



CONTESTED SPACE

— Youth's Experience and Appropriation of Marseille's Inner City District —

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“Youth’s Experience and Appropriation of Marseille’s Inner City District”

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CONTENTS

PREFACE	6
INTRODUCTION.....	7
1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11
1.1 URBAN REGENERATION	12
From Urban Demolition to Community Development.....	12
Urban regeneration in France	14
1.2 THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC SPACE.....	16
1.3 PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH.....	17
1.4 AGE RELATIONS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT	19
1.5 APPROPRIATION AND TERRITORIALITY.....	21
Acquiring and possessing space	21
Constructing Place	23
1.6 EXPERIENCING SPACE.....	24
2.1 SETTING THE SCENE	28
2.2 INNER CITY POVERTY AND URBAN REGENERATION.....	29
Le Panier and Belsunce.....	29
Recreating The City	31
2.3 YOUTH AND MARSEILLE’S URBAN SPACE	33
The Environment	33
Youth Out of Control.....	34
3 EXPERIENCING MARSEILLE’S URBAN SPACE.....	37
3.1 INTERPRETING THE CITY	38
The Environment	39
3.2 LES RACKETS.....	46
The Social Circumstances.....	46
3.3 FAIRE ATTENTION!.....	49
Public fear of youth.....	49
4.1 WHY THIS PLACE	53
Le sol.....	54
C’est où on reste entre nous	55

On a pas des salles	58
Les gangsters de la gare	60
5 CONCLUSION	65
6 BIBLIOGRAPHY	69
I APPENDIX – SELF REFLECTION	74
II APPENDIX – RÉSUMÉ EN FRANCAIS	77
III APPENDIX ARTICLE	80
IV APPENDIX PHOTOGRAPHS	81



Map of Marseille's inner city district

PREFACE

This thesis is an interpretation of the words spoken by youth participating in the research carried out in Marseille, France. It is the product and combination of my first fieldwork experience and the knowledge and insight gathered through being a student in Anthropology for over three years at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. The idea of the research topic evolved out of the current prevailing discourse in Belgium and The Netherlands designating youth as a ‘problem’ in public space. As the discourse became increasingly visible in the media, it became even taken more serious by the government ruling both countries. With the goal to solve the unwanted situation, policies were set out and new surveillance and meddling teams were created to ‘treat’ and approach this youth in our city’s public urban space. By reading newspapers and listening to the way people talked about the matter, I became aware of youth’s precarious positioning in society. I wanted to find out if there really was a problem as how it was so often portrayed by my surroundings. And what did youth themselves think about their situation? I chose to research the matter outside The Netherlands or Belgium as to question the reach of the discourse to other countries as nearby as France.

The search for answers to my questions became an adventure which could not have been successfully completed without the help of many. There are a number of people I want to thank in this way for their contribution to this for me valuable experience in life, and more specifically, in Marseille. At first I want to thank all youth that participated in this research for accepting me in to their social world. For showing me how they experienced living in a city as Marseille and for sharing many moments of laughter and foolishness. I am also thankful to the staff of the organisations ADDAP 13, Contact Club, AMS and the social centre Bausanque who put effort in making it possible to meet Marseille’s youth. Furthermore I want to thank the people I met along the way who guided me through this unknown city and made it possible to feel at home.

Finally, I want to thank here in The Netherlands, Martijn Oosterbaan, for his infinite encouragement, patience and understanding during the for me tumultuous past year. I am also thankful to Brenda Oude Breuil, who inspired me to go to Marseille and helped me getting there. And of course I want to thank my friends and the home front in Belgium for their listening ear, their endless support, and most importantly for never giving up believing in me.

INTRODUCTION

Marseille, France - a city of contrasts. Though big and sprawling, dirty and slum-like in many places, it still remains a fascinating city that oozes with much elegance and charm. Its old harbour, the *Vieux Port*, is vibrant, colourful and charming enough to compensate for the dreary industrial dockland nearby. But then Marseille has always been a symbol of danger and intrigue and the city's contrasts somewhat add to that reputation. Its ambiguous character is felt in many ways throughout the urban landscape. An inner city square with playgrounds designated as sweet and innocent areas for children, simultaneously host delinquent behaviour caused by drug addicts and alcoholics. Space is scarce in this concrete jungle, no distance is left between extremes. When visiting Marseille you are confused and overwhelmed by its intensity and you wonder how people live in this medley of cultures and creeds.

Urbanists have long chronicled the social worlds that make cities fascinating, fearful, and frustrating places. However in empirical research the relationship between social interaction and the physical environment is still largely neglected. Urban ethnographers study in cities, but tend to ignore the material structures through which their respondents operate (Kidder 2008). The city is an urban space that can be defined in terms of a complexity of interacting social relations. It is a site of difference and segregation. It is a space of politics and power. It is a landscape of economic and cultural distinction, creating a realm of everyday experience and freedom.

This thesis aims to acknowledge the importance of the urban environment in youths' engagement with their surroundings. The case of *Saint-Charles* station, among other findings, will provide insight on this matter. By doing so it opts to expand our knowledge on the dialectical relationships between people and their environment. It questions if the current positioning of youth in a climate of fear and suspicion influences the way they are treated in public space. Furthermore I explore how regulatory regimes such as processes of urban regeneration, and on a more local level surveillance teams, exert control over youths' ability to freely engage with their surroundings.

This research focuses on young people's perceptions of Marseille's urban environment and the multiple realities, tensions, paradoxes and possibilities that they experience while using neighbourhood space. Throughout the literature youth are defined as being in a distinctive 'stage of life,' described as adolescence or: 'Betwixt and

between' the golden age of 'innocent' childhood and the realities of adulthood (Skelton and Valentine et. al. 1998). They find themselves in an ambiguous zone in search of what their relationship with the world entails. Through appropriating public space, this intricate process is elaborated and contested. It can be used as a tool to mark boundaries, defining a space or territory. It can be a way for young people to claim some ownership of public space and defend it against others. Territoriality takes shape when a certain geographical space is possessed and dominated, promoting a sense of identity and belonging (Flint and Robinson et.al. 2008). Besides being an act of rebellion, it is a way of making space into place, inscribing one's surroundings with meaning (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998).

The data for this thesis were gathered over three months of participant observation. From February 2011 till April 2011 I conducted fieldwork in Marseille. The fieldwork setting included two inner city social centres, the streets, and *Saint-Charles* station. Spending my days roaming Marseille's urban space and taking short trips with the social centres' weakly activities throughout the city, I observed where and how youth presumably between the ages of thirteen and twenty years old would hang out in public space. The question that led me through these observations was: "How and why do youth appropriate Marseille's inner city public space?" To limit my research area I choose to focus on youths' activities carried out in the inner city public space of *Saint-Charles* station. The search for answers to these questions led me through the numerous moments I spent hanging around Marseille's central station, the location that became the central backdrop of my research. Observations of and conversations with adolescents made me aware of the people and the places they experienced in a positive or negative way. Furthermore I actively explored together with them how they felt towards those people and those places. Through examining its manifestations, dimensions and implications I aimed at understanding the underlying meaning.

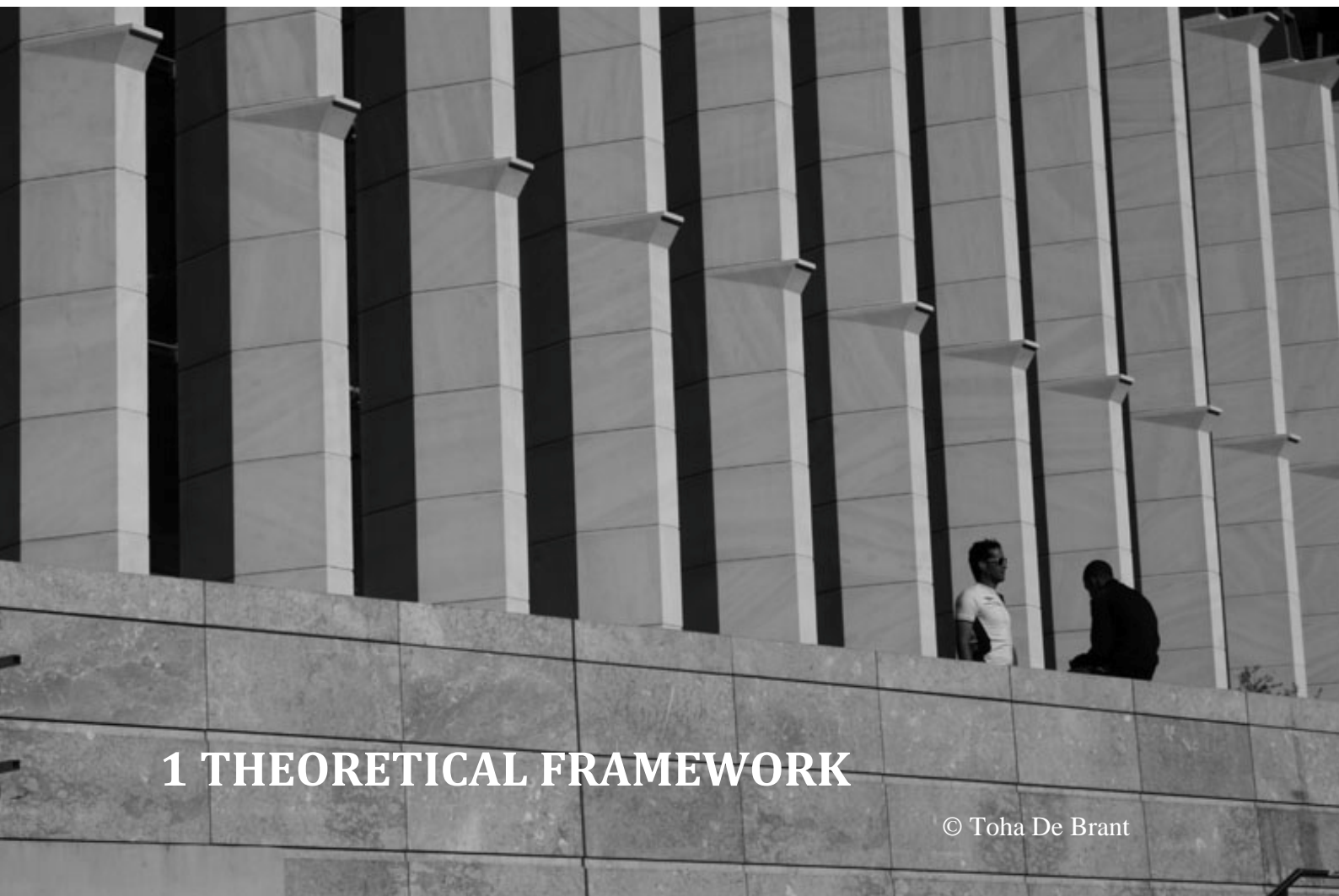
Belsunce and *Le Panier* are part of what is defined as: *L'hyper centre* of the city. It is the true city centre of the urban area of Marseille. It houses a variety of sectors: residential, commercial (chain stores, franchised shops, luxury shops, late-night shops, etc.), cultural (cinemas, theatres, museums, etc.) and tourism. It also has a high concentration of services and transport networks (underground lines, Saint-Charles railway station), and is therefore a natural meeting place for a large number of populations, particularly for young people from the outlying towns and districts

(Martinais and Bélin 2004: 362). Here, as in other contexts where people and practices intermingle, insecurity feeds largely on the opposition between, on the one hand, social groups who demand 'lawful' uses of public space (shopkeepers, residents, customers, tourists), and on the other hand, populations whose practices and behaviour are deemed 'out of line'. It is within a context of monitoring, recording and control procedures that young people's use of public space is constructed as a threat to social order. Considering the fairly new changes in the urban landscape of the inner city district of Marseille, little is known about the effects and policies of urban renewal programs on the use of public space by youth.

This research contributes to the theoretical debates regarding the politics of public space and provides insight, at the social level, on the perspective of youth regarding their action in, and experiences of, space. In the first chapter of this thesis I have conceptualized the most important terms and discourses that arise when researching the appropriation of public space by youth. I start off by explaining the process of urban regeneration and demonstrating how its character changed and goals changed over time. In the following part I frame the process more locally, and look at the situation in France. Next I describe what the politics of public space contains, concluding that the public space of the city is not open to all its inhabitants. Additionally, I set out to portray the way youth are generally perceived by their surroundings as to understand current city policies regarding young adolescents. Then, I discuss the conceptualisation of appropriation and territoriality which provides us with a more thorough understanding of the research objective. In the last paragraph of the theoretical framework, I look into the dialectical relationship between people and the environment, drawing to a close by stating that 'location matters'. In Chapter 2, I set the scene by describing the Marseille's history, and focus on two inner city neighbourhoods *Le Panier* and *Belsunce* particularly. The context clarifies how several urban regeneration projects keep the city under a spell of continuous change and how youth are positioned in this environmental and social complexity.

The findings of my research are subsequently discussed in the second part of the thesis. Chapter 3 focuses on how youth experiences Marseille's urban space. Here I describe how they differentiate between neighbourhoods based on environmental characteristics as well as the social circumstances in the environment. I further explore how youth try to differentiate between one another in search of who they are. The public

fear of youth being out of control will be linked to the homogenisation of adolescents as one dangerous group. I will bring the chapter to a close by concluding that youth are, on the contrary, a very heterogeneous group who experience their surroundings for a great part in terms of safety even though this is often attributed to them. In Chapter 4 I use *Saint-Charles* station, located at the heart of the city, as a framework to demonstrate the politics of public space from a youth's point of view. Here I will reveal certain underlying appropriation motivations to point out why exactly this place is chosen to be appropriated above others. The second part of the chapter elaborates upon the relationship between youth and the regulatory regimes present at the station. I will further point out how the consequences of urban regeneration have influenced the place where youth currently are to be found. The chapter will be completed by concluding that by 'hanging around' at a place like *Saint-Charles* station youth rebel against adult power, and express their desire to make a space into a place of their own. In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I pose the conclusions of my research. Here we find that images of young people stigmatize and influence the way they are treated by those around them and can have consequences for their denial to a rightful place in public space.



1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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1.1 URBAN REGENERATION

Worldwide urbanisation is one of the most impressive facts of modern times and has wrought profound changes in social life. According to the United Nations report of World Urbanization Prospects (The 2009 Revision), 50.5 percent or 3.5 billion of the world population is currently living in cities. As a result the global population as a whole has become more urban and less rural. One could say that the future of modern society lies in towns and cities, challenging global economic development and local democracy while maintaining urban cohesion (Repères 2000: 2).

