

# Fanon and space: colonization, urbanization, and liberation from the colonial to the global city

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**Abstract.** Stimulated by recent controversies about the headscarf in France, this paper offers a fresh look at the spatial and urban dimensions of the work of Frantz Fanon. While there is widespread agreement that the work of Fanon (which preceded the so-called ‘spatial turn’ in social theory) includes powerful spatial dimensions, there is no consensus about the status of ‘space’ in Fanon’s texts. Postcolonial theorists, whose reading of Fanon dominated the Anglo-American academic world until recently, have applauded the prevalence of spatial metaphors in Fanon’s work as a sign for the latter’s discomfort with dialectical thought and matters of historical transformation and thus as a sign for ‘third-space’ thinking. Representing a new, heterodox wave of Fanon interpretation and insisting on Fanon’s Hegelian–Marxist, radical Black, and phenomenological preoccupations with liberation, other readers have detected a shift from spatial to temporal concerns in Fanon’s work. While building on this latter reading of Fanon, I argue that the spatial aspects in Fanon’s work are neither a function of a philosophical imperative of nonrepresentability nor in contradiction with his concerns about temporal transformation. Fanon analyzed everyday racism as an alienating spatial relation, treated colonization as spatial organization, and viewed decolonization in part as a form of reappropriating and transforming spatial relations in the colonial city and through the construction of nationwide sociospatial alliances. Fanon’s complex historical–geographical perspective on everyday racism, the colonial issue, and national liberation makes it possible to link his work to Henri Lefebvre’s insights into the processes by which postwar French urbanization mediated a shift from colonial war to the ‘colonization’ of everyday life in the metropole. Given the growing role of controlling urban space in the core and peripheries of our neo-imperial world, excavating an urban and spatial Fanon is promising for strategies to emphasize the urban dimensions, microaspects and macroaspects, and multiple scales of what colonization means today.

## 1 Unveiling France – unveiling Algeria

In February 2004, after months of acrimony and street demonstrations, the French National Assembly passed the infamous law on secularism in public education, and did this with a majority that exceeded by far the numbers of the centre-right legislative majority. Technically a generic ban on the wearing of “signs or clothing which ostentatiously exhibits religious affiliation” (Gouvernement de France, 2004), the law is in practice more narrowly targeted at headscarves worn by Muslim schoolgirls. Proponents of the bill and much of the French press presented the bill as a measure to safeguard universal values of republicanism (secularism, feminism, democracy) against the communitarian particularism of Islam and, more specifically, fundamentalism (Tevanian, 2004). In other Western media, the French debate was also often framed as a ‘clash of civilization’ accentuated by the fallout of September 11 (Vidal, 2004). This ‘civilizational’ imaginary notwithstanding, the proportion of practising Muslims among France’s North African population is only about 10% (Müller, 2004) while the number of girls wearing the headscarf to school was estimated to be no larger than 2000 (Tevanian, 2004). The public divide between Islam and the West conjured up during the headscarf debate was also belied by the fact that the measure was opposed

not only on traditional religious grounds by Muslim organizations but for progressive reasons by some feminists, antiracist groups, and teacher organizations.<sup>(1)</sup>

Rather than a *response* to a superordinate clash of civilization, the French law on secularism has *fomented* a moral panic about Islam that further culturalizes debates about immigration and racism in France and thus plays into the hands of the proselytizing minority among non-European immigrants.<sup>(2)</sup> Indeed, the headscarf law has helped to rejuvenate anti-Arab currents in France's long history of racism and colonial ideology (Ruscio, 2004). In this longer view, it makes sense to have another look at Fanon's "Algeria unveiled", the chapter in *A Dying Colonialism* (1965 [1959], pp 35–67), the publication of the Front de Libération National (FLN) (1965 [1959]). No fan of religious traditionalism, antimodernism, or ethnonationalism,<sup>(3)</sup> Fanon nonetheless argued that the policy of French colonial authorities to strip Algerian women of veils must be opposed. He saw this policy as a colonial expression of "false humanism", a pseudo-emancipatory strategy of cementing colonial domination by subjecting the bodies of colonized women to visual control and authority. Unveiling was only a progressive step if taken on the terms of the colonized, through the trials of the independence struggle. Fanon's hope was that the participation of women in urban uprisings would create a dynamic towards unforced secularism and undermine the traditional family. The fact that the veil was often worn for instrumental reasons (as a symbol of resistance or as a way of disguising weapons) Fanon interpreted as a moment within this liberating dynamic. If in the eyes of the colonizer "Algeria unveiled" requires unveiling Algeria's women, for Fanon women's independence is the ultimate test to gauge the advent of true decolonization.

Current controversies in France have been complicated by the defeat of left and secular nationalism and the rise of religiously based politics in postcolonial regimes as well as in immigrant communities. But, even though it is written in a register friendly neither to political Islam nor to religious fundamentalism (Muslim or otherwise), Fanon's text highlights the undeniably neocolonial character of France's anti-'veil' law and underscores the complex dynamics of the antiracist response, where wearing a headscarf is often less an expression of religious conviction or parental coercion than a way of asserting identity in a racist environment.<sup>(4)</sup> What I find of interest are the

<sup>(1)</sup> Next to opposition by the *Parti Musulman de France*, and the *Union d'organisations islamiques de France*, the law was questioned by *Femmes Publiques*, the *Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples* (MRAP), the *Mouvement de l'Immigration et des Banlieues* (MIB), teachers federations, and parent organizations (*Fédération Syndicale Universitaire*, *Fédération des conseils de parents d'élèves*). Some of these secular groups refused to conflate secularism with a campaign against racialized religious minorities (MIB, 2004; MRAP, 2003) or to equate feminism with paternalist policies to "protect"—exclude and render invisible—women immigrants (Souyris, 2003).

<sup>(2)</sup> A year after the law was passed, forty-nine girls had been expelled from school for wearing a headscarf. The demand for private religious schools has increased and debates about religion continue to rage in universities. Meanwhile, the French right (pushed by Nicolas Sarkozy) is fuelling 'civilizational' racism by playing with Catholic conservatism.

<sup>(3)</sup> Fanon, who was in touch with Ali Schariati, the Iranian critic of the Shah and modernizer of Shia doctrine, warned that an anticolonialism inspired by Islam might lead to a "revival of sectarian or religious spirituality" and thus "fix the nation in an artificial traditional state instead of opening avenues to the future" (cited in Cherki, 2002, page 280). Fanon's comments expressed his preference for a nonethnic, secular, democratic, and protofeminist form of national liberation over the militaristic form of Algerian nationalism that asserted itself in the late 1950s (Turner, 1999, pages 387, 401).

<sup>(4)</sup> It is not uncommon for women who would never think of covering themselves in their home countries (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco) to do so once (back) in France or Germany. In a report on newly practising Middle Eastern girls in suburban Detroit, Mary Abowd (2005) also sees the growing popularity of the headscarf and veil as a response and inversion of the cultural–civilizational (supposedly anti-Islamic) character of anti-Arab racism in the USA today.

links between Fanon's protofeminist insights and the spatial and urban dimensions of his remarks on colonization and the anticolonial response. "Algeria unveiled", which was published shortly after the defeat of the Battle of Algiers in 1957, is the most important access point to the spatial and urban Fanon. What makes Fanon's comments about the veil so interesting is that they are embedded in a series of observations about spatial confinement in the colonial city and the role of women revolutionaries in reappropriating urban space for the twin purposes of women's liberation and national independence. Given that current controversies about the veil in France are tightly woven into a specifically urban story about managing "the suburbs" (*la banlieue*) as sites of immigrant unruliness and disrespect for the Republic, Fanon's urban reflections are of the utmost relevance.

The second section of the paper will situate these arguments with a quick detour into current Anglo-American debates about Fanon. I will contrast the 'spatial' and antidialectical readings by postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha to Fanon scholars like Ato Sekyi-Otu, who, as exponents of a new wave of Fanon interpreters, insist on Fanon's Hegelian–Marxist, radical Black, and phenomenological preoccupations with liberation and emphasize a shift from spatial to temporal concerns in Fanon's work. In the central, third part I will build on this latter critique of postcolonial interpretations of Fanon to suggest that the spatial aspects of Fanon's work are neither a function of an epistemology of nonrepresentability (as in Bhabha's work) nor in contradiction with his concerns about temporal transformation. Fanon analyzed everyday racism as an alienating spatial relation, treated colonization as spatial organization, and viewed decolonization in part as a form of transforming spatial relations in the colonial city and constructing nationwide sociospatial alliances. Fanon's perspective on racism, the colonial issue, and national liberation was thus thoroughly historical and geographical at the same time. As I will suggest in the fourth section of this paper, this reading of Fanon's historical geography makes it possible to connect Fanon's integral analysis of colonization to Henri Lefebvre's critique of urbanization and the 'colonization' of everyday life in postwar France. In the fifth section I will make some concluding links to ongoing debates about neoracism and suburbanization in France.

