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EFFECTS OF PLACE AND POVERTY IN EUROPE

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Summary

This article deals with the need to build theories on the spatial dimension of poverty in order to develop analysis and action charts for more social equity and territorial efficiency. Europe being a vast region of the world, it is both a question of developing a theoretical model that allows us to grasp the constants of the spatial inscription of poverty and identifying its local, regional or national variations. This new approach consists in showing the importance of the effects of place associated with poverty and highlighting the lack of thought given to territory when it comes to implementing public policies dealing with poverty.

Résumé

Cette communication porte sur la nécessité de théoriser la dimension spatiale de la pauvreté afin de se donner des grilles d'analyse et d'action pour plus d'équité sociale et d'efficacité territoriale. Parce que l'Europe est une vaste région du monde, il s'agit à la fois de développer un modèle théorique qui permette de saisir les invariants de l'inscription spatiale de la pauvreté et de déterminer ses déclinaisons locales, régionales ou nationales. Dans ce sens, l'innovation consiste à montrer l'importance des effets de lieu associés à la pauvreté et à mettre en évidence l'impensé du territoire dans la mise en œuvre des politiques publiques de traitement de la pauvreté.

Key words

Effects of place, boundary of poverty, territorialisation of public policies, deprived suburbs, interstitial urban spaces

Mots clés

Effets de lieu, frontière de la pauvreté, territorialisation des politiques publiques, banlieue de relégation, espaces urbains interstitiels

Effects of place and poverty in Europe

INTRODUCTION

In the dual context of 2010, designated *European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion*, and the New Life Project carried by the ENTI, this article deals with the need to build theories on the spatial dimension of poverty (Séchet 1996). The idea is to grasp the general processes of spatial inscription of poverty in order to identify their local and regional variations across Europe. As part of the reflection on sustainable development, the aim is to develop a series of analysis and action charts in order to reach a higher level of social equity and territorial efficiency. This new approach consists in shifting the usual scope of poverty studies by trying to understand the importance of the effects of place associated with poverty and the lack of thought given to territory when it comes to implementing public policies dealing with poverty.

In Europe, poverty and mass unemployment are the results of a mutating productive system and the associated restructuring of the economy from a local to a global scale. In 1973, there were 400,000 job seekers in France; twenty years later, the symbolic level of 3 millions was reached. Meanwhile, in December 1988, the creation of a 'minimum integration benefit' (*revenu minimum d'insertion*, or RMI) symbolised the political and social recognition of the problem of economic exclusion. On the 1st of July 2009, the RMI was replaced by an 'active solidarity benefit' (*revenu de solidarité active*, or RSA). In 2008, there were approximately 100,000 homeless people, just over 1 million RMI beneficiaries in continental France, between 2 and 3 million job seekers, almost 4 million people entitled to the 'complementary universal health care coverage' (*couverture maladie universelle complémentaire*, or CMU complémentaire) and around 5 million people living in areas benefitting from an 'urban regeneration policy' entitled *politique de la ville*. As of the 1st of June 2010, the RSA was paid to 1,766,000 beneficiaries in continental France. In response to the increasing number of unemployed, recipients of means-tested benefits and low-wage workers since the 1970's, and given the weakening of social protections linked to waged labour (Castel 1995, 2003), social aid policies represent an answer from the Welfare State to the social risk that poverty represents. At the same time, these policies contribute to 'singling out' people in a situation of poverty and building a representation of poverty in society.

Because this social issue cannot be dissociated from

the spaces and territories in which it lies, and because space acts as an explanatory factor for social organisation (Frémont, Chevalier, Hérin, Renard, 1984; Vant 1986; Di Méo, 2000; Harvey, 2006; Séchet, Veschambre, 2006; Lussault, 2007), the effects of place are the results of multiple processes and should not be restricted to a simple contextualisation of social phenomena or to a study limited to the spreading processes of social phenomena from a given point. Given that the effects of place interact with the effects of class in the emergence of social inequalities (Bourdieu 1993), it is not only a question of identifying where people in a situation of poverty live, but also of finding out why they live there and what are the difficulties inherent to their housing situation and their use of space. The aim is also to understand the tensions associated with the territorialisation of public policies dealing with poverty, which can emphasize these effects of place.

The author of this article will be using the results of the study on poverty she carried out in Strasbourg and the Bas-Rhin (north-eastern region of France) towards the end of the 1990's. The case study is representative of the classic notion of disqualifying poverty (Paugam, 2005). Starting from there, it will be possible to widen the scope of the study and take into account the other elementary forms of poverty (marginal poverty and integrated poverty) in order to initiate a programme aimed at comparing the effects of place across Europe, or on an even larger scale. It will be necessary to deal with local and national configurations in various societies with considerably different proportions of poor populations. These configurations depend on the labour market, the political systems and historical contexts that gave rise to different types of social aid policies and associated modes of governance, the real-life experience of poverty, the associated effects of place etc...

I. Poverty: a boundary drawn under the eye of society

I Poverty, a "unique sociological synthesis"

By declaring that the poor are not excluded from society but, quite the opposite, that they are included through the support relationship which links them to the rest of society, just like foreigners, materially excluded and whose exclusion reveals the interlinked relationships between the constituent parts of society, Georg Simmel (1907) shows that poverty is a "*unique sociological synthesis*".

People in a situation of poverty are not interlinked, and yet, they share the common experience of an uncertain or impossible quest for work, they receive benefits which make them indebted to society and place them in a dependency or social heteronomy situation, in which they are required to respond to the demands of social intermediaries (Wacquant 1999). To be in a situation of poverty is to be recognised as such by society because the individual becomes a 'client' of the schemes dealing with poverty. This occasional or long-term use of social aid and public charity leads to the crossing of a social boundary that both protects and confines the individual. Therefore, these public policies (see figure 1 and box 1) operate in a perverse way by both contributing to the upholding of a minimum social cohesion and to the creation of disqualifying categories (Paugam, 1993) which set the boundary of poverty (Sélimanovski, 2008). The adoption of a social definition of poverty leads to the collection of management data because data collected through population census is too imprecise on the subject of poverty. The sources of this study are therefore based on the counting and monitoring of individuals receiving aid who are not exempt from the obligation of working: recipients of the RMI and other means-tested benefits, people who requested special financial help from the 'Emergency Social Fund' (*Fonds d'urgence sociale*, or FUS)¹ and people who receive individual or collective social aid through the *politique de la ville*.