While cities are often the engines of innovation and economic growth, they are also frequently the locations where serious problems – inner-city decline, unemployment, physical decay, social exclusion – occur. Since 1945 the European urban planning and housing discourse has been accentuated by what Furbey (1999) describes as ‘a series of keywords with a common prefix’ (Furbey 1999: 419). From the ‘reconstruction’ of the immediate post-war years to ‘renewal’ and ‘redevelopment’ in the 1960s and 1970s resulting in the mastery of ‘regeneration’ from the 1980s. Presently, in the context of globalisation, an environment of competition between cities and regions has been created through extensive urban development projects as a means of making cities more attractive and thus more competitive (Swyngedouw et.al. 2003 in Mergele 2008: 357). Designing the setting for the emergence of extensive urban development projects worldwide.

From Urban Demolition to Community Development

Urban regeneration is the process that influences the way cities change and transform over time. It has had a major impact on many urban landscapes, and has played an important role in the history and demographics of cities around the world. The need for the modernization of old city centres initiated during the industrial revolution, emerged in the late 19th century in Europe, and experienced an intense phase in the late 1940s. The horrific impact of two World Wars were echoed in the built environment of many parts of the continent and urged for an urban policy of reconstruction (Roberts and Sykes et.al. 2000: 15). This was followed by a long phase of

slum clearance and the 'modernisation of urban centres and urban infrastructure' (Couch et.al. 2011: 2). Until the 1950s, flats and tenements were considered as a suitable form for replacement of working class housing. They seemed to be the 'the silver bullet' of urban renewal (Power 2007: 67). By the end of the 1960s, most renewal policies began to totally discard large-scale slum clearance and the correlating expulsion of the population to peripheral areas. This resulted in a series of adjustments to policy, and programs were reoriented towards rehabilitation and area improvement (Couch 1990, in Roberts and Sykes et.al. 2000: 15). The 1970s put an end to the general post-World War (two) economic boom. As the inner city became increasingly affected by social, economic and environmental problems, a greater co-ordination between previously separate economic, social and physical strands of policy was necessary (Ward 1994 in Couch 2011: 3; Roberts and Sykes et.al. 2000: 16). Today, urban regeneration is an integral part of many local governments, often combined with small and big business investments. Chouch (1990) explains the process of urban regeneration as: 'a process in which the state or local community is seeking to bring back investment, employment and consumption as well as enhance the quality of life within an urban area (Couch, 1990 in Couch et.al. 2011: 3). Robert and Sykes (2000) argue that urban regeneration is based on six themes: the relationship between physical conditions and social response; the ongoing need for renovation of the built environment; a healthy economy as the foundation for urban prosperity and quality of life; the need to use the urban land prudently in order to avoid unnecessary sprawl; acknowledging that urban policy reproduces the prevailing social conventions and political forces of the day; and at last, the need to ensure that all areas of public and private policy operate with the principles of sustainable development. Their definition of urban regeneration is based on these six themes and advocates a holistic approach. As stated by Robert and Sykes (2000): 'urban regeneration is a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change' (Robert and Sykes et.al. 2000: 17). It goes beyond the demolition and reconstruction of the physical environment and aims at community development.

Urban regeneration in France

About three-quarters of the EU population lives in urban areas and more than half of this urban population lives in cities of more than 200,000 (Robert and Sykes et.al. 2000: 281). Each country has had to deal with problems of urban economic restructuring, and each has also been obligated to deal with renewal of run-down neighbourhoods, both in inner urban areas and in peripheral social housing estates.

France has a quite specific urban landscape in comparison to other European countries, 80 per cent of the population lives in urban areas and 45 per cent of the population lives in flats often located on the outskirts of most major cities (DgCID 2006: 60, Eurostat in Couch et. al. 2011: 13). The area surrounding the inner district, like that of Paris, is characterised by clustered, modernist, blocky buildings rising above their more modestly sized surroundings. By the mid 1970s these hastily constructed public housing projects were falling in to gross despair. Built to meet the housing needs of a nation experiencing population growth, migration from rural to urban areas, and rapid industrialisation, these large-scale high rise peripheral housing estates were left to further deteriorate (Couch et.al. 2011). As a result, housing schemes started to decline into a process of impoverishment, forcing the authorities to react. Although inner city urban regeneration has been pursued in France, its main concern has been these peripheral communes of urban areas (Couch et.al. 2011: 18). Since the construction of these *grands ensembles*, many social problems are concentrated in these areas, often designated as *Zones Urbaines Sensibles* (ZUS). The high youth unemployment (23% of 15–24 year olds in urban areas) is particularly acute in many of these areas, rising to 42% in these ‘critical urban areas.’

French central and local governments policies towards urban areas can be divided into two key areas: agglomerations and urban areas as a whole, and those which address ‘needy neighbourhoods within cities’. It is the latter group of policies that constitutes France’s *Politique de la Ville*, which primarily addresses the social, economic and physical issues facing more deprived urban areas (Couch et.al. 2011: 20-21). The policy aims at reducing territorial inequalities and addresses regeneration and development at the neighbourhood level. *Politique de la ville*, literally translated ‘city policy’, is a policy for neighbourhoods defined as being in difficulty. Concerned with housing, the urban environment, employment, health, the public order, security and

urban services, the policy tries to improve the physical and socio-economic situation of 'disadvantaged neighbourhoods' (European Urban Knowledge Network 2011). Policies towards agglomerations and urban areas as whole cover projects concerned with metropolises, conurbations, and medium-sized cities. Metropolises can be seen as the 'locomotives' of French economy. Considering their important positioning, the French government launched a 'call for metropolis cooperation' in June 2004, aimed at helping them to enhance their profile in Europe. Existing projects were given additional support and original strategies for cooperation projects between the public sector and private sector were encouraged (DgCID 2006: 61). For example, since 1995, France's second biggest metropolis Marseille, has been subjected to the largest urban regeneration project in Europe. The project, Euroméditerranée was launched through the combined efforts of the French Government, the City of Marseille, the Local and Regional Authorities and *Marseille Provence Métropole Communauté urbaine*. The Euroméditerranée initiative is charged with redeveloping and growing Marseille to such degree that it becomes recognized as one of Europe's major cities. Its key missions are: to improve the quality of life (housing and public spaces, facilities and local services); urban planning and management (plan and implement major urban regeneration projects); real estate development (plan and prepare operations); and economic development and employment (market research for new businesses and investors).

Gigantic investments in urban regeneration projects like these, reshape cities completely. Efforts of urban revitalisation can be seen as an economic engine and reform mechanisms but can simultaneously be seen as mechanisms of social control. It may enhance existing communities, but it may also lead to the displacement of existing populations through the process of gentrification. Gentrification is a general term for the arrival of wealthier people in an existing urban district, a related increase in rents and property values, and changes in the district's character and culture. The term is often used negatively, suggesting the displacement of poor communities by rich outsiders.

This research will further explore how the process of urban regeneration influences the way youth uses and appropriate public space in the second largest city in France: Marseille, and what role this process plays in the politics of public space.

1.2 THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC SPACE

To understand what is meant by the politics of public place, it is important to begin by conceptualising space in terms of a complexity of interacting social relations. It is also important to recognise that within that complexity both individuals and social groups are constantly engaged in efforts to territorialise, claim spaces, to include some and exclude others from particular areas (Skelton and Valentine 1998: 126). This process of inclusion and exclusion is often based on notions of class, ethnicity, gender, and age. As stated by Lefebvre (1991 in Low 1996) the complex and contradictory nature of space is that “space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations,” (Lefebvre 1991 in Low 1996: 863).

Trends towards the increased privatisation of public space as well as efforts to revitalise and gentrify key areas of the central city have generated numerous struggles of the definitions of, and public access to, urban space (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 306-307). One might assume that the public space of the city is freely open to all inhabitants, but the reality of privately provisioned public spaces such as corporate plazas and small parks is that a considerable amount of control is exercised over who may occupy those spaces and how they may be used by privately hired security forces.

In contemporary metropolitan Los Angeles, for example, certain districts of the city are being controlled by specific juridical modes of imposing spatial ‘discipline.’ Davis (1999) refers to these districts as being ‘social control districts.’ In these districts, sanctions of the criminal or civil code are merged with land use planning. Public schools for example, are surrounded by ‘drug-free zones’ and ‘gun free zones’ all over Southern California. Extra federal or state penalties are added to crimes committed within a specified radius of public institutions (Davis 1999: 383-384). In other cases, new laws, targeted at specific groups and locations, criminalize otherwise legal behaviour. As a condition of probation, for example, prostitutes are now given maps demarcating areas, including parts of Hollywood and South Central, where they can be arrested simply for walking down the street. Other districts are, as stated by Davis (1999) ‘designed to quarantine potentially epidemic social problems, or more usually, social types,’ (Davis 1999: 384). Social types, or people on ‘the edge of society’, resembling unwanted illegal immigrants, prostitutes, and undesirable homeless people. Skid row, an area of

Downtown Los Angeles, contains one of the largest stable homeless populations of the United States. It is here where homeless people are being ‘contained’ (the official term) within the 50-square-block area of skid row. In 1996, the city council officially declared a portion of skid row’s sidewalks an official ‘sleeping zone’. Up until this moment the LAPD maintains its traditional policy of keeping street people herded within the boundaries of the nation’s largest outdoor poorhouse (Davis 1999: 384).

What becomes clear here is, that from the moment the use of space is analyzed, power structures are brought to the surface (Geenen 2009: 364). The social control district strategy penalizes individuals, even in the absence of a criminal act, merely for group membership (Davis 1999: 386). Initiatives like privatization, revitalization, gentrification, and the appearance of ‘social control districts’ in Los Angeles have been identified as contributing to what Mitchell (1996 in Valentine 1998: 7) has termed the ‘annihilation’ of public space. In other words, to squeeze undesirable ‘others’ out of these locations (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 7). These ‘others’ can be homeless people, prostitutes, immigrants, but also youth.

In the following chapter I will clarify how the way we currently define and perceive youth adds to the way we treat them in public space.

1.3 PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH

Since the late nineteenth century, the category of youth has been invented to create a breathing space between what Valentine (1998) calls ‘the golden age of ‘innocent’ childhood and the realities of adulthood.’ Youth are still seen to be in a distinctive ‘stage of life’ defined as adolescence. According to Erikson (1968) adolescence involves a transition toward greater responsibility. It is a time of heightened idealism and concern for meaning. Adolescents reflect on their surroundings and engage in complex moral reasoning (Erikson 1968 in Kirshner 2007: 367). This complex phase of transition resulted in varying notions of the nature of young people, established over time. Anxiety about their lack of discipline and unruliness took shape in the idea of ‘youth as trouble’. Later, with the emergence of consumption society, the imagining of what it means to be young became a definition of ‘youth as fun’ (Skelton and Valentine 1998: 4). Although youth has been identified and constructed in many

ways, it remains as Sibley (1995 in Valentine 1998) argues, ‘ambiguously wedged between childhood and adulthood.’

Adolescents are denied access to the adult world, but they attempt to distance themselves from the world of the child. At the same time they retain some links with childhood. Adolescents may appear threatening to adults because they transgress the adult/child boundary and appear discrepant in ‘adult space’ (Sibley in Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 4).

Youth, in other words, can be seen as being in the liminal phase. The liminal phase is the period between states, the limbo during which people have left one place or state but have not entered or joined the next (Turner 1974 in Kottak 2004: 585). Liminality always has certain characteristics. Liminal people occupy ambiguous social positions. They exist apart from ordinary distinctions and expectations, living in a time out of time (Kottak 2004: 585). Being in a stage of ‘betwixt and between,’ or being on the ‘threshold’ are expressions often used in the literature. This liminal positioning of youth means that youth are defined by boundaries of exclusion. These boundaries define what young people are not, cannot do or cannot be (James 1986 in Valentine et.al. 1998: 5). The category which contains them is problematic, in the sense of being neither child nor adult; the adolescent is lost in between, belonging nowhere, being no one (James 1986 in Skelton and Valentine 1998: 6). The ambiguity of the term ‘youth’ is mirrored in this research.

As a means of resolving collectively experienced problems relative to their position in the social structure, and of developing a sense of identity, youth are likely to join or claim membership in subcultures (Brake 1985 in Epstein et.al. 1998: 122). Adolescents and youths become emotionally involved with for example, music, as a way of distinguishing themselves from adults and from each other (Epstein et.al. 1998: 123). Other aspects such as clothing and the choice of certain spots in public space to ‘hang out’ or not to ‘hang out,’ are important aspects of identity formation among youth. It is the way youth engage with and reflect on their surroundings that tells us something about whether life as represented to them has some vital promise. Erikson (1968) states: ‘it is the young who carry in them the power to confirm those who confirm them, to renew and regenerate, to disavow what is rotten, to reform and rebel’ (Erikson 1968

in Kirshner 2007: 367). Youth are often negatively portrayed by their surroundings, especially the media. They are noisy, do not follow the rules, loiter public space, and destroy newly built facilities. These images of young people are often used to justify punitive rather than socially supportive policies, resulting in reductions in physical recreation amenities, the defunding of youth organisations, curfews and other restrictions on young people's free access to public space (Rose et. al. 1994 in Valentine et.al. 1998: 305). In Marseille the placement of surveillance cameras in the inner city district of Marseille indicates this tendency of punitive control. Furthermore it demonstrates how images of youth can influence the idea that we are in need of more control over public space.

1.4 AGE RELATIONS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Throughout society we tend to categorise people according to age and ascribe appropriate behaviour accordingly. Hendricks (2003) describes age as 'a master status characteristic that defines individuals as well as groups' (Hendricks 2003 in Calasanti et.al. 2003: 203). For example, we assume that people of working age provide for those, both young and old, who are stereotypically thought of as dependents (Laws 1993: 672). When a specific age group is advantaged or disadvantaged based largely on associated stereotypes and prejudice we can speak of ageism. Ageism is, as stated by Levin and Levin (1980), 'an ideology that ascribes certain attributes and abilities to people, young or old, simply because of their age. Most often the term is used to describe the negative stereotypes of old people (and more recently of youth) which predispose them to discrimination' (Levin and Levin 1980 in Laws 1993). For example, older or younger people might benefit of cheaper rates when using public transport or certain public facilities, like cinemas (Banton 1999). Although different age groups are constructed, they do not function independently, intergenerational relations are important to the functioning of society (Laws 1993: 672).

