

## **Objects of Dispute: Planning, Discourse and State Power in Post-war France**

### **Abstract**

During the presidency of Charles de Gaulle (1958-1969), the Paris region underwent substantial transformation through an programme of spatial planning led by high-ranking civil servant Paul Delouvrier. The aim of the *Schéma directeur d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région de Paris* (1965) was to improve urban life through modernisation and the creation of new urban centres; but its scale and complexity meant that it was quickly seen to represent the hubris of state power. This article examines the role of discourse and narrative in state planning, highlighting the role of planning's discursive apparatus in the production of space, and the stories told about planning by the actors themselves and those who witness its consequences. It considers what those narratives reveal about perceptions of power in post-war France, placing the Gaullist view of the state as a force for good in the context of contemporary critical analyses of state power by Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre and others. Exploring the relationship between power, resistance and critique, it suggests that the environments produced by spatial planning can be fruitfully considered as complex objects of dispute, enmeshed in conflicting hopes, dreams and visions of the future. It discusses how the New Town of Cergy-Pontoise emerges as such an object in the television documentary *Enfance d'une ville* (1975), by Éric Rohmer and Jean-Paul Pigeat.

### **Keywords**

State planning – Paul Delouvrier – Gaullism – power – discourse – Cergy-Pontoise

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In June 1965, the French government published a plan that would transform the everyday lives of millions of people for decades to come. Launched by Paul Delouvrier, recently appointed Prefect of the Paris District by General de Gaulle, the *Schéma directeur d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région de Paris* (SDAURP) encompassed both the city and an area around it of some 50 square miles. Its ambitions were both spatial and temporal. With the Year 2000 as its horizon, it aimed to manage an urban population projected to grow from 8.5 million in 1965 to 14 million by the end of the century. Key to the plan was the construction of eight new satellite towns in a circle around Paris (five of which would ultimately be built). The scheme also involved major infrastructure projects, including a new international

airport to the north of the city at Roissy, a system of *autoroutes*, and a new rapid transport system, the RER, connecting the New Towns to Paris and each other.

Rosemary Wakeman describes the Schéma directeur as ‘one of the most grandiose regional land-use programs ever attempted’.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Delouvrier soon earned the nickname ‘le Haussmann des faubourgs’,<sup>2</sup> a reference to his nineteenth-century predecessor in Parisian urban planning which signalled not just the ambition and scope of his project, but also the political patronage behind it, with Charles de Gaulle cast as Delouvrier’s Louis Napoleon.<sup>3</sup> The scheme was implemented over the next two decades. Construction of Cergy-Pontoise, the first of the New Towns, began in 1967 on a greenfield site above a meander of the River Oise north-west of Paris. Roissy airport opened in 1974, and the RER network took shape when Line A (east-west) and Line B (north-south) met at the newly-completed underground interchange of Châtelet-Les Halles in 1977, built on the site of the old wholesale food market in central Paris.

Like many such schemes in the post-war period, the empirical work of spatial transformation initiated by the Schéma directeur was embedded within a complex discursive landscape. As Wakeman notes, it was accompanied by an array of textual and visual material, from maps, scale models and artists’ impressions to magazine articles and television news broadcasts, all serving to disseminate and tell stories about the urban futures which the scheme would bring to life.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the Schéma directeur was discursive in its very foundations, taking the form of a map to the scale

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<sup>1</sup> Rosemary Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia: An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 220.

<sup>2</sup> Roselyne Chenu, *Paul Delouvrier, ou la passion d’agir* (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 238.

<sup>3</sup> The parallel invoked between De Gaulle and Napoleon III reflected contemporary unease over what were perceived to be the General’s autocratic, if not dictatorial, leanings.

<sup>4</sup> Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia*, 223.

of 1/100,000 and a commentary which set out the ambition of preparing Paris for the Year 2000.

Not only did this material articulate the planners' wishful thinking, or what Sylvia Ostrowetsky terms 'l'imaginaire bâtisseur',<sup>5</sup> but it signalled the extent to which spatial planning is a discursive project, and how the environments it engenders are produced by and through discourse and narrative. As the Schéma directeur was translated into built forms on the ground, it demonstrated the power of statements, and particularly statements made by the state, to produce changes in empirical reality. That power derived in large part from the conjunction of a set of political, economic and historical circumstances which afforded legitimacy and performative force to the vision, words and deeds of a group of individuals charged with creating a modernised French future in the present of the 1960s and 1970s.

Recent accounts of spatial production in post-war France, by Busbea, Cupers and Wakeman among others, have drawn on and underlined the vast quantity of discursive material produced as part of the planning process.<sup>6</sup> Yet it is striking that while their work certainly highlights what might be termed the discursive apparatus of spatial planning, it does not explore in any detail the role of discourse and representation in the production of spatial realities. In contrast, this article sets out to examine more carefully the curious and unstable position of spatial planning as an activity which unfolds in the discursive as much as the empirical realm, and consider how the former drives and shapes the latter. That is, it is concerned to explore how planning's discursive apparatus mediates between imagined and real space, and produces one from the other.

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<sup>5</sup> Sylvia Ostrowetsky, *L'Imaginaire bâtisseur: les villes nouvelles françaises* (Paris: Librairie des Méridiens, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Larry Busbea, *Topologies: The Urban Utopia in France, 1960-1970* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2007); Kenny Cupers, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia*.

The article understands the relationship between the discursive and empirical dimensions of spatial planning in a variety of ways. First, in terms of how the discursive realm (in the form of maps, plans, narratives, scale models or artists' impressions) drives and shapes the creation of planned spaces. Second, in terms of the role of narrative and myth in spatial planning. The planners themselves tell stories, both about the processes they undertake and about the urban futures and promised lands they set out to create, mobilising text and image as they do so; but stories are also told from the outside, by those who watch the consequences of spatial planning unfold, and see its impact on the world around them. Such narratives help shape perceptions and attitudes towards spatial planning in the public sphere. Meanwhile, planning's outcomes (new urban spaces, new buildings, new infrastructures) are forms which are engendered by discourse, and maintain a hybrid status at once empirical and discursive. While they exist as physical forms in the landscape, shaping the feel of daily life for their users and inhabitants, they are also filmed, photographed, talked about and otherwise turned into symbolic forms which circulate within society. Moreover, as new urban forms, they are political in the most fundamental sense, insofar as they constitute the *polis* as both physical space and location for political encounter, and themselves become subject to often intense political debate.

