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# Destroying the Mystique of Paris: How the Destruction of Les Halles Served as a Symbol for Gaullist Power and Modernization in 1960s and 1970s Paris

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DESTROYING THE MYSTIQUE OF PARIS: HOW THE DESTRUCTION OF LES HALLES SERVED AS A SYMBOL  
FOR GAULLIST POWER AND MODERNIZATION IN 1960s AND 1970s PARIS

by

SCOTT A. KASTEN

Under the Direction of Dr. Denise Davidson

ABSTRACT

Les Halles, Paris's historic marketplace, was once called "the belly of Paris" by Emile Zola. Les Halles was a Parisian institution. The destruction of the marketplace in 1971, especially the famed Baltard pavilions, set off a firestorm of debate and public dissent not seen on an urban issue in nearly a century. Within the debate over Les Halles existed a series of gripping juxtapositions or binaries- a battle between the Gaullists and the liberal intellectuals, capitalists and workers, modernity and tradition. These juxtapositions reveal France's struggle to adapt to the new modernity that emerged in the postwar and post-colonial years. The battle over Les Halles was symbolic of the power struggle between Gaullists who wanted to "modernize" France on the one side, and on the other, a group of intellectuals and preservationists who sought to protect Les Halles as a symbol of traditional French identity.

INDEX WORDS: Les Halles, Paris, Gaullists, Public space, Urbanism, Urban preservation

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SCOTT A. KASTEN

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beautiful wife Anne-Claire, your love, support, and patience over these past two years has never been lost on me and continues to be appreciated more than you may ever know. To my little Jacques, while not quite as patient with my endless working as your mother has been, my constant drive to be a dad that you are proud of has always fueled my fire. Regardless, I hope you feel that I never forgot to take a break to play.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1 LES HALLES: AN INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 CAPITALISM AND THEORIES OF PUBLIC SPACE AND OWNERSHIP.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3 MODERNIZATION VERSUS PRESERVATION IN THE GAULLIST ERA: A TALE OF TWO CITIES.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>4 THE DESTRUCTION OF LES HALLES AND THE END OF AN ERA .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>73</b>

## 1 LES HALLES: AN INTRODUCTION

According to the *Saturday Evening Post* of September 20, 1958, “The Best Show in Paris is Free. This is Les Halles, the market place of Paris—a raucous, gory, fascinating bedlam where countesses rub shoulders with roughnecks, and no one ever goes to sleep.”<sup>1</sup> Such was the charm of Les Halles, that Emile Zola once called it “the belly of Paris” and even wrote a novel that took place entirely within its confines.<sup>2</sup> Others have called it Paris’s heart and others still, its soul. Such personification made Les Halles seem to many like an old friend, always there with a warm bowl of onion soup on a cold Parisian winter evening. The destruction of the marketplace, especially that of the famed Baltard pavilions, was a tragic drama that began in 1959 and reached its climatic apex in 1971, setting off a firestorm of debate and public dissent not seen on an urban planning issue in nearly a century. The debate over Les Halles turned on a series of gripping juxtapositions or binaries—a battle between the Gaullists and the liberal intellectuals, capitalists and workers, modernity and tradition, the State and the city. Les Halles is important because, located in the physical and metaphorical center of the city, its fate was believed by Parisians to determine the future of Paris as well.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the history of Les Halles as an integral piece of Parisian identity as well as some of the concepts that will be discussed in greater detail in the succeeding chapters. These concepts will include an exploration of the demographic makeup of the surrounding neighborhood, which will play an important role in the social revolution France underwent in the 1960s.

Chapter Two will discuss the theoretics of space, particularly public space. Sociologist Richard Sennett once said, “the public geography of a city is the civic impulse institutionalized.”<sup>3</sup> As Sennett suggests, how public space is used explains a lot about the values and social organization of a society.

<sup>1</sup> Toni Howard “The Best Show in Paris is Free,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, September 20, 1958, 44.

<sup>2</sup> See *Le Ventre de Paris* (“The Belly of Paris”), published in 1873. It was Zola’s first novel about the working class and the third novel of his twenty-volume series *Les Rougon-Macquart*.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 264.

Urban space is a place of action and drama, where the events that shape history are often played out. As Jürgen Habermas has said, the space of a city offers one the “privileged eye of power,” or according to Rosemary Wakeman, “the street is a space of power for those excluded from other accepted forms of discourse.”<sup>4</sup> Les Halles was a particularly important and symbolic public space, and by unfolding the theory behind how public space is used, an increased appreciation and understanding of why the various stakeholders in Les Halles’ future fought as ardently as they did should become clear.

Chapter Three will discuss Gaullist ideology and how Les Halles functioned as a space where Gaullists and preservationists battled over the future of Paris’s identity. In the 1960s, the Gaullists were largely guided by technocratic principles that minimized the role of traditional aesthetics in urban planning and management and focused on global competitiveness and efficient use of space (such as the use of skyscrapers or mass housing projects) in a way that would create economic growth. To many preservationists, this shift was one steeped in commercialism and which was, in the words of journalist and preservation advocate André Fermigier, “the architecture of deception.”<sup>5</sup> Paris was not New York, it had a heritage that was uniquely French and worth preserving.

Chapter Four, the final chapter, will revisit the legacy of May 1968, but rather than look at it from a past versus present symbolism it will illuminate the growing class antagonisms of which Les Halles is representative. During the late 1950s, and throughout the 1960s, working-class Parisians (who had traditionally lived in Les Halles and its surrounding neighborhoods) were forced out into the newly emerging suburbs, or *banlieues*. This migration was a result of policies like the Gaullists’ new vision for Les Halles. Thus Les Halles’ destruction provides an opportunity to investigate the creation of what

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<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 9. Rosemary Wakeman, *The Heroic City: Paris, 1945-1958* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 6.

<sup>5</sup> André Fermigier, “Qui a vendu les Halles?” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 12 July 1971, 12.

historian Tyler Stovall has called the “Paris Red Belt.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, the chapter will bring the narrative of Les Halles’ destruction to a close and further explore the aftermath of its redevelopment.

Before discussing the aforementioned juxtapositions, in order to show the importance of the Les Halles debate, some historical context may be useful. This historical context will be broken into two parts. First, a history of Paris after World War II through the 1950s will be given. Understanding this period is important because many of the images that gave rise to the sentimental nostalgia to save Les Halles came from this period. Second, a more specific history of Les Halles will be useful to understand how engrained Les Halles was in Parisian identity.

During World War II, France fell to the Nazi war machine in a matter of weeks. Fortunately, Hitler so admired Paris’s beauty that he ordered the city to be spared large-scale destruction. Thus Paris emerged from the war largely unscathed physically. The emotional toll of the war on Paris however was another story. Occupation under the Nazis was an experience of repression, loss, and displacement, accompanied by feelings of exile despite the state of Paris as an “open” city. When the euphoria of liberation finally came, the familiar surfaces of Paris were reinvigorated with a renewed intensity of meaning; what had been taken for granted before the war now felt new and exciting.<sup>7</sup>

The 1950s marked an important period of transition in Paris. As Wakeman says, the decade “was a bridge between the first half of the century, with all its political violence and class struggle, and the second half, with its modernizing zeal and mass consumer culture.”<sup>8</sup> The idea of Paris as the capital of modernity had long faded away. The reputation of Paris, that of the carefree Belle Époque Paris, was lost during the war and with it vanished the tourists who were an important part of the Parisian economy. In order to welcome back the lost foreign visitors, the city produced a series of postwar travel brochures that attempted to revive the mystique of historic Paris, even if such a Paris was becoming

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<sup>6</sup> Tyler Stovall, *The Rise of the Red Belt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.)

<sup>7</sup> Wakeman, *The Heroic City*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

increasingly mythical. These brochures were full of nostalgic images of independent street vendors, couples browsing at the quayside bookstalls, and of course the city's famous landmarks, all in an attempt to recreate Paris as the place of idyllic fantasy. Indeed, the city went to great lengths to give the impression that nothing in Paris had ever changed. Paris was still that city that existed out of time, deceiving Parisians who longed for a return to the familiar amid the recent chaos of war.

Of course reality in postwar Paris was quite different than the fantasy of travel brochures. For years the city had ignored its infrastructure and was beginning to crumble. Social and living conditions were horrible. Paris had a population density per hectare almost five times that of London and one and a half times that of New York; many of these inhabitants were packed into a housing stock that was beyond dilapidated.<sup>9</sup> One of the bright spots amid the harsher realities was the raging might of industrial Paris, which was reaching its apogee in the postwar reconstruction. This victory for the city's working-class was short lived however. The governing technocratic elites (which will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Three) had decided that Paris was too big and too concentrated and was diverting development from the rest of the country. It was true; Paris dominated France politically and economically. Over 80% of French auto production jobs were in Paris, and figures for other industries were not much different.<sup>10</sup> From a national security standpoint (especially given the recent occupation of Paris by the Nazis) it made sense to spread that nation's wealth and industrial resources with greater geographical equity. What followed was the deindustrialization of Paris and by 1958 demolition and reconstruction had become a familiar image.

Throughout the 1950s, working-class Paris remained entrenched in the select neighborhoods the working-class had long called home. These neighborhoods were located in the historic core of Paris, the 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> arrondissements, but especially Les Halles and the Marais, with additional proletarian pockets near the Bastille and the 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> arrondissements. For decades, outside of the Baltard pavilions at Les

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 59.

Halles, these working-class enclaves had been largely forgotten. The reawakening of Paris after the war and the campaign to recreate the fantasy of “old” Paris placed a spotlight on these seemingly dark neighborhoods once again. In fact, reviving the memory of these lost neighborhoods became a cultural obsession. Throughout the 1950s, an abundance of novels and films were released that lauded Parisian working-class life.

