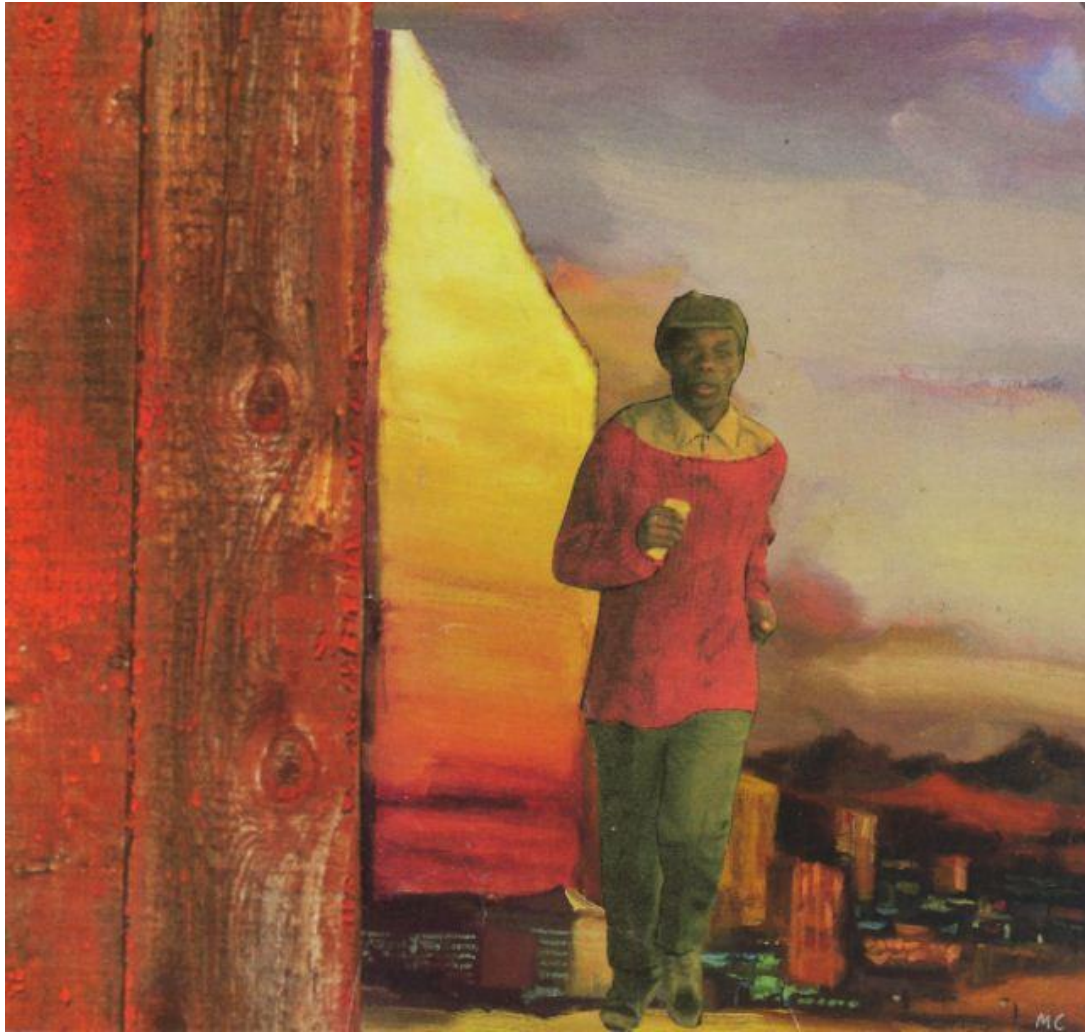


Homage to Michel Coquery

The journal *Justice Spatiale / Spatial Justice* was born after the conference which took place at the Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre in March 2008. Some of you may remember the posters of the event on the walls of the university: they included four urban images, collages made by Michel Coquery donated for the occasion. These collages have since been used on the covers of the volumes of proceedings of the conference (and many others are to be found on the covers of other publications in geography or urban studies). It was Michel's way of wishing us well, and it was characteristically modest and important. We all wish to thank him.

Michel Coquery left us in November 2011. He was what he had been: an alumnus of the Ecole Normale de Saint-Cloud (1953 to 1958), *agrégé de géographie*, co-founder of the Institut Français d'urbanisme, a lecturer at the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussées and the Université de Paris 8, head of the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Fontenay-Saint-Cloud (1990-1995). But he was also much more, an outstanding teacher, scholar, artist and human being. What he taught had a lot to do with what we have attempted to demonstrate within the pages of this journal: that our job as professors or researchers is basically to give away freely (give our time, our ideas or our knowledge); that a concern for accuracy doesn't exclude poetry or empathy, and that sound knowledge gains from these; that scholarly research should also prove operational; that politics are essential and that personal involvement is necessary; that it is our duty to attempt to be useful.



"A geographer who is also a poet" said Gilles Sautter about Michel Coquery. And, like a cat, he did indeed have several lives, the lives of a "geographer who is also...", probably because one of his features was an appetite for life, for discoveries, for relations with human beings and their places. His manifold scholarly life made him an "Africanist" after he had become a leading specialist of French geography of commercial activities, a geographer who became an urbanist, but an urbanist who remained first and foremost a geographer. He had parallel lives as artist and scholar, as professor and head of higher education institutions; lives lived in several languages since Michel Coquery was committed to making Anglophone literature known in France, and in Africa, where, along with his wife Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, and also Jean-Pierre Raison, he worked hard to drag French geography out of its traditional backyard. Our hope is to be able to take after someone who did so much to open up new horizons to many students.

All his lives were connected by invisible threads: cities, politics, love, in whatever order. Those threads may have become intertwined in his experience of military service in Oran, Algeria, in the late 1950s. Maybe this is best illustrated in his collages, what better image of life? And can't cities also be best understood as collages, whether harmonious or not, of motley pieces, cityscapes to gaze upon, decipher and learn from?

We salute Michel Coquery, all the Michel Coquery.

One thing is sure, we now know that "cats can grin" and we're happy to be the Alices who find it out. We believe that, like the Cheshire Cat's, Michel Coquery's smile will stay with us after he has left:

"it vanished quite slowly (...) ending with the grin, which remained after the rest had gone.

"Well, I've often seen a cat without a grin", thought Alice; "but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life"."

The editors

