
Urban renewal – a vehicle for spatial justice in the face of traffic safety problems?

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Abstract

Traffic safety consists of various actions (like education or engineering) aimed at reducing accidents. The Urban Renewal Program funds projects to transform urban neighborhoods, thereby becoming a vehicle for greater spatial justice. Are engineering activities the vector of increased spatial justice even though inequalities in term of traffic safety exist?

The objectives of this article are to demonstrate the existence of socio-spatial inequalities in terms of traffic safety and to examine the reduction of inequalities in urban renewal projects. Through an analysis of laws, projects and the words of local authorities, safety issues in urban renewal programs are analyzed.

While security is incorporated implicitly in urban development, the increase of spatial justice in terms of safety is not maximized. Indeed, local authorities are not aware of the combination of accidentology factors and instead target behavior and delinquency. The lack of accident analyses and the lack of awareness of authorities and communities hinder the maximization of the increase in spatial justice.

Keywords:

Traffic safety – Spatial justice – Urban renewal – Delinquency

Introduction:

Alarmist speeches, special columns and spectacular reports – a lot of ink has been spilt on the issue of traffic safety in disadvantaged neighborhoods¹. The media and political debate is focused on the issue of the safety of persons and goods in a context of "exploding" insecurity in France's suburbs. However, the numerous such speeches only take note of a single type of insecurity – delinquency. The profusion of references to this single issue conceals other types of insecurity, such as the lack of traffic safety, whereas several research works have demonstrated the existence of strong links between inequalities and accidents.

While the lack of traffic safety is often considered as an outcome of delinquent behavior, research has shown that the poor suffer 20-40% more accidents (Hasselberg et al., 2001) and that the inhabitants of poor city areas suffer almost 40% more accidents (Fleury et al., 2009). The inhabitants of run-down neighborhoods would therefore be both the "attackers" and the primary "victims". However, the stand taken in this article avoids the attacker/attacked dichotomy and opts for an understanding of accidents as the outcome of a complex process combining people, modes of transportation and the environment during an accident.

In order to fight against socio-spatial inequalities, the National Urban Renewal Program² has been funding operations since 2003 aimed at improving the quality of disadvantaged neighborhoods and at contributing to their economic and social development. Its stated objectives include health and quality of life. In this context, are socio-spatial inequalities given the lack of traffic safety also being addressed? The program offers the opportunities to fund several types of activities. At road level, urban renewal makes it possible to fund development projects in public areas – remedial actions for traffic safety can be taken. Moreover, these programs incite comprehensive approaches and partnerships between actors during the definition of urban projects. The actors involved in traffic safety issues are theoretically associated and can express themselves with regard to their traffic safety needs.

Traffic safety is defined as a series of actions aimed at protecting persons – in other words, at reducing the number of accidents, defined as clashes between different users of public areas, whether they are pedestrians, cyclists or motorists. These actions vary from sensitizing users with regard to urban development activities undertaken (30 zones, development of pedestrian crossings, double bends to reduce speed, etc.). Network

¹ An disadvantaged district is defined as an area in which a large part of the inhabitants are facing economic problems. The indicators proposed by the Observatory of Inequalities in France are unemployment, the share of precarious jobs, school failing rates, etc.

² 1st August 2003 Orientation and Programming Act for the City and Urban Renewal No. 2003-710 (*Loi d'orientation et de programmation pour la ville et la rénovation urbaine n° 2003-710 du 1er août 2003*)

managers are able to enhance traffic safety through certain developments (Fleury, 1998). There are socio-spatial inequalities with regard to the risk of having an accident – is the urban development undertaken during urban renewal projects a vehicle for increasing spatial justice?

Spatial justice is a concept that has been debated since the 1970s, based on the analyses undertaken by Rawls (Gervais-Lambony and Dufaux, 2009). The geographer, Reynaud, stated that disparities "are felt and seen as just so many instances of injustice by all those who fall victim to them, to different degrees" (Reynaud, 1981: 10). The feeling of injustice exists only if the inequalities are known. Socio-spatial justice therefore consists of "knowing how things can be re-balanced to the benefit of the marginalized areas" (Reynaud, 1981: 10). Traffic safety is therefore "just" if it helps reduce accidents in the most disadvantaged areas, while enabling each of the inhabitants of these areas to have access to traffic safety.