Of the many popular figures who took on the responsibility of raising up working Paris, or what was called the “authentic” Paris, one of the most important (especially for Les Halles) was photojournalist Robert Doisneau. Doisneau’s work functioned as a visual urban commentary that exuded an emotional sentimentalism and allowed his audience to become *flâneurs* exploring the lives of everyday Parisians. Through his lens, Doisneau captured Paris’s dancing girls, dockworkers, street vendors, and old men enjoying a game at the park, and cast them in a way that made them somehow seem heroic. Quotidian Paris became lively and filled with a sense of importance. Doisneau’s work capturing the allure of Les Halles is particularly spectacular. The Les Halles area was of significant importance to Doisneau, and several of his first successful photos came from just outside the market area back in the 1930s. When it was announced in 1959 that the market would eventually move to a new site at Rungis, Doisneau knew that Les Halles would in due course die and from that point began a detailed photographic study of the markets and its denizens, so that the memory of Les Halles would live on in time.

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, many of those hoping to save Les Halles believed that deindustrialization was the first step in a larger process in which the left-leaning workers of Paris were being pushed out and replaced by the right-leaning bourgeoisie. Backers of Les Halles, like Doisneau, feared that such a migration would result in the homogenization of Paris and the creation of a new and foreign identity for the city. One of Les Halles’ most attractive features was that it was a place

where people of all social classes came together and functioned as a unified community. As Doisneau explained:

As a little banlieusard I didn't know this part of Paris well, Les Halles. When people spoke of Les Halles, they evoked a brewery. In other words, when people wanted to get drunk, they often ended up at Les Halles. There they mixed with the butchers and the grocers. There was a kind of promiscuity there, a mixture of characters from very different social backgrounds. For me, for a neighborhood to be interesting, you need a mix—people mustn't be too alike.<sup>11</sup>

Doisneau's images of Les Halles, *les forts* (the strongmen) carrying heavy animal carcasses over their heads, the butchers, the florists, patrons picking through piles of vegetables, or Parisian bourgeois dressed in tuxedos ready for a night on the town, romanticized Les Halles and re-created the marketplace as a microcosm of Paris itself. Throughout the 1950s, whether through novels, films, or photos, the message Parisians were receiving was that working-class Paris and the neighborhoods they called home were a special part of the city and they were worth preserving.

With a general history of Paris in mind, we can now turn to a more specific history of Paris, that of its twentieth-century creation. When most people think of Paris, or Parisian streets, the image that most often comes to mind is Haussmann Paris. Under the direction of Haussmann, Paris was the "capital of modernity." Nineteenth-century Paris was defined by grand-scale projects and bold thinking. Yet, according to Anthony Sutcliffe's classic 1970 study, the early twentieth century marked "the autumn of central Paris," and Patrice Higonnet confirmed this when he stated, "Paris was not the capital of the twentieth century."<sup>12</sup> What happened in Paris to bring about such a quick decline? Sutcliffe

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Hamilton, *Robert Doisneau: A Photographer's Life* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), 302.

<sup>12</sup> See Anthony Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris: The Defeat of Town Planning, 1850-1970* (London: Edward Arnold, 1970) and Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 434.

argues that Paris lost its grand-scale visions, while others have countered that Paris became stuck in the past, tied to ideas that no longer worked in the current time.<sup>13</sup>

While Paris may have lost its modern vision, Rosemary Wakeman aptly states that the production of urban space “is always a battlefield of contending forces,” and it should not be forgotten that twentieth century Paris faced several planning obstacles that were difficult to overcome.<sup>14</sup> In addition to overcoming the legacy of Haussmann, twentieth-century Paris faced two world wars (and the subsequent reconstructions), political and social conflict, and increasingly publicized intellectual debates over the future of the capital. According to Wakeman however, what may have most plagued Paris in the twentieth century was a lack of true avant-gardes, visionary leaders that would entice the imaginations of Parisians.<sup>15</sup> Le Corbusier comes closest, however, much of his *Plan Voisin* was Haussmannization carried to an extreme and much of what he dreamed for Paris would never be realized.

Following the First World War, it was obvious that much of Paris’s infrastructure was in decline and in need of repair or replacement. The deterioration of the city and the increased density resulted in the rapid rise of the suburbs, where working-class families fled in hopes of better living conditions. As postwar reconstruction began in the 1920s, the mindset of Parisian planners had changed. The sweeping slum clearance and redevelopment associated with Haussmann was no longer offered as the desired solution. Instead, Third Republic planners adopted a policy of treating Paris as a living organism, one that did not require constant hands-on care, but rather more unobtrusive renovation that paid attention to the city’s historical character and fostered social reconciliation and moral regeneration.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Michael Cornu, *La Conquête de Paris* (Paris: Mercure, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> Rosemary Wakeman, “Nostalgic Modernism and the Invention of Paris in the Twentieth Century,” *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 27 (Winter, 2004), 116.

<sup>15</sup> Wakeman, “Invention of Paris,” 116.

<sup>16</sup> Wakeman, “Invention of Paris,” 121.



To what extent this shift was a result of a real ideological change or the restraining nature of meager postwar finances is a question that remains to be answered.

It was not until the fall of France in June 1940 and the emergence of the Vichy regime that Paris was given a real opportunity for urban reform and renewal. Marshal Pétain was quick to condemn the inaction of the Third Republic in an address to the Study Commission for the Paris Region, saying, "Over the past sixty years, due to the failure of authorities who neither planned, nor demanded, nor acted in time, the Paris agglomeration has continued to spread out in disarray over the surrounding countryside, widening the circle of misery and ugliness that surrounds the city, saddening the heart and the mind."<sup>17</sup> The Vichy regime moved to neutralize those connected to the Third Republic on the local level, and in their place instituted a technocratic and planned form of urban development that would provide a model for the Gaullists two decades later.

The Vichy regime created a hierarchical series of planning commissions and committees that operated in a statutory framework that gave planning agencies wide authority to zone, clear, and develop as they saw fit. Seeking to apply these urban planning techniques to all large cities in France, Vichy imposed a national agenda on urban planning. At the heart of Vichy urban ideology was a desire to maintain a sense of French tradition in design, while rebuilding the morals and values of the French population. Vichy ideology adopted what became known as "French nostalgic modernism," which attempted to balance scientific urban planning with historical and natural forms of the city. The Vichy regime believed that collapsing together tradition and modernism was not a contradiction, but something uniquely French.<sup>18</sup> Of course, the war was still raging and any plans for the reconstruction of Paris would have to wait until the end of the war. When that time came, the Vichy regime had been swept from power and the Fourth Republic, which followed the Vichy regime, spent much of its short thirteen-year reign struggling to reunite France and repair the wartime destruction, rather than devising

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<sup>17</sup> Marshal Philippe Pétain, quoted in Wakeman, "Invention of Paris," 130.

<sup>18</sup> Wakeman, "Invention of Paris," 131.

grand plans for Paris. A renewed campaign for Paris's renovation would have to wait for the rise of the Gaullists and the Fifth Republic, and at the heart of Gaullist plans was the renovation of the city's central marketplace—Les Halles.

In the words of Rosemary Wakeman, "Les Halles is a palimpsest, a place that reflects the capital's many histories."<sup>19</sup> Les Halles' historic relationship with Paris began in 1137, when Louis VI ordered the two existing markets to be transferred to the center of town. In succeeding years, various kings made additions and changes to the market, notably Philip Augustus in 1183 and François I in 1543.<sup>20</sup> In 1763, a new market structure was built from stone and concrete. The shift in material, as the previous markets had largely been constructed as open-air wooden structures, symbolized the importance of the central market in urban life. Stone was the material of monuments and structures designed to last for ages. The *Halle au blé* ("Corn Exchange"), as the market was known, was France's central distribution point for grain. The monumentality of the structure was also designed to invoke notions of abundance and stability, which in turn made the population less rebellious and easier to govern. The main hall of the *Halle au blé* still stands today, and is now known as *La Bourse de commerce*.<sup>21</sup>

By the dawn of the nineteenth century, Les Halles suddenly became a center of congestion and chaos having largely outgrown its capacity. In 1811, Napoleon issued a series of decrees that appointed the market the "Grande Halles" and the national center for food trade and distribution. These decrees were accompanied by several expansions and renovations of the marketplace. In 1842, the *Commission des Halles* was created to find a more permanent solution to the problem and it debated whether to rebuild or move the market. In 1848 the decision was made to expand and rebuild the market in its

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<sup>19</sup> Rosemary Wakeman, "Fascinating Les Halles," *French Politics, Culture & Society* 25 (Summer 2007): 46.

<sup>20</sup> Anne Lombard-Jourdan, *Les Halles de Paris et Leur Quartier, 1137-1969*, (Paris: Ecole Nationale des Chartes, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Meredith TenHoor, "Architecture and Biopolitics at Les Halles," *French Politics, Culture, and Society* 25 (Summer, 2007), 74.

current location and an architectural competition was announced, which was won by French architect Victor Baltard in 1854. Baltard was forced to amend his original plans for a design of glass and concrete when Napoleon III called for “big umbrellas (of glass), nothing more,” and Haussmann, who was in charge of the larger redesigning of Paris at the time, instructed “Iron, iron, nothing but iron.”<sup>22</sup> According to art historian Christopher Mead, the Baltard Pavilions were “a demonstration of the city’s transformation and modernization under Haussmann.”<sup>23</sup> The markets signified an important shift in the industrialization and standardization of architecture during the nineteenth century and presented a radically new conception of architecture that broke with the city’s own historical patterns of development. As a result of their function, the markets dissolved the familiar differences between the street and building, outside and inside, public and private; the markets combined pavilions and streets into a single, transparent and rational system. The pavilions showed that the machine age had arrived, as their difference from traditional buildings was clear. The pavilions of Les Halles, the greatest example of fine French ironwork before the Eiffel Tower, were finally completed in 1888, bringing new vitality to the center of Paris.

