists. In painting the picture of social conditions, they may mask the often numerous, dense, and interconnected networks of cooperation and multiethnic support.

The conditions of coexistence of French natives and immigrants are in fact quite diverse. For the working class, and especially laborers, multiethnic housing remains one feature, among others, of more general social interactions, which—despite residential segregation—bring together different groups. The characteristics specific to both majority and minority groups, in terms of social class, resources, means of socialization, and goals, induce both conflicts and alliances, depending on situations and circumstances. This leaves a margin of freedom for groups and individuals when it comes to the importance they give to affiliations, identities, boundaries, and ethnic stereotypes. The urban particularities of the community and the neighborhood, their history, the process of settlement and population changes, etc., create a context in which immigrants are both the actors and the stakes. Their socioeconomic integration, although limited mostly to unskilled jobs, is still enough to bring about diversely based relationships. Work, commercial exchanges, neighborhoods, and daily encounters thus give rise to a convergence or a divergence of concerns, complementarities or rivalries. These relationships depend on the economic, spatial, or social modes of integration, on behavior, and on other aspects of immigrants' presence. Depending on the type and degree of social, economic, and urban usefulness of these foreigners, and depending on whether they are seen as a danger or as a resource, attitudes of native French towards immigrants vary. In one and the same urban atmosphere, hostile, indifferent, ambivalent,

and accepting French natives generally coexist. The balance among these determines the “climate” for immigrant integration, which encourages or hinders their activities, their efforts toward community or cultural preservation or affirmation, and their practical integration or assimilation, and which thus tends to define the limits of their autonomy. In spite of the diffusion of ethnic stereotypes, the ethnicization of mixed housing relationships, and a fortiori ethnic separation, is not the norm in residential areas. There is a diversity of equilibriums, in more or less stable “balance” or in conflict, that are achieved locally through the interaction between populations and social groups.

It is hardly possible, given the state of research, to propose a systematic classification of mixed housing situations. We can only try, on the basis of observations in Paris in the past few years, to show how urban conditions, class relations, and interethnic relationships are worked out in housing arrangements (Guillon and Taboada-Leonetti 1986; de Rudder and Guillon 1987; and Taboada-Leonetti and Guillon 1988).

In a “good neighborhood,” where many immigrants (one-fifth of the population) work in service jobs for a French middle class long established in the area, class complementarity and employer/employee relationships overshadow the interethnic aspect of contacts. The immigrant presence is either not known or misunderstood, and is not perceived very differently from the presence of people from the provinces who at the beginning of the century carried out the same jobs. Immigrants develop an independent social and community life, parallel to the life of French nationals, but unnoticed by them.

In another area, the popular “urban village” dominated by craftsmen and commercial activities, native French and immigrants (representing one-fourth of the inhabitants) belong clearly to the same socioprofessional categories, and conflict and competition are limited by the complementary nature of their activities, which guarantees the prosperity of the area. The economic interconnections that give rise to many relationships and to constant ethnic intermingling establish the model for social relationships characterized by recognition (either acceptance or denial) of the presence of minorities, but also by avoidance of ethnic separation, and by individual, often personalized interaction.

In yet another area, renovated during the 1970s and 1980s, Southeastern Asian refugees (mostly Chinese) settled and developed an Asian commercial area, while the French who live there belong to the middle class (employees and middle management). The relatively close-knit Asian community structure induces a different type of social atmosphere, separate from that of French nationals. Social lifestyles are therefore largely parallel, and French nationals’ attitudes are ambivalent: immigrants are seen as a resource that gives the area

an economic liveliness and a certain exotic attraction, but their inward-looking organization is seen as a threat of minority autonomy to the dominance of French identity.

