Localising the Social: The Rediscovery of Urban Poverty in Western European 'Affluent Societies'

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Abstract

Concentrating on the production of knowledge of poverty and homelessness, this article discusses how particular spatial settings influenced the construction of social problems in the 1960s and 1970s. Exploring the practices of three kinds of knowledge producers – social scientists in academic circles, 'practitioners cum *activists' engaging in advocacy research and experts in governmental committees – the analysis focuses on the early stages of a rediscovery of poverty in Western Europe as it was debated in international fora as well as in West Germany and France. It shows that the way in which poverty was represented as a new challenge to Western 'affluent societies' was in many respects an urban story, as the ongoing housing crisis and newly defined problem areas served as major points of reference for the revived interest in social deprivation. Moreover, urban actors – locally active NGOs and municipal authorities – played a preeminent role in launching debates on the apparent paradox of poverty in affluence. With their own work often grounded in particular urban problem zones, many contemporary observers tended to spatialise poverty. For them, poverty was bound to particular places; it was an exceptional sphere that helped generate a particular behaviour that made it difficult for 'the poor' to rise. While a growing part of the population had access to housing of a standard previously reserved to the middle class and had become able to choose where to live, life in peripheral shantytowns or dilapidated inner cities became the ultimate signifier of a social position beyond the established class structure.*

In sociological studies today, the rise of a globalised, post-Fordist society is often closely associated with 'new' forms of poverty. Almost invariably, these new forms of advanced inequality are located in cities, as sociologists and others identify the

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emergence of a new *urban* marginality or a new *urban* underclass.[1] At least in Western Europe and the Americas, poverty is depicted as an urban phenomenon, and many observers take the segregation of cities as a sign for rising inequalities.[2] Yet, why deprivation is closely linked to urban constellations is not always clear. Of course, generally speaking, societies became increasingly urbanised over the course of the twentieth century. As a growing percentage of the world population now lives in urban environments, cities are focal points for social change. Moreover, it is commonly assumed that globalisation promotes social tensions that are reinforced by changes in urban governance. Still, particularly when considering the long tradition of studying poverty in cities, it remains unclear whether the 'new urban poverty' sociologists talk about is indeed so very new and whether it is a formation that is intrinsically linked to urban sites.

The current fascination with the city as an arena of social tensions points to the question of how social problems and their representation have been linked to urban space in the past – and how this relationship developed over time. Historians have shown that the fast-growing industrial cities of the nineteenth century became preeminent arenas for investigations of the social question by social reformers and early sociologists alike.[3] However, the make-up of society in general and the topography of cities in particular changed considerably in the aftermath of the Second World War. Also, the ways in which experts investigated, thought and talked about social problems have changed. That makes the question of if (and how) urban actors and environments continued to influence social policies and representations of inequality in the second half of the twentieth century all the more interesting.

With regard to their thriving post-war economies, in the 1950s, contemporaries often presented Western European societies such as France and West Germany as increasingly affluent. Political actors, social experts and public commentators focused on upward mobility and on the expanding middle classes, while issues such as poverty became less important for the general public – even more so since the welfare state promised social security to all. Cities in particular served as show cases for rising living

[1] Characteristic of the notion of a decidedly urban marginality in contemporary sociology is the influential analysis of North American ghettos and of French *banlieues* by Loïc Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A comparative sociology of advanced marginality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008). On 'new forms of poverty' of an 'urban character' see also Didier Fassin, 'Exclusion, underclass, marginalidad: Figures contemporaines de la pauvreté urbaine en France, aux États-Units et en Amérique latine', *Revue française de sociologie*, 37 (1996), 37–75. For a historical perspective on the concept of the urban underclass see Helmuth Berking, 'Local Frames and Global Images – Nation State and New Urban Underclass: Über die Globalisierung lokaler Wissensbestände', in Martina Löw, ed., *Differenzierungen des Städtischen* (Opladen: Budrich, 2002), 107–21.

[2] On the emergence of the post-Fordist city see Hartmut Häußermann et al., eds., *An den Rändern der Städte. Armut und Ausgrenzung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004). For a long-term perspective on the history of segregation see Carl H. Nightingale, *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[3] On the works of Henry Mayhew, Charles Booth and others see Rolf Lindner, *Walks on the Wild Side. Eine Geschichte der Stadtforschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004), 43–95. On French social reform and the city see Janet R. Horne, *A Social Laboratory for Modern France: The Musée Social and the Rise of the Welfare State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

standards and for contemporary beliefs in the malleability of society. Thus, when political actors, academic experts and journalists came to realise over the course of the 1960s that poor urban living conditions persisted, their discovery seemed to challenge a number of by then well-established ideas of what life in Western societies was like. After poverty had disappeared from public discourse for more than a decade, the resurgent public and academic interest in poverty in 1960s Western Europe picked up on American debates and, in particular, on the notion of a 'new poverty in affluence'.[4] In many respects – and this is the subject of this article – this (re)discovery of poverty was an urban story: first, because the ongoing housing crisis and newly defined problem areas served as major points of reference for the emergent interest in deprivation, second, because locally active NGOs and municipal authorities played a preeminent role in launching debates on the apparent paradox of poverty in affluence and third, because contemporary observers tended to spatialise poverty. For them, poverty was bound to particular places, it was an exceptional sphere. While a growing part of the population had access to housing of a standard previously reserved to the middle class and had become able to choose where to live, life in peripheral shantytowns or dilapidated inner-cities became the ultimate signifier of an underprivileged social position. And while more and more inhabitants claimed to belong to the middle class by pointing to their (chosen) place of residence, 'the poor' became defined by the fact that they were tied to unwanted urban badlands.

Concentrating on the production of knowledge on poverty and homelessness, this article explores how particular spatial settings influenced the construction of social problems in the 1960s and 1970s.[5] Investigating the categories and practices of three kinds of knowledge producers – social scientists in academic circles, 'practitioners *cum* activists' engaging in advocacy research and experts in governmental committees – the analysis focuses on the early stages of a (re)discovery of poverty in Western Europe as it was discussed in international fora as well as in West Germany and France. Urban space enters into this analysis in a threefold manner: first, as a multiplicity of material sites that were constantly transformed by urban planning as well as by the social practices of a variety of urban actors; second, as a site of knowledge production and thus as a privileged observational field for the investigation of social change; third, as an element of current representations of 'the social' that circulated in the media, political circles and academic networks.[6] All three aspects were intertwined, as

[4] See for example Peter Townsend, 'Introduction', in Peter Townsend, ed., *The Concept of Poverty: Working Papers on Methods of Investigation and Life-styles of the Poor in Different Countries* (London: Heinemann, 1971), ix–xi, ix.

[5] On the concept of 'poverty knowledge' as a knowledge rooted in the idea 'that scientific knowledge holds the key to solving social problems' – and to solving 'the poverty problem' in particular – see Alice O'Connor's inspiring analysis, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 4–17. On the production and circulation of knowledge in general see Philipp Sarasin, 'Was ist Wissensgeschichte?', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 36 (2011), 159–72.