These intergenerational relations are expressed in different ways. For example, in employment where especially older workers continue to struggle with key workplace issues that impact their job security, promotion opportunities, job retention, and relationships with other co-workers (Brooke and Taylor 2005). Also, age relations can

be expressed in the built environment and contribute to an emerging hierarchy of spatial access and mobility. According to Laws (1993) 'age relations are expressed through the separation of the generations in space, be it homes for the aged or playgrounds for children' (Laws 1993: 672). She argues that since changing definitions of the aged, and subsequent ageist attitudes and practices, it can shape the supply of and demand for particular types of housing and social services. Therefore it is important to consider the ways in which age relations might structure social and built geographies (Laws 1993: 627).

The definition of youth is currently based on quite negative assumptions as they are often portrayed through media and police campaigns as deviant, barbaric and unclean, or even as a 'threat to the social order' (Sibley (1995), Malone and Hasluck (1998) in Chawla et.al. 2002). Their positioning as 'intruders' in the public and private spaces of city life, leads to a series of exclusionary tactics (Valentine 1996; Malone and Hasluck 1998 in Malone and Hasluck 1999: 19). As a result, young people have been devalued in regard to their capacity to contribute to discussions of public space planning. Their needs and concerns are often not even considered and, due to their loss of mobility, they have profoundly limited environmental experiences (Malone 1999: 18). Communities are often ineffective in engaging and providing for youth in meaningful ways, leading to boredom, alienation, apathy and frustration for many. Preliminary research has shown that urban planning as well as leisure and recreation provision seem to take little account of young people's interests, perspectives, or varying social means. When young people are criticised for hanging around with nothing to do we tend to ascribe this to the age group and not to exterior factors that may influence their behaviour (Chawla et.al. 2002: 76). When reading the urban landscape one could assume that youth are marginalised, excluded, and removed from public view through what Malone (2002) describes as 'the construction of imaginary boundaries'. The way the built environment is shaped tells us about society's age relations, including attitudes towards youth. Ageist attitudes are socially constructed as well as 'youth', 'young people', and the man-made surroundings that provide the setting for human activity. The social and physical architecture of our cities speak about the way we value and position them. Being denied free access to and mobility in public space, youth might reclaim ownership through acts of appropriation in the struggle to the right of the city.

1.5 APPROPRIATION AND TERRITORIALITY

Acquiring and possessing space

Appropriation is a process in which one communicates with and socially relates in urban space. Generating urban culture and living memory one can create, relax, dream, and learn according to one's desires and projects. It are these series of psychological processes that lead to constructions of place. In turn these constructions might lead to eventual identification with the urban space. In this sense, we could say that space appropriation is based on identification (Karen 2007: 99). A process by which the attachment individuals establish with the environment is defined and characterized by the activity they carry out in the space.

The appropriation of space involves an intricate process in which individuals and groups elaborate their relationship with the world (Engels-Shwarz 2003: 36). Youth is particularly in search of what this relationship with the world entails. As studies on youth suggest, the space of the street is often the only autonomous space that young people are able to carve out for themselves. Hanging around and larking about on the streets, in parks and in shopping malls, is one form of youth resistance (conscious and unconscious) to adult power.

This adult power appears as a range of 'authorities' in wider society. Rules are invented and implemented to spatially order the population in terms of age (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 127). Youth on the street are often considered a polluting presence, a potential threat to public order. As a result they are often subject to various adult regulatory regimes including various forms of surveillance and temporal and spatial curfews. Excessive control over young people's mobility can lead to a sense of spatial oppression (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 7-9). To overcome this spatial oppression youth can claim ownership of space. Appropriation often operates as a tool in this struggle for the right to the city. The adult act of purchasing and modifying a space, taking control and playing identity markers is somewhat similar to the youth act of appropriating a space. However, the appropriation of space by youth also includes the added aspect of modifying adult rules of use or engagement. In this way it becomes an

implicit political statement as well, a counter-positioning of experiential and modern cultural norms (Childress 2004: 199).

Unlike adults, young people have limited ability to manipulate private property. As Childress argues ‘they can’t own it, can’t modify it, and can’t rent it. They can only choose, occupy and use the property of others,’ (Childress 2004: 196). Although young people cannot ‘own’ private property or private space, they can appropriate space and make it into a place they can identify with. Through, for example, marking names in wooden benches, spraying graffiti on walls, and hanging out in public space, youth inscribe their existence into the world around them. The ability to invest one’s living space with meaning – to literally occupy, define and decorate one’s surroundings, is one of the clearest demarcations of power, wealth and influence in the urban landscape (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 306). Street art is a good example that illustrates how public space can be appropriated. Youth that do not have the privilege to seek refuge in expensive private indoor recreational settings attempt to exert influence over their neighbourhood space by re-visioning its appearance and purpose. Street art, graffiti, design and performance are used as mechanisms to reclaim space in urban life, or simply as outlets for creative expression and survival (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 308).

When a space is appropriated it can be marked by boundaries defining a space or territory. Through the demarcations of these boundaries, an identified geographical space can be possessed, dominated, and defended against others. Persistent attachment to a specific territory, the boundaries of which are controlled by a certain group of people, can be defined as territoriality (Flint and Robinson et.al. 2008: 200). It can be a way for young people to claim some ownership of public space, providing psychological benefits, social benefits, and a solution to basic human needs, including security, belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Ardrey 1967 in Flint et.al. 2008: 202). Kintrea and Suzuki (2008) argue that territoriality is something fundamental to human social organisation. Relph (1976) suggests that there is a ‘deep human need’ for attachment to ‘significant places,’ so there is a strong link between the importance of place and the expression of territoriality over that place, and personal identity and well-being (Dear and Wolch 1989 in Flint et.al. 2008). Low and Altman (1992) argue that place attachment also provides access to a community through social networks; in turn, this can promote a sense of identity, particularly through learned behaviour or through a

shared religion, culture or lifestyle. The form that a given space takes, tells stories of the people who have shaped and interacted with it, just as a space's form contributes to the future experiences that people will have there.

Constructing Place

Through interaction with the space around us we attribute meaning and make it into place. Modan (2007) points out that 'place comes into being through (among other factors) people's perceptions, and those perceptions are shaped by the production and reproduction of symbolic systems such as maps, photographs and discourse' (Modan 2007: 307). Places are fluid, changeable and dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory. They can be contested terrains that are shaped by and reflect unequal power relations, and the interests of some people or groups over others. By 'place,' we mean a space which people in a given locality understand as having a particular history, as arousing emotional identifications and as being associated with particular groups and activities in that locality (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 253).

In this way, appropriation plays an important role in the construction of place. As it is a process that expresses the attachment individuals feel towards a place defined and characterised by the activity carried out in that space. Youth in particular can turn a desperate or unattractive space into a malleable entity. Creatively changing its initial state into a place, attributing it with meaning and sharing it with others. For example, in 1967 the mayor of Marseille expressed an intention to launch a project that consisted of creating a large sea-side resort area, aimed at using the potential of the coast for leisure purposes. During the development of the coastline young people from Marseille started to skate on the pipelines resting on the lawns, turning a construction site into a place to hang out and socialize. In the end, the resort was never built and a skate park was created instead (L'Aoustet and Griffet 2001). Youth get involved in the social construction of the space they occupy, the actual transformation of space – through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting – into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning (Low 1996: 862). Graffiti, another example, can, in addition to being a way of appropriating public space, also serve the function of turning space into place. Markings of space such as graffiti are in part a

marking of young people's interior environment (Docuynan, 2000 in Childress 2004: 200), arousing emotional identification. Doing so it can become part of the self and play an important role in the process of identity formation. As youth are to be found in a stage of 'betwixt and between,' they have to creatively invent new ways of making the urban space ruled by adult power in to their place.

1.6 EXPERIENCING SPACE

How we experience the environment we live in influences our behaviour and/or general sense of well-being. Living, working, our spending time in a place that is dark, impoverished or unsafe, will not make us feel opportunistic about our lives. Physical structures like buildings shape this environment. Over time buildings can become something other than what its designers envisaged and something more than what was built – as users and visitors see in those walls a diverse range of significations (Gieryn 2002: 36). As Winston Churchill once said: 'We shape our buildings and afterwards our buildings shape us,' (Gieryn 2002: 35). According to Forrest and Kearns (2001) we should not underestimate the importance of physical change, physical boundaries and local landmarks in creating a sense of belonging and identity. Buildings come in a wide range of shapes and functions, placed together they can make villages, cities, create and typify neighbourhoods. When neighbourhoods become an extension of the home for social purposes, and hence extremely important in identity terms: 'location matters,' the neighbourhood becomes part of our statement about who we are (Forrest and Kearns 2001: 2130). Who and what we are surrounded by in a specific locality may also contribute in important ways to both choice and constraint and, less tangibly and more indirectly, to notions of well-being and social worth (Forrest and Kearns 2001: 2130). We would rather live in a nicely maintained suburb than in a place that is deteriorating. People tend to associate certain neighbourhoods with certain types of people. For example, we assume that violence and criminality is less prominent in neighbourhoods that are nicely maintained. Uptown neighbourhoods are perceived as stable, populated with families who care for their homes, mind each other's children, and confidently frown at unwanted intruders. The external perceptions of areas impact the behaviour and attitudes of residents in ways which may reinforce cohesive groupings and further

consolidate reputations (Forrest and Kearns 2001: 2135). The neighbourhood in which we live can play an important part in socialisation, not only through its internal composition and dynamics but also according to how it is seen by residents in other neighbourhoods and by the institutions and agencies which play a key role in opportunity structures. In other words, the identity and contextual roles of the neighbourhood are closely linked to one another (Forrest and Kearns 2001: 2134).

Various neighbourhood conditions appear to significantly affect a wide range of individual outcomes at every stage in a person's life and across social and economic dimensions (Ellen and Turner 1997 in Forrester and Kearns 2001: 2136). These outcomes are very different for groups at different points in their lives. They might be different for adults, children, or youth. According to Breitbart (1998), young people who live in declining parts of the city are strongly aware of the influence that their local environments exert. They can literally see and feel the constraints that dangerous and/or inadequately provisioned neighbourhoods place upon them. All the more they can appreciate the opportunities that safe spaces, with ample resources, provide. Aside from supplying a physical backdrop for their activities and travel, these spaces send messages to young people about how an external world values or fails to value the quality of their lives. Indeed, it is often surprising to adults to discover how prominent observations about the built environment are in young people's expressions of hope or frustrations (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 308). Young people's growth and development depends upon environments that provide stimulation, allow autonomy, offer possibilities for exploration, and promote independent learning and peer group socialising. Privatisation, violence, disinvestment, and poverty threaten in all settings, whether urban or rural, the nurturing growth and development of the city (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 141).

The environments of youth speak to them of the future. Young people see and viscerally experience limits, absences, walls, and foreclosures all around them. These issues which are environmental in the broadest sense, have deep, and largely unexplored effects upon young people's constructions of identity, in how they see their 'place' in the world, and ultimately, in how they produce the world to come (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998: 142). The built environment is integrated into the socialised universe of meaning as a product of beliefs and as producer of those beliefs (Kidder 2008: 308). Certain areas or buildings in a city might be described and perceived in a

negative or positive way, attributed with meaning. They can become avoided areas or on the contrary areas that are visited more often. Therefore youth might decide to 'hang out' on inner city streets near commercial and cultural sectors, rather than on streets in neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city where conditions are different and out of sight.



2 CONTEXT

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE

France, officially the *République Française*, is a country that according to its surface finds itself to be the largest country of the European Union. Marseille is one of the five biggest cities in France, and is the most populous after Paris (800.000 inhabitants, 240 square kilometres). It has the biggest commercial port, and is situated at the Mediterranean Sea - in between the *Côte Bleu* and the *Calanques* - in the region known as the Provence. The geological characteristics of this place restrict its development, clamped in an amphitheatre of limestone-mountains only breaching towards the sea. Cut off from the hinterland, for a long time Marseille depended on the sea, as a sort of self-governing city-state, open to everyone who came from *le Grand Bleu*. The port functions like an integration machine: in 1850 ten percent of the population was of foreign origin, in 1910 the percentage had risen to twenty percent. This exceptional sociological situation absorbs foreigners to the rhythm of the sea. Mediterranean conflicts brought: Armenians from Turkey, Jews, Italians and Spanish people who fled fascist regimes, Africans after decolonisation-, and Lebanese due to civil war. In the past decade the dirty wars expelled Algerian Muslims - that outside the western fortress, in indifference - already killed more than 100.000 people directly affecting Marseille's population (Wassenaar 2002: 51). The smallest political-cultural earthquake in the Mediterranean is experienced with an echo in Marseille. This varying population mingled in a chaotic urban landscape - divided into sixteen municipal districts which are themselves informally divided into several neighbourhoods or *quartiers* (111 in total), often resembling villages - is what shapes the distinctive character of this Southern city.

2.2 INNER CITY POVERTY AND URBAN REGENERATION

Le Panier and Belsunce

Marseille intrigues with its complexity: building types, periods and cultures clash within confined spaces. Unlike other cities in France, it is the inner city district of Marseille that houses most poverty. In 2002 one in three residencies were deserted, in contrast with inner city's elsewhere, who in the last decade became ghetto's for the rich (Wassenaar 2002). According to the French statistics bureau INSEE (Institute National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques), it are the second and third arrondissement, just north of the Old Port that are the poorest. Here the average income per capita is a lot lower than the city's average income per consumer unit as a whole. With only 6300 Euros per consumer unit, people living in the inner city district only possess half of the average income of all living in the city. The first arrondissement is as poor as the second and the third arrondissement, except the area at the top of the *Canebière* (up until *Palais Longchamp*), where the average income is higher (Sud INSEE l'essentiel 2004: 1-2). The actual research site included the historical *quartiers*, *Le Panier* and *Belsunce* in this inner city district. *Le Panier* is located in the second arrondissement and *Belsunce* in the first arrondissement. During the fieldwork period these neighbourhoods belonged to the demarcated area in which I encountered and observed youth.

Le Panier is the oldest district situated at the northern site of the Old Port (*Vieux Port*), in the second arrondissement. It is also the oldest neighbourhood of the city, inhabited by fisherman, sailors, and tradesman in the past. Later on it became a poor neighbourhood when immigrants of mainly Italian and Arabian origin settled in the area. In this impoverished part of the city, the state was for years on end far from present. Run-down and neglected housing is now being renovated, and the present historical heritage (as the 17th century *Vieille Charité*) has been made accessible to the public. It was and still is a very multicultural part of Marseille (Attard-Maraninchi 1997), loved by many tourists attributable to its romantic character of tiny streets, steps, and houses. The ancient architecture of the neighbourhood might speak to the heart and

imagination, but is less practical for life in the 21st century. The houses are small, dark, and the streets are that narrow that inhabitants have difficulty parking their car. Besides, the neighbourhood knows a large young population who has little space to roam the streets or to play without disturbing other inhabitants.

