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Spatial Determinism and Territorial Public

Policy : Challenges and Evolutions.

The case of the French “*Politique de la ville*”



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Département de sociologie



INTRODUCTION

- **Space and politics : political discourses & public policies**
- **Urban ideology : urban space in political thinking**
- **Space as instrument or challenge for social change?**
- **Representations of the relationships between space and societies since the 70s**
- **Plan :**
 - **What is “*Politique de la ville*”? History and context**
 - **Stakeholders and their ideas**
 - **Ideology, practices and consequences**

From “Urban policies” to “Politique de la ville”(1/3)



Les Courtilières
In Pantin near
Paris

“Les grands ensembles”



Neighbourhood of social
housing in Sarcelles, near
Paris



Vénissieux
near Lyon

G. Busquet : Spatial determinism and territorial public action : challenges and evolutions.

From “Urban policies” to “Politique de la ville”(2/3)

- Observations : Lack of facilities, degradation of the built structures, departure of the middle class, concentration of a captive population, growth of unemployment, first riots...



« The sociologists
are coming any
minute now »

(Author : Chappatte)

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From “Urban policies” to “*Politique de la ville*”(3/3)

La Politique de la ville.

- **A policy which appeared in the 70s, and was institutionalized in the 80s**
- **A multi-ministerial policy that aimed to manage the town planning heritage of the “*grands ensembles*” of the suburbs**
- **Three Components :**
 - **police-enforced or repressive**
 - **socio-economic**
 - **urban and spatial**
- **A territorialised public action**

The actors of the “politique de la ville” and their ideas (1/2)

- **The actors since the beginnings of the “politique de la ville” :**
 - High civil servants
 - Members of the elected local governments
 - NGO representatives
 - Stakeholders of the social movement scene
 - Architects and experts (sociologists, geographers...)

- **The former ideology of urban policies of the 50s-60s :**
 - State-controlled town planning
 - Rationalism
 - Spatial determinism
 - Progress, modernisation
 - A “quantitative” approach

The actors of the “*politique de la ville*” and their ideas (2/2)

➤ **A more “qualitative” approach of the city, coming from criticisms from :**

- Urban sociology
- Social urban movements
- French “Second Left-wing”

➤ **New themes:**

- “Living environment”, “quality of everyday life”,
- “Urban self-management” and participation.



First “HVS Programmes” in the 70s



Socialist party’s “*Politique de la ville*” since the 80s

The ideology of the “*politique de la ville*”, its application and its evolution (1/3)

- **A focus on urban issues at the local level : a new form of spatial determinist ideology .**
- **The spatial component of public policy : “Banlieue 89” in the 80s, then ANRU since 2003.**