The article's objectives are to demonstrate the existence of social, spatial and socio-spatial inequalities in terms of the risk of accidents, through a review of the literature available (1), to raise questions about the reduction of such injustices in the framework of urban renewal projects (2) and to question whether the lack of understanding of these issues has influenced the absence of a specific traffic safety policy (3). The analysis of the place and functioning of security in renewal projects has been done through a qualitative analysis of the draft bill on the National Urban Renewal Program and an analysis of the decision-making processes during five urban renewal projects³ in the city of Lille (France). The analysis of the decision-making processes is based on the financial agreements signed between local partners (local governments, funding agencies, etc.) and the National Urban Renewal Agency (Agence Nationale de Rénovation Urbaine), as well as on the discourse of the technicians in charge of the urban projects and an accident analysis⁴.

1/ The lack of traffic safety as a marker for injustice

Not all citizens are equal in terms of the risk of suffering a traffic accident, as the driver of a vehicle (automobile, motorbike, moped or bicycle) or as a pedestrian. Research shows that socio-spatial inequalities exist in terms of traffic safety (1.1). This can partly be explained by behavior associated with delinquency (1.2), but the influence of the territory as such is far from negligible and helps understand the other processes at play (1.3). The aim, therefore, is to determine whether there is a district-specific effect on the risk its inhabitants run – in other words, to analyze the "effects of the concentration of poverty on the inhabitants of 'poor' neighborhoods" (Bacqué and Fol, 2007: 181).

1.1/ Inequalities in terms of accidents

Since the 1980s, research has been done on the socio-economic differences in terms of health and, more specifically, the disparities faced in terms of traffic safety. Most of the renewal work is targeted as specific groups (children, pedestrians, motorists, etc.) and the results reveal substantial inequalities in terms of traffic safety issues. Health-related epidemiologists or geographers deal with this issue essentially through statistical analyses. The links between socio-economic inequalities and traffic safety have been demonstrated through three entry points: the poor have more accidents, disadvantaged areas reveal a higher accident rate, and there is a higher involvement of people living in disadvantaged neighborhoods in accidents.

Several works show that low socio-economic levels are associated with higher accident rates (Wise et al., 1985; Van Beeck et al., 1991; Laflamme and Engstrom, 2002; Zambon and Hasselberg, 2006). Accident risks are 20-40% higher for children from laborers' families than for middle class children (Hasselberg et al., 2001). Social

³ These were the Lille Sud (Lille), Roubaix Est (Roubaix), Haut Champs (Roubaix-Hem), Nouveau Mons (Mons-en-Baroeul), Bourgogne (Tourcoing) and Beaulieu (Wattrelos) projects.

⁴ A series of meetings were held in April-May 2010. The meetings were held with twelve people in charge of urban projects (five managers), roadways development (three at the commune level and two at community level) and traffic safety analysis (two community-level managers).

and economic factors are more significant than age, gender or behavior, in terms of accident rates among children (Christie, 1995).

Other results show that disadvantaged areas are particularly accident-prone in terms of traffic accidents (Roberts et al, 1992; Bagley, 1992; Aguero-Valverde and Jovanis, 2006). Children's accident rates are twice as high in poorer neighborhoods. Hence, it is no longer just a risk that certain population groups run, but the actual frequency of occurrence of accidents in a given district.

Finally, a district's poverty level can be related to the accident rates suffered by its inhabitants. Results show that there are positive correlations between these two variables (Durkin et al., 1994; Abdalla et al., 1997; Reimers and Laflamme, 2005). The inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods run a 36% additional risk as compared to inhabitants from better-off neighborhoods (Fleury et al., 2009). Recent research does, however, add some nuances to these links, demonstrating that the environment's influence during an accident (Hewson, 2004) or individual variables (Borrell et al., 2002) explain more than the poverty level of the residential district concerned alone. Living in a poor district does not have a direct impact on individual risk, but does make a positive contribution to it.

