How to narrate the "city problem" and the "city policy" in post-war France?

-the case of Montpellier- *

This article aims to clarify the characteristics and to analyze the structure of the narrative which has been used to talk about the "city problem (*question de la ville*: Fr.)" and the "city policy (*politique de la ville*: Fr.)" in France after the World War II, in the purpose of proposing, even temporarily, the mode of speech over them to be used today. The "city problem" means the whole problems degrading the conditions of life, mainly seen in the part of city commonly called "sensitive area": petty crime, deterioration of security, vandalism, deal of drug, division and conflict among inhabitants, etc. The "city policy" means the general system of politics, which contains not only the urban development policy, but also the immigration policy, socio-cultural policy, economic policy, security policy, and so on, applied to these areas.

More specifically, we intend to answer the following questions : how have we talked about the city problem and the city politics after the World War II , since the 1990s in particular, when they became the target of analysis in the fields of urban research and contemporary urban history and at the same time found themselves a major topic of public debate?; what realities and what intentions existed behind the common narrative about them?; what merits and what problems does that narrative reveal when we use them to achieve the improvement of living conditions in the sensitive areas?

We chose, in this article, the historical experience between the 1960s and 2010s of the district (*quartier*: Fr.) called Les Cévennes, located in the city of Montpellier (department of Hérault, Occitan region) as subject of analysis. We made this choice because this district has suffered from the typical city problem and that it contains several large collective housings with different characters from each other, whose comparison, we hope, will be useful.

We will tackle our task by taking the following steps. We begin by checking what type of narrative has been used to talk about the city problem and the city policy since the 1960s. Then we will present the problems relating to that narrative. After that, we will follow the concrete emerging process of city problem and elucidate the operational mechanism of city policy adopted to the Cévennes. Finally, we will highlight the points to keep in mind when we talk about the city problem and the city policy.

Common Narrative on the City Problem and the City Policy

We begin by confirming the content and character of the common narrative on the city problem and on the city policy, for we doubt the validity of this narrative widely accepted in

the political and academic world.[1]

According to it, France during the Glorious Thirties, that is to say in the period of the economic and social resurrection after the World War II and the following economic growth, saw the massive and intensive construction of economical collective housings carrying the social character, commonly called "social housings," in the neighborhoods of big cities, starting with Paris and regional center cities such as Montpellier. From the 1980s, however, these areas have become the game field of the city problem, and thus the targets of the city policy.

The common narrative has two characteristics. First, it tends to attribute the emergence and the deterioration of the city problem to the gathering in sensitive areas of poor immigrants, particularly the Muslim immigrants from former French colonies.

In the beginning, collective housings, social housings in particular, had been constructed for workers coming from surrounding rural areas to the cities as the labor force contributing to the economic growth. The character of the collective housings and their inhabitants has, however, gradually changed. More and more foreign immigrants came to arrive at these housings. The rapid growth of the postwar Glorious Thirties attracted many Muslim immigrant workers, mainly of Arab ethnicity originating from North African (Maghreb) countries which had been colonized by France (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). Turkish people who had to leave the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) after the modification of its immigration policy in the early 1970s, also flocked to France in order to continue working in Europe.[2] They, in this way, have gradually occupied the collective housings.

Moreover, when the French government clarified the conditions for family reunification of immigrants in 1976 and 1978, many of them turned from temporary immigrants to settled immigrants with their families, making collective housings the zones where immigrant

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[1] See, as exemples of the common narrative in the fields of urban research and contemporary urban history, Jean-Claude Chambordon et Madeleine Lemaire, "Proximité spatiale et distance sociale," *Revue Française de Sociologie*, 11-1, 1970, pp.3-33 ; Philippe Estève, *L'usage des quartiers*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004. ; Annie Fourcaut, "Trois discours, une politique ?," *Urbanisme*, 322, 2002, pp.39-45 ; Hervé Marchal et al., *La ville au risque du ghetto*, Paris : Lavoisier, 2010 ; Marcel Roncayolo (ed.), *La ville aujourd'hui*, Paris: La Seuil, 2001 (first edition, 1985) ; Thibault Tellier, *Le temps des HLM*, Paris: Autrement, 2007 ; Pedro de Almeida Vasconcelos, "Processus et formes socio-spatiaux des villes," in Marion Carrel et al. (eds.), *Ségrégation et fragmentation dans les métropoles*, Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires de Septentrion, 2013, pp.37-62 ; Bruno Vayssière, *Reconstruction, Déconstruction*, Paris: Picard, 1988 ; Sami Zegnani, *Dans le monde des cité*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013.