## 2 Excavating Fanon

References to the work of Fanon have proliferated in Anglo-American writing since the mid-1980s, particularly in psychoanalytic and cultural theory and, in a secondary fashion, in cultural geography. The framework for this renewed Fanonism was, and in some respect continues to be, centred in postcolonial theory in general and in Bhabha's rereading of Fanon in particular. As Henry Louis Gates sums up,

"Fanon's current fascination for us has something to do with the convergence of the problematic of colonialism with that of subject-formation. As a psychoanalyst of culture, as a champion of the Damned of the earth, he is an almost irresistible figure for a criticism that sees itself as both oppositional and postmodern" (1999, page 252).

Fanon has become accepted as a key precursor to postcolonial theory and forms of deconstructive literary theory centred in metropolitan academic institutions within the English-speaking world (Bhabha, 1994; 1999).<sup>(5)</sup> As I will discuss in the next section, this postcolonial rereading of Fanon has dominated the reception of Fanon in critical geography as well.

<sup>(5)</sup> Next to Bhabha's texts, see Gates (1999), Gilroy (1987), Grimm (1997), Julien and Nash (1997), and West (1993).

This sprawling Anglo-American interest in Fanon stands in considerable contrast to a curious silence about Fanon in the French-speaking world. In France, memories of Fanon faded quickly in the early 1970s under the impact of structuralism on the left, revisionist attacks on Fanon's supposed anti-European violence on the right, and a general amnesia about France's colonial past. This has begun to change only recently (Khiari, 2006; *Les Temps Modernes* 2005). In Algeria, the heirs of the Algerian independence movement in the FLN started writing Fanon out of the revolutionary pantheon after the coup of 1965, when Fanon's democratic, nonethnic secularism no longer fitted the peculiar Arab-Muslim nationalism and developmentalism of the Algerian state (Cherki, 2002, pages 261–270; Claussen, 1994, page 200; Macey, 2000, pages 7–9; Müller, 2001a).

In the English-speaking world, the resurgence of a postcolonial Fanonism represents an exact reversal of the readings that preceded it in the 1960s and 1970s (Macey, 2000, page 28), when Fanon was read within a context shaped by national liberation struggles and non-White insurgencies in the metropolises. Whether denounced as a dangerous populist by orthodox Marxists or lauded as a chief intellectual of Third World and Black revolutions, Fanon—most notably his *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961) [*The Wretched of the Earth* (1963)]—was read for his reflections on the role of violence and decolonization in revolutionary theory, thus the precise opposite of the linguistic–psychoanalytic concerns of postcolonial theory and its emphasis on Fanon's *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (1952) [*Black Skin – White Masks* (1967a)] (Cherki, 2002, pages 276–279; Gordon et al, 1996; Müller, 2001a). The postcolonial Fanon is not a liberationist intellectual situated in African and radical Black activist milieus but a skeptical cultural critic housed in metropolitan academic institutes shaped by the cultural and linguistic turn in social theory (Ahmad, 1992; Gibson, 1999a, page 15; James, 1996, page 310; Sivanandan, 1990). The postcolonial emphasis on space as a sign of Fanon's supposed antidialectical stance must be seen in this larger political and theoretical context.

With the notable and crucial exception of Edward Said,<sup>(6)</sup> post-colonial theory has relied on primarily psychologizing readings of Fanon.<sup>(7)</sup> Even though Fanon's left-wing social *psychiatry* harboured deep suspicions of Freudian, Jungian, Adlerian, and Lacanian *psychoanalysis* and their universal and transhistorical assumptions about subjectivity, family, sexuality, and the unconscious (Macey, 2000, pages 322–326),<sup>(8)</sup> Bhabha reads Fanon as a proto-Lacanian *psychoanalyst* (Bhabha, 1994, page 8) and sees Fanon's texts primarily as symptoms of his supposed autobiographical anxieties. Fanon's new humanist project to work through the trials of colonial violence and

<sup>(6)</sup> In section 3, on space and Fanon, I will stress the continuities between Bhabha and Said. But Said's reading of Fanon, unlike Bhabha's, is not a purely psychoanalytical and cultural one. To the extent that Said reads Fanon through Michel Foucault and his critique of Orientalism as a regime of truth, he reads Fanon's spatiality as a welcome critique of dialectical thought and 'historicism'. But Said's reading of Fanon is fraught with the antinomies and shifts in Said's work (Ahmad, 1992, pages 175, 203). In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said makes reference to *The Wretched of the Earth* as often as he deals with *Black Skin – White Masks* (Fanon, 1963 [1961]; 1967a [1952]) and reads Fanon more politically and historically than Bhabha does. For Said, Fanon is an important guide to think through the limits of narrow nationalism and the postcolonial bourgeoisie and the deforming effects of cultural imperialism on anticolonial response, notably in the Middle East and Palestine (see Said, 1993, pages 223, 235, 269–278, 299; see also Kennedy, 2000, pages 86–93; 122–123).

<sup>(7)</sup> Alice Cherki reminds us of precedents for such readings. In 1973, Alberto Memmi dismissed Fanon's revolutionary humanism as an expression of psychological self-denial (in *The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon*) and Édouard Glissant characterized Fanon's comments about the French Caribbean as a symptom of personal escapism (in *Le Discours Antillais*) (cited in Cherki, 2002, pages 270–273).

<sup>(8)</sup> Read Fanon (1963, pages 250–252, 296–301; 1967a, pages 143, 149, 150–152, 157, 161–164, 188, 191, 213; 1967b, pages 52–54).

anticolonial response thus appears as an indication of Fanon's own tortured colonial "split self-hood" (page 44) "an overcompensation for the closed consciousness of 'dual' narcissism" (1999, page 191). For some, Fanon's response to colonial selfhood regresses into "exceeding Manicheism" (West, 1993, page 13) and "masculinism" (Butler, 1993, page 30).

Despite this critique, Fanon's treatment of the actually existing Manichean division between Black and White characteristic of the colonial world is not interpreted as a contingent moment in the "dialectical narrative" of his work (Sekyi-Otu, 1996). Instead, it is seen as an unfortunately stark but usefully nondialectical formulation that allows one to leave "dreams of perfectability" behind for the benefit of a "life without transcendence" and strategies to "shift the Manichean boundaries" in a performative politics of hybridity and cultural difference (Bhabha, 1994, pages 34–38; 1999, page 192). Engaging colonial racism is no longer a component in the strategic–organizational transformations of revolution or of the lived tensions of everyday life (as modified from Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty). It becomes a Sisiphan, deconstructively "antidialectical" (Bhabha, 1994, page 55) quest to subvert signifying binaries in the postcolonial diaspora and its "unhomely", hybrid subjectivities (page 9). In Lou Turner's words, "whereas Fanon sought to strip the artifice of racism from human relations through revolutionary *praxis*, Bhabha and other post-modern critics find it sufficient merely to shift the 'Manichean boundaries' of identity and difference" (1996, page 137).

Combined with a psychologizing "biographism" (Müller, 2001a), this postcolonial affirmation of an antidialectical Fanon eternalizes the race question. Fanon's gripping analysis of everyday racism is no longer a modality in the broader constellations of historical–geographical colonialism and imperialism (Fanon, 1967b [1964], pages 31–33), an alienating subject–object relation mediated by the political and economic dynamics of institutions and social mobilizations. As a result, Fanon's insistence on the key role of *national* liberation and violence is interpreted less as a *strategic* insight into the transitional process of liberation from alienation (Atzert and Müller, 2001) than as an unfortunate residue of binary thinking. Even more importantly, Fanon's powerful analyses of the 'banality of racism' in Martinique, Lyon, and Paris and his analysis of the dialectics of decolonization in Algeria and West Africa are purged of their phenomenological–existential and Hegelian–Marxist dimensions and reinserted into the legacies of structuralist and poststructuralist linguistics.<sup>(9)</sup>

Bhabha is explicit about wanting to erase from our memory of Fanon notions of "everyday life as experience, subjectivity or false consciousness" (1994, page 30). As a result, the 'race' question is viewed not as a *situational, historically contingent* experience of alienation mediated by historical and geographical forces [as Fanon suggested *against* Octave Mannoni's attempt to dehistoricize the psychology of racism (1967a [1952])] but as a transhistorical linguistic-psychological problem inscribed in the very operations of language understood as an interplay of signs and language games (Müller, 2001a; Sekyi-Otu, 1996, page 127).<sup>(10)</sup> If race is a function of the "necessary"—epistemologically prescribed—interplay of identity and difference, self

<sup>(9)</sup> On these lost memories, see Gordon (1996a; 1996b), Kruks (1996), Macey (2000, pages 26–27), Müller (2001b), Turner (1996), and Turner and Alan (1999).

<sup>(10)</sup> In this regard, Bhabha's nonconcepts of hybridity and cultural difference, which emerge from "the very structure of symbolization" (Bhabha, 1994, page 36), signal a reformulation of Jacques Derrida's *différance*, which is equally rooted in a radically deconstructive understanding of the "conditions of signification" (Derrida 1982 [1973], page 10). These quasi-concepts, which are meant to refer to a metaphorical space of nonrepresentability, are meant to mobilize an epistemological critique of categories of dialectics, supersession, totality, and liberation (Albritton, 1999; Derrida, 1982 [1973], pages 20–21; Dews, 1986; Jay, 1984; Whitehead et al, 2001).

and other, in modernity (Bhabha, 1994, pages 241–242, 247; 1999, page 191), Fanon's enduring quest for a new humanism beyond race is dismissed as a regression into existential phenomenology, a lapse into essentialist lament (Bhabha, 1994; 1999). Gates, who otherwise writes in the same register as Bhabha, points out: "Bhabha's 'Remembering Fanon'... is an index to all that Bhabha wants us to forget" (1999, page 256).

