

Worlding Heritage Historic Urban Landscapes and the Conservation Imaginary



Joseph Heathcott
The New School
66 W. 12th St., Room 605
New York, NY 10011

Office: 00.1.212.229.5100 x 2984
Cell: 00.1.347.751.5323
Email: joseph@newschool.edu

**Worlding Heritage:
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CHAPTER TWO

TIME: ACCELERATION AND DECELERATION IN PARIS



Fig. 1. The Promenade Plantée along Avenue Daumesnil, 2010. Photograph courtesy of Patrick Berger.

What is the temporality of infrastructure as it transitions from its productive life into industrial heritage? To think through this question, this chapter considers the Promenade Plantée in Eastern Paris. Cutting a 4.7 km swath through the 12th Arrondissement, it pioneered the form of the elevated linear park adapted from abandoned rail infrastructure (fig. 1). The great stone arches that support a portion of the Promenade have been converted into the Viaduc des Arts, with dozens of high-end artisanal shops, boutiques, and cafés. Since then, the conversion of disused urban rail lines to linear parks has sparked the imagination of planners, designers, and citizens in

many cities around the world, as they take a close look at their relict transit infrastructure with an eye toward conversion. Projects in the works include Vancouver's Port Mann Bridge, Philadelphia's Reading Viaduct, the Sydney Monorail, Bloomingdale Freight Line in Chicago, and the Tanjong Pagar and Jurong Railways in Singapore. These vacated lines obdure as part of a broader process of capital disinvestment, where tens of thousands of industrial age artifacts have fallen into obsolescence and disuse (Alfrey and Putnam, 1992; Brown, 2001; De Sousa, 2002, p.297-309; Koekebakker, 2004). Many of these structures are too expensive to tear down, so they decline *in situ*, accumulating the patina of age and abandonment as well as the antique allure of ruins (Edensor, 2005; Santora, 2010, p. RE1).

The elevated linear park emerged as a way to develop a new program for outmoded linear infrastructure, part of a broader effort to remake Paris for a post-industrial age. While scholars have grappled with the production of post-industrial landscapes, few have considered the varied and contradictory temporalities that surround such projects. This chapter traces the political, social, and economic forces that shaped the Promenade's architectonic form over time, from the production of a national rail system in the nineteenth century to the decline and dereliction of rail lines after World War II, to the reformatting of disused infrastructure in the 1970s and 1980s. At the heart of the story is time itself--not only change over time, but the changing conceptions of time that attend reformatted infrastructure. Where nineteenth-century rail lines annihilated space and compressed time through unprecedented velocities, I argue that the apparent 'deceleration' that attends post-industrial leisure landscapes is only made possible by the hyper-acceleration of global capitalist modes of production and

accumulation. In other words, the material solidity of frozen material infrastructure that promotes 'slowness' in contemporary urban design obscures the rapid accelerations of capital that are currently remaking the flow of wealth, people, and goods in the world.

Pairs Governance and Planning

In the decades following World War II, a severe housing crisis constituted the central planning challenge in Paris. As a response, planners working under the auspices of the Prefect of the Seine shifted efforts away from the demolition of central districts that had been common in the 1920s and 1930s, toward higher-density construction on the urban periphery. Over the course of the 1950s, for example, they transformed the low-density ring alongside the Boulevard Périphérique into a series of Modernist residential and commercial environments. In addition, planners also inserted new developments into the fabric of the central city itself--including the Front de Seine, La Défense, and the oft-reviled Gare de Montparnasse (Sutcliffe, 1996, pp.165-169). And throughout the 1950s and 1960s, planners demolished hundreds of buildings in the streets radiating east from Place d'Italie, transforming a working-class tenement district into a landscape of dense, Modern high rise housing (fig. 2). Between 1954 and 1974, then, redevelopment activities reshaped 12 square kilometers of land across Paris--nearly a quarter of the city's buildable surface. But it was not simply the quantity or extent of the changes that transformed Paris. Planners reconfigured the quality of land uses as well, eliminating 28% of all industrial floor space while adding 22% and 16% more office and residential space in the process (Evenson, 1979, p.310). While Paris would likely have undergone

some form of deindustrialization in any case, state policy accelerated the loss of manufacturing in the postwar decades.



Fig. 2. Transforming the 11th Arrondissement, east from Place d'Italie. A few remaining old tenements can be seen at bottom. Photograph courtesy of Interphotothèque, Documentation Française.

The efforts of planners to decentralize the urban core culminated in the 1965 regional plan for Paris: the *Schéma directeur d'aménagement et d'urbanisme de la région de Paris*. The plan called for further demolition and rebuilding of the urban core, coupled with rapid increase in the construction of new towns on the far periphery linked to the city through a massively expanded commuter rail system. However, even as officials rolled out the plan, Parisians began agitating against the excesses of

redevelopment, opposing what many saw to be the sapping of vitality of the old city. Spurred along by the massive student and worker unrest of 1968, citizens mobilized to oppose the ongoing destruction of urban districts (Evenson, 1979, p.303-304). For many Parisians, the effort to transform the city into a commuter metropolis eroded the prominence of the urban core and diminished the relevance of Paris on the world stage.

With the resurrection of the Paris mayoralty in 1976, the energies of redevelopment shifted from the Prefecture to the new municipal executive. Taking advantage of a divided left, Jacques Chirac won the first mayoral election in 1977. Chirac and his successor Jacques Tiberi shifted the locus of urban redevelopment from central state authority to public-private partnerships. Their devolutionary efforts dovetailed with the broader neoliberalization of governance and finance in Western Europe, where state expenditures were devolved from the central redistributive model of transfer payment to the decentralized investment model of infrastructure-led redevelopment (Swyngedouw et al., 2003).

Chirac's ambitions received a considerable boost, ironically, with the election in 1982 of Socialist President François Mitterrand. Despite their political differences, the two agreed on the unquestionable primacy of Paris, particularly as France looked forward to its Bicentennial in 1989. Shortly following his election, Mitterrand announced his *Grandes Opérations d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme* or *Grands Projets*, a series of major developments that would bring new monumental grandeur to Paris, including: the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the Grande Arche de La Défense, and the Opéra Bastille. This national command economy of cultural production dovetailed with Chirac's goals to liberalize property control laws and to use infrastructure and facilities to

increase property values in Paris's residential districts. (Bacqué, 2011, pp.256-273; (Carpenter and Lees, 1995, p.295).