[2] In 1961, the West Germain government concluded "migration accord between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Turkey" in order to make come the Turkish workers who would work and go back to Turkey as "invited workers at short term (*Gastarbeiter*: Ger.)." In 1973, however, the West Germany a stopped the reception of Gastarbeiter because of the economic recession caused by the first oil shock.

families live collectively and continuously. This phenomenon led to greater visibility of immigrants who have a different lifestyle or another culture from these of native French people, to which the latter were not well accustomed.

The second characteristic of the common narrative on the city problem and the city policy is the fact that it emphasizes the assimilation of immigrants into French society as a solution to the city problem and therefore as a goal of the city policy. It advocates the assimilation which claims that the final goal of immigration policy is the "integration" of immigrants and that the assimilated and integrated immigrants are and should be treated equally with the other French people.

On the side of immigrants in France, the first generation after the World War II generally adopted this doctrine, agreeing to be integrated and assimilated into the French society. In reality, however, achieving social uprising through assimilation and integration was very difficult for them who came from a different cultural background than the majority of the French people. Most of immigrants remained in the poor and bad social condition and, from this situation, the districts where they were living became the theater of problems caused by the socio-economic fragility and instability, that is to say, the city problem.

As for the second generation of immigrants, who are born in France and thus have French nationality, they expressed the strong dissatisfaction with the failure of the French model of immigration policy, i.e., that of the "assimilation, integration, and equality," type. Their dissatisfaction has worsened, for they are French citizens and should no longer be considered as immigrants. Because of this discontent, some of them began to turn to their original culture, starting with the Muslim religion, to reject the mainstream culture and lifestyle, or, in some cases, to oppose the values widely regarded as natural which must be respected in France. This phenomenon was regarded as the evidence of the failure of the assimilationist immigration policy, causing a very serious political and social debate from the 1980s.

Therefore, the zones gathering poor sedentary immigrants were considered as sensitive areas because of the frequency of the city problems, justifying the need and legitimacy of the city policy. As many collective housings became a kind of bastion of foreign culture, the Muslim culture in most cases, the main cause of the city problem was attributed, among others, to the spatial segregation caused by the gathering of immigrants. Dissolving this segregation, that is to say, achieving social diversity or social mixture, was chosen as the main object of the city policy. We could thus say that the key word of the city problem is "spatial segregation based on ethnic and cultural difference " and that of city policy "social diversity/mixture."

In short, the common narrative speech current adopts, in order to explain the process of the emergence and the generalization of the city problem, the following scheme: the gathering of immigrants in collective housing, the spatial segregation, the economic impoverishment, the increased crime and delinquency, the worsening of living condition, and the failure of

assimilating them. Based on this scheme, we have come to discuss the following question: what city policy should we take in the future?

Trap of "Identity Politics" Approach

The common narrative which we summarized in the previous section has some problems, however, which could allow us to analyze the city problem and the city policy. For example, it is not self-reflexive. More concretely, it lacks the recognition of the possibility that it is artificially constructed and the sensitivity to the possibility that his political impact works in the negative way. This kind of positioning, which is not self-reflexive, is scientifically insufficient today and, in the worst case, dangerous.

In this section, we analyze the researches so far on the city problem and the city policy in order to answer the following two questions. First, in what sense is the common narrative on the city and on the sensitive area in particular artificial and constructed? Second, how could it be dangerous?

As to the first point, that is to say, the artificiality and the constructiveness of the narrative, some researches have already shown that the artificial intention has intervened in the construction and the creation of the common narrative.[3] We must therefore take this fact, i.e., the intervention of artificial intent, into consideration when we analyze the urban research and the contemporary urban history so far. This stance is not, unfortunately, shared by all the specialists of these disciplines.