How can socio-spatial differentiations be understood in terms of traffic safety? An interpretation framework often used is one based on behavioral hypotheses.

1.2/ The behavior in question

A possible hypothesis is that "accidents result from criminal acts committed by asocial groups. Safety then depends on activities directed at individuals, whether in terms of training, information, control or repression" (Fleury et al., 2009: 145). However, normal motorists may suffer an accident, while driving a normal car, on a normal road (Baker, 1960). In fact, the deliberate breach of rules only occurs in 5% of cases. Motorists' faults are due more to errors than to the transgression of driving rules (Van Elslande et al., 1997).

The inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods are more involved in accidents due to the higher demographic presence of inhabitants open to additional risks. In fact, disadvantaged neighborhoods are highly populated by youth. The share of the age group under 20 years accounts for 32% of the population in Sensitive Urban Areas (Zones Urbaines Sensibles), which is the priority target for the city's policies since 1996, although it accounts for only 25% of the population in metropolitan France, according to the general population census (INSEE, 1999). However, the youth, especially young men, are open to higher risk levels (Factor et al., 2008; ONISR, 2009). One of the explanations proffered for this situation is the attitude of the youth, which take more risks (Hatfiel and Fernandes, 2008).

Offences and criminal behavior are found to be present when the conditions in which accidents have occurred among inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods are analyzed. 10.3% of the users have offences recorded against them among the inhabitants of a disadvantaged district in which an accident has occurred, as against just 7.5% for inhabitants in a well-off district. The percentage of offences committed by the inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods is higher than the figure for the inhabitants of more prosperous neighborhoods, whatever the nature of the offence, except for illegal blood alcohol levels. But the hypothesis of delinquent behavior cannot suffice alone to explain the heightened risk of inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods, since "many accidents are very similar in the way they take place – or at least, in terms of the behavior involved – to those [involving inhabitants of more prosperous neighborhoods]" (Fleury et al., 2009: 146).

Behavioral hypotheses are not 'spatialized' or area-specific. They can be, in the sense that peers influence risk-taking behavior. In such actions, these behavioral hypotheses lead to sensitization campaigns or the strengthening of control and repressive measures. Such activities are 'non-spatial' in the sense that they are not specific to a given area.

1.3/ The socio-spatial dimension of risks

Traffic safety inequalities can be explained by social factors, which echo individual factors: vehicle use, vehicle maintenance, use of safety equipment, or adoption of more risky behavior (alcohol, drugs) by the most disadvantaged social categories (Zambon and Hasselberg, 2006).

District-related characteristics play an important role. Hence, living in overcrowded accommodation (Rivara and Barber, 1985; Pless et al., 1989) or living in a high-rise (Mueller et al., 1990) has a positive impact on accident risks for children. The authors explain this by the greater propensity of children to spend time outside their homes. These results echo another study dating back to the early 1970s, which shows that the most accident-prone areas have a high concentration of housing with small gardens, very little playing grounds for children, and the presence of transiting traffic in the district (Preston, 1972). Traffic levels in a district also play a role in pedestrian accident rates (Mueller et al., 1990; Joly et al., 1991). The characteristics of residential neighborhoods, along with their inhabitants' social characteristics, therefore play a role in traffic safety inequalities. Hence, it is less a district-specific effect than an environmental effect that plays a role in accident rates – the concentration of poverty is not the only factor behind higher accident risk levels, since morphological factors must also be added.

Mobility, partly determined by socio-economic profiles and the area of residence, is also an influencing factor. Erskine shows that a disproportionate number of members of the least motorized households are killed in road accidents (Erskine, 1996). Abdalla explains this phenomenon by differences in risk exposure depending on the mode of transportation. School-going children of prosperous neighborhoods travel by car – hence, they are more exposed to non-pedestrian accidents than children from disadvantaged neighborhoods, while the latter are more exposed to accident risks as pedestrians (Abdalla, 1997).

Inequalities also exist in terms of the risk of being involved in an accident. They can partly be explained by delinquent behavior, but also by social aspects, the residential district's characteristics and mobility. To reduce these inequalities, the National Urban Renewal Program with its social and urban dimensions offers an opportunity to increase spatial justice.