[6] Referring to approaches that have been formulated in Actor-Network-Theory, a growing number of researchers in the field of urban studies argue that 'the city' should not be understood as a given entity, underlining the various practices by which urban actors 'assemble the city'. Ignacio Farías and Thomas

contemporary observers reacted to and interacted with specific material sites and local actors when investigating poverty. At the same time, their depictions of 'the poor' bore traces of an established cultural imagery of urban slum life. In attempting to chart the process whereby 'poverty in affluence' was defined as a new problem and appeared on the public agenda, this analysis is inspired by social historians' current attempts to make sense of the process of ordering and reordering 'the social'. Moreover, it takes up the claim brought forward by the proponents of Actor-Network-Theory that the production of knowledge is a praxis-grounded and 'situated' process.[7]

Rather than taking a local, national or transnational framing of social inequalities as a given, the article foregrounds the practices through which contemporary actors ordered and located 'the social'. [8] Debates on urban transformation have transgressed national borders. When assessing social change in an urban environment, academic experts, activists and political actors have repeatedly referred to concepts and methods developed elsewhere. Accordingly, this analysis traces the transnational urban story of the rediscovery of poverty by using two events as focal points: an international conference on the life of 'maladjusted families' that took place in the UNESCO-Palais in the early 1960s and the European Commission's poverty programme launched in the early 1970s. The first section focuses on the importance of urban problem zones for anti-poverty work as a new field of action, tracing the local, national and transnational activities of a French organisation concerned with poverty, while the second concentrates on the interconnectedness of poverty debates and housings problems in West Germany. The third section discusses the overall role of urban transformations in the discovery of poverty in Western European welfare states, comparing the two examples and situating them in a transnational framework.

I

'In the shadow of each large city, the map of the civilised world is punctuated with grey zones.' This is how the journalist Menie Grégoire introduced an article published by the French magazine *Esprit* in 1964 that was dedicated to a *bidonville* at the periphery of Paris.[9] The shantytown, called Noisy-le-Grand, attracted some attention at the time. It served as a sort of laboratory for the activities of ATD Fourth World (*Aide à toute détresse*, later *ATD Quart Monde*), an increasingly influential association engaged in anti-poverty work. Founded in Noisy-le-Grand in the late 1950s, ATD rapidly

Bender, eds., *Urban Assemblages: How Actor-Network Theory changes Urban Studies* (London: Routledge, 2010).

[7] Bruno Latour, *Eine neue Soziologie für eine neue Gesellschaft. Einführung in die Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2010).

[8] This perspective is very much influenced by both the history of social knowledge and current debates on the production of space in history and sociology. See Patrick Joyce, 'What is the Social in Social History?', *Past and Present*, 206 (2010), 213–48; Christian Topalov, eds., *Les divisions de la ville* (Paris: Ed. Unesco, 2002).

[9] Menie Grégoire, 'Le camp de Noisy-Le-Grand', *Esprit*, Nov. 1964, 858–69.

established itself as a powerful advocate for the very poor.[10] While deeply rooted in a Catholic milieu, from the outset it combined its local work in the outskirts of Paris with an international strategy. By the late 1960s its activists were frequently called upon as experts by both international academic circles and French ministerial committees. This success deserves a closer look because it points to the impact of local activism on the overall process of a rediscovery of poverty in the academic and political sphere. Grégoire thus based most of her article on impressions gained when visiting two international conferences launched by ATD's research bureau in 1961 and 1964. It was with regard to her observations there that she described Noisy as one among many *bidonvilles* (slums) that existed in France, Germany, Portugal or the Americas. And it seemed to her as if these *bidonvilles* and zones of exclusion alone 'carried the weight of poverty' in a world that was becoming increasingly middle-class (*'un monde qui s'embourgeoise'*).[11]

Indeed, when ATD Fourth World convened its two international conferences on 'maladjusted families' in 1961 and 1964, the poverty zones in Western societies played a preeminent role.[12] Held in the UNESCO-Palais in Paris, both seminars brought together social scientists, social workers and political activists who, for the most part, came from Western Europe and North America. Among them were a number of researchers who were either already or who were to become internationally known experts, like the British sociologist Peter Townsend and his American colleague Lloyd E. Ohlin, the social psychologist Otto Klineberg and the Norwegian sociologist Vilhelm Aubert. In the eyes of these participants, the currently booming Western industrial societies had only begun to register the persistence of poverty in their midst. Already in their introduction the conference convenors declared that sociologists and social workers had only just begun to prompt an awareness of poor families who were left on the margins – even though they were living in occidental countries that offered full employment and a social security system. And Henning Friis, the Director of the Danish National Institute of Social Research, who acted as chair to the conference in 1964, voiced a commonly held opinion when stating that the 'discovery of poverty in an age of affluence' – the 'embarrassing discovery that poverty continues to exist in rich countries' – had so far mostly taken place in the United States, while poverty had hardly entered public consciousness in Western Europe.[13]

[10] On the history of *ATD Quart Monde* see André Gueslin, *Une histoire de la grande pauvreté dans la France du XXe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 219–29. See also, from an activist's point of view: Francine de la Gorce, *L'espoir gronde. Noisy-le-Grand 1956–1962* (Paris: Editions Quart Monde, 1992); Francine de la Gorce, *Un peuple se lève. 1963–1968* (Paris: Editions Quart Monde, 1995).

[11] Grégoire, 'Camp', 869.

[12] The Bureau de Recherches Sociales as a co-foundation of ATD organised both meetings. Bureau de Recherches Sociales, ed., *Familles inadaptées et relations humaines: Compte rendu du Colloque International sur les Familles Inadaptées*, 12–14 May 1961 (Paris: Bureau de Recherches Sociales, 1961); Jules Klanfer, *L'exclusion sociale: Etude de la marginalité dans les sociétés occidentales* (Paris: Bureau de Recherches Sociales, 1965).

[13] Henning Friis, 'Preface', in Klanfer, *L'exclusion*, (preface without page numbers).

The United States indeed witnessed a new interest in 'the poor' in the early 1960s.[14] After the topic had disappeared from public discourse for more than a decade, Michael Harrington's seminal study on *The Other America*, along with a number of academic studies – such as Oscar Lewis's analyses of a culture of poverty, or John Kenneth Galbraith's study on *The Affluent Society* – helped to spur a change in public opinion. The emergent debate motivated John F. Kennedy to tackle the issue, later forcing President Lyndon B. Johnson to launch an anti-poverty programme under the heading of a 'war on poverty'. However, as the UNESCO-conferences illustrate, this success was not confined to the United States. On the contrary, the nascent public and academic interest in poverty in Western Europe picked up on the American debate.[15] Most of the conference participants in the UNESCO-Palais were thus involved in research projects or forms of community work that had only recently been initiated. And most of them explicitly cited the works of Harrington, Galbraith and Lewis (and the media reactions to which they led) as important inspirations for their commitment.[16]

In Western Europe as well as in the United States, unequal living conditions did not disappear at any point in the twentieth century. But, after the hardships experienced in the 1930s and 1940s, the growing affluence of the 1950s instilled such confidence in society's progress that social scientists and politicians alike paid little attention to the persistence of deprivation. Apart from earlier conferences on refugees, the UNESCO-seminars were indeed the first international venue in the post-war period to be concerned with poverty and maladjustment as problems of 'developed' (as opposed to 'underdeveloped') countries. They serve as an interesting starting point for a historical analysis of the changes in the 'telling about society'[17] in the second half of the twentieth century: first because the conferences suggest that locally active non-governmental organisations like ATD played a crucial role in directing attention to contemporary social problems, thereby preparing the ground for further research activities and policies, and second because they bring into sharp relief the importance of urban spaces for the investigation and representation of social problems.

During the UNESCO-conferences, slums, *bidonvilles*, grey zones, twilight zones or the margins of Western cities figured prominently in almost all debates and presentations. Up to a certain point, this emphasis mirrored the interests of the conference convenors, as ATD Fourth World was itself founded in a shantytown, and the activists considered the material conditions of life in camps like Noisy-le-Grand

[14] Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962). In 1999, Time Magazine even considered it one of the ten most important nonfiction books published in the twentieth century. On Harrington's work on the book see Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2000), 175–220.