Meanwhile, the mayor's office consolidated primary responsibility for land use planning in its Atelier Parisien d'urbanisme, created in 1977. Much of the large-scale planning activity in Paris revolved around redevelopment geographies called *zones d'aménagement concerté* (ZAC), where planners sought to leverage private investments through intensive public capital expenditures on demolition, site preparation, utilities, and infrastructure. A major overhaul of planning laws in 1983 enabled the establishment of a new entity to carry out the city's various plans: the Sociétés d'économie mixte (SEM) (Marvillet, 2006, pp.49-51). One of these, the Société d'économie mixte d'aménagement de l'Est Parisien (SEMAEST), would act as lead developer for a range of projects under the aegis of the *Plan-programme Est de Paris*, approved by the municipal council in November 1983 (Atelier Parisien d'urbanisme, 1983). The aim of the plan, as its title suggests, was no less than the transformation of eastern Paris over the next two decades. This would eventually include the creation of new green spaces such as the Promenade Plantée (Varlet, 1997, p.79).

From Industrial Machine to Green Corridor

The effort to convert Eastern Paris from a working-class industrial landscape to a high-end district populated by upwardly mobile professionals involved numerous interlocking projects on both banks of the Seine over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. Most prominent among these on the Left Bank was the ZAC Tolbiac, a district of docks, warehouses, and tenements that would be cleared to build the massive new Bibliothèque

nationale de France (BnF), one of Mitterrand's *Grands Projets*. On the right bank, the *Plan-programme Est de Paris* called for the conversion of the docks and warehouses at Bercy, once the city's principal entrepôts for wines, into a district of government offices, high-density housing, and a major new public amenity: the Parc de Bercy.

Less dramatic, but no less transformative, the Plan made a tentative call to repurpose the old Bastille-Vincennes spur line and its associated infrastructure, particularly the massive track rotunda and sprawling complex of machine sheds at Reuilly (fig. 3). In the ensuing years, multiple ideas and proposals passed through SEMAEST, ranging from a renewal of the spur line as a commuter train to the destruction of the rail corridor and its reabsorption by adjacent property owners.

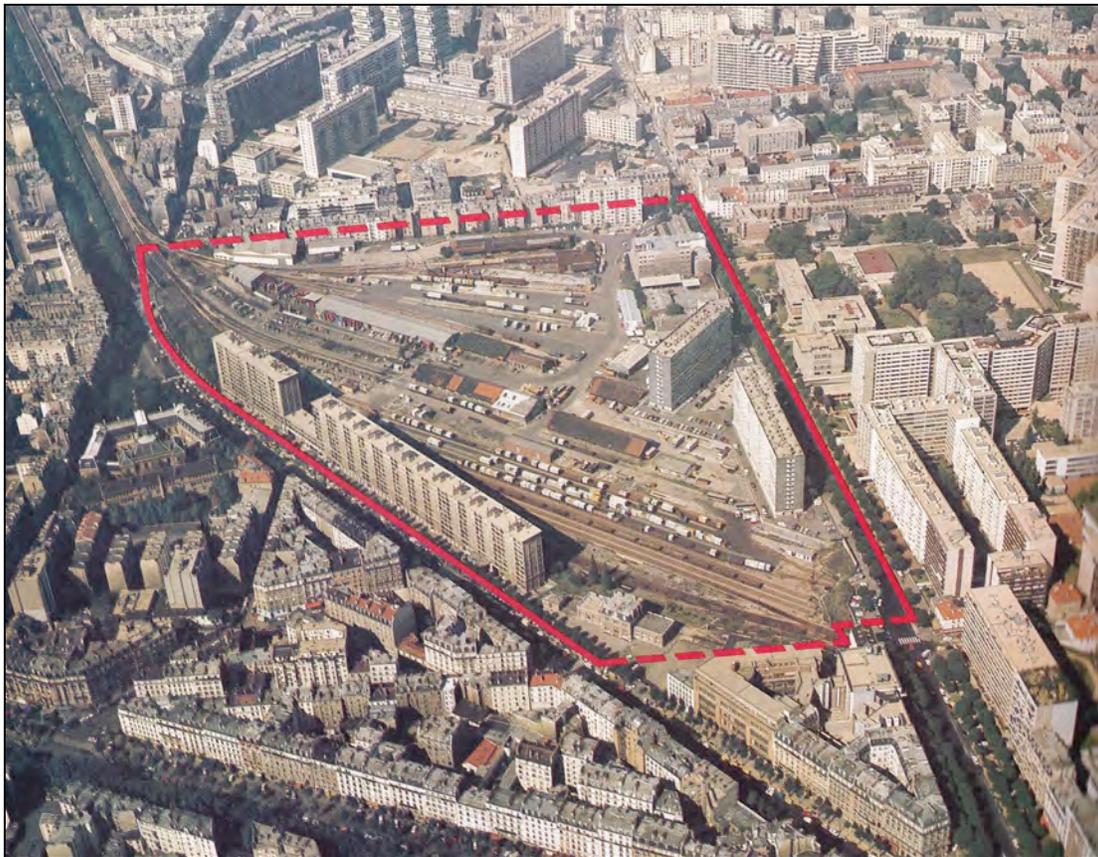


Fig. 3. The boundaries of ZAC Reuilly. Image courtesy of the Pavillon d'Arsenal.

However, the proposal that came from the Atelier Parisien d'urbanisme captured the most attention: the conversion of the entire railway into a new linear park to connect Bastille to the Bois de Vincennes on the outskirts of Paris. The rail yard at Reuilly, now ZAC Reuilly, would be dissembled and the land given over to new housing, schools, and public facilities. With support from the Atelier, SEMAEST held a competition for the design of the park in 1988, awarded contracts for demolition and construction beginning in 1990, and oversaw the project to completion in 1993.



Fig. 4. The path of the Promenade Plantée through the 12th Arrondissement, showing the Opéra (1), the ZAC Reuilly (2), and the Boulevard Périphérique (3).