Getting to grips with the discursive apparatus of post-war spatial planning is important because the spatial realities it produced continue to frame and shape the everyday lives of millions of French citizens. It is important too for the light it sheds on broader questions about the practices and perceptions of state power in post-war France, both of which are thrown into sharp relief by the development and implementation of the Schéma directeur during the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, a second

aim of the article is to explore how that power sees itself, and how it comes to be portrayed. The Schéma directeur in its initial phase is indicative of the sort of interventionist political action typical of De Gaulle's Fifth Republic, predicated on a belief in the state's agency and embodied in singular figures such as Paul Delouvrier, who were invested with the capacity to make decisions for and about the lives of the French population.

As a process necessarily unfolding over several years, however, spatial planning took place against a shifting political backdrop which changed how the project's vision, ideology and physical manifestations came to be viewed. The article considers how the material forms and environments created by spatial planning became constituted discursively as contested objects, provoking clashing points of view which congregated around them, bringing people together in their disagreement, and forming with them a political assemblage. It explores how the relationship between power and critique is staged in Eric Rohmer's 1975 television documentary, *Enfance d'une ville*, which depicts the creation of the New Town of Cergy-Pontoise, its discursive foundations, and its emergence as both material reality and object of dispute.

### **Planning, narrative and myth**

Two moments from 1967 underscore the centrality of narrative and myth in French spatial planning. In its issue dated 1 July that year, the influential news magazine *Paris Match*, closely aligned with France's political establishment, ran a cover story on 'un extraordinaire reportage dans le futur'. Under the headline 'Paris dans vingt ans', an artist's rendering in full colour showed wide boulevards and tall buildings bathed in sunlight, with helicopters moving between tower blocks and tiny figures

walking down long esplanades. On the inside pages, more pictures of the projected Parisian skyline were accompanied by photographs of the planners at work, gathered round their maps like military strategists. The article closed with a full-page colour photograph showing Paul Delouvrier airborne in a police helicopter, flying past an office block in a dramatic display of Gaullist agency.

The *Paris Match* story gave visual form to the promises Delouvrier had made on behalf of the state two years earlier, as he set out the ambitions of the SDAURP in the commentary which accompanied its publication. Preparing Paris for the Year 2000, argued Delouvrier, would ensure the conditions of happiness and prosperity for all its citizens:

Préparer la région de Paris à son avenir – mission de ceux qui ont la charge de son aménagement et de son urbanisme – c’est rendre la vie meilleure aux millions d’hommes et de femmes, ses habitants d’aujourd’hui et de demain; c’est faire de cette région un outil économique plus efficace au service de la collectivité nationale; c’est y mettre en valeur une beauté ancienne, y créer une beauté nouvelle, que le Parisien comme le visiteur du pays le plus lointain puisse aimer.<sup>7</sup>

The quick accumulation of verbs of action (‘préparer’, ‘rendre’, ‘faire’, ‘mettre’, ‘créer’) in a series of anaphoric statements stages and assumes the state’s will and ability to bring its vision to fruition. The commentary takes on a performative quality through its rhetorical expression of causal certainty linking the ‘mission’ of Delouvrier’s team with an inevitable series of outcomes. Bearing as it does the

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<sup>7</sup> *Schéma directeur d’aménagement et d’urbanisme de la région de Paris* (Paris: La documentation française, 1965), 9.

imprimatur of the French state, Delouvrier's statement itself brings to pass the conditions for action, establishes its horizon and thereby prepares the ground for a reshaped Paris region in a sense which is literal as much as figurative.

A few months previously, in March 1967, Jean-Luc Godard had released *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*, a film about urban development in the Paris region, and its impact on those living there. The film's opening sequence features shots of building work around Paris, accompanied by an unsynchronised soundtrack which switches disconcertingly back and forth between silence and the sound of construction noise (pneumatic drills, rumbling lorries). It then cuts to images of the recently-completed *grand ensemble* of *la cité des 4,000* at La Courneuve to the north of Paris, which are joined by a whispered voiceover from Godard. Drowned out occasionally by ambient noise (passing traffic, the sound of children playing), Godard begins his commentary with reference to a decree published in the French government's *Journal officiel* of 19 August 1966:

Le 19 août, un décret relatif à l'organisation des services de l'État dans la Région parisienne était publié par le *Journal officiel*. Deux jours après, le Conseil des ministres nomme Paul Delouvrier préfet de la Région parisienne qui, selon le communiqué du secretariat à l'Information, se trouve ainsi dotée de structures précises et originales.<sup>8</sup>

The effect of Godard's theatrical whisper is twofold. On the one hand, it is a provocation to the audience: we are being asked to listen rather than hear, engaged politically by physical means as we strain to catch what Godard is saying. On the

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<sup>8</sup> Jean-Luc Godard, *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle: découpage intégrale* (Paris: Seuil, coll. "Points-Films", 1971), 20.



other, whispering as a mode of communication creates an impression of secrets being revealed, of sensitive information being shared for the benefit of the common good. What we are straining to hear concerns something important ('des structures précises et originales') lurking beneath the ordinary, daily business of government as it is articulated in the dry prose of bureaucracy and legislation.

The film seems concerned in particular to bring out of the shadows both the mysterious new role of Prefect and its holder, and to place them centre-stage. A sense of revelation is reinforced a minute or so later when the narrator pursues his analysis of the new structures and their implications:

Le pouvoir gaulliste prend le masque d'un réformateur et d'un modernisateur alors qu'il ne veut qu'enregistrer et régulariser les tendances naturelles du grand capitalisme. J'en déduis aussi que, en systématisant le dirigisme et la centralisation, ce même pouvoir accentue les distorsions de l'économie nationale, et plus encore celle de la morale quotidienne qui la fonde.<sup>9</sup>

He establishes planning activity as a force which is not only unstoppable and unaccountable, but also destructive in its impact on the everyday life of the population. Its reorganisation of space, infrastructure and living places emerges as a tangible manifestation of the state's power over human life, defined by Michel Foucault in the 1970s as 'bio-politics'.<sup>10</sup>

That stories of state power told from the radical left and the conservative right might diverge is to be expected. Notable nonetheless is their shared assumption that there is such a power at work in the land, even as they disagree as to whether it is

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<sup>9</sup> Godard, *2 ou 3 choses*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique: cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979* (Paris: Hautes Études/Gallimard/Seuil, 2004).

nefarious and divisive (for Godard) or productive and unifying (for *Paris Match*). Likewise, both recognise Delouvrier as Gaullist man of action and incarnation of that power. As John Gaffney has argued, the Gaullist Fifth Republic was distinguished by a particular combination of the institutional, the structural and the personal, facilitated in large part by De Gaulle's revised constitution, which enshrined a shift away from the legislature to the executive, and the simultaneous concentration of executive power in the figure of the president.<sup>11</sup> Also noticeable is how the dynamic combination of personality, role and structure illustrated most evidently by a powerful president reproduced itself at different levels of government.