According to the researches cited above, the terms and concepts of the "city problem" and the "social diversity/mixture" appeared and spread among the public in the 1990s. This process was accelerated by some policy intellectuals, starting with the sociologist Alain Touraine.[4]

At first known as inventor and propagator of the concept of "new social movement," Touraine used it to change the reading grid and the frame of reference of the society, advocating understanding not vertically but horizontally. In other words, he claimed that contemporary society must be observed, approached, and analyzed not from the point of view of the class structure, but on the basis of the relationship between the heterogeneous identities. For him, the society is and must be regarded as the field where a game of the "identity politics" is played, whose stake is no longer "if she/he is on the dominant or obedient position in the

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[3] See for exemple, Noénie Houard, *Droit au logement et mixité*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009 ; Susanna Magri, "Le pavillon stigmatisé," *L'Année Sociologique*, 58, 2008, pp.171-212 ; Sylvie Tissot, L'*État et les quartiers*, Paris: La Seuil, 2007.

[4] As for his theory and his arguments, see for exemple Alain Touraine, *Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble?*, Paris: Fayard, 1997.

vertical structure of society," which was important before, but "if she/he is included or excluded in the horizontal structure of society." The new social movement is pro-inclusion in some cases, or pro-exclusion in others.

His theory was positively evaluated and widely adopted in the academic world, helping the terms and concepts of the "city problem" or the "social diversity/mixture" to emerge and to spread. It was regarded as a point of view and as a reading grid/frame of reference which could be used to interpret and to explain adequately the characteristics of social change which we have observed in developed countries since the 1970s In the 1990s, then, it was introduced into the fields of the urban research and the contemporary urban history, beginning to exert some influence over them.

Considering the above-mentioned facts, we could say that approaching the city and the sensitive area with these terms and concepts in the pocket means watching these spaces by using the reading grid/frame of reference of the identity politics.

In the case of the sensitive area, we must keep in mind that it is a reality and at the same time an artifact. It is true that poor immigrants living together in the collective housings, certain youth in particular, give rise to problems. We must pay attention, however, to the fact that a speech act which defines the sensitive area as a space where the identity politics is played constitutes our discourse, our reading grid/frames of reference, our points of view, and our realities in certain cases. This act intervenes when we name the above mentioned problems the "city problem," when we attribute their main causes to the spatial segregation based on the cultural and ethnic difference, or when we look at the social diversity/mixture as the main objective of the solution to be taken, that is to say, of the city policy.

The second point, i.e., the possible danger of the common narrative on the city, can be divided into two. The first possible danger comes from the fact that it approaches the city problem by using, intentionally or unconsciously, the point of view and the reading grid/frame of reference of the identity politics. As is concerned with the sensitive area in particular, this approach would seem effective and useful for the analysis of the city problem.[5]

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[5] See for exemple Massimo Bricocoli et al., "Urbain spaces as public action 'mode dorable'," in Ali Madanipour et al. (ed.), *Public Spaces and the Challenges of Urban Transformation in Europe*, London: Routledge, 2014, pp.11-22 ; Jean-Yves Causer, "La contribution des discriminations socio-spatiales aux logements urbaines de cloisonnement et d'enfermement," in Philippe Hamman (ed.), *Le tramway dans la ville*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011, pp.149-158 ; Anne Clerval, *Paris sans le peuple*, Paris: La Découverte, 2013 ; Jean-Claude Driant, *Les politiques du logement en France*, Paris: La Documentation Française, 2010 ; Michel Lussault, *De la lutte des classes à la lutte des places*, Paris: Grasset, 2009 ; Saco Musterd and Mariëlle de Winter, "Conditions for spatial segregation," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 22-4, 1998, pp.665-673 ; Édmond Préteceille, *La production des grands ensembles*, Paris: Mouton, 1973 ; Pierre Tévanian and Sylvie Tissot, "La mixité contre le choix," *Les mots sont importants*, 2004