2/ Implicit consideration of traffic safety by urban renewal projects

Urban renewal includes several sections in which traffic safety is implicitly broached. The implicit consideration of traffic safety means that safety is a collateral outcome of other objectives, but is not a clearly stated objective by itself.

These implicit traffic safety-related activities may be observed in two main areas: through the prevention and repression of delinquent behavior (2.1) and through the improvement in the living environment (2.2). However, this implicit improvement takes place within the framework of the recommended opening-up of certain neighborhoods in order to fight against exclusion. But are the objectives behind the opening-up of these neighborhoods in contradiction with traffic safety goals (2.3)?

2.1/ Prevention and repression of delinquent behavior

In a context in which the reason given for the lack of traffic safety is the deviant behavior of individuals, different interpretations of inequalities in traffic safety can be found: the inhabitants of disadvantaged neighborhoods are more involved in accidents due to their behavior.

An analysis of the financial agreements of the five urban renewal projects in the city of Lille helps analyze the place of traffic safety in the projects and in their decision-making processes. When urban renewal projects address traffic safety issues, these issues are handled by Local Safety and Delinquency Prevention Contracts (CLSPD – Contrats Locaux de Sécurité et de Prévention de la Délinquance) or Proximity Urban Management (GUP - Gestion Urbaine de Proximité) contracts. The former represent the city's prevention and safety policy section. The actions taken focus mainly on sensitization or repression. The latter aim at improving the inhabitants' quality of life, with traffic safety being one of the aspects addressed. The signing of such an agreement is mandatory in urban renewal neighborhoods. In both cases, the orientations developed aim at

sensitizing drivers, the prevention of behavior that could lead to conflicts and the repression of users who fail to abide by the rules. Hence, the 2009 Local Safety and Delinquency Prevention Contract (CLSPD) in Lille included activities aimed mainly at sensitizing youth with regard to traffic safety or at reducing the number of accidents through police checks (Contrat Local de Sécurité, 2009, Lille). The "Proximity Urban Management" (Gestion Urbaine de Proximité) section in Lille's Major Urban Renewal Project in 2006 addresses the issues of delinquency and traffic safety without any distinctions between them (Grand Projet de Rénovation Urbaine de la Ville de Lille or Lille City Great Urban Renewal Project, 2006, Lille).

The opinions of the urban renewal project managers interviewed show that they view delinquency and accidents as intimately related. With regard to safety in these neighborhoods, the main reasons given were related to the incivility of the youth ("One thing's for sure – there are young people who drive like madmen"⁵) or of motorized two-wheeler users ("On sunny days, you can see many moped or quad riders driving around the neighborhoods without helmets. This leads to incivility phenomena that can lead to conditions of insecurity"⁶). Preventive and repressive actions with regard to delinquent behavior are explicitly quoted as a means to reduce insecurity, including traffic insecurity.

During the re-development of public areas, the technical actors take the likelihood of such incivility into account: "in difficult neighborhoods, there's bound to be joyriding. We always think of that when we free up public areas". In fact, other actions too have an impact on traffic safety, such as urban development operations.

2.2/ Implicit consideration of security issues in urban development

Article 6 of the Orientation and Programming Act for the City and Urban Renewal stipulates that the program "includes urban development, rehabilitation, residentialisation, demolition and housing development, the establishment, rehabilitation and demolition of public amenities, the re-organization of economic and commercial zones or any other investments that help bring about urban renewal"⁷. The rehabilitation or requalification of the road network was an integral part of urban development operations. The requalification was accompanied by some thinking on traffic organization, the place of different modes of transportation, authorized speed limits, parking, etc. The choice made impacts the levels of safety as demonstrated by Marine Millot in her argument: "While the "network" aspect of urban spaces actually impacts strongly on safety issues, as shown in literature, it is not the only one. Other properties must be taken into consideration, such as treatment of public areas, the environment in which users evolve, etc. And the interactions among these different elements are equally significant" (Millot, 2003: 362). Consequently, the requalification of the roadways has an implicit influence on safety.