The case of a deteriorated area, with “an atmosphere of newly settled immigrants,” through which, without any major objections from the native French, several waves of immigration have passed since the beginning of the century, illustrates an immigrant ethnic enclave and ethnic conflict. The decline of previous economic activities and above all the imminence of urban renewal made of this area, in a few months, a festering place for deviant activities (drug traffic, receiving of stolen goods, squatting in housing, etc.). The ethnic conflict arose when legal and illegal African residents were identified with the deviant activities, while with the help of the media, social and ethnic segregation of the area was reinforced, confirmed by fear. A series of police operations, including arrests and expulsions, preceded the total transformation of the area into a residential and commercial neighborhood. Geographic concentration of groups, which fulfilled typically urban functions (localization of minority or marginal practices, exoticism, etc.), and which allowed the conservation of a potential land reserve, facilitated, through manipulation of ethnic groups and ethnic images, the recovery of the space by deportation of the inhabitants.

5. ETHNIC GROUPING AND “GHETTOS”

In France, although it is not often admitted, there is the risk of creating sections, in effect “ghettos,” of enforced housing by restricting the opportunity for residential choice for certain categories of the foreign population. Thus in the metropolitan Paris area, the tendency for foreigners to scatter over the entire area, observed during the between-census period of 1968–1975, seems to have slowed or even stopped in some areas between 1975 and 1982. But the French situation is not and never has been that of “segregated neighborhoods,” as they are called by the Chicago School.

During crises caused by the decline in traditional urban activities, downtown residential concentrations often occur in obsolescent areas, which are abandoned by households with resources to flee uncomfortable, substandard housing. The age of the buildings is not the only problem because the decline in values sometimes also affects new buildings, both highrise and low buildings, characteristic of postwar architecture. On the other hand, many older buildings continue to be well kept up and improved, and remain in demand.

Contrary to what the public often believes—natives and immigrants alike—these neighborhoods never have an absolute majority of foreigners among

their residents. Even today, there is no urban section with more than a 40 percent concentration of foreigners. Higher concentrations exist only in smaller areas: a building, a group of buildings, or at the very most, a block.

“Gentrification” and expansion of tertiary industries pushes the working classes out of central neighborhoods in which they have lived for a long time. We see the classic phenomenon of population succession, ending with the removal of the working class. The deterioration of a neighborhood and the lack of comfortable housing stock officially motivate these substitutions. Some studies show that urban renewal in the 1960s didn’t always give priority to the most substandard sections, but rather to the most working-class or immigrant sections; and many neighborhoods were voluntarily abandoned to deterioration, or were purposely brought to the edge of decrepitude to justify the renewal. When poor-quality housing was removed, its residents were also removed because the relocation quarters offered were usually elsewhere, especially in peripheral areas. Even those who succeed in being relocated in the same area often end up having to leave because of the rent increases following the renovation, if the slow pace of the process does not hinder land speculation. Others, in spite of assurances that they will be relocated, do not benefit from this right, either because, as more or less precarious occupants without a lease, they are legally excluded, or because, tired of waiting in an insecure situation, they relocate on their own.

The economic recession and the criticism of “operation bulldozer” cut back the large-scale urban renewal projects in favor of more selective restoration of neighborhoods and building rehabilitations. The social consequences of these projects, although less brutal and less traumatic for the fabric of the neighborhood and its residents, are not always much different from the earlier ones, even if they sometimes take longer.

Working-class suburbs, old industrial outskirts, or zones on the edge of urbanization also sometimes have a concentration of immigrants, particularly in subsidized housing. The media, politicians, and public opinion focus these days on this issue of low-income housing, in a joint denunciation of “ghettos,” social problems, and conflicts in mixed housing between native French and immigrants. These concentrations originated in the recovery of city centers, and the suburban construction development of the 1960s and 1970s. Relocation housing for a poor family, especially a large poor family, almost necessarily requires a move to the outskirts of town. Certain housing complexes were abandoned bit by bit by families able to continue climbing the residential ladder, especially by purchasing property, which was encouraged by the state. Others find hardly any French interested in living in them. The vacancy created by this absence of French demand has permitted immigrants to enter

subsidized housing, but they enter from the bottom and are concentrated in the most deteriorated housing complexes.