According to the common narrative, the main cause of the city problem is the gathering of poor immigrants in the collective housings of the district. Faced with the discrimination and the alienation caused by the dysfunction of assimilationist policy, some of them (re-)find their original cultural or ethnic identity, trying to reorganize their life space into a more favorable form for their new identity. Non-immigrant residents of the collective housings, on their part, oppose these attempts, regarding them as challenge s or assaults s against the "republican values" important for them, because they constitute (or are at least imagined collectively as) the identity which makes the France what it is, affirmed and consolidated through history since the French Revolution and during the Third Republic in particular. The two identities confront each other, crystallized in this confrontation: the sensitive area becomes the field where the game of the identity politics is played and where various city problems arise. From these considerations stems a view that the fundamental purpose of the means of solving these problems, i.e., of the city policy, is and must be to prevent identities from crystallizing themselves. To achieve this goal, that view emphasizes the importance of making emerge a situation where people with different identities from one another are mixed in the collective housings, that is to say, the social diversity/mixture. A debate then begins on its effectiveness as a city policy.

Surely the city problem is, at least partially, the product of the identity politics. It would be effective, therefore, to use the identity politics as point of view and reading grid/frame of reference of a l use as a point of view and frame of reference when we analyze that problem. We must keep in mind, however, that its use has a side effect, as we have too often attributed an incommensurable character to the concept of "identity." More concretely, identities such as immigrant or non-immigrant, Muslim or Christian, Arab or Latin, etc. are exclusive s and therefore incompatible with one another. What is more, Moreover, these identities may exist at different and separated layers from one another, coexisting in a partially stratified way, causing fragmentation and increase of identities: Arab Muslim immigrant, Christian Arab immigrant, non-immigrant Arab (that is to say, children born in France of Arab immigrant parents) Muslim, etc. It follows that the number of these new and sub identities are often recognized as incommensurable.

It is important to note here that the game performed by actors with incompatible identities with one another has no margin for compromise in many cases. In this type of game, each actor has three possibilities: to win and to exclude other players, to lose and to be excluded, or to draw and to coexist without relationship with others. In the case of the city problem, they win and make the space (collective housing, district, etc.) their exclusive cultural territory, or they lose and leave, or they make a draw and coexists with other people as neighbors indifferent to each other, without exchanging a word, and therefore feeling uncomfortable. Will the social diversity/mixture be effective in such a kind of game?

(http://www.lmsi.net/La-mixite-contre-le-choix).

The second possible danger of the common narrative on the city comes from the fact that it exercises a great influence on the city policy carried out in France. If the opinion, the argument or the debate on the city problem and the city policy remained in the academic world, that is to say in the ivory tower, they would cause little harm to the daily life of the people living outside it. This would be true even though that narrative was not be self-reflexive, or even though it was based on the identity politics without recognizing its defaults. Today in France, however, the urban research and the contemporary urban history as disciplines have a characteristic that their academic action is located near the political practice, establishing a close and strong relationship with it. Approaching the city problem from the point of view and with the reading grid/frame of reference of the identity politics therefore reaches the political decision-makers, who have adopted that stance, making decisions in setting up the city policy under the influence of the identity politics approach. The narrative of specialists in urban research and contemporary urban history thus leads to a city policy based on the concept of "identity politics." This type of policy, focusing on the identities of residents, especially those in sensitive areas, is developing today.[6]

In the fields of urban research and contemporary urban history, academic research and political practice are, here too, closely linked to each other by certain political intellectuals. The most important of them is the sociologist Jacques Donzelot. He began his academic career as a specialist of family sociology under the influence of Michel Foucault, moved his interest and research focus to urban sociology in the 1990s, and began to exert a strong influence on the development of the city policy as scientific advisor of the *Plan Urbanisme Construction Architecture* (PUCA), an inter-ministerial agency created in 1998 as a sort of official and governmental think tank on urban planning in general. He adopts the theory of Alain Touraine which considers the society as the playing field of the identity politics in terms of inclusion and of exclusion, applying it to the city. He claims that spatial segregation is at the root of the city problem and offers as a solution to encourage the social diversity/mixture through citizen participation in political decision making on the city, on the district, or on the collective housing.[7]

In sum, it would be dangerous, theoretically and practically, and in various ways, to have recourse without self-reflexivity to the identity politics as point of view and as reading

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[6] See for exemple Comité d'évaluation et de suivi de l'Agence nationale pour la rénovation urbaine (hereinafter CES/ANRU), *Changeons le regard sur les quartiers*, Paris: La Documentation Française, 2013 ; CES/ANRU, *Des quartiers comme les autres?*, Paris: La Documentations Française, 2013 ; Conseil Économique, Social et Environnemental, *Les avis du Conseil économique, social et environnemental, avant-projet de la loi relatif à la ville et à la cohésion urbaine*, Paris: Les Éditions des Journaux Officiels, 2013 ; Jean-Marie Delarue, *Banlieues en difficulté*, Paris: Syros, 1991.

