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# Building Development in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: between Planning Procedures and Local Action<sup>1</sup>

Agnès Sander<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The Paris cityscape, which is largely a product of the transformations effected under the Second Empire by the Prefect Haussmann and the city administration, is astonishing for its degree of uniformity. It has been the source of much envy and, at the time, a certain amount of opposition. Charles Garnier himself, who designed the Paris Opera House at around the same time, was an ardent critic of this municipal action, its monotonous regulations and unwelcoming *froideur*.<sup>3</sup> Thus, understanding the urban forms of Paris involves searching for an explanation of the uniformity of its architecture and its avenues.

However, on closer inspection, Haussmannien thoroughfares present all sorts of irregularities depending on which streets we examine.<sup>4</sup> So in order to understand how an urban landscape is formed, it is worthwhile examining these irregularities and deformities<sup>5</sup>, which demonstrate that such forms are not merely the product of municipal decisions. It is these deformities that we have chosen to analyze in detail here by studying a highly atypical Haussmannien thoroughfare: Rue des Pyrénées in the 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* of Paris.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised and updated version of the case study in French entitled “*La rue des Pyrénées: les limites de la planification*”, published in the BRA-MELT research report (1992). *Regards sur l’haussmannisme*, pp. 67-72.

<sup>2</sup> Translated from the French by Neil O’Brien

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Loyer, François (1987) p. 361.

<sup>4</sup> See Darin, Mickaël (1981) and Darin, Mickaël (1989).

<sup>5</sup> Borie, Alain, Micheloni, Pierre, Pinon, Pierre (1984, first edition 1978).

This street was laid out beginning in 1862 in the outlying districts to the east that had just been newly “annexed” by the City of Paris. We seek to analyze this Haussmannien thoroughfare, which is incomplete in terms of the size of the accompanying edifices, by trying to understand why it diverges from the archetypal Haussmannien street bordered by a carefully aligned series of buildings occupying all of the permitted space and offering a uniform façade to the passerby. In order to appreciate why this street is now composed of largely heterogeneous buildings in terms of both their form and siting, we examined each plot in turn and tried to isolate the reasons for their divergence from classical Haussmannien form. We believe that only a plot-by-plot analysis can provide a precise understanding of how the buildings along a street were formed. Only such an analysis can establish why Rue des Pyrénées looks like it does today. Why did the buildings along this street actually get built? In other words: why these and not others?

Carrying out a plot-by-plot analysis does not preclude establishing classifications of similar-type plots. An initial “morphological” analysis that highlights ideal, typical forms and those actually observed could serve to identify:

- the major types of deformity in relation to what we expect to see in a Haussmannien street;
- typical plots;
- those that appear to be unique, etc.<sup>6</sup>

Once the deformity has been identified, hypotheses are developed to try to explain it in relation to the specific actions of the plot owners. This article will study the production of these urban forms along Rue des Pyrénées by analyzing both the intentions and actions of planners and resistance to such planning by property owners, based on two different approaches: firstly, a network approach<sup>7</sup> (the street as one element within an *ensemble* of streets designed to facilitate the passage of goods and people), and secondly, plot substitution (where the plot is seen as the unit of property on which buildings are constructed).

This analysis is preceded by a two-part overview of the context. In the first section, following a summary description of Haussmannien city planning, we briefly sketch the reasons for the visual uniformity of the Paris cityscape. The second section presents the street itself which is subsequently analyzed along with the hypotheses and different methods required for the analysis. The article will present details of a few chosen examples and will not delve into the history of each plot that we were able to trace in the archives.

## Overview

It is important to realize from the outset that the transformation of Paris and the laying out of new streets did not begin with the Second Empire (Napoleon III, 1852-1870).

<sup>6</sup> It is the relationship between the plot, built area and empty spaces that needs to be analyzed and classified and not just the plot itself. However, we can only verify hypotheses (reasons for deformity) on a plot-by-plot basis. Archive sampling may be useful in such cases.

<sup>7</sup> Castex J. Depaule J.C., Panerai P, (1977) pp. 18 and 23, employ the term “global level”; M. Darin (1981), p. 13, uses “major urban element”.

Although private thoroughfares, frequently bordered by houses built by decree were already being developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it was really under the First Empire (Napoleon 1<sup>st</sup>, 1804-1814) that the first series of complete thoroughfares were built in the form of residential allotments: the state acquired the land, divided it into plots and subsequently resold these for development. Private developments began to take off from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As regards Paris as a whole, the Haussmannien building programs carried out under the auspices of Georges-Eugène Haussmann, prefect of the Seine from 1853 to 1870, used the recommendations made by previous observers to good effect. The problems inherent to the City of Paris had long been recognized: delays traveling between the two banks of the Seine; the extreme poverty existing on the Left Bank and the squalor of the city center; the rapid development of the Right Bank of the Seine mainly towards the west, where the business and commercial districts that sprang up exist to the present day; failure of road widening schemes to have any real impact.

Haussmannien street building programs sought to resolve these difficulties by impacting on the existing city: two major Parisian axes (going from north to south and from east to west) and the Boulevard Saint-Germain were laid out to link the two banks of the Seine both physically and symbolically; many other thoroughfares were built to link important points in the city and, while they undoubtedly facilitated troop movements, they also cleaned up, embellished and showed off property to good effect. Ring roads also improved access to the peripheral neighborhoods annexed to the city in 1860. The programs were carried out on a massive scale and took advantage of the newly available procedure of expropriation.

Following the Haussmann era and despite the upheavals of the war of 1870, the major street building programs continued through to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the Third Republic (1871/1875-1940). The network conceived of by Haussmann was not only carried out but extended and completed locally mainly thanks to the action of the Paris city administration which was characterized by a remarkable continuity through successive changes of government. The same pattern can be observed in the areas of water and sanitation, parks and gardens, etc.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly the first reconstruction period that followed the Great War marked a radical change in city building practices due to the campaign to combat insalubrity and the rise in modern architectural practices: until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century new streets were lined with plots and the limit of city planning intervention cut right through the street block; social housing blocks in the 1920s and 30s were characterized by the disappearance of the plot pattern and city planning intervention limits extended out to the middle of the street. The major housing schemes of the second reconstruction marked the end of the street block and the formal and functional disassociation of public thoroughfares and dwellings<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Le Corbusier, Jeanneret, Pierre (1931).

## The reasons for uniformity

Before studying the irregularities of the Paris cityscape, it is well worth recalling how the apparent uniformity of this cityscape was produced, insofar as no regulations existed under the Second Empire concerning the design and composition of building façades.<sup>9</sup>

The first important point is that while Parisian planning regulations (through to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) had a major impact on urban forms and landscapes, they were not conceived primarily for this purpose. These laws were generally driven by concerns over safety: the height of buildings in relation to street width and the construction materials used; making it mandatory to plaster wooden façades to reduce the risk of fires; banning *corbelling and overhanging forms more than a few centimeters wide*; or refusing to authorize balconies running from one building to another.