In 1889, Paris hosted the World Exposition to celebrate the centennial of the French Revolution. Prime Minister Jules Ferry sought to use the fair to celebrate the achievements of French liberalism under the Third Republic. The French desired a bold theme that would allow France to stand out from the rest of Europe as the center of the newly emerging industrial world. Ferry had chosen to highlight French greatness in the realms of engineering, science, and technology. As part of this presentation two steel structures were commissioned that would showcase French ingenuity: the Eiffel Tower and the Gallery of Machines. Once these projects were completed, Paris boasted the world’s tallest structure, the Eiffel Tower, the world’s largest roof span over a single structure in the Gallery of Machines, and the

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<sup>22</sup> Norma Evenson, “The Assassination of Les Halles,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32 (1973), 308.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Mead, “Victor Baltard and the Central Markets of Paris,” Musée d’Orsay, <http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/events/lectures/victor-baltard-and-the-central-markets-of-paris.html>.

world's most modern and expansive marketplace in Les Halles.<sup>24</sup> As the predecessor to the highlights of the Expo, Les Halles' construction set in motion a new identity for France which, like the iron that it was built from, portrayed a sense of power and stability that would etch in the hearts of the French a strong feeling of national pride.

The pavilions served their function well until the 1940s, when the familiar problems of congestion and unsanitary waste became a concern once again. In 1949, the Economic Council of Paris abandoned the standard solution of renovating the marketplace in its current location and in 1957 a committee was created to explore alternate locations for the market. Finally, on February 6, 1959, the Parisian Council of Ministers decided that the marketplace would be transferred to a new site at Rungis, near the Orly airport, and it is from this point that the drama and controversy surrounding Les Halles began.<sup>25</sup>

As stated earlier, the destruction of Les Halles was infused with symbolic juxtapositions, all of which are interrelated and rooted in the genesis of the Gaullists and the Fifth Republic. One area where Gaullist visions of modernity had their greatest impact was on the social demographics of the Les Halles neighborhood. The markets had always dominated the character of the Halles district. The neighborhood, never as fashionable as the neighboring Marais, was home to Paris's working classes and poor, many of whom were employed in the markets. Rather than a neighborhood of mansions or fine homes, Les Halles consisted mostly of older and rundown structures, of which it was noted:

With the exception of certain prestigious buildings, Les Halles does not present at first sight monumental ensembles of exceptional architectural quality, of which the need for conservation is indisputable. Its interest resides in characteristics less apparent and more subtle: an ancient urban fabric which determines the characteristic land allotment. Street patterns which conform

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<sup>24</sup> Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France, Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 2-3.

<sup>25</sup> Pierre-François Large, *Des Halles au Forum* (Paris: Edition l'Harmattan, 1992), 53.

to the historic ways of the capital; sequences of facades filled with fantasy and harmony, forming a refined and elegant urban décor.<sup>26</sup>

As the quoted passage implies, Les Halles was a neighborhood of character and history. The existence of the marketplace, the narrow winding streets, and the old buildings, coupled with the working-class residents who called Les Halles home, created a unique atmosphere that harkened to what Paris may have been in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Such a neighborhood provided low-income residents the opportunity to live in the center of Paris, which was quickly increasing in cost at this time, and provided a tangible and still preservable link to a Paris that had otherwise disappeared.

As Louis Chevalier notes, the economics of being a landlord during the early twentieth century was such that property owners had very little financial latitude to make repairs or improvements to their buildings; as a result several buildings in the neighborhood gradually decayed or were abandoned altogether. To make matters worse, following World War II, as was the case following all major French wars since the Revolution, “an enormous movement in hearth-bound France...looking to escape ‘the chill of provincial life’” brought scores of both provincials and the normal flow of immigrants (many from North Africa) into the French capital.<sup>27</sup> As the newly arrived could “always find work in Les Halles,” the neighborhood became saturated, with the population density of the area reaching over 300 people per acre.<sup>28</sup>

The odd dynamic of so many living in conditions of deprivation amid the largest food market in the world was problematic. Yet as Wakeman has argued, “in the picturesque fantasy of Les Halles, urban decay and disorder somehow preserved traditional French identity...Les Halles was an

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<sup>26</sup> “Les Halles: Les études de restauration-rehabilitation,” *Paris projet* (Paris: l’Atelier Parisien d’Urbanisme, no.1, July 1969), 35.

<sup>27</sup> Louis Chevalier, *The Assassination of Paris*, ed. trans. David Jordan (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 19.

<sup>28</sup> Evenson, “The Assassination of Les Halles,” 311.

incongruent display of class relations, of centrality and marginality.”<sup>29</sup> Despite this strange nostalgic symbolism, it seemed many in the Parisian Council were in agreement that the status quo of hardship and squalor could no longer be maintained, nor could the congestion, the prevalence of rats, or the existence of prostitution. A change had to be made.

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<sup>29</sup> Wakeman, “Fascinating Les Halles,” 53.

## 2 CAPITALISM AND THEORIES OF PUBLIC SPACE AND OWNERSHIP

Public spaces are, in theory, shared by the community as a whole, open to all without discrimination, and are an important facet to the urban environment. Fundamental in creating social cohesion, they are places where human interaction and social mediation take place. The design, character, or structuring of public places is a significant factor in the identity that an urban area takes on. Public spaces are often organized to showcase cities' historical legacy, cultural landscape, or natural surroundings. The way in which public spaces are fashioned by those charged with developing them and perceived by those utilizing them plays an essential role in who has control over the space. This chapter aims to provide some theoretical background on the meanings of public space, as well as an historical overview of how public space has been used in Paris, and in Les Halles specifically since the mid-nineteenth century. First, general concepts of space will be discussed before transitioning to a more in-depth discussion of capitalism and the appropriation of space, the dynamics of the neoliberal city, and finally (as well as throughout the chapter), it will be shown how Les Halles is emblematic of these spatial control concepts.

The idea of the “public sphere” as a place of political deliberation and participation, and in turn democratic governance, extends deep in time. The Athenian agora, or the Roman forum, were physical and public places where people gathered not only to engage in commerce, but to discuss politics, current events, and ideas important to the community. These public spaces operated to bring society together so that a dialogue could be formed that would result in a functioning democracy and a flourishing economy. As sociologist Richard Sennett has said, “public space is the geography of the public sphere.”<sup>30</sup> In this sense, the relationship between public space and the politics of the public sphere is important, because within the space of the city, as Habermas has stated, exists “the privileged

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man: On the Social Psychology of Capitalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 264.

eye of power.”<sup>31</sup> The street or the public square can serve as a place where confrontation occurs over whose social ideals and values dominate and it is from public spaces that those groups who are largely excluded from traditional forms of power and influence can find it. When a particular politically disadvantaged social group is unable to represent its interests in the houses of organized government, public spaces, such as squares or markets, can serve as a dramatic stage where the forgotten can shout their grievances. As we will see later in this chapter, and throughout the thesis, Les Halles is representative of the changing nature of public versus private space, the shifting of old social codes, as well as the changing clientele of the city.

In order to better understand confrontations over public space and provide additional context for understanding Les Halles, it is helpful to take a brief look at the Haussmannization of Paris in the 1850s and 1860s. Haussmann’s redesign of Paris is replete with parallels to the issues faced in the redevelopment of Les Halles one hundred years later. In both cases, one of the primary rationales used for demolition was the need for slum clearance, improving public health, and restoring a sense of moral order. Like the Gaullists in the 1960s, the Third Republic leaders of the 1870s (following in the footsteps of Haussmann and the Second Empire) saw the renovation of Paris as an opportunity to display the Republic’s values. Buildings commissioned for the World’s Fair of 1889, such as the Eiffel Tower, were meant to show France’s growing industrial might and the future longevity and stability of the Republic. However, as a harbinger for what the Gaullists would experience when they announced their reconstruction plans, Haussmann’s vision of Paris, with its wide boulevards, symmetric lines and right-angled corners was frequently criticized as being inhuman and mechanistic, “aligned like a regiment under arms.”<sup>32</sup> The literary glorification of “old” Paris, led by figures like Victor Hugo, who set his masterpiece *Les Misérables* in the corridors of the gothic Paris that Haussmann was proposing to

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<sup>31</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 9.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories, The City and Its Mystique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 15.



destroy, attempted to make heartfelt pleas to save a past that could be forever lost. It was writer Charles Baudelaire who may have best captured the struggle over public space in Haussmann's Paris with his 1869 poem "The Eyes of the Poor," from his larger collection entitled *Le Spleen de Paris*.

Baudelaire writes:

Ah! So you would like to know why I hate you today? It will certainly be harder for you to understand than for me to explain, for you are, I believe, the most perfect example of feminine impermeability that exists.

We had spent a long day together which to me had seemed short. We had duly promised each other that all our thoughts should be shared in common, and that our two souls henceforth be but one -- a dream which, after all, has nothing original about it except that, although dreamed by every man on earth, it has been realized by none.

That evening, a little tired, you wanted to sit down in front of a new cafe forming the corner of a new boulevard still littered with rubbish but that already displayed proudly its unfinished splendors. The cafe was dazzling. Even the gas burned with all the ardor of a debut, and lighted with all its might the blinding whiteness of the walls, the expanse of mirrors, the gold cornices and moldings, fat-cheeked pages dragged along by hounds on leash, laughing ladies with falcons on their wrists, nymphs and goddesses bearing on their heads piles of fruits, pates and game, Hebes and Ganymedes holding out little amphoras of syrups or parti-colored ices; all history and all mythology pandering to gluttony.

On the street directly in front of us, a worthy man of about forty, with tired face and greying beard, was standing holding a small boy by the hand and carrying on his arm another little thing, still too weak to walk. He was playing nurse-maid, taking the children for an evening stroll. They were in rags. The three faces were extraordinarily serious, and those six eyes stared fixedly at the new cafe with admiration, equal in degree but differing in kind according to their

ages.

The eyes of the father said: "How beautiful it is! How beautiful it is! All the gold of the poor world must have found its way onto those walls." The eyes of the little boy: "How beautiful it is! How beautiful it is! But it is a house where only people who are not like us can go." As for the baby, he was much too fascinated to express anything but joy -- utterly stupid and profound.

Song writers say that pleasure ennobles the soul and softens the heart. The song was right that evening as far as I was concerned. Not only was I touched by this family of eyes but I was even a little ashamed of our glasses and decanters, too big for our thirst. I turned my eyes to look into yours, dear love, to read *my* thoughts in them; and as I plunged my eyes into your eyes, so beautiful and curiously soft, into those green eyes, home of Caprice and governed by the Moon, you said: "Those people are insufferable with their great saucer eyes. Can't you tell the proprietor to send them away?"