Box 1

In France, public policies dealing with poverty are implemented through three interacting spheres whose operating logics are opposed. On the one hand, the spheres of social insurance and assistance (or social aid) are aimed at recipients of integration and inclusion measures (principle of equality) who receive this help via 'branches' (guichets) linked to their 'catchment' managed area. On the other hand, the politique de la ville is a policy aimed at regenerating well defined urban areas, which identifies urban project areas called 'sensitive urban areas' (zones urbaines sensibles, or ZUS) where specific measures are applied. Those measures are threefold. They apply to buildings, residents and the economy: building

¹ The FUS was a public aid mechanism implemented from January to June 1998 to ease, on an occasional basis, the financial distress of households in difficulty who applied for such help with the county ('département') structure responsible for allocating the funds. A national budget of one billion francs was shared between the various *départements*: 800,000 applications were made, 600,000 people were given an average of 1600 F (244 Euros). This study is based on a comprehensive use of the addresses of the 6 070 people who applied for FUS aid in the Bas-Rhin, a 10% use of the registered applications, 31 biographical studies of FUS beneficiaries and around 20 interviews with social intermediaries. In the Bas-Rhin, 82.2% of applicants received an average aid of 1927 F (294 Euros).

restoration and renovation measures, most often aimed at large housing estates, social development measures, remedial teaching (in 'priority education areas'), promotion of cultural events, fight against criminality, and economic development measures in certain areas classified as urban 'free zones'. In a sense, the politique de la ville is a 'positive discrimination' mechanism aimed at urban areas in crisis (principle of equity). Those three spheres of public management of poverty make up a system which developed slowly, through the addition of successive measures initiated by many different players, in different contexts and with different aims: social management and/or development through the economy, preventative and/or security oriented measures, structural mechanisms and/or emergency measures. The tensions that riddle the system, be it between the reassertion of equality principles and the potency of social and territorial inequalities, or between the operating logics aimed at individuals and those strictly aimed at project areas, lead to many contradictions that can restrict the impact of those public policies' charitable goals.

Figure 1

2. A mixture of disqualifying situations

The difficulty of the relationship with work is a determining factor of poverty that is echoed by accommodation difficulties. Other drivers, such as family circumstances, also contribute to emphasize the process of social withdrawal that typifies poverty. Isolation: in the Bas Rhin, almost two thirds of FUS recipients live alone, whereas isolated individuals make up 28.2% of the county's (*département*) households. The family structure of FUS recipients is out of phase with average standards: there are both more single-parent families and more very large families. Over-representation of immigrants: there are 4 times more immigrants amongst FUS recipients (37.3%) than in the Bas Rhin's population (9.1% in 1999). The mixture of disqualifying work, family and housing situations explains both the crossing of the boundary of poverty and the diversity of the individuals who cross that boundary. The FUS panel, processed via a descriptive statistics tool, confirms the diversity of those situations of poverty. Seven household categories were identified (figure 2).

Two categories symbolize the most common poverty situations: the "small-size families living in low-rental housing estates, near all the social aid amenities" and the "isolated individuals with very low financial resources living in hostels or in private rented accommodation". Those two categories are framed by two groups of opposite

categories: one is based on the opposition between aid and work, the other on the opposition between large family and single (isolated). The category entitled “single-parent families who receive means-tested benefits and live in low-rental housing estates in Strasbourg” is almost solely made of women who receive the ‘single-parent benefit’ (*allocation de parent isolé*), which is a minimum payment given to single parents raising children under the age of three. On the opposite end is the category representing “working families and unemployed on benefit who are not FUS beneficiaries”. The “large immigrant families living in low-rental housing estates in Strasbourg” category is made (in 50% of the cases) of families of 4 children or more. This category is very much in contrast with the “young and isolated individuals without their own accommodation” category, which is both the most distant from the panel’s centre of gravity and the most uniform category. The individuals belonging to that category do not have any dependant children and live, in their majority, at their parents’, in other people’s homes or in emergency hostels. They have low resources or none at all. Finally, the 7th category brings together the “households receiving the RMI, who own their home or live in caravans” and represents the individuals in difficulty belonging to the gipsy community of the Bas-Rhin, whose members are nomadic or sedentary.

Therefore, behind the boundary of poverty and on its doorstep lie individuals with very different backgrounds and circumstances who endure great hardship linked to their lack of financial resources, which itself is due to or resulting from various material, professional, domestic and cultural problems. These problems are exacerbated by their housing situation and use of space.

II. WHERE, WHY THERE, AND WITH WHAT CONSEQUENCES?

1. The effects of place

The study of poverty and the effects of place (Bourdieu, 1993) touches upon the crucial geographical question of “Where and why there?”. In this case, the question takes on a particular meaning because people in a situation of poverty are caught up in a process of accommodation ‘stranding’ and social withdrawal, the consequence of which is to over-determine the living area in the exercise of their territoriality. The “Where and why there?” question implies the need to determine the urban or rural location, the extent and the features of the spaces identified by policies dealing with poverty, and then to look for interactions between public policies and the housing distribution of households living in a situation of poverty. Where do they live and why do they live there? What are

the drivers that influence the spatial inscription of those populations? How do the interactions between the number and nature of pauperized households, the location of support structures, the dynamism of social housing policies, the contents of policies dealing with poverty and the way they project themselves in urban or rural, managed or project areas operate? What role does the regional economic and demographic environment play in the creation of spaces of poverty? Is access to social services equal for all people in difficulty whatever the area?

To examine this last question in more detail, we need to come back to the issue of territorialisation of public policies dealing with poverty and their recipients. Under the ‘territorial’ test, the binary relationship between policy and ‘public’ switches to a ternary one in which space plays a very active role. Because it matches the inequalities of the territories on which it applies, the territorialisation of public policies dealing with poverty can strengthen the boundary of poverty and contribute to maintain the social domination under which people in a situation of poverty find themselves, even though the very purpose of those policies is to reduce the inequalities between people affected by poverty and the other members of society (Sélianovski 2007, 2010). This suggests the need to ask new questions about the non-use of social services (Warin, 2006, 2009).

The empirical results of the study carried out in Strasbourg and the Bas-Rhin clearly show that the disqualified social status of people affected by poverty is linked to a negative housing situation in terms of amenities and representations. The residential distribution of people living in a situation of poverty is both characterised by dispersion and concentration. People living in a situation of poverty are concentrated in ‘shrunk’ spaces, i.e. smaller than the living spaces occupied by the unemployed or working people (lack of ‘occupying benefit’, see map 1 and 2). These spaces are neither prestigious nor attractive. They are badly catered for in terms of equipment and services, and rather badly served by public and/or private transport networks (lack of ‘location benefit’). All those in a situation of poverty are faced with the problem of ‘physical’ distance to services because their modest financial means do not allow them to adequately provide for the cost of their travelling requirements, let alone counterbalance any potential lack of public transport. The ‘symbolic’ distance to some services is another problem. Likewise, access to social services is often inconsistent, depending on the location, due to the perverse effects of the territorialisation of public policies dealing with poverty. Additionally, the concentration of groups of people in a situation of poverty, some of whom

come from foreign immigration, disqualifies the space in question, all the more so if it relates to a project territory targeted by the *politique de la ville* (lack of 'position' or 'rank benefit'). This is similar to the discriminating effect of a bad address. Finally, the dual process of preventing residential migration and restricting the everyday mobility of individuals in a situation of poverty allows us to talk about *withdrawal territoriality*. By associating the features of the housing situation of people affected by poverty and of their territoriality, one can establish that the spatial outline of the boundary is polymorphic.