➡ *Demolition of housing and relocating poverty elsewhere*

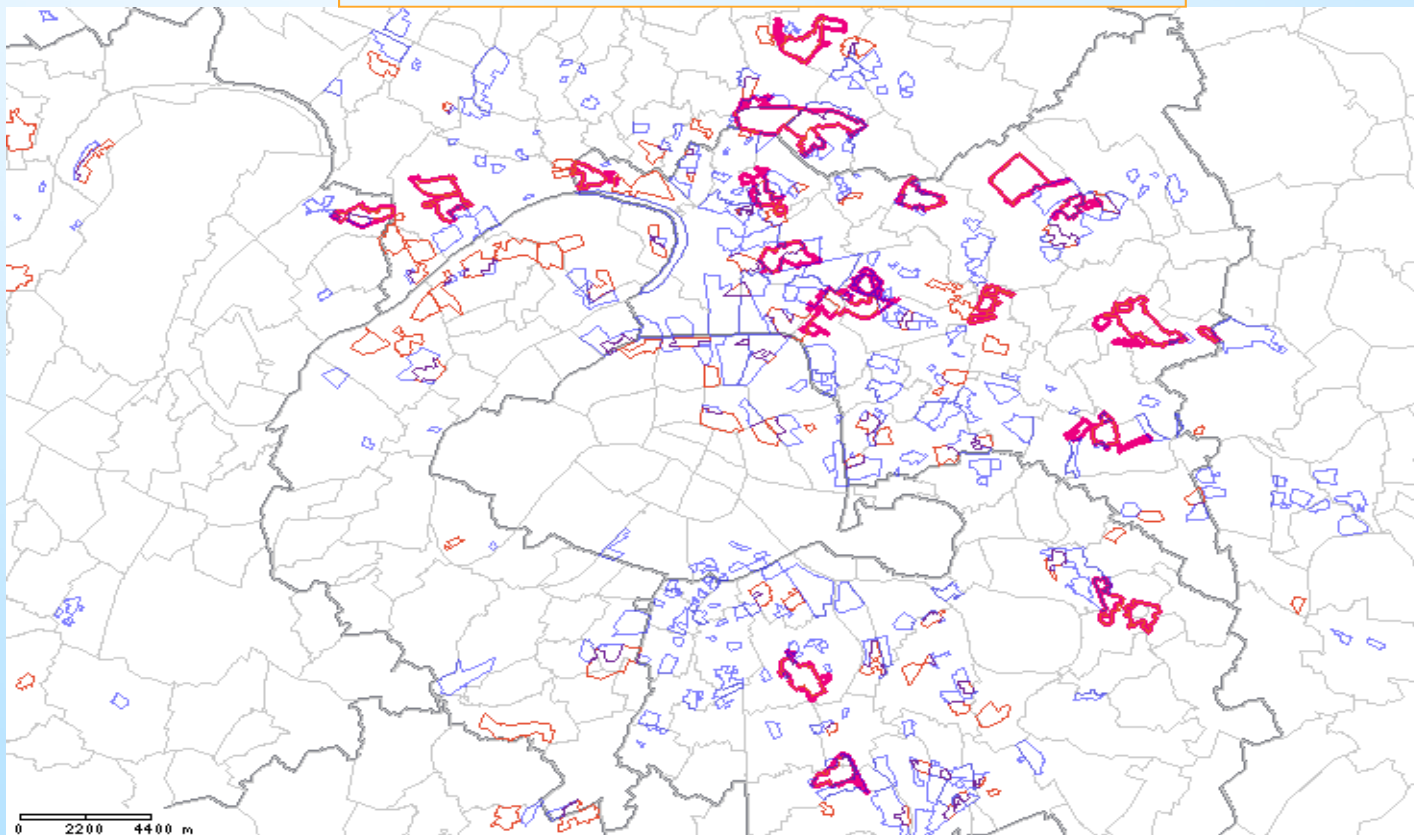
- **“Priorities geography” : Targeting and circumscribing “sensitive” neighbourhoods based on social indicators**

➡ *Stigmatization of areas and of certain populations in relation to their location*

The ideology of the “*politique de la ville*”, its application and its evolution (2/3)

The neighbourhoods of the “*politique de la ville*” near Paris

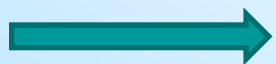
Source : Secrétariat
générale du CIV
<http://sig.ville.gouv.fr/>



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The ideology of the “*politique de la ville*”, its application and its evolution (3/3)

- Sine the 90s and the creation of ANRU (2003) : the reinforcement of the role of the state.
- In the 80s : a contractual relationship between the state and local administrations, based on local initiatives
- Nowadays : Centralized administration.



Ready-made solutions without any local diagnosis



Drop of the idea of inhabitants' participation

However spatial determinism and the idea of “social mix” remain...

Conclusions

➤ On public action:

- *Targeting territories rather than people :*
- *Spatial categorization of social groups*
- *Social categorization of space*

➤ On urban ideology :

- *Spatial determinism and dialectic between criticized and salutary space*
- *Remedying social problems by using space*
- *Territory becomes a stake for public action*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ATTENTION !

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