Behind the plastered façades (since the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century) that lent *ancien régime* Paris such a uniform air, buildings were busily adding floors of widely differing forms unremarked by passersby. As François Loyer explains, urban density increased without any major changes to the appearance of Parisian buildings. The regulatory height of cornices (17.41 m, for streets over 9.75-m wide between 1784 and 1859; 20 m for streets over 20-m wide in the case of Haussmannien boulevards) also had a major esthetic impact. Indeed, although the regulations passed in 1884 and 1902 authorized considerable increases in the height of buildings, this was only by playing around with loft space so that the actual appearance of façades changed little. Depending on the period, architectural compositions that tinkered with the maximum authorized height used either vertical or horizontal lines. The typically Parisian manner of alternating jambs and piers of the same width tended to blur such differences of *modénature* and composition.

We should also note that regulations frequently tended to reflect trends more than they set them: the 1884 regulation concerning the height of loft timbers was based on models that architects had already been experimenting with at the end of the Haussmannien period, notably on Avenue de l'Opéra, where builders were able to add an extra three main stories in relation to the regulatory size of a building in 1784.

Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the clout of the restructured administration under Haussmann. The *architectes voyers* (street architects) were important players and, in the absence of written regulations, were able to use their advisory role to exercise strict control over façade design, as borne out by the example of Avenue de l'Opéra. We should note that they played a lesser role in outlying neighborhoods where it was considered inappropriate to place excessive constraints on architectural design in places where land was difficult to sell. The only plot along Rue des Pyrénées for which an order to build within the year is appended to the deed of sale is the first plot sold, on the corner with Rue de Belleville. Sluggish demand coupled with the influence of property developers in the area (one of whom was a Paris city councilor) subsequently meant that the municipality placed few constraints on either plots or buildings along this street.

<sup>9</sup> "The reasons for uniformity" section draws on the following works: Boudon, *et al.*, (1977), Harouel Jean Louis (1982), Loyer François, *op. cit.*; Pinon Pierre (2002).

Thus a combination of

- planning laws (focusing on the safety of persons and property) had already regulated the production of Parisian buildings for several hundred years;
- building methods and materials subject to their own rules, but evolving under the impetus of increased industrialization;
- the training of building contractors and tradesmen at the same schools;
- the social profiles of tenants and owners impacting the characteristics of dwellings and each floor of the dwellings;
- and a city council that was able to conceive of and implement a grand scheme, mean that Haussmannien architecture is perceived as being a particularly homogeneous style.

A study of the irregularities masked by this apparent uniformity shows that the reality was somewhat more complex: municipal action, even at its strongest during the Haussmannien period, has only a limited impact on urban forms.

### Analyzing atypical street forms: overview and hypotheses

Rue des Pyrénées was laid out beginning in 1862. It was one of the newly-added, essentially rural districts to the east that was annexed to form the new Paris. It still looks like an unfinished street and lacks that visual coherence that we associate with the typical Haussmannien street. The mechanisms that produced the buildings are readily identifiable: where two buildings of unequal height meet, it is easy to distinguish the old plot from the plot that resulted from the street-laying scheme. A defect in the building suddenly reveals an old street boundary. The traces are there for all to see, visible in the urban space (Fig. 6.1).

The principal assertion underpinning our work is that a city is never produced by planning alone from a sort of *tabula rasa*, nor is it a being that develops on its own terms via a gradual process of organic growth.<sup>10</sup> The city is a series of trade-offs between planning regulations and the factors that resist or circumvent such regulations.<sup>11</sup>

For certain authors<sup>12</sup> Haussmannien planning methods represent a major break with what had gone before. However, we consider that the mechanism whereby streets were laid out within the limits of the existing urban fabric harked back to an essentially traditional method.<sup>13</sup> The process essentially entailed laying out new streets, and the planner's role was to define this public space. Therefore, to have a global impact on the urban space, the planner must start working at plot level. We could consider that the role of planners should stop at setting the limit between the street and the individual

<sup>10</sup> Poëte, Marcel (1937).

<sup>11</sup> This hypothesis is advanced in particular by M. Darin (1981), p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> Particularly Boudon *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 58 and 59. Obviously, we are strongly indebted to this monumental study which has highlighted the necessity of a plot-by-plot analysis for understanding cityscapes and how they are formed.

<sup>13</sup> Concerning the continuity between Haussmann building programs and previous schemes, see Bowie, Karen (dir.) (2001).

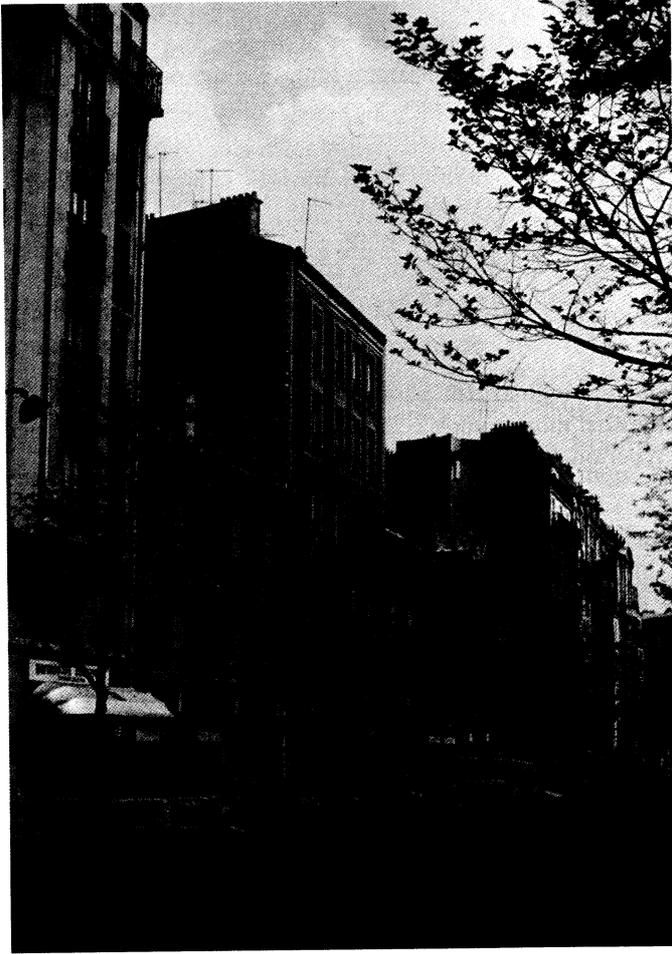


Fig. 6.1 An atypical haussmannien city landscape: Rue des Pyrénées (credit: A. Sander).

plots, however the boundary of each plot depends on that of the street: each of these tiny private enclaves is used to define the public space and this explains why the actions of planners also extend to plots intended for private development. It is also because, when a new street is laid out, the profitability of the scheme as well as public hygiene and the embellishment of the public thoroughfare justify an incursion into privately-owned property. The drafting of planning and building regulations is the most obvious sign of this incursion. Negotiations may be necessary with the owner of each expropriated plot, and the boundary of each plot may have to be redrawn before it can be resold.