The “spontaneity” of community groupings, through the organization of strong networks of diverse immigrations, stimulates much discussion of the tendency of certain nationalities or ethnic groups to gather together voluntarily, even to crowd together. This “popular” talk covers up “vulgar” or even out-and-out racist modes of discourse, as much as it swamps more informed discussion. These concentrations are interpreted as the fruits of cultural maladaptation and immigrant poverty, rising from a need for mutual support and a desire for joining with others of the same background.

However, this “culturalist” vulgate, widely spread by the administration as much as by the media and public opinion, overshadows the social mechanisms in play. These associations occur in the absence of native French demand and because of discrimination; family and previous village relationships of immigrants do not by themselves explain them, even though, without a doubt, these factors allow us to understand certain features, such as the attachments that contribute to reuniting the immigrants from the same region in a particular geographic area. Many groupings, sometimes even hardly noticed by inhabitants, operate like this. It is often the principal mode of residential settlement by migratory waves subject to the least discrimination, those whose image is not accompanied by fantasies of aggression and contamination.⁵ But community support and exchange, although generally important for immigrants, does not necessarily create concentrations. These are more frequent for populations discriminated against or excluded; but in addition, the gathering of stigmatized populations is more “visible” and more worrisome for French natives.

In urban centers, immigrants often live together with the poor native French, among whom the proportion of older people and single people is significant. In the suburbs, on the other hand, they live alongside generally young French families, including a relatively large number of families that social service administrators classify as “in great difficulty” or “in some difficulty” (problems resulting from many children, single parenthood, uncertain or almost nonexistent resources, unemployment, sickness, handicapped status, alcoholism). Certain immigrant households also find themselves in this type of situation. But whatever the problem, the assemblage in one area of immigrant families and of families “in difficulty” contributes to the general confusion about immigrants and social problems.

Whether central or on the outskirts, these areas of immigrant concentration serve in varying degrees not only as real estate reserves, but even more as population stocks. Downtown, these populations insure a profitable transition

between the departure of the previous population (a commercial or craftsman middle class, tradesmen) and installation of new activities and new social classes (service industry, middle and upper management). In the suburban outskirts, they render profitable real-estate projects requiring low investment and which cannot attract a clientele who can pick and choose. If initially it is not the arrival of immigrants that makes the French natives flee, but rather the natives' abandonment of an area that allows immigrants to settle, then maybe at a second stage the immigrant presence—which serves as a sign of neighborhood decline—hastens the process of French people moving out and deters others from moving in.

Among the populations most discriminated against in the deteriorated urban sections, we find an immigrant social category that supplies housing and services to other immigrants of the same origin, substituting for the lack of “standard” offerings. Alongside “official,” legal furnished hotels and rooms, they create a parallel market, more or less substandard and illegal, and provide services “adapted” to their clientele. The competition in this market remains lively, and the drying up of the demand does not seem to be of concern.

The battle against such “slum landlords” or exploitative superintendents also hurts the renters, who must find other housing. Alternative housing is offered to some. They may accept or refuse it because of its cost or its location in relation to where they work. But those who occupy housing without title or illegally are obliged to relocate on their own. They will thus enlarge the ranks of clients of other buildings of the same nature. The struggle against slumlords has only a minimal effect when it is not accompanied by a relocation policy with good-quality and plentiful housing. It is also often perceived by the immigrants as persecution, since owners, superintendents, and renters keep the parallel market alive.

Indeed, the center-city zones of concentration also fulfill purposes other than simply residential: work location, transit availability, informal exchanges, specialized trade, particular recreational activities. They offer an ethnic infrastructure that also taps a nonresident population, often coming from well outside of the area, notably at the end of the week, on vacation days, or during holidays traditionally celebrated in the countries of origin. They are urban magnets, allowing affirmation and community and cultural autonomy, which restore a devalued identity