Delouvrier was to Parisian spatial planning as De Gaulle was to national government: a charismatic leader with the desire and ability to transform will into action. Like many public servants of the post-war period, his ethos of state service and action for the common good, what the historian and political scientist René Rémond terms his 'volonté d'agir',<sup>12</sup> was forged during time spent in the French Resistance. He began his career as a senior finance inspector before moving into government as a cabinet secretary under René Pleven and René Meyer during the Fourth Republic. After working with Jean Monnet in Luxembourg on the newly-created European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, forerunner of the European Economic Community and the European Union), Delouvrier was appointed the French government's delegate general in Algeria by De Gaulle in 1958, the first civilian to hold a post until then reserved for the military. Having resigned in 1960, he was made *délégué général au district de la région de Paris* in 1961.

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<sup>11</sup> John Gaffney, *Political Leadership in France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 6.

<sup>12</sup> René Rémond, "Introduction: Paul Delouvrier, un grand commis de l'État", in Sébastien Laurent and Jean-Eudes Rouillier (eds), *Paul Delouvrier: un grand commis de l'État* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2005), 10.

A sense of Gaullist volition, and the performative force of the state's statements, is further reinforced by a third narrative, what Catherine de Saint-Pierre terms 'le récit fondateur'<sup>13</sup> of the *Schéma directeur*, and the transformation of the Paris region. In a story often repeated by Delouvrier, its origins lay in a *coup de gueule* by General De Gaulle on 11 August 1961, the day the two men met to discuss Delouvrier's new role as *délégué général*:

J'ai reçu un second coup de téléphone, me convoquant de la part du général de Gaulle. Je me suis présenté devant lui le 11 août 1961. [...] Il m'a dit: 'Michel Debré tient beaucoup à cette réforme. La banlieue parisienne est un désordre total. Il faut remettre de l'ordre dans cette affaire. Je compte sur vous pour le faire'.<sup>14</sup>

A cruder version of the encounter, one also told regularly by Delouvrier, has De Gaulle making his point more bluntly: 'Delouvrier, la région parisienne c'est le bordel, mettez-moi de l'ordre dans tout cela'.<sup>15</sup> Various other textual forms of De Gaulle's command and its programmatic imperative to 'restore order' are in existence. Moreover, its historical veracity is corroborated by the presence of an alternative version in an official history of post-war planning, which couches a similar sentiment in more refined political rhetoric;<sup>16</sup> but it is the crudest variant, marked by

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<sup>13</sup> Caroline de Saint-Pierre, *La fabrication plurielle de la Ville: décideurs et citoyens à Cergy-Pontoise, 1990-2000* (Paris: Créaphis, 2002), 16.

<sup>14</sup> *L'aménagement de la région parisienne (1961-1969): le témoignage de Paul Delouvrier* (Paris: Presses de l'École nationale des Ponts et chaussées, 2003), 15.

<sup>15</sup> Saint-Pierre, *La fabrication plurielle de la Ville*, 14; cf. Jean-Paul Flamand, *Loger le peuple: essai sur l'histoire du logement social* (Paris: La Découverte, 1989), 284, who offers a more expansive variant: 'la région parisienne, mais c'est le bordel, il y a ces banlieues inhumaines, mettez-moi de l'ordre là-dedans'.

<sup>16</sup> Fouad Awada (ed.), *40 ans en Île-de-France: retrospective 1960-2000* (Paris: IAURIF, 2001), 27, epigraph to chapter three: "'C'est important politiquement et pour la France que Paris retrouve une

the lexical slippage from ‘désordre total’ to ‘bordel’, which has typically surfaced in later accounts.

Both the story itself and its retelling by Delouvrier sum up a certain understanding of government action and political agency under De Gaulle, and his role as charismatic leader and moral force. At one level, the cruder version of the story undoubtedly captured the imagination because of a colloquial expression (equivalent to ‘shambles’ or ‘mess’ in English) that seemed incongruous in the mouth of a president known for more lofty turns of phrase. At another, the slippage from ‘désordre’ to ‘bordel’ is a revealing one. Its literal meaning (‘brothel’ or ‘bordello’) imports some significant metaphorical implications about the *banlieue*, figuring it as a feminised space which requires the re-imposition of a masculine moral order. Indeed, for Loïc Vadelorge, the story is indicative of the self-perpetuating mythology of the Gaullist Fifth Republic as the domain of ‘providential men’ whose destiny is to resolve the problems of a generation.<sup>17</sup> Its valorisation as a founding narrative by those involved signals the recognition and legitimisation of De Gaulle’s moral authority by granting it a performative quality. Delouvrier and his men receive it as a command to which they feel called upon to respond.

Vadelorge makes clear his impatience with the persistence of Delouvrier’s story and the fetishization of De Gaulle’s ‘petite phrase’, arguing that in thinking about post-war planning, the time has come to move from myth and memory to history.<sup>18</sup> Yet in many respects, it is precisely the persistence of the narrative which is interesting, as are the ideological implications with which it is freighted, and the fact that it starts to emerge in different places and be told from different perspectives. In

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image de cité moderne. Il faut mettre de l’ordre là-dedans.” Charles De Gaulle s’adressant à Paul Delouvrier, le 11 août 1961’.

<sup>17</sup> Loïc Vadelorge, “Mémoire et histoire: les villes nouvelles françaises”, *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine*, 98 (2005), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Vadelorge, “Mémoire et histoire”, 9.

doing so, furthermore, it begins to frame understanding of the period beyond the confines of historical expertise on the subject as it acquires additional connotations. The story of De Gaulle's *coup de gueule* and Delouvrier's leap to action became a focal point for critiques of state planning and its consequences, not least as the environments produced by De Gaulle's founding command, and the problems that emerged with them, grew increasingly apparent. When the story surfaces in such critiques, it does so in a way which further accentuates its mythic qualities while its historical veracity is uncritically assumed, undoubtedly because the story confirms established perceptions about the practice of power in France at the time.