[15] See for example Townsend, 'Introduction', ix–xi, ix.

[16] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), 254–59.

[17] For the analysis of different forms of representing social change see Howard S. Becker, *Telling About Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

a major reason for the inhabitants' continued marginalisation.[18] Certainly, not all conference participants shared this assumption and considered poverty an experience that was bound to a particular environment, like slums or shantytowns – but many did. In particular the activists and social workers present assumed that in fact in all modern cities there was an emergent 'subculture of poverty' that transcended national borders. The 'tableau of a maladjusted population in Rotterdam', as for example the 150 practitioners of the conference study group on social work concluded, resembled the one of maladjusted families living in islands of poverty in Cologne, Rouen or London.[19] Some explicitly took up the notion of 'islands of poverty' that the US economist John Kenneth Galbraith had employed in his analysis of affluent societies.[20] But whereas Galbraith mostly spoke in a figurative sense about these islands – to illustrate that poverty, while affecting fewer people than in the past, and commonly overlooked by most (white middle-class) Americans, still existed – many of the attendant researchers, activists and practitioners interacted with 'the new poor' in particular urban spaces. Their emergent interest in 'the poor' was often intimately connected with urban housing problems and concrete material sites.

While contemporary observers liked to declare that poverty was becoming 'invisible', it was in fact the visibility of inadequate urban living conditions – be it in the form of peripheral shantytowns or dilapidated inner-city housing – that seems to have convinced contemporaries of the persistence of deprivations. It was hardly accidental that several new NGOs concerned with poverty work, like ATD Fourth World in France or the charity Children in Need (*Kinder in Not*) in West Germany, were formed in response to individual encounters with provisional camps in the late 1950, the first in a *bidonville* in the periphery of Paris, the latter in a shantytown on the fringes of Düsseldorf.[21] In both countries, more than a decade after the war, the persistence of visibly poor urban areas was increasingly considered a contradiction, if not a scandal. Better living conditions for all was one of the major promises of the post-war era, and political actors commonly adhered to the modernist tale of an increasingly progressive urban environment. Nevertheless, most Western European societies continued to struggle with a massive housing shortage up to the late 1960s. When referring to insufficient housing conditions, commentators thus touched on a problem that concerned large parts of the population. Housing, in short, became a priority area for debates on the gaps in and problems of the welfare state in general – and on social deprivation in particular.

In France, as well as in Britain and West Germany, the end of the Second World War by no means marked the beginning of public housing and urban renewal policies.

[18] Résumé des conclusions et recommandations générales, 2, Second Colloque sur les familles inadaptées sous le haut patronage de la Commission Française pour l'UNESCO, 10–12 Feb. 1964, Colloques et études années 1960 (no reference number), Centre International Joseph Wresinski, Baillet-en-France.

[19] Groupe des Praticiens, 17, CIJW, ibid. In a similar vein see Groupe Logement et Urbanisation, 14, CIJW, ibid.

[20] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1958), 254–59.

[21] On Kinder in Not see, from an activist's perspective, Wolfgang Kelm, ed., *Faß ohne Boden? Beiträge zum Obdachlosenproblem* (Wuppertal: Jugenddienst-Verlag, 1973).

In all three countries the interwar period had already seen slum clearance projects and early forms of public housing provision. Nevertheless, the Second World War marked a caesura. Due to wartime destruction, cities such as London and Berlin lost significant parts of their housing. For modernist planners, these destroyed cities offered the unexpected opportunity to realise their ambitious ideals. With Western European societies showing an enormous faith in modernism and economic growth, they aimed to restructure cities in accordance with the principles of functional modernism, distinguishing more clearly between spheres of work, leisure and living. Slum clearance programmes thereby went hand in hand with large-scale housing projects.[22] West Germany and France invested massively in new housing. In addition to subsidising family homes for the middle classes with the help of tax incentives, both countries advanced the construction of social housing estates on the urban periphery from the mid-1950s onwards. Initially, the new high-rise estates were to provide housing for the working classes. But the rent in the new West German council flats as well as in French *grands ensembles* and 'HLM' ('moderate rent housing') turned out to be too high for many low-income inhabitants of cheap flats in traditional working-class neighbourhoods.[23] Accordingly, it was the upper stratum of the working class (employees and skilled workers) who initially moved to the new high-rises. Low-income households, by contrast, often failed to find accommodation, particularly when slum clearance projects forced them to leave their former flats. Thus, in spite of the massive building efforts, the housing crisis of the post-war period failed to go away. In many large cities, it remained a major problem throughout the 1960s, one which saw new arrivals and low-income households – large families, migrants or older people – struggling to find adequate accommodation.

Post-war France in particular witnessed a late wave of urbanisation. With agricultural production losing influence, a surging birth rate and a burgeoning migrant population, French urban regions experienced a population growth on an impressive scale. Thus, Noisy-le-Grand, the camp Menie Grégoire referred to in her article, was by no means the only shantytown in France. Over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, French cities saw many *bidonvilles* emerging: provisional camps situated in the urban periphery that primarily, though not solely, housed migrants from Northern Africa and Southern Europe who had failed to find other lodgings.[24] In the course of the 1960s, the French government made repeated efforts to erase these camps, but its rehousing policy increasingly became a (post)colonial measure, as government officials

[22] Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal. Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Jeffry M. Diefendorf, *In the Wake of War. The Reconstruction of German Cities after World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Brian W. Newsome, *French Urban Planning 1940–1968: The Construction and Deconstruction of an Authoritarian System* (New York: Lang 2009).

[23] Thibault Tellier, *Le temps des HLM 1945–1975: La saga urbaine des trente glorieuses* (Paris: Ed. Autrement, 2007); Annie Fourcaut, 'Les premiers grands ensembles en région parisienne: Ne pas refaire la banlieue?', *French Historical Studies*, 27 (2004), 195–218; Ingeborg Flagge, ed., *Geschichte des Wohnens, Vol. 5: 1945 bis heute. Aufbau, Neubau, Umbau* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1999).

[24] Yvan Gastaut, 'Les bidonvilles, lieux d'exclusion et de marginalité en France durant les trente glorieuses', *Cahiers de la méditerranée*, 69 (2004), 233–50.

strove to segregate and control Algerian migrants in particular. The administrative practice of bulldozing the shantytowns, of categorising the inhabitants according to their ethnicity and behaviour and of rehousing them accordingly was closely interconnected with the aims of French immigration policy.[25] Those activists and experts who engaged in poverty work, however, tended to focus on the French metropolitan families who lived in the *bidonvilles*, often treating immigrants' housing problems separately, as part of an overall 'immigrant question'.[26] Nevertheless, the new anti-poverty advocates did start to challenge the official slum clearance policy. And whereas government officials in the 1960s continued to attribute the housing difficulties many families were facing to their individual deficiencies, a growing number of critiques referred to them in terms of poverty and marginality and pointed to their societal dimension.