Regrouping makes it possible to exercise control over the type of building that goes up, and a series of specific constraints may be imposed on the new owner via building specifications. Buildings may be prevented from falling into a state of “insalubrity” by regrouping plots in an appropriate manner. In certain cases plots may be resold to finance public works, but what subsequently happens to the plots that are sold back into

private hands is largely beyond the planner's control. The real break in city planning methods occurred when the planner's scope extended from the street to encompass intervention in a given zone.<sup>14</sup> In other words, by acting simultaneously on both the public and the private space, we eliminated all resistance to planning, especially due to the physical situation of the plots themselves: thence the old plot pattern was scrapped completely in the planned renovation zones of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>15</sup> Any subsequent urban renewal can be very fraught as the land/property in question is a single indivisible entity: it is difficult to modify the buildings without demolishing them completely; it is impossible to split a plot in two as the plots themselves have disappeared. Moreover, technical networks no longer correspond to streets (inexistent) as they did in Haussmannien street building schemes but run under buildings or open spaces, seriously limiting any potential transformation projects.<sup>16</sup>

This analysis covers the section of the Rue des Pyrénées that runs between Rue de Belleville and Rue des Prairies. It excludes the section of Rue de Puebla (now known as Avenue Secrétan) that grew out of the widening of Rue Drouin-Quintaine (an old private street that has since disappeared). Thus, our research is limited to the section of the street covered by the first expropriation jury of December 15, 1864 (Fig. 6.2). It includes Place Gambetta, a favored location for property speculators in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris.

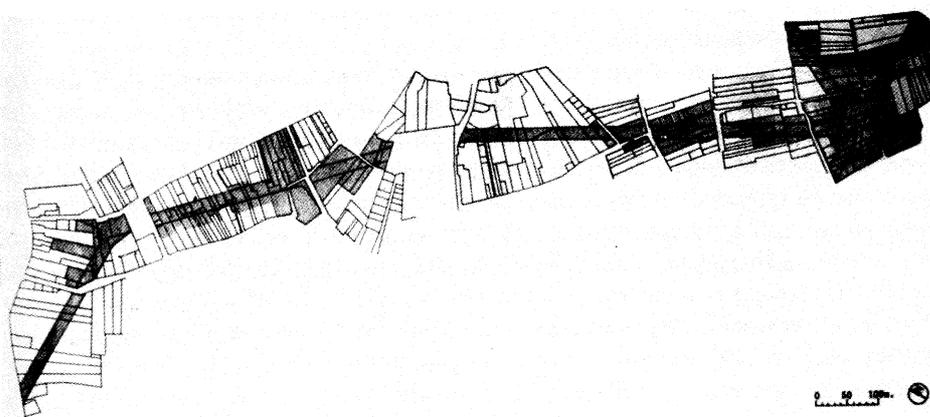


Fig. 6.2 Land covered by expropriation (jury of December 15, 1864), (map source: APUR Atelier parisien d'urbanisme, AP Archives de Paris and AN Archives nationales).

<sup>14</sup> Situated by M. Darin, *op cit.*, p. 11 and by Gaudin, Jean-Louis (1985), at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: reform of the expropriation law of November 6, 1918 and reflections on the Cornudet Law (Gaudin); expropriation law of April 21, 1914 (Darin). See also Legendre d'Anfray, Pascale (1990). *La petite ceinture*, graduate degree dissertation from the Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris, which highlights the role of these "insalubrious" building blocks in the process of moving planning from the street into entire zones.

<sup>15</sup> Lucan Jacques (1980), p. 69: due to Post-War regrouping and the land mobilization called for by the modernists, plot subdivision—the secular form of constituting or reconstituting cities—was not as big an issue as it might have been.

<sup>16</sup> See Treuttel J.J. *et al.*, (1996).

Drawing up a 1/2000 scale map of the street makes it possible to analyze the “formal” transformations that impacted the plots. Examining the regrouped plots in terms of the regulatory possibilities available to the city council enables us to see where the forms of the plots actually produced were out of line with a “logical” subdivision, which we take to mean the boundaries that would have been drawn by planners free of any constraints. Other plots of interest were identified from an analysis of the contemporary street profile and visible discontinuities in buildings. The use of archives to analyze changes in these plots and in the buildings that adjoin them makes it possible to highlight the chains of small events that produced such forms.

## Planners’ choices and constraints

### The production of a local network

No sooner had the districts located between the Fermiers Généraux tax wall and Thiers’ fortified wall been annexed to Paris in 1860 than “the city council commissioned engineers from the suburban division of the city public works department to study the profiles of a number of large thoroughfares intended to connect the new districts comprising the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, as well as a part of the 12<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements*, both between themselves and to the older districts of the City”.<sup>17</sup>

The building of such streets (ring roads and thoroughfares going right into the heart of the city) corresponded to immediate implementation of the very principles that explained why the *notables* had wanted to annex the outlying neighborhoods in the first place. They hoped that the sense of order introduced into Paris by Haussmannization could also be extended to the immediate suburbs. In any case, this was the gist of the report in favor of “annexation” presented to the Emperor by the Secretary of State for the Department of the Interior Delangle, on February 12, 1859: “Expanding districts have given little thought to combining their streets with those of adjoining neighborhoods. They are all focused on Paris and all their efforts have gone into removing previously existing barriers: little has been done to link adjoining districts. However, one district straddles another; some actually run into each other and their overlap results in a hotch-potch of impressive streets that go nowhere, horrible lanes and cul de sacs, relatively well laid out modern neighborhoods and groups of buildings thrown up pell-mell”.<sup>18</sup> The same arguments were subsequently used with regard to street paving, sidewalks, sewers and water and gas distribution: i.e., that “supra-territorial management was needed to embellish cities and to make their networks work more effectively”.

This willingness to open up the old outlying Parisian suburbs underpinned the construction of streets such as the Rue des Pyrénées. Their categorization within the “third network” clarifies the choices subsequently made by the City Council: type of street proposed, amount of investment, building deadlines, etc. Castex, Depaule and

<sup>17</sup> Haussmann Georges Eugène, March 8, 1862, in Lazare Louis (1862). *Publications administratives*, Paris.

<sup>18</sup> Préfecture de la Seine (1959/1960). *Documents administratifs*.

Panerai<sup>19</sup> have described the “third network” as a “rag-bag of operations that had not been included in the second category”. We should note that this network included link roads and completed certain projects begun previously. It also comprised all road works carried out in the newly annexed neighborhoods. Unlike the first and second categories, which were partially funded by the central government, the third category was paid for solely by the City.