Be that as it may, the term “ghetto,” which is often applied to neighborhoods with a relatively strong immigrant presence, turns out to be inappropriate here. In France, these neighborhoods never combine all the characteristics of the known ghettos of history. Not only are they not institutionalized,

but they are also not homogeneous: immigrants are minorities, and even if they constitute a clear minority they are not all of the same national, ethnic, or cultural origin. We do find larger groups leaving an imprint on the neighborhood in terms of “lifestyle” and provoking an identification of the neighborhood as “Arab” or “Asian,” but we never find a “major minority” among the minorities. Ethnic identities and characteristics in these areas are nowhere near as noticeable as in other countries. These “Arab neighborhoods” or “Chinatowns” are in fact a pale equivalent to the black, Chinese, or Puerto Rican neighborhoods of American cities. Finally, and perhaps above all, immigrants in France are rarely structured into relatively autonomous “micro-societies,” organized defensively and offensively, made up of diverse social classes, with real territorial bases, and with organizations, institutions, leaders, and networks of political action or opinion capable of collective negotiation. The use of the term “ghetto” here seems to have a more ideological than descriptive function. The word causes fear—as does the reality, perceived as a “social evil” more or less absolute and mythical—among French natives as much as immigrants themselves. Thus both exclusion and social control (or even policing) over minorities are confirmed and even justified. Among other things, the stigmatization of a residential area as a “ghetto” facilitates removal and dispersal (de Rudder 1987).

6. THE SITUATION AND STRATEGIES OF THE PLAYERS

The diverse groups involved in the allocation of housing and in determining the conditions of immigrant life develop differentiated strategies, related to positions they themselves occupy in the social structure.

Private Landowners and Superintendents of Subsidized Housing

Undoubtedly, some private landowners, especially those who cannot count on any other income from their property and who lack means or the desire to work, will continue to offer housing to immigrants at a profit. Other landowners will try to conserve a higher status for their buildings or housing, which increases their return. This presupposes that they will avoid immigrant renters, or at least renters of certain nationalities, who could lower their status. The proportion of one to the other and its evolution depends on the available real estate and the tightening or loosening of the market, and thus on the economic resources that will be devoted to construction and improvements for housing in the coming years.

As far as subsidized housing is concerned, the situation is quite inconsistent.

The administration and elected officials are confronted with a growing demand from immigrants and from the most destitute of the French natives, which logically should bring about relocation of the poor, in conformity with the social purpose of public housing. But the officials are also under pressure from those already living there and, more generally, from local public opinion, which tends to object to immigrants and relocation of the poor in their neighborhoods.

An exclusion policy that contributes to segregated concentrations of immigrants or of marginalized citizens is, even as it is carried out, perceived as a social and a public problem, sometimes aggravated by the reactions of the native French. Integration is the only solution. But good integration is, in the end, the one we participate in as little as possible. Responsible administrators and elected officials are tempted, however, to adopt quotas and other limitations on the percentage of immigrants in buildings, neighborhoods, and communities. But the reasoning itself is contradictory. First, immigrants are supposed to integrate only when dispersed (which has the added advantage, and not a small one, of making them disappear as actual or potential collective players). Their integration requires that we prevent them from gathering together, and thus that we remove the segregationist causes of these concentrations. But if these causes are removed, there is hardly a reason for quotas. Next, because the conflicts between immigrants and native French appear when there are "too many" immigrants, it is a good idea to rely on the strength of numbers in favor of the native French in order to prevent conflict. This would tend to exclude some immigrants from subsidized housing to which they have a right, and to encourage their gathering in the housing areas where they are tolerated. Setting limits to immigrant settlement thus ends up hindering their access to housing and to the areas appropriate to their social category—housing, neighborhoods, and work communities—and reinforcing their relegation to the most devalued areas. We have "integration" by dispersion, in the first case, "passing the threshold of tolerance" in the second.

The decentralization plan, adopted in 1982, which gives more power and autonomy to local communities as opposed to the state, could, in the absence of efficient regulation, lead to a heightened aggravation of the process of segregation. Elected officials and bureaucracies, who are closer to the people they administer, risk of course being more sensitive to their pressure.