When *France Soir*, a widely read tabloid, published a report on eighty-nine *bidonvilles* in the outskirts of Paris in 1965, it dedicated the first of its eleven articles on 'the islands of hell in the city of light' to Noisy.[27] In the mid-1960s the press began to discover the shantytowns on the periphery of French cities as a newsworthy topic and published a growing number of mostly scandalised reports on the misery experienced by the inhabitants. The reporting soon developed a dynamic of its own. Nevertheless, it often picked up on the activities of organisations like ATD Fourth World and gave legitimacy to their claim that the poverty of (French) families inhabiting shantytowns required political attention. Moreover, despite the large number and broad variety of *bidonvilles* that existed, journalists only referred to a handful of (soon notorious) camps, amongst them Noisy, to illustrate what this poverty looked like. Contrary to most *bidonvilles*, Noisy-le-Grand had not been erected by its inhabitants or private proprietors. It originated in response to an appeal by the French Catholic priest Abbé Pierre, who in 1954 addressed the French public via radio, referring to the high number of homeless persons suffering in the cold winter of 1953–1954. Broadcast by different radio stations and soon taken up by the press, his appeal stimulated donations on a remarkable scale.[28] Supported by this money, a housing charity initiated by the

[25] Minayo Nasiali, 'Order the Disorderly Slum: "Standardizing" Quality of Life in Marseille Tenements and Bidonvilles', *Journal of Urban History*, 38 (2012), 1021–35; Françoise de Barros, 'Des "français musulmans d'Algérie" aux "immigrés": L'importation de classifications coloniales dans les politiques du logement en France, 1950–1970', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 159 (2005), 26–53; Amelia H. Lyons, 'Des bidonvilles aux HLM', *Hommes et Migration*, 1264 (2006), 35–49; Muriel Cohen and Cédric David, 'Cités de Transit: The Urban Treatment of Poverty During Decolonisation', *Metropolitics*, 28 Mar. 2012, available at www.metropolitiques.eu/Cites-de-transit-the-urban.html (last visited 3 Dec. 2014); Marc Bernardot, *Loger les immigrés: La Sonacotra 1956–2006* (Bellecombe : Ed. du Croquant, 2008); Marie-Claude Blanc-Chaléard, 'Des bidonvilles à la ville: Migrants des trente glorieuses et résorption en région parisienne', Mémoire d'HDR, Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2008.

[26] On housing as a key aspect of 'the immigrant question' see: Jim House and Andrew Thompson, 'Decolonisation, Space and Power: Immigration, welfare and housing in Britain and France, 1945–74', in Andrew S. Thompson, ed., *Writing Imperial Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 240–67.

[27] Maurice Josco, '89 bidonvilles autour de Paris', *France Soir*, 22 Oct. 1965.

[28] Gueslin, *Grande pauvreté*, 205–19; Rosemary Wakeman, *The Heroic City: Paris, 1945–1958* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 138–45.

Abbé founded Noisy-le-Grand. As one among several temporary settlements (*cités d'urgence*), the camp was intended as a temporary solution for families in search of housing. However, many of the around two hundred families stayed for several years, some until the early 1970s, and others joined them. The majority were large families with low incomes, who for the most part were living in steel Nissen huts. Grouped together on the edge of Noisy, a small town in the Eastern periphery of Paris, they lacked an official address and were cut off from electricity, canalisation or public transport.

While Noisy was different from most other *bidonvilles*, as almost all of its inhabitants were born in France, it soon gained a certain notoriety. This was due mainly to the activities of ATD Fourth World. In 1956 the Catholic priest Joseph Wresinski turned the shantytown into the basis for a fledgling action group, which later became an international human rights organisation, that placed shared life with 'the poor' at the centre of its activities. Deeply rooted in the Catholic milieu, ATD linked traditional notions of Christian charity with new social work methods – and close cooperation with social scientists. While the combination of poverty relief and knowledge production was not new in and of itself, the association discovered the political use of international experts at a particularly early stage. It established a system of international volunteers who lived in Noisy. In addition, Wresinski created a network of influential supporters, one of whom was Alwine de Vos van Steenwijk, a former Dutch diplomat. In cooperation with Joseph Wresinski, she established the association's research bureau, which launched conferences and liaised with social researchers from both France and other countries, advocating a close cooperation between social work and academic research in anti-poverty work.[29] Owing to these activities, the press reported on Noisy, and the camp repeatedly served as an observation field for the investigation of poverty.[30] Moreover, poverty researchers from both France and abroad visited it. Among them was the US sociologist S.M. Miller, whom ATD had invited to come in 1966. 'They took me to Noisy', Miller remembered, 'where people were living in makeshift, igloo-like housing; two taps were the sole sources of water for the people of the shantytown; little drainage was available. It was a terrible place, only minutes from Paris'.[31] According to Miller, his trip to France helped him understand the importance of organisation, inciting him to found a permanent research group on poverty within the International Sociological Association. His story is symptomatic, as both local activism and transnational research activities spurred the emerging interest in poverty. Moreover, it illustrates how

[29] Pierre Dogneton, *Ambassadrice auprès des plus pauvres. Alwine de Vos van Steenwijk* (Paris : Harmattan, 2001), 14–35. On ATD see also Jean-Paul Tricart, 'Genèse d'un dispositif d'assistance: Les cités de transit', *Revue française de sociologie*, 18 (1977), 601–24, 611–4.

[30] Jean Cournut, *Approche psycho-pathologique d'un camp d'asociaux* (Paris: Thèse pour le Doctorat en Médecine, 1963); Jean Labbens, *La condition sous-prolétarienne: L'héritage du passé* (Paris: Bureau de Recherches Sociales, 1965); ibid. *Le quart-monde: La pauvreté dans la société industrielle: Etude sur le sous-prolétariat français dans la région parisienne* (Paris: Bureau de Recherches Sociales, 1969).

[31] S. M. Miller, 'The Fourth World Movement: Personal Lessons', *Social Policy*, 7, 1 (2013), available at www.socialpolicy.org/about-us/660-the-fourth-world-movement-personal-lessons- (last visited 4 May 2014).

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anti-poverty work often evolved in close exchange with concrete material sites and their inhabitants.

While an increasingly international scene of poverty researchers developed in the 1960s and 1970s, local activists played an important role in encouraging their cooperation. It was thus hardly coincidental, but rather the result of a conscious networking strategy, that many of the social scientists who came to Paris for the UNESCO conferences in the early 1960s continued to meet in the following years.[32] S.M. Miller and Peter Townsend, Otto Klineberg, Lloyd E. Ohlin, Henning Friis and Vilhelm Aubert all took part in an international research network initiated by ATD in the mid-1960s. By regularly corresponding and co-organising seminars with these experts, ATD's general secretary de Vos van Steenwijk sought to encourage closer cooperation between them. Moreover, she hoped to initiate studies that were concerned with the problems encountered by the locally active practitioners in their day-to-day work.[33]

However, de Vos was not always successful in impressing the researchers with ATD's on-the-ground knowledge of 'the poor'. This became obvious when she and Peter Townsend co-organised an international seminar on behalf of the research network that was to take place in Essex in 1967. While the French activists had a particular interest in the lifestyles of the poor, the British scholar was more interested in poverty measurements and income distributions. When Townsend changed the conference programme accordingly, de Vos was annoyed that the new draft deviated 'to a somewhat alarming extent' from the original one.[34] 'Our entire association', she complained in a letter to the Norwegian sociologist Vilhelm Aubert in July 1966, 'is extremely disappointed . . . . Needless to say we also had counted on doing something which would serve more directly the purpose of those who engage in fighting poverty in the grey areas throughout the Western World. I have many letters of such people. They feel that we shall not know what the redistribution of income really means unless we have some more answers about the "culture of poverty".' Even though de Vos conceded that the notion of a cross-generational 'culture of poverty', as it had been popularised by the US-anthropologist Oscar Lewis in his work on Mexican slums, was misleading, she thought that life in poverty zones such as Noisy went hand in hand with a particular type of behaviour that made it difficult for 'the poor' to rise.[35] In fact, at the international seminar in Essex, several contributors, among them US urban sociologist Herbert J. Gans, took up the notion of a culture of poverty and debated its use. In his own paper, however, Peter Townsend rejected

[32] They met at an international seminar on low-income groups organised by the OECD in 1965, at a panel on poverty at the World Congress of Sociology in 1966, at an international seminar in Essex in 1967 and at an international conference on urban deprivation organised by the British government in 1973.