The survey of the eastern Paris network shows that Haussmann’s concerns were primarily of a functional nature and this attitude, which differed significantly from the approach adopted for projects within the first category and nearer the city center, had an impact on street design and the manner in which the projects were conceived. The current layout of Rue des Pyrénées was influenced directly by this initial planning approach.

The Imperial Decree of July 28, 1862 contains details of the street building program and road works to be carried out in the newly annexed districts of eastern Paris. It focused primarily on the inner ring road now known in its various sections as Avenue S. Bolivar/Rue des Pyrénées/Avenue du Général M. Bizot, although it comprised other streets which were also decreed to be in the public interest. This group of streets constituted a proper local network within these districts, connected to Paris in a very basic manner.

### Intervention by the city council: *modus operandi*

When laying out new streets, expropriation was the basic tool available to the council, and the limits of this scheme were enshrined in legislation. The expropriation law of May 3, 1841, as well as its subsequent enabling decrees, formed the legal basis for Haussmannien building programs. In particular, it stipulated that “buildings of which it is necessary to acquire a portion in the public interest shall be purchased whole if owners so require by a formal declaration addressed to the magistrate in charge of the jury [...] the same applies to each plot of land that is reduced by one quarter of its total area following subdivision, if the owner does not own an adjacent plot, and if the plot thus reduced is less than 10 Ares in size”.<sup>20</sup>

As contemporary critics pointed out,<sup>21</sup> this law favored private interests over the public interest. Owners could opt to keep plots along a street and if the plots were too small or if their form rendered them unsuitable for construction, they could obtain an adjustment to the building line. If the owner decided to build on the plot in spite of its characteristics, an “*immeuble-placard*” (closet building) would result and would quickly fall into a state of insalubrity.

The decree of March 26, 1852, amended the law of May 3, 1841, and completed the law of April 13, 1850, dealing with slum clearance. It provided “the means of tackling insalubrity in dwellings rented out; however, it did not prevent the construction of unhygienic dwellings”.<sup>22</sup> It was heavily criticized for attacking the principle of private property and was a major enabling factor in the Haussmannien street building program

<sup>19</sup> Castex *et alii*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> Deville, Rez (1886) p. 139.

<sup>21</sup> Lazare, Louis (1868), op. cit., tome 2, Lahure (1842) and Bidaux Georges (1907).

<sup>22</sup> des Cilleuls, André (1877), p. 59.

in Paris. While it provided the city council with much wider powers of expropriation, A. des Cilleuls and Lahure<sup>23</sup> have shown that these powers were in fact rarely used as the council wanted to avoid having to purchase additional plots of land.

Moreover, the possibilities available under the decree of March 26, 1852, were restricted by the decree of December 27, 1858, which strengthened the role of the *Conseil d'Etat* (French Supreme Administrative Court)<sup>24</sup> and, as J. L. Gaudin<sup>25</sup> has shown, this court tended to favor the interests of property owners until at least the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This decree imposed public inquiries with a right of appeal to the *Conseil d'Etat* and clarified the pre-emption rights of the owners of plots at the far end of expropriated blocks of land located between their plot and the public thoroughfare (surplus expropriated land). This was the legal context against which the Rue des Pyrénées was laid out.

An analysis of the original street plan gives an idea of how the council planned to use the possibilities offered by expropriation legislation. We have taken a map pre-dating 1862 and compared the land expropriated to build the Rue des Pyrénées while distinguishing between plots expropriated away from the covered area with those expropriated along the area covered by the future street (Fig 6.3). Apart from a few specific cases that require more detailed research, we note that the following types of plot were expropriated away from the street:

- plots deemed to be not buildable once the expropriated parts were taken off (size, form, situation in relation to the street);
- plots situated below or above the new street level for which leveling was required. This applied to the plots situated between Rue des Pyrénées and Rue des Cascades (Fig. 6.3), or those located around Passage des Soupirs and Rue Villiers de l'Isle Adam;
- plots set aside for future redevelopment. This was the case with plots expropriated to build Place Gambetta. Large-scale expropriation enabled the reconstitution of entire blocks of land.

In general, expropriation was limited to plots located along the area actually covered by the planned route of the street and this type of minimal expropriation limited the possibilities of building a traditional Haussmannien street, i.e., one lined by buildings of a uniform nature. Plots that lay along the new street remained in the hands of the same private owners as previously and it was impossible to force them to build. Similarly, the procedure “whereby owners acquired land situated in front of their existing holding” did not involve any obligation to build along the public thoroughfare.<sup>26</sup>

The council could merely hope that the creation of a new street would encourage property owners to build. Place du Guignier is a good example of this type of situation (and will be examined in more detail below). Place du Guignier had not really been

<sup>23</sup> des Cilleuls, André (1910) and Lahure, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> The streets and thoroughfares of Paris are all part of the “*grande voirie*” (highroads) whereas those of other French cities belong to the “*petite voirie*” and fall under the jurisdiction of the *cour de cassation* (French Supreme Civil Court).

<sup>25</sup> Gaudin Jean-Louis, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>26</sup> des Cilleuls André (1877), p. 139.



Fig. 6.3 View of buildings situated between Rue des Pyrénées and Rue des Cascades (credit: A. Sander).

planned for, within the scope of the expropriation process, and it was created from surplus expropriated land. Only part of a block of land located between Rue de l'Ermitage and Rue du Guignier was subject to a second partial expropriation order dated February 8, 1868<sup>27</sup>. This order also includes a scheme to widen the Rue de l'Est which was subsequently completed but does not appear on the 1903 land registry. This case can be compared with that of the Place Gambetta where the expropriation was on a much larger scale. Place Gambetta was already planned for in this first phase: plots were regrouped and entire new blocks were created.

After the expropriation phase and before the land was resold, the surplus expropriated land was redrawn into new plots that would be easily buildable: boundaries perpendicular to the street, façade of suitable dimensions (Fig. 6.4). The form of the urban space took precedence over the form of the plot and was limited by the direction of the streets and by the old plot boundaries. Private ownership was subordinated to public planning requirements.

### Conclusion regarding the choice of planning strategy

Analyzing the options chosen by planners is not enough in accounting for the appearance of a street. There is no corollary between the expropriated area and the type of buildings lining a street. We could be forgiven for thinking that Haussmannien build-

<sup>27</sup> Archives Nationales, cote F/la/2000/102.