More recent critics have lamented that, despite these strategic omissions, the weight of the postcolonial interpretation has left little "room for the cultivation of alternative research on Fanon" (Gordon et al, 1996, pages 6–7). Within a new, heterodox wave of Fanon scholarship, authors have carefully reconstructed Fanon's complex engagements of arguments for and against *Négritude* by André Breton (1983 [1947]), Aimé Césaire (1983 [1939]), Jean-Paul Sartre (2001), and Léopold Sedar Senghor (2001), notably his critical reworking of Sartre's view of antisemitism (in *Réflexions sur la Question Juive* (1945) and Merleau-Ponty's more bodily grounded notion of lived experience [in his *Phénoménologie de la Perception (Phenomenology of Perception)* 1962].<sup>(11)</sup> Some have investigated his adaptation of left-wing social psychiatry to colonial situations (Vergès, 1996) and his proto-theoretical feminism.<sup>(12)</sup> And still others have zeroed in on the historical materialist and strategic aspects of his writings on decolonization in Algeria and Africa,<sup>(13)</sup> most specifically his relationship to Abane Ramdane (Turner, 1999), François Maspéro (Macey, 2000, pages 19–20), Amílcar Cabral, and Julius Nyerere (Idahosa, 2004).

What emerges from these reinterpretations is not only a lost 'radical' Fanon, whose work is compatible with certain Hegelian, Marxist, phenomenological, and radical Black modernist traditions but a novel set of interpretative strategies that insist on the continuities between Fanon's early phenomenological analyses of everyday racism and his more explicitly political and historical writing on national liberation (Turner, 1996, page 150). In the most ambitious rereading of Fanon, Sekyi-Otu (1996) suggests that Fanon's antidialectical musings (in parts of *Black Skin—White Masks* and the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*) are moments in a narrative that recount a veritable "dialectic of experience" which reaches from everyday experience of the colonial situation to the heights of anticolonial strategy. Sekyi-Otu wants us to retain the "critical normative, yes revolutionary humanist visions" (1996, page 3) and the "irrepressible openness to the universal" (page 16) that permeate Fanon's attempt to complement Césaire's critique of European humanism (1955) with a quasi-Gramscian analysis of the postcolonial transition.

### 3 Fanon and space: from the colonial city to the reappropriation of colonial space

#### 3.1 Debating 'space' in Fanon's work

There is a general consensus in the secondary literature that Fanon's work is strongly 'spatial' in tone and substance. Despite their substantial disagreements about Fanon's work, postcolonial interpreters and readers influenced by Marx and phenomenology have both pointed to the stark character of Fanon's spatial narratives about the divisions between colonizer and colonized, which can be found both in *Black Skin—White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967a [1952]; 1963 [1961]) as well as in two key chapters "Algeria unveiled" (pp 35–67) and "The Algerian family" (pp 99–120) in *A Dying Colonialism* (1965 [1959]).

<sup>(11)</sup> On the Sartrean connection, read Marcano (2003) and Vogt (2003); on the link to Merleau-Ponty, see Gibson (2003) and Weate (2001). On Fanon in these contexts, see also Bernasconi (1996), Gordon (1996a; 1996b), Kruks (1996), Macey (2000; 2002), and Turner (2003).

<sup>(12)</sup> See the controversy among Elia (1996), Sharpley-Whiting (1996; 1999), Souffrant (1996), and Zouligha (1999).

<sup>(13)</sup> See, for example, Adam (1999), James (1996), Taiwo (1996), and Turner and Alan (1999).

Despite the partial differences in their overall readings of Fanon, Bhabha and Said have accepted Fanon's spatial narrative even though they are uncomfortable with its ostensibly essentialist and binary character. They have generally applauded this spatial move insofar as it seemed to signal a welcome move away from the 'historicism' of dialectical thought (Bhabha, 1999, page 184). One corollary of the postcolonial strategy to attenuate, yet eternalize, Fanon's nondialectical formulations on race and colonial divides is the insistence on Fanon's essential spatiality. In contrast to Georg Lukacs's dialectic, which assumed the primacy of consciousness in history, Said argued that, for Fanon, what counts is "the primacy of geography in history and the primacy of history of consciousness and subjectivity" (1999, page 208). Bhabha goes further and suggests, curiously, that "it is one of the original and disturbing qualities of *Black Skin – White Masks* that it rarely historicizes the colonial experience" (1999, page 184). What is of interest to Bhabha here is a Fanon that can be read into his notion of "third space": the empty space of nonrepresentability that opens up between signifiers (identity and difference, self and other) in performative play (1994, pages 36–37, 50). Divested of the embarrassing Hegelian–Marxist and phenomenological influences and liberated from unacceptable humanisms (liberal or radical), this spatial Fanon can be mobilized to open up this deconstructive third space, that "spatial relation between signifiers" (page 36) and between the fixities of Black and White.

A Fanon seen through an epistemologically deconstructive lens is good news for those geographers and urban theorists for whom the spatial, cultural, and linguistic turns in social theory are coterminous. Michael Keith and Steve Pile see Fanon as a useful source to elaborate a theory and politics of 'place and identity' in postcolonial times (1993, pages 19, 30–31). Jane Jacobs correctly distinguishes Fanon from world-system theory and its pitfalls but then claims him for a *generic* "critique of humanism" (1996, page 17). Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper marshal Fanon's *Black Skin – White Masks* as an "early work on the spatialization of cultural politics" (Soja, 1996, page 96). Fanon becomes—pace Bhabha—an embryonic thinker of cultural difference as 'alterity' (page 139) and as "third space", that space of "radical openness" and "hybridity" (page 12–14) where "everything comes together" in an "all-inclusive simultaneity" (pages 56–57). Pile rightly emphasizes the situated and political character of Fanon's highly spatial writing (2000, page 273). But, puzzled by the ambivalence of Fanon's view of the nation as a "troubled space"—a space for revolution *and* a site of postcolonial repression—he insists that Fanon can be rescued only by detaching his insights from the ostensibly dualist and hierarchial imagination of his nation-state centrism. With Gates, Pile wants to read Fanon into a generic "politics of identity and place consistently suspicious of claims to authenticity" (Pile, 2000, page 275). What gets lost here is not only Fanon's way of linking daily experiences with colonialism to larger (post)colonial sociopolitical constellations, but also Fanon's attempt to tie utopian desires for a new nonliberal humanism to organizational and intellectual strategies of liberation.

Critics of postcolonial Fanon interpreters have not denied the plausibility of this 'spatial' reading. As Sekyi-Otu pointed out about the opening passages in *The Wretched of the Earth*,

"The text goes so far as to suggest that the manifest measure of 'colonial exploitation', the palpable index of its 'totalitarian character', is to be found not primarily in the rate of surplus value but in the magnitude of the physical and metaphysical chasm dividing the colonizer and the colonized. It is in this sense that Fanon's text prefigures Foucault's criticism of Marxism's 'devaluation of space' in its critical vocabulary" (1996, page 77).

This seems to corroborate the claims of postmodern geographers, who have suggested that Fanon can be neatly included in the pantheon of writers who feed into the cultural, linguistic, and spatial turns of social theory. But Sekyi-Otu insists that Fanon's spatial passages—which he describes as *dangerously* antidialectical—must be seen as mere moments when seen in relationship to Fanon's overall work. The latter is a series of “dramatic speech acts in the moving body of a dramatic narrative” (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, page 236) which is “suffused with the haunting presence of a repressed discourse of temporality” (page 76). This discourse expresses itself in a commitment to disalienate everyday experiences from race (Fanon, 1967a [1952], pages 8–9, 226, 231) and in a view of national liberation as an opening towards a radical internationalism (1963 [1961], page 315).

These critics are correct in insisting on the persistent, and exponentially growing, role of time and temporality in Fanon's work. They grasp the extent to which Fanon's writing is thought “in movement” that insists on situating acting bodies in time and space but escapes the ‘spatial’ traps of identitarian logics (Cherki, 2001; 2002, pages 285, 299). Yet, Fanon's insistence on time hardly signals an attempt to assert (aspatial, temporal) dialectical writing over (atemporal, geographical) logics. Suggesting that in Fanon's work “the movement from colonial to post-colonial society is also a move from the dominance of the spatial” (Gibson, 1999b, page 411) comes close to simply inverting the postcolonial spatialization of Fanon, for Fanon not only suggested that colonialism and racism must be understood in spatial (as well as historical) terms, he also indicated that the transformation of (weakly hegemonic) colonial space must be understood as a historico-geographical process and as a strategy of appropriating and transforming space *and* (linear–repetitive) time (Weate, 2001, page 178). Space, geography, and the urban are, indeed, important in Fanon's work, but they exist in an integral relationship with notions of time and historical change. As we will see in the next section, Fanon's proto-theoretical historical geography of everyday life and colonial situations escapes the easy refusal of Europe, categorical antiurbanism, and populist anti-Marxism which he has at times been accused of. This will make it possible to link Fanon's work to that of Lefebvre.