[33] For ATD's correpondence with these researchers see: Comité International de Recherche sur la Pauvreté, 1962–1970, BRS: Colloques et études, années 1960, CIJW; BRS: Correspondance de l'Institut, 1969–1977, CIJW.

[34] de Vos to Klineberg, 28 July 1966, Comité International de Recherche sur la Pauvreté, 1962–1970, BRS: Colloques et études années 1960, CIJW.

[35] de Vos to Aubert, 29 July 1966, ibid. See also her letter to Townsend, 4 Sept. 1966, ibid.

the concept for the very reason that it 'concentrated attention upon the familial and local setting of behaviour' and ignored the 'external and unseen' social forces which conditioned the distribution of resources.[36]

Up to a certain point, these different emphases mirrored the difference between a left-wing Catholic milieu holding on to a universal vision of misery that necessitated social work wherever it occurred – and a critical sociology developing in constant dialogue with national welfare state policies. More fundamentally, however, they resulted from different forms of acquiring knowledge. While ATD's community work was grounded in particular localities, Peter Townsend was part of an emerging social science apparatus that strove to generate representative surveys on 'the nation' which abstracted from the location of both the researcher and his or her objects. Like most quantitative sociologists, he aimed for a decidedly a-spatial description of social problems that abstracted from local contexts.[37] In Townsend's view, poverty was relative to the average living standard of a society. Accordingly, he wanted to shift the focus from visible misery to the more abstract (and more encompassing) phenomenon of a deprivation that hindered individuals to 'have the types of diets, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary in that society'.[38] And since he assumed that poverty was often a transitory stage rather than a permanent condition, Townsend disapproved of definitions that suggested that there were 'two nations, the rich and the poor'. Such a representation of poverty, he maintained at the UNESCO-conference in 1964, was not helpful – except perhaps when it came to winning public consent for social reforms.[39]

In spite of these tensions, and even though it had just been founded, ATD was rather successful in drawing attention to the conditions in French shantytowns such as Noisy-le-Grand. Thus, when the French government began to become concerned with the deprived situation of so-called 'maladjusted' and 'badly housed' families, the officials in charge made extensive use of the expertise of Alwine de Vos and Joseph Wresinski.[40] Furthermore, ATD expanded its activities to other Western European countries, and its members were repeatedly invited to international seminars on poverty.[41] They were also consulted when the European Commission initiated an anti-poverty-program in the mid-1970s. The association's success in establishing itself as an advocate for the very poor illustrates that its policy of cooperating closely with

[36] Peter Townsend, 'Measures and Explanations of Poverty in High Income and Low Income Countries', in Townsend, *Concept*, 1–45, 44.

[37] On the influence of a 'locationless logic' on (quantitative) sociological research see Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain since 1940. The Politics of Method* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[38] Townsend, 'Measures', 42.

[39] Peter Townsend, Manuscript, 10, Second Colloque, Colloques et études années 1960, CIJW.

[40] Commissariat Général du Plan, Intergroupe Handicapés-Inadaptés, Groupe des Handicapés Sociaux, Le problème de l'habitat des inadaptés sociaux. Note établie par M. Trintignac (Paris: Oct. 1970), 1, 19771141/1, Centre des archives contemporaines, Paris; Commissariat Général du Plan, Commission de l'habitation, Rapport du Groupe 'Mal Logés' (Paris: Dec. 1970), Liste des Rapporteurs, Habitat I, Rapport Colloques, 1970–1981, CIJW.

[41] Townsend, *Concept*; OCDE, *Les groups*; Joseph Wresinski, 'Lettres Ouvertes', *Habitat et vie social*, 2 (1974), 63–4.

social scientists of international standing turned out to be an effective campaigning strategy. It helped draw attention to the problem zones with which the activists were dealing as well as to the overall plight of 'the excluded'. Rather than depicting the poor as a dangerous class requiring control, they described them as a deprived class that required integration. In the first place, however, the activists propagated the notion of a Fourth World (*Quart Monde*), a separate world of the poor. This understanding of poverty was deeply intertwined with a territorial vision of deprivation – a deprivation bound to particular spaces. Furthermore, it turned out to be influential, as several political actors (both in French ministerial circles and the European commission) took up the notion of a Fourth World.

In the post-war period, French government officials often sought the reasons for the conditions within urban problem areas in the inhabitants' socio-psychological disposition or behaviour. Up to a certain point, the activists who pointed to the persistence of poverty zones in the 1960s challenged this view. They emphasised that the realities for poorly housed families were inextricably connected to the overall development of society. This was particularly the case when researchers from the New Left became interested in urban marginality in the late 1960s, since they declared that the state's housing policy itself resulted in new urban divisions. Nevertheless, the common imagery of poverty as an island, zone or pocket that was frequently evoked in poverty action and research hardly destabilised the widespread belief in growing prosperity and in the power of the welfare state. In fact, the representation of poverty as a separate world lent itself to official political discourse, as the imagery of localised poverty suggested that social deprivation could be eliminated with the help of selective measures concentrating on particular zones. The French urban renewal policy at the time was clearly influenced by socio-technological ideas of a social order that could be engineered. Following the notion of poverty as a place, French officials thus could hope to deal with 'the poor' by making use of well-established policies, aiming to change society by rearranging urban space. And while contemporaries in the late 1970s and 1980s became increasingly concerned with the 'limits of growth' and feared they were facing social problems that were impossible to solve, in the 1960s, by contrast, they mostly assumed that French officials were able to, and even obligated to, successfully eradicate deprivation. In many respects, the idea of poverty as an exceptional sphere thus stabilised the dominant representation of France as an affluent welfare society.

II

In January 1974 the Commission of the European Communities adopted a programme to fight and prevent poverty. Under the heading 'action against poverty', the programme was to embrace pilot schemes that combined social work with academic research. All of them were to be locally organised. Pointing out that people were losing faith in the European Community, the Commission hoped that its

anti-poverty programme would help to revitalise the integration process.[42] With regard to this objective, the Commission showed a particular interest in the relationship between welfare states and the persistence of poverty. Accordingly, when formulating the criteria for the selection of project schemes, the Commission's directorate for Social Affairs wanted to know why 'the "Welfare State" failed to meet the needs of certain sectors of the population', whether there were 'social difficulties arising from ... measures themselves designed to improve social conditions' or whether there was 'a "Hard Core" of unreachables, a *Quart Monde* in European society'.[43] The programme's primary objective, however, was 'the collaboration between two "worlds" which basically ignore one another (the "world" of the "non-poor" and that of those who are "excluded")'.[44]

Most of the pilot schemes proposed by the member states showed a similar understanding of poverty as a separate sphere. And in most cases this understanding went hand in hand with a territorial approach. The way in which poverty was thought about and acted upon as a social problem was closely linked to particular urban settings. Thus, when asked to propose a number of pilot schemes for the Commission's action programme, the West German government recommended projects concerned with homelessness – or with work in inner-city slums. Of seven studies proposed by the German Ministry of Family Affairs in 1974, one concerned the integration of homeless people in an urban renewal area in Cologne, another vagrants in Munich, another the practice of rehousing the dwellers of camps for the homeless in the Ruhr Area, another the situation of labour migrants in the city of Remscheid, another the social work in a 'peripheral quarter' in the medium-sized city of Gießen and, finally, a sociological survey of poverty to be carried out in a poor area of Cologne.[45] Not all of these proposals were among the twenty-six project schemes finally adopted by the Commission's international advisory committee. Yet this first selection is symptomatic because it shows that West German officials primarily associated poverty with questions of housing and urban development while hardly concerning themselves with other, less visible forms of relative deprivation.