So you see how difficult it is to understand one another, my dear angel, how incommunicable thought is, even between two people in love.<sup>33</sup>

In this poem, Baudelaire shows how the ambiguities of ownership, aesthetics, and social relations of everyday life collide. The boulevard and the café are, technically speaking, public places open to all but within those spaces clearly exists a wall that divides who may enter and who may not. The poor family, their eyes wide with wonder and wishful thinking, has no right to this space. The female lover is aghast that she may have to share this space with those she clearly does not deem worthy; they are in fact "insufferable." That she sees as a possibility the idea of having them sent away shows that the boulevard is a place of control and the power is in her hands. With such a gesture, the boulevard is no longer a public place, but an exclusionary one. The boulevard is not the only public space that shows this power dynamic. Take for example the traditional multi-story apartment building

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<sup>33</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "The Eyes of the Poor," *Paris Spleen*, trans. James Hiddleston, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

of “old” Paris prior to Haussmann. The ground floor was traditionally reserved for a business of some kind, the first and second floors were occupied by the bourgeoisie, the third by respectable bureaucrats, and the fourth by the working class. In these buildings, despite the clear symbolism of class division, citizens of all backgrounds came into frequent contact with one another and shared space. As these buildings were destroyed to make way for Haussmann’s grand boulevards, many of the buildings that replaced them did not echo that former social diversity—there was a separation of the classes into new class-defined neighborhoods. As Richard Sennett said, “in the remaking of the city by Haussmann in the 1850s and 1860s the intermixing of classes within districts was reduced by design. Whatever heterogeneity occurred spontaneously in the division of private houses into apartments in the first half of the century was now opposed by an effort to make neighborhoods homogenous economic units.”<sup>34</sup> This segregating of classes created both a lost sense of moral obligation and a lost sense of sociality on the part of the bourgeoisie toward the working class. The cliché “out of sight, out of mind,” rings true here. The creation of a new public space that through its design signifies ownership by a particular class, as was the case of the café in Baudelaire’s poem, serves to separate the classes in the community as a whole. The reaction of the young child in the poem is demonstrative of this idea. He sees how beautiful the café is, with its glittering gold and expansive mirrors, yet he knows that it is a place for people who are not like him.

Scholars like David Harvey and Manuel Castells connect the appropriation of space with capitalism.<sup>35</sup> They emphasize the historical movement of capitalism in the formation of city processes, a movement that shifts commercial spaces of need to commercial spaces of profit. The result of such a shift is what Immanuel Wallerstein would call a core-periphery relationship, or in this context, a relationship in which middle and upper class interests dominate working class interests and in doing so

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<sup>34</sup> Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 134.

<sup>35</sup> See David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), and Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980).

the working class is forced to relocate to the periphery. In this relationship, it is noted how urbanism, guided by capitalism, develops within the core a site where surplus value is created and appropriated and where contradictions between use value and exchange value are manifested. This process has as its main goal expansion toward the world market. In the case of Les Halles, the traditional function of the space was as a food market, a function that focused on exchange value from market transactions on a local scale. However, when it was proposed that the market be transformed into a world commercial center of high rent office space (for transactions on a more global scale), the role of capitalism and the emphasis of use value supplanted the space's traditional purpose. What arises in such a dynamic is the need to realign space in a way that maximizes profit, resulting in a struggle for group dominance over a particular space. This is what geographer Neil Smith terms the "revanchist city," a city that claims urban spaces, once "lost" to low income inhabitants or immigrant groups, by increasing rents in certain neighborhoods to attract middle and high income earners into the area.<sup>36</sup> The gentrification phenomenon has become a global economic strategy by which urban spaces are reorganized through investments of public-private partnerships to attract flows of capital into the urban space. The redevelopment of Les Halles in the 1960s and 1970s is representative of this trend, as the project was managed by a public-private coalition and was to result in replacing low-wage market workers with higher-wage professionals.

One consequence of such confrontational processes in urban areas is the emergence of the neoliberal city, which blends traditional liberal concerns for social justice with an emphasis on economic growth. The danger is that as the city is forced to compete with other cities in the global arena for limited investment capital, the social justice component begins to become secondary. This sense of competition for investment dollars can be found in the rivalry between Paris and London over the title of Europe's financial capital, a title that London has won. Although the concentration of capital in

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<sup>36</sup> Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

refurbished city centers has been an efficient and successful strategy in attracting foreign investment for many cities, what has resulted from such strategies is the creation of pseudo public spaces, like shopping malls. These spaces are open to the public (like Baudelaire's café), yet are not completely public because the private ownership of such spaces requires the "need for order, surveillance, and control over the behavior of the public," in order to protect the interests of the owners and their patrons.<sup>37</sup> Again, to go back to Baudelaire, the female lover and her exclusionary attitude toward the family passing by is emblematic of the power dynamic that pseudo public spaces, such as a café or shopping mall, maintain. When she suggests that the poor family should be sent away, it is likely that such a request would have been honored for fear of the space becoming labeled as "contested," causing proprietors to potentially lose a higher level of clientele. By changing the users of a public space, governments can effectively monetize that space, making it more "desirable," and making access to public space a highly contested practice.

Les Halles is illustrative of this dynamic. As a wholesale food market since the twelfth century, Les Halles had long served as a place focused on local exchange value. When we look at the evolution of the renovations of Les Halles, it becomes clear that adherence to the capitalist oriented theories of public space posited by Smith, Harvey, and Castells is the path Les Halles has followed. The market area started as an open-air square where goods were exchanged among the local neighborhood population; under Napoleon, in the early nineteenth century, covered stalls were created and the overall area of the market expanded. At this point, the renovations seemed geared toward better serving the local people. In the mid nineteenth century, under Haussmann, the Baltard pavilions were erected, creating the largest covered market in the world. People were now being drawn from all over Paris and the surrounding area, and the market served a more regional and even national economic purpose. It was not until the mid twentieth century (the renovation project that this thesis focuses on), that the pull to

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<sup>37</sup> Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 138.

the world market and the need to bring global capital to Paris forced French officials to realign how the public space of Les Halles was used. The market was moved to Rungis, near Orly airport, in a warehouse-like facility that could meet the market's new task as a food distribution center for all of France. The former food market was converted into a large entertainment and retail-shopping complex designed to cater to a more international clientele, both in terms of consumers and providers.<sup>38</sup>

This, of course, was a contested move, but the creation of the Forum des Halles shopping mall was an attempt by the city to promote spaces of consumption in what was becoming a more consumption-oriented society. However, like Baudelaire's café, the space of an upscale shopping mall can be characterized as being more exclusive than inclusive, as only a certain social class of people will have the disposable income available to purchase "luxury" goods. As David Sibley has argued, "it appears that the boundaries between the consuming public are strengthening, with non-consumption being constructed as a form of deviance at the same time as spaces of consumption eliminate public space in the city."<sup>39</sup> The presence of Paris's low-income non-consuming class was therefore seen as a "deviance" to the type of space the city had been trying to promote, one directed toward the middle and upper class populations. Consumption was now no longer associated with "need" as it had been with the existence of the food market, but instead became concerned with profit and the accumulation of capital.

Ironically, when one visits the Forum des Halles today, one notices that the space has attracted underclass youth that come from the suburban ghettos their parents and grandparents were forced to relocate to when the old marketplace was destroyed. The youth's presence at the mall allows them to

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<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that the original plans for the site did not include a shopping mall, which created a pseudo public space as discussed earlier. As has also been discussed, the plan had been to create an international commercial center, which would have drastically realigned the use of the space and the nature of the people using that space. Unfortunately for the Gaullists, the backlash against the plans of a commercial center in the neighborhood by the public and the collapse of construction funding in the early 1970s as a result of a financial crisis forced officials to compromise in the form of the Forum shopping mall.

<sup>39</sup> David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 95.

escape the banality of life in the ghetto and experience the city that has been taken from them. Oftentimes they sell drugs in the park near the mall and engage in general disturbance, contesting the order the mall seeks to maintain for its targeted clientele. The transformation of the Les Halles market area represents the kind of production and consumption of public space that results from a divided city. Those who are included and those who are excluded use it differently. By this I mean that what was publically oriented space for the benefit of the whole community is appropriated by the government, turned in to a saleable commodity, transferred into private hands that redesigns how the space is used, and both monetizes it and makes it exclusive to a particular population.

Thus far, I have introduced the idea of the neoliberal city and how Les Halles is emblematic of the way in which capitalist forces can alter the control of public space. Although already alluded to in part, one important question that emerges from neoliberalism is what are the implications of public space appropriation and why did Paris go through this process in the 1960s? In the remaining pages of this chapter, relying heavily on the ideas of the geographer/sociologist Henri Lefebvre, I will further explore the neoliberal city and the production of space, the consumption of that space, and the segregation (and class-conflict) that can result from such consumption. Buttressing the concepts that have already been covered with more detail with those like Lefebvre's will place the theoretical understanding of public space on solid ground and will aid in later chapters in making it clear that the Gaullist redevelopment plans for Les Halles were rooted in capitalistic motivations with real social and class consequences.

First, what is neoliberalism? Neoliberalism is a particular strategy of capital accumulation which began in the 1960s as a means of rolling back the traditional Keynesian model toward a market-guided form of regulation aimed not only at creating economic growth, but also at managing some of the deep

sociopolitical contradictions induced by earlier forms of neoliberal policy intervention.<sup>40</sup> As Bob Jessop writes, neoliberalism requires “the liberalization and deregulation of economic transactions, not only within national borders, but also—and most importantly—across these borders; the privatization of state-owned enterprises and state-provided services; the use of market proxies in the residual public sector; and the treatment of public welfare spending as a cost of international production, rather than a source of domestic demand.”<sup>41</sup> Cities, then, had to adopt new forms of urban governance to attract capital investment, causing them to rely increasingly on private or transnational corporations.