### 3.2 Racism and colonization as spatial relations

Fanon's phenomenology of everyday racism in *Black Skin – White Masks* is infused with spatial terminology. Echoing James Baldwin's view that blackness can “fix bleak boundaries” to someone's life (1984 [1955]), Fanon describes forms of everyday separation as ways of being immobilized, of being “walled in” (1967a [1952], page 117). Through racialization, Fanon suggests, “the white man is *sealed* in his whiteness and the black man in his blackness” (page 9, my emphasis). The metaphor of sealing alludes to spatial relationships that, through body language, gestures, looks, and physical distance, separate colonizer and colonized as they meet on a street corner or in a queue. Thus,

“I am the slave not of ‘the idea’ that others have of me but of my appearance....

I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed*. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro!.... I slip into corners, and my long antennae pick up the catch-phrases strewn over the surface of things—nigger underwear smells of nigger—nigger teeth are white—nigger feet are big—the nigger's barrel chest—I slip into corners, I strive for anonymity, for invisibility. Look, I will accept the lot, as long as no one notices me!” (1967a, page 116 [1952], emphasis in the original).



The racialization of everyday space makes the “relief of anonymity” (Kahn, 1987) or the “melting pot” of the modern city (Berman, 1982) difficult to experience for those racialized as non-White. Reducing human beings to their physical appearance—and the historical weight of past racism tied up in bodily image—is achieved by putting Black bodies in place. This form of objectification makes it impossible to escape bodily confinement and denies the possibility of freedom—that is to say, a reciprocal spatial relation between body and the world (Gibson, 2003, page 133).<sup>(14)</sup> Given the extent to which everyday racism imposes peculiar spatial limits on colonized subjects, it is no wonder that dreams for humanity can take the form of “leaping out” of the sociospatial constraints of ‘race’ or at least of “slipping into corners”, of minimizing the degree of visibility in racially charged public space. Being an invisible Black flâneur in 1950s Lyon is out of the question.<sup>(15)</sup>

The degree to which colonial racism is organized spatially becomes even more evident in Fanon’s concrete historical–geographical analyses of life in the colonies. Fanon encountered the stark realities of segregation in the colonial city less in Martinique and more in Algiers and Blida, first as an employee of the French authorities in Blida’s psychiatric clinic, then as a member of the FLN (Macey, 2000, pages 213, 260–261, 271). His analyses suggest that the (weak and brittle) hegemony of colonialism is predicated on processes of *spatial separation* that exist as segregation in colonial cities and on forms of demarcating city and countryside through colonial administration. Fanon describes this spatial organization as a form of compartmentalization:

“The colonial world is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need to recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we examine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it implies. This approach to the colonial world, its ordering and its geographical layout will allow us to mark out the lines on which a decolonized society will be recognized. The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression” (1963 [1961], pages 37–38).

Colonial administration has far-reaching consequences. As an expression of social inequality and of quasi-ontological forms of exclusion, colonial spatial segregation heralds an irreconcilable conflict between colonizer and colonized. As Fanon explains in *The Wretched of the Earth*,

<sup>(14)</sup> For Fanon’s reading of Richard Wright and his consequent adaptation of Sartre’s critique of antisemitism and Merleau-Ponty’s notion of lived experience as well as Fanon’s double substitution of Merleau-Ponty’s *schéma corporel* with the *schéma historico-racial* and the *schéma épidermique-racial* in his “Lived experience of the Black”, see Gibson (2003), Turner (2003), and Weate (2001).

<sup>(15)</sup> Kristin Ross makes a point similar to Fanon’s when she contrasts the image of the flâneur in postwar French film with the experience of FLN organizers in 1950s Paris, who were “driven to walking the streets at night despite the curfew because they have nowhere else to be together, and limited to only a very few areas deemed ‘safe’ and experienced Paris as an enormous ambush through which we moved with ludicrous precautions” (1995, page 176). See also James Baldwin’s observations of the colonial status of Black African students in 1950s Paris, which he believed was more precarious and naked than it was in Harlem (1984 [1955], pages 117–123). For a current view, see the scenes in Hate (*La Haine* Kassovitz, 1997) that show how three teenagers from suburban housing projects experience ‘visibility’ on their excursions to central Paris.

“The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers’ town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler’s feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you’re never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler’s town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler’s town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. The look that the native turns on the settler’s town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession—all manner of possession: to sit at the settler’s table, to sleep in the settler’s bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive. ‘They want to take our place.’ It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler’s place” (1963 [1961], page 39).

Fanon paints a picture of absolute division and Manichean dualism that *appears* to forbid notions of dialectical transformation as well as notions of hegemonic integration. The sociospatial organization of colonialism indicates that “economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life never come to mask the human realities” and expresses the overdetermination of class relations by ‘race’. Given this inversion of worlds, it is no wonder that Marxism requires being “slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem” (pages 39–40), for, in the colonial world, spatial relations are characterized by a peculiar form of stasis; they are a “world of statues: the statue of the general who carried out the conquest, the statue of the engineer who built the bridge; a world which is sure of itself, which crushes with its stones the backs flayed by whips: this is the colonial world” (pages 51–52). In the colonial city, spatial organization appears as an absolute force of external imposition:

“The European city is not the prolongation of the native city. The colonizers have not settled in the midst of the natives. They have surrounded the native city; they have laid siege to it. Every exit from the Kasbah of Algiers opens on enemy territory. And so it is in Constantine, in Oran, in Blida, in Bone” (1965 [1959], pages 51–52).

“The native cities are deliberately caught in the conqueror’s vise. To get an idea of the rigor with which the immobilizing of the native city, or the autochthonous population, is organized, one must have in one’s hand the plans according to which a colonial city has been laid out, and compare them with the comments of the general staff of the occupation forces” (1965 [1959], page 52).

In colonial society, spatial organization is seemingly without contradiction and fluidity; it appears to be a one-sided form of “putting ‘natives’ in place” for good (1963 [1961], pages 51–52).

A closer look at everyday life in the colonial city does, however, reveal that colonial space is by no means restricted to the ‘external’, visibly coercive, and brutal forms of social space *conceived* by the colonial administrators.<sup>(16)</sup> Colonial spatial relations, as brutal and coercive as they are, produce forms of homogeneity that are embedded in daily spatial practices and infused in the bodily and affective representational spaces of the colonized even as they are strictly separated from the colonizer. For Fanon, “colonization standardizes relations, for it dichotomizes the colonial society in a marked way” (1965 [1959], page 126) through the “emotional, affective” aspects of cultural racism (1967b [1964], page 40) and the “unreflected imposition of a [colonial] culture” (page 191). This peculiar colonial production of homogenization/separation (what Sartre would have called ‘seriality’ and Lefebvre would have called ‘abstract space’ and ‘linear time’) is both spatial (demarcating) and temporal (linear–repetitive) (Weate, 2001, page 178). “Not wholly coercive or repressive” (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, page 85), colonial time/space has a profound impact on the imaginary worlds and bodily experiences of the colonized. It “normalizes the pathological” in colonial situations (Gordon, cited in Persaud, 1997, page 174) to the point of tempting the colonized to “racialize their claims” (Fanon, 1963 [1961], page 214) and revert to unmediated forms of “action and aggression”, or, alternatively, to dream of escaping confinement by “jumping, swimming, running, climbing” (pages 51–52). As Fanon indicated in his observations about *Négritude* and “the misadventures of national consciousness”, such immediate reactions to colonial time/space are difficult to avoid but can lead to an impasse in the quest for a future beyond race and true national liberation (1967b [1952], pages 17–18, 27, 76; Kruks, 1996, page 130).

The incorporation of colonial spatial organization in everyday spatial relations becomes obvious also when one analyzes the particular form of gendering in colonial spatial organization.

“Apart from the charwomen employed in the conquerors’ homes, those whom the colonizer indiscriminately calls the ‘Fatmas’, the Algerian women, especially the young Algerian women, rarely venture into the European city. Their movements are almost entirely limited to the Arab city. And even in the Arab city their movements are reduced to the minimum. The rare occasions on which the Algerian woman abandons the city are almost always in connection with some event, either of an exceptional nature ..., or more often, traditional family visits for religious feasts, or a pilgrimage. In such cases, the European city is crossed in a car, usually early in the morning. The Algerian woman ... must overcome a multiplicity of inner resistances, of subjectively organized fears, of emotions.

<sup>(16)</sup> One must add here that Fanon paid little attention to the historical and comparative complexities of colonial urbanization, see Abu-Lughod (1980), King (1990), Ross and Telkamp (1985). In the case of Algiers, the dichotomy between the European city and the Casbah—the main terrain for the Battle of Algiers—was complicated by the presence of *évolués* (a racist term for the assimilated—‘evolved’—minority of the colonized population who serve as colonial administrators) in the European quarter, social differentiation among the Europeans (along lines of class and nationality), and the fact that the Casbah was shaped by a strong Kabyle resident population. Also, the distinction between public and private space, as well as between the low-lying European city and the hilly Casbah, which was magnified by the French and reordered by the development of ‘native’ shantytowns and colonial garden suburbs since the mid-19th century and by the production of modernist housing blocks since the 1950s, builds on forms of spatial distinction and gender divisions that date back to practices during the previous Ottoman Empire (Almi, 2002; Çelik, 1996, 1997; Deluz-Labruyère, 2004; Miège, 1985; Stora, 2004, pages 7–11).