A notable example of the entangling of myth and history occurs in *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*, François Maspero's account of a journey through the Parisian suburbs along line B of the RER in 1989. The book quickly became celebrated as a seminal text on contemporary Paris, not least because of its attention to the forgotten or overlooked spaces of the capital's suburbs. In large part, it is a journey through the urban environments created by post-war planning, and in particular by Delouvrier's Schéma directeur. Undertaken by François and his companion Anaïk, it begins at Roissy airport, one of the elements of infrastructure deemed vital for the development of the Paris region by Delouvrier and his team. Heading south towards the city centre along the RER B (a second key piece of infrastructure developed under the aegis of the Schéma directeur), the travellers encounter increasingly complex concatenations of spatial production.

The newest spaces, furthest away from the centre, are implanted on greenfield sites (Roissy airport was barely 15 years old when François and Anaïk arrived there to start their journey). As they approach central Paris, spatial arrangements get more complicated, and layers of space more imbricated. When they reach La Courneuve to

the north of Paris, and its infamous *grand ensemble* of *la cité des 4,000*, Maspero offers his readers a short history of post-war spatial planning:

Mais enfin, les 4 000 – quatre mille logements pour autant de familles, cela fait combien d’habitants: 20 000? –, c’est un bel exemple de stockage humain. L’une des plus grandioses réalisations du plan Delouvrier. Cela se passait en 1960. ‘Delouvrier, avait dit de Gaulle, la région parisienne c’est le bordel, il y a ces banlieues inhumaines, mettez-moi de l’ordre là-dedans’. Delouvrier avait répondu quelque chose dans le genre de: ‘Affirmatif, mon général’, et il avait mis de l’ordre. Il avait créé un Plan, le PADOG, et des Zones, il avait fait succéder les ZAC aux ZUP, en attendant qu’elles soient remplacés par les ZAD; il avait remodelé la vieille Seine et Oise en plusieurs départements, prelude à la création de la région.<sup>19</sup>

Like Godard twenty or so years earlier, Maspero settles on the housing estate as symptomatic of the problems produced by post-war state planning, conjuring a sense of the malign indifference which lies behind it (‘un bel exemple de stockage humain’). From Godard’s perspective in the 1960s, *Les 4,000* was both symptom and source of the economic and moral degradation produced by modernisation and the consumer capitalism it facilitated. When Maspero stopped there two decades later, his reading of the site was framed by the marginalisation, poverty and social exclusion which had come to define France’s suburbs, and had affected disproportionately the communities of immigrant origin for whom places like *Les 4,000* represented the extent of France’s post-colonial hospitality.

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<sup>19</sup> François Maspero, *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 196.

Undoubtedly reflecting his long history of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist activism, Maspero's account of the 'plan Delouvrier' echoes Godard's in its hermeneutics of suspicion, and is predicated on an assumption that the French state was working to impose its own interests ahead of those of its citizens. His mood of suspicion is articulated in the details he foregrounds and the tone of irony he adopts. Maspero repeats the *coup de gueule* which forms the basis of Delouvrier's own founding narrative, and the bitter humour of the response which he imagines for Delouvrier ('Affirmatif, mon général') at once sums up the assumed arrogance of Gaullist power and the hierarchical structures which sustained it.

Equally revealing are the biographical details about Delouvrier that Maspero goes on to offer:

L'ordre, Delouvrier, il connaissait: il était passé, en 1941, par l'école des cadres d'Uriage qui fut, comme on sait, une pépinière de grands commis, du temps où la France chantait *Maréchal nous voilà*; l'essentiel, comme disait de Gaulle, étant que c'étaient tous de bons Français. Bref, Delouvrier et ses copains mirent de l'ordre dans la région parisienne.<sup>20</sup>

The historical reality is inevitably more complicated than Maspero's elliptical telling allows. Delouvrier joined the Resistance soon after his time at Uriage, and the institution was in any case less straightforwardly aligned with Pétain's discredited regime than Maspero implies, staffed as it was by a number of progressive intellectuals such as the sociologist Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, Maspero's suggestion of the continuities between Vichy and De Gaulle's

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<sup>20</sup> Maspero, *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*, 196.

<sup>21</sup> On Chombart de Lauwe and the École d'Uriage, see Jeanne Haffner, *The View From Above: The Science of Social Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2013), 56-61.

administration (expressed in his sly characterisation of De Gaulle's pragmatic recognition that some compromise over uncertain wartime allegiances might be necessary) is perhaps the most effective way of implying a malevolent undercurrent to the Gaullist regime; and all the more so since the travellers arrive in La Courneuve from Drancy, where they visit the Cité de la Muette, a pioneering example of progressive social housing from the 1930s, transformed into a transit camp for Jews during the Occupation. The mere juxtaposition of the two locations in Maspero's narrative, and the links he makes between social housing, planning and the abuse of power, ensure that Maspero's account of *Les 4,000* and its origins is shadowed by the troubled history of its ancestor.

Maspero's account of the 'plan Delouvrier' also illustrates how historical narratives about spatial planning take shape and circulate, and how certain perspectives gain prominence and authority. It seems likely that Maspero draws his version of De Gaulle's *coup de gueule* verbatim from Jean-Paul Flamand's *Loger le peuple*, published in the months preceding his trip, which he acknowledges earlier in the text as his source for the history of urban development in Paris.<sup>22</sup> Maspero's account shares Flamand's generally critical tone, as well as his argument that post-war urban planning in France is characterised by the growing accumulation of power by the state. Likewise, the Gaullist command resurfaces five years later in Kristin Ross's analysis of the relationship between French modernisation and decolonisation, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*.<sup>23</sup> Noteworthy here is the fact that Ross cites *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* as her source, sustaining and consolidating the critical perspective on post-war planning which is rooted in Flamand's book even as her reference loses sight of *Loger le peuple* as the likely original source of the quotation.

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<sup>22</sup> Maspero, *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*, 178 and Flamand, *Loger le peuple*, 284.

<sup>23</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Re-ordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995), 153 and 224 n. 47.



The process by which assertion, assumption and insinuation begin to inform narratives of post-war planning is illustrated even more clearly by the inaccuracies which creep into the portrayals by Godard and Maspero of *Les 4,000*. They both set out to infer a link between Delouvrier and the housing estate, and to establish a causal relationship between the actions of a specific individual and the problems for thousands of others which ensue. In Godard's film, the connection is established mainly through location filming and the framing of the action by the whispered voiceover, which identifies the publication of the decrees of 19 August 1966 and the appointment of Delouvrier to his new role as the main impetus for the wave of new housing development. Maspero makes the connection more explicitly by suggesting that *Les 4,000* was 'l'une des plus grandioses réalisations du plan Delouvrier', which he identifies as the PADOG (*Plan d'aménagement et d'organisation générale*) published in 1960.