The result of this large-scale adaptive use program is a park that runs for nearly 5km through eastern Paris, defining a linear condition in changing elevation (fig. 4). It commences 365 meters southeast of the Opéra Bastille, at the point where the Bastille-Vincennes line once terminated. For the first 1.5 kilometers it runs atop the Viaduc des Arts, stretching eastward along the Avenue Daumesnil. From there, the elevated Promenade crosses the Rue de Rambouillet into the northern tip of the Bercy quarter, an old warehouse district near the Seine. While still elevated, the line shifts here from the exposed stone viaduct to a series of bridges, platforms, and earthen embankments, often secreted from the street. The elevated portion terminates at the Jardin de Reully, a large circular green space converted from the railway's former maintenance yard and roundhouse. Promenaders can pass over the Jardin across a long, narrow wooden footbridge, or meander through along its perimeter paths (fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Jardin de Reully, with footbridge over the circular lawn. Photograph by author.

After Reuilly, the Promenade runs either at or below the grade of the street. For three hundred yards it mingles at grade with the Allée Vivaldi, passing between a series of large, seven- and eight-story residential buildings, most with ground floor commercial space for restaurants, shops, cafés, and offices. After the Allée Vivaldi, the Promenade enters a sequence of wooded lots just north of the Place Félix Eboué, meandering below grade until it reaches the Boulevard Périphérique. Here the Promenade Plantée essentially terminates; although an underground passage does exist to carry pedestrians under the Périphérique, it has been closed for repairs since 2010. At this point, a large spiral staircase returns the pedestrian to grade; by continuing along surface streets through the suburb of Saint-Mandé, one eventually connects to the Bois de Vincennes.

Meanwhile, beneath the rail line's elevated portion between Bastille and the Rue de Rambouillet, the Viaduc des Arts presents a uniform configuration of the spaces defined by the 71 grand arches (see fig. 1). These open, airy commercial premises house boutique craft and artisanal operations, restaurants, and design firms. From the moment it opened, the Viaduc des Arts and the Promenade Plantée enjoyed critical and popular success, sparking global interest in this repurposed urban form.

Infrastructure Time

Despite its appearance of fixity through design, the Promenade Plantée nevertheless took shape through a series of intersecting processes, routines, and conditions. Over the course of 150 years, the little piece of infrastructure both produced and became entangled in a series of transformative temporalities that unfolded across varied scales. Some of these temporalities emerge from the alternating compression and

distanciation of space with respect to time. Other temporalities attend the phase-changes in the infrastructure, as it moves through its initial use to a decommissioned state and finally to new program. Still other temporalities trace the affective experience of the Promenade Plantée within and against a series of global restructurings that are currently transforming Western Europe.

Railway Space-Time

Commissioned in 1853, the Bastille-Vincennes rail line (fig. 6) reflected the authoritarian growth policies of the Second Empire government, focused on the rapid industrialization of France (Green, 2011, pp. 35-38, 57-64; Nilsen, 2008, pp. 69-72; Price, 2007, pp. 210-215). Built by the Compagnie du Chemin de Fer de l'Est, the line



Fig. 6. Bastille-Vincennes railway at the Gare de Reuilly. Photograph courtesy of Agence Roger-Viollet.

constituted a spur, connecting Paris to a series of crucial military and commercial nodes-- first to the garrison at the Fort of Vincennes, and then to the burgeoning suburbs to the east such as La Varenne and Verneuil-l'Étang (Combrexelle and Braschi, 1989). By linking with the Company's Eastern lines, the spur also connected Paris to the textile manufacturing center at Mulhouse in Haut-Rhin, and the strategically important city of Strasbourg, on the disputed border with Germany. To accommodate passengers on the line, the company built the Gare de la Bastille, designed by François-Alexis Cendrier in 1859 as one of the first major terminal stations in Paris. Two kilometers east of the Bastille at Reuilly, the company constructed a massive roundabout for bundling and unbundling trains, served by a sprawling complex of sheds, machine shops, switches, and signal houses.

To make room for the new line amid the tangled medieval streetscape of Paris, Prefect of the Seine Georges-Eugène Haussmann carved out a purpose-built corridor for the railway, demolishing all buildings in its path. The construction of the corridor, and the viaduct that carried the tracks through the densest part of Eastern Paris, embodied the ruthlessly technocratic ethos of modern civil engineering--what Haussmann himself called "the implacable access of the straight line"--slicing its way across the streets and neighborhoods of the Twelfth Arrondissement in order to network Paris with the nation (Jordan, 1996, pp. 185-187). The project also provided Haussmann with the opportunity to create the Avenue Daumesnil, one of the longest streets in Paris, in order to provide a faster east-west route for carriage traffic into the heart of the city.

As a result of these large-scale public and private capital investments, the East of Paris was connected to an interlacing network of nodes and pathways that could be

traversed in astonishingly short durations. Moreover, a rapid increase in passenger trips could be accommodated. In its first year, the line carried 5 million people, and between 1880 and 1900 the number of tickets rose from 7 million to 20 million (Robert, 1983, pp. 413-416). Though only a small spur line, the Bastille-Vincennes railway nevertheless multiplied the city's eastward connections, and provided a rapid form of transit that would eventually draw tens of thousands of middle-class Parisians to resettle in Nogent-sur-marne, Bonneville, Boissy, and other residential districts outside of the center.

The Bastille-Vincennes spur embodied what Anthony Giddens (1984, p. 377) has described as the simultaneous compression and distancing of space-time. On the one hand, the velocity of rail compresses space and shortens the duration of travel, along with the very sense of distance. On the other hand, the rapid transportation of people and goods, along with "system integration" and the regulatory frameworks of industrial time, stretches relations of production and consumption over greater and greater territories (Giddens 1981, pp. 90-104).

Clocking the World

Even as it annihilated space, the national rail system amplified the discipline of industrial clock time that increasingly created a national temporality linking rural to urban areas. Higher speeds and more frequent departures, coupled with rising demand for more predictable runs, meant that railroads increasingly operated on sexagesimal clock time of hours, minutes, and eventually seconds. While this did not prove a problem for north-south traffic, east-west traffic had to account for the earth's axial turn and the consequent gain and loss of time in traversing longitudinal space. Designers of railway

stations like the Gare de Bastille incorporated clockworks into the aesthetic expression of façades, indexing the prominence of temporal reckoning for a Modern society (Gaillard 1981; Meeks 2012, pp. 42-44). Still, different regions continued to maintain separate clock times based on regional observation through much of the nineteenth century. Finally, in 1891, France adopted Paris mean time as a national regulatory regime; rail companies maintained master clocks in each station house, updated through telegraphs from the Paris Observatory at Montparnasse (Caron 1997).