[7] As for the artgument of Donzelot, see for exemple Jacques Donzelot, *La ville à trois vitesses et autres essais*, Paris: Éditions de la Villette, 2009 ; Jacques Donzelot, *À quoi sert la rénovation urbaine?*, Paris: PUF, 2012.

grid/frame of reference in the analysis of the city problem and the city policy. Especially since this concept is artificially constructed. We must examine, at least, its effectiveness, judging the that of other concepts, and, if it is possible and necessary, try to use them and the identity politics simultaneously. In addition, we must try to find the origin or the mechanism of production of the identity politics in other dimensions than that of identity. To do this, we need a little more self-reflexivity.

The case of the Cévennes district (Montpellier)

After criticizing the common narrative, our task now seems clear: to show that we can't properly analyze or clarify certain aspects of the city problem and of the city policy by having recourse to the identity politics, and to propose other measures of research. In this section, we tackle this task briefly by taking as object of analysis the Cévennes district (Montpellier).

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the city of Montpellier experienced a rapid increase in population. It doubled, rising from just under 100,000 to nearly 200,000 between 1954 and 1975, that is to say in 20 years, for three reasons. First, inhabitants of the surrounding rural area of Montpellier, in the Hérault department, or the Languedoc-Roussillon region, most of them former peasants on the one hand, and the immigrants consisting mainly of North Africans on the other, flocked to the city in order to work as laborers in the factories which the city administration had invited to implant themselves in the framework of local industrial policy. Second, the University of Montpellier was enlarged in the 1960s and students increased rapidly. Thirdly, Montpellier welcomed nearly 20,000 repatriates (more than 25,000 in the agglomeration) after the independence of Algeria.

To accommodate them, it was necessary to build a lot of housings quickly and to put them at their disposal. Collective housings, often composed of towers and of bars, appeared in the north-west zone of the city, including the Cévennes district, located three kilometers north-west from the central area of city. In 1964, for example, the construction of a private collective housing called the Petit Bard, composed of more than 800 housing units and regarded as a *de facto* reception center of repatriates, started. The same year, a collective housing of more than 900 housing units for people with low incomes, under the name of the Cévennes, was built on a site of about nine hectares near the Petit Bard. Three years later, the HLM Public Office of the Hérault department built, just next to the Petit Bard, a public collective housing (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré* [HLM]: Fr.) of more than 500 housing units under the name of the Pergola, mainly for repatriates.

Many other collective housings for poor or modest classes were built in the Cévennes district, since the city administration of Montpellier adopted, during the 1960s and 1970s, the zoning as a fundamental urban development policy. Concretely, the East sector was assigned to the

agriculture, the North one to academic institutions (universities and *grandes écoles*) and hospitals, the South one to the industry, and the West one to the housings for workers, new commers from rural areas, and immigrants.[8]

In this section, we analyze the histories of the Petit Bard and of the Pergola, with the intention of clarifying the process of the emergence of the city problem and of finding the mechanism of the effective city policy.[9]

In the case of the Petit Bard, most of the original inhabitants were repatriates who had bought housing units and lived there as owners. Over time, however, they gradually sold or rented their units in order to leave the city, because of the aging, or for the reason of the change of family size. The main buyers of these housing units were real estate agencies, who rented them immediately. Major tenants then were the immigrants and, from the second half of the 1970s, almost exclusively those from the Morocco. In the wake of changes in the composition of the inhabitants of the Petit Bard, we see in the 1990s that the owners-inhabitants occupied no more than 20 % of all inhabitants, that the Moroccan immigrants represented almost 90 % of the population, and that the unemployment rate of adult men was about 30 %. This collective housing was regarded as a typical territory of the city problem, where a vicious cycle was functioning: the gathering of immigrants, their poverty and the unemployment, the deteriorating security, the departure of un-poor people, and the arrival of new immigrants ... It was nicknamed "the supermarket of drugs" or "the *de facto* social housing."

