



## The Treatment of “North Africans” in 1960s Urban Renewal in France

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*Translated from the French by Oliver Waine*

*While France’s 1960s urban renewal has been studied in terms of its effects on the working classes, its racial dimension has rarely been highlighted. Janoé Vulbeau examines two neighborhoods in the northern cities of Lille and Roubaix, considered in light of Henri Coing’s pioneering Paris study, and shows how the development of what amounts to a settlement policy was partly based on the grouping together of, and discrimination against, “North Africans.”*

The urban-renewal policies implemented in the 1960s on both sides of the Atlantic (Klemek 2012; Mercure-Jolette 2015; Backouche 2013) proved to be of an extremely violent nature for the most marginal populations (Gans 1962; Coing 1966). The poorest fringes of the working classes, considered to be “asocial” (Nasiali 2014) and assimilated to the “underclass” (Katz 1993), failed to correspond to the canons of the modern city and consequently were driven out of urban centers. In the United States, the racial dimension<sup>1</sup> of this policy had not escaped analysts’ attention, as the black intellectual James Baldwin pointed out as early as 1963, when he described urban-renewal policies and their urban effects as “negro removal.”<sup>2</sup> In France, the urban-renewal policy initiated by the Gaullist government in 1958<sup>3</sup> was also highly criticized, particularly by academics in the field of Marxist urban sociology, who readily called it a policy of “renovation and deportation” (Godard *et al.* 1973).<sup>4</sup> However, its specific nature with regard to “North Africans”<sup>5</sup> has only rarely been noted, even though these populations were particularly keenly affected by this policy. Taking as our starting point a study of two 1960s urban-renewal operations in the northern French cities of Lille and Roubaix, combined with a review of Henri Coing’s classic work, *Rénovation urbaine et*

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<sup>1</sup> Here, following on from the works of Stuart Hall and Colette Guillaumin, we use the term “race” not as a biological or natural characteristic but very much as a social construct or, as Stuart Hall puts it, as a “floating signifier” (phenotype, religion, culture) that is at the origin of a radical otherization of certain populations, justifying them being kept in a situation of minoritization and domination in society (Hall 2013; Guillaumin 1972).

<sup>2</sup> James Baldwin, interviewed by Kenneth Clark, 1963: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8Abhj17kYU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8Abhj17kYU).

<sup>3</sup> This policy, initiated by French order no. 58-1465, was brought concomitantly with France’s “ZUP” policy (creating *zones à urbaniser par priorité*, or “priority urban-development zones”; order no. 58-1464). The urban-renewal policy formed part of a wide-ranging plan for France’s postwar development and the modernization of housing stock in France’s major towns and cities.

<sup>4</sup> For a contemporary perspective on how working-class populations are encouraged to move within the context of urban-renewal projects, see Fol *et al.* 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Up until 1962, colonized populations coming from Algeria, primarily identified using terms such as “North Africans,” “Muslims,” and “Algerians,” had a particular legal status, namely that of *Français musulmans d’Algérie*, or “French Muslims from Algeria” (FMAs) (Spire 2003; de Barros 2003 and 2005). They were subject to discriminatory treatment in terms of access to social services (Math 1998), employment (Pitti 2004), and the way they were dealt with by the legal system and the police (Blanchard 2008 and 2012). See also Blanchard 2018.

*changement social, l'îlot 4 (Paris 13<sup>e</sup>)*,<sup>6</sup> we wish to show the partially racialized<sup>7</sup> nature of this policy, which led to the exclusion of “North Africans” from certain urban centers.