Henri Lefebvre was among the first scholars to connect theories of spatial production with the forces of capitalism. Space, according to Lefebvre, is not an object nor a subject, but a “social reality,” a set of relations and forms. For Lefebvre, space is constantly being negotiated, and it is in space that struggles and actions take place. Put another way, public space is a dramatic stage where opposing forces vie for power. The production of space becomes one mode of capitalist production, where the continuation of the accumulation process has not only been achieved by the extraction of surplus value from the labor force, but by the production and extraction of value from space. As Lefebvre said:

When the forces of production make a leap forward, but the capitalist relations of production remain intact, the production of space itself replaces—or, rather is superimposed upon—the production of things in space. In a number of observable and analyzable instances, at any rate, such a production of space itself is entailed by the pressure of the world market and the reproduction of the capitalist relations of production. Through their manipulation of

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<sup>40</sup> Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, “Cities and the Geographies of Actually Existing Neoliberalism,” *Antipode*, 34 (July 2002), 364.

<sup>41</sup> Bob Jessop, “Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Urban Governance: A State-Theoretical Perspective,” *Antipode*, 34 (July 2002), 454.



abstract space, the bourgeoisie's enlightened despotism and the capitalist system have successfully established partial control over the commodity market.<sup>42</sup>

As a distinctive commodity, space manifests certain contradictions different from those found in the production of things. For example, "the raw material of the production of space is not, as in the case of particular objects, a particular material: it is rather nature itself, nature transformed into a product, rudely manipulated, now threatened in its very existence, probably ruined and certainly—and most paradoxically—localized."<sup>43</sup> Thus, "today the social (global) nature of productive labor, embodied in productive forces, is apparent in the social production of space...Today, space as a whole enters into production as a product, through the buying, selling, and exchange of parts of space."<sup>44</sup> Thus, space becomes a means by which control is exercised. With the production of space, the state can manipulate the use or the functions carried out in urban space.

The state and each of its constituent institutions call for spaces—but spaces which they can then organize according to their specific arrangements; so there is no sense in which space can be treated solely as an *a priori* condition of these institutions and the state which presides over them. Is space a social relationship? Certainly—but one which is inherent in property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of land) and also closely bound up with the forces of production (which impose a form on that earth or land); here we see the polyvalence of social space, its "reality" at once formal and material. Though a *product* to be used, to be consumed, it is also a *means of production*.<sup>45</sup>

As Lefebvre says, space is a product that is now created for consumption, and David Harvey concurs, noting, "Surplus product has frequently been lavished on the built form of the city in the past

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<sup>42</sup> Henri Lefebvre, "Right to the City," in *Writings on Cities*, ed. E. Kofman and E. Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 61.

<sup>43</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 123.

<sup>44</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bonono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 154.

<sup>45</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 85.

(in the form of monumental architecture and the like). But it is now necessary for urbanism to generate expanding consumption if the capitalist economy is to be maintained.”<sup>46</sup> In line with that idea, Paris reconstituted the food market at Les Halles, which was a site of consumption, into an upscale shopping mall—a site of higher-level consumption. The importance of such a shift is found in that the natural function of public space, the free access of space to the public, becomes supplanted by the more exclusionary consumption function. The working and low-income classes, traditionally groups that had defined Les Halles, found it more difficult to operate in a space that discriminated against them by offering products that were often beyond their means. According to Don Mitchell, “planners of pseudo-public spaces such as malls, corporate plazas, and redeveloped parks have found that controlled *diversity* is more profitable than the promotion of unconstrained social *differences*...the sort of diversity that pseudo-public spaces encourage is a diversity bound up in the unifying, leveling, homogenizing forces of commodity, brand oriented consumption.”<sup>47</sup> In order to compete for the increasingly mobile capital of world markets, localities must create safe and attractive environments that will give investors a certain peace of mind. Shopping malls, like the Forum des Halles, represent such “safe” places where consumers can spend their money without fear of violence from the underprivileged, who have been *theoretically* priced out of the area. In this way, the homogenization of a city or city district can be accomplished.

For Lefebvre, in addition to feelings of safety, consumption also requires what he terms “everydayness.” Lefebvre states that everydayness is a product of industrial era capitalism, which “resulted in the constitution of an everydayness, a social environment of sophisticated exploitation and carefully controlled passivity. Everydayness is not found within the ‘urban’ as such but in and through generalized segregation: the segregation of moments of life and activities.”<sup>48</sup> To connect back to

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<sup>46</sup> Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, 271.

<sup>47</sup> Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 139.

<sup>48</sup> Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 140.

capitalism, the division of labor also plays a central role in the quotidian life by segregating, classifying, and fragmenting physical and intellectual labor throughout the urban space. According to Lefebvre, “the more effective accumulative society becomes as an integrating force, the more it loses control over its own elements. This society keeps its own inner contradictions alive, and surprisingly, it segregates as much as it unifies and individualizes...Social segregation is based on the division of labor, but can be reduced to it, since it implies the intervention of analytic intelligence, which shatters, separates, and dichotomizes.”<sup>49</sup> The working class is thus banished to the periphery (in Paris, the *banlieues*) where they are relegated to poor housing complexes under the control of the decision making center; “the principal contradiction is shifted to the urban phenomenon itself: between the centrality of power and other forms of centrality, between the ‘wealth-power’ center and the periphery, between integration and segregation.”<sup>50</sup>

According to Lefebvre, everyday life was created with the introduction of programmed consumption, when the capitalist system learned not only to manage, control, and rationalize the production process, but to deepen the dependency of the population by advocating their decisions in the consumption sphere as well. Or, as David Harvey says, “postwar Fordism has to be seen, therefore, less as a mere system of mass production and more as a total way of life. Mass production meant standardization of product as well as mass consumption.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, consumption spaces are designed to effectively program consumer participation. According to Lefebvre, the impact of this programmed consumption takes its greatest toll on the working class:

The case is still more distressing for the working class, who live in the midst of signs of consumption and consume an inordinate amount of signs, as everyday life is, for them, mainly

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<sup>49</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Foundation for a Sociology of the Everyday* (New York: Verso, 2002), 330.

<sup>50</sup> Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 170.

<sup>51</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1989), 135.

dominated by compulsions with a minimum of adaption. Consciousness, in such circumstances, craves for make-believe and is inevitably disappointed by it, because the methods of enslavement and exploitation to which the working classes have to submit disguise their true condition, and they are not aware of being exploited and enslaved in their daily lives and daily consumption to the same degree as they are in the sphere of production...Consumption is substitute for production, as exploitation is intensified, it grows proportionately less obtrusive. The working class cannot help being disconnected for they are the first of the social strata to be acquainted with such frustration; their class consciousness is not easily restored and yet does not entirely disappear but becomes a class "misunderstanding," and as such is involved in such claims and protests that spread unobtrusively from questions of pay (that are never adequately solved) to the organization of their daily lives.<sup>52</sup>

It seems then that the working class is doubly impacted in a negative way. The spaces that were once public and belonged to everyone are appropriated and become exclusionary to them, replaced with spaces that offer products that are beyond their means yet shown to them as something they can strive towards but often will remain nothing more than a fantasy.

At the outset of this chapter, one of the stated goals was to further explore some of the social and class consequences of spatial transformation. Thus far I have addressed issues of space as they relate to the city center. I have discussed how capitalist forces have caused public spaces, focused on localized exchange value, to be appropriated for the purpose of more profit-maximized use values, and how this process has caused public spaces to transform into pseudo-public spaces designed for consumer classes. While it has been touched upon, at this point I would like to briefly shift the focus from the core to the periphery. This shift is important because the removal of the working and low

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<sup>52</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (London: Athlone Press, 2000), 91.

wage classes from the core to the periphery was not a new phenomenon in the 1960s, but was one that increased in its intensity and had larger social implications.

As we have seen, the neoliberal city creates spaces of consumption intended for the consumer classes in order to further the accumulation of capital. One result of this process is that the working class, often consisting of a large immigrant population, is excluded from the spaces of consumption and forced to the periphery, where feelings of resentment and isolation often produce violence and a culture of financial dependence. It should then come as no surprise that it was during the *trente glorieuses* (1945-1975), which coincides with the Gaullist-led gentrification of Paris through projects like the one at Les Halles, that the majority of the Parisian *banlieues* (suburbs) were constructed. These *banlieues* consisted largely of HLM (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré*), which are private-public funded housing blocks of fixed rent apartments. HLMs are generally recognized as the lowest quality residences in France, and as late as 1968, only 41% of HLM apartments were equipped with a toilet.<sup>53</sup> The level of isolation felt by those forced to the periphery and the social consequences that come from the creation of divided space is evident in the recent study of one particular *banlieue*, La Courneuve, and one particular HLM within that community, the *Quatre Mille*.<sup>54</sup>

The space of the *Quatre Mille* is comprised of a mix of high-rise and low-rise apartment blocks that border a collection of football fields, basketball courts, and some basic shopping amenities. The complex is divided by a ring road, creating a “north” *Quatre Mille* and a “south” *Quatre Mille*. The community is closed off from Paris through a media and political discourse that is both exoticized and devaluing in nature. As David Garbin and Gareth Millington have explained, “What is at stake is a denial of identity, a process whereby devalued peoples are fixed to a devalued landscape. This double bind is

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<sup>53</sup> “10 idées recues sur les HLM,” <http://www.convergence-lr.fr/evenement/1/hlm-ideesrecues-2012.pdf>, accessed March 16, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> David Garbin and Gareth Millington, “(Counter)narratives of space and resistance in a multicultural Parisian *banlieue*: La Courneuve and beyond,” paper presented AHRC Diasporas, Migration and Identities conference, University of Surrey, June 11-12, 2009.

difficult to escape from.”<sup>55</sup> They argue that, “what drives young people in the *banlieue* to despair is that each stigma prevents them from freeing themselves from the other. Even when the youth from La Courneuve travel to the center of Paris for leisure or employment, they are easily recognized as *jeunes de banlieues* and treated with a mixture of fear, fascination, and contempt.”<sup>56</sup> Ironically, the marketplace at Les Halles was appropriated and converted into a shopping mall so that a higher-class space could be created in the center of Paris. Instead, shortly after the mall opened in 1986, it became a place of congregation and refuge for those from the *banlieues* in order to escape their feelings of isolation from the city. Whereas a general sense of social cohesion between the classes had existed in the neighborhood of Les Halles prior to its gentrification, by forcing the low-income classes to the periphery, a new sense of fear and resentment took its place.