Over the course of the 1950s poverty had almost completely receded as an issue of interest to the general public. Since the end of the war most West Germans' living standards had improved considerably. This new normality of a rising consumer society went hand in hand with a predominant focus on upward mobility. Social scientists and political observers presented the Federal Republic as a society prospering under the auspices of the welfare state, while entries on 'poverty' disappeared from sociological and economic encyclopaedias altogether. Very few sociologists or economists worked on social deprivation, and newspapers seldom referred to

[42] Memorandum by P. van Bijserveld to E. James and L. Crijns, 9 Aug. 1974, BAC 18/1987, Vol. II, 226, Historical Archives of the European Commission, Brussels.

[43] Action Against Poverty, Criteria for the Selection of Pilot Schemes, 1974, Directorate General for Social Affairs, BAC 18/1987, Vol. I., 162–5, HAEC.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Letters to the Directorate General for Social Affairs, BAC 18/1987, Vol. 1, 14, 19, 27, 49, 56, 99, HAEC.

it. Historians and sociologists have taken this as evidence of a repression of the topic, claiming that an interest in the social question only re-emerged in the late 1970s when West Germany experienced a number of changes that promoted social inequality: the oil crises and economic recession, mass unemployment and an erosion of long-term wage labour.[46] This interpretation, however, ignores the fact that on the local level municipal politicians and non-governmental initiatives had already become concerned about the fate of so-called homeless families and their 'poverty' and 'isolation' over the course of the 1960s. They began to identify the integration of homeless families as a central problem for municipal governments.[47] In the late 1960s this concern resulted in a rapidly-growing number of sociological surveys on the poverty of 'the homeless' that in turn attracted the attention of the press.

In the Federal Republic the term 'homeless people', as the journalist Hans-Joachim Noack explained in 1972 in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*, did not just include people without a roof above their heads but also those whom the authorities had sent to emergency accommodation. Noack gave a concrete example: he pointed to the city of Mannheim, which counted 10,000 homeless among its 330,000 citizens and administered one of the largest camps for the homeless in West Germany.[48] These people lived, Noack wrote, 'as their environment has taught them to live and survive: suspicious and isolated'. Noack was by no means the only one interested in homelessness. In around 1970 newspapers and television produced an impressive number of documentaries and articles on the topic.[49] And even though similar emergency camps existed in all large German cities, several of these reports made reference to the one in Mannheim. The 'Waldhof barracks' were situated on the industrial fringes of the city and were administered by the City of Mannheim. For the most part, the barracks housed large families with a low income who had been forced to leave their former apartments because they were unable to pay the rent. 40 per cent of their children visited special needs schools. Referring to the poorly

[46] Lutz Leisering, 'Zwischen Verdrängung und Dramatisierung. Zur Wissenssoziologie der Armut in der bundesrepublikanischen Gesellschaft', *Soziale Welt*, 44 (1993), 486–511; Marcel Boldorf, 'Die "Neue Soziale Frage" und die "Neue Armut" in den siebziger Jahren', in Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Das Ende der Zuversicht? Die siebziger Jahre als Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 138–56; Winfried Süß, 'Armut im Wohlfahrtsstaat', in Hans-Günter Hockerts and Winfried Süß, eds., *Soziale Ungleichheit im Sozialstaat: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Großbritannien im Vergleich* (München: Oldenbourg, 2011), 19–41. In a similar vein, see Paugam's periodisation of a 'marginalised poverty': Serge Paugam, *Die elementaren Formen der Armut* (Hamburg: Hamburger Ed., 2008). However, in his analysis of changing images of poverty in West and East Germany, Christoph Lorke follows a different (and more convincing) periodisation: Christoph Lorke, *Armut im geteilten Deutschland. Die Wahrnehmung sozialer Randlagen in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2015).

[47] Peter Höhmann, *Zuweisungsprozesse bei Obdachlosen: Zur Produktion sozialer Probleme durch Instanzen sozialer Kontrolle* (Regensburg: unpublished dissertation, 1973), 10.

[48] Hans-Joachim Noack, Begraben in Baracken, *Zeit*, 3 Mar. 1972, 72.

[49] See for example: Hanspeter Neumann, 'Abgestempelt. Elendsviertel am Rande Mannheims', *Zeit*, 8 Mar. 1968; Ulla Hofmann, 'Fünf Menschen in einem Zimmer ohne Wasseranschluss', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 Feb. 1970; 'Spiegel-Report über sozial benachteiligte Gruppen in der Bundesrepublik', *Spiegel*, 28. Sept. 1970; Siegfried Diehl, 'Schwere Wege aus dem Getto', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 Apr.1972; Petra Michaely, 'Warum sammelt Frau Schumann Tabletten?', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22 Sept. 1973.

maintained low-rise buildings as well as to the waste accumulating in between them, the journalists emphasised that the estate differed visibly from its surroundings – and that Mannheim's population eschewed the inhabitants and considered them 'asocial'.

In the late 1960s public commentators started to use this and other camps in order to decry the extent of the deprivation that still existed in Germany – and to criticise the common practice of accommodating 'the homeless' in isolated areas in the urban periphery. Like Noack, many drew their information from recent sociological studies. Moreover, many underlined the paradox of poverty in a (Western) society of affluence, often explicitly quoting American authors like Galbraith and Harrington. Noack himself based his observations on analyses carried out by a group of sociologists and psychologists who were conducting a research project on marginality at the University of Mannheim. The research project had been initiated and financed by the municipality of Mannheim in close cooperation with a local charity.[50] The Waldhof barracks and their inhabitants thus gained the attention of the national press after a local action group had formed that sought to improve the situation in the ill-reputed area. The group recommended preparing a study on the inhabitants, and the municipal authorities in turn commissioned a group of social psychologists at the local university – most of them recent graduates – to conduct the survey. It was their study that caught the attention of journalists like Noack. This was far from unusual. In fact, almost all of the surveys and PhD theses on homeless families in West Germany at the time were commissioned by municipal authorities or, in some cases, by private initiatives.[51] As in France, and in the tradition of older distinctions between deserving and underserving poor, German officials originally related the severe housing problems of families to their 'weakness' or 'asocial' behaviour, seeking to discipline as well as accommodate them. But by the late 1960s this started to change. Increasingly, local politicians and administrators started to question their own unsuccessful practice of concentrating 'the homeless' in the outskirts of cities. As part of this process they began to instigate sociological studies on the topic.

In all of the resulting studies, researchers picked up the administrative category of 'homelessness' in order to refer to the inhabitants of publicly administered substandard flats, barracks or shelters. And all of them focused on low-income families with many children as the predominant high-risk population. Their estimates of the overall number of homeless persons varied considerably, reaching from 500,000 to one million inhabitants of municipal accommodation.[52] Still, the researchers did agree

[50] Hans Martini, 'Vorbemerkung', in Forschungsgruppe Gemeindesoziologie, Obdachlosigkeit. *Gemeindesoziologische Untersuchung. Teil I* (Mannheim: Informationen aus dem Sozialwesen, 1971), I–III, III; Dagmar Krebs, *Anwendung der Stress-Theorie in einer Felduntersuchung an Obdachlosen* (Mannheim: unpublished dissertation, 1971).