### **The “douar” and the “medina”: stigmatization as a prerequisite for urban renewal**

In the late 1950s, the socialist city councils of Lille and Roubaix, in conjunction with the French central government, decided to tackle the issue of how to renovate some of their most run-down districts (Figure 1). The central neighborhoods of Saint-Sauveur in Lille and Édouard Anseele<sup>8</sup> in Roubaix, both plagued by unsanitary housing, cellars and *courées* (courtyards),<sup>9</sup> were selected as key targets by municipal authorities that wished to see, in their place, the emergence of healthy, modern housing.<sup>10</sup> These districts, which were respectively home to 2,257 and 1,800 households, were to be the subject of two major urban-renewal operations extending over 19 hectares (47 acres) of land in Lille and 13 hectares (32 acres) in Roubaix. At this time, only the poorest populations—generally considered marginal—lived in these areas. For example, in Roubaix, a municipal report prepared in anticipation of the urban-renewal operation indicated that the Édouard Anseele neighborhood was populated by “isolated asocial individuals and single men from North Africa, who do not always work regularly.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See the interview with Henri Coing (in French) conducted for *Métropolitiques* by Pierre Gilbert and Emmanuel Bellanger, published on November 6, 2017: [www.metropolitiques.eu/Renovation-urbaine-et-changement-social-Entretien-avec-Henri-Coing.html](http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Renovation-urbaine-et-changement-social-Entretien-avec-Henri-Coing.html).

<sup>7</sup> By using the terms “racialized” or “racialized minority,” we are not seeking to postulate the existence of “races”; rather, we wish to emphasize the process of otherization experienced by “North Africans” at this time, who were considered biologically and culturally inferior. For an example of the use of the concept of race in a study of French urban history, see Nasiali 2016; and for a comparison between the United States and France in the context of contemporary urban renewal, see Kirszbaum 2013.

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the urban-renewal operation in the Édouard Anseele neighborhood, see Janoé Vulbeau’s forthcoming article in *Revue du Nord*.

<sup>9</sup> Translator’s note: the French term *courée* refers to a passage, alley or courtyard in the center of a block that is accessed from the street and around which rows of small workers’ houses are built.

<sup>10</sup> The following television report (without sound), archived on the website of INA (the French National Audiovisual Institute), shows the destruction of the Saint-Sauveur neighborhood: [www.ina.fr/video/RCF99004820](http://www.ina.fr/video/RCF99004820).

<sup>11</sup> Sources: Archives Départementales du Nord (ADN—Archives of the Nord *Département*), 1594 W 989; City of Roubaix, *Rapport introductif pour le directeur des services départementaux*, unspecified author, 1957.

Figure 1. A *courée* (courtyard) in the Édouard Anseele neighborhood of Roubaix



Photograph from a report titled *Rapport de la SARRT sur le relogement de la population Édouard-Anseele*, 1958 (ADN, 1594 W 989) (DR).

As this report outlines, fingers were increasingly being pointed at the presence of “North Africans.” This particular population group was growing exponentially in the Nord *département*<sup>12</sup> at this time, rising from 3,700 in 1939 to 19,399 in 1962, owing primarily to their recruitment in the area’s many textile and metalworking factories (Genty 1999, p. 143). These populations were mainly concentrated in the cities of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing.<sup>13</sup> The Saint-Sauveur district, for example, was home to two thirds of all Algerians living in Lille. In the view of the technical advisor

<sup>12</sup> Translator’s note: Nord is France’s northernmost *département* (administrative division similar to an English county) and one of the country’s most industrialized and urbanized areas, along with the neighboring Pas-de-Calais *département*. The cities of Lille and Roubaix are both located in the Nord *département*, which stretches along the Belgian border from Dunkirk in the north to Maubeuge and Avesnes-sur-Helpe in the south.

for Muslim affairs<sup>14</sup> at the time, this concentration was likely to result in the decline of the neighborhood and even the creation of veritable “ghettos.”<sup>15</sup> Fear of this kind of segregation was built on a sentiment of racial difference that was supposedly at the root of these populations’ failure to adapt to the French context. This was sometimes explicitly stated, despite the increasing unacceptability of the term “race” in postwar France,<sup>16</sup> as evidenced, for example, by the following memorandum, written in 1965, from the director of the Programme d’Action Contre les Taudis (PACT—Anti-Slum Action Plan) in Roubaix<sup>17</sup> to the Fonds d’Action Social (FAS—Social Action Fund)<sup>18</sup> on the subject the housing of “mixed”<sup>19</sup> and “Algerian” families:

“We believe that these households must be given special attention because they are often more fragile. While they always involve the union of two nationalities, they can also be a point of conflict between very different *races* and mentalities that sometimes lead to a rejection of normal host environments” (our emphasis).