Further to the east one comes across the district *Belsunce*, typified by its Baroque architecture and historical value. Built in 1670 as part of the expansion of the city to the south and the east, the *Course Belsunce* (main street in the neighbourhood) is characterized by its arc de triump in the north, also known as *La Porte d'Aix*. Since the seventeenth-century, the function of the neighbourhood and its people have changed. In the nineteenth-century two population movements took place. At first the gradual departure of the bourgeoisie to the outskirts of the city, who were attracted by newly built neighbourhoods as the *Prado*, south of the city. Second, the arrival of a new population after several waves of immigration. People from different backgrounds, Italian, Spanish, Armenian, North-African, Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, ... settle in the district. From then onwards the area started to become marginalized and avoided by other citizens of Marseille. Although situated in the hart of the city, it becomes seen as an indecent and unsafe place, populated by vagabonds and foreigners.

Today, it has not lost this identification, it still is a poor neighbourhood, home of many immigrant workers living in furnished hotels or hostels. This ethnic diverse population turns *Belsunce* in to a special place. The trade intensity of the vendors on the street are symbolic for the city in search of a Mediterranean identity. The description of the neighbourhood is often based on the ethnicity of its population, and stigmatized as being the 'foreign and immigrant' part of the city. The district tends to be designated as '*Le Quartier Arab*' by the majority of Marseille's inhabitants (Temime 1997). Youth in the neighbourhood seem to carry the depiction of this inner city quarter on their shoulders, often perceived as dangerous and unpredictable by their surroundings. Further to the north one comes across Marseille's main railway station. *Saint-Charles* station is perched on top of a small hill and is linked to the city center by a monumental set of stairs. Surrounded by the neighbourhood *Belsunce* (South-East) and the neighbourhoods *La Joliette* and *Le Belle de Mai* (North-East), it is centrally located at about one kilometre of the *Vieux Port* and the city's main street *La Canebière*. At the end of the 1990's a redevelopment project began with the opening of the Marseille underground and bus interchange as well as the arrival of the TGV Méditerranée. As a result of this high-speed

train connection between Paris (three hours), Lyon (one hour and a half), and Lille (four hours and a half), the annual passage has increased from 7,1 million in 2000 to 15 million in 2007. The station got extended to the north-side by a passage way to the new bus terminal, and a northern exit towards the *Université de Provence-Aix-Marseille*, located at the northern side of the station. This passage way, *La Halle Honnorat*, provides a brand new public space and commercial area with shops, bars, and benches for passengers awaiting their public transport connection.

Recreating The City

Marseille, long synonymous for urban anarchy, economic failure and social tensions, is working on its renaissance through three different urban renewal programs. In most metropolises the transformation to a modern service economy and the creation of attractive new urban areas are largely complete, but in Marseille the process of major urban revitalisation continues (Megerle 2008: 357). As Marseille knows an impoverished city centre, it is currently subjected to the urban renewal program: *Projet Centre Ville*. The neighbourhoods *Le Panier* and *Belsunce* belong to this district. Secondly, the port area - that lost much of its economic activity - is being subjected to the largest urban revitalization project in France, also known as: *Projet Euroméditerranée*. The third project *Grand Projet pour la Ville (GPV)* is concerned with the city as a whole and focuses on urban and social cohesion in Marseilles' agglomeration. These programs are implemented with the intention to renovate property and enhance the living quality throughout the city adding to its aspiration of becoming the economic and cultural connection between Europe and the Mediterranean.

Marseilles' inner city development was lost out of sight until in 1995 Jean Claude Gaudin was selected major. Gaudin, though being Liberal, broke with the traditional urban *laissez aller*. Urban planning projects were first developed in to a 'schéma de cohérence', and are currently executed by Marseille Aménagement. With a budget of 460 million euro's, covering an area of 350 hectares, the *Projet Centre Ville* aims at renovating old neighbourhoods, eradicating substandard housing, attracting new inhabitants (students and young households) to the area, and creating a genuine inner city with public and commercial functions (Wassenaar 2002: 52). Impoverished

neighbourhoods as *Le Panier* and *Belsunce* are protected by the state and associated with protected architectural and urban heritage zones (CUCS de Marseille 2009: 15).

The increasingly obvious decline of Marseille at a time of growing international competition between cities and regions demanded action (Megerle 2008: 362). The second urban renewal project, *Euroméditerranée* launched in 1995 by the combined efforts of the French Government, the City of Marseille, the Local and Regional Authorities and *Marseille Provence Métropole Communauté urbaine*, commits to renovating a 480-hectare area in the heart of the City of Marseilles, between the commercial harbour, the Old Port and the TGV station. It is a strategy intended to actively combat the crisis in the city and to kick-start the transformation that would turn Marseille into a dynamic economic metropolis (Megerle 2008: 62). Three Urban Development Zones (*Joliette, Saint-Charles, Cité de la Méditerranée*) that *Euroméditerranée* is directing will help ensure significant urban transformation of this deteriorated sector by diversifying the modes of transportation and by creating an attractive area that provides practical, social and generational diversity. *Euroméditerranée* is acquiring the land, landscaping the public areas and establishing the construction schedules. The land is sold to developers and/or operators based on the architectural and project specifications¹

Initiated in 1994 the third project, *Grand Projet pour la Ville* (GPV), covers fifty square kilometres in the Northern districts, which are inhabited by 220.000 people. This area, above the Euromed port district and the hills full of flats in the North-East, are the outcome of spontaneous urbanization and the correlating arrangement of Marseille's agglomeration. Apartment complexes, warehouses, restaurants, and factories, are located adjacent to deteriorating villas, supermarkets, marshalling yards, village centres and offices. These *quartiers Nord*s are no peripheral neighbourhoods, some of them are located within walking distance of the city centre. The GPV aims at reducing the socio-economic divide between the poor North and the rich South. Old village centres are now fragmented by unimaginable declined apartment blocks with now cynically sounding names as Belle Vue or Air Belle, but will be given a renewed roll as sub-centres with public service and commercial facilities (Wassenaar 2008: 54).

In the field of spatial planning and within the process of urban regeneration, these projects are intended to introduce structure into the spontaneously evolved fabric

¹ <http://www.euromediterranee.fr/?L=1> (Accessed 6th July 2011)

of the city. With its poor, working-class population, it is a real challenge to make this transition to an international business work platform - with tertiary services, high-tech industries, and scientific research and culture work - without disturbing the delicate social balance. How these changes in urban space influence youths living environment and experiences of space, will be further explored throughout this thesis. As to provide background information on the current circumstances for young people in Marseille's public realm, I attempt to sketch some aspects of their physical and social surroundings which will serve as the backdrop for further elaboration in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

2.3 YOUTH AND MARSEILLE'S URBAN SPACE

The Environment

In Marseille, where the Mediterranean climate lends itself to leisurely walks, it is paradoxically hard to make your way on sidewalks, find a bench to rest, or a public space to get together. The main reason for this lack of pedestrian space is the presence of the car. We could say that Marseille is crushed by the car. In the 1950s the tram was removed and trees and sidewalks were cut. Each day hundreds of thousands of cars find their way throughout the city (1.8 cars per household in Marseille, 0.80 in Paris). But the vehicles, scraping sidewalks and bus lanes, are not the sole reason for the lack of benches, squares and places where one can wander: the few untouched areas are handed over to the terraces of cafes, shops or real estate developers. At this moment in time the city might not be that concerned with their young population as most attention is focused on attracting possible new *Marseillais*, through developing projects as those of EuroMéditerranée, and the welcoming of luxury tourism and cruise lines.

As public and private space becomes a focus for development values, contests occur between the unequal parties having a stake in the use of public space, such as central and local government, young people, and communities. The few parks and playgrounds present, are fenced off and open between eight o'clock in the morning and eight o'clock in the evening. The sign on most entrance gates provides especially young visitors, with whoever it concerns with additional information: 'no scooters', 'no balls', and 'no skateboarding.' Bums, dropouts, immigrants, or youth: physical and imaginary

boundaries are constructed to prevent them from occupying the scarce public space remaining in the city's densely built environment. Part of the city's elite prefers to have no public space, rather than public space permeated by what they define as 'social-pariahs.' *Le Parc Longchamp* situated North of the city's historic high street: *La Canebière*, is one of the few exception, here youth is allowed to play football or skateboard. In general the inner city district does not offer enough freely accessible public space for its large young population. Besides *Le Parc Longchamp* and *Le Pharo* - who both have restricted access - one has to take at least an half an hour during bus ride towards the southern located *Parc Borely*. This park is situated along the seashore, Marseille's most frequently visited beach *Plage du Prado*, and it the only freely accessible skate park in the city. Independent playgrounds as the one near *Porte d'Aix* - situated in the neighbourhood *Belsunce* - are often to be found in a dirty and degraded state. The smell of urine in this fenced off urban space is no rarity. Dog excrement, empty cans, plastic, paper, and food scraps are characterising the playing environment. Marseille has a reputation for being messy and unruly and is sometimes rightfully called 'the Naples of France.'

The dirtiness is not limited to playgrounds and parks but applies to the whole city. Dead rats, turned over garbage bags, dog excrements on sidewalks, ugly tags, and trashy beaches, are part of the urban scenery. Since 2008 a special police force has been created: *La Police de la Propreté*, in order to attack Marseille's persisting waste problem. Their objective is to create a neat an clean Marseille, modifying the behaviour of its population by handing out fines when one does not respect the urban environment appropriately. This newly created surveillance team fits well in the existing panic over what is seen as deviant behaviour, and the increased control over people's activities in public space.

Youth Out of Control

As youth is often present on the streets, in public space, they have greater possibility of being targeted as those behaving deviant, violating social norms. After the urban riots in France in November 2005, the image of youth as being delinquent and out of control got reassured. France's 'unity thinking' and the fear to differentiate under the

slogan 'fraternity', seems to unify all youth under one category. This often results in the idea that all youth is 'out of line'². Youth living in poor districts or *banlieus* (high-rise flats on the outskirts of most large French cities) are often perceived and described as 'those urinating on shop windows', 'walking around with fighting dogs', 'or driving past with the radio on full blast' (Martinais and Béтин 2004: 362). The presence of 'youths from the suburbs' and 'dropouts' is frequently seen as a (negative) influence to the commonly owned public space of the city. In Marseille these youth can not entirely be defined as 'youths from the suburbs' as many poor, working-class quarters are situated in the heart of the city. Nevertheless, this does not take away the territorial stigmatization of many popular youth hanging out in public space.

Since 2006 a social workers organisation AMS (Association de Médiation Social) has been created. The association has been implemented by the city council and works in order of the CLSPD (Conseil Local de Sécurité et de Prévention de la Délinquance), governed by the mayor of the city. The organisation aims at surveying public space and mediating between inhabitants, merchants, bar owners, bums, youth, children and the police. This system of surveillance could be described as an (adult) regulatory regime as their objective is 'delinquency prevention.' Their aspirations are often put in to practice by monitoring youths activity's on the streets, squares, beaches, and parks. Fixed walking tracks are mapped out, framing the areas in need of 'mediation'. The street is often seen as youth's own environment in need of supervision and control. Hence most neighbourhoods are accommodated with a social- or animation centre where youth (as well as adults) from all ages can sign up for courses, daytrips and community activities. They provide: access to culture, sport and recreation; the development of an intergenerational link; and support for parenting. They promote respect, tolerance, responsibility, and commitment. The social centre should enable participants to express themselves, learn and act collectively as well as individually, in order to encourage diversity and 'living together' in the neighbourhood. Besides these social centres a few youth clubs are present in one of the neighbourhoods included in my research, *Belsunce*. Traditionally these social centres and youth clubs are relied upon by adults to fill the gap of places for youth to spend time with friends outside the home (Percy-Smith in Chawla et.al. 2002: 69). As the absence of freely accessible public space is a fact in France's second city, the presence of social centres or youth clubs neither seem to fulfil youths

² Information obtained through conversation with Luuk Slooter on 26/01/2010

search for an independent 'third space' to hang out. Youth influence their environment by their standards in a way that can not always be controlled. They can be inventive and stubborn as will become clear throughout this thesis. With the politics of public space being the area of discussion, youth seem to occupy an ambiguous and diverse position in which they are easily stigmatized and without voice.

The following two chapters contain my research findings. Here the data gathered in the field will be put in to perspective and reflected upon through the theory set out above.



3 EXPERIENCING MARSEILLE'S URBAN SPACE

Cities are living entities constructed over time. How a place is experienced depends on its physicality as well as the social relationships arising within. The material structure comes alive through the stories, experiences and perceptions of people in these places. The focus of this chapter is on the way young people experience the environmental and social dimensions of Marseille's urban space. The voices of several youth will be used to illustrate the diversity in experiences of certain areas and neighbourhoods throughout the city. These voices will provide a lens through which to understand their life world, as their story is central to this research. None of the youth I spoke to lived in the southern district of the city. Most of them lived in the inner city district, in the area South and East of *Saint-Charles* station. Furthermore I deem to question the prevailing theories (Skelton and Valentine et.al. 1998) assuming that youth in particular are strongly aware of the influence their local environments exert. Further along in this chapter I will address how feelings of insecurity play an important role in this experience. It will become clear that youth most often tend to attribute these feelings to 'other' youth present in the public realm. Here we see that youth differentiate themselves from one another and thereby disprove the prevailing assumption of youth as one homogeneous culture. Through this we find that the current public discourse on youth gravely underestimates this diversity, and does stereotype.

3.1 INTERPRETING THE CITY

A hot Wednesday afternoon. The air is thick. A youth worker and I take the bus for the weekly activity of one of the inner city neighbourhoods' social centres. Today we are going towards the North of Marseille where we will meet the rest of the group and play football on rollerblades. Once we leave the city centre behind, the bus takes us through old village centres. The streets are inadequately narrow for the size of the vehicle. Traffic jams and an overcrowded bus characterise the journey. People of every ethnic background cling on to available handrails while getting swung around by the bends in the road. It takes us almost two hours to get where we need to be. Finally, after what feels like an everlasting ride, we get off at Saint-Joseph. The air is remarkably thinner, walking towards the designated activity location I observe the environment. What a difference, I feel relieved.