Yet their desire to associate Delouvrier with *Les 4,000* and its problems introduces some significant historical inaccuracies. First, construction of the *grand ensemble* began in 1957 and was completed in 1963. It had no direct connection to the *Schéma directeur*, reflecting instead an earlier phase of building in response to France's housing crisis of the 1950s. Second, and picking up on perhaps the most glaring error in Maspero's potted history of planning, the *Schéma directeur* was itself predicated on a critique of the PADOG. In conceiving the Paris region as a whole, and as part of a broader national (even European) space, the *Schéma directeur* represented an attempt to move beyond what had come to be recognised as the limitations of its predecessor, which aimed to limit the development of the Paris region within a strictly defined boundary.

What interests me here are not so much the historical inaccuracies in the stories told by Godard and Maspero, as the ways in which those inaccuracies help to consolidate perceptions of Delouvrier as the embodiment of a problematic sort of power at work in French society. Indeed, by asserting the concentration of power in particular individuals, their stories start to converge with the sorts of myths about spatial planning which Vadelorge sees being perpetuated by the actors themselves. As Vadelorge suggests, the persistence of such myths, and their insistence on the importance of a few providential men, has implications for the historical understanding and historiography of French spatial planning. Kenny Cupers pursues this point, arguing that ‘to understand the making of the French suburbs, we need to favor situated agency over abstract forces and contingency over determinism’.<sup>24</sup> That is to say, we need to interrogate straightforward assumptions about spatial planning as the exercise of what Cupers terms ‘top-down power’<sup>25</sup> in favour of a more nuanced analysis of planning activity which draws out the role of provisionality, uncertainty and negotiation between different actors, be they state agencies, local government bodies or commercial enterprises.

Nevertheless, we need at the same time to remain attentive to the nature of power in Gaullist France, and recognise that the ‘situated agency’ described by Cupers includes the authority bestowed on charismatic individuals like Delouvrier within a hierarchical structure. Doing so allows us to grasp how narratives and myths about spatial planning as an exercise in ‘top-down power’ can gain traction as its often problematic consequences begin to unfold. In this context, figures such as Delouvrier are emblematic at once of how state power works in post-war France, and of how it comes to be perceived. At stake is the relationship between the Gaullist

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<sup>24</sup> Cupers, *The Social Project*, xv.

<sup>25</sup> Cupers, *The Social Project*, xxiv.

government's 'volonté d'agir' and what Michel Senellart, discussing Foucault's work of the mid-1970s, calls 'le pouvoir sur la vie',<sup>26</sup> a power which would increasingly preoccupy Foucault and others through the 1960s and 1970s, and which is brought into particular focus by spatial planning and its execution.

### **Power, resistance and critique**

Pierre Bourdieu proposes that the state can be understood as 'le fondement de l'intégration logique et de l'intégration morale du monde social'.<sup>27</sup> It is at once produced by and reproduces a social order predicated on shared understanding ('l'intégration logique') and shared values ('l'intégration morale') among those individuals who constitute and sustain it. The Gaullist Fifth Republic offers a forceful expression of the blending of these two things as it asserts itself during the 1960s. It combines charismatic leadership expressing a clear sense of French national destiny with institutional structures legitimising that personal authority and channelling it as transformative agency (Rémond's 'volonté d'agir'). What is also crucial about Gaullism, as I noted above, is not just that it draws shared beliefs and values together with investment in singular political agency, but that it is *perceived* to work as such by the actors themselves, and invested with a positive moral charge at the same time.

Thus, photographs of Delouvrier flying over La Défense in a military helicopter, or television news footage of the lead planner of Cergy-Pontoise perched next to a scale model of the New Town, make manifest an ideology of public service which emphasises the personal dynamism of state servants and invests them with a potent form of legitimacy and power. From this perspective, state servants are

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<sup>26</sup> Michel Senellart, "Situation des cours", in Michel Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population: cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978* (Paris: Hautes Études/Gallimard/Seuil, 2004), 382.

<sup>27</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l'État: cours au Collège de France, 1989-1992* (Paris: Seuil, coll. "Points-Essais", 2012), 15.

endowed with a set of values through which individual devotion to the state as a force for public good brings an enlightened ability to act in the best interests of the nation's citizens. The 'qualités personnelles' which René Rémond identifies in Delouvrier ('une volonté d'agir, une détermination à innover') find their ideal expression in a shared horizon of public service and state action:

Il est aussi éminemment représentative d'une génération de hauts fonctionnaires qui avaient une conception exigeante du service public et se faisaient une idée ambitieuse du rôle de l'État dont ils pensaient que c'était à lui de définir le bien public et d'intervenir pour le réaliser.<sup>28</sup>

Entering the state apparatus in the wake of the Liberation, and informed by their experience of occupation and resistance, the high functionaries of the Gaullist administration accumulate power and authority which, at first glance, seem to derive from individual will and charisma; but it is the specific structures and ethos of French bureaucracy, particularly as they are recast by De Gaulle, which sanction those qualities as legitimate. The combination of vision, will and charisma operating within an otherwise strictly hierarchical chain of command is perhaps the most eye-catching feature of Gaullist modes of governance.

Through its staging of the Gaullist 'volonté d'agir', visual material of the period also draws out how that will is bound up with the state's 'pouvoir sur la vie', its ability to define the conditions for life and the frameworks in which life will be lived. Michel Senellart uses the phrase in relation to Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France in the mid-1970s, in which he developed the themes of bio-politics and

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<sup>28</sup> Rémond, "Introduction: Paul Delouvrier, un grand commis de l'État", 10.

governmentality; that is to say, the emergence of modern modes of government predicated on the regulation of the human population falling under the purview of the state. As the Schéma directeur made clear, the distribution, management and mobilisation of populations is thought through in spatial terms first and foremost. Indeed, it is unsurprising that the French state's efforts to reconfigure and reorient its territory in the post-colonial moment was accompanied by heightened critical reflection on space and its production.