2. *Poverty, a boundary with a polymorphic outline*

a. *A transparent outline*

Few people in a situation of poverty live in the countryside, in the peri-urban belts of Strasbourg's conurbation and in the 'posh' areas, but some do. Therefore, the boundary's outline tends to become transparent. Withdrawal territoriality is not felt in the deprived areas, but in attractive towns and neighbourhoods. People in a situation of poverty can no longer merge into an anonymous mass fading behind the territory; quite the opposite, they bear the full brunt of the hostility that society shows towards dependant people, to such an extent that RMI recipients and social workers who support them often try to hide this 'shameful' status behind a more acceptable screen such as disability or unemployment. Thus, households in a situation of poverty who live in such places are stranded in an area where the vast social distance between them and the others can become overwhelming and where their limited daily usage of space due to their lack of financial resources is totally at odds with the mobility that prevails as an attribute of modernity and social success. But even in those rural or peri-urban spaces, the outline of the boundary can once again become tangible when one suddenly comes across a gipsy encampment, whose residents are often recipients of means-tested benefits.

b. *A changeable outline*

In Strasbourg town centre and in the vicinity of the train station, the boundary presents a changeable outline drawn by the wandering of people in situation of poverty. Their use of space depends on the areas within the city where they can fulfil their vital eating, washing and sleeping needs. They live in optimal social heteronomy. The regular visits they pay to branches of the public services and charities created for them, emergency services around the station, emergency hostels, council social services, changing rooms, soup kitchens and coffee shops, and the individual or collective

occupation of various sheltered and/or begging areas (scenes of marginal and violent behaviours on occasion) produce, within the city, a territory that is specific to homeless people, groups of wandering youths, tramps and illegal immigrants. The boundaries of this territory outline a public space, more or less spread around Strasbourg, between the historic town centre, the station and various peri-central areas located near the station or next to the docks, on the opposite side of the centre, towards the south and the east. It is possible to go further in the analysis of this territory by distinguishing the behaviours of vagrants according to their daytime routine. At night, the appropriation of public or private spaces is more discrete and is exerted on interstitial abandoned spaces: squats, disused train carriages, porches and private entrances of various buildings, underneath motorway and railway bridges, industrial wasteland surrounding the station and the docks. It is near the train station that the remains of the ramparts erected in the 19th century and the infrastructure built in the *non-aedificandi* area which extended those ramparts mark the sharpest urban divides in the metropolitan area of Strasbourg. Those various places allow individuals to hide from the outside world when the weather is fine. During the day, the occupation of other places downtown and in the station can be the source of conflicts with the public and contributes to the visibility of people affected by poverty. The intimate space exposes itself in the public space; the social boundary is overlaid on that of the body. Such a boundary weighs on the conscience of a rich society. But its outline is changeable because it is easy to drive the undesirable dwellers out of the city centre. The marginal nature of homelessness has thus become a symbolic image of poverty, which hides the other more frequent and more common situations of poverty from the eyes of society.

c. *A dual outline*

In the south and west of Strasbourg's peri-central belt (outskirts and suburban towns included), the boundary's outline is recognised because it is dual. There is here a marked alignment, albeit imperfect, between the city's large housing estates where the vast majority of the county's social housing is based, the territories targeted by the *politique de la ville* and the 'shrunk' spaces occupied by the largest concentrations of people in a situation of poverty. People affected by poverty build their relationship with space in withdrawal: 'finitude' and/or conflict. In the case of 'finitude' territoriality, the residential migrations of the individuals concerned are blocked within the social housing universe and are associated with an everyday mobility almost exclusively limited to the neighbourhood. Their uses of space outline an enclosed area in which seasonal and daily

temporalities are no longer dictated by the rhythms of work, but by the return trips between home and school (when there are children in the household) and between home, local shops and local branches of social services. Ultimately, the habit of no longer getting out of the tight residential space's boundaries and of no longer being able to consider moving out confine the individual even further in his/her fear of the unknown and in a feeling of personal despair.

In the case of conflict territoriality, we are brought back to a symbolism created by antagonistic pictures from the media. In Strasbourg, it is easy to confront the radiance of the European Parliament's glass front (reflecting sky and water and pride of the European capital) and the glimmer of the Christmas market (which symbolises the Rhine region's prosperity) with the burning of vehicles, indicative of a social revolt emanating from parts of the youth population who do not find their place in the heart of the city. This form of territoriality affects young residents in need of recognition who live in suburban areas stigmatised by their landscape and their status as territories targeted by the *politique de la ville*. Here, youths and, in particular, young men experience a dual withdrawal territoriality. The first one is linked to the blocking of socio-residential paths and to their parents' restricted everyday mobility. The second one, which is antagonistic, is expressed through the collective appropriation of various public spaces in the neighbourhood and in the city centre (accessed by tram), and through antisocial or criminal acts, more or less violent, which are committed in groups and commonly called *urban violence*. Studies show that for young people in difficulty, in the absence of any hope of integration within society, this withdrawal builds a (unique?) identity within the boundaries of the neighbourhood, and whilst not all young people identify with the violent acts committed in those areas, the territorial identity stigmatises everyone because the eyes of the outside world reflect the image of a disqualified and segregated neighbourhood. This is how conflict territoriality feeds segregation and reinforces the spatial impact of the boundary of poverty. But ironically, the legibility of poverty as a phenomenon vanishes in the eyes of society because of the 'ethnicisation' of the social issue, a notion based on the fact that immigrants and their children are overrepresented in those very neighbourhoods. One could wonder about this process of poverty disappearance in representations, since this is where it is the most important.

III. THE HYPER-TERRITORIALISATION OF THE SOCIAL ISSUE

1. *The media staging of deprived areas*

Satellite estates and laboratories of urban modernity originate from the large housing estates built in the 60s and 70s. In the absence of efficient public transport links and sufficient quantities of services and jobs, they became dormitory suburbs within a decade. They housed blue and white-collar workers' families, French and foreign, chosen by social landlords. Middle class households had already left (Chamborédon, Lemaire, 1970). Today, large housing estates have become deprived areas because of the economic crisis and its consequence, unemployment, which strongly affects the population. Those large housing estates (which are, for the most part, targeted by the *politique de la ville*) were protected for 30 years from the biggest social drifts, but were also stigmatised. In this slow process, the media coverage of urban violence has played an important part.