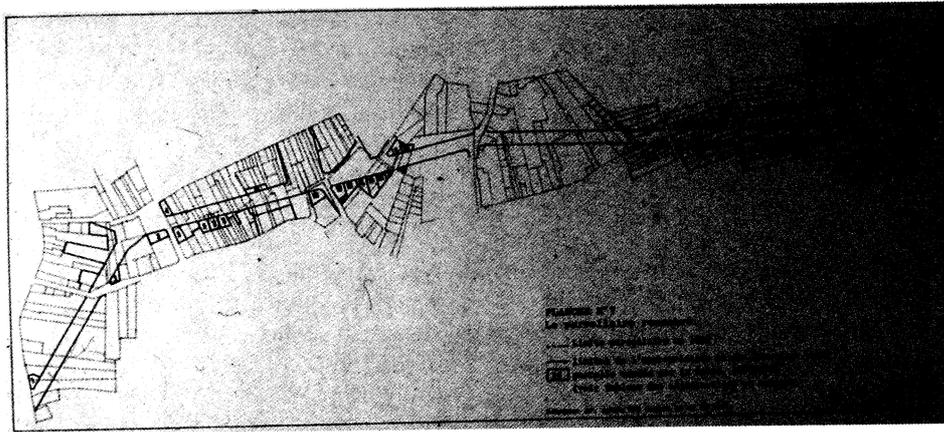


Fig. 6.4 The redrawn plot pattern, A. Sander on map source: APUR Atelier parisien d’urbanisme and AP Archives de Paris.

ings should have been erected on plots expropriated in large numbers and then redrawn in order to facilitate construction. Following the same logic, houses composed of just a few stories would then be more likely to appear on old plots that simply lay along the route of the new street, but that had been neither redrawn nor resold. While a comparison of Place Gambetta and the other public squares along Rue des Pyrénées (Place du Guignier, Place des Rigoles and Place du Jourdain) would appear to give credence to this assumption, there are so many examples invalidating it that a number of caveats need to be introduced.

This highlights how important it is for a project to be “assisted”. Building a town hall on Place Gambetta or opening a street that runs into the heart of the city (in this case, Avenue de la République) are examples of incentives to build and strategies adopted by the planners, but they still do not fully account for the future appearance of the street. On many plots that were redrawn when the street was first laid out we now have houses of only one or two stories, whereas plots that merely lay along its route boast buildings seven or eight stories high.

Other factors have therefore intervened to shape the street by modifying the options initially chosen by the planners or by taking these even further.

## Resistance to planning

### Modifications to the network

Within months of the incorporation of the district of Belleville into Paris, numerous street building proposals were submitted to the city council and some of these survived in one form or another to be included in the Imperial Decree of July 28, 1862. Already on March 20, 1860, E. Masson stressed “the necessity for a major thoroughfare through

the heart of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissements* of Paris".<sup>28</sup> He wrote that this "major axis half-way up a hill [would make it possible] to regulate traffic in these new Eastern districts which, due to the lie of the land, still do not have streets that are perpendicular to the Seine". The most frequent criticism recurring in the pages of the *Revue Municipale* gazette throughout 1861 concerned the location of the Town Hall of the 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* which had been housed in the old Belleville town hall since "annexation". Its peripheral location within the newly-created *arrondissement* was heavily criticized.<sup>29</sup> L. Lazare suggested putting the new town hall and a church on a square to be built at the intersection of the Rue du Retrait and the Rue des Partants (now known as the Rue Villiers de l'Isle Adam). The council eventually decided against this location and opted instead for a new town hall in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* on the traffic circle laid out behind the Père Lachaise Cemetery (now known as Place Gambetta). A hospital was built behind the town hall, while a church was put up on the site of the old Notre Dame de la Croix chapel in lower Ménilmontant.

The Decree of July 28, 1862, was quite warmly welcomed, and criticism was leveled mainly at the project's execution rather than at the project itself. Most public ire was focused on the slow progress. By 1870, only the work set out in the Decree of July 28, 1862, had been completed, consisting of the Buttes Chaumont Park and surrounding streets, Rue de Puebla, Rue de Meaux and Rue de Bagnolet.

Although the plan drafted by Alphand<sup>30</sup> indicated 1870 as the completion date for the Rue des Pyrénées, the actual date was obviously much later. The expropriation and resale procedures were unpopular and the lack of investment was highlighted as a real problem. "The city council was not short of options for building avenues and boulevards in eastern Paris. In the 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*, even though it only had to pay out between 20 and 25 francs per square meter, the council only expropriated the plots that were absolutely essential for building the new street."<sup>31</sup> We should stress that per-square-meter land prices around the center of Paris hovered around 200 francs at this time, whereas the cost of expropriating plots that bordered the Rue des Pyrénées generally varied between 16 and 20 francs per square meter. As we have seen, by limiting expropriation strictly to the land covered by the new street, the council forfeited any control over future building programs. Around the Rue des Pyrénées, this strategy also resulted in plots that were difficult to build on due to the gradient in relation to the proposed route of the new street which ran along a contour line. The Lazare brothers considered that the planners' role should have consisted not only in actually laying out the new street, but in facilitating building along the street as had been the case in the center of Paris. L. Lazare also lamented the lack of publicity in relation to the public auctions of land which prevented any competition between potential buyers. Thus, well-informed speculators were in a much stronger position to acquire the new plots at knock-down

<sup>28</sup> Masson, E. (1860). *La revue municipale*, No. 332 of 20 March, 1860.

<sup>29</sup> *La revue municipale*, articles of Bernage and of L. Lazare, No. 327 of 1 February, 1860; No. 343 of 19 July, 1860; No. 349 of 10 September, 1860; No. 336 of 1 March, 1861; No. 375 of 1 June, 1861; No. 396 of 1 January, 1862.

<sup>30</sup> Alphand, dir. (1889).

<sup>31</sup> Lazare, Louis (1970), p. 127.

prices which often only slightly exceeded the expropriation indemnities paid out by the council a few years earlier so that no profits were generated on the sales of the new plots. However, the importance of the Rue des Pyrénées was now incontestable. In 1873, when a commission composed of local *notables* was asked to study the route of a metropolitan railroad line linking Paris to its suburbs, they recommended that this should follow the same route as this street. None of the subsequent modifications to the network of surrounding streets (all of which were made post 1871, i.e., after the end of the Second Empire and the Haussmann era), disputed the strategic importance of Rue des Pyrénées and are proof of a remarkable continuity in Parisian municipal planning (Figs. 6.5 and 6.6). This bolstered the local importance of the street and new investment was pumped into enhancing public spaces. However, in certain cases such developments actually slowed down urban development in the street itself.