Fig. 7. Bastille-Vincennes Railway timetable, showing Sunday and holiday schedules as far as Verneuil-L'Étang. Courtesy of the Archives Nationales de France.

Meanwhile, track and engine improvements continued to shave minutes off of travel times and intervals between trains. By 1876, for example, the wait time for trains

between Paris and Vincennes had fallen from 30 to 15 minutes, and the journey that once took nearly an hour by horse-drawn carriage could be completed in 15 minutes (Robert 1983, p. 414-416). Such rapid intervals had to be carefully coordinated, as multiple trains used the same rail lines, and switches had to be thrown with precision timing in order to shift trains onto their proper destination tracks. One of the key artifacts to arise from this period of temporal standardization was the published timetable (fig. 7)--remarkable not only for its gridded logic, but for the confidence and systematic intelligence required to commit the enterprise to print. On the ground, this highly routinized passage of trains atop the Bastille-Vincennes viaduct enveloped the 12th Arrondissement in a rhythmic sonic envelope of rattling of tracks, furiously stamping engine pistons, and great gouts of steam. Against the noisome backdrop, train engineers signaled their approach to the Gare de la Bastille by letting loose a blasting whistle, creating an aural figure-ground dyad (Schafer 2004, p. 8). Thus, each passing train constituted a haptic, affective instantiation of the temporal grid that regulated everyday life in these quarters of Eastern Paris.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the network of rail connected to Paris increased dramatically in density and extent. Multiple companies operated through a confusing welter of right-of-way agreements. However, the Great Depression brought a cascade of failures to many of the operators, and the routes, schedules, and use contracts became fragmented. The Bastille-Vincennes spur in particular had long served laborers and clerical workers during the week, and pleasure-seekers during the weekend. With the collapse of the economy, there were far fewer workers commuting to jobs or weekenders heading to the countryside. By 1936, annual ridership on the line had dropped to 12 million from a 1929 high of 30 million (Robert 1983, p. 415). To salvage

the rail system, the French government intervened, creating the state-owned Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français (SNCF) in 1938. The Paris-Vincennes-Strasbourg line was absorbed into the public rail system that year (Nilsen, 2008 p.109-111).

Suspended Animation

In the decades following World War II, significant portions of Paris's nineteenth-century industrial infrastructure lurched toward obsolescence. In some respects, this constituted a continuation of decline inaugurated by the Great Depression, from which many lines had never recovered. In other respects, this was the result of public capital investments in new or selectively upgraded infrastructure. The shift to truck-and-trailer freight distribution, for example, resulted in the construction of new freight terminals around the suburban periphery, leading several freight companies to declare bankruptcy. Additionally, the Prefecture of the Seine began to replace tram lines with buses, which proved far more agile moving through a street network undergoing continual repaving and repair. And for one reason or another, the SNCF elected not to upgrade the Bastille-Vincennes line with electric power, maintaining it as a steam line until the very end. By the late 1960s, commuter traffic on the line had fallen to a low of 6 million passengers per year, barely one-fifth of its peak in 1930.

The final blow for the Bastille-Vincennes line came with the construction of the Réseau Express Régional (RER) passenger system beginning in the mid-1960s. Though the Prefecture had experimented with rapid electric trains on dedicated lines into the city as early as the 1930s, it was not until after World War II that planners began to envision a new overlay of commuter rail (Tricoire 2002). The first line to be constructed, RER A, opened in stages between 1969 and 1977, with a line from suburban Boissy-St-Leger to

Place de la Nation, followed by a major underground portion linking Nation with the Auber station near Galleries Lafayette. These new connections rendered several older rail lines redundant, including Bastille-Vincennes. In 1969 officials decommissioned the Bastille-Vincennes railway (Meunier, 2001, pp.22-41, 56-70). Even as the RER A became one of the busiest commuter lines in the world, the Bastille-Vincennes portion in the inner urban core remained disused, a neglected piece of French industrial heritage.

Nevertheless, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the infrastructure continued to serve the neighborhood (figs. 8 and 9). Beneath the viaduct arches, numerous auto repair garages, machine shops, brasseries, craft workshops, billiard halls, and makeshift residences remained in place (Meade, 1996, p.52). These served a decidedly working-class clientele, reflecting the persistence of the neighborhood as a home for working families. On top of the viaduct, adventurous Parisians quietly laid claim to the vacated linear space as a kind of insurgent habitat. The abandoned rail bed became a haven for bird watchers, underage drinkers, drug dealers, and urban explorers. And the decommissioned Gare de la Bastille became a venue for rock concerts, experimental theater, and other events. Even so, many residents of the Twelfth Arrondissement grew tired of living alongside an abandoned rail line, and began agitating for a solution. Some residents and officials, including SEMAEST planners, wanted the railway torn down. Others called for the development of a new commuter line, or even the restoration of freight service. The SNCF, however, deemed demolition too costly, particularly with the onset of a severe recession in the early 1980s (ZAC Reuilly File).



Figs. 8 and 9. From 1969, when the Bastille-Vincennes rail line was decommissioned, and the opening of the Promenade Plantée in 1993, the arches of the viaduct continued to provide space for local businesses. Above: a furniture store, painting service, and shoe repair shop. Below: an auto repair garage. Photos ca. 1975, courtesy of the Pavillon de l'Arsenal.

For over two decades, then, the disused rail line persisted in a kind of suspended animation, surrounded by large-scale development projects and a swirl of contradictory aspirations that tended to cancel each other out. On the one hand, planners had spent decades trying to decongest Paris by building highways, establishing new satellite towns, and relocating industrial functions to the periphery. On the other hand, planners lamented the obsolescence, underused land, and vacant structures that resulted from decentralization policies. "Signs of the decline of activities are evident today," planners noted in the 1983 *Plan programme de l'est de Paris*. "This is the result of deindustrialization which, everywhere in Paris since the 1950s, has led to the departure of activities and disintegration of economic fabric" (Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme 1987, 99).