Immigrant Populations

Populations of foreign origin develop diversified strategies depending on where they came from, their migratory traditions, and their social structures. We

often attribute different behaviors of immigrants to their cultural traditions, when international comparisons make it appear that the differences depend more on the receiving country (de Rudder 1985)⁶ and its structures, ideologies, and opportunities. Immigrant strategies regarding integration are strategies of adaptation to local and national situations. This observation is more confirmed than contradicted by the fact that these strategies mobilize knowledge and *savoir-faire* that are acquired before migration or are transmitted by the community and ethnic networks. In addition, a study in progress about integration strategies is uncovering, at the heart of each migratory wave, a great diversity in attitudes and behaviors—a diversity that seems to grow as the immigrants' stay lengthens (de Rudder, Taboada-Leonetti, and Vpurc'h 1988).

Immigrants are generally aware of the negative effects of concentrating groups of disfavored and segregated populations on themselves (they dread the possibility of "pogroms" that "ghettos" may offer), as well as on society as a whole. But that does not prevent them from demonstrating their opposition to dispersion policies. Local community support permits them to resist discrimination, and dispersion risks destruction and submersion of the group, which amounts to domination.

Young Adults

The strategies of young adults, born of immigrant families, are an unknown. Socialized in France, they do not have the same strong community attachments nor the resulting behaviors that their parents have. The egalitarian, individualist, and hedonist values that their country of residence has instilled in them are sometimes in violent contradiction with the social destiny reserved for them by that country, which makes them particularly sensitive to feelings of oppression and discrimination. Today employment seems the most important issue to be faced. And housing depends on employment. The risk of revived housing competition is great because of the slowing of construction and the decline in public financing for housing. If the segregational effects of these developments are not controlled, the situation will deteriorate.

Public Opinion

For some years now we have witnessed a resurgence of racism and of its expression in politics. Opinion polls reveal a radicalization of attitudes towards immigrants. Indifference becomes rare, giving way to more clear-cut positions. Alongside a trend favorable to immigration (even if it favors assimilation,

denying cultural recognition) and to equalizing immigrants' rights and living conditions, which remains a minority view, there is a trend developing to reject immigrants that falls just short of nationalist, chauvinist, xenophobic, or racist positions. Immigrants are denounced as illegitimate competition at the heart of an uncertain economic situation; they are held responsible for problems or at the very least are considered a nuisance.

Even apart from the economic crisis, as immigrants move towards consolidating their positions in France, developing their claims for better integration, equal treatment, recognition of their identity and of cultural autonomy, etc., there has been a sharpening racism, which might have remained latent as long as the immigrants seemed to accept their precarious lot and "stay in their place." But (national) anguish, stirred up by the extreme right, now focuses on the loss of national identity that would be provoked by settlement of non-European families. At the same time, the French keep alive both a strong rejection of a racist social order—to the point where even the nationalistic extreme right paradoxically claims this view as its own—and their attachment to egalitarian values.

Housing: Cause and Consequence of Integration

The residential conditions of immigrants are not, on the whole, characteristic of what we often called "first settlement." The most marginal situations are generally slowly remedied, except, doubtless, for illegal immigrants.

The hierarchy between native French and immigrants and between immigrants from different points of origin, however, perpetuates itself. The universal factors that tend to improve living conditions, such as how long the individual immigrant has been there, how long ago the wave of immigration of which the individual was part occurred, whether the family joined the individual, how well he or she has mastered the French language, familiarity with social and administrative matters, knowledge of rights, improvement in earnings and professional skills, etc., have an effect, as does ethnoracial status. But these factors do not succeed in completely balancing out the influence of racial discrimination. Immigrant status also interferes when the individual tries to move upward, by blocking professional promotion, thus preventing the achievement of other characteristics that lead to better residential integration. Maghreb populations, and particularly Algerians, no matter how long they have been in France and/or how good their command of the language and the social system, continue to suffer segregation in both the private sector and public housing. This hinders their access to the older, more comfortable housing, and relegates them to the least desirable sections of subsidized housing.

Housing thus appears as both product and producer of integration or of marginalization, as both cause and consequence. We must not underestimate its role. However, no matter what its importance—undeniable as it is—housing is only one aspect of integration, because it is only one aspect of the relationship between immigrants and the receiving country. We should not minimize the effects of the contacts on other levels: in jobs, work relationships, school, but also in the street, the media, stores, unavoidable meeting places (offices, institutions, public urban spaces), and recreation facilities.