At the start of the 1970s, Henri Lefebvre noted the 'internal colonisation' which accompanied the return from the colonies of urban planners and civil engineers,<sup>29</sup> and the violence inflicted on lived experience by the 'abstract space' they produced;<sup>30</sup> and while Foucault's work in the 1970s is not concerned with spatial planning and production *per se*, his investigation of how modern states govern their territory draws out the ways in which practices of government have an inherently spatial dimension. By the end of the decade, Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were writing in different ways about modes of resistance to planned space from below. De Certeau's celebration of pedestrian ruses, incursions and desire paths as ways of reclaiming public space in the first volume of *L'invention du quotidien* (1980) has a conceptual parallel in the notion, developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille plateaux* the same year, of the 'ligne de fuite' cutting across and beyond bounded territory. Moreover, it is surely not coincidental that the final words of *L'invention du quotidien* are a withering reference to 'la technocratie fonctionnaliste'. The rebarbative nature of the term enacts the scorn De Certeau feels towards the phenomenon it names.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Espace et politique* (Paris: Anthropos, 2000), 69.

<sup>30</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos, 2000), 333.

<sup>31</sup> Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, t. 1, arts de faire (Paris: Gallimard, coll. "Folio-essais", 1990), 296.

French spatial theory of the period can be seen in many ways as a response to, and diagnosis of, the impact of government activity under Gaullist and post-Gaullist regimes, and how the state's monopoly position gives it far-reaching power over the conditions of life through spatial planning. In particular, it articulated the perverse affective consequences of spatial planning as a process producing environments perceived and lived as threatening even as it strove to create what Delouvrier termed the 'conditions matérielles d'une vie heureuse'.<sup>32</sup> In a famous description of his first encounter with the new town of Mourenx in south west France ('j'arrive à Mourenx et je m'effraie'),<sup>33</sup> Lefebvre encapsulates his critique of planned space as the imposition of a geometric order which seeks to regulate, organise and rationalise the spontaneity of everyday life and its spatial practices, and as a result produces effects not of happiness but of fear and alienation.

The emergence of critique as the Schéma directeur is translated into built environments in turn foregrounds the relationship between power and resistance, a dialectic theorised by Foucault in his Collège de France lectures in relation to the liberal democracies of European modernity and the emergence of civil society. In *Sécurité, territoire, population*, Foucault argues that, as liberal democracies matured, civil society took shape as a function or effect of the practice of power by the state. State structures and actions produce the category of civil society as a central object and concern of government. At the same time, thanks to the incorporation of liberty as an axiomatic principle of democratic life, civil society itself serves as a check on government actions which might stray too far in defining the terms and conditions of liberty through activities of critique, resistance and 'contre-conduite'.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>32</sup> *Schéma directeur*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "Notes sur la ville nouvelle", in *Introduction à la modernité* (Paris: Minuit, 1962), 123.

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire, population*, 364.

as locus and principal agent of power, the state sets the terms and grounds for the political debate through which its actions are challenged.

The steady implementation of the Schéma directeur over the years following its publication offers a compelling illustration of how the state, as it intervenes in the lives of its citizens by reshaping spaces of dwelling and collective life, provokes resistance and critique. Central to this dynamic is the peculiar temporality of spatial planning, and in particular, the inevitable temporal lag which opens up as the planners' vision unfolds in the long duration of spatial production, and politics begins to inflect, disrupt and challenge that vision's material manifestations. We have seen how the forms taken by the project in the 1960s were due to a specific conjunction of political circumstances and modes of political legitimacy. Consequently, when those circumstances changed, Gaullist planning found itself called into question even as it continued to produce new landscapes and environments. Its emerging empirical realities – the spaces, buildings and things it created – slowly became objects of dispute.

By the time François Maspero was writing *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express* in 1990, the *problème des banlieues* had become an axiom of broader political debate in France. The planners' moral optimism had been displaced by the hermeneutic of suspicion articulated by Maspero and others, as social exclusion and urban deprivation became the most visible outcome of post-war planning interventions, and cast doubt on the idea of the state as a force for good. A hardening in attitude towards Gaullist planning can be mapped most obviously through the progressive spatial and critical theory of the 1970s, as we noted above; but more subtly and strikingly, those shifts were taking place as well within the field of expertise itself, as France negotiated its way from a Gaullist to a post-Gaullist era of government.

An article published in 1979 by urban planner Jean-Paul Alduy offers a snapshot of changes in attitudes to planning and the balance of power within the field. Born in 1942, Alduy trained at the *École polytechnique*, where he qualified in the *corps des ponts et chaussées* as a civil engineer. In the early 1970s, he joined the Institut d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de l'Île-de-France (IAURIF), which Delouvrier had created to support the development and implementation of the Schéma directeur. Alduy's article appeared in the second issue of the journal *Annales de la recherche urbaine*, which had been launched by the Ministère de l'Équipement in 1978 to disseminate the work of academics and professional urban planners. As such, the journal offered an insight not only into French planning's established orthodoxies, but also its emerging heterodoxies, of which Alduy's intervention serves as an example. Indeed, both the IAURIF and *Annales* illustrate how the French state's own institutions facilitated the production of self-reflexive critical discourses by its agents. By articulating breaks and shifts within the field of expertise, heterodox positions helped to create the conditions in which the products of spatial planning became contested objects through critical debate.

In his article, "Les villes nouvelles de la région parisienne: du projet politique à la réalisation, 1963-1977", Alduy set out to analyse the New Towns as an illustration of technocratic power in Gaullist France, and track how the project's fortunes were affected by changes in the national political and economic context.<sup>35</sup> Alduy makes clear the significance of 1958 as consolidating the technocratic turn in French government, when political and technocratic authority coincided and reinforced each other. As he puts it, the implementation of the Schéma directeur, and the founding of the five New Towns 'constituent avant tout l'expression réelle et

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<sup>35</sup> Jean-Paul Alduy, "Les villes nouvelles de la région parisienne. Du projet politique à la réalisation, 1963-1977", *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine*, 2 (1979), 3-78.



symbolique du pouvoir des agents des hauteurs de l'appareil central de l'État sous la Ve République'.<sup>36</sup> He is also clear that the resignation of De Gaulle in 1969 and the death of Pompidou in 1974 mark the waning of that conjunction, already signalled by the landmark *loi Boscher* of 1973, which ended the construction of *grands ensembles*.