Take, for example, the project to develop the area around the town hall of the 20<sup>th</sup> arrondissement. This required larger-than-planned-for expropriation, so on August 14, 1874, the city council decided to approve the acquisition of a site located on Rue du Rat-

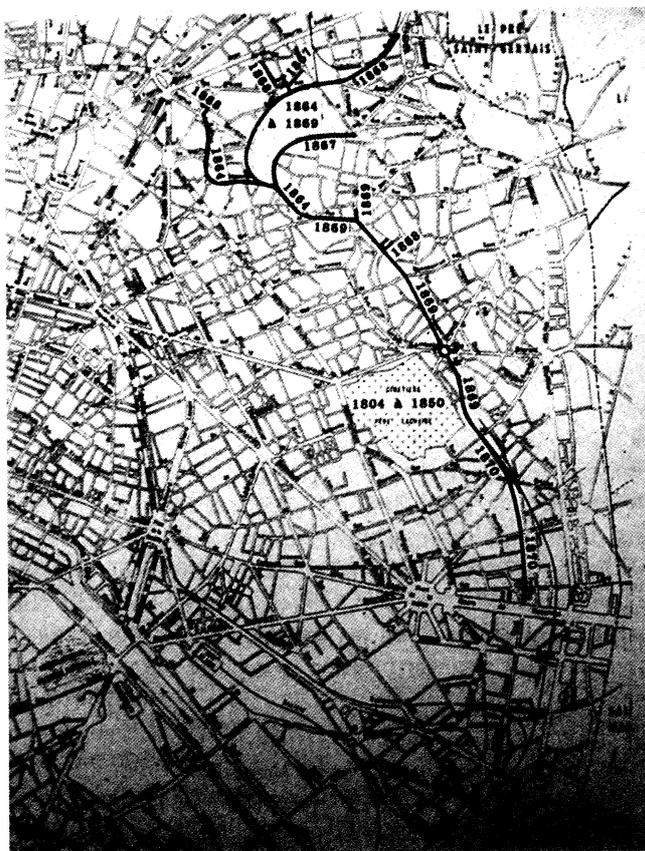


Fig. 6.5 Chronology of streets laid out between 1864 and 1871 relating to Rue des Pyrénées, A. Sander on map source: APUR Atelier parisien d'urbanisme and AP Archives de Paris.



**Fig. 6.6** Chronology of streets laid out between 1871 and 1889 relating to Rue des Pyrénées, A. Sander on map source: APUR Atelier parisien d'urbanisme and AP Archives de Paris.

rait prolongée (now Rue du Cambodge). On December 4, 1876, an expropriation order for the purpose of widening Rue de la Chine and Rue de Robinson (no longer exists today) was submitted for public review. Neither of the two sites concerned were ever resold as, on January 30, 1877, the council decided to use this land to build a public garden. All of the plots composing the blocks between Rue de la Chine, Rue de la Dhuis (now Avenue Gambetta), Rue du Japon and Rue du Sorbier (now Rue Belgrand) were either expropriated or purchased subject to an amicable settlement. A new order was published on March 7, 1877, providing for the expropriation of the land required to extend Rue du Japon and to close Rue de la Cour des Noues (between Rue Sorbier [now Rue Belgrand] and Rue de la Chine) and Rue du Ratraït (section formerly situated between Rue Sorbier [Rue Belgrand] and Rue des Prairies). This was not implemented immediately as a new modification to the street widening program was submitted for public review on December 10, 1877. It was only then that the plots regrouped by the previous council in and around the new town hall and the Rue de Puebla were put up for sale.

## Resistance to plot patterns

Once the plots along Rue de Puebla were put up for sale, the role of private buyers and sellers became crucial. A map of the redrawn plots bears out the important role played by one particular category of property buyers that may be termed “speculators”.

Several, sometimes adjacent, plots were bought up by the same owners. The names of Bariquand, Cantagrel and Laubière crop up especially frequently: these three people owned a number of plots on Rue des Pyrénées, some individually and some jointly.<sup>32</sup> Historians are familiar with Bariquand, who was a bailiff by profession, and Laubière, a “property owner”, and G. Jacquemet has written a long article about them.<sup>33</sup> Cantagrel, who was an architect and city councilor, only joined them later around the time of the speculative property transactions in the 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement*.

G. Jacquemet’s paper provides details of the periods in which speculators were most active. A boom around 1880 undoubtedly fuelled the acquisition of the sites acquired along Rue des Pyrénées, most of which were put up for sale by the council between 1879 and 1881. However, an economic crisis in 1882 resulted in a wave of property sales and foreclosures and most of the sites acquired in 1880 still had not been built upon. The bulk of the property acquired by speculators was sold in 1889 and subsequent sales after 1890 did help to boost building activity; however the whole process helps to explain why development took so long, even after the land had been sold off by the city council.

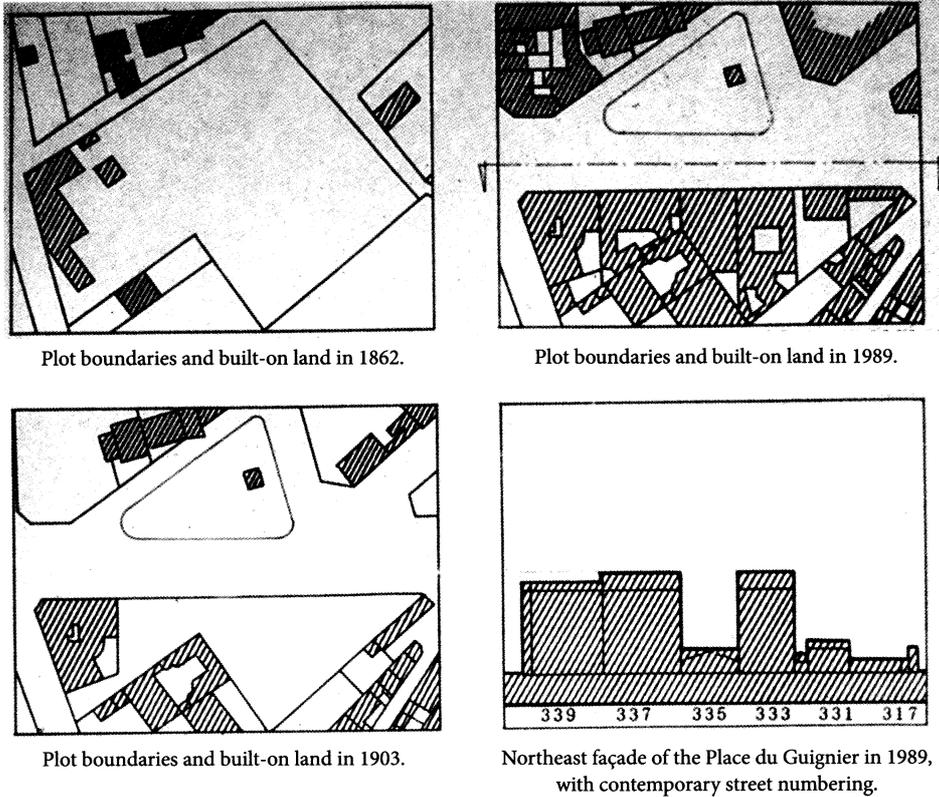
Another reason was speculators’ lack of enthusiasm for these relatively cheap neighborhoods. It was much more profitable to build in wealthier areas where the return on investment was more or less guaranteed. The new building requirements imposed on property developers by Haussmann and his successors (compulsory connection to the sewage system and the water and gas networks, etc.) meant that site costs were nothing compared to construction costs. The development of systems to rent out property with a subsequent promise to sell had a similar impact. Under such schemes, it took the tenant a number of years to pay for the property which meant that, as construction costs were the same in all neighborhoods, it was more advantageous to build on expensive land. As a result, this type of rental scheme was rare in the 20<sup>th</sup> *arrondissement* where “it must be remembered that, with regard to the value of the land newly-annexed to Paris, local influences were to hold sway over the central influence that resulted from the annexation for a long time to come”.<sup>34</sup> For all of these reasons, the development of the Rue des Pyrénées was painfully slow: the street had been laid out but private investors were reluctant to build in this old outlying district of marginal interest.