Although the high-rise buildings give me a contradicting feeling inside, this part of the city provides more breathing space. The area is remarkably green. On location, a bit further down the road, we find ourselves at a well-maintained football terrain. Observing the area, taking photographs, I get talking with some young guys hanging off the side of the railings surrounding the terrain. They are watching another team play. I ask if they come here often and if they are from the nearby neighbourhood. One of the guys, shakes his head from the left tot the right. 'Non, j'habites pas ici' [No, I don't live here].He explains that he lives in the inner city district in the neighbourhood *Belsunce*. He comes here regularly, every Wednesday and Friday afternoon. '*IL y a rien comme ca en centre ville(pointing to the football terrain), c'est pour ça que j'aimes les quartiers Nord!*' [There is nothing like this downtown, that's why I like the northern district!]³

The Environment

Walking through each neighbourhood, it would be easy to make one's own judgements about the different areas as places for young people to grow up in. Throughout my research I made an attempt to gather information on how youth themselves experience their surroundings. Subjects of conversation were centred around questions related to whether they liked or disliked certain parts of the city.

These conversations would often be limited as numerous youth had troubles expressing themselves. They were able to say if they liked or disliked certain neighbourhoods or places, but could hardly define why. Here one needs to take into account that youth do not have cut and dry answers when asking about how they experience the environment. Stereotypes were incorporated in their answers and had become part of their personal opinion. It seemed like many youth had never even thought about the influence their local environments exert. Certainly they were aware of certain social and environmental hazards (as assumingly people of all ages living in similar circumstances) but I did not get the impression that they were 'in particular' strongly aware of these conditions. A 'take it for granted' attitude prevailed, as most youth rarely had had the chance to compare their life situation to that of others

³ Informal conversation with youth, date: 20/04/2011

elsewhere. It is this complexity of working with youth that we need to take seriously when writing an ethnography concerning their life world.

The positive statement about the area, emphasized in the vignette above, took me completely by surprise. In my eyes, this was even a quite contradicting comment. In general the northern district of Marseille is designated as a dangerous place and ‘no go zone’. Characterised by its high-rise buildings, socio-economic problems, violence and rampant drug trade it often makes the news in antagonistic ways. How could it be that this young guy experienced this district in a different way than most youth I talked to so far? The few words or short sentences that would typify the answers to many of my questions posed during interviews with youth, would mainly confirm stereotypes continuously expressed in the media. Although youth’s experience of neighbourhoods’ and city space was notably diverse, a general differentiation between the northern district and the rest of the city was made by all of them.

Negative differentiation was most often related to the threat of social dangers in the area. Stories of youth witnessing drugs being traded, experiences of burglary at their own homes, and the difficulty of integrating in the local social environment of a *cité* when new to the district were common. Positive differentiation was most often related to the environmental opportunities the area provides. The northern district is more spacious in comparison with the inner city district, which is according to an informant ‘*que de beton*’. Ismail, one of the guys that would hang around the football terrain near an inner city social centre, explains how he goes to play football in the northern district due to the lack of appropriate space in the neighbourhood he lives:

*Je viens ici ou je viens aux un stade, un vrai stade à Saint-Jozef, c’est au quartiers Nord. Ca me dérange que je dois aller si loin pour jouer. Je croix que le stade Velten est le seule en centre ville. Et tu as vu ? C’est toutes casser.*⁴ – Ismail

[I come here or I go to a terrain, a real one at Saint-Jozef, it’s in the northern districts. It bothers me that I have to go that far to play. I think the terrain Velten is the only one downtown, and have you seen how its all degraded?]

⁴ Semi-structured interview with Ismail, date: 24/02/2011

On the contrary, Anaïs and Claire both used to live in the northern district and consider their move to the inner city not as an improvement to their living conditions. They talked about the northern district as calm and without cars, providing them with space outside their home where they could meet other youth and play. The girls explained the following when I asked their opinion about that part of the city:

*Où j'ai habité avant, aux quartiers nord, c'était calme, pas des voitures. J'avais la possibilité de jouer dehors où ils y avaient beaucoup des autres jeunes. Là où j'habite maintenant c'est bruyant, on a rien pour s'asseoir, il y a pas un espace communale, et il y a pas des fleurs. Je souhaiterais habiter ailleurs parce que la maison est trop petite aussi.*⁵ – Anaïs

[Where I lived before, in the northern districts, it was quiet, there were no cars. I had the opportunity to play outside where I could meet a lot of other young people. Where I live now it's noisy, there is nothing provided to sit down, there is no communal space, and there are no flowers. I would like to live elsewhere because the house is too small, too.]

*Dans le quartier où j'ai vécu quand j'étais plus petite, dans le 13^{ième}. C'était supère la bas. Déjà c'est plus propre, c'est plus calme et tout, et j'avais tout mes amis la bas. Ma mère elle veut retourner en l'ancien quartier.*⁶ – Claire

[In the neighborhood where used to live when I was little, in the 13th arrondissement. It was great over there. Already it is cleaner, quieter, and I had all my friends over there. My mother wants to return to the old neighborhood.]

The inner city district, where most of my informants lived, is characterised by its narrow streets, bars, restaurants, shops, densely built environment and scarce greenery. Claire, who currently lives in one of the inner city neighbourhoods, *La Joliette*, tended to talk quite negatively about her present living space. This inner city neighbourhood is located between *Le Panier* and *Belsunce* and is among the most popular of Marseille. Speaking

⁵ Semi-structured interview with Anaïs, date: 27/04/2011

⁶ Semi-structured interview with Claire, date: 03/03/2011

about her neighbourhood she would express feelings of insecurity and emphasize the dirtiness and unfriendliness of the people as the most disturbing factors in her surroundings. With her eyes fixed on the grass beneath her, she softened her voice and tried to explain what bothered her:

J'aime pas trop ce quartier par ce que je ne sais pas ... (pulls grass). Il y a beaucoup d'embrouille, c'est très très sale, il y a beaucoup d'agression et tout. Les gens sont méchants, il pense qu'à eux et c'est pas très sécuriser le soir. – Claire

[I don't really like this neighborhood, because ... I don't know ... (pulls grass). There are lots of scrambles, it's very very dirty, and there is a lot of aggression. People are evil, they only think of themselves and it's not very secure at night.]

At Saint-Charles station I met among others, more youth from the surrounding inner city neighbourhoods. Jasmir lived like Claire in the neighbourhood *La Joliette*, East from the train station. He would describe the neighbourhood as 'a bit in decay'. He would mention the dirtiness, poor people and the newly arrived immigrants without documents, as factors that typified the area. When I asked if he had the impression that coming from the neighbourhood *La Joliette*, influenced the way people would treat him, he said yes. Although he emphasised that these ideas would not change who he was as a person. Sitting on the ground, leaning against the glass walls of the brand new North-wing of the station we talk, and he explains:

J'habite vers le côté de Porte d'Aix c'est un peu cassé la bas. C'est le côté où ils sont pas des gens riches et comme j'ai te dit il y a des gens sans papiers et ils vendent toutes par terre. Des trucs qu'ils ont trouvé dans la poubelle. Et c'est sale tu a vu. Si je te dis j'habite au Porte d'Aix j'ai l'honte. Parce que les gens vont me sujet sur ca. Toi, tu est quelqu'un de la bas. Mais après je m'en faute. Moi j'aimerais bien que ca change, oui. Mais le police arrive pas à .. je ne sais pas. Il y a beaucoup de pauvreté aussi. Les gens ils travaillent pas. Ca m'intente pas dans me comment je suis. Ca changerais rien.⁷ – Jasmir

⁷ Semi-structured interview with Jasmir, date: 20/03/2011

[I live next to the Porte d'Aix, it's a little bit run down over there. It's an area where there are no rich people, and as I told you there are all these people without papers selling stuff on the ground. Things they found in the trash. And it's dirty. Haven't you seen. If I tell you I live at the Porte d'Aix I'm ashamed. Because people will judge me about it. You, you are someone from that neighbourhood. But in the end, I don't care. I wish that it changed, yes. But the police doesn't succeed ... I don't know. There is a lot of poverty too. The people don't work. It doesn't influence who I am. It doesn't change anything.]

Most youth I spoke to also mentioned some positive aspects about living in the inner city district. These positive associations were mainly based on the presence of entertainment like cinemas, shops, and the constant flow of people. Nadia, for example, loved the inner city. She explained how she detested the emptiness of the northern district and emphasised the fact that there was always something going on in the city centre where she currently lived. When I asked if she could explain me a bit more what exactly she liked in the area she answered me with a smile:

Tous en ville! Les quartiers nord j'aime pas. J'aimes habiter en centre ville parce que ça bouge. C'est comme dans les autres quartiers. Il y a des mondes midi et soir. C'est pas comme dans les quartiers nord, la c'est rare. Je suis aller dans les quartiers nord parce que c'est ma tante qui y habite. J'aimes pas ces quartiers. Ça me plait pas. C'est vide. Il y a des centres et tout pour les jeunes, mais ça m'intéresse pas. Parce que il y a pas de magasins, ça bouge pas⁸. – Nadia

[Everything in town! I don't like the northern suburbs. I love living downtown because there's a lot going on. It's like in other inner city neighbourhoods. There are people day and night. It's not like in the northern neighbourhoods, where it's rare. I have been to the northern suburbs because my aunt lives there. I don't like these neighborhoods. It doesn't please me. It is empty. There are social centers for youth and all, but I'm not interested. Because there are no shops, and there's nothing going on.]

⁸ Semi-structured interview with Nadia, date: 11/03/2011

Although, the youth I spoke to mostly made differentiations between the northern and inner-city neighbourhoods on several grounds, it was feelings of insecurity that seemed to largely determine their experience of the city's urban space. In the next paragraph stories of several youth will illustrate how these feelings were most often related to 'other' youth present on the streets.



Image 1 taken by one of the girls: the view from her room.



Image 2 taken by one of the girls: the view from the back of her house.

3.2 LES RACKETS

The Social Circumstances

Young people's experiences of neighbourhood space are related to environmental characteristics as well as to the social circumstances in this environment. Most conversations with youth about their experience of Marseille's urban space (certain districts and neighbourhoods) showed that this experience was intensely related to feelings of insecurity. These feelings were commonly expressed and most often attributed to 'other' youth hanging out on the street. A reoccurring subject was the presence of a certain type of youth, or with their words: '*des rackets*.' According to several respondents, these youth are often to be found at school, school entrances, street corners, alleyways, metro entrances, and train stations. Engaging with his/her surroundings in a more aggressive way '*le racketteur*' (steamer), demands money, objects, or clothes from his victim by threatening him, often by the use of physical force. An article, *Les Profs de Diderot en Colère*, published on the 18th of March 2011 in *20 minutes Édition de Marseille* illustrates how these youth terrorize the surroundings of a high-school in the North of Marseille. The article talks about how an adolescent got hurt when playing with a knife at the entrance of the school building. It demonstrates how real violence conducted by 'other' youth is for many young people in their daily lives.

Rasha, a girl I met at *Saint-Charles* station, lived North-East from the building, in the neighbourhood *Belle de Mai*. When I asked her why she chose *Saint-Charles* station as a place to hang out so often, she answered: '*Ici à Marseille il ya beaucoup de raquettes, Saint-Charles nous offre un espace où nous pouvons rester 'entre nous'*.' [Here in Marseille there are a lot of 'rackets', Saint-Charles provides us with a space were we can stay 'entre nous'.] She further described how she disapproved off these 'other' youths' behaviour, and how she felt the urge to differentiate herself from them:

'Mon quartier est calme, mais il y a un peut de rackaille quand même. J'aime pas trop habiter là bas. Parce que il y a beaucoup de rackets qui font tout le temps des problèmes. Des rackets se sont des bandits on va dire. Des garçons et des filles. Tu as entendu comment ils/elles parlent ? Ils/Elles respectent personne !

C'est pas comme ça selon mes amis. Non, non, non, non, ... Je veux dire que voila, je veux pas rester avec des rackailles.^{9'} – Rasha

[My neighborhood is quiet, but there is a bit of steaming going on anyway. I don't really like living there. Because there are many steamers that cause problems all the time. We would say that des rackets are criminals. Boys and girls. Have you heard how they speak? They respect no one! It's not like that amongst my friends. No, no, no, no ... I mean that, I don't want to be amongst steamers.]

Besides wanting to differentiate themselves from these 'other' youth, most youth would associate them with feelings of insecurity and 'trouble'. During one of our conversations Julien explained that, in his eyes, Marseille lacked safety. More than once he experienced being hassled on the street. Having experienced this it directly influenced his desire to go out at night. He tried to persuade me that it would not be a very good idea to go to a party all by myself, as the city centre is full of 'these' youth in particular:

'Il y a beaucoup d'insécurité à Marseille. Je me suis fait racketté trois fois ici. On a pas envie de sortir à Marseille le soir parce que c'est pas sécuriser. Quand tu sort il y a toujours des bandes des jeunes dehors, tu te sens pas à l'aise. On sais il y a plein des bandes des jeunes en ville. Si on veux sortir, il faut qu'on sorte avec un group des jeunes, avec des amis, jamais toute seule. Si non il y a beaucoup des rackets et tout ca. Vieux Port et l'Opéra, souvent la. Noailles c'est le pire parce que ils sont tous la bas.'^{10'} – Julien

[There is a lot of insecurity in Marseille. I got attacked by steamers three times here. We do not want to go out in Marseille at night because it is not secure. When you go out there are always gangs of young people outside, it makes you feel uncomfortable. We know there are plenty of bands of youth in town. If we want to go out, we have to go out with a group, with friends, never alone. If not

⁹ Semi-structured interview with Rasha, date: 16/04/2011

¹⁰ Semi-structured interview with Julien, date: 06/04/2011

there are a lot of steamers and all that. Often around the Vieux Port and the Opera,. Noailles is the worst because they are all over there.]