The election of Giscard d'Estaing in 1974 brought a move away from the state-led intervention of the Gaullist era towards greater economic liberalism, whereby the market rather than the state came to be seen as the main motor for growth. This change in emphasis signalled a shift in the balance of power on the right which coincided with an economic downturn in France following the oil crisis of 1973 and the end of three decades of sustained economic expansion. The Parisian New Towns, argues Alduy, became caught up in the double bind of a slowing economy and a changing political agenda, and perceived as 'non seulement coûteux mais politiquement peu rentable'.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the very nature of Alduy's intervention was itself a sign that the high Gaullist moment of spatial planning had entered into history. His account locates the New Town project in the past through the terms of its title, and feels able to treat it as a historical phenomenon whose causes and effects can be drawn out.

This is perhaps why his article provoked an impassioned response from Jean-Eudes Rouillier, published in the same issue of the journal.<sup>38</sup> Rouillier was one of the original members of Delouvrier's planning team, and the first general secretary of the Groupe central des villes nouvelles (GCVN), created in 1970 to co-ordinate the planning and development of New Towns across France. As such, he represented the established order of French spatial planning. His response thus marked a moment of

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<sup>36</sup> Alduy, "Les villes nouvelles de la région parisienne", 5.

<sup>37</sup> Alduy, "Les villes nouvelles de la région parisienne", 5.

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Eudes Rouillier, "L'expérience des villes nouvelles. Essai de réponse à Jean-Paul Alduy", *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine*, 2 (1979), 79-104.

inter-generational rivalry and transition. That Alduy's article merited a reply from a figure like Rouillier was enough to confer it legitimacy and recognition, even as Rouillier took issue with Alduy's analysis and reasserted the moral and social impetus behind the Schéma directeur:

J'ai le sentiment qu'à chaque pas, dans ce domaine-là comme dans bien d'autres (infrastructures, conception urbaine, vie sociale, etc.), les questions clés ont été du type: comment faire prendre la mayonnaise? Comment trouver de nouveaux équilibres à travers des déséquilibres successifs?<sup>39</sup>

For Rouillier, the Schéma directeur and the New Towns were still very much an actual rather than a historical event; and in many ways, he was right. The building and infrastructure associated with the Schéma directeur were still taking shape at the point when Alduy was historicising the project that initiated them. Nevertheless, they were empirical realities whose symbolic and political meanings had started to shift between the moment of their conception and the moment of their realisation in concrete form.

Their changing fortunes are played out in *Enfance d'une ville*, a television documentary on Cergy-Pontoise by Jean-Paul Pigeat and Éric Rohmer, made for French state television and broadcast in 1975, as the first inhabitants were arriving and the settlement was being established.<sup>40</sup> The programme was filmed at a moment when, as Alduy would later note, political orthodoxies about state-led planning and its ethos were starting to change. It stages the increasing complexity of spatial planning's outcomes and how they acquired a hybrid status between empirical realities, symbolic forms and discursive objects.

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<sup>39</sup> Rouillier, "L'expérience des villes nouvelles", 87.

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Paul Pigeat and Éric Rohmer, *Enfance d'une ville: peut-on fabriquer une ville?*, série Ville nouvelle, 1975, INA.

## **The birth of an object of dispute**

The Parisian New Towns were intended to redistribute populations and economic activity across the region by making them semi-autonomous urban areas, linked to each other and to central Paris by autoroutes and an express rail network (the RER), but with their own commercial and administrative centres. Cergy-Pontoise was the first, and became the capital of the new *département* of Val-d'Oise, created as part of the administrative restructuring of the Paris region under the Gaullist reforms.

The plans for Cergy-Pontoise encapsulated the vision and ambition of the Schéma directeur, and its attempt to imagine new urban futures. Delouvrier himself identified the site as part of his car-based surveys of the Paris region.<sup>41</sup> Approximately 20 miles to the north west of Paris, it overlooks a sweeping bend in the Oise river with a panoramic view back towards the capital on the horizon. Building began in 1967, led initially by Bernard Hirsch, a senior planner in the *École nationale des ponts et chaussées* and veteran of France's West African colonies. The first structures to emerge were a prefecture, made of glass and concrete in the shape of an inverted pyramid, and a steel-framed shopping mall clad in mirrored glass, *Les Trois Fontaines*. Their simultaneous construction reflected the twin administrative and economic foundations of the New Towns. The planners incorporated recent thinking in their efforts to create habitable urban space and resolve the problems of large-scale *grands ensembles* such as *Les 4,000* at La Courneuve: low-rise housing; a network of pedestrian walkways separated from and passing over the road network; a string of schools located in different *quartiers* to help sustain a sense of community. By 1973, the first residents had moved in, though the development of the whole site would

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<sup>41</sup> Chenu, *Paul Delouvrier, ou la passion d'agir*, 255.

continue over the next two decades, with the neighbourhood of Cergy-St Christophe completed only in 1993.

The long duration of Cergy's development returns us to the complex relationship between time and space at the heart of spatial planning. Sylvia Ostrowetsky argues that 'le travail du planificateur est une activité discursive sur le temps et l'espace comme matières à gérer du social'.<sup>42</sup> Planning is an activity preoccupied simultaneously by space and time. Central to the Schéma directeur was the aim of making space work more efficiently for socio-economic benefit; and spatial efficiency is predicated on ensuring the most effective circulation of resources (materials, goods, people). Put another way, planning is about the regulation of time through the organisation and production of space. Its discursive apparatus is a machine which produces space, and which aims to produce spaces making more effective use of time (whether for production, consumption or leisure). Hence why the Schéma directeur extends its purview beyond Paris into its regional hinterland in search of decongested space, and why transport infrastructures (autoroutes and express rail networks) are identified as the key to productive space. It is also concerned with anticipating the look, feel and requirements of a projected future, as Delouvrier's preoccupation with the Year 2000 as horizon and frontier makes clear. It aims to create urban futures in the present, a desire made manifest in the bold architecture of Cergy's new prefecture, which stands as a statement by the post-war French state about its ability to usher in the future before its time.

Yet the machine of spatial planning itself becomes entangled in time, because the spaces it produces take shape over years or decades. *Enfance d'une ville* records the empirical consequences of the Schéma directeur and its discursive apparatus,

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<sup>42</sup> Ostrowetsky, *L'Imaginaire bâtisseur*, 212.

capturing the transformation of rural into urban environments, and the appearance in the landscape of futuristic built forms; but through interviews with a range of actors, from the planners to new residents and local politicians, it also shows how those empirical realities become caught up in political debate, disagreement and critique in the move from plan to realisation. In short, the film stages and presents Cergy-Pontoise as an object of dispute. From the moment three minutes in when it cuts from Bernard Hirsch comparing the birth of Cergy with colonial settlements in Africa ('une ville nouvelle, c'est un peu analogue au défrichage des territoires d'Afrique') to a local market gardener gesturing towards the good agricultural land from which he had been displaced to make way for the first constructions, *Enfance d'une ville* establishes the contested nature of the New Town as a source of controversy and antagonism.