These racialized and stigmatizing perceptions were perpetuated and reinforced by parts of the local population and press, which often associated “North Africans” with the deterioration of these areas. An anonymous text kept in the archives of the diocese of Lille evokes the presence of “North Africans” in these terms:

“They’re here, idle, loitering on our sidewalks. Little by little, they are occupying certain neighborhoods in our cities, in their own cafés, [where] none of us would risk entering. They are said to be lazy and unstable, prone to lying and impulsive, without any moral restraint. [...] ‘What are all these North Africans doing in our country?’ asks the man in the street. What does this growing invasion mean?”<sup>20</sup>

A 1967 article in Roubaix’s local newspaper, *Nord Éclair*, also explicitly makes links between the deterioration of buildings, social difficulties, and the presence of “North Africans”:

“After the events of 1958 [linked to the Algerian War], they [the “North Africans”] settled in these unsanitary neighborhoods that Europeans quickly abandoned.<sup>21</sup> In the first quarter of 1959, 30% of births registered in the area were North African. Thus, today, some areas are exclusively

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<sup>13</sup> Translator’s note: Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing are the three main cities in a conurbation that today includes some 90 municipalities and over 1.2 million inhabitants within France. (The conurbation also extends into Belgium, around the cities of Courtrai/Kortrijk and Tournai/Doornik, bringing the total population to around 2 million in the continuously built-up area, and almost 4 million in the wider metropolitan area.)

<sup>14</sup> In French, *conseiller technique aux affaires musulmanes* (CTAM).

<sup>15</sup> Source: ADN J256, report by S. David, *conseiller technique aux affaires musulmanes*, 1952–1953, cited in Babin 2009, p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> Since the end of the Second World War and the conviction of Nazi war criminals, UNESCO has sought to demonstrate the scientific absurdity of the term “race” and discourage its use (Simon 2010).

<sup>17</sup> The PACT in Roubaix was created in 1954 at the instigation of the Comité Interprofessionnel du Logement (CIL—Interprofessional Housing Committee) for Roubaix and Tourcoing, with the aim of housing the poorest families in these cities. It took on an important role within the Édouard Anseele operation, where its efforts focused on rehousing displaced families.

<sup>18</sup> The FAS, created in 1958 (order of December 29), was originally a financial body aimed at promoting a social policy for French Muslims from Algeria. In this role, it had to compensate for the lack of social services available to these populations. It was expanded in 1964 to fund social action for all foreigners (see Elkarati 1989).

<sup>19</sup> The director of the PACT indicated in his memorandum that “mixed” families were households where the “head of the family” was “African” (source: Archives Nationales [French National Archives] 20050590/141, “logement des migrants—résorption des bidonvilles FAS. Note du directeur du PACT au FAS. Aperçu sur la situation des familles de travailleurs migrants mal logés dans l’agglomération de Roubaix, 23 mars 1965”).

<sup>20</sup> Source: Archives Diocésaines de Lille [Lille Diocesan Archives], document titled *D’où viennent-ils ?*, anonymous, probably dating from 1953, cited in Babin 2008, p. 70.