Thus, a generation of Parisians grew up knowing the Bastille-Vincennes railway only as a derelict piece of the city's industrial infrastructure, albeit with a changing cast of characters occupying the viaduct arches. During this time, the railway silently accumulated the patina of decay: masonry crumbled from weather-weakened mortar; graffiti effervesced across the parapet walls and underpasses; tracks rusted as tall grass and other volunteer perennial species reclaimed the rail bed soil. The relict piece of infrastructure sat heavily on the landscape, deactivated, obsolescent, waiting.

Temporality of Loss

Meanwhile, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, state-directed planning schemes encountered a citizenry increasingly traumatized by urban demolition. Major features of everyday working-class Parisian life had either fallen to the wrecking ball, or were transformed beyond recognition. Planners working under the auspices of the Prefecture

demolished Les Halles in 1971, the slaughterhouses of La Villette in 1974, and the Citroën factory in 1983. To the west, the towers of La Défense rose in fits and starts over three decades, replacing the factories, warehouses, and tenements of Courbevoie and Nanterre with a gleaming new civil and commercial district. In the east, SEMAEST planners cleared several dozen buildings to make way for the massive new Opéra Bastille, including the erstwhile Gare de Bastille in 1984. New facilities sited outside of the city also exerted an impact on the built environment of the core. For example, the construction of the massive new Marché International de Rungis in the southern suburbs of Paris had far-reaching implications for the city. Completed in 1969, the market not only replaced the functions of Les Halles, it also rendered most of the docks and warehouses along the Seine obsolete, including the old wine trading center at Bercy (Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme 1987, 99).

Anxieties over rapid change were amplified, moreover, by the radical designs replacing the Gothic, Second Empire, and Beaux-Arts structures. A series of singular new buildings challenged ordinary Parisians' sense of their city and its identity. The Tour Montparnasse, completed in 1973, became an instant lightning rod for criticism, its seemingly anonymous and placeless International Style absorbing much of the anger Parisians felt over the rapid changes underway around them. Renzo Piano's astonishing Centre George Pompidou, completed in 1977, destabilized Parisians' notion of the grand institution. With its guts exposed and its program obscured, the Pompidou Center radically inverted the neoclassical hierarchies that had stabilized expressions of cultural power since the Enlightenment. Finally, the immense Forum des Halles (fig. 10), opened in stages between 1979 and 1986 on the site once occupied by Baltard's pavilions, further

challenged cherished Parisian ideals. The replacement of the iron grid of markets with an underground shopping mall literally inverted the practice of public life *en plein air*.



Fig. 10. Forum des Halles, 1986. The underground mall was designed by Claude Visconi, while Jean Willerval designed the gardens. Courtesy of Pavillon de l'Arsenal.

Citizen opposition emerged from a mix of motives, including newfound environmental consciousness, anti-establishment politics, and newfound commitments to historic preservation. However, below these varied commitments lurked nostalgia for a partly imagined pre-industrial Paris of artisans, shopkeepers, and *petit quartiers*. Such nostalgia was abetted by a raft of media that showcased a disappearing Paris. Renowned photographer Robert Doisneau famously captured the waning days of Les Halles in stark black and white, his images circulating in books, magazines, and exhibitions. Lionel Mouraux's wonderfully atmospheric color photographs of the Bercy warehouse complex

in 1977, collected in several books, catalyzed an effort to save at least part of the old complex (fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Lionel Mouraux produced hundreds of photographs of the Bercy warehouses in various stages of decline. Courtesy of the Pavillon de l'Arsenal.

In his 1977 screed against rapid redevelopment, *The Assassination of Paris*, French historian and civil servant Louis Chevalier declared:

...it is always the same few who speak of beauty and history, who say what needs saying, who utter the necessary words in all the major votes and all the major decisions...but they also speak out on the multitude of incidents that make up the daily life of the city, against threats to a street, a façade, a garden, a tree, artists studios in danger of destruction (168).

Chevalier laid blame squarely on the figure of the technocrat, "an administrative caste created to serve the state, which soon took over the state." For Chevalier, the technocrat

is a species of civil servant long dormant in French politics, but which came to be unleashed upon the nation by the Fifth Republic to carry out De Gaulle's vision of a Modern France. "To be a good Bishop," he acidly remarked, "one does not have to be a great theologian" (Chevalier 1994: 119-123). But of course, Paris was undergoing global transformations that the power of planners, architects, accountants, engineers, and other civil servants could only obliquely confront.

Plan-Project Time

Rumbling through the temporalities of suspension and loss, the special time of redevelopment welled up at specific points on the landscape of Paris in the 1980s and 1990s. Even as the Bastille-Vincennes railway lay derelict, quietly reclaimed for informal and fugitive uses, it became enmeshed in plans for the remaking of Eastern Paris. In 1983, the city's Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme established the Société d'économie mixte d'aménagement de l'Est Parisien (SEMAEST), and published its *Plan-programme Est de Paris*, approved by the municipal council in November 1983 (Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme, 1983). The ambitious plan sought to correct for decades of imbalance in the distribution of capital improvements, which had long tended to favor the "Beaubourgs"--the city's haute-bourgeois Western quarters. With the *Plan-programme Est de Paris*, planners would redirect public expenditures to a combination of rehabilitation and clearance for new construction, projecting a landscape of new amenities such as parks, schools, swimming pools, as well as high-density housing, onto the working-class precincts of the 12th and 13th Arrondissements.



Fig. 12. Plan for transforming the decommissioned wine center at Bercy into a new park, c. 1987. Courtesy of the Pavillon de l'Arsenal.

Despite the recessions of the 1980s, several large-scale works transformed the face of Eastern Paris, anchored spatially and temporally by two of Mitterrand's Grands Projets: the Opéra-Bastille at the Western edge of the 12th Arrondissement, commenced in 1983; and across the Seine in the 13th, the clearance of Tolbiac through the early 1990s to make way for the Bibliothèque nationale de France, completed in 1996. Between these Grands Projets, SEMAEST planners set their sites on the decommissioned docks and warehouses of Bercy, the former center of wine distribution for Paris (see figs. 11 and 12). After a series of studies in the mid-1980s, planners settled on the idea for a new park at Bercy, incorporating it schematically into the updated version of the 1983 *Plan-programme de l'est de Paris* (Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme 1987, 98-101).