In France, urban violence has a particular resonance because of the combined heritage of the Algerian war and this social urban planning which, nowadays, is dated and criticised. The urban violence phenomenon progressively brought about the emergence, in the collective social imagination, of various large housing estates viewed as disqualified and stigmatised spaces, while a vague feeling of insecurity was growing at the same time. The *politique de la ville* can be shown to have been developed as an answer to this urban violence phenomenon and to have therefore contributed to the creation of those symbolic spaces. The current issue is a recurring one. It follows the castigating of the "ZUP" (priority development areas) and the "sarcellisation" (a type of urban sprawl associated with Sarcelles, a city located in the Paris suburbs) during the 70s, on a background of criminality in suburban Paris or Lyon. What is particularly interesting is that it is possible today to draw a parallel between highly symbolic acts that are carried out in those territories. There is, on the one hand, the powerful symbolism of urban violence which penalises residents in those areas and frightens society, forcing it to think about the problems encountered by young people lacking integration. On the other hand, there is the no less powerful symbolism of social housing estates' planned demolition, programmed in numbers, i.e. the instant pulling down of tower blocks and large blocks of council flats that seem to epitomize the biggest social difficulties at local level.

The first such demolitions took place in Vénissieux in 1985. The imploding technique applied to those buildings, pulling down tower blocks and large blocks of council flats in a few seconds (like Block n° 5 of the *Tarterêts* estate in Corbeil Essonnes, the

Muraille de Chine in Saint Etienne, the *Barre Renoir* in La Courneuve in May and June 2000) in the presence of the Housing Minister, representatives of the local authorities and ex-residents is both spectacular and symbolic of the resolve to end the social issue. Conversely, the problems associated with the brutal disappearance of those landmarks for the ex-residents who lived there for many years receive very little media coverage, as if their past was wiped clean. Similarly, the future of their housing situation remains generally unreported. Images of imploding buildings are simultaneously broadcast on television news and published in newspapers and magazines under shock headlines indicative of this desire to end the social issue: “council estates to the scrapyard”, “ghettos to be pulled down”. One wonders whether the demolition of these estates isn’t offered as a miracle cure to the ‘ailments’ affecting the suburbs, systematically described using medical metaphors such as “fever”, “fracture”, “emergency treatment” (Rigouste 2004). One can also wonder about the symbol’s significance: isn’t the legal destruction of council estates reminiscent of capital punishment, a sacrificial act to which our society would resign itself (Ménard, Plassard 2000)? Be that as may be, those images of instant destruction remain in society long after the event. They are used during the credits of some TV series and are sometimes exhibited in art galleries. The picture showing the demolition of tower blocks in Vénissieux in 1994 formed part of Paul Virilio’s 2003 exhibition entitled *Ce qui arrive* (That which happens), this particular use conferring the status of work of art to the very moment of destruction.

The staging of the *politique de la ville* in response to the mediatised phenomenon of urban violence has largely contributed to the social issue drifting onto urban territories. The first perverse effect of this territorial ‘orchestration’ is the erasure of the issue of poverty in those areas. Yet, the example of Strasbourg shows that the highest concentration of people living in a situation of poverty at regional and county level is found in areas targeted by the *politique de la ville*. The second perverse effect lies in the naturalisation of the social issue in substantialized territories. According to this view, deprived areas are sealed territories where all the ins and outs of the social issue are to be found.

2. The reversal of discrimination and disqualification stigmas

Poverty is linked to the issues of anchoring, confinement and social reproduction, but is also a matter of going beyond allocated identities. The potency of negative effects of place in deprived areas does not necessarily mean that local residents

are confined in a social and/or spatial determinism. We know that in deprived areas, in areas of confinement and social withdrawal, territorial anchoring also allows for the pulling of local resources and the building of interpersonal relationships which can be very rich. Some researchers talk about autochtony potential (Retière 2003). But there is more. Territorial anchoring can also induce a reversal of disqualification and segregation stigmas in favour of individuals or groups of people who, until then, were victims of poverty and/or discrimination. The sense of territorial anchoring varies according to the age, gender and background of each individual. For young people in extreme difficulty, self-recognition within the territory through the observance of common behavioural rules is, without a doubt, one of the ways to survive when the promises of social integration fade away. One should therefore avoid any univocal assessment of the effects of place. On the one hand, this phenomenon can promote withdrawal and confinement if there is nothing left to do to exist in society and if all the other processes of self-projection in the future have failed. Conversely, territorial anchoring can be a driving phenomenon, since knowing where we come from gives us the strength to project ourselves in society. The social success of famous athletes, musicians, painters, dancers, models and fashion designers contributes to creating a positive image of the areas they come from. Some sociologists, social workers, lawyers, teachers and lesser-known artists also contribute to promoting a universal culture of ‘resourceful improvisation’, mutual aid, partying and multiculturalism. The impact of suburban situations on the teaching of foreign languages and culture also springs to mind (Bertucci, Houdard-Mérot 2005), as do the cultural experiments conducted by various cities, such as the one entitled *Mémoire de soi-e* (Dray, Sieffert 2004) carried out in 2000 in the area of Saint-Jean de Villeurbanne for Lyon’s dance parade (the most popular event during the *Dance Biennial*). There are also musicians, artists and playwrights whose work feeds on marginal and borderline situations (Hurstel 2006). Those creations are unlike any traditional culture of poverty, as they are not confined to any sealed pocket of society. Quite the opposite, they percolate, from the edge to the centre, through a dual boundary which, here, reveals its interface properties.

CONCLUSION

The study of poverty and the effects of place highlights three very different biases that can explain the invisibility of poverty: a scalar bias, a political and management bias, a social and historical bias. First, poverty is often masked from the eyes of the observer by a reading scale that is simply unsuitable for its purpose. This scalar bias can interfere with the analysis of the passage between 'shrunken' spaces of poverty, where the highest concentrations of people in a situation of poverty are found, and spaces of low poverty where those populations are highly scattered. It can also black out the micro-segregations that exist in terms of housing within a city. For example, a run-down estate located on the outskirts of a village and occupied by people in difficulty is not noticeable, and yet, at local level, it can be considered as an unpleasant place to be avoided and hidden to outsiders.