Samir experienced similar feelings of insecurity as Julien throughout the city. However he would express these feelings more as being part of certain districts. Samir previously lived in the northern district and only recently moved to another neighbourhood towards the South. He also lived in another smaller city before moving to Marseille. This variety in experience enabled him to compare certain living environments with others. When I asked him to describe Marseille, he started off by saying that he felt like in this city you could not trust people on their appearance. In his eyes, the beach and the sun were what made the city great, nevertheless the city also had his downside. When I asked what this downside entailed he paused and tried to explain:

'Il ya déjà plus de gens dans les Citées. Il ya eux et il y a d'autres personnes. Je ne sais pas comment expliquer [...] La violence est se banaliser. Les gens ils porte un couteaux sur lui, c'est normal enfaite. C'est comme un téléphone sur toi. Ils enfute quoi. C'était pas comme ça où j'habitais avant. C'était petite, et voila, c'est plus calme. Si tu arrive ici sa fait une petite shock quoi. Le différence entre une petite et une grande ville. Il y a beaucoup de violence. C'est pas pareille quoi. Mon petit frère c'était racketté avec un tournevis, c'est vraiment dangereux !¹¹' – Samir

[There are already more people in the cité's. There is them and than there are other people. I do not know how to explain [...].Violence has become trivialized People are carrying a knife on them, in fact it's normal. It's like carrying a phone on you. They don't give a damn. It wasn't like that where I lived before. It was small, and voila, quieter as well. If you move here its a little shock.. It's the difference between small and large cities I suppose. There is a lot of violence. It's not the same. My little brother was attacked by steamers with a screwdriver, it's really dangerous!]

Through the voices of Rasha, Julien and Samir we see how Marseille's urban environment is for a great deal experienced in terms of safety. For some youth, like

¹¹ Semi-structured interview with Samir, date: 30/03/2011

Rasha, *Saint-Charles* station functions as a safe-heaven, away from *les rackets*, providing a space to be amongst like minded people. She considers it important to differentiate herself from these ‘other’ youth who create feelings of insecurity in her living environment. To be away from these youth she deliberately chooses a specific place to hang out, and therefore creates a boundary between herself and the ‘others’. Often youth are treated and perceived as one category by their surroundings, but youth themselves do not see themselves like that. On the contrary, they differentiate and dissociate from one another

3.3 FAIRE ATTENTION!

Public fear of youth

Youth among themselves do not feel like one homogenous group or a single ‘youth’ stereotype. On the contrary, they differentiate from one another in search of who they are and who they are not. However, the public discourse on youth gravely underestimates the complexities of young people’s lives. Throughout my research people kept on warning me about youth. They would often advice me to ‘*faire attention*’ [to pay attention]. People seemed to be scared, or at least, doubtful of youth hanging around in public space. I was told more than once that I should not thrust them, and should definitely not approach them all by myself.

Exploring the inner city district one grey and cold afternoon, I came across a quite dilapidated playground near *Le porte d’Aix, Belsunce*. A few older men were playing *Jeux de Boules* and some youth were having fun with a ball on the provided terrain to the right. I took my camera out of my bag and started taking photographs to document my observations. A few minutes later one of the older men approached me as he wondered what I was doing. We started talking about the neighbourhood, meanwhile I tried to figure out what his thoughts were on Marseille’s youth. When our conversation eventually hit the subject, he looked me straight in the eye and answered with a worried voice: *Les jeunes ici, ils te frappent, ils te volent, ils prennent tout ce que tu as, même tes vêtements et tes chausseurs ! Les jeunes ici sont dangereux, faire attention! Moi, je portes*

*toujours un couteau sur moi!*¹² [Young people here, they'll hit you, they'll steal from you, they'll take everything you have, even your clothes and your shoes! Young people here are dangerous, be careful! I always carry a knife on me.] Where upon he showed me the inside of his jacket pointing his fingers to the little knife sticking out. Yalda, another resident, expressed similar feelings towards youth: *Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui ont rien dans leur tête, ils agressent les femmes, ils volent, tu peux pas leur faire confiance. Faire attention je vous dites!*¹³ [Young people today have nothing in their heads, they attack women, they steal, you can not trust them. I say: be careful!] Both quotes illustrate the widespread public fear of youth being out of control (Skelton and Valentine 1998). This prevailing discourse contributes to their generalised treatment by their surroundings. When this subject was being discussed during interviews with youth, frustration would be expressed as several of them had the impression that people lose their diversity out of sight. As Nadia explains: *Les gens pense que tout les jeunes sont le mêmes, mais on est pas tous les mêmes. Des fois il nous traitent d'un autre manière, parce que ils croient que nous sommes tous pareille, et on est pas tous pareille.*¹⁴ [People think that all young people are the same, but we are not all the same. Sometimes they treat us in a certain way, because they believe that we are all the same, and we're not all like that.] Ismail experienced being treated by his surroundings in a similar way as one of our conversations point out: *Ils mettent tout le monde dans le même sac. Pour eux tout le monde est des voleurs.*¹⁵ [They consider all youth the same. For them all youth are thieves].

We tend to generalise and categorise youth labelling them all as 'trouble,' and treating them accordingly. Doing so youth feel generalised by those in their surroundings, as they are captivated in a one-sided discourse. Leading to their positioning as 'intruders' in the public and private spaces of city life, and to a series of exclusionary tactics (Valentine 1996, Malone and Hasluck (1998) in Chawla et. al. 2002). There are thieves and drug-dealers, but there are also youth just hanging around after school, getting together, or dancing, appropriating public space like that of *Saint-Charles* station. People make places and come into being through experiences and social relations in that place. Doing so spaces become places related and associated to certain

¹² Informal conversation with inhabitant neighbourhood Belsunce, date: 15/02/2011

¹³ Informal conversation with Yalda, inhabitant neighbourhood Belsunce, date: 18/04/2011

¹⁴ Informal conversation with Nadia, date: 17/03/2011

¹⁵ Semi-structured interview with Ismail, date: 24/02/2011

people. In search of who they are youth tend to differentiate amongst them. Some avoid to be associated with certain youth by carefully selecting the places they go. Their movement is further constrained by how they experience the environment in terms of safety. This contradicts with the public discourse and fear of youth that designate them as being the insecurity problem. The following chapter will elaborate on how multiple social relations within the built environment of *Saint-Charles'* public space can provide young people arenas in which to experience and explore their world or how they can become sites of conflict and struggle.

4 SAINT-CHARLES STATION



Marseille's central station served as the main backdrop of my research. It came to play an important role in understanding the politics of public space from a youth's point of view. *Saint-Charles* station provided a framework in both a physical a conceptual way. At first I will discuss what motivated youth to appropriate this inner city public space. Some youth were motivated by the opportunities the material structure provided, others by the social relationships established within. *Saint-Charles* station became a contested terrain not only between youth and the existing regulatory regimes, but between youth and 'other' youth roaming around. Emotions of happiness and relaxation would be linked to the social relationships established in the given locality as well as the activity carried out in the space. By attributing a specific space with meaning, youth engage in creating a spatial identity. In doing so, the place becomes part of the self and must be defended against others. In the case of *Saint-Charles* station, not only against regulatory regimes but also against 'other' youth crossing imagined boundaries constructed by them in its space. I will bring the chapter to a close by demonstrating how surveillance teams such as ONET and *Maintenance Gestion du Site* are influenced by the prevailing idea of youth as 'trouble', restricting youths' presence in and use of the station's public space.

4.1 WHY THIS PLACE

Saint-Charles station is an easy accessible public space throughout the city of Marseille. It provides a dynamic environment where youth can get together without having to consume. The presence of shops and bars and the constant flow of people as a background audience, creates a very specific setting that is meaningful to them. Fulfilling a wide range of needs and desires, it is frequented by different social groups each with their own motivations and requests. Amongst these different social groups one can distinguish different youth groups, as each group engages in their way with their surroundings. Due to the presence of several schools nearby, some youth come to the station to hang around during lunch break or after class: chatting, catching up with class mates, or eating snacks when waiting for a bus, metro or train. In the afternoon other youth groups appear. These youth literally 'hang around', selecting the place as 'the' spot

to smoke joints, deal drugs, or steel stuff. Moving unpredictably throughout the station's physical space, they appropriate their surroundings in a distinguishable way. They lark about, in search of potential clients or travellers who leave their luggage unattended. Smoking cigarettes near the station's main entrance, they gaze around, awaiting the right moment to approach their target. Other groups of youth are motivated on different grounds, as they are driven by their passion for dance and the intertwined urge to openly express Hip-Hop culture.

As my research evolved my interest was increasingly drawn towards this 'dancing' group of youth. I started to observe them more closely and on a more regular basis. Most evenings, especially on Wednesdays and during the weekend, these youth get together at the Northern entrance of *Saint-Charles* station. Tucked away in the quite isolated left hand corner, they exchange dance moves, challenge each other in dance-battles, laugh with friends, or just hang around watching each other perform. Small battery powered speakers, connected to an I-pod, mp3 player, or mobile phone, are scattered around the place, providing the right sound for each dance style rehearsed. But what motivated these youth to exactly choose this spot above others to hang out?

Le sol

Break-dance was one of the several dance styles rehearsed at the *Saint-Charles* station. The youth practicing this dance style would appropriate the space South-East of 'their' corner at the northern entrance hall. For them the built environment, in particular the flooring, was of great importance. As several youth recalled how the granite polished tiles made sliding and turning possible. Both Samir and Jasmir, experienced break-dancers, explained how this was essential to their dance style rehearsed and the body's specific interaction with the environment: '*La gare a de bons carnage, ça glisse bien. Pour travailler tous qui tournes, ça glisse bien*'¹⁶ – Samir. [The station has good flooring it slides well. To work all that spinning movements, it slides well] '*Le sol, on peut s'entraîner dehors aussi mais le sol est pas agréable pour notre discipline a nous c'est par terre.*'¹⁷ - Julien [The flooring, we can also train outside but the ground is not pleasant for us and our discipline

¹⁶ Semi-structured interview with Samir, date: 30/03/2011

¹⁷ Semi-structured interview with Julien, date: 06/04/2011

discipline, which needs the floor.] *'Eux ils se débrouille (pointing to other dancers), mais nous s'entraîner par terre, donc on est obligé de venir ici. Le sol est un point positive.^{18'}* - Jasmir [They, the figure it out, but we train on the floor, so we are forced to come here. The flooring is a positive point].

Through the opportunities the physical environment presented a dialectical relationship between the dancer and his surroundings evolved. By turning this corner of Marseille's train station in to a stage of performance, the building became something other than what its designers envisaged and something more than what was built, as users and visitors saw in those walls a diverse range of significations (Gieryn 2002: 36). These youth look beyond the building as an environment exclusively constructed for travellers, moving past ordinary perceptions and official conceptions of this particular physical space. By using the material characteristics of the flooring, corners, and walls as objects of continuous play, this space is made in to a place they can identify with. In the following paragraph it will become clear how this identification is further developed through the process of socialisation with the people in the given locality.

C'est où on reste entre nous

For most youth the multiple social relations established at *Saint-Charles* station would be the main drive behind their consistent return. These social relations would be established with friends and peers, but also less obviously, with bystanders as potential audience. On the one hand *Saint-Charles* served as a place to meet like minded people to, as one of the dancers stated, stay: *'entre nous'*. On the other hand it served as a place to be 'seen' and enjoy the admiration and encouragement of those around them. The presence of other youth or bystanders would by several youth be indicated as that what motivated them to perform in their best possible way. Some dancers explain how it gave them the desired adrenaline rush and the boost to go on:

'Je viens ici parce que tout le monde se rejoignent ici. Aussi les gens qui te regarde, ça motive quand même. Je pense que c'est importante parce que si tu danse tout seule, si tu t'entraînes tout seule, il y as pas trop d'intérêt. Tu

¹⁸ Semi-structured interview with Jasmir, date: 20/03/2011

*t'entraînes quoi, mais tu es pas très motiver. Des fois quand il y a des gens tu t'entraînes à fond, ça te donne l'adrénaline. Tu veux le faire bien.'*¹⁹ – Samir

[I come here because it's were everyone gets together. Also the people who look at you, motivates. I think it's important because if you dance all alone, if you train alone, there is not too much interest. You train, but you're not very motivated. Sometimes when there are people you train thoroughly, it gives you adrenaline. Yout want to do it well.]

*'Quand on est plusieurs on est plus motiver. On a plus d'envie. Si on vois les autres danser, ça te donne d'envie. Quand tu est tout seule c'est dure. Tout le monde connait la gare, si on dit que on s'entraînent la bas, tout le monde sait que c'est où.'*²⁰ – Julien

[When we're with more we're more motivated. We feel more like it. If we see others dance, it gets us in to the mood. When you are all alone is hard. Everyone knows the station, if we say that we are training over there, everyone knows where it is.]

*'Je viens ici aussi parce que les gens peuvent nous regarder et les filles et tout. Le regarde des gens ca motive, et puis, souvent il y des gens dans le barrière en haut et il nous regarde pour longtemps. Souvent il y a des trains qui sont on retard et les gens ils viennent la et il regarde et sa motive. Même pour les autres danseurs ca motive. Même si on fait pas la même discipline, le même style, c'est quand même bien de regarder les autres, et de fais se regarder aussi.'*²¹ – Jasmir

[I also come here because the people can watch us the girls and everything. People watching motivates, and also, often there are people hanging of the railings upstairs who look for long time. Often the trains are late and the people

¹⁹ Semi-structured interview with Samir, date: 30/03/2011

²⁰ Semi-structured interview with Julien, date: 06/04/2011

²¹ Semi-structured interview with Jasmir date: 20/03/2011

they come and watch us and that motivates. Even for the other dancers it motivates. Even if we don't practice the same discipline, the same style, it's still good to watch others and make them look as well.]

Samir, Julien, and Jasmir all emphasised the importance of other people looking or participating when carrying out their activity in public space. Through conversations with youth it became clear that *Saint-Charles* station aroused emotional identifications of freedom relaxation and happiness. These feelings were frequently associated with particular people like friends and bystanders, and activities like dancing and socializing. As these activities and emotions take shape in a particular material space they construct a place where they are associated with (Modan 2007, Skelton and Valentine 1998).

Through conversations with youth it became clear that the space at the left hand corner of the northern entrance is by many perceived as 'their' spot. Identification with the place plays an important role in this experience. As studies on youth suggest, the space of the street is often the only autonomous space that young people are able to carve out for themselves (Skelton and Valentine 1998). *Saint-Charles* station provides a similar autonomous space, but is different in that way that youth come here to not have to 'hang out' on the streets. Between the home and bars or youth clubs, 'their' spot at *Saint-Charles* could be seen as a 'third' space for them to hang out. They possess and dominate this space by continuously 'being there', and from time to time end up defending it against others. Several youth explain how the space at the northern entrance of the station becomes a contested terrain when other groups of youth interrupt their battles or mock them from the sideline:

*'Ici il y a souvent des autres jeunes qui viennent et nous embêtes. Ils sont pas comme nous, eux ils sont pas dans le domaine hip-hop et tout ça. Il nous trouve un peut nul tu vois. Ils viennent et ils nous embêtes, mais c'est rien, c'est pas violent.'*²² – Jasmir

[There are often other youth who come annoy us. They are not like us, they are not in to hip-hop and all that. They think we are losers. They come and they bother us, but it's nothing, it is not violent.]