At the same time, the film draws attention to the New Town as an object in a tangible sense, a physical presence in the landscape which must be encountered and negotiated, and whose existence catalyses reaction, feeling and political action. It explores the relationship between human beings and the environments they create by locating its various protagonists in the environs of Cergy. This is most obviously the case with the planners themselves, who are filmed in the midst of the world they have created. While the urban planner M. Douady is interviewed on a pedestrian overpass between two *quartiers*, others are filmed in their offices, overlooking construction sites and surrounded by their maps, plans and scale models. In doing so, the film stages an encounter between the planners' imagination, the discursive apparatus that articulates it, and a reality which is not just about built form, but about the lived experience of the New Town's inhabitants.

During these interviews, we begin to hear voices of dissent among the planning team, as they reflect on some of the earlier decisions taken about Cergy. So

while M. Douady sets out the philosophy behind segregating vehicle traffic and pedestrians so that the car 'ne gêne pas', the planner now responsible for roads and transport, M. Roulet, argues that

Le choix qui a été fait correspond à l'urbanisme tel qu'il se pratiquait il y a une dizaine d'années, dont le souci était une séparation, une organisation des circulations. Je crois qu'on est allé trop loin dans ce sens-là après avoir trop longtemps nié le phénomène automobile.

Douady himself discusses the desire to re-create in the pedestrian streets of the New Town the life and activity of traditional streets with shops and cafés, but acknowledges that

On s'est trompé, parce qu'on croyait avoir à faire une ville comme toutes les villes qu'on connaît, mais on s'est aperçu qu'on ne peut plus faire des villes comme ça, en particulier parce que les commerces maintenant ne veulent plus se mettre sur les bords de ces petites rues. Ils se réfugient, ils se rassemblent dans ces grands centres commerciaux.

Two interesting things arise from these comments. First, they illustrate how planning orthodoxies are established and then challenged, and how a discipline or practice evolves over time, as one generation is displaced by the next. Notable in this respect is the self-presentation of M. Roulet, whose manner, look and perspective embody the voice of new (i.e. implicitly more enlightened) ideas. Second, Roulet's intervention highlights the lag inherent in spatial planning, as decisions taken at a particular time

(‘il y a une dizaine d’années’), and freighted with all manner of theoretical, institutional and technical orthodoxies (‘une séparation, une organisation des circulations’), produce significant material legacies in the landscape even as they become the subject of critique and interrogation from within.

The nature of Cergy-Pontoise as an object of dispute is further underlined when the film draws out the discursive and political activity set in train by its construction. Interviewing a group of new residents, Piaget and Rohmer unearth the peculiar status of the New Town as located across the pre-existing electoral boundaries of fifteen *communes*, which results in a limbo of political representation. In an echo of Foucault’s analysis of civil society, the group notes the speed with which residents’ associations sprang up to occupy the discursive space created by the construction of the New Town and the political, administrative and fiscal issues it raised: ‘il y a eu très vite – et c’est quelque chose qui nous a surpris – la naissance d’une vie associative très rapide. Une association résidents du quartier s’est créée presque instantanément’.

Not only do the residents feel disenfranchised because they have not elected the people who represent them *de facto*, but those same politicians also display varying degrees of hostility to the physical, political and administrative existence of the New Town. Speaking with plans of Cergy on a wall behind him, Hirsch acknowledges how translating those plans into built realities involves discussion and negotiation:

On ne peut pas faire ce qu’on veut, d’abord parce que... il faut discuter. On travaille sur le territoire de quinze communes. Vous avez quinze conseils

municipaux qui ont chacun leurs préoccupations, qui sont très étrangères à celles de la ville nouvelle.

At the same time, the deputy mayor of Éragny, one of the more pragmatic local politicians, acknowledges Cergy's unavoidable presence in the landscape as an object to be negotiated, even as he expresses concern over the problems it might bring:

Elle est là, la ville, vous comprenez. Alors, ce qu'il faut faire à présent, c'est la rendre vivable, de faire en sorte que les gens ne sont pas dans des machines à dormir, mais qu'ils trouvent dans cette ville ce qu'on peut trouver dans des villes anciennes.

In its depiction of planning activity on the ground, and its exploration of the political battles triggered by the diggers moving in, *Enfance d'une ville* illustrates Delouvrier's claim that the planners 'se battent pour des choses nouvelles, pour que les hommes vivent autrement'.<sup>43</sup> It does so both in its portrayal of spatial planning as an epic struggle to create a vision of the future, and in its analysis of how the implementation of that vision inevitably produces political resistance and critique as it comes to be inscribed on the ground. It stages the *polis* simultaneously as physical environment, as space productive of civic life, and as itself a subject of debate, taking shape in a changing political context and exposed to shifts in consensus about the role and reach of the urban planner.

When Delouvrier published the Schéma directeur in 1965, he made bold claims about France's future and how spatial planning could bring it into being. I have

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<sup>43</sup> Lion Murard and François Fourquet, *La naissance des villes nouvelles: anatomie d'une décision (1961-1969)* (Paris: Presses de l'école nationale des ponts et chaussées, 2004), 246.



argued that Delouvrier's claims should be taken seriously, even as we examine the dynamic of power that drives them. That is to say, we need to recover the ideas and dreams which can become clouded by assumptions of *raison d'État* and a hermeneutic of suspicion. Close attention to post-war spatial planning in France is important because of how planning has intervened in the frameworks and substance of everyday life, the fundamental reality of existence; but it also tells a crucial story about government more broadly by drawing out the relationship between 'volonté d'agir' and 'pouvoir sur la vie', which defines political and social life in post-war France. The stakes were high in post-war spatial planning, as the subsequent decades would confirm. This makes all the more necessary a careful interrogation of spatial planning, its processes and discourses, and the complex combination of imagination, power and agency on which they depend.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> I would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their insightful and helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. It also benefitted greatly from the wisdom of Professor Andrea Noble. A pioneering scholar of Latin America and visual culture, Andrea died suddenly in May 2017. The article is dedicated to her memory.