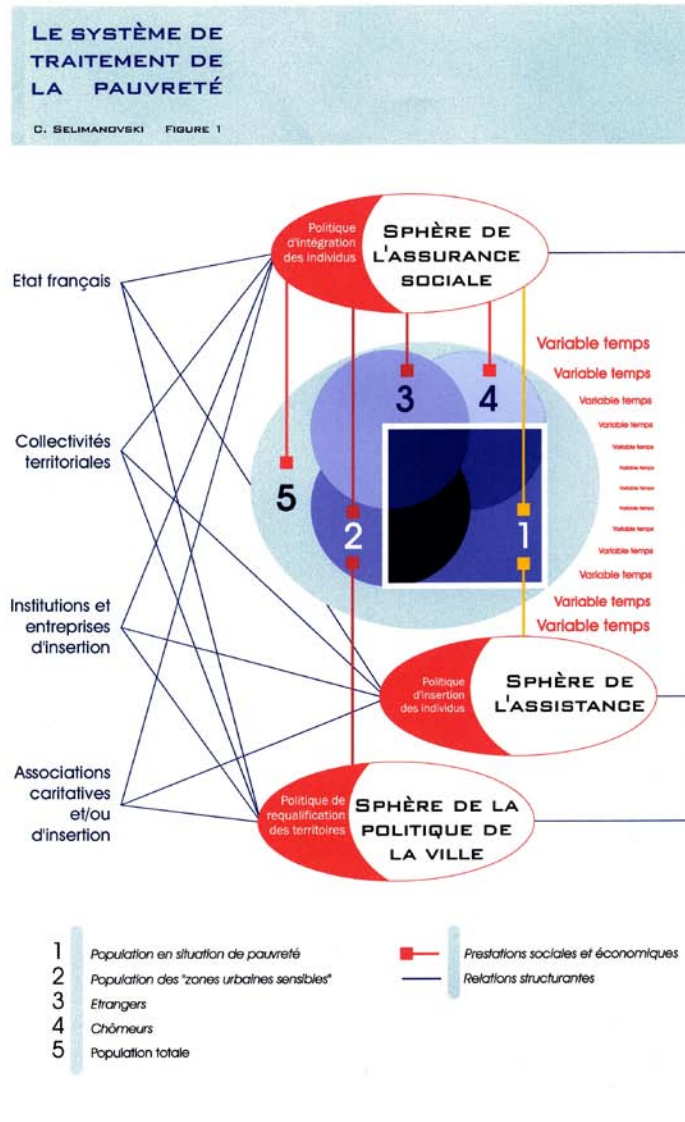
Secondly, the fight against poverty in an equalitarian society like France is a challenge tackled by all politicians on either side of the political spectrum, as well as many associations. Although charitable and consensual, political speeches often hide the absence of any real political will. In the long term, this is expressed through the ambiguities of an inconsistent management of poverty. With many players associated through partnerships, poverty management is handled in a state of continual tension between piecemeal, divergent and sometimes conflicting measures: incentives for social integration and repressive injunctions in the support measures aimed at individuals (some people supporting the view that social aid promotes laziness and that it is necessary to impose some form of community service work in return; others favouring the notion of a living income without compensation); prevention and repression in the approach to urban violence; opening and closing, restoration and demolition of buildings in the regeneration policy aimed at 'sensitive' territories, etc... This kind of management induces a pernicious dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' people in poverty, the 'good' ones disappearing whilst the 'bad' ones are stigmatised. Similarly, the emergency management

of the homeless issue leads to a compassionate view of poverty that hides the extent, diversity and origins of poverty situations. Finally, in the countryside of a rich and conservative region like Alsace, poverty is hidden by all the political and institutional players behind the much more acceptable cloak of unemployment and disability.

Thirdly, many residents in shrunken/segregated areas live in poverty. However, those areas are exclusively perceived as community neighbourhoods, *ghettos*, where populations coming from foreign immigration are concentrated, without taking into account those immigrants' geographical diversity of origin and the poverty in which some of them live. This focus can be attributed to the resentments inherited from colonial history in the national collective consciousness, the emergence of a borderless radical Islamic movement and the perverse effects of the *politique de la ville*. The social issue is thus confined in territories that are deemed to be sealed and where everything can be resolved locally. Poverty is forgotten. Even in some public speeches about sustainable urban development, the issue of poverty disappears. The word *solidaire* (showing solidarity) is added to the word *durable* (sustainable): *la ville durable et solidaire* (a sustainable and 'solidary' town). Why is this word added, since it is redundant in relation to the principle of sustainable development as viewed in its three social, economic and environmental dimensions? What does it mean? In recent speeches, it only refers to the *politique de la ville* and to recommendations to uphold social cohesion through the promotion of social 'mixity' (*mixité sociale*). Here as well, any reference to poverty has disappeared. Yet, we know that the urban and rural inscription of poverty is in no way limited to the boundaries of 'sensitive' areas. At European level, we know that the issue of poverty lies at the very heart of the social and regional project through policies dealing with employment, education, healthcare, housing, access to social rights etc... Hence the need to carry out comparative studies on poverty and the effects of place which go beyond the French perspective...

Figure 1

POVERTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



État français = **French state**. Collectivités territoriales = **Local authorities**. Institutions et entreprises d'insertion: **Institutions and companies dealing with inclusion**. Associations caritatives et/ou d'insertion: **Charities and/or organizations dealing with inclusion**

SPHERE DE L'ASSURANCE SOCIALE: SPHERE OF SOCIAL INSURANCE

Politique d'intégration des individus: **Integration policy aimed at individuals**

SPHERE DE L'ASSISTANCE: SPHERE OF ASSISTANCE

Politique d'insertion des individus: **Inclusion policy aimed at individuals**

SPHERE DE LA POLITIQUE DE LA VILLE: SPHERE OF URBAN REGENERATION POLICY

Politique de requalification des territoires: **Territorial regeneration policy**

Variable temps: **Time variable**

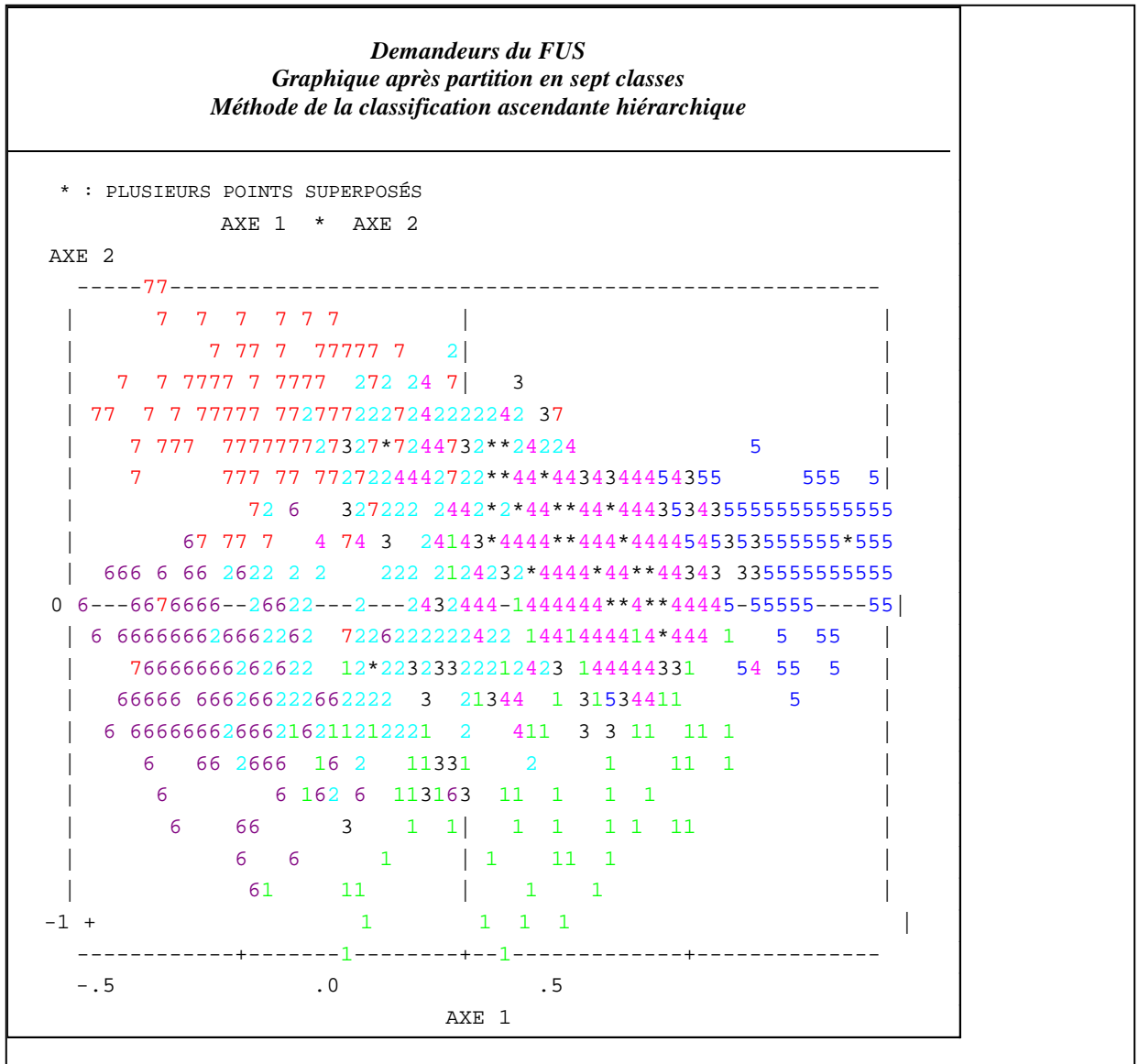
**1/ People living in a situation of poverty. 2/ People living in 'sensitive urban areas'. 3/ Foreigners
4/ Unemployed. 5/ Total population**