Whereas traffic safety is not an explicitly stated objective, it is intrinsic to urban development. Taking traffic security issues into consideration within larger quality of life objectives was embodied what the Lille Sud urban renewal project manager had to say: "There is no specific security diagnosis, but one does think of road safety. Except that it is not just limited to road safety! It has to do with the quality of life in the city, user-friendliness, the living environment and usage, much more than road safety alone". Urban renewal project managers do not speak of the safety issue when they are questioned about traffic or the quality of life in the city in general. When the issue of the lack of traffic safety is brought up, the fact that it has implicitly been taken into consideration is taken for granted: "the safety issue is not necessarily brought up clearly, but it is taken into account when we work on roads, parking areas and public transportation stations. These issues cannot be sidestepped"⁸. Like Mr. Jourdain, could urban renewal projects improve traffic safety unknowingly?

⁵ Extract of meeting with the manager of one of the five urban renewal projects analyzed (Hauts Champs area).

⁶ Extract of meeting with the manager of one of the five urban renewal projects analyzed (Nouveau-Mons area).

⁷ Extract from Act no. 2003-710 dated 1st August 2003

⁸ Extract from the interview conducted with the Nouveau Mons commune's technical department manager.

When traffic safety is considered as an element of the quality of life, the fact that it has been taken into consideration is not accompanied by any statistical analysis of insecurity. The reduction of safety to a mere quality of life variable and its dilution among other nuisances are two hindrances to understanding the motivations behind this specific insecurity and to dealing with it through targeted actions.

2.3/ Situational prevention and traffic safety – similar objectives?

The law governing the National Urban Renewal Program stipulates that one of the city's policy orientations is to fight exclusion. The term 'exclusion' appears twice in the text of law. The fight against exclusion is first mentioned as a means to reduce insecurity issues. Subsequently, it is used to justify the development of public transport. In this section of the text, the development of public transport is considered as a tool to fight exclusion and, therefore, fight delinquency. Social and spatial exclusion is therefore seen as a factor contributing to the rise in delinquency and the fight against exclusion is seen as a means to reduce delinquency. Situational prevention development work is therefore carried out. The underlying idea is that a better conception of the environment would make it possible to prevent criminality (Newman, 1972). Two strategies have been developed for urban renewal: physically opening up neighborhoods and clearing public areas through "residentialisation" operations.

In order to limit the subdivision of neighborhoods and link it to the urban area, projects seek to open up neighborhoods by establishing new "road infrastructure 'linking up' the ANRU (National Urban Renewal Agency) neighborhood" (Louvot and Jemelin, 2007: 14). Thus, in Roubaix, in the Trois Ponts neighborhood, the urban renewal project plans to improve the area's accessibility by establishing a "set of urban motorways both for vehicles and pedestrians that incite you to take them or cross them". This road development project is not based on any clear thinking founded on statistical data or accident analyses, although these impact on the traffic moving across the area. Without a precise insecurity analysis, the strategy of opening up these neighborhoods might lead to new conflict conditions. Without an assessment of how insecurity has evolved after opening up these areas, only the use of a conditional clause would be appropriate.

Residentialisation is a town-planning operation that "could literally be defined as an action aimed at transforming a social housing complex into a 'residence'. The development practice thus designated consists of clarifying the status of external areas at the minimum and of demarcating the residence's private area from the city's public areas with the help of a fence. Spatial systems vary according to both the donors' and architects' intentions and the room for maneuver left by the different areas configured. They range from merely closing-off an area to prevent trespassing, gatherings and traffic, to the establishment of residential units offering residents areas they can appropriate" (Lelevrier and Guigou, 2005: 51). By forming traditional streets, such operations reduce undefined intermediary areas that users traveling through find difficult to figure out. In that sense, residentialisation can reduce situations of insecurity, but no assessment of the impact of such operations on accidents has been made.

Urban development work carried out implicitly incorporates traffic safety issues while including civil security issues explicitly, but traffic insecurity situations have not been specifically analyzed. Urban renewal offers an opportunity to improve spatial justice, but the opportunity is not maximized. This can be explained by the lack of knowledge concerning injustices in terms of traffic safety, both with regard to facts and explanatory processes.