Amid the loss of numerous landmarks, however, citizens and planners increasingly sought opportunities to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse artifacts of the old city. A major boost in this direction came with the bold conversion of the Gare d'Orsay

into a museum. Rendered obsolete by the shift to longer trains in the 1930s, the station served as a postal center, film set, and auction house before it was slated for demolition in 1970. However, in the mid-1970s, a coalition of citizens and civil servants prevailed against razing the station, and in 1978 an architectural competition yielded plans for its conversion into a major new museum. Opened in 1986, the Musée d'Orsay had a catalytic effect not only in France, but in cities around the world, as planners and preservationists sought new life for industrial-era buildings and structures (Hein and Houk 2008; Schneider 1998).

With the publication of the updated *Plan-programme de l'est de Paris* in 1987, the municipality embraced the idea to convert the Bastille-Vincennes rail line into a "coulee verte" for the city, rather than following the original plan to cover it with new construction. Seeking the best plans for this new green corridor, SEMAEST held a design competition in 1988, and awarded contracts to three finalists. Architect Patrick Berger would act as lead designer, and would oversee the redevelopment of the superstructure, with its 71 arches, into the Viaduc des Arts. Architect Philippe Matthieu and landscape architect Jacques Vergely would design the new linear park on either side of the ZAC Reuilly. Plans for new residential and commercial development in the ZAC Reuilly took shape around the design of the greenway, the restoration of the Gare de Reuilly, and the creation of the new Jardin de Reuilly to serve as the central pivot point of the Promenade Plantée (Varlet, 1997, pp.78-84).

For the next decade, this piece of relict infrastructure entered the matrix of project time--that temporal condition governed by the issuance of contracts, the dispersal of public funds, the securement of private investments, the recruitment and deployment of

labor and all of the rituals of work time established by unions, the coordination of materials and phases, the seasonal cycles of construction, and the inevitable delays that attend any massive episode of redevelopment. Even after completion of the Viaduc and Promenade, redevelopment projects tied to the coulée verte continued well into the 2000s, particularly in the form of new construction of high-density housing and public amenities in the eastern section between Reuilly and Place Daumesnil (fig. 13).



Fig. 13. Construction along the Promenade Plantée's Allée Vivaldi. Photograph by author.

Deceleration

Amid the dramatic transformations underway in Eastern Paris, the Promenade emerged as an apparent space of deceleration. This provided what urban theorist Christoph Lindner has described as a slowing down of the high-velocity action of the city through conservation and leisure (Lindner 2013, pp. 18-19). In designing the project,

Vergely and Mathieu conceptualized the overall plan within the French landscape practice of *préverdissement*--a horticultural term which means to encourage a particular botanical scheme through initial plantation. In this practice, according to landscape architect Pierre Donadieu (1999, p. 14), designers aspire to "anticipate the city" through nimble, patient, and flexible tactics. Rather than overdetermining the urban landscape through close-ended constructions, designers organize projects within a framework that connects current conditions to future growth, and that provides platforms for human drama and experimentation. More than anything, they lent their architectonic imagination to the production of a space of deceleration within the city (fig. 14).



Fig. 14. Vergely and Mathieu's design emphasizes slowness, disruption, and contemplation. Photograph

No longer a part of a national rapid freight and passenger movement system, today the Promenade supports a range of decelerated place-making routines, including

walking, jogging, sitting, picnicking, bird watching, reading, talking, seeing and being seen. It is an amenity for adjacent residents, a destination for Parisians, a draw for tourists, and a laboratory for horticulturalists and students of landscape. It offers a unique viewshed of Paris: originally constructed for motion, connection, and destination, it now frames a counterpoint of slowness, rest, and contemplation. Visitors absorb views not through the claustrophobic window of a moving train, but from the unencumbered vantage of the walker in the city, whose peripheral vision sweeps over building and sky. And unlike the grand boulevards designed by Haussmann as a theatrical set piece for a new Paris, the Promenade Plantée slices through the city's back stage, revealing an alternate vantage from which to read and experience the landscape (Sennett, 1992, p.133-137; Jordan, 1996, pp.348-352).

All of this decelerated activity unfolds along an interstitial seam several stories above the streets of Paris, and it is the conservation of this linear elevation that is the Promenade's signal achievement. The Promenade retains the material culture of the industrial age in the form of the viaduct atop which it runs. It also secures the intangible heritage of the spatial corridor, the right-of-way of the rail line, originally appropriated at public expense for private use, now returned to the public as open access leisure space. To create such a corridor anew in today's city would be nearly impossible. Moreover, the Promenade's peculiar form--a long, thin spine with thick edges and complex program--produces a kind of folded, interiorized space that nevertheless feels capacious. It converts what had been an edge condition characterized by a rigid, impermeable boundary into a threshold for multiple activities, experiences, and meanings (Kullman, 2011, p.70). In this way, the preservation of historic spatial elements has resulted in a

reformatting of urban temporality into what Chrisoph Lindner (2016) has described as a "slow" urbanism, one that provides a platform for public culture and all of its associated human dramas, activities, and encounters.

Cyclicity

While people engage in a variety of decelerated activities along the length of the linear park, the Promenade Plantée is nevertheless imbricated in temporal cycles beyond its peculiar spatial envelope. These cycles are tied to the shifting fortunes of neighborhoods over the last half-century, which in turn reflect the changing levels of public and private investment in housing, amenities, and infrastructure.

French cities, unlike their Anglo-American counterparts, typically contain higher proportions of wealthy households in central districts to begin with, and therefore experience gentrification in less rapid and glaring ways (Préteceille, 2007, pp.10-31). Very few of the central and western *beaux quartiers* of Paris have witnessed the devaluation cycles of socio-economically equivalent London and New York neighborhoods, for example. Still, sizable swaths of northern and eastern Paris saw declining property values in the decades after World War II, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by several stages of revaluation in the 1990s and 2000s. These cycles enveloped the Promenade Plantée and the Twelfth Arrondissement within a set of transformations in the nature and experience of city life in post-Industrial Paris (Carpenter and Lees, 1995, pp. 292-295).