She must at the same time confront the essentially hostile world of the occupier and the mobilized, vigilant, and the efficient police forces” (Fanon, 1965 [1959], page 52). Under colonization, the Algerian woman suffers twice from spatial confinement. The homogenization of the colonized produced by colonial apartheid reinforces the legacy of domesticity and gender division in precolonial architecture and interior design (Çelik, 1996, pages 129–130). “Veiled, uneducated, blocked, just as Algeria as a whole is by colonial domination” (Fanon, cited in Sekyi-Otu, 1996, page 228), she becomes a symbol of colonialism as a whole.

The double confinement of Algerian women—novelist Assia Djebar calls it ‘imprisonment’<sup>(17)</sup>—is a product of both colonial spatial organization and traditionalist reaction on the part of the colonized. Colonial abstract space is profoundly patriarchal, but this patriarchal organization of space in the colonial city is quite different from that in postwar France because it cannot be understood without reference to the strategies of colonial control. For the Orientalist colonizer, for whom the Arab or Islamic city is symbolized by the colonized woman and the Algerian house (Çelik, 1996, pages 130–131; 1997, pages 21–26), full colonization can be achieved only by ‘liberating’ women from the stranglehold of seclusion. Controlling Algeria thus means ‘unveiling’ its women both in a literal sense and figuratively, through planning and architectural strategies that ‘open up’ Algerian domestic spaces (courtyards, rooftops) in modernist housing blocks more open to external access (1996, 134–137; 1997, chapter 5; Deluz-Labruyère, 2004). In a colonial context such a strategy of unveiling can be interpreted only as an act of domination, not as a form of liberation. This has deep effects on women’s daily spatial practices and their affective experiences of public space:

“These patterns [of strengthening the traditional patterns of behaviour], which were essentially positive in the strategy of resistance to the corrosive action of the colonizer, naturally had negative effects. The woman, especially the city woman, suffered a loss of ease and of assurance. Having been accustomed to confinement, her body did not have the normal mobility before a limitless horizon of avenues of unfolded sidewalks, of houses, of people dodged or bumped into. This relatively cloistered life, with its known, categorized, regulated comings and goings, made any immediate revolution seem a dubious proposition” (Fanon, 1965 [1959], page 49).

The uneasy combination of colonial confinement and traditionalist reaction has profound, at first sight counterrevolutionary, effects on the bodily experience of colonized women.

The gendering of colonial space reveals contradictions in the spatial architecture of colonialism. The commodification of agriculture in Algeria not only allowed land transfer to settlers and colonial authorities but also produced displacement, proletarianization, rural–urban migration and sprawling urban *bidonvilles* (shanty towns) that undermined the castelike divisions of colonial urban society and sustained the growth of independence movements (Stora, 2004, pages 95–97). Similarly, strategies of ‘unveiling’ Algeria had unintended effects. The ‘veil’ and the ‘native’ house become elevated to symbols of passive resistance—and the modernist developments meant to appease Algerian aspirations became hotbeds of anticolonial mobilization in the 1950s

<sup>(17)</sup> In novels such as *L’Amour—la Fantasia* (1985) and *La Femme sans Sépulture* (2002), Djebar, herself a participant in the liberation struggle and contributor to *El Moujahid*, describes the relationship between colonization and spatialized patriarchy and, in turn, the variegated and rich role of women in the independence movement as victims of French reprisals, active, if all too often publicly ‘invisible’ supporters, and heroic figures of the resistance in the field.

(Çelik, 1996, pages 132, 138). In contrast to Paris—the capital of the 19th-century and imperial metropole—colonial city life is thus characterized by a peculiar set of constraints on the kind of gendered commodification Walter Benjamin (1982) describes in his passages on fashion in his *Arcades Project*. This commodification poses a constant threat to the rigidity of early modern—Victorian, Haussmannian, and Wilhelminian—patriarchy and its project to consolidate the separation of public and private space (Wilson, 1991). This threat did not exist in the same way in Algiers. The very colonial forms of political and spatial separation made it difficult for the colonizers to open up Algeria by ‘unveiling’ its women and by sexualizing the city by treating women as merchandise (Fanon 1965 [1959], page 44).

“In the case of the Algerian, therefore, there is not in the street or on a road, that behavior characterizing a sexual encounter that is described in terms of a glance, of the physical bearing, the muscular tension, the signs of disturbance to which the phenomenology of encounters has accustomed us. The European faced with an Algerian woman wants to see. He reacts in an aggressive way before this limitation of his perception” (page 44).

This lack of gendered commodification, while a product of ‘successful’ colonial and patriarchal confinement, may also represent an achilles heel in the weakly hegemonic arrangements of colonial social space. It signals the real but strictly limited hegemonic nature of the peculiar strategy and process of *separation* that define colonial spatial relations.

### 3.3 Decolonization: reappropriating urban space and sociospatial strategy

Fanon describes in spatial terms not only colonial administration and its contradictions but also anticolonial struggles. In what are among the most brilliant passages in Fanon’s overall work, in “Algeria unveiled” and “The Algerian family”, Fanon describes the war of movement of national liberation as *a claim to the city* and as a practice of *reappropriating—and thus transforming*—colonial space. Clearly reflecting on the experience of the Battle of Algiers, so well captured in Gillo Pontecorvo’s film (1973), Fanon starts his observation with comments on the role of women in urban uprising. At that time, the FLN’s Soumam declaration of 1956 had authorized women to participate in the ‘public’ side of the liberation struggle (Macey, 2000, pages 276–278; Turner, 1999, pages 371, 377–386). Often, that meant that women would cross the increasingly tight controls between the European city and the Casbah (the major ‘native’ part of central Algiers) to fulfill spying, supply, or bombing missions. This also required that a woman leave the veil at home in order to pass the controls more easily and appear as a European woman. Women became more visible agents of liberation.

“Initially subjective, the breaches made in colonialism are the result of a victory of the colonized over their old fear and over the atmosphere of despair distilled day after day by a colonialism that has incrustated itself with the *prospect of enduring forever*. The young Algerian woman, whenever she is called upon, establishes a link, Algiers is no longer the Arab city, but the autonomous area of Algiers, the nervous system of the enemy apparatus. Oran, Constantine, develop their dimensions. In launching the struggle, the Algerian is loosening the vise that was tightening around the native cities. From one area of Algiers to another, from the Ruisseau to Hussein-Dey, from El-Biar to the rue Michelet, the Revolution creates new links. More and more, it is the Algerian women, the Algerian girl, who will be assuming these tasks” (Fanon, 1965 [1959], pages 52–53, emphasis in the original).

Moving from domestic to public space as the main site of resistance and leaving the segregated 'Arab' city glamorized by colonial planners,<sup>(18)</sup> in their actions revolutionary women prefigured a truly liberated postcolonial society by transgressing boundaries and reappropriating space.

Temporarily reappropriating urban streetscapes meant not only confronting the European city and the spatial restrictions on the 'native' city, however, but also overcoming the "considerable number of taboos" (Fanon, 1965 [1959], pages 51–52) presented by the peculiarly gendered forms of confinement in the colonial city. The freedom acquired by walking not along the walls but "in the middle of the sidewalk, which in all countries in the world belongs rightfully to those who command" (page 59) presupposes a transformation of the relationship between body and world order.

"The absence of the veil distorts the Algerian women's corporeal pattern. She quickly has to invent new dimensions for her body, new means of muscular control. She has to create for herself an attitude of unveiled-women-outside. She must overcome all timidity, all awkwardness (for she must pass for a European), and at the same time be careful not to overdo it, not to attract notice to herself. The Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion. The new dialectic of the body and the world is primary in the case of one revolutionary woman" (1965 [1959], page 59, quoted in Sekyi-Otu, 1996, page 226).

The revolutionary dialectic of body and world necessarily implies transforming urban space in all its dimensions, for it is urban space which articulates everyday life and social formations as a whole.