3/ Lack of knowledge about situations of inequality

In terms of urban renovation projects as well as re-developed roads, no traffic safety diagnosis is carried out (3.1). In the decision-making process, analyses have shown the absence of project promoters – the departments that analyze safety and security are not present when road projects are being defined (3.2). The absence of technical involvement is not compensated by an associative or political involvement, despite strong feelings concerning the lack of traffic safety among the inhabitants of rundown districts (3.3). The reason that traffic safety issues are not taken into consideration explicitly is therefore due to the lack of knowledge about these situations.

3.1/ Lack of knowledge about safety-related inequalities

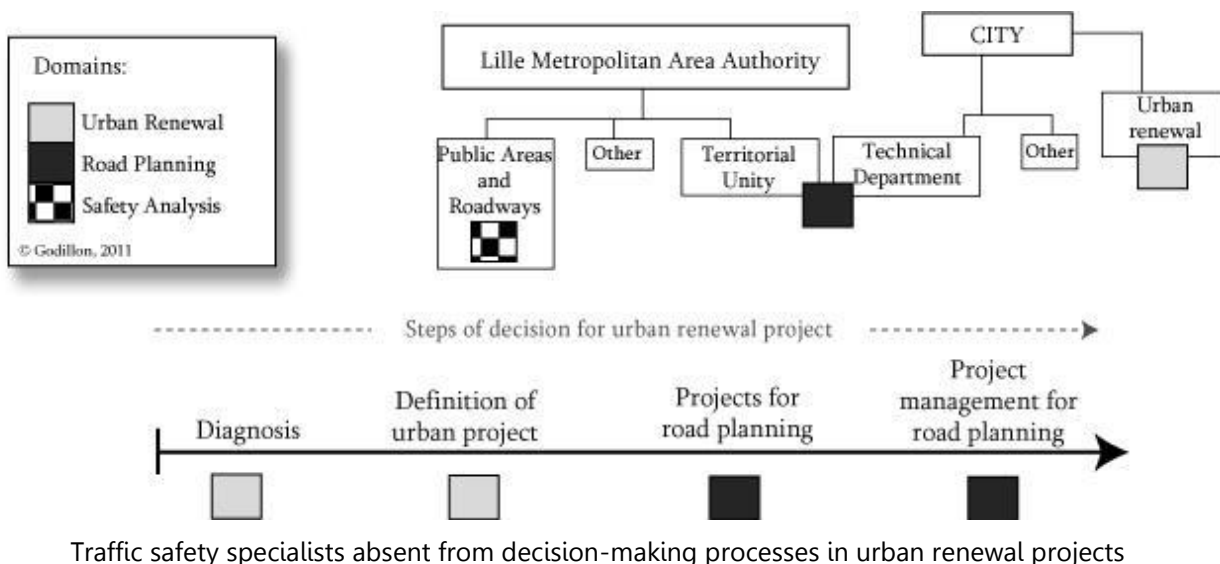
When urban renewal projects are developed, no specific diagnosis is conducted in the concerned neighborhoods with regard to traffic safety situations: "no warning notices are issued concerning traffic accidents. Therefore, I do not know whether there is any specific frequency (of accidents) in the neighborhood, as compared to the rest of the city"⁹. At the metropolitan level, actors have no knowledge of inequalities because of the absence of studies demonstrating the links between accidents and an area's social conditions.

Safety studies are conducted on the main roads by the "Public Areas and Roadways" Department of the Lille Metropolitan Area Authority at the request of the communes. No specific analysis is conducted for road re-development works in urban renewal projects, despite the existence of additional traffic safety risks. No safety diagnosis is done before initiating development work for new roads, nor is any impact study undertaken with regard to the potential emergence of new traffic safety situations once the work is completed.

Given the context of the lack of knowledge about traffic safety, are the departments in charge of safety analyses present during the decision-making processes for urban renewal projects?