In *The Weight of the World*, French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu, analyzes the relations between structures of social space and physical space and the sense of isolation that those forced to the periphery feel. Bourdieu suggests that the structure of social space is inscribed in physical space, creating oppositions between places. In this way, inhabited, or appropriated space functions as a “spontaneous symbolization of social space.”<sup>57</sup> For example, oppositions between places, such as the Marais in Paris and the *banlieue* of La Courneuve, are asserted as a symbolic system of distinction. The social oppositions objectified in physical space are reproduced in thought and language, as categories of perception. Places such as the Marais are viewed as pleasant while somewhere like La Courneuve evokes feelings of disgust or fear. The “site effect” disguises the arbitrariness of positions in social space and endows them with a “naturalization effect.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Garbin and Millington, “(Counter)narratives of space.”

<sup>56</sup> Garbin and Millington, “(Counter)narratives of space.”

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 124.

<sup>58</sup> Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World*, 125.

For Bourdieu, the ability to dominate space is gained by appropriating the rare goods that are distributed there. This idea is in line with the theories of Lefebvre discussed earlier. This dominance is achieved through the ownership of various types of capital. La Courneuve by contrast, which is a dominating space, appropriates individuals that are deprived of capital or held at a distance from capital which further exacerbates their deprivation and exclusion. Residents like those of *Quatre Mille* do not possess the necessary capital to inhabit spaces in the city that are symbolically richer; their lack of capital “merely intensifies the experience of finitude, it chains one to a place,” or as David Harvey says “while the rich can command space, the poor are trapped in it.”<sup>59</sup>

Those feelings of urban alienation are also articulated by Loic Wacquant, whose theory of “advanced marginality,” states that closure, in the Weberian sense, is accomplished when a dominant collective restricts its adversaries’ access to opportunities and resources in order to exclude them from competition. By enclosing the underclasses in the *banlieues*, the dominant collective is also able to, in the neoliberal tradition, engage in “the social and penal regulation of the marginal.”<sup>60</sup> Advanced marginality is thus concentrated in desolate districts that experience “an erosion of the sense of place.” Communities like the *Quatre Mille* become bounded and penalized spaces that are stigmatized from below by the everyday practice of residents trying to distance themselves from one another and from above from the vilifying discourse of the bourgeois circles.

I have now discussed the impacts on both the core and the periphery of the capitalist movement to appropriate public space and to maximize its monetary value. Nowhere was this process more evident than Les Halles during the 1960s and 1970s. The neighborhood had long been the site of social class mixing, and the home and place of employment in the food markets under the Baltard pavilions for thousands of workers, many of whom were immigrants. The Gaullist plans to renovate Les Halles completely changed that dynamic. What ensued was a protracted struggle between opposing interests

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<sup>59</sup> Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World*, 125, and Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, 170.

<sup>60</sup> Loic Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 3.

for control of the space known as “the heart of Paris.” The result of that struggle was the construction of the Forum des Halles shopping mall, a pseudo public space designed to cater to the needs of a consumer class. The former marketplace workers were relocated to the *banlieues* outside of Paris, effectively making them outsiders in a place that used to be their home. These outsiders did not go quietly, however; the feelings of tension and isolation brought about by their exile led many poor youth to take the train into Les Halles where they would congregate and contest the space. Their various acts of civil discord have done much to create the rhetoric that fuels the “immigrant problem” in France today and the current renovation of Les Halles, with its objective of “cleaning up” Paris, is evidence that the battle for this space has not reached a conclusion.

This battle for space was not merely a battle of discourse or philosophical theories; it involved real demographic change. In 1962, the population of Les Halles was 19,235 people (contained in 8,464 households); by 1982 this number had dropped to only 9,668 (6,748 households). This is a striking statistic for a city that was undergoing a severe housing shortage during the same time period. Within this demographic shift, the working-class population of Les Halles decreased by 70%, while the professional or “white-collar” population of Les Halles doubled.<sup>61</sup> The majority of the working-class population was displaced to the outer-rings of Paris and the *banlieues*.

This chapter has provided an overview of the historiography and theory involved in public space. Throughout, I have referred to Les Halles to demonstrate how these theories work in practice. However, a much deeper analysis is needed in order to show how important the battle over Les Halles is to French history. In the next chapter, the focus will shift to the rise of the Gaullists in the 1950s and 1960s, and with them technocratism. How the Gaullists sought to use public space, specifically the space of Les Halles, provides an opportunity to explore the Gaullists’ vision for modernizing France and some of the tensions that would arise from that vision.

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<sup>61</sup> Pierre-Francois Large, *Des Halles au Forum: Metamorphoses au Coeur de Paris* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 1992), 65.



As this chapter has shown, the production of urban space matters. The design, character, and structuring of public space can be used to both include and exclude the community in its uses. The design of a space can also be used to express the values of the community or those in control of the community. The next chapter will introduce the rise of the Gaullists and the creation of the Fifth Republic. The way in which the Gaullists proposed to refashion the public space of Les Halles and the Baltard pavilions was telling of Gaullist ideology and the course they planned to set for France.

### 3 MODERNIZATION VERSUS PRESERVATION IN THE GAULLIST ERA: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

“Once upon a time there was an old country, wrapped up in habit and caution. At one time it was the richest, mightiest people among those in the center of the world stage. But, after great misfortunes, it withdrew within itself. We have to transform our old France into a new country and marry it to its time.”<sup>62</sup> This quote from Charles de Gaulle is an arguably accurate assessment of France at the start of the postwar years. The physical and psychological damage that followed World War I created an atmosphere of caution, pessimism, defeatism, and hostility in France. Even in the years just prior to the Second World War, France’s social structure consisted of self-sufficient peasants, independent craftsmen, local nobles and Parisian bourgeoisie. Economically, France had not yet moved beyond a quasi-industrial economy. Instead, it was marked by excessive elite influence and high tariffs that caused France to become somewhat insular. Rather than industrial goods, France relied on its aptitude for producing quality handmade goods and agricultural products, neither of which fostered industrial innovation. As late as 1939, France’s “economic Malthusianism” caused the French to focus on preventing losses in already existing fortunes or ways of life, rather than achieving gains through innovation.<sup>63</sup>

De Gaulle’s more realistic and pragmatic view of France prior to the postwar years is only one version of the story. On the other side, there is Belle Époque France, marked by nationalistic pride in French greatness in technology, science, literature, and the visual arts. This was the France of the can-can, romanticized cafés and bistros, and grand balls. Belle Époque France chose to ignore the stagnant state of governmental affairs, as well as political parties, leaders, and policies marked by indifference

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<sup>62</sup> “France: Offer to Algeria,” *Time*, June 27, 1960.

<sup>63</sup> Phillip Williams and Martin Harrison, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle’s Republic* (London: Longman, 1971), 3.

and lack of creativity—decadent indulgence offered too great a distraction. Belle Époque France was another French victim of the Great War; yet its memory lived on, serving for some as a security blanket for the harsher realities of the interwar and postwar years. Symbolic of that memory, of a now mythical France, was Les Halles—an icon lauded by literary notables Emile Zola and Victor Hugo. The Gaullist decision to destroy Les Halles set off a firestorm of debate not seen on an urban issue in France in nearly a century. This chapter seeks to chart the rise of the Gaullists and the new ideology they offered to France and argues that Les Halles served as a battlefield where those opposed to the Gaullist vision sought to fight for a familiar French identity they perceived to be under attack.

In presenting this argument, this chapter will first explore the Gaullists' rise to power and the new vision they offered to a France that had become out of touch with the contemporary world. Next, the chapter will chart the concurrent ascension of the technocrats, who became the Gaullists' frontline soldiers in achieving the Gaullist vision for France's future, known as the *politique de grandeur*. The chapter will then discuss how Les Halles offered the Gaullists their first major opportunity to align the infrastructure of Paris with their overall goals and how Les Halles became a symbol for the binary of past versus present discourse that took place between the Gaullists and the preservationists. The chapter will end with an analysis of the events of May 1968, how these events relate to Les Halles, and the preservationists' fears over the "Manhattanization" of Paris.

When the Gaullists came to power in 1958 and formed the Fifth Republic under the leadership of the newly re-emerged Charles de Gaulle, France was in dire need of a fresh direction. Embarrassed and occupied during World War II and with the independence of its colonial crown jewel Algeria seeming imminent, France was no longer the glorious world power it was under the Third Republic. The Fourth Republic was (according to Gaullists) ineffective and constantly mired in parliamentary

bureaucracy that made strong leadership all but impossible.<sup>64</sup> The failures and misery experienced under the Fourth Republic had a lot to do with why so much of the French public looked backwards with such envy to the Third Republic heyday, of which Les Halles was one of its most recognizable symbols. The Fifth Republic would be different than the Fourth-- strong, assertive, and forward looking. Indeed, the Fifth Republic marked a dramatic shift in the type of men who had access to power, as the political, moral, and economic circumstances of the post-war era "allowed new men to rise to the top in the business world and to occupy those positions most important for the fate of Paris."<sup>65</sup>

Who were these "new" men? Ever since the end of the Old Regime, France had been influenced by a limited number of powerful and elite families that had formerly held royal connections and the land and titles to match. As Louis Chevalier says, "the war, defeat, occupation, collaboration...destroyed the old ruling class."<sup>66</sup> In addition to the war, and the economic depression that preceded it, decolonization resulted in the loss of large fortunes dependant upon the fruits of the old and waning empire, leaving the old bourgeois ill-prepared to deal with the crises before and during the war and the new opportunities that existed after. Those who were well-positioned for the postwar world were the small numbers of Frenchmen who went to America to study American-style management. Upon their return to *l'hexagone* they continued their study at the *Ecole nationale d'administration* (ENA), France's university for the political elite. These business-oriented thinkers brought their skills to the French civil service, aligning themselves with the Gaullists. This new generation of technocrats was not content to rest on the ideals and accomplishments of the old France; they wanted to build a new France, one that was assertive and powerful.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Philip Nord, *France's New Deal, From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 1-4.

<sup>65</sup> David Jordan, ed., Louis Chevalier, *The Assassination of Paris*, trans. David Jordan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 97.