The Promenade Plantée emerged as just one element of a vast remaking of Northern and Eastern Paris over the 1980s and 1990s, with the primarily goal of the

Chirac administration being the revaluation of private property through targeted public investments (Donadieu, 1999, p.12; Nelson, 2001, pp.492-298; Savitch and Kantor, 2004, pp.145-147). Evidence suggests that the strategy has paid off, if unevenly, in many quarters of the city (Bacqué and Fijalkow, 2006, pp. 63-83; Pattaroni et al, 2011).

In the Twelfth Arrondissement, national census records reveal many of the telltale signatures of devaluation and revaluation cycles. Amid the severe housing crisis of the postwar decade, the vacancy rate in the Twelfth was less than one half of one per cent. From 1962 to 1975, however, the number of vacant units in the Twelfth nearly quintupled. By the end of the 1980s, 8% of the housing stock in the Twelfth lay vacant--a total of 6,316 units. The rise was even more dramatic in the 48th quarter, comprising the Quinze-Vingts neighborhood, which contains most of the elevated portion of the Bastille-Vincennes line. While the city lost 25% of its residents between 1954 and 1999, Quinze-Vingts lost 42%. In 1990, over 10% of housing units in the Quinze-Vingts were vacant. However, with new investments in the Promenade Plantée, Viaduc des Arts, the ZAC de Reuilly and Bercy, the vacancy rate in the Twelfth leveled off in the late 1990s at around 8%. And the population of the Twelfth rebounded, experiencing a 5% growth rate since 1982, even while the city as a whole continued to lose population. In this sense, the neighborhood turned an important corner. However, the new cycle of revaluation and in-migration masked more profound changes that would reshape Paris over the next three decades.

Acceleration

Once transformed, the Promenade Plantée became part of an emergent temporality governed by the transformation of work and finance, and the production of a global tourist imaginary. Advertisements for the new amenities at Citröen, La Villette, and Bercy typically tied them less to their status as heritage artifacts, and more to their role within an emergent global economy characterized by high velocity, information saturation, and hypermediated consumption (fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Advertisement for the Parc de la Villette, 1992. Courtesy of the Archives Nationales de France.

As the neighborhoods surrounding the Promenade Plantée rebounded in the late 1990s, the population and employment base of the neighborhood underwent a substantial transition. This transition reflected, in part, broader changes in the political economy of France and the nature of work and residence in the nation's capital city (table 2). In 1954,

for example, one in six Parisians worked in traditional industrial and wage-earning jobs. By 1982 the proportion had fallen to one in ten, and by 1999 only 5.5% of all residents fell into the category of *ouvriers*.

This transformation exerted the most dramatic effect on working- and lower-middle-class neighborhoods of Paris. The Twelfth Arrondissement, for example, saw a sharper decline than the city as a whole in the numbers of laborers, semi-skilled tradespeople, clerks, food and commercial employees, low-level bureaucrats, and other wage and salary earners. Meanwhile, between 1982 and 1999, the Twelfth experienced a sharper rise than the city overall in the number of people employed in the knowledge professions. The Quinze-Vingts neighborhood (48th Quarter) experienced these changes most intensively, with a 120% rise in the proportion of knowledge industry professional--double the increase in Paris overall--and a 60% decline in the number of wage workers. It is likely that the creation of the Promenade Plantée and the Viaduc des Arts exerted a catalytic effect on the neighborhood, increasing property values and reconfiguring the residential landscape.

An in-depth regression and mapping study by Anne Clerval (2011) further details the picture. Centered on the old Faubourg St. Antoine, which includes parts of both the Eleventh and Twelfth Arrondissements east of the Bastille, Clerval's research reveals that between 1982 and 1999, the neighborhood experienced a dramatic increase in the number of "high cultural capital" residents, and a corresponding decline in moderate-income households. These increases in households with both very high incomes (white collar workers in technology, finance, and management) and very low incomes (artists,

students, and the *déclassé*) suggest a 'hollowing out' of the middle--a common signature of gentrification.

The Promenade's Viaduc des Arts, with its dozens of high-end artisanal shops and boutiques, constituted a central element of the commercial reconfiguration of East Paris. Prior to redevelopment, many of the vaulted spaces housed one-and-a-half story premises with businesses on the street level and small lofts above for storage and illegal flats, all enclosed by makeshift façades that had accumulated over time. In the renovation process, these premises were demolished and cleared out, opening up the arches to their original condition. While eleven of the arches remain open for street through-traffic, the other 60 have been equipped with uniform glass curtain-wall façades and regulated signage, color schemes, and uses (fig. 16).



Fig. 16. Shop front under an arch of the Viaduc des Arts, 2014. Photography by author.

On the one hand, the outfitting of the Viaduc des Arts reflects the commitment by officials to support the traditional artisanal and craft operations that had long characterized the Twelfth Arrondissement. And yet planners cleared the ramshackle collection of small-scale, DIY artisanal workshops and squats that had accumulated beneath the arches, making way for the installation of premises geared toward "upmarket tenants, attracted by the upgrading--not to say gentrification--of the area stimulated by the Bastille Opera." (Meade, 1996, p.54) In the process, planners and designers imposed a derivative, unitary aesthetic of glass façades and open interiors on a structure whose former aesthetic derived from the rich, adaptive, and fine-grained accumulations emerging from the working-class neighborhoods of the Twelfth (see figs. 8 and 9).

The effect of this transformation, as with so many post-industrial urban redevelopment schemes, has been to convert a site of primary production to a landscape emphasizing global tourist spectatorship and consumption (Zukin, 1993, pp.4-9; Clarke, 2003, pp.28-43). Indeed, tourists "discovered" Eastern Paris as the neighborhoods surfaced in the discursive space of travel magazines, books, and blogs throughout the 1990s and 2000s (Pinkhasov, 2012), thrusting the area into the seasonal cycles of tourism and the global simultaneity of the tourist imaginary. Thus, the refurbishing of the Bastille neighborhood, construction of the new opera house, and completion of the Promenade ushered in a process of transformation in Eastern Paris that continues today (Marvillet, 2006, pp.35-42).