[51] See for example Fritz Haag, *Wohnungslose Familien in Notunterkünften. Soziales Bezugsfeld und Verhaltensstrategien* (München: Juventa, 1971); Ursula Adams, *Nachhut der Gesellschaft. Untersuchung einer Obdachlosensiedlung in einer westdeutschen Großstadt* (Freiburg i.Br.: Lambertus, 1971); Direktorium Investitionsplanungs- und Olympiaamt, *Wohnungen für Obdachlose* (München: Beiträge zur Stadtentwicklung, 1967).

[52] Deutscher Städtetag, ed., *Hinweise zur Obdachlosenhilfe* (Köln: Deutscher Städtetag, 1968); Ursula Christiansen, *Obdachlos weil arm. Gesellschaftliche Reaktionen auf die Armut* (Gießen: Ed. 2000, 1973), 29;

on the fact that the number of homeless persons had not declined over the course of the 1960s but, in fact, had grown. Many cited the example of Cologne, where local authorities registered 6,563 'homeless' in 1955 and 18,423 in 1966, most of whom were employed and lived with their partner and children.[53] In contrast to France, the West German municipal camps primarily housed Germans. The vast majority of these homeless families lacked accommodation after having been evicted from their former flats, either because they had failed to pay their rent or as a result of slum clearance measures.[54]

Hence, as a social problem, homelessness was deeply interconnected with changes in official housing and urban renewal policies.[55] Over the course of the 1960s the German government had gradually liberalised the housing market, dismantling the previous system of state control.[56] At the same time municipalities invested more in slum clearance in traditional working-class areas. As a result, accommodation became less affordable for low-income households, in particular in large cities. Due to these changes in official housing and urban renewal policies, more and more families were evicted from their flats. Thus, in spite of the ambitious housing policies of the post-war period, homelessness was on the increase.[57] Moreover, it was heavily stigmatised. That public housing policies failed to cater adequately for the less well off was hardly new. And yet, with upper-working-class and middle-class families enjoying remarkably improved housing conditions, the precariousness encountered by some differed more markedly from the average living standard.

Originally, municipal officials had hoped that the publicly administered camps would help turn the inhabitants into better adapted tenants. However, most social scientists who had been commissioned to report on the camp inhabitants pointed out that the families' relegation to the periphery in fact enhanced their stigmatisation.[58] The authors of the various studies on homelessness in West German cities almost unanimously declared that the longer families lived in estates like the Waldhof barracks, the more marginalised they became. In her PhD thesis on Mannheim's camp, the sociologist Dagmar Krebs thus decried that every larger city in the Federal Republic contained a homeless camp that remained invisible to most of the population because of the social barriers such as railway tracks, scrapyards or industrial premises which systematically separated it from the rest of the city.[59] In her view, this geographical situation corresponded to a social one, as it rendered the inhabitants even more isolated.[60] The homeless were 'the poor of contemporary

Klaus Schulz, *Die Rechtsstellung des Obdachlosen nach Bundes- und allgemeinem Sicherheitsrecht* (Würzburg: Diss, 1970), 12.

[53] Höhmann, *Zuweisungsprozesse*, 29; Haag, *Wohnungslose*, 16; Städtetag, *Hinweise*, 5.

[54] See for example Haag, *Wohnungslose*, 31; Krebs, *Anwendung*.

[55] Haag, *Wohnungslose*, 16–7; Schulz, *Rechtsstellung*, 11; Krebs, *Anwendung*, 8, 12–3.

[56] Lidwina Kühne-Büning et. al., 'Zwischen Angebot und Nachfrage, zwischen Regulierung und Konjunktur', in Flagge, *Geschichte des Wohnens*, 153–232, 158–62.

[57] Haag, *Wohnungslose*, 16–7; Schulz, *Rechtsstellung*, 11; Krebs, *Anwendung*, 8, 12–3.

[58] Höhmann, *Zuweisungsprozesse*; Haag, *Wohnungslose*; Krebs, *Anwendung*.

[59] Krebs, *Anwendung*, 5.

[60] Krebs, *Anwendung*, 129.

society', Krebs maintained, and she demanded that their segregation from the rest of society be overcome.[61]

As in Krebs's case, depictions of homelessness often came with an appeal. In the late 1960s the social scientists concerned with the topic – most of whom belonged to a young generation of sociologists – criticised the widely held belief that families living in emergency accommodation, barracks and other forms of substandard housing were 'socially weak' or delinquent. Instead of placing the blame on these families, they pointed to their stigmatisation, exclusion and the overall societal dimension of urban marginality. That their critique gained so much public attention in the early 1970s was also due to a post-1968 culture of doubt concerning a society too focused on economic productivity. However, the emerging concern with urban poverty was not confined to the New Left – despite the fact that most of the academic experts involved were rooted in a left-wing milieu and despite the fact that the newly installed socio-liberal government took a particular interest in the topic. Initially, local officials and activists belonging to no particular political or religious milieu had become concerned about the persistence of problem zones in their respective cities. They brought the problem to the attention of social scientists, whose research in turn attracted the attention of the national press. Thus, from around 1970 onwards increasing numbers of journalists, some of them working for conservative newspapers, became interested in the camps for homeless people that in their view spoke of a poverty unworthy of West German society.

By then the worries about the housing crisis as an administrative problem intersected with a broader change in the attitude towards affluent Western societies. It became more common to appeal to the moral obligations that came with being part of the 'affluent West' (as opposed to the 'poor Third World'). Contemporaries thus took the situation of 'the homeless' as an example of more encompassing deficiencies. They saw it as characteristic of a society that betrayed its ideal of social equality because it was so much focused on economic performance that it left behind those unable to keep up with the pace. 'The West German affluent state (*Wohlstandsstaat*)', as the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* declared in an extensive report on homelessness, 'accepts the existence of pockets of poverty as a sort of prison for all those who cannot compete in this performance-oriented society or in the housing market'.[62] In its report, the magazine called for a change in public opinion as well as in concrete policies regarding 'the homeless', pointing to a gap between the Federal Republic's self-understanding as a just society and its neglect of marginalised groups. Such an appeal was characteristic of the way in which social experts and public commentators used the publicly administered camps for the homeless as examples of the shortcomings of a society that, in their view, needed to be reminded of its own ideals. They described the inhabitants as a group for whom the promise of a 'society

[61] Krebs, *Anwendung*, 5.
[62] 'Spiegel-Report'.

of equals' had not yet fulfilled itself – but should do.[63] Hence, the problem zones in the outskirts of cities helped to stabilise the consensus that a more integrative society was called for.

III

After poverty had receded as an issue for the broader public in the years after the war, urban problem zones turned into major arenas for the discovery of a new poverty in Western European societies. More than fifteen years after the end of the war run-down urban areas and a growing number of provisional camps in the urban periphery lent themselves to a moralistic re-evaluation of social progress because they so visibly broke with a number of modern promises. In France as well as in Germany the expanding welfare state promised social security to all, irrespective of their location. Urban planners sought to rearrange cities so that they provided standardised living conditions for all. In short, in the mid-twentieth century urban space was supposed to be less and less socially divided. And 'where one lived' was not supposed to impact on 'where one stood on the social ladder'. It is this strained relationship between new horizons of expectation and the visible persistence of social problems that made urban poverty zones such a pertinent subject. In the post-war period, the evocation of clearly located poor milieus belied both the promises of the welfare state and the optimism of modern planning.