In this particular case, Fanon expected women's revolutionary role not 'just' to further national liberation. He supposed that the publicly visible role of revolutionary women would provide an example for colonized women more generally and undermine patriarchy and lay the foundation for new gender relations in postrevolutionary Algeria. Indeed, he observed that the publicly visible role of FLN women already produced a situation where "the men's words [in the Algerian family] were no longer law, the women were no longer silent, ... the woman ceased to be a complement for man, [and] *she literally forged a new place for herself by her sheer strength*" (1965 [1959], page 109, emphasis in the original). Fanon thought that the process of individualization which (rightly and necessarily) failed in France's quest to 'unveil' Algeria would work to break up patriarchal homogeneity in postcolonial society. Fanon effectively describes the possibility of blurring the gendered division between public and private space *without* the patriarchal mediation of sexualized commodification so common to the advanced capitalist world. The veil, once stripped of its traditional aura, could come off on terms defined by the colonized, not the colonizer. Its further use, which was sometimes necessary after the French caught on to the FLN's initial strategy and women used the veil to conceal weapons, would be instrumental, without the weight of tradition. Fanon's expectations about the role of women revolutionaries were too optimistic (Zouligha, 1999). But, far from equating decolonization

(18) Replicating the 'arabophile' leanings of Napoleon III (Stora, 2004, pages 18–19), the Orientalist idolatry of the Casbah and the Algerian house as the gendered embodiment of 'Arab' or 'Islamic' culture was strongly present in French planning and architecture circles, including Le Corbusier, that modernizer of modernizers. From the 1930s on, it also informed policies of preserving the architectural (but not social) integrity of spaces like the Casbah (Çelik, 1997, pages 38–43). This early strategy of accommodating diversity within the confines of the colonial order can be taken as a spatial dimension of the 'humane' racism criticized by Fanon in 1955 and thus as a colonial precedent of current culturalist racisms.

with “male liberation” (hooks, 2000, page 41), Fanon sees the transformation of patriarchy as a key process towards (and ultimate goal of) “true independence” (Sharpley-Whiting, 1996; 1999).

In colonial Algeria, gendered strategies of reappropriating urban space were moments within a national struggle. These geographies of national liberation had to rest on sociospatial alliances, and the spontaneity of urban or rural uprisings had to be complemented by patient intellectual leadership and an effective party organization rooted in both city and countryside (Gibson, 1999b; Sekyi-Otu, 1996; Turner, 1999). As Fanon wrote years after the defeat of the Battle of Algiers, when the relationship between the FLN leadership in Tunis and the peasants, urban dwellers, and base organizers in Algeria was increasingly distant, two pitfalls must be avoided in the construction of these alliances. First, the widespread urban bias of nationalist parties must be avoided, for it is among the “workers, primary schoolteachers, artisans and small shopkeepers” in urban centres that one is most likely to find people who profit—in small measure—from the colonial setup (1963 [1961], page 60). If not, it is likely that the nationalist party would disregard the peasants, who “have nothing to lose and everything to gain” (page 61), and organize them in a top-down fashion, by “parachuting” inexperienced organizers into the villages (page 113). Instead, counterhegemonic alliances must be built with militant organizers that organize close ties with the villages “instead of playing hide-and-seek with the police in urban centres” (page 126).

The second pitfall that Fanon suggests must be avoided is simplistic antiurbanism. Just as the unmediated spontaneity of revolt must give rise to “practical realism” (1963 [1961], page 134) in order to move from nationalism and racial hatred to counterhegemonic “social and economic awareness” (pages 139, 144), he suggests that national liberation movements cannot bypass colonial urban centres.

“The leaders of the rising, however, realize that some day or another the rebellion must come to include the towns. This awareness is not fortuitous; it is the crowning point of the dialectic which reigns over the development of an armed struggle for national liberation. Although the country districts represent inexhaustible reserves of popular energy, and groups of armed men ensure that insecurity is rife there, colonialism does not doubt the strength of its system. It does not feel that it is endangered fundamentally. The rebel leaders therefore decide to bring the war into the enemy’s camp, that is to say into his grandiose, peaceful cities” (1963 [1961], page 128).

In the cities, Fanon centred his hopes on the lumpenproletariat, “the people of the shanty towns”, where “the rebellion will find its urban spearhead” (page 129). From the point of view of revolutionary theory, this is of course a controversial position to take.<sup>(19)</sup> But it is important to remember that Fanon’s comments about the lumpenproletariat must be understood from within a social formation where full proletarianization was limited and where urbanization was a function of agricultural restructuring rather than of industrialization (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, pages 120, 124–125; Stora, 2004, page 96). Furthermore, Fanon’s cautionary remarks about unmediated spontaneity, which apply not only to the peasantry but also to the lumpenproletariat, do not lend themselves to the antiurban ‘foco’ guerilla strategies championed by Che Guevara, nor do they sanction the millenarianism that may follow such adventurist conceptions of revolution.

<sup>(19)</sup> It helps to recall the long-standing debates on revolution and the peasant question; (see, for example, Idahosa, 2004; Petras, 1978; Wolf, 1969). By the beginning of the war in 1954, Algerian ‘peasantry’ was already in full ‘destructuring’ due to processes of social displacement, urbanization, and partial proletarianization produced by the introduction of private property, export production, and capital intensive farming (Stora, 2004, pages 22–24, 40–46). The urban unemployed in the shanty towns thus testify to the limits of the city–countryside distinction in these debates.

Only an organization of national liberation that spans the colonially administered divide of city and countryside can hope to overcome the “social ontology of the colonial city” (Turner, 1996, page 135). Indeed, without such a broad sociospatial alliance, Fanon, who bases his comments in part on observations he made in Accra as a representative of the Algerian exile government, fears that postcolonial regimes are likely to degenerate into deformed, neocolonial caricatures governed by overblown administrative centres and antidemocratic centralism:

“Only too frequently the political bureau, unfortunately, consists of all the party and its members who reside in the capital. In an underdeveloped country, the leading members of the party ought to avoid the capital as if it had the plague. They ought, with some few exceptions, to live in the country districts. The centralization of all activity in the city ought to be avoided. No excuse of administrative discipline should be taken as legitimizing that excrescence of a capital which is already overpopulated and overdeveloped with regard to nine-tenths of the country. The party should be decentralized in the extreme” (1963 [1961], page 185).

Without sociospatial balance and deep democratization, the pitfalls of ‘national consciousness’ will find its equivalent in a neocolonial mimicry of bourgeois urbanism:

“Since the bourgeoisie has not the economic means to ensure its domination and to throw a few crumbs to the rest of the country; since, moreover, it is preoccupied with filling its pockets as rapidly as possible but also as prosaically as possible, the country sinks all the more deeply into stagnation. And in order to hide this stagnation and to mark this regression, to reassure itself and to give itself something better to do than to erect grandiose buildings in the capital and to lay out money on what are called prestige expenses” (page 165).

True liberation requires counterhegemonic strategies for democratic, socialist self-determination that rest on a sociospatial alliance that does not replicate colonial spatial arrangements. The alternative is a weakly hegemonic passive revolution centred in the former European quarters of the colonial city. What Fanon anticipates here is the neocolonial urban modernism that expresses the sociospatial seclusion of the comprador bourgeoisie from the arid hinterlands and was immortalized in Sembene Ousmane’s films set in Dakar, notably *Xala (The Curse)* (2005) and *Faat Kiné* (2000).

Fanon goes further to suggest that the geography of true national liberation is really only a stepping-stone towards a genuine internationalism. Given his nonethnic, antitraditionalist, and protofeminist conception of national liberation, Fanon sees independence as a form of socialist transformation within national contexts:

“When the nation stirs as a whole, the new man is not an *a posteriori* product of that nation; rather, he coexists with it and triumphs with it. This dialectic requirement explains the reticence with which adaptations of colonization and reforms of the façade are met. Independence is not a word which can be used as an exorcism, but an indispensable condition for the existence of men and women who are truly liberated, in other words who are truly masters of all the material means which make possible the radical transformation of society” (1963 [1961], page 310).

This ‘domestic’ transformation of material conditions—built on the kind of sociospatial arrangements Fanon sketched in broad strokes—provides the precondition for a ‘new internationalism’. This not only implies pan-African strategies to marshal anticolonial solidarity, which Fanon championed in the last years of his life. His geography of liberation also extends to a new, nonliberal radically internationalist humanism. “It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately only the source of all culture” (1963 [1961], pages 147–148). Only through the trials of decolonization (in the double sense of political liberation and micrological transformations of everyday life) is it possible to



avoid the double pitfalls of the false humanism of European colonialism and the narrowly nationalist consciousness of the comprador bourgeoisie. Fanon's "partisan – universal" politics of opening up "immediate knowledge" to a "progressive enlightening of consciousness" (Sekyi-Otu, 1996, pages 26, 104) thus rests on a threefold, multiscale transformation of colonial space: the gendered colonial city, national geographies of colonial administration, and unequal international relations.

#### 4 Fanon – Lefebvre, a possible lineage?

At first sight, linking Fanon to Lefebvre seems implausible. What was central to Fanon—racism, imperialism, and colonization—was either marginal (racism) (McCann, 1999) or secondary (Eurocentrism, imperialism, colonization) in Lefebvre's overall work. Strongly shaped by radical Black and anti-imperialist traditions, and focused more on colonial realities of Martinique and North Africa than in metropolitan France, Fanon's writing continued to be wedded to the peasant question and to the distinction between city and countryside (Persaud, 1997, pages 177–178), which Lefebvre started to question as the basis of revolutionary theory from the early 1960s until the publication of the *La Révolution urbaine* (Urban revolution) in 1970 (Lefebvre, 1970a). Similarly, Fanon, whose work was even less traditionally academic than Lefebvre's, did not share the latter's growing interest in *explicit* theorizations of space in social theory. However, with the necessary qualifications, drawing connections between Fanon and Lefebvre is not impossible. This is true once we consider both the similarities between Lefebvre's and Fanon's intellectual universes and examine the conceptual benefits of tying Fanon's spatial and urban remarks on (de)colonization to Lefebvre's theories of everyday life, urbanization, the production of space, and 'colonization' (Kipfer, 2004; Kipfer and Goonewardena, 2007).