<sup>66</sup> Louis Chevalier, *The Assassination of Paris*, trans. David Jordan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 131.

<sup>67</sup> Jordan, ed., *The Assassination of Paris*, 97.

The first problem the technocrats faced was how to modernize France from its state of decadence and decay. In order to create a more expansionist and progressive nation, the Fifth Republic placed the influence of technical expertise over a parliament that had become uninspired to take reformative action. As Philip Nord says, the new buzzwords of the Republic were “modernization” and “productivity.”<sup>68</sup> Under technocratic guidance, France nationalized several key industries, including the energy and utilities sectors and took large ownership stakes in other industries such as banking. The result of these nationalizations is what became known as technocorporatism. Technocorporatism sought financial efficiency and profit maximization in the entities the State ran and organized the controlled firms within a corporate hierarchy that placed experts at the top and wage laborers at the bottom. These hierarchies created a tension between the technocrats and the labor unions, which led many in the working class to resent the government while at the same time developing an increasing reliance on the burgeoning welfare state. This resentment would later break into open rebellion in May 1968. However, despite these labor tensions, in the early 1960s the Gaullists and their technocratic frontline were still firmly in control and working steadily forward to enact their new vision for France.

The result of the Gaullists’ new vision was what became known as the *politique de grandeur*. Such policies involved the belief that France still deserved to be viewed as a major world power. According to the Gaullists, this would require a rejection of foreign or outside reliance, energy independence through nuclear energy, the reformation of the French economy through state-controlled capitalism (known as *dirigisme*), and a strong French voice in international bodies. Connected to the politics of grandeur was a foreign policy of French anti-Americanism. France sought to create for itself a role in the world where it offered a successful alternative to unfettered capitalism in America and restrictive communist policies in the Soviet Union.<sup>69</sup> The Gaullists had a long way to go to achieve these

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<sup>68</sup> Nord, *France’s New Deal*, 146.

<sup>69</sup> Edward Kolodziej, *French International Policy under de Gaulle and Pompidou: The Politics of Grandeur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 618.

goals. In the early 1960s, shortly after de Gaulle rose to power, two-thirds of Frenchmen worked in companies of 200 employees or less and not one French company was listed in the *Fortune Global 50*, a listing of the world's largest companies.<sup>70</sup> Today, nearly fifty years after the Gaullist creation of the Fifth Republic, Paris has more *Fortune 500* companies than either London or New York City and France boasts six companies in the *Fortune 50*. Before Paris could become the world's third most popular multinational corporation destination, the Gaullists needed to realign the way in which France interacted with business.<sup>71</sup>

The Les Halles project gave the new government its first opportunity to chart such a new course; indeed, it became emblematic of "the alliance between state power and capitalism...of state supremacy and the virtues of centralized planning."<sup>72</sup> De Gaulle himself "saw the project as a measure of French prestige, a project that would fulfill Paris's historic destiny and catapult it into the ranks of modern world capitals."<sup>73</sup> The Gaullists desired a plan that would transform Les Halles into a business enclave, complete with an international trade center, 900,000 square meters of high rent office space, 3,000 luxury apartments, and over 800 hotel rooms, all to be found in a series of skyscraping towers: "the urban planning operation of the century."<sup>74</sup> One of the benefits of exploring Les Halles' destruction is that the way in which the project was structured (financially, legally, etc.) is illustrative of early Fifth Republic technocratism and shows some of the influence the Vichy regime had on Gaullist thinking. In the Paris region during the 1960s, urban planning functions were fulfilled by two different bodies, the *Institut d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme de la Région Parisienne* (IAURP-Development and Planning Institute of the Paris Region) at the regional level, and the *Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme* (APUR- Paris

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<sup>70</sup> Phillip Williams and Martin Harrison, *Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic* (London: Longman, 1971), 3.

<sup>71</sup> "Fortune Global 500," [http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2012/full\\_list/index.html](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/global500/2012/full_list/index.html), Accessed November 27, 2012.

<sup>72</sup> Rosemary Wakeman, "Fascinating Les Halles," *French Politics, Culture, & Society* 25 (Summer 2007), 55.

<sup>73</sup> Wakeman, "Fascinating Les Halles," 56.

<sup>74</sup> Wakeman, "Fascinating Les Halles," 55.

Planning Studio) at the city level.<sup>75</sup> For a city-based project like Les Halles, APUR was in charge of planning, however, the Prefectural office it worked under retained overall authority and controlled the larger direction of the planning. To implement the planning proposals, a publicly-owned company—*Société Anonyme d’Economie Mixte* (SEM-Public Development Corporation) was created, later to become SEMAH (*SEM d’Aménagement de Rénovation et de Restauration du Secteur des Halles- Les Halles Redevelopment, Renovation, and Rehabilitation Public Corporation*). SEMAH was owned 51% by the city, 25% by the State, and 24% by private savings and banking institutions.<sup>76</sup> The controlling board of SEMAH was comprised of State ministerial representatives and city councilors. To support SEMAH’s efforts, the National Assembly enacted various statutes, such as *Code de l’Urbanisme*, to allow SEMAH comprehensive redevelopment powers, to delegate SEMAH compulsory purchase powers, and controls on land speculation in the designated Les Halles development area to keep prices stable. Such hierarchal planning and implementation structures, supported by a statutory scheme, is reminiscent of the Vichy regime’s own organization as they planned their own future for Paris.

In 1966 SEAH (*Société d’Etudes d’Aménagement des Halles*, another planning subgroup of the Paris city council, created in 1963 as a small study team to create planning options for Les Halles) released its planning recommendations based on four criteria:

1. The retention of the fundamental character and activities of the neighborhood, with the exception of the market pavilions.
2. The total restoration of buildings in some of the area.
3. The rehabilitation of some areas to provide lower income groups with increased residential standards, but without disturbing the social equilibrium of the area.
4. The complete redevelopment of the market and peripheral properties.<sup>77</sup>

It was from these initial guidelines that the proposal for the international trade center and the luxury apartments came. SEAH’s recommendations were completely ignored, and the amount of

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<sup>75</sup> Roger Zetter, “Les Halles: A Case Study of Large Scale redevelopment in Central Paris,” *Town Planning Review*, (July, 1975), 273.

<sup>76</sup> Zetter, “Les Halles,” 274.

<sup>77</sup> Zetter, “Les Halles,” 271.

commercial space proposed by APUR and the architectural firms it had hired was twice what SEAH had proposed.

The plan was a drastic shift from the existing purpose and character of the Les Halles neighborhood, and existing residents knew their time was limited as suggested by a poster on a building to be destroyed, which read:

The center of Paris will be beautiful. Luxury will be king. The buildings of the St Martin block will be of high standing. But we will not be here. The commercial facilities will be spacious and rational. The parking immense. But we won't work here anymore. The streets will be spacious and the pedestrian ways numerous. But we won't walk here anymore. We won't live here anymore. Only the rich will be here. They have chosen to live in our quarter. The elected officials responding to their wishes have decided. The renovation is not for us.<sup>78</sup>

The passage stands in stark contrast to this passage discussed earlier in the previous chapter:

With the exception of certain prestigious buildings, Les Halles does not present at first sight monumental ensembles of exceptional architectural quality, of which the need for conservation is indisputable. Its interest resides in characteristics less apparent and more subtle: an ancient urban fabric which determines the characteristic land allotment. Street patterns which conform to the historic ways of the capital; sequences of facades filled with fantasy and harmony, forming a refined and elegant urban décor.<sup>79</sup>

The destruction of the Baltard market pavilions and the rehabilitation of the neighborhood surrounding Les Halles would be a significant change. With the exception of the Latin Quarter, Les Halles was the last neighborhood in central Paris to retain its connections to Third Republic Paris and serve as a refuge for working- class inhabitants. The new Les Halles, as the poster implies, would be

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<sup>78</sup> Evenson, "The Assassination of Les Halles," 312.

<sup>79</sup> "Les Halles: Les études de restauration-réhabilitation," *Paris projet* (Paris: l'Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme, no.1, July 1969), 35.



modern, with wider avenues and new residents of a different class. The Les Halles project signified the politics of grandeur. The proposed towers, the luxury apartments, the hotels, were meant to show the world that France was putting its tumultuous beginning to the century behind it, and was now re-emerging as a center for international business and as an example of modern city planning.

The way in which the Gaullist vision of modernization and grandeur contrasts with the preservationists' own visions is well illustrated in the transcript of an interview of Paris Préfet Marcel Diebolt.<sup>80</sup> Diebolt, who was trained in law, was in charge of all urban planning matters in Paris.<sup>81</sup> As the Conseil de Paris began to explore the idea of a subterranean complex to connect the expansion of the underground metro lines and the new RER lines, according to Diebolt, a goal of the project was to bring activity to the center of Paris. He said, "In one word, the future of the neighborhood would be human." He cited the proposal of green spaces, and the cultural, entertainment, and recreational amenities, as well as the new housing being built. Diebolt noted these changes "will finally create a true place for man in the city." This characterization of the project as "human" and as creating a "true place for man in the city" is an interesting one.

If Les Halles could have been defined by anything, it was its humanistic quality. The market was a place of employment for the working class (including Paris's prostitutes) and where people of all classes came together to buy their fruits, vegetables, meats, and even flowers. Many of the local restaurants served patrons well in to the early hours of the morning. Les Halles was a place that belonged to everyone. Les Halles was always full of activity and a center of every type of human interaction. The neighborhood only began to lose these characteristics after the marketplace was shut down. This was the argument of the preservationists; the neighborhood was human and always had

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<sup>80</sup> Undated transcript, Archives de Paris, file number 101/77/10, boxes 1-6.

<sup>81</sup> Diebolt resigned his position as Préfet of Paris within two months after the bulldozers destroyed the marketplace to become the Chairman of the building company Société Auxiliaire de la Construction Immobilière (SACI) and Director of the Banque pour la Construction et l'équipement. See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Social Structures of the Economy* (Cambridge: Polity Press), 2005, 104.

been. It was the character of the neighborhood, and its function as a place for everyone that those who fought to save Les Halles hoped to protect. When Diebolt talked of how the project would be “human,” the question that arose was in what way?