Eventually official housing policies themselves resulted in new social and ethnic divisions. Originally, however, government officials in post-war France and West Germany subscribed to the modernist vision of better living conditions for all. Contemporaries commonly assumed that the welfare state could do away with the clearly demarcated poor areas that had characterised cities thus far. But over the course of the 1960s both state actors and their critics came to discover that this was less easily done than originally expected. Political activists, social experts and local authorities became aware that large cities in particular were still facing a massive housing shortage. In both countries, public authorities administered long lists for families waiting to gain access to public housing. The housing shortage did not affect all social milieus in the same way. It was primarily low-income households, large families, migrants and older people who struggled to find adequate housing and who were often relegated to badly reputed problem zones. And while a growing percentage of West Germans and French began to identify itself as middle class, living conditions that clearly deviated from the middle-class ideal of life in a family home or in a well-equipped modern flat came to be associated with a social position beyond the established class structure.

Even though the existence of poverty zones – or poverty in itself – hardly constituted a new phenomenon, Western European social scientists, political actors

[63] For a long-term perspective on the idea of a 'society of equals' see Pierre Rosanvallon, *La société des égaux* (Paris: Seuil, 2011).

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and the press spoke of a 'new poverty'. In part, this perception reflected the improved living conditions that the majority of the population enjoyed. In part, too, it picked up on the American discourse on poverty as it had emerged in the early 1960s. There, as well as in Europe, the notion of a 'poverty in affluence' allowed the problem to be addressed while still holding on to the imagery of a successful society. In addition, social experts could emphasise the innovative character of their work by underlining the novelty of their subject. In any case, social scientists as well as political actors distinguished between an absolute poverty that they mostly attributed to 'underdeveloped societies' and a poverty that was relative to the new affluence they identified in Western societies. Enjoying a remarkable transnational career, the catchphrase of 'poverty in affluence' stabilised two imagined geographies: a Cold War topography that clearly differentiated between the Western and Eastern sphere, and the distinction between developed and underdeveloped regions that was central for the 'age of development' in international politics from the 1950s to the 1970s.[64] At the same time, the transnational framing of poverty as a new social problem went hand in hand with a localised vision of a subculture of poverty emerging on the fringes of modern cities. By spatialising poverty in such a way, it became both exceptional and universal – a culture of poverty that was bound to particular urban badlands while simultaneously transcending national borders.

When contemporary observers described 'poverty in affluence' as a new phenomenon in the 1960s, they were mostly referring to a formation that was indeed intrinsically linked to changes in the urban topography. In France as well as in Germany they were concentrating on the situation of families whose situation in peripheral problem zones was brought about by changes in official housing and urban renewal policies. These experts did not simply project a particular vision of poverty on a blank urban space, nor did a particular materiality of urban life predetermine their way of narrating poverty. Rather, the rediscovery of 'the poor' in affluent society took place at the intersection between localised activities bound to particular urban settings, transnational campaigning strategies and a well-established cultural imagery of affluence and urban slum life.

In West Germany and France urban political actors were foremost in initiating this discovery. Locally active private initiatives, which began their work in peripheral urban problem zones, as well as (in the case of West Germany) municipal politicians played a predominant role in launching debates on homelessness and poverty. It is characteristic of the new culture of expertise taking root in the 1960s that both groups prompted sociological studies on the housing problems with which they were concerned. Commissioning research on *bidonvilles*, camps for homeless families and rehousing practices, activists and municipal actors alike redefined housing as a field of social intervention. As far as this production of poverty knowledge was concerned, three groups were preeminent: technocratic experts, whose expertise was meant to facilitate governmental measures, 'researchers *cum* activists', who were either social

[64] Wolfgang Sachs, 'Introduction', in Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, 12th edn (London: Zed Books, 2007), 1–5, 2.

workers or activists engaging in the study of social problems, and social scientists, often rooted in a Christian, socialist or social-democratic milieu. For them, the urban problem zones turned into important observational fields for 'asocial families', 'marginal groups' or, simply, 'the poor'. In France Catholic actors initiated this discovery of poverty at an earlier stage, but, by the late 1960s, both countries saw a growing concern with urban problem areas.

Contemporary actors tended to talk in moral terms about urban deprivation and life in urban poverty zones, either warning of the concentration of 'asocial' elements in urban twilight zones or calling for a more inclusive welfare system. Over the course of the 1960s the representation of urban poverty underwent a change: the dominant depiction of maladjusted layabouts bringing about their own housing problems slowly gave way to the claim that homelessness also affected industrious, deserving families. In part this was due to local activists relating the background stories of individual inhabitants. In part, too, members of the New Left emphasised the materialist causes of social problems. On top of this, government officials became aware that, irrespective of the housing boom, the number of families exposed to substandard conditions had stagnated or was even growing. Fundamentally, however, the new focus on the societal dimension of housing problems was characteristic of growing doubts concerning the development of capitalist societies. At the same time as the Left seized upon the housing question, social scientists and political campaigners used the debates on badly housed families in order to refer to the gaps in and problems of the welfare system as it had been thus far established. Pointing to urban poverty zones as spaces of an alternate ordering, they sought to readjust the moral economy of French and West Germany society or of the European Community.[65]

The appeal for a new moral economy and a more inclusive welfare state did have a significant gap, however, as it tended to leave out immigrants. Many migrants coming to France and West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s were struck by the lack of housing. They were often barred from council housing and particularly affected by discriminatory practices in the private housing market. Nevertheless, the moral appeal connected to the designation of 'islands of poverty' hardly extended to them. On the contrary, migrants tended to be objects of moral panics. In France, the representation of life in the metropolitan *bidonvilles* became ethnicised over the course of the 1960s – and closely intertwined with post-colonial anxieties that focused on Algerian migrants in particular.[66] Even though governmental officials and social experts alluded to the deprivation faced by many of these migrants, they barely included them in an inclusive discourse on the gaps in the French welfare regime or on the shortcomings of French society. Late 1960s West Germany saw an even stricter separation between concerns regarding the emergence of ethnic ghettos in inner-city renewal areas and worries regarding the exclusion of homeless or in other way

[65] While the 'moral economy' does go back to E.P. Thomson, sociologists and historians increasingly use the term in a much broader sense in order to point to the normative assumptions and value systems influencing social practices in the context of the welfare state or other fields. Steffen Mau, 'Welfare Regimes and the Norms of Social Exchange', *Current Sociology*, 52 (2004), 53–74.

[66] Nasiali, 'Order', 1022, House and Thompson, 'Decolonisation'.

marginalised German families.[67] In short, political actors and social experts in both countries tended to designate migrant areas as a threat rather than a moral obligation, while the inclusive notion of poverty in affluence focused on the indigenous poor.

Particular urban settings, like the *bidonvilles* in France and the emergency camps for homeless families in West Germany, thus figured prominently in the transnational story of a discovery of poverty. In many ways, these spaces served as heterotopia – spaces of an 'alternate ordering' that organised 'a bit of the social world in a way different to that which surrounds them'.[68] When referring to slums, grey zones or islands of poverty as exceptional spaces in otherwise affluent societies, social scientists, political actors and journalists marked them as problem areas that required a readjustment of current social practices, either by the inhabitants or the rest of society. They turned the urban badlands into privileged testing grounds for the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of Western European welfare states.

[67] On the fears concerning ethnic ghettos in West German municipalities see Christiane Reinecke, 'Auf dem Weg zu einer neuen sozialen Frage? Ghettoisierung und Segregation als Teil einer Krisensemantik der 1970er Jahre', *Informationen zur modernen Stadtgeschichte* (2012), 110–31.

[68] Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997), viii.