3.2/ Absence of traffic safety specialists in decision-making processes

The Lille urban area's institutional organization separates accident analysis specialists from those who develop public areas and those in charge of urban renewal projects. Traffic safety analyses are conducted within the "Public Areas and Roadways" Department, whereas road development is the responsibility of the technical departments of the Territorial Units corresponding to the neighborhood concerned. In addition, community departments do not undertake any development work without the approval of the commune concerned, insofar as the communes have jurisdiction over the roadways (lighting, parking, etc.). As shown in this diagram, the separation of responsibilities is not compensated by consultations with safety specialists in the decision-making processes of urban projects.



⁹ Extract from the interview conducted with the manager of one of the five urban projects analyzed (the Nouveau-Mons).

The main problem in the Lille Metropolitan Area Authority is therefore the separation of jurisdictions between the communes and the city itself, with regard to the management of development work for the roadways, traffic, public areas and the living environment: "The separation of jurisdictions related to the management of public areas between the urban community (management of commune-level and community roads) and the communes (policing, public lighting, green areas) tends to isolate road safety within the field of road engineering developed by community departments" (Désiré et al., 2001: 9).

Traffic safety is not a clearly stated objective and is not paid any special attention during urban renewal projects. The absence of a promoter for this issue at the institutional level is echoed among the inhabitants as well.

3.3/ A strong feeling of insecurity without the inhabitants being mobilized

The inhabitants of underprivileged districts are more concerned with accident risk levels in their residential areas than those living in other urban areas. Since 2005, the INSEE's Living Environment and Safety Survey has included questions related to the lack of safety in residential districts. The survey makes it possible to measure the impact of certain attacks on goods and persons, as well as the entire population's opinion with regard to its living environment and safety. The sample consists of about 25,500 households and breaks down communes according to several types, with a national-level extension for Sensitive Urban Zones (ZUS - Zones Urbaines Sensibles). 67% of ZUS dwellers find their neighborhood pleasant to live in (as against 91% of the inhabitants of other types of communes). The primary criticism concerns the lack of civil safety, as 60% ZUS dwellers were concerned by delinquency and incivility (as against 29%) and 49% by traffic hazards (as against 44%).

Despite a relatively stronger feeling than elsewhere about traffic hazards, there have been no records of the mobilization of residents in this regard in underprivileged districts. In the Lille metropolitan area, the "59, rue de l'Avenir" Association is one of the few associations that took up road safety as its initial area of interest (Désiré et al., 2001). But no records of any associations were found in the neighborhoods in the course of the field work. However, local mobilization could have been used as a vehicle for taking security issues into consideration in urban renewal projects. Reverting to the development of the environmental justice movement, Sylvie Fol and Géraldine Pflieger use the example of transportation in San Francisco to show that the equal distribution of the advantages and disadvantages related to transportation among the people has emerged as a goal and as an assessment criterion for transportation policies (Fol and Pflieger, 2010). By becoming a group action category, the fight for a fairer distribution of vehicle-related nuisance may become a subject for public action.

Conclusion

Whereas socio-spatial inequalities exist in terms of accident risks, these issues have not been dealt with explicitly within the framework of urban renewal projects. However, territorialized public action nonetheless provides an established framework to improve spatial justice in the face of transport-related nuisance. The explanation for the fact that these aspects are not taken into consideration is the lack of awareness of such inequalities. There is very little research on the issue of inequalities in terms of traffic safety and the few results available are not disseminated widely enough. In addition, the predominant discourse lays emphasis on behavioral aspects to explain the lack of traffic safety. While inequalities are the outcome of a combination of territorial factors, the departments responsible for accidentology are not involved in the definition of urban projects. The absence of any technical inputs with regard to traffic safety is not compensated by any associative or political mobilization on the part of the inhabitants.

Fairly limited means are needed to improve spatial justice as far as traffic security is concerned: making accident analyses compulsory, undertaking impact studies of urban development projects with regard to internal travel within a neighborhood and traffic safety, and involving departments responsible for road safety issues while defining urban renewal projects are the means required for taking traffic safety issues into consideration in urban renewal projects. Such changes can only occur if there is better awareness of the inequality-related processes and issues in terms of traffic safety.

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