The plots situated at present day numbers 317 to 341, and 290 to 294 Rue des Pyrénées provide a good example of the consequences of the acquisition of land by such speculators. These plots form the northeastern façade of Rue des Pyrénées along Place du Guignier (Fig. 6.7). Our main source here is the *Journal d’annonces Petites affiches* (jour-

<sup>32</sup> Bariquand acquired 17 plots, including two jointly with Cantagrel and one with Laubière. Laubière and Cantagrel acquired four plots and seven plots, respectively, on their own.

<sup>33</sup> Jacquemet Gérard.

<sup>34</sup> Haussmann André (1863), p. 301.



**Fig. 6.7** Place du Guignier, northeast façade A Sander on map source: APUR Atelier parisien d'urbanisme, BHVP Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris, AP Archives de Paris and AN Archives nationales.

nal of small legal announcements), consulted for the period in question at the Bibliothèque historique de la Ville de Paris (BHVP: Historical Library of the City of Paris).

As we have already seen, this square was built using surplus expropriated land. The plots situated at numbers 317 to 341 Rue des Pyrénées (plot numbers 13 to 19 in the plan of the redrawn plots, Fig. 6.4, plots numbered from left to right) were sold by the council between 1880 and 1886, at the same time as most of the plots expropriated under the order of December 15, 1864. Plots 13 to 16 were acquired by Cantagrel on his own, while plots 17 and 19 were purchased jointly by Bariquand and Cantagrel. In fact, Cantagrel had previously acquired land opposite these plots, on the other side of the street. In other circumstances, all such land acquired by a single buyer around a public square could have been used for a private housing development, regulated or otherwise. In actual fact, the land remained idle and the plot at 337 Rue des Pyrénées (number 13 in the plan) was split into two plots and auctioned off on March 10, 1896. We do not know if there were any takers but a little later, on April 27, 1897, it was once again put up for auction, this time together with all of the plots we have just described. This land still had not been

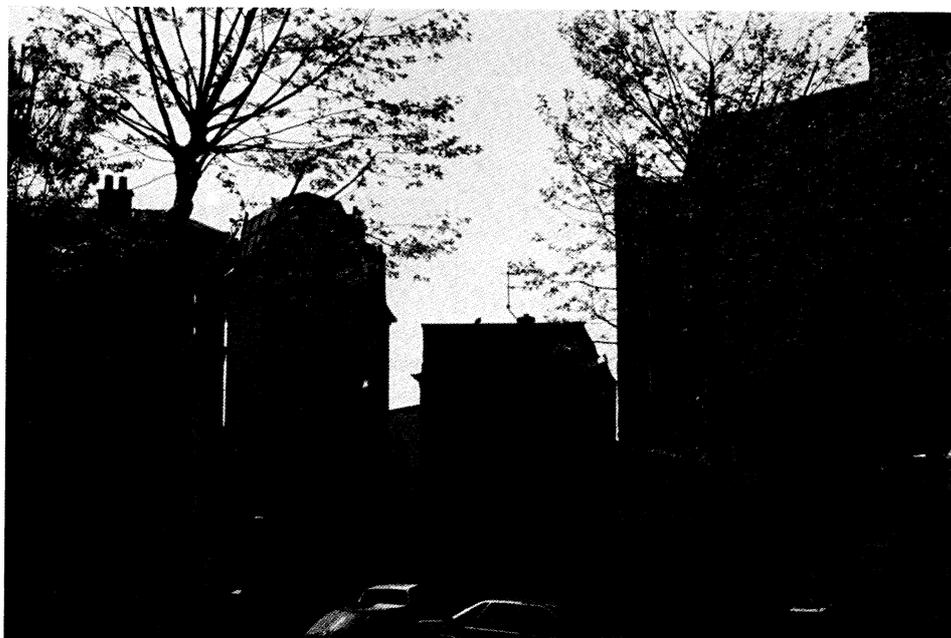


Fig. 6.8 Place du Guignier, North-East façade (credit: A. Sander).

built upon 17 years after it was first put up for sale by the city council! The only exception is the plot located at number 339 (number 12 in the plan of the redrawn plots) which has housed a seven-story building since 1896. This was one of the plots acquired by Cantagrel in 1880, and we do not know whether he sold it again or let it out in the intervening years. The plots located at numbers 337 and 341 were once again sold by auction on July 1, 1902.

These plots now contain very heterogeneous buildings despite having been redrawn by the council prior to resale (Fig. 6.8). The dwelling at number 317 has one story, while number 331 consists of a two-story building dating from 1909. This plot, owned by a certain Pinton, was resold on March 24, 1908, even though the owner had just connected it to the sewage system with a view to putting up a six-story building. It was the new owner, Bruelle (or Brucelle?), who built the aforementioned building that survives today. Number 333 is an eight-story structure built in 1907 by the same Pinton. Number 335 consists of just one story, while number 337 comprises eight stories and was put up in 1905 by Philippon, architect and owner of the site. As regards number 341, which currently houses a five-story building, it was sold by legal auction on July 11, 1914, while building work at the site was in progress.

An analysis of other plots that now house buildings of just one or two stories provides an understanding of the role of the owners of what were previously plots of rural land, and who, following the small-scale expropriation that accompanied the street-building program, suddenly owned property along a brand new street. As they could not raise the sums necessary to put up an appropriately-sized building, many chose to construct small structures containing a store on the ground floor and an apartment above. Such plots

house similar structures to those built on sites acquired by individuals of modest means once the speculators had gone bust, i.e., low-rise buildings reserved for the private use of their tradesmen or artisan owners or let out in small apartments. In one case where the plot was quite large, the owner simply developed it as a single site (Cité Leroy) containing small individual houses (which have survived and are now in huge demand) Thus we can see how the initial decision to limit expropriation to a strict minimum combined with the low value of the land to produce urban forms that were highly atypical in a newly laid out Haussmannien street.