<sup>21</sup> This extract demonstrates how newspapers at the time tended to separate populations not so much according to criteria of nationality as by perceived broad cultural domains, with “Europeans” (including Italian, Spanish and Portuguese foreign nationals, significant numbers of whom were present in Roubaix) contrasted with “North Africans,” thus reflecting a racialized perception of these populations.

occupied by Algerian families, and we might wonder whether we are not moving towards the creation of a *de facto* ghetto. For traders in these areas, this leads to countless difficulties: it is necessary for them to keep track of an implausible number of ‘slates’ that are cleared only once a fortnight, or when the postman brings the welfare check.”<sup>22</sup>

These perceptions were also reflected in everyday language. The Édouard Anseele neighborhood was referred to punningly by Roubaix locals as *le douar Anseele* (“the Anseele douar”)<sup>23</sup> while the Saint-Sauveur district in Lille was frequently described as a “medina.”<sup>24</sup> This apprehension about the creation of “North African neighborhoods” was reinforced by the context of the Algerian War of Independence and the fact that both of these areas were the scene of struggles between the Mouvement National Algérien (MNA—Algerian National Movement) and the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN—National Liberation Front) (Gilbert and Vorms 2012), reported at the time in the media (Genty 1984). In Paris, sociologist Henri Coing also noted in his study of *Îlot 4* (Sector 4) in the city’s 13<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*<sup>25</sup> how the representation of a district populated by marginalized people or racialized minorities acts as a repellent: “It is a bogeyman for newcomers, whatever their social status: a neighborhood of North Africans, of homeless people” (Coing 1966, p. 82).

In both Roubaix and Lille, perceptions of a predominantly “North African” neighborhood seemed to bear no relation to the actual numbers. In the Édouard Anseele district, this population group represented 750 out of 5,000 residents, or 15% of the total population. In the Saint-Sauveur district, while “North Africans” (who were counted as “French”) were not the subject of a specific census, the sociologists Bieganski and Davenne estimated that they were not in the majority.<sup>26</sup> Their concentration in these two areas was mainly the result of the presence of numerous *hôtels garnis* (lodging houses)<sup>27</sup> specialized in welcoming these populations. Housing conditions in these *hôtels garnis* were extremely poor and many residents lived in cramped quarters, as revealed by a number of journalistic investigations.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, despite constant concern on the part of central government and municipal departments regarding the presence of “North Africans” and their rejection by part of the population, elected officials in Lille and Roubaix tended to deny or conceal the fact that there was a link between their presence and the desire to eliminate the unsanitary conditions observed in these two neighborhoods. For example, when the socialist mayor of Roubaix was accused by municipal councilor Jules Mullie—a member of the *Républicains Sociaux*, a Gaullist political party—of wanting to move “Algerians” from one part of the city to another,<sup>29</sup> the mayor refuted these remarks by indicating that they were “French people like anyone else” and that

<sup>22</sup> Source: “Le taudis c’est la maladie de la délinquance”, *Nord Éclair*, April 12, 1967.

<sup>23</sup> In North Africa, a *douar* is a village or group of dwellings (Duriez and Cornuel 1975, p. 180).

<sup>24</sup> The term “medina” would even be used by the police in reference to an intervention to maintain order in the neighborhood in 1955 (Babin 2009, p. 24). On the perception of “Algerian neighborhoods” as “medinas,” see also Blanchard 2012b: [www.metropolitiques.eu/The-police-and-the-Algerian.html](http://www.metropolitiques.eu/The-police-and-the-Algerian.html).

<sup>25</sup> Translator’s note: the city of Paris is divided into 20 administrative districts called *arrondissements*. The 13<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* is located on the southeastern edge of the city proper, and includes neighborhoods such as Les Gobelins, La Butte aux Cailles, Austerlitz, the 1960s/1970s high-rise Italie 13 development (now Paris’s largest Asian quarter), and the more recent Paris Rive Gauche development alongside the Seine (around Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand). In 1921, *Îlot 4* (Sector 4), located around Rue Jeanne d’Arc, in the center of the 13<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, was identified as one of 17 sectors of unsanitary housing in Paris.

<sup>26</sup> Figures cited by Roubaix city council. Sources: Archives Municipales de Roubaix (AMR—Roubaix Municipal Archives), 1D-115, session of February 24, 1958; and Bieganski and Davenne 1969, p. 40.