Many people attribute the main cause of the city problem at the Petit Bard to the identity politics, that is to say, to the gathering of the mostly poor Moroccan immigrants and to the cultural conflict which it arose. This is not sufficiently explanatory, however, because this argument doesn't shed light on the cause of the gathering of immigrants in this collective housing. We must therefore make clear the mechanism of the gathering of poor immigrants in order to explain convincingly why the city problem emerged in the Petit Bard.

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[8] Archives municipales de Montpellier, 1O1T, " Programme de modernisation et d'équipement de Montpellier ", s.d., maybe 1962. At the municipal elections of 1977, the Left won and the new city administration abandoned the zoning policy which the ancien Center-Right city administration had encouraged. The new adminitsration did, on the contrary, adopt two fundamental ideas for the urban development policy. First, fixing of the "axis of development" from the North-West to the South-East, including the development of the South-Western zone as an industrial-adminisrative-residential district. Second, the "micro-zoning" which proposes the multi-functionnalization of each district, the mixture of housings and offices for exemple.

[9] As for more detailed analysis of the collective housings of the Petit Bard and of the Pergola, see Naoki Odanaka, "Cinquante ans d'un quartier montpelliérain : le Petit Bard, 1960-2010, " *Bulletin Historique de la Ville de Montpellier*, 38, 2016, pp.98-107 ; Naoki Odanaka, "Lien personnel et structure spatiale : 'politique de la ville' dans un grand ensemble montpelliérain, la Pergola (1960-2010).", Tohoku University TERG Discussion Paper, 406, 2019, pp.1-20.

In this case, the phenomenon occurred through the introduction of the logic of commercialization, that is to say, the market mechanism in the private collective housing. Concretely saying, a housing unit for sale after the departure of owner-inhabitants is generally purchased by a real estate agency, who then rents it. As the most important for the agency is profitability, he is not very motivated to spend a lot for the maintenance of living condition or for the renovation of building. He also is not inclined to pay extra charge for, for example, hiring a staff who repairs or cleans the common space like the building entrance, the lift, the exterior walls, the gardens etc. Management of the private collective housing is usually delegated to a trustee but, in these conditions, the latter loses the interest of knowing who actually lives in the collective housing or who owns such and such housing unit. As a result, the buildings, the living condition, or the financial situation of the collective housing deteriorate very quickly. The owners-inhabitants or the tenants who can't bear these situations depart. Arrive then the people who couldn't live other than that collective housing because they are poor, or those who wish to live near their friends or their parents and are willing to pay the rent even if it is more expensive than the reasonable price (that is the case of Maghreb immigrants). On the other hand, the price of housing unit falls, the profitability of the rent goes up, and the incentive for the real estate agency to buy more units is strengthened. The vicious cycle then begins again.

In short, at the collective housing of the Petit Bard, the city question was deteriorated mainly for economic reasons. In this housing, three categories of stakeholders coexisted without interest for one another: housing unit owners many of whom are real estate agencies, the inhabitants of which most had become tenants, and the trustee charged with the administration. This phenomenon means that three categories of functions associated with them also coexisted without any relation among them: possession, habitation, and management.

As for the Pergola, we find here too the phenomenon that many initial inhabitants, mainly repatriates, left, replaced by immigrants as tenants of vacant housing units. The Pergola, an HLM with social character inhabited mainly by poor or low-income families, saw too the emergence of some city problem which could be attributed to the identity politics like the Petit Bard.

The seriousness of the problem, however, was much less than at the Petit Bard. A maintenance project started in 2005, called the "Urban Renovation Project, the Cévennes district," bears testimony to it.[10] This five-year project (2005-2009), which targeted the two collective housings, had the intention of renovating them to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants and the image of the districts. The concrete means proposed, however, were

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[10] See Archives municipales de Montpellier, 837W18, "PRU Cévennes, concession d'aménagement Petit Bard," Ville de Montpellier, s. d., maybe 2005.

totally different from each other. At the Petit Bard, the project decided that almost the half of the buildings were to be demolished and rebuilt. As the demolition and reconstruction require big expense, long time, and a careful administrative procedure, starting with the offer to residents of temporary accommodation during the work, the maintenance was not completed during the planned period of the project. It continues today. As for the pergola, on the contrary, the project judged that the minor repair of buildings and of the interior of housing units would be sufficient and they were completed in five years without problems.