Prestations sociales et économiques: **Social and economic aid**

Relations structurantes: **Structuring relationships**

Figure 2

FUS CLAIMANTS
CHART COMPILED AFTER SPLITTING THE SAMPLE INTO SEVEN CATEGORIES
(Hierarchical Ascending Classification method)



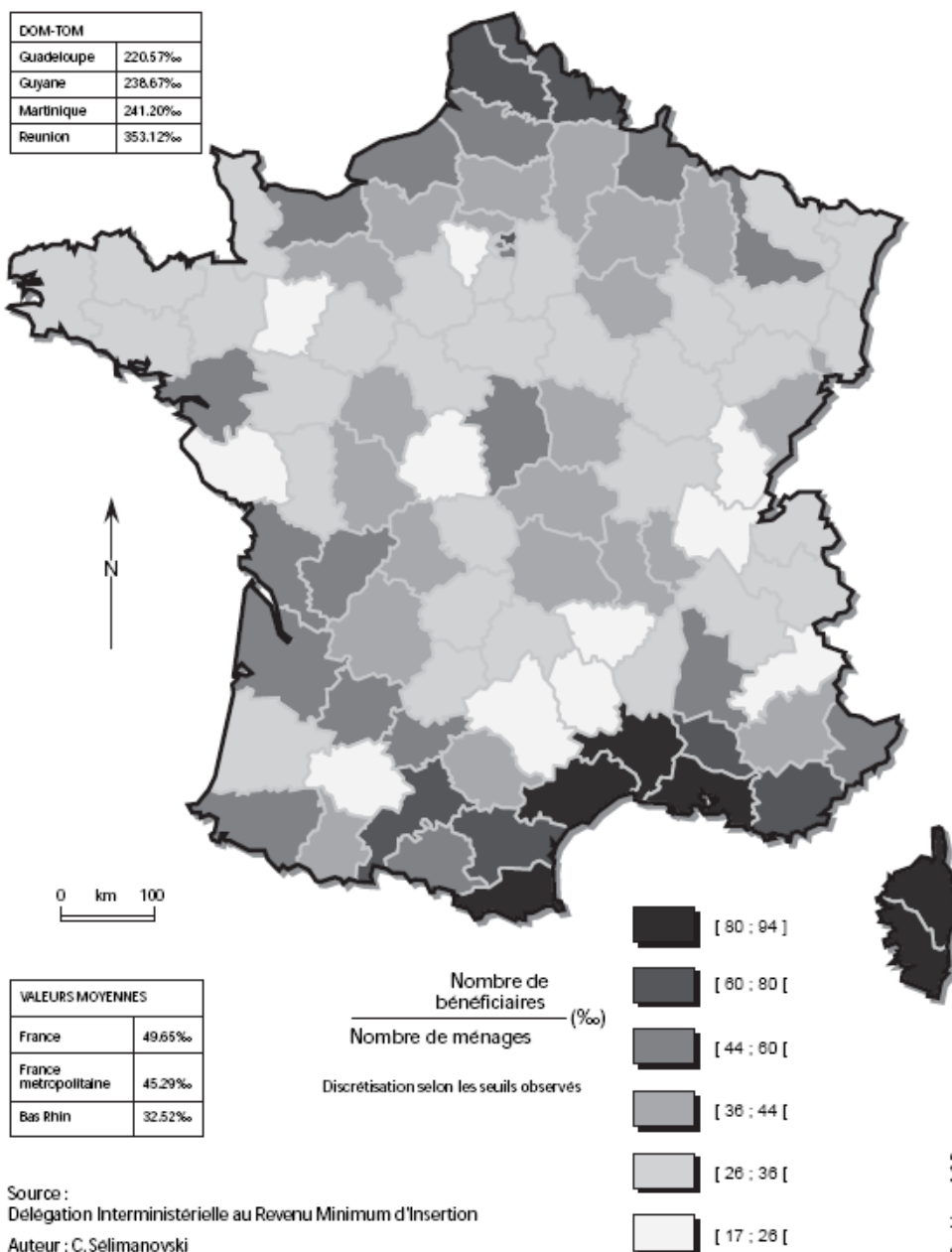
- Category 1: Working families and unemployed on benefit who are not FUS recipients
- Category 2: Small-size families living in low-rental housing estates, near social aid services
- Category 3: Households receiving the RMI, who own their home or live in caravans
- Category 4: Isolated individuals with very low financial resources living in hostels or in private rented accommodation
- Category 5: Young and isolated individuals without their own accommodation
- Category 6: Large immigrant families living in low-rental housing estates in Strasbourg
- Category 7: Single-parent families who receive means-tested benefits and live in low-rental housing estates in Strasbourg

Source: Mission d'Insertion Sociale et Professionnelle de la Préfecture du Bas-Rhin, 1998; 10% use of the 6070 registered applications in the Bas-Rhin (SPAD/ 2.52).