<sup>27</sup> Translator’s note: the term *hôtel garni* (or *hôtel meublé*) translates literally as “furnished hotel,” but in reality denotes lodging houses whose rooms (or, in some cases, dormitories) can be rented by the night, week or month, typically as temporary places to live or emergency accommodation rather than as tourist accommodation.

<sup>28</sup> Guy Chatiliez, *Nord Éclair*, investigation published in February 1950; Paul Cassier, *Liberté*, investigation published in February 1952.

<sup>29</sup> As Françoise de Barros points out, the mayor was accused by city councilor Jules Mullie of wanting to build a Sonacotral accommodation center in the west of Roubaix, which in Mullie’s view would have had a negative impact on local traders and led to the neighborhood’s decline (de Barros 2006).

they could therefore “live wherever they want.”<sup>30</sup> In Lille, during a 1959 session of the city council, a communist councilor questioned SFIO<sup>31</sup> (socialist) mayor Augustin Laurent about those inhabitants who had been “pushed out to peripheral districts” by urban renewal. He informed the mayor that “certain categories of inhabitants” were particularly acutely affected: this was the case for “single women, the elderly and the economically weak,”<sup>32</sup> singularly ignoring the “North Africans.”<sup>33</sup> This latter group was thus excluded from all municipal debate on urban renewal, even though they were bearing the full brunt of this policy.

### **“North Africans” excluded from rehousing operations and pushed out to the margins of the city**

In his study on urban renewal in Paris, Henri Coing pointed out that “North Africans,” considered “undocumented occupants,”<sup>34</sup> were excluded from rehousing schemes. “For the time being,” he wrote, “the destruction of North African hotels by OPHLMVP<sup>35</sup> in the neighboring Deux Moulins sector has led to outright evictions, approved by the police commissioner” (Coing 1966, p. 110). In Lille and Roubaix, despite the fact that the municipal authorities were responsible for rehousing,<sup>36</sup> “North Africans” were subject to the same discriminatory treatment: they were, for the most part, excluded from any rehousing schemes.<sup>37</sup> In the case of the Saint-Sauveur operation, the semi-public corporation in charge of rehousing excluded all persons “accommodated in *hôtels garnis*,”<sup>38</sup> assimilating them, as in the operation studied by Henri Coing, to tenants “without rights or documents.”<sup>39</sup> A category without any explicit reference to “race” thus acted as a factor of exclusion for a specific population. In Roubaix, a Sonacotral accommodation center was opened by the

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<sup>30</sup> Source: AMR, 1958 municipal bulletin, session of February 24, p. 529, cited in *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> SFIO: Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière (French Section of the Workers’ International). This French socialist party was founded in 1905, and replaced by the current Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party) in 1969.

<sup>32</sup> Source: Archives Municipales de Lille (AML—Lille Municipal Archives), 1D/2, 160<sup>th</sup> session of December 21, 1959, p. 993.

<sup>33</sup> In her monograph of the Marais district of central Paris, Isabelle Backouche highlights both the fact that this neighborhood was made into a “Jewish ghetto” in popular and everyday representations, contributing to the area’s depreciation, and the fact that no mention of Jews was made—that they were “forgotten,” even—during the renovation processes that occurred in the area under the Vichy regime (Backouche 2016).

<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, it is very likely that many “North African” workers living in *hôtels garnis* were doing so without having signed any sort of rental contract with their landlord. On the history of these *hôtels garnis*, see Faure and Lévy-Vroelant 2007.

<sup>35</sup> OPHLMVP: Office Public d’Habitation à Loyer Modéré de la Ville de Paris (City of Paris Public Office for Low-Rent Housing), a municipal body responsible for low-cost social housing.

<sup>36</sup> In both Lille and Roubaix, significant funding was found by city authorities to rehouse inhabitants. Furthermore, the personnel in charge of these operations participated in different working groups tasked with finding rehousing solutions for displaced individuals. On this point, Henri Coing recalls that there was a “network of quite remarkable professionals from the redevelopment corporations of the city of Paris and [the former *département* of] Seine-et-Oise, as well as people from Roubaix/Tourcoing and Lille, who were all at very well informed about these issues.” See the interview in *Métropolitiques* (*op. cit.*).