The Pergola was able to avoid the serious deterioration of the city problem because of the rehabilitation of 1992. That year, the HLM office, builder and administrator of that collective housing, began to rehabilitate the buildings and the housing units in the framework of a program called "Operation Pergola Quality" using the public subsidy called *PALUROS* (*Prime à l'amélioration des logements à l'utilisation locative et à l'occupation sociale*: Fr.). As it is generally accepted that a collective housing needs a total repair due to aging about every 15 years, we can estimate that the HLM Office took the decision to intervene rather quickly in order to resolve the emerging city problem at the Pergola. Original inhabitants, mainly composed of repatriates, had formed a dense and close personal relationship among one another, resulting in a certain conviviality in the collective housing. The architects of the Pergola had designed it to promote these relationships, choosing a layout and a form of closeness to the outside and of inclination to spatial self-sufficiency. With the arrival of new inhabitants mainly composed of immigrants and poor or humble people who did not know one another, however, this spatial structure contributed to the emergence of the city problem. Spatial closure of the collective housing gave a feeling of being cut off from the outside, leading the new inhabitants to feel isolated, excluded and locked. Some of them, of which most were young, headed to small delinquency, drugs, vandalism, etc. The HLM office, judging that the spatial structure of the Pergola no longer corresponded to the personal relationship among the new inhabitants, decided to have recourse to a radical way: the demolition of some parts of the buildings in order to open the housing to the outside. This decision, realized in the framework of the "Operation Quality Pergola," was critical for the living condition to be maintained at a fairly good level. The experience of the Pergola shows the need to analyze the city problem and the city policy at its social dimensions.

The historical experience of the Petit Bard and of the Pergola shows us that the common narrative on the city problem and on the city policy, which talks about them from the point of view of the identity politics, is insufficiently convincing as historical analysis. Behind or under the emergence of identity politics in the fields of the city problem and of the city policy lies the economic phenomenon of the commercialization of real estates and of the introduction of the logic of market, or the social phenomenon of the human relationship and of the spatial structure. In other words, we must reconstruct the mechanism of the city problem by integrating the economic and social aspects and by linking them with identity politics. As for the city policy, its target must go beyond the identity and other cultural aspect to contain the

economic and the social.[11]

Conclusion

We do not deny the importance of the identity politics for the emergence of the city problem. We do not contest the effectiveness of the identity politics as point of view and as a reading grid/frame of reference when we analyze the city problem not only in the Cévennes district, but also in anywhere of contemporary France, in order to construct a proper city policy. In sum, we do not reject completely the common narrative on the city problem and on the city policy. In fact, urbanization and urban development are political acts, and as they have such a character, the identity politics must intervene. [12]

It seems to us, however, insufficient and dangerous in some cases to tell the city problem and construct the city policy on the only basis of the identity politics. The word "identity" is fashionable in many academic disciplines today, but we need to look at the "beyond," that is to say, what is behind this concept.

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[11] See Daniel Pinçon, "La monumentalisation du logement ou l'architecture des ZUP comme culture," *Les Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale*, 38/39, 1996, pp.51-62 ; Henri Vieillard-Baron, *Banlieues et périphéries*, Paris: Hachette, 2009.

[12] See Pierre Bourdieu, "Identité et la représentation, " *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 35, 1985, pp.63-72 ; Philippe Hamman et al., "La négociation dans les projets urbains de tramway," in Philippe Hamman (ed.), *Le Tramway dans la ville*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011, pp.45-72 ; Jacques Joly, *Formes urbaines et pouvoir local*, Toulouse: Presses Universitaires Le Mirail, 1995 ; Bernard Jouve et al., "De la gouvernance urbaine au gouvernement des villes?," *Revue Française de la Science Politique*, 49-6, 1999, pp.835-854 ; Gzenaëlle Le Goullon, *Les grands ensembles en France*, Ph. D. Thesis, Université de Paris 1, 2010.