It is also very important to understand the planning regulations in force during the initial phases of development as these had a significant impact on the buildings that eventually came to line the street. They explain why building development on the Rue des Pyrénées, which lagged behind the initial street building program, was blocked in certain cases by new regulations. Let us take just one example: the strips of land that are almost perpendicular to the street and for which the Rue des Pyrénées provided an outlet. These plots were not immediately built upon and sometimes had some of their width trimmed in subsequent sales (e.g., numbers 318 and 316). If there is a construction project at the far end of a pre-existing plot, i.e., behind the street, this may limit the permitted height of buildings on the street itself. However, this is not enough to freeze the urban landscape. When the plots increase in value sufficiently, the acquisition of all of the plots in question can obviate the effects of this type of planning regulation and facilitate more profitable real estate development (the case of number 312).

### Section conclusions

This third section has highlighted the manner in which development first had to be preceded by the constitution of a network of roads organized around Rue des Pyrénées (the case of Place Gambetta). While the creation of such a network initially held up the sale of plots, it was also an essential part of the process, as developing the land around Place Gambetta only became profitable once these new avenues had been laid out, thus linking it to the gateways to the new Paris (Porte de Bagnolet and Porte des Lilas) and to the center of town (via Place de la République).

We have also pointed up the important role played by speculators in the appearance of a street. Their actions have an impact on both the prime potential building sites and the rhythm of development. When the plots along Rue des Pyrénées were put up for sale in the 1880s, many were acquired by speculators who had no intention of building at that particular time. We have also shown how the low value of the land was an obstacle to development. The negative investment environment put the sites “on hold” for 20 odd years and it was not until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that new investors were willing to erect buildings of appropriate quality on them.

The actions of local property owners who forfeited land that lay along the actual path of the new street to expropriation also need to be taken into account. Their strategies varied widely and resulted in contrasting urban forms depending on whether or not they tried to make the most of the opportunity offered by the creation of the Rue des Pyrénées. Some built a house for their own use while others found the means to construct an appropriately-sized building, thus benefiting from the new outlet available for

their site. Others sat on their plots and waited for them to increase in value so they could sell them at a profit. Some built a small housing development on their site as we saw in the case of Cité Leroy. Each of these options has been a victim of the vagaries of time: once the city expanded and required more densely constructed structures, the small houses were demolished and replaced by more economically profitable buildings; when the neighborhood became more middle-class, the small houses needed to be preserved.

We have also shown how neither the initial choices of planners nor the regulations subsequently applied are sufficient to push a city planning project through to completion. The pre-existing context and any subsequent changes, as well as the actions of private investors also play a crucial role. Nevertheless, the possibilities made available by planning or planning regulations should not be neglected: investors may choose whether to or not to make the most of these, thus the importance of assisting projects by providing other types of incentives.

## Overall conclusion

At the time of Haussmann, new streets were laid out in order to transform the city in as short a time as possible, and not merely to service plots of land or link a pair of monuments. This is borne out by the obligation to build within a year that was frequently imposed on buyers of new plots that had been redrawn by the council.

However, certain streets, such as Rue des Pyrénées in Paris, still have not been completed nearly 150 years after they were laid out. By incomplete, we mean “in a state of perpetual construction”: these streets continue to evolve and to change in line with changes in the city and its planning regulations. This research has shown the extent to which an urban object and product of planning is rooted firmly in the territory. It has highlighted the factors that underpin resistance to this planning and the limits to planners’ roles. Finally, it has demonstrated how the new street, as an urban object, is gradually absorbed by the city over the long term<sup>35</sup>, so that it becomes an indissociable part<sup>36</sup>, but it still experiences difficulties in its development that are important to highlight.

In actual fact, we have highlighted the extent of the interaction between “top-down” planning actions and the “bottom-up” choices of the property owners in the production of the newly-laid out street. We are dealing with genuine co-production of a city which explains why the production process itself is so long and non-linear. Following in the tracks of the putative Haussmannien bulldozer, the tiny actions of the former, partially expropriated owners or the speculators that snapped up the newly created plots were of considerable importance. They combined with public action (which is itself framed by

<sup>35</sup> Braudel Fernand (1969) and Fortier, Bruno (1984), p. 119: “This dimension of time is probably the only “place” where we can observe—far removed from showcase city planning projects—the “micro-city-planning know-how that has made it possible to deal with this reality and to blend these fragments together without merely aggregating them”.

<sup>36</sup> Fortier Bruno, *idem*, p. 112, shows how the traces of the urban phenomena, housing developments, newly laid out streets and grandiose projects actually exist only in the map of Paris that he is analyzing (*le Vasserot*): they have been subsumed into a much more dense and indiscernible structure.”

expropriation regulations) to produce a huge variety of specific urban forms. Thus, if we want to understand these forms, it is crucial to analyze not merely the planning environment, and this goes for both a micro-plot-based analysis and a study of the route of the project as a whole. True, the route of the new street is in principle determined wholly by the planners but, as Halbwachs points out, “in spite of their authoritarian approach and a desire to leave their mark on the project, those tasked with laying out new streets have had to take the social requirements expressed within the city itself on board, and their action merely implements the procedures and details of the project without changing or counteracting the influence of collective forces.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, we have shown how the layout of Rue des Pyrénées can be traced back to the projects presented by several local *notables*. We have also seen how, in certain cases, the routes of planned streets were modified prior to completion for financial reasons or local considerations.

The manner in which this combination of actions by one or other group actually produces the forms observed can only be fully appreciated when the decisions of each party are placed in their own specific spatial and temporal context in relation to the location in question. The public actions and choices of property owners in Paris’ wealthy city center and in its peripheral districts were not the same. They also depended on economic circumstances: financial crises had the potential to “freeze” the development of plots of land, sometimes for years. When studying these plots in detail we observe that the first few years of a project are crucial in determining urban forms. Although the link established by Haussmannien city planning between building construction and plot patterns facilitated the substitution of buildings and the development of the cityscape in principle, in reality it became difficult to develop plots that were not built on in the first few years: construction of buildings at the far end of a pre-existing plot leading to planning restrictions on buildings giving onto the street itself; apertures for daylight that cannot be removed subsequently, etc.

The reticular dimension of operations is also very important in terms of how quickly they are completed: private investors only become interested in one-off, isolated operations once they make sense in relation to the city as a whole (e.g., if they have been linked via new thoroughfares), as we have seen with Place Gambetta, which attracted interest from investors only once it was linked to the city center (via Avenue de la République) and to the gateways of Paris (via Rue Belgrand and Avenue Gambetta). This last conclusion bears out the findings of research into contemporary public transport networks: developing the areas around city railway stations as proposed in a number of SCOTS<sup>38</sup> requires a skilful articulation of the spatial and temporal dimensions affected by the relationship between long-distance flows and local spaces.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Halbwachs, Maurice (1977), p. 337.

<sup>38</sup> *Schémas de COhérence Territoriale* (guidelines for coherent territorial development), which have replaced development blueprints under the Urban Solidarity and Renewal Law of December 13, 2000.

<sup>39</sup> For a summary, see: Zembri Pierre (1997).

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