Fanon's work is strongly laced with existential – phenomenological and Hegelian currents of Marxism, sustained as it is by a critical engagement with Césaire, Senghor, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Wright, François Tosquelles, and the so-called Nizan group around François Maspéro. Lefebvre and Fanon thus shared critical modernist intellectual influences (Hegel, Marx, surrealism, existential phenomenology) that led both to deliberate on the alienations of daily routines. Not an antidialectical refusal of Europe but a dialectical critique of racialization as a form of alienation in everyday situations, Fanon's critique of everyday racism strongly resonates with Lefebvre's critique of everyday life, which itself was a unique translation of Marx's original work on alienation into debates among French Marxists, surrealists, and existentialists (1991a). Insofar as they assumed that colonized subjects (women, workers, immigrants, colonial subjects) could liberate themselves from the alienating shackles of empire and bureaucratically administered mass consumption in the colonial city and metropolitan France, Fanon's and Lefebvre's respective new (nonliberal) humanisms were plainly incompatible with structuralist philosophy (Marxist or non-Marxist), which rapidly rose to prominence in France in the 1960s and tended to be silent on the Algerian war (Ross, 1995, pages 157–165, 176–196).<sup>(20)</sup> Fanon's and Lefebvre's dialectical humanism also distanced both from the official Communism of the *Parti Communiste Français*, which considered 'alienation' a conceptual no-go area in order not to ruffle the feathers of its Comintern superiors and of the "alienated" state classes of state socialism (Lefebvre, 1973). Fanon and Lefebvre, who was expelled from the party in 1958 and

<sup>(20)</sup> Following Lefebvre's consistent critique, structuralism and its reified understanding of language banned the human, history, and popular agency from its intellectual universe and mimicked the "reign of experts" of postwar colonial and technocratic administration with its formalist, rationalist style of rigour and subject-less, time-less methods of determination (Lefebvre, 1971a; 1971b).

signed Sartre's letter in support of decolonization (*Le Manifeste des 121*) (Ross, 1995, pages 162, 226), disagreed with the notoriously fickle, timid, and often complicit Algeria policy of the Communist Parties of France and Algeria (Hess, 1988, page 156; Macey, 2000, pages 205, 243, 258, 342–345).

Only seemingly part of a long line of “anti-urban skeletons” in radical and Marxist traditions (Merrifield, 2002, page 2), Fanon also defies simplistic antiurbanism. His discussion of the role of changes in street life during the Battle of Algiers and his insistence on the need to connect city and countryside in an integral project for true decolonization are powerful examples of the strategic role of urban space in connecting radical ruptures (uprisings) to molecular changes (in family life, for example). For Fanon, as for Lefebvre, social space is thus a strategic mediation of radical politics (Lefebvre, 1991b; 2003 [1970]) because it links the phenomenology of everyday life to the macrological dimensions of the social order—in this case, colonialism and racialized patriarchy. Spatially mediated, Fanon's descriptions of revolutionary change also resemble Lefebvre's comments about the *Commune* and May 1968 (1965; 1968a; 1968b). Fanon proposed to link short-term dynamics—street politics, nationwide organizations, intellectual practices—and longer-term wars of position to democratize society, transform patriarchy, improve material conditions after decolonization, and, on that basis, build a new humanist internationalism.

Fanon's analysis of the organization of colonial social space is as multidimensional as Lefebvre's critique of the production of space even as it “stretches” Lefebvre's Marxism “every time we have to do with the colonial problem” (Fanon, 1963 [1961], page 40). What Lefebvre calls abstract (both homogenizing and fragmenting) space produced by bureaucratically administred commodification, technocratic rationalism, linear (clock) time, and phallogocentric visuality in ‘neocapitalist’ France (1991b) is *even more* immediately shaped by state violence and a *formally* racialized commodity form in the colonies. In Fanon's work, colonial space was a conceived product of colonial planners oriented to dominate, homogenize, and exclude. At the same time, colonial abstract space *integrated* the colonized into colonial abstract space through daily spatial practices and affective, bodily spatial experiences. These practices and experiences were paradoxically shaped by a dual, profoundly gendered process of *homogenization* and *serialization* (of racialized colonial subjects) and *separation and confinement* (of those same subjects, who are segregated in non-European space and domestic life). In turn, colonial abstract space is full of *peculiar* contradictions such as the corrosion of the patriarchal family and peasantry under the pressure of rural–urban migration and strategies of ‘unveiling’ domestic space. These contradictions opened up windows of opportunity for national liberation: a project of transforming space by reappropriating the colonial city and constructing sociospatial alliances across city and countryside.

As Ross brilliantly demonstrated (1995), Fanon and Lefebvre suggest that the peculiar production of abstract space in colonial Algeria is internally related to the production of abstract space in postwar France. Because of the extent of European settlement and the fact that, more than other colonies, Algeria was seen as part of the colonial motherland in France, war in Algeria was represented as a “housekeeping” exercise to restore a marriage in difficulty. Terror and torture by the French authorities and the settlers were often described in metaphors borrowed from French postwar domestic life. The counterinsurgency methods during the Battle of Algiers, for example, were seen as attempts to “clean up” “the dirty” and “infectious” Casbah by methods of repression that were as scientific as the domestic technologies that filled France's Fordist households. In turn, the colonization of everyday life in metropolitan France accelerated precisely during the Algerian war. The “modernization” of French life came to represent a “civilized” counterpart to the Algeria—that lost, rebellious “bride” of France—which

decided to sever links with its generous groom and choose a regressive path of unreason that modern France had better forget (Ross, 1995, pages 110–122).

The gendered ‘colonization’ of metropolitan everyday life signaled a certain reorientation, an urbanization and spatial displacement of the colonization process.

“In the case of France, ..., it [the colonization of everyday life as described by Lefebvre and the Situationists] means considering the various ways in which the practice of colonialism outlived its history. With the waning of its empire, France turned to a form of interior colonialism; rational administrative techniques developed in the colonies were brought home and put to use side by side with new technological innovations such as advertising in reordering metropolitan, domestic society, the ‘everyday life’ of its citizens. Marxist theory had made considerable progress in refining theories of imperialism in the domain of international relations. Lefebvre now pushed that theory to apply to the insights garnered from an international analysis to new objects: to the domain of interregional relations within France, for example, or the space of domesticity and practices of consumption. But it was above all the unevenness of the built environment of the city, its surroundings, and its social geography that came to crystallize, for Lefebvre, the contradictions of postwar life. For speculative capital, no longer drawn to foraging abroad, was increasingly directed towards investment in the built environment: Paris, the city itself, became the site for a generalized exploitation of the daily life of its inhabitants through the management of space” (Ross, 1995, pages 7–8).

Ironically, returning colonial cadres were reassigned to plan and administer the rapid urbanization of the metropole,<sup>(21)</sup> which quickly came to resemble a domestic microcosm of the broader colonial situation. Even before the latest round of gentrification and urban renewal since the late 1970s, the construction of “neo-bourgeois” space meant a neo-Haussmannian exercise of “cleaning out” ‘rotten’ areas like *Les Halles* and the remaining ‘unsanitary’ working-class and immigrant areas in central Paris (*les îlots insalubres*) and relegating immigrants and workers (particularly those from North and West Africa) in *bidonvilles* and *grands ensembles* (large-scale public housing estates) at the edge of Paris (Ross, 1995, pages 145–156).

With the help of Fanon, Ross’s argument develops and rearticulates Lefebvre’s critique of everyday life, urbanization, and space, which recognized (albeit insufficiently) the socially uneven character of postwar modernization. The ‘colonization’ of everyday life imposed a particular burden on women and signaled a patriarchal and phallogocentric reprivatization of life as symbolized by the proliferation of modernized ideals of domesticity in the new genre of women’s magazines, one of Lefebvre’s subjects of investigation (Lefebvre, 1970b, page 102; 1991a, pages 49–50, 302, 392; McLeod, 1997, pages 18–19; Ross, 1995, pages 79–81, 89). Although it deepened commodification and homogenized daily experience, the ‘colonization’ of everyday life proceeded unevenly, through the controlled invasion of domesticity (thus, disproportionately, women) and the resegregation of urban space along lines of class and ethnicity (acutely those of immigrant workers from the colonies). Algeria was thus not an “external” political question but the “double” of French politics (Ross, 1995, page 110). Decolonization and neocolonialism in the postwar world order were not only the flipside of the ‘colonization’ of everyday life in the metropole: they were an everyday matter in

<sup>(21)</sup> This was most famously the case for Paul Delouvrier, a Gaullist official who after orchestrating the ultimate withdrawal of France from Algeria headed the formulation and initial implementation of the famous Paris regional plan of 1965 (the *Schéma Directeur d’Aménagement et d’Urbanisme de la Région de Paris*) (Ward, 2002, pages 228–230). Of course, direct links already existed between French military spatial planning in Algeria during the 1830s and 1840s and Baron Haussmann’s strategies in the 1850s and 1860s (Misselwitz and Weizman, 2003).

the heart of the imperial heartland. There, the segregated and reprivatized dynamics of everyday 'colonization' and suburban ghettoization appear as differential fragments in the urban dialectic of 1968 (Lefebvre, 1968b, pages 16, 103, 105).