<sup>37</sup> Although Algerians living in mainland France were officially “French” from 1947 onward, they were often refused access to social housing by social landlords. Some were housed via specific channels, such as the hostels and housing complexes run by Sonacotral (a body founded in 1956) or accommodation centers called *cités de transit* (“transition estates”; see: [www.metropolitiques.eu/Cites-de-transit-the-urban.html](http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Cites-de-transit-the-urban.html)) (Lyons 2006; Cohen 2013).

<sup>38</sup> The sociologists Bieganski and Davenne highlighted that other households were also excluded from rehousing operations, as the development corporation decided to rehouse only one household per dwelling, thus excluding a large number of households who shared space in a house with other families. Consequently, out of 2,257 households initially identified, 1,740 were selected for rehousing, and ultimately just 1,263 were actually rehoused (Bieganski and Davenne 1969, p. 24).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Association d'Aide aux Français d'Algérie de la Région Lilloise (ADAFARELI—Association for the Assistance of French People from Algeria in the Lille Region) near the Édouard Anseele<sup>40</sup> neighborhood. However, the developers specified that few of the “North Africans” displaced by the Édouard Anseele operation would have access to it.<sup>41</sup> A treasury inspector conducting a review of the operation in 1963, referring to the case of the “North Africans,” reported that 400 “single foreigners accommodated in *hôtels garnis*”<sup>42</sup> had been “removed from the final assessment,”<sup>43</sup> thus erasing any trace of these populations in the accounts relating to rehousing.

Gaullist urban-renewal operations enabled municipalities<sup>44</sup> to modify the settlement patterns in their urban cores (Desage *et al.* 2014), even in those operations that included the highest proportions of social housing, such as that studied by Henri Coing in Paris, which focused on rehousing *in situ*.<sup>45</sup> A twofold movement took place, marked by the exclusion of the most marginal populations on the one hand, and the gentrification of these neighborhoods—with the development of both social and luxury housing intended for the middle and upper classes—on the other.<sup>46</sup> This policy affected “North Africans” in particular, who were pushed out to outlying districts; Henri Coing wrote, in the case of Paris, that “the North Africans [...] driven out in this way [would] find alternative accommodation nearby, accentuating the overcrowding and deterioration of the neighborhoods adjacent to the urban-renewal site” (1966, p. 110).

In Lille and Roubaix, the urban projects implemented were of a different nature, with an emphasis on luxury housing and the emergence of a business district in the former, and on social housing and a shopping mall in the latter. Nonetheless, both projects resulted in the displacement of “North African” populations, to the districts of Moulins, Wazemmes and Vieux-Lille in the case of Lille, and to the Alma-Gare neighborhood in the case of Roubaix. In Alma-Gare, the desire to avoid the development of an “Algerian district”<sup>47</sup> was expressed more explicitly by the city council in the 1970s (de Barros 2004),<sup>48</sup> leading to the drafting of a new urban-renewal plan and the mobilization of residents against this project (Cossart and Talpin 2016). With regard to the new constructions in the Saint-Sauveur and Édouard Anseele neighborhoods, while no mention is explicitly made of the absence of “North Africans,” the presence of a new population was

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<sup>40</sup> The accommodation center in question was the 180-room Beaufort complex. On the history of this center, see Wybo 2016.

<sup>41</sup> The reason for this lack of access was not explicitly stated, but a report by the development corporation specified that it was essentially “North Africans” who had recently arrived in mainland France that benefited from the dwellings in the Beaufort accommodation center (source: ADN, 1284 W 451, “Rapport du conseil d'administration à l'assemblée exceptionnelle du 10 juin 1960”).

<sup>42</sup> The treasury inspector produced this report in 1963, at which point Algeria had been independent for a year. This meant that Algerians were now considered “foreigners” (de Barros 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Source: ADN, 1284 W 516, “Note de présentation par l'inspecteur général des Finances Noeneclay concernant l'enquête sur l'exécution des opérations de RU. Paris 30 avril 1963”.