Map 1

PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING THE RMI (MINIMUM INTEGRATION BENEFIT) PER COUNTY (DÉPARTEMENT) – FRANCE, JUNE 1998

Carte 1 Proportion par département des ménages bénéficiaires du Revenu Minimum d'Insertion France, juin 1998



DOM-TOM: **Overseas territories**

VALEURS MOYENNES: **AVERAGE VALUES**

Nombre de bénéficiaires: **Number of recipients**

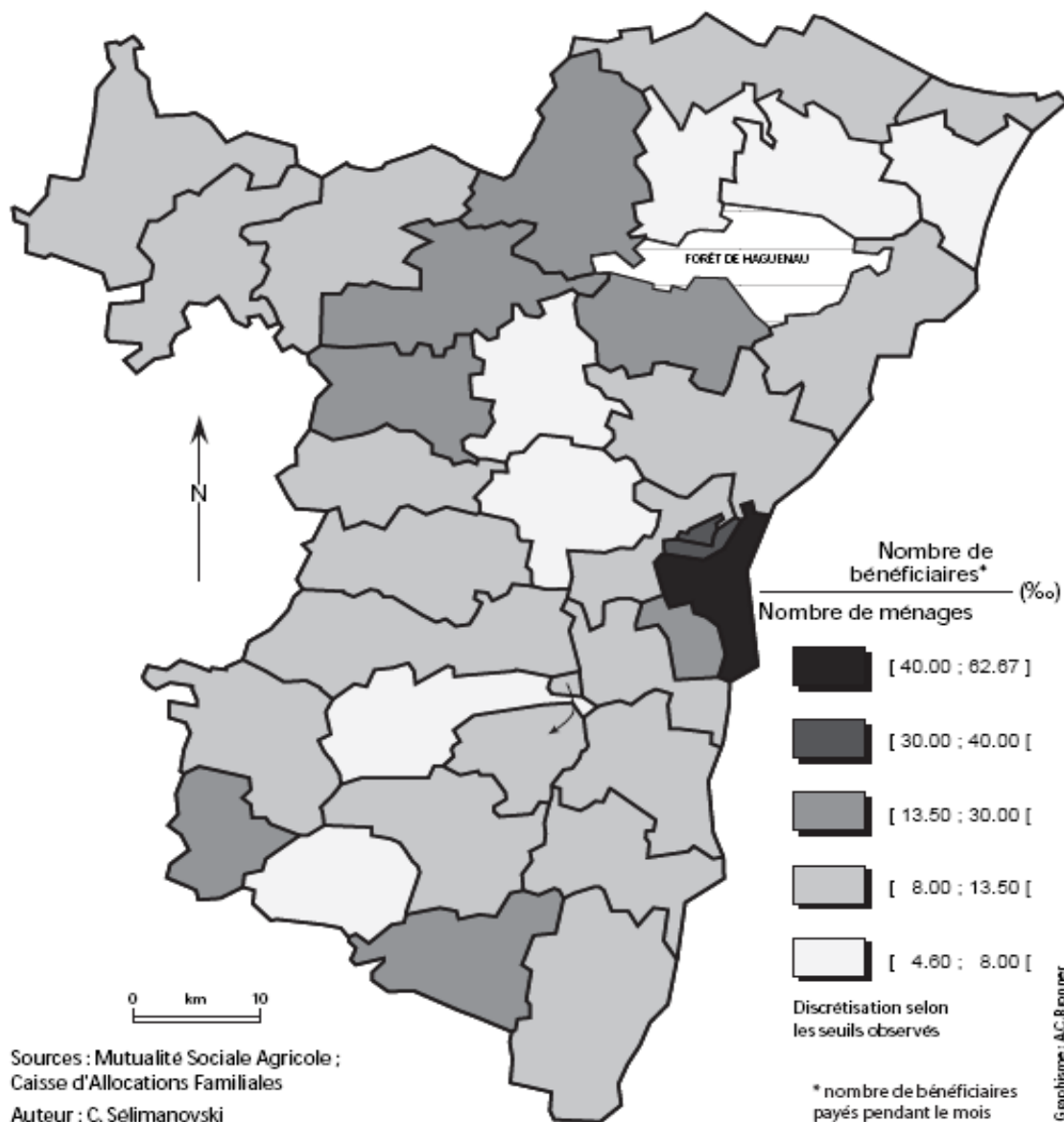
Nombre de ménages: **Number of households**

Discrétisation selon les seuils observés: **Data allocated according to recorded thresholds**

Map 2

PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING THE RMI (MINIMUM INTEGRATION BENEFIT) PER BOROUGH (CANTON) – BAS-RHIN, JUNE 1998

Carte 2 Proportion par canton des ménages bénéficiaires du Revenu Minimum d'Insertion Bas-Rhin, juin 1998



Nombre de bénéficiaires*: **Number of recipients***

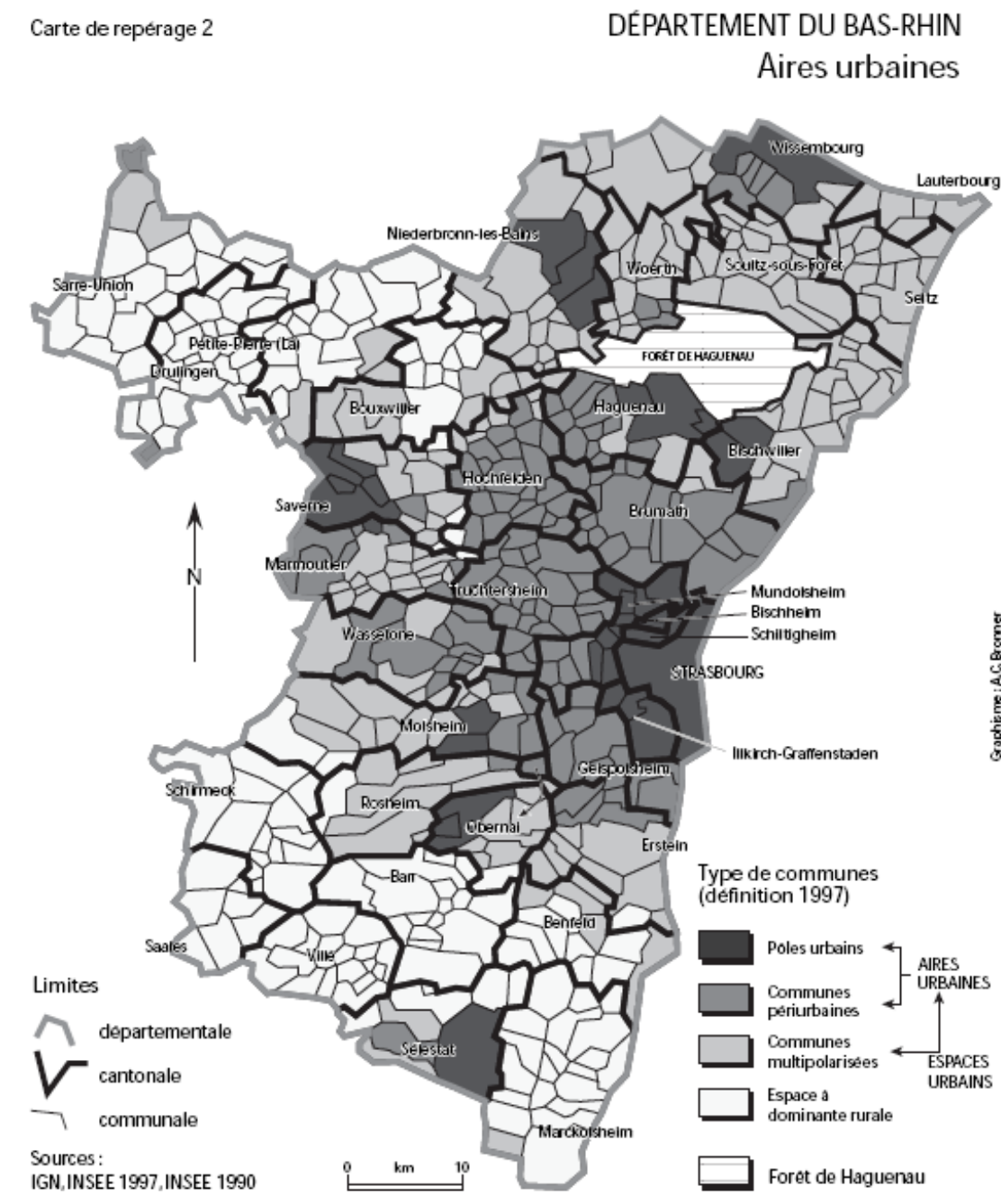
Nombre de ménages: **Number of households**