A mixed neighborhood, with French natives and immigrants, is not in itself a certain integrating factor, in the context of competition and insecurity. However, local life, daily interactions, interpersonal relationships and group activities made possible by living together often have a positive if sometimes unnoticed effect. Everyday reality is often more complex than inhabitants and observers would have us believe. And even conflict, when not focused on divisive ethnic factors, is part of a coexistence where inclusion and exclusion, rejection and cooperation, fear and support all occur in the same place. Local ethnic relationships can contribute to immigrant integration, as a result of functional contacts among the diverse groups.

While it may be true that bad housing conditions tend to have a negative influence, they also permit practical adaptations, "cultural tinkering," and diversified integration strategies, sometimes protected by a certain freedom from the dominant society's control. But in order for these practices to support real integration, the situation must not be closed; a margin of initiative must remain. The issue is not only housing conditions, but even more important, the residential freedom of immigrants. Housing is really only negatively connected to integration. The "dead end" or forced housing situation stigmatizes its inhabitants (to the point where people are refused jobs because of where they live), and brings about self-devaluation that breeds failure and apathy, but also weak, more or less unorganized revolt, and deviance—all well-known effects of social exclusion.

From this perspective, the vicious circle in which immigrant workers who want to bring in their families find themselves can also create integration problems. In an effort to avoid the creation and reproduction of slums, public officials justify acceptance of immigrant families with larger and more comfortable housing. But subsidized housing, even without quotas, takes a long time to obtain, and is never allocated when the family is not yet in France. A person is thus required to find housing in the private market that is too big and too expensive for one person before requesting that the family be allowed to join him or her, and sometimes the waiting period is long.

Immigrant adaptation and integration is also too often measured by immi-

grants' silence, submission, and social invisibility. However, individual or collective refusal of the social treatment they are subjected to in the form of resistance or struggle, bypassing the law, or confrontation is a demonstrable sign of integration, and of the desire to integrate. Social struggles have, in and of themselves, a certain integrating power because they entail debate, contact, search for solutions, mediators, and negotiations. They often permit accelerated socialization into the process of social regulation in France. They also bring out actors, leaders, and negotiators from the immigrant groups whose role is often important in achieving their integration.

It is true, however, that urban or housing struggles often have trouble surfacing: residential location, in France is not a framework where collective identity of adversaries is easily developed. Negotiations and conflict resolution concerning living conditions are poorly organized. Life outside of work atomizes individuals, sending them back to primary attachments rather than to local organizations that will fight for their claims.

NOTES

1. One hundred and thirty neighborhoods were affected by this policy aimed at coordinating diverse public services such as architectural restoration, economic development, revitalization of social and communal activity, prevention of academic failure and delinquency, etc.
2. Remember that the massive call for foreign labor during the expansion years was less controlled by the state than followed by it—79 percent of immigrants arriving in France in 1967 were legalized after their “illegal” entry into France.
3. Such as the allocations for immigrants of 0.2 percent, then 0.1 percent of employers' contributions to workers' housing, adopted in 1977, 1975, and 1979.
4. The term “household” defines, in census terms, a group of people living in the same house, whether relatives or not. For convenience, we call “French households” or “foreign households” those in which the person “referred to” (declared as such in the census forms) is French or foreign. Certain households are clearly multinational, but the general indications remain valid.
5. The racist image includes many animalistic comparisons and metaphors, mostly referring to harmful or predatory animals that reproduce quickly (rodents, insects, vermin, images of proliferation and invasion . . .). It is also frequently associated with bacteriological, microbial, or viral attacks, and insidious contaminations. We cannot analyze the racist's explicit or implicit fantasizing here, but we must not forget how widespread it is, extending well beyond openly acknowledged racists.
6. Thus, for example, the proportions of landowners among immigrants varies considerably from one country to the next, less for cultural reasons than as a function of the rental market.

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