<sup>44</sup> Relations between the French state and municipalities on the subject of urban renewal have, however, sometimes proved conflictual. For more on the case of Roubaix, see Janoé Vulbeau's forthcoming article in *Revue du Nord*.

<sup>45</sup> Henri Coing indicated that the developer of *Îlot 4* had favored a staggered relocation operation, whereby tenants were “decanted,” thus enabling them to remain in the area during the redevelopment; however, despite these measures, the poorest populations were forced to leave the neighborhood, as they were unable to pay the (higher) rents on the new social-housing units (Coing 1966, p. 92).

<sup>46</sup> Regarding the Édouard Anseele operation in Roubaix—which, it should be pointed out, included a large proportion of social housing—the sociologists Bruno Duriez and Didier Cornuel reported that, prior to renovation, the neighborhood was composed of 52% manual workers, 10% tradespeople/craftspeople and traders, and 25% economically inactive older people, while the make-up at the start of the 1970s was 30% manual workers, 30% clerical workers, 23% middle managers, 8% senior managers, and practically no older people (figures cited in Duriez and Cornuel 1975, p. 181).

<sup>47</sup> In Roubaix, the term “North African” began to disappear in the early 1970s in favor of “Algerian.”

<sup>48</sup> Sources: AM, 1D-224, session of November 22, 1971; and de Barros 2004, p. 217.

highlighted, corresponding above all to the canons of the middle classes that now populated these districts. Similarly, in Roubaix—where urban renewal was more “social” in nature—a journalist wrote of “a new blood [that] pumps through the heart of the city” and described the new population as belonging “mainly to the tertiary sector and the civil service” (Figure 2). While the neighborhood was previously home to almost no managers or middle-level occupations, its population after the urban-renewal operation was composed of 30% clerical workers and 31% middle and senior managers, with the proportion of foreigners falling to 2% (Duriez and Cornuel 1975, p. 181). In this way, these two spaces were transformed from “problem” North African neighborhoods to model neighborhoods intended for a wealthier, whiter French population, housed in modern dwellings (Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 2. Page from the newspaper *Nord Éclair* describing the new center of Roubaix following the Édouard Ansele urban-renewal operation



“Un sang nouveau bat au cœur de la ville”, *Nord Éclair*, 17–18 March 1968. An investigation by Claude Vincent (DR).



**Figure 3. Résidence du Beffroi, a housing complex built in 1965 as part of the urban-renewal operation in the Saint-Sauveur neighborhood of Lille**



Photo taken from the junction of Place Roger Salengro and Rue Pierre Mauroy © Janoé Vulbeau, 2018.

**Figure 4. Buildings reconstructed after the urban-renewal operation in the Édouard Anseele neighborhood of Roubaix**



On the façade of the left-hand building, a mural painted in 1987 can be seen. It reads: “Rue des Longues Haies,” in reference to the former street and neighborhood on which these buildings stand. Photo taken from the junction of Boulevard Gambetta and Rue Henri Dunant. © Janoé Vulbeau, 2018.

The experiences of these two operations in Lille and Roubaix shed new light on the urban-renewal policy implemented in France in the 1960s and 1970s. While Marxist urban sociology (Godard *et al.* 1973) has highlighted some of its consequences in terms of the settlement and displacement of the working classes, the specificity of this policy with regard to “North Africans” has been studied far less. Through our examination of these two cases and our review of the study conducted by Henri Coing in Paris, we have shown that the presence of these populations played a significant role in the negative perceptions of these districts, and were a partial justification for this policy. However, this presence was never explicitly cited as a motive for urban renewal by the municipal elites, with a desire to avoid any questions about these populations instead prevailing. This urban-renewal policy proved to be discriminatory for “North Africans,” in particular because they were essentially excluded from rehousing processes. Moreover, it ultimately led to their exclusion from urban centers altogether.<sup>49</sup>

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