The fact that for Lefebvre 'colonization of everyday life' is "more than a figure of speech" (Gregory, 1994, page 403) is clearest in his *De l'État* (1976; 1977; 1978). Based on comments on Lenin, Luxemburg, primary accumulation, state formation, and imperialism (1976, pages 305–364; 1977, pages 86–132), Lefebvre defines "colonization" not only as a historical era of territorial expansion but more generally as the role of the political authority in reproducing relations of production and domination through the territorial organization of relationships of centre and periphery (1978, pages 173–174). This notion of "colonization", which can operate at multiple scales (international, interregional, intraregional), takes us beneath the "economic facts" of macropolitical economies of imperialism and finance capital (pages 170–171) and allows us to connect forms of territorial control in formal (ex-)colonies and metropolitan centres. In the period of postliberal industrial capitalism and interimperialist competition, for example, Lefebvre identifies an emerging "suburban style" of organizing urban space in both colonial cities and Haussmann's Paris (page 178). In late-20th-century neocapitalism and neo-imperialism, formal decolonization goes hand in hand with a "world-wide extension of the colonial phenomenon" (page 178), including a transformation of cities according to the vulgar modernist "model of isolated units" that orders space into a hierarchical "collection of ghettos" (pages 308–309), facilitates the dispersal of the workers and migrants and, especially in metropolitan France, mediates the phallogentric and bureaucratic colonization of everyday life (*ibid.* pages 174–175, 183–186). Resistance to these "colonial" realities should link "far" and "near" peripheries, ex-colonies, and Parisian suburbs (pages 207, 237–238, 247). These comments are highly suggestive for transnational analyses of spatial relations. Yet, in order not to gloss over the specificities of distinct forms of "colonization" ("far" or "near"), they require Fanon's geography of everyday racism and geopolitical colonization.<sup>(22)</sup>

## 5 Gestion coloniale de la planète – gestion coloniale des quartiers: Fanon today

The controversies over the headscarf in France took the form of a veritable "political hysteria" over the supposed threat of 'Islam' to 'Western society' (Terray, 2004). Similarly to other recent events such as the response to September 11 in the US and the aftermath of the killing of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands, the headscarf acrimony resembles the "racist fury" Fanon himself observed when he commented on the mob violence against North Africans in Paris before the end of Algeria's war of independence (Davis, 2001; Fanon, 1967b [1964]). On the basis of a "sufficient sedimentation of racism" (Fanon, 1967b [1964], page 164), these moments of racist fury represent spontaneous outbursts of the "crudest form of race discrimination" (page 166) that articulate conjunctures of intensified geopolitical conflict. In Fanon's time, the cultural racism of the postfascist 1950s gave way to racist fury in the midst of the Algerian war. Today, racist violence flourishes in a context of neo-imperial war and recolonization, thus rearticulating the supposedly more benign, 'new' cultural and differential racism of diversity management and multiculturalism.<sup>(23)</sup> Indeed, culture wars over religious symbols have become "adjuncts" of the European security state (with its coercive migration and antiterrorism laws). They signal a "trend towards monoculturalism" not only in Republican France but also in 'multicultural' Britain and Holland (Fekete, 2004).

<sup>(22)</sup> This is also true for the analysis of gender relations. For just such an explicit feminist critique and reshaping of Gramscian and Lefebvrian everyday research, see Frigga Haug's work (1994).

<sup>(23)</sup> On the 'old' and the 'new' racism, see Balibar (1991), Gilroy (1987), Miles (1993), and Wieworka (1998).

What kind of responses do such neoracist realities call for? From Fanon's double critique of particularist traditionalism and falsely universalist European humanism we can derive a *radically cosmopolitan* orientation.<sup>(24)</sup> Such radical cosmopolitanism testifies to the inadequacy of some postcolonial readings of Fanon, which, in their liberal cosmopolitan emphasis of the cultural politics of hybridity in metropolitan diasporas<sup>(25)</sup> tend to overemphasize the novelty of postcolonial racism and accept the culturalist terrain that sustains today's 'civilizational' racism (Cherki, 2002, page 295). Not content with shifting the boundaries of race, radical cosmopolitanism is about working *through* the alienations of race and colonization in a critically modernist commitment to liberate both colonizer and colonized from the alienation of race (Bernasconi, 1996, page 116; Gilroy, 2000, page 40; Sartre, 1963, page 24). For Fanon, such a liberatory quest is spatially and historically situated. Rooted as it is in the primordially materialist problematic of phenomenology—which posits experience as mediation between body, consciousness, and the world—the project of decolonization involves a transformation of the objectifying and alienating spatial relations that racialized encounters produce in modern urban life. These daily situations, which annul the *liberal* cosmopolitan promise of anonymity and individual subjectivity, are micrological condensations (but not reflections of) of social–political historical geographies of colonial and neocolonial domination.

My reading of Fanon (and Lefebvre) suggests that an engagement with contemporary racist situations be tied to multiscale analyses of the spatial relations of 'colonization'. Today, these spatial relations should be grasped transnationally, not only in former colonies but also in metropolitan centres. Such a transnational view fits well with attempts to reactivate Black, Marxist, and feminist traditions of linking antiracism in the core to aspirations for independence in (neo)colonies (Kelley, 2002). It is also corroborated by Lefebvre's comments on 'colonization' and the totality of Fanon's work, which forces us to see the links between daily racism in the imperial core and the trials of decolonization in the colonial periphery. After September 11, racialized panics and sociospatial divisions in metropolitan centres must be tied to global neo-imperialist realities (Gregory, 2004; Harvey, 2003; Smith, 2005). The latter are increasingly realized through strategies of controlling the rapidly expanding slums of the South (Davis, 2004; Graham, 2003).

<sup>(24)</sup>On the distinction between liberal cosmopolitanism and radical, dialectical cosmopolitanism (in Fanon or CLR James), see Susan Buck-Morss's article on "Hegel and Haiti" (2000, page 849), and Laura Chrisman's discussion of Fanon and Chinua Achebe's critique of cosmopolitics (2003, page 161).

<sup>(25)</sup>In contrast, for postcolonial theorists, Fanon's early work (*Black Skin – White Masks*) is used primarily for a cultural politics of hybridity in diasporic communities in the imperial core (Bhabha, 1994; 1999; Julien and Nash, 1997; West, 1993). This is in contrast to many others who stress the importance of Fanon's more concretely historical and anticipatory analyses of the native bourgeoisie, the misadventures of national consciousness (in *The Wretched of the Earth*), and the Algerian family (in *A Dying Colonialism*) for a proper understanding the contemporary African situation. For those writers, Fanon shapes analyses of the "passive revolution" of political decolonization and the failures of postcolonial bourgeoisies (Taiwo, 1996), critiques of postdevelopmentalist, neoliberal strategies like the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (Bond, 2002), studies on the rise of ethnonationalist and fundamentalist politics in North and Sub-Saharan Africa (Mamdani, 2003), and interpretative strategies to maintain a memory of what the "African revolution" might have and could still mean in Africa (Idahosa, 2004; Sekyi-Otu, 1996; Turner and Alan, 1999). On the occasion of Algeria's recent forty-year anniversary of independence—overshadowed by a decade of civil war—Fanon's secular, democratic, and proto-feminist perspective seemed particularly worth recalling (Cherki, 2001; Ghechoua, 2002; Gibson, 1999a; Sharpley-Whiting, 1999; Zouligha, 1999). In the following, I am proposing an urban and transnational redirection of the latter set of perspectives.

In neo-imperial metropolises, Fanon helps us to detect colonial traces that persist in racialized and gendered segregation and forms of (cultural and overt) violence that deny the subjectivity of colonized peoples (Cherki, 2002, page 309). In France, a “neoracist consensus” is refracted by the sociospatial relation and public image of “the suburbs” (la banlieue) (Cherki, 2002, pages 292–295; Ross, 1995, page 196), those former red bastions transformed in the eyes of policy makers into sites of pathology populated by deviant youth, nonassimilated immigrant populations, and, more recently, Islamic fundamentalists (Bertho, 1998). After years of fiscal retrenchment and internal segregation had produced a two-tier public housing system (Harloe, 1995, pages 447–459), the French state now complements its urban policy of ‘inclusion’ with a strategy to destroy public housing blocks such as La Courneuve’s *Cités des 4000*. Justified on technical grounds, public housing projects are destroyed selectively, often in areas that were the most politicized by years of youth revolt. Frequently televised, the spectacle of exploding housing blocks signals a victory against what is seen as irreparably destructive ghetto architecture and the stone-throwing, ‘delinquent’ youth and immigrant populations it is said to cultivate. The message given by the French authorities to the inhabitants is clear: defy the French Republic or protest your situation and we will blow up the physical conditions of your existence. Reminiscent of the Algerian war (Abdallah, 2001), this is the same message given to Palestinians by the Israeli defence forces and to the Iraqis by the American occupants. This suggests that careful links must be made between the “colonial management of the planet” and the “colonial management of the neighbourhood” (MIB, 2003).

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