Conclusion

Standing on the Avenue Daumesnil and looking across to the Viaduc des Arts and the Promenade Plantée, it is difficult to see the ensemble as anything but a stable artifact, a piece of heritage frozen in time and repurposed as a public amenity. The graceful arches, the overhanging ivy, the ponderous brick spandrels and limestone pediments: such elements convey a sense of stolidity amid the bustle of Paris. Crossing Avenue Daumesnil and ascending to the Promenade Plantée, one enters a realm of relative calm and quiet, as though having passed through a membrane. Birdsong fills the air, along with the faint scent of wet earth and flowers. People stroll alone or in small clusters, and the occasional jogger pads by, while a custodian empties a rubbish bin. Here, velocity is a matter of foot-power, or the occasional silent electric thrum of a motorized scooter.

And yet, the affect of stability and serenity belies the manifold overlapping temporal conditions that have produced, swirled around, and flowed from this piece of infrastructure over the last 150 years. It is not simply that the city changes over time while the rail line bears dumb witness; it is that the rail line itself is temporally dynamic and therefore productive of change. Rammed through eastern Paris in a convulsion of reconstruction, Haussmann's implacable straight line tightened connections of the eastern suburbs and provinces to the capital, vastly increasing the velocity and volume of trade and travel. These increases reshaped the spaces through which the railway passed, tying commercial development and commuter settlement to the fortunes of the capital.

Meanwhile, the rail line creates a fixed traction system that is necessarily imbricated with urban space, so that it is subject to the broader political, socio-technical, and economic forces that reorganize both the surrounding urban landscape and the

infrastructure that serves it. In the mode of industrial expansion through the second half of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth, this imbrication serves the expanding productive capacity of Paris. However, the utility of the rail depends on the persistence of the system to which it is fixed. As elements of that system change--the shift to electric rail, the efforts to decentralize the urban core, the movement of industrial activity out of the city--bits and pieces of the interwoven rail-industrial-urban fabric fall into obsolescence over time.

Of course, the story does not stop there. Obsolescence has its own temporal qualities that weave relict pieces of the landscape into narratives of loss and nostalgia. In the 1970s, Parisians were gripped with anguish over the rapid transformations of the postwar decades, particularly the disappearance of the productive city--the city of workers, artisans, factories, markets, slaughterhouses, and shops. Within this temporal envelope of nostalgia, Parisians tended to downplay the frictions of mass industrial unrest, the discomforts of working-class tenement life, the plumes of factory smoke that perpetually darkened the skies, the choke of congestion around Les Halles and other nodes of the city's productive fabric. Nostalgia often serves a critical function, to be sure, but it is a critique of the present that relies on highly selective memory of the past. Nevertheless, nostalgia plays a crucial role in the burgeoning interest among Parisians in salvaging elements of their recent past, such as the Bastille-Vincennes rail line.

And so the rail line glides into new temporal registers. Plans for the Promenade Plantée took shape amid one of the most ambitious efforts to remake Paris since the days of Haussmann--the *Plan Programme de l'est de Paris*. As one of many projects, the conversion of the Bastille-Vincennes rail line into a linear park pushed the relict

infrastructure into project time, an oscillating temporality of contracts and phases, starts and stops, idle periods and double shifts, basic construction and finishing touches. Those who live or work in Eastern Paris witness a series of transformations; some projects unfold in sequence, others simultaneously or in overlapping phases. While gathering designs for the conversion of the Bastille-Vincennes rail line, for example, contractors put the finishing touches on Carlos Ott's gleaming new Opéra. When the first phase of the Promenade Plantée opened in 1993, SEMAEST staff were busily preparing to demolish and re-grade the first section of Bercy to make way for the new park landscape.

Once completed, the Promenade Plantée is caught in tension between several overlapping temporal conditions. The new park itself more than achieves the goal of its designers, to create a space of deceleration and slowness amid the high energy of a rapidly changing Paris. At the same time, the new amenity is itself productive of such changes, providing a pull factor for the resettlement of the Twelfth Arrondissement, which once suffered the highest vacancy rates in the capital. Despite some protections in the form of rent control and social housing units, a revaluation cycle inevitably transforms the neighborhoods through which the Promenade Plantée passes, bringing in a wave of salaried professionals to the once stalwart working-class district. If these new residents work hard in the fast-paced world of finance, media, design, and information, they have but to walk to the Promenade Plantée to access a landscape of slowness.

Thus, the decelerating qualities of the Promenade's landscape design persist in tension with, and indeed partially mask, the forces of temporal acceleration that envelope it. The transformation of global finance through exponentially increased velocities of transaction has reshaped Paris throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first

centuries. Planners in the capital seek not only to remove older fixed capital investments such as factories, markets, slaughterhouses, port facilities and obsolete rail lines. They also actively make room for the information economy and its associated residential, commercial, intellectual, and leisure landscapes. In the West, this includes such massive undertakings as La Défense and Citröen. In the east, it includes the transformation of La Villette into a massive entertainment and museum complex, Bercy into a quayside park, and the Bastille-Vincennes line into a new leisure landscape. Planners achieve these results through increasingly neoliberal commitments to devolution of the welfare state and a shift to expending public capital in support of globally-financed private investment.

In the end, whether the conversion of industrial artifacts produces narrow benefit or broad public good, the process inevitably monumentalizes a set of historical relationships while producing dramatic shifts in spatial and temporal organization (Pollitt, 2012, pp.65-73). The Promenade Plantée comprises not one but several interlaced spatio-temporal modalities. Despite its elevated views and noteworthy contemporary design, for example, it is in many ways a classic bourgeois space, using carefully crafted landscape and firmly controlled optics to describe a linear pathway for seeing and being seen. At the same time, it registers, to varying degrees, a neoliberal turn in city making, with public-private partnerships directed toward the production of amenities that raise property values. Finally, it constitutes a heterotopic space that, despite its obdurate forms, resists formal closure because it remains open to multiple, overlapping alterities, trajectories, uses, and meanings. The Promenade Plantée exemplifies the creation of post-industrial landscapes that recalibrate leisure space and time to new modes of cultural production within an increasingly global two-tiered economy.

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