Discrétisation selon les seuils observés: **Data allocated according to recorded thresholds**

*nombre de bénéficiaires payés pendant le mois: ***number of recipients paid during that month**

Map 2.bis

LOCATION MAP



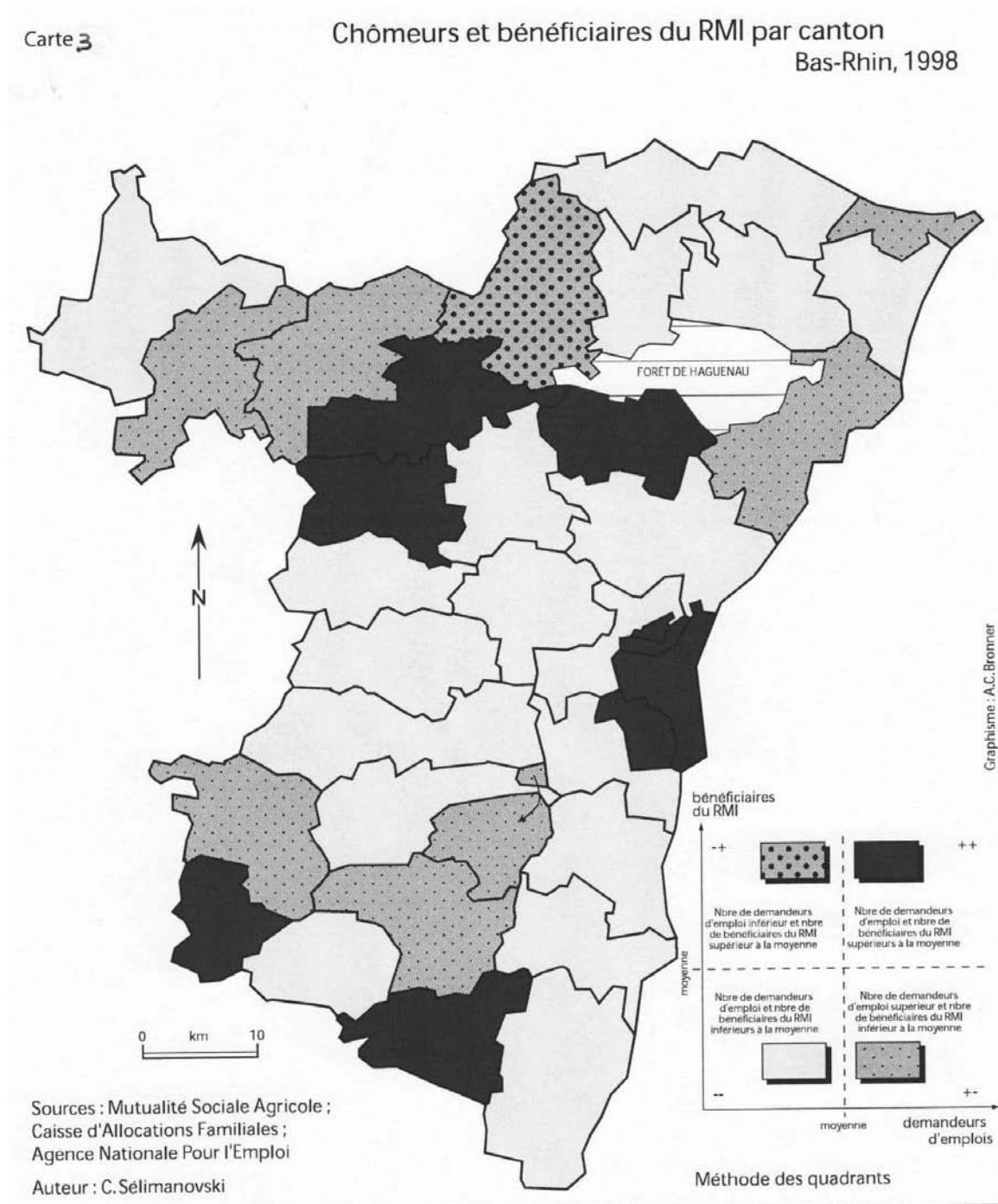
AIRES URBAINES: **URBAN AREAS**
 ESPACES URBAINS: **URBAN SPACES**

Limites : **Boundaries**. Départementale: **County**. Cantonale: **Borough**. Communale: **Town**

Type de communes: **Town types (1997 definition)**
 Pôles urbains: **Urban hubs**
 Communes périurbaines: **Peri-urban towns**
 Communes multipolarisées: **Multi-polarized towns**
 Espace à dominante rurale: **Predominantly rural area**
 Forêt de Haguenau: **Haguenau Forest**

Map 3

UNEMPLOYED AND RMI RECIPIENTS PER BOROUGH (CANTON) - BAS-RHIN, 1998



RMI recipients&Job seekers

(Top left)

Number of job seekers below average and number of RMI recipients above average

(Top right)

Number of job seekers and RMI recipients above average

(Bottom, left)

Number of job seekers and RMI recipients below average

(Bottom, right)

Number of job seekers above average and number of RMI recipients below average

Quadrant method.

Photograph 1

STRASBOURG'S LARGE HOUSING ESTATE OF HAUTEPIERRE, BUILT FROM 1969



Credits: Aliénor Heil- Sélimanovski, march, 2006

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