²² Semi-structured interview with Jasmir, date: 20/03/2011

By using the words ‘us’ and ‘them’ Jasmir constructs a boundary between the dancers and the rest of the people crossing ‘their’ space. This boundary is further expressed by the choice of clothing, as one of the dancers explains: *‘Les gens savent que les jeunes qu’ils s’habillent comme ça ont un peu le style de hip-hop, ‘peace’, ils sont pas méchant. On s’habille pas comme les voyous avec leurs survêtements’* [The people know that youth that dresses like that, a little bit Hip-Hop style ‘peace’, aren’t mean. We don’t dress like the crooks’, with their tracksuits and Nike sneakers.] This statement amongst others point out that clothing, activity and music decide to a certain extent to which group you belong. Such findings are confirmed by Epstein (1998) who argues that youth, as a means of resolving collectively experienced problems relative to their position in the social structure, are likely to join or claim membership in subcultures as to develop a sense of identity. Through attributing it with meaning and sharing it with others *Saint-Charles* station becomes an extension of the home for social purposes, and hence extremely important in identity terms as it becomes part of our statement about who we are (Forrest and Kearns 2001: 2130). *Saint-Charles* station provides youth with an opportunity to be amongst like minded people, to share and bond with peers. The physical space as well as the people within create a sense of belonging and contribute to youth’s identity formation in society.

On a pas des salles

As the literature points out, most youth do not have the privilege to seek refuge in expensive private recreational settings, or do not have the money to consume drinks or food at bars and restaurants. Jasmir explains that it is not like there is nothing to do around the city, but that you need the means for it: *‘Tu peux aller autre part mais tu as besoin des sous, tu peux boire un coup. Il y a des endroits où ils ont le babyfoot, le billard, mais pour faire ça tu dois avoir des sous.’*²³ [You can go somewhere else but you need the money for it, so you can have a drink somewhere. There are places where they have foosball, were you can play pool, but you must have some money.] Many youth mention the lack of freely accessible places where they can get together, or for the dancers:

²³ Informal conversation with Jasmir, date: 03/04/2011

places to practice their dance moves. This lack can be seen as one of the structural reasons that push these youth to appropriate a space like that of *Saint-Charles* station. Most of the places that according to the break-dancers provide sufficient space are outside the city, near Aix-en-Provence or Aubagne. These locations are hard to get to without a car and therefore have limited accessibility:

*'Je viens ici parce que on doit avoir des salles pour s'entraîner mais il y en a pas. Il y a pas beaucoup des salles, le plupart est en extérieur de Marseille, ils sont pas dans Marseille même. C'est pour ça. Si j'ai pas de voiture je peux pas y aller. A Aix ou Aubagne ou des trucs comme ça.'*²⁴ – Samir

[I come here because we need a space room to train but there is none. There are not many spaces provided for training, the majority is outside of Marseille, they're not even in the city. That's why. If I have no car I can't go. To Aix or Aubagne or places like that.]

Youth often expressed frustration as they had really put effort in to changing their situation by calling the mayor's office more than once. They would ask if there was any possibility to arrange a space at a social centre or other, but unfortunately, they would never receive a phone call back. Previous available places were no longer to their disposal because several social centres decided to give dance-classes requiring admission instead:

*'Ça fait un ans que je viens ici, parce que en fait on trouve pas des salles. On a demandé des associations, on a vu la mairie, mais ils trouvent jamais rien. Ils disent que ils nous appelleront mais ils nous appellent jamais.'*²⁵ – Rasha

[I've been coming here for over a year now, because in fact we don't find a space to train. We asked some youth associations, we met with the mayor, but they never find anything. They say they'll call but they never do.]

²⁴ Semi-structured interview with Samir, date: 30/03/2011

²⁵ Semi-structured interview with Rasha, date: 16/04/2011

As youth have limited ability to manipulate private property (Childress 2004) they are left quite powerless in situations like this. In an attempt to exert influence over their neighbourhood space youth might make a revision of its appearance and purpose, as the case of *Saint-Charles* station points out. Such findings are confirmed by Malone (1999) as she argues that youth's needs and concerns are often not considered and even devalued. The fact that youth is no priority age group in society (Laws 1993) influences the way already scarce space - in a city like Marseille - is being distributed. Playgrounds are provided for children, bars and restaurants for adults, but youth are, as argued by Valentine and Skelton (1998), often lost in between.

Les gangsters de la gare

Several youth are gathered at the northern entrance hall of Saint-Charles station. The glass walls create a bright environment giving the space a pleasant feel. The granite polished flooring provides two or three groups of youth with the necessary surface as each group is practicing a different style of dance. One group finds itself positioned in the middle of the hall towards the doors. The other two groups have each acquired an opposite corner. Other youth talk or hang around, people come and go. A few girls, about five are sitting down with their backs leaning against the glass walls, observing the rest of the people talking and dancing.

Two adults in uniform approach the group of youth positioned closest to the entrance doors. They are both wearing dark blue uniforms with 'Maintenance Gestion de Site' stated on their backs. 'Vous êtes trop bruyante,'[You are too noisy] I overhear the woman say. It seems like the youth did not see this coming. Confused they start asking questions. As it is hard to understand what is exactly being said it seems like the encounter proceeds peacefully. Another group of youth is approached by those in uniform. Now I hear clearly what is being said and all youth is asked to leave. Time passes by and the nature of the discussion between the surveillance team and youth starts to change. As no youth makes an attempt to leave another surveillance team arrives. Three people appear wearing orange jackets with 'ONET' stated on their backs. 'Que ce que on a dit? On a vous dit déjà trois fois de baisser le son !'[What have we told you? We've already told you three times to turn down the music!] To which the young people respond surprised and dissatisfied

tone: ‘On a baser le son. Vous dites baisser le son, on a baisser le son, vous dites baisser le son encore plus, on a baisser le son encore plus. Alors, on entend la musique même pas. C’est comme jouer au foot sans ballon.’ [We turned down the music. You tell us to turn down the music and we did. You tell us to turn down the music more, and we turn down the music more. We don’t hear the even here the music anymore. It’s like playing football without a ball] Some youth laugh when one of the young guys chooses this well picked metaphor to express their frustration.

The surveillance team goes one arguing that no matter what they do at this point, they have to leave the premises: ‘Le SNCF ne veux pas que vous reste ici, tu demande pas pourquoi, c’est comme ça ! C’est eux qui roulent la discision. Si je suis chez moi je fais ce que je veux mais, on est à la gare et nous sommes la pour appliquer le règlement de SNCF.’[The SNCF doesn’t want that you stay here, you don’t ask why, it’s like that ! They decide what happens. When I’m home I do wat I want, but we’re at the station and we’re here to implement the rules set out by the SNCF] The man speaking looks with a straight and serious face at the youth surrounding him: Oké ? C’est bon !? He looks them in the eye and tries to explain his point one more time : ‘On peut pas accepter qu’il y a des gens qui danse ici. Dans le début c’est deux, trois, après c’est un centaine.[We can’t accept that there people dance here. At the start it’s one, two, tree, than they’re with a hundred] ONET’s words do not seem to make the wanted impression, as no youth makes an effort to leave the station. Not much later the police is called in. Upon their arrival the youth do not seem to hesitate and walk towards the exit door. One of them looks over his sholder and shouths with his voice full of irony: ‘On est traiter comme des gangstèrs de la gare.’ [We are treated like the gangsters of the station] Some youth laugh with the guys’ provocative comment while they realize that their defeat is an immanent fact.²⁶

This vignette illustrates how *Saint-Charles* station is being surveyed and secured in several ways by different security corporations and police. It displays how its space is a contested terrain in the struggle to the right of the city. ONET is a privately owned security business that works in commission of the SNCF (French railway company). Furthermore, we can distinguish the *Police National*, the *Police Ferroviaire*, the *Sécurité Incendie*, and the *Maintenance Gestion du Site*, who all have their specific surveillance duties to fulfil. Here, as in other contexts where people and practices intermingle,

²⁶ Observation *Saint-Carles* station, date : 27/03/2011

insecurity feeds largely on the opposition between, on the one hand, social groups who demand 'lawful' uses of public space (shopkeepers, residents, customers, tourists), and on the other hand, populations whose practices and behaviour are deemed 'out of line'. Youth's practices and behaviour are often assumed to be out of line before being objectively analysed. In a context of monitoring, recording and control procedures young people's use of public space is constructed as a threat to the social order. As both ONET, the *Maintenance Gestion du Site*, and the *Police Nationale* perceive them as 'intruders' in *Saint-Charles'* public space, youth are subjected to a series of exclusionary tactics as the above sketched situation points out. The space of *Saint-Charles* station consists of a complexity of interacting social relations. Within that complexity both individuals and social groups are constantly engaging in efforts to territorialise, claim spaces, to include some and exclude others from particular areas (Skelton and Valentine 1998: 126).

The fact that most youth is to be found at the northern entrance hall of *Saint-Charles* station is related to its renovation in 2007. Previously youth would dance and hang out at the bottom of the building towards the South-side of the station. When the station got extended to the North-side by a passage way, providing shops and bars, youth adopted this change and moved to the newly constructed part. One of the dancers explains how previous to the renovation of the central station, they danced at the other side of the building near the taxi stops. The renovation made their life easier as security used to hassle them there more often: '*On était chassée [we where driven away] because, 'apparently' we were annoying the people. Now it's okey, they leave us alone most of the time.*'²⁷ Most of the time means: they are allowed to stay as long as they do not make too much noise. What too much noise entails is determined by *Saint-Charles'* surveillance teams. Regularly they are asked to turn down the music and on a more random basis, asked to leave the premises when their behaviour is deemed 'inappropriate' for the site. An employee of ONET explains how it is prohibited to squat, beg, or dance at the railway station. '*C'est une gare, pas un lieux pour danser.*'²⁸ [It's a train station, not a place where you can dance] According to ONET, people complain about the music produced by the little speakers brought to the venue '*Les gens entendent pas les annonces des trains à*

²⁷ Informal conversation with Yanus, date: 10/04/2011

²⁸ Semi-structured interview with ONET, date: 28/04/2011

*cause de leur music. En plus ça embête les gens qui veulent manger tranquillement.*²⁹ [The people don't hear the broadcasted train information because of their music. On top of that it disturbs the people who want to eat in peace.] The dancers are allowed to use the balcony surrounding the train station, or the square between the train station and the university. However, they are not allowed to appropriate the indoor space, that space is property of the SNCF and is reserved for travellers. *'Si ils veulent faire des spectacles, ils doivent aller dans des endroits pourvu pour faire des choses comme ça. Les gens ont peur des jeunes en group comme ça. La gare est pour le transport !'*³⁰ [they want to do shows, they must go to places provided for that. People are afraid of youth group like that. The station is for transport!] The dancers know this but explain that the floor outside does not provide the same opportunity to practice their dance moves, as it is rough and does not slide. Furthermore, they feel like the security avoids acknowledging that they are not the 'real' problem at the station as a respondent explains:

'Ils se plaignent que on fait trop de bruit, ils viennent pour ça, mais en même temps ils y a des autres jeunes qui vraiment font des choses grave, qui nous volent et tout. Et si ça nous arrive ils sont jamais là.' – Yanus

[They complain that we make too much noise, they come for that, but at the same time they are other youth who are really do serious things, that rob us and everything. And if that happens they are never there.]

Although youth is officially not allowed to dance at the train station they continue to appropriate its public space by modifying adult rules of use and engagement (Childress 2004). These youth have learned over time that by not playing their music too loud the security tolerates their presence to a certain extent. This is largely appreciated and a fact pointed out in numerous conversations with youth:

²⁹ Semi-structured interview with ONET, date: 28/04/2011

³⁰ Semi-structured interview with ONET, date: 28/04/2011

*'Ils nous acceptent, ils nous mettent pas dehors. Si on met pas la musique à fond, ils nous laissent danser. Et ça c'est bien. Ici avec la sécurité, des fois ils disent de baisser le son mais après ils disent rien.'*³¹ – Samir

[They accept us, they don't put us outside. If we don't play the music too loud they let us dance. And that's good. Here with the security, sometimes they ask to turn the music down but otherwise they say nothing.]

Through dancing or simply 'hanging around' at a privately provisioned public space at the heart of Marseille's inner city district, youth show a form of (conscious or unconscious) resistance to adult power. From time to time their presence is accepted by *Saint-Charles'* surveillance team, providing them with an autonomous 'third' space between the street and the home. Doing so it becomes a place of socialisation to which one can belong, creating a spatial identity through their specific engagement with the environment. Here appropriation and territoriality came to play an important role in the process where a random space is made into a place of their own.

³¹ Semi-structured interview with Samir, date: 30/03/2011



5 CONCLUSION

With this thesis I have tried to portray youths' experience of and interaction with Marseille's urban space. The perspective of youth was highlighted because young voices expressing their relationship with the environment are not often heard and studied. Youth are more often than not negatively portrayed by their surroundings, especially the media. These images of young people stigmatize and influence the way they are treated by those around them and can have consequences for their denial to a rightful place in public space. I therefore emphasize the need to recognize youth as a highly diverse and heterogeneous group. This actuality was brought to the fore by youth themselves during many interviews conducted at several locations in Marseille's inner city district. Regarding the experience of youth of their surroundings, the literature on adolescents and public space emphasizes that youth in particular are strongly aware of the influence their local environments exert (Skelton and Valentine 1998). However, these findings were difficult to confirm by the research I conducted. In general the youth I spoke to had difficulties expressing themselves, especially when it came to talking about why exactly they liked or disliked certain parts of the city. In summary of all the interviews conducted, their experience of Marseille's urban space would be related to the environmental characteristics as well as social circumstances of their surroundings. Notable was their experience in terms of safety. Remarkably, these feelings were often attributed to 'other' youth on the streets, or in their words: *des rackets*. This differentiation youth made between themselves and 'other' youth subverts the general public discourse designating youth as one category.

Saint-Charles station played a central role in my attempt to understand space in terms of a complexity of interacting social relations. According to Skelton and Valentine (1998), it is within this complexity that both individuals and social groups are constantly engaged in efforts to territorialise, claim space, to include and exclude others from particular areas. *Saint-Charles* station became the physical and social environment in which to understand the politics of public space from a youth points of view. Privately provisioned public spaces such as *Saint-Charles* station are surveyed by privately hired security forces who exercise a considerable amount of control over how and by whom those spaces might be occupied. In an act of rebellion and an attempt to influence their living environment, youth appropriated the newly built northern entrance of Marseille's central station. By continuously 'being there' they turned it into a spot of their own, an

autonomous 'third space' between a youth house and the home. 'Their' place would not only be defended against adult power, but similarly against 'other' youth crossing imagined boundaries. Boundaries would be constructed between themselves: 'the dancers' and them: 'the hasslers' on grounds of clothing, music or specific activities carried out in the given locality. By doing so the space became increasingly attributed with meaning and hence became important in identity terms as it became a statement about who they are (Forrester and Kerns 2001). Appropriation and territoriality both function as important tools in constructing this identity and in making a space such as that of *Saint-Charles* station into a place of their own. Young people's 'doing nothing' (in this case dancing) can be seen by adults as unproductive and dangerous. Yet it would be wise for adults to realise that youth sitting or dancing in the open area of a train station are engaging in a complex alternative narrative: narratives of self-display, assessing themselves in relation to others, and developing cultural codes. This specific behaviour is essential if young people are to construct a spatial identity and be enabling agents of their environment, instead of victims of it (Malone and Hasluck in Chawla et.al. 2002: 91). *Saint-Charles* provided me with a framework to explore how consequences of urban regeneration can influence youth's use of public space. The research data points out that the youth that have been dancing at the station for several years have since its renovations relocated to the newly constructed northern side. Here we can deduce that the process which influences the way cities change and transform has had a positive outcome for this particular group of youth. As the world is urbanising and more and more people are living in cities, the process of urban regeneration increasingly becomes part of our lives. Therefore, I suggest that its consequences for youth and other generations provide as an interesting and largely unexplored topic for future research.

In conclusion, with regards to the central question posed in this thesis, there is no straightforward answer to give which clarifies how and why youth appropriate Marseille's public space. It is to say that the category 'youth' is very complex for it includes so many different young people each interacting in their way with the environment. To understand their behaviours, universal images of youth need to be put aside. This is not to say that young people defy all classification and that there are no points of similarity in their behaviour. As Malone (2002) points out: 'when grouping and naming distinct aspects of youth culture, it is imperative to be mindful that behaviours are fluid and transitional, just as identity is never static' (Malone 2002:93). Due to the

limited scope of my research project, which was mainly related to time span, several issues were noticed but left unexplored. The gender dimension of youth in public space is an aspect I did not have the chance to examine thoroughly, but which was a prominent factor throughout my research. The girls present at for example, *Saint-Charles* station, were largely outnumbered by the guys. Furthermore I consider it important to revision the prevailing ideas and theories concerned with youth's experience of urban space. During my fieldwork period I did not get the impression of youth's particular sensitivity of the influence their local environment exerts. But because my research was limited in many ways I do not aim to undermine grand theories, but rather suggests a few ideas for further research as it always unearths further questions.

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Map: Marseille inner city district

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I APPENDIX – SELF REFLECTION

After travelling the world to far and distant places I decided to conduct my research closer to home: Europe. Inspired by one of my professors in Anthropology I became curious about Marseille. She had been conducting Anthropological research for several years in this southern city and knew its environment by heart. With her I discussed my first ideas which eventually developed in to my research topic. She gave me the opportunity to meet a street workers organisation in Marseille that worked with youth in urban space. This first visit to Marseille convinced me to carry out my research in this to me unknown but intriguing environment. When I returned in February I was excited, but had the slightest idea of how the upcoming three months would work out.

Initially, my plan was to explore the streets and public spaces of Marseille's inner city district to find out where youth would mainly regroup and hang out. After a few weeks in the field. I realised that this was an almost impossible task to accomplish. The inner city area in which I planned to conduct my research proved to be too large for the limited time I had at my disposal. Additional to observing the urban area, I participated in certain weekly activities of the street workers organisation ADDAP 13, the social centre *Bausanque*, and the youth centre *Contact Club*. In reflection, it had been better if I had only focussed on one neighbourhood, and only worked with one social organisation. Because as a result of the numerous locations and many respondents, my attention was often fragmented and conversations with youth stayed quite superficial in my opinion. Because of covering numerous locations and many respondents, my attention was often fragmented and conversations with youth stayed quite superficial in my opinion. In reflection, it had been better if I had only focussed on one neighbourhood, and only worked with one social organisation.

De Walt en De Walt (2002) argue that 'being a man or a woman may be the most significant social fact concerning and individual and obviously will have an impact on participant observation' (De Walt en De Walt 2002: 83). The fact that I am a woman influenced my research in many ways. People would constantly warn me about certain areas, and more importantly, they would discourage me to approach youth by myself on the streets. Because 'you never know what could happen to a girl with a foreign accent in a city like Marseille'. As my research was mainly focussed on observing the streets this

'advice' unwillingly influenced where I would go and to whom I would speak. I unconsciously held back from approaching youth on the street as I got a bit superstitious. In the end I was new to the city and could not disprove their opinion. I was new to the city and unconsciously held back from approaching youth on the street as I got a bit superstitious. But in the end I had to find out for myself if their (fearful) opinions were valid, since my research demanded to approach strangers from time to time to gather information on certain topics. The way I was treated by strangers differed from male to female. This had its advantages and disadvantages. For example, I had the impression that men were more eager to help me out and girls would trust me easier. On the other hand, I showed genuine interest in talking to people who provided me with interesting information. This interest would regularly be perceived by men in a non-professional way. Sometimes it led to uncomfortable situations as I had no other intentions than simply having a conversation.

Gaining entry to the field site and beginning the process of building rapport can be a daunting experience for new researchers (De Walt en De Walt 2000: 35). In the case of working with - and researching youth; gaining entry to the field site and building good rapport was, and kept on being, quite challenging to me. In order to communicate with youth in a relaxed and light way, it is important to be able to joke around and laugh. The extent to which I spoke French was enough to get me around and have normal conversations, but humour? No, I did not always get the jokes in French. At the start of my fieldwork period my research methods would (besides participant observation) mainly consist out of semi-structured interviews. Overall, it was hard to get youth's time and attention for an interview somewhere apart from the rest of their friends for over thirty minutes. It was only towards the end of my research that I understood the added value of having informal conversations in a familiar setting.

Being back home from 'the field', I had to start writing my thesis. Here I came across another obstacle in doing anthropological research: having the role of the person who is supposed to interpret youth's words and experience of Marseille's urban space. I struggled, as I did not feel eligible to speak for the youth that shared their thoughts and daily experiences with me. Sometimes, in relation to the theory I felt like I had to interpret too much. When they often answered me with: 'I don't know' or 'I don't care' I wondered if it really meant they did not know or did not care. I found it hard to let myself read between the lines, to make assumptions about their life. I assume most

(becoming) anthropologists find themselves struggling with this feeling. For me, the interpreting aspect of doing anthropological research is what always needs to be questioned by the individual conducting it. Never loosing out of site if he/she is presenting the gathered fieldwork information in a reflective and accurate way for those he/she represents.

Fieldwork picture: an afternoon of participant observation at *Saint-Charles*.



II APPENDIX – RÉSUMÉ EN FRANCAIS

Avec cette thèse, j'ai tenté de dépeindre l'expérience des jeunes et leur interaction avec l'espace urbain de Marseille. La perspective des jeunes a été soulignée, car les voix des jeunes, exprimant leur relation avec l'environnement, ne sont pas souvent entendues ni étudiées.

Les données de cette thèse ont été réunies pendant trois mois d'observation participante. De Février 2011 à Avril 2011, j'ai mené sur le terrain à Marseille. Le travail sur le terrain comprenait deux centres sociaux en centre-ville, les rues, et la gare Saint-Charles. Passant mes journées d'itinérance dans l'espace urbain de Marseille et prenant de courts trajets avec les centres sociaux d'activités faibles dans toute la ville, j'ai observé où et comment la jeunesse sans doute entre l'âge de treize et vingt ans, traîne dans l'espace public. La question, qui me conduit à travers ces observations, était: "Comment et pourquoi les jeunes approprient l'espace public en centre-ville de Marseille?" Afin de limiter mon domaine de recherche j'ai choisi de me concentrer aux activités des jeunes réalisées dans les espaces publics en ville, à la gare *Saint-Charles*.

Afin de trouver des réponses à ces questions j'ai passé beaucoup de temps en traînant dans la gare centrale de Marseille, l'endroit qui est devenu le fond de mes recherches. Observations et conversations avec les adolescents, je me suis aperçu du peuple et des endroits qu'ils ont vécu d'une façon positive ou négative. En plus, j'ai exploré activement avec eux comment ils se sentaient vis-à-vis de ces personnes et ces lieux. En étudiant ses manifestations, les dimensions et les implications que j'ai comprises la signification profonde.

Cette recherche contribue à des débats théoriques concernant la politique de l'espace public et donne un aperçu, au niveau social, au point de vue des jeunes concernant leurs actions dans, et les expériences avec l'espace. Dans le premier chapitre de cette thèse, j'ai conceptualisé les termes les plus importants et les discours qui se posent lorsqu'il s'agit de rechercher l'appropriation de l'espace public par les jeunes. Je commence par expliquer le processus de régénération urbaine et de démontrer comment son caractère a changé et que les objectifs ont changé au fil du temps. Dans la partie suivante, j'ai encadré le processus plus localement, et de regarder la situation en France. Ensuite je décris ce que la politique de l'espace public contient, concluant que

l'espace public de la ville n'est pas ouvert à tous ses habitants. En plus, je me mets à dépeindre comment les jeunes sont généralement aperçus par leur entourage, pour comprendre les politiques actuelles concernant la ville de jeunes adolescents. Ensuite, je discute la conceptualisation de l'appropriation et territorialité qui nous donne une compréhension plus profonde de l'objectif de la recherche. Dans le dernier paragraphe du cadre théorique, je regarde la relation dialectique entre les personnes et l'environnement, touché à sa fin en déclarant «les questions de localisation». Dans le chapitre 2, j'ai situé décor en décrivant l'histoire de Marseille, et concentré particulièrement sur deux quartiers du centre-ville *Le Panier* et de *Belsunce*. Le contexte clarifie la façon donc plusieurs projets de régénération urbaine maintiennent la ville sous le charme du changement continu et comment les jeunes sont placés dans cette complexité environnementale et sociale.

Les résultats de ma recherche sont ensuite discutés dans la deuxième partie de la thèse. Le Chapitre 3 se concentre comment les jeunes éprouvent l'espace urbain de Marseille. Je décris ici comment ils différencient les quartiers en fonction des caractéristiques environnementales ainsi que les circonstances sociales dans l'environnement. Plus loin, j'explore comment les jeunes essaient de faire la différence entre les uns les autres à la recherche de ce qu'ils sont. La crainte du public de la jeunesse étant hors de contrôle sera lié à l'homogénéisation des adolescents comme un groupe dangereux. Je termine le chapitre en concluant que les jeunes sont, au contraire, un groupe très hétérogène, qui connaissent leur environnement pour une grande partie en termes de sécurité, même si cela est souvent attribuée à eux. Dans le Chapitre 4 j'utilise la gare Saint-Charles, situé au cœur de la ville, comme un cadre pour montrer la politique de l'espace public du point de vue des jeunes. Ici je révèle certaines des motivations qui sous-tendent l'appropriation de souligner pourquoi exactement ce lieu est choisi pour être affecté à d'autres. La deuxième partie du chapitre élabore sur la relation entre les jeunes et les régimes réglementaires présentés à la gare, souligne encore combien les conséquences ou la régénération urbaine ont influencé l'endroit où les jeunes sont actuellement trouvés. La conclusion de ce chapitre c'est que en 'traînant' à un endroit comme Saint-Charles les jeune rebellent contre le pouvoir des adultes, et expriment leur désir de faire un espace à un lieu qui leur est propre.

Conclusion : la jeunesse est plus souvent négativement dépendu par sont environnement, notamment les médias. Des images de la jeunesse stigmatisent et

influencent la façon dont ils sont traités par ceux qui les entourent et peut avoir des conséquences pour leur refus d'une place légitime dans l'espace public. Je souligne donc la nécessité de reconnaître les jeunes comme un groupe très diversifié et hétérogène. Cette réalité était présentée par les jeunes eux-mêmes pendant de nombreuses interviews tenues à plusieurs endroits dans des quartiers en centre-ville de Marseille, étant le central de la recherche. En ce qui concerne la question centrale posée, de cette thèse, il n'y a pas de réponse simple à donner à tous, qui précise comment et pourquoi des jeunes approprient une surface publique à Marseille. C'est à dire la catégorie 'jeunes' est très complexe, car elle comprend autant de jeunes différents qui agissent chacun selon sa façon avec l'environnement. Si on veut réussir à comprendre leurs comportements, des images universelles des jeunes doivent être mis de côté.

III APPENDIX ARTICLE³²

QUARTIER

Les profs de Diderot en colère

Près de 300 personnes ont défilé hier dans le 13^e arrondissement à l'initiative des enseignants du lycée Diderot. Ils dénoncent la violence subie par leurs élèves autour de l'établissement. « Il y a eu 50 agressions pour du racket depuis le début de l'année, dont certaines avec blessures à l'arme blanche », explique Serge Jourdan (Snes), un professeur du lycée. Vendredi dernier, un adolescent a été blessé à la joue avec un couteau à la sortie du lycée. Parents et professeurs

veulent alerter les pouvoirs publics et le recteur sur la nécessité de mener une politique ambitieuse dans le quartier. « Il ne faut pas le laisser à l'abandon. Avec les trois suppressions de postes dans le lycée cette année, c'est pour nous la première cause de la montée en puissance de la violence », estime Serge Jourdan. Les professeurs suggèrent d'organiser une table ronde avec les élus, le préfet, le recteur et les associations de quartiers pour dynamiser le quartier. ■



Les enseignants demandent plus de moyens pour le lycée Diderot.

³² *Les Profs de Diderot en Colère*, published on the 18th of March 2011 in *20 minutes Édition de Marseille*

IV APPENDIX PHOTOGRAPHS

The photo on the front of the thesis, followed by other photo-pages, and the photographs here below are all taken by myself during my fieldwork period in Marseille. Photography has been an important tool in establishing rapport with youth and has helped me to cross social boundaries in many ways.