What Diebolt did not mention is that the housing was luxury housing, geared to a new class of residents--the upper class. The amenities were meant to cater to the new luxury apartment dwellers, despite a token amount of low-cost housing. Also absent was the plan to locate the Ministry of Finance in the place where the marketplace once stood. When asked about the existing working-class residents who would be displaced, Diebolt responded that the *Société d'aménagement des Halles* (the public/private company charged with developing Les Halles) would provide them housing in the new suburbs sprouting outside of Paris. Diebolt argued, “if changes are not made, the neighborhood, once full of life risks becoming depressed. We must make sure the heart of Paris is a living heart.”

Diebolt's comments make the contrast with the preservationists clear. He recognized the neighborhood's history of vitality, which was on the decline, and that something must be done. To the preservationists, the neighborhood already had a heart, one that belonged to the working-class Parisians who had been living in Les Halles for more than a century. They believed that Les Halles was about tradition, the small shops that supported the marketplace, and the neighborhood functioning as a place where the social classes of Paris came together. To develop Les Halles in the way Diebolt proposed was simply to move the working classes out of Paris and to exclude them from the renovation. Although publicly promoted as a project to move Paris towards much needed modernization, behind the Gaullists' plans for Les Halles was what appeared to be a vision of a more gentrified Paris. With its central location, Les Halles provided the Gaullists the opportunity to redefine Paris. They saw Les Halles as a place where well-to-do residents could have beautiful central Parisian views from their apartment and office windows, a place that would show the world that Paris was still a relevant financial center with a modern infrastructure and that France had finally adapted to the twentieth-century.

To be clear, the historical and emotional significance of Les Halles to Paris was not completely lost to the Gaullists. For them, the choice was one of living in the past or living in the present and planning for the future. The way the Gaullists approached the decision of how to treat Les Halles is representative of the technocratic thought process that guided Gaullist political ideology. At the end of the transcript, Diebolt is asked if he does not feel at all a “little tug to the heart” in relation to Les Halles’ impending disappearance. He responded:

Of course, like every Parisian, I can only regret, sentimentally, the departure of Les Halles that have so long been attached to the life of Paris, its activities, its style, and its charm. Certainly, it is a bit of Paris that is leaving. But, one must live in one’s own century. This departure is more than necessary—it is indispensable. The transfer answers the economic, urban, and social needs. For my part, I am confident in the future heart of Paris and I am convinced that it, in another form, and with another style, will be an essential element in the life of the capital.<sup>82</sup>

This paradox between living in the past and living in the present becomes even clearer in a paper delivered to a conference on the development of Les Halles.<sup>83</sup> The paper is broken into two components, “Paris Face A Son Avenir” (Paris faced with its future) and “Les Halles, Face Au Present” (Les Halles faced with its present). The paper begins by recognizing that the mere mention of Les Halles evokes the urban center, a privileged place that is reflective of the capital. However, the problem remains of how to continue as a “living city” that is currently paralyzed and which finds its existence in outdated structures that belong more to the past than to the future. As the paper states, “the first rule of action in Paris is to do nothing and to change nothing about this ‘je ne sais quoi’ of fantasy, history, and ideas that make up Paris.” As the quote implies, the preservationists were wrapped up in protecting

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<sup>82</sup> Undated transcript, Archives de Paris, file number 101/77/10, boxes 1-6.

<sup>83</sup> “Exposé Prononcé à l’Occasion de l’Ouverture du Colloque Consacré à l’Aménagement des Halles,” undated document, Archives de Paris, file 101/77/10, boxes 1-6.

a mythical Paris, a city that existed in minds and memories, but no longer in a functioning reality. The report continues, noting that the evolution of Paris had already begun. In technocratic fashion, it cites a litany of studies and statistics that show why change is both the logical and sensible choice—overruling emotional and historical considerations. In closing, the paper breaks down the choices regarding Les Halles into three options:

The first solution tends to eliminate modern world nuisances likened to business and aerates and greenifies the numerous monuments that are a testament to the poor. The consequences of this option are incontestably a return to calm and a more balanced life, but which brings a lessening of financial value and creates no investment in infrastructure, a lessening of economic activity, and stagnation of real estate, the lot of which is not likely to develop the cultural activity that is desired by all.

The second option is intended to sustain and confirm the current economic level while adapting the structures to their dominating function. A slight densification of tertiary activities can be considered. Incentives clearly directed toward rehabilitation and restoration could improve living conditions, while maintaining most of the older frames.

The third alternative would see notable densification of business activity, the price of which is massive and modern “concentrations” (skyscrapers) which are therefore aggressive toward the environment and would neutralize the historical and cultural assets of the neighborhood.

In a sense, one of the problems in the battle over the future of Les Halles was that both preservationists and Gaullists believed their vision offered a compromise while the other side still found such a compromise too extreme.

These options were presented to the public as part of a grand architectural competition in the spring of 1967. André Fermigier, an art historian and journalist for *Le Nouvel Observateur*, a left-leaning

French intellectual magazine, led the charge against the grand Gaullist plans with melodramatic bravado. Fermigier wrote a series of articles over the next several years entitled *La Bataille de Paris*, designed to appeal to Parisians' emotional heartstrings in an effort to "save Paris." One article, entitled "*Menaces sur Paris: Néron, Sixte Quint et Napoléon n'eurent pas à faire de choix plus essentiels que ceux qui seront faits demain aux Halles,*" and its implication that never in hundreds of years of Parisian history was there a choice so integral to Paris, shows just how serious Fermigier believed this choice to be.<sup>84</sup> Fermigier cast the debate as one between commerce and modern skyscrapers on the one side, and neighborhood charm and historic identity on the other. He wrote, "the tower is inhumane, but gives the illusion of power,"<sup>85</sup> whereas Les Halles is "one of the richest historical memories of Paris."<sup>86</sup> Fermigier went on, accusing Parisian (and French) officials of behaving "like a private company concerned only to maximize the profits of the land it owns," and only too willing to "sell out" "one of the greatest successes of metal architecture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century...where you will see a forest of arcs, of charm, agility, and a decency that you will surely regret the impending disappearance of."<sup>87</sup> Fermigier was not alone; fellow *Observateur* journalist Maurice Duverger's "Open Letter to the King on the Future of Les Halles" deemed André Malraux's dream of a new Versailles as a testimony to the century of de Gaulle: "The Sun King himself did not dare destroy the Cité or the Marais to construct Versailles."<sup>88</sup> Similar dramatic headlines began to appear in other Parisian papers, noting the evictions of the working-class and the numbers of people who demonstrated against the government.<sup>89</sup> The public responded,

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<sup>84</sup> Translated this is "Nero, Sixtus V and Napoleon did not have to make choices more essential than those that will be made tomorrow at Les Halles." Translation is mine.

<sup>85</sup> André Fermigier, *La Bataille de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 35.

<sup>86</sup> Fermigier, *La Bataille de Paris*, 46.

<sup>87</sup> Fermigier, *La Bataille de Paris*, 46.

<sup>88</sup> See Wakeman, "Fascinating Les Halles," 56. André Malraux was a French novelist and the Minister of Cultural Affairs under Charles de Gaulle. Malraux was given vast authority by de Gaulle on all matters relating to Paris. Malraux, supported by de Gaulle, wanted to use the Les Halles area to build large towers to be used for the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Culture, a bureaucratic Versailles in the center of Paris.

<sup>89</sup> A collection of all newspaper articles written about Les Halles can be found in the Paris Police Department's "Dossier Police," which also included memos and maps related to the Les Halles debate and how the police

aghast at the audacity of the Gaullist's desire to appropriate for themselves and their interests a part of Parisian history; de Gaulle would be forced back to the drawing board. Nostalgia had won the first round.

The dynamic between history, the memory of "Old Paris," and modernity is an important one. For many, the destruction of Les Halles was symbolic of the destruction of Paris itself. For centuries, Les Halles represented the energy of Paris, the city's social contrasts, the mixing of classes, and the grandeur of the Belle Époque. The process of destruction was slow and painful. First the working-class disappeared, banished to the *banlieues*, then the pavilions were destroyed and replaced with a gaping hole that remained until 1977.<sup>90</sup> It seemed Paris was quickly becoming unrecognizable to many of its citizens. Les Halles' supporters feared that Paris had entered an age where duration or longevity no longer mattered, that Paris had entered a cycle where what was "old" must now become new.<sup>91</sup> In 1990, Henri Lefebvre, voiced his response to this passion for innovation;

I have the impression that architecture and urbanistic interventions have not matched the transformation of the city. I have lived in the centre of Paris for the past thirty years and have seen it transformed. Only a few years ago the centre was virtually abandoned, then reoccupied in an elitist fashion...In my building behind the Pompidou Centre, the old people have for the most part died and apartments are occupied by offices. They also want to push me out to have

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department meant to keep order during the protests. These materials can be found at Les Archives de la Préfecture de Police—Préfecture de Police de Paris.

<sup>90</sup> The hole, dubbed *le trou des Halles*, (*trou* is "hole" in French) became a sensitive eyesore and the filming site of a 1974 artistic film, "*Touche pas à la femme blanche*" ("Don't Touch the White Woman"), that can be viewed as symbolizing the tensions present in Les Halles' destruction and larger class tensions in France as a whole. The film is an interpretation of Custer's Last Stand, and the Battle of Little Bighorn is filmed inside the hole where the Les Halles marketplace had stood. The battle between the soldiers and the Indians is one in which the soldiers attempt to take the homes of the Indians, symbolic of the Gaullists taking the homes of the working class in Les Halles.

<sup>91</sup> Until its destruction, Les Halles was, along with the Latin Quarter, one of the only parts of Paris to have maintained its same function continuously since its initial settlement in 1137.

my apartment. I have the feeling that the centre is becoming museumfied and managerial. Not politically, but financially managerial.<sup>92</sup>

This yearning for the past was not new to Parisians, who had similar fears during the Haussmannization of Paris, including when the Baltard pavilions were built at Les Halles in the 1860s. In an 1874 study of Parisian life, journalist Maxime Du Camp reflected on Les Halles:

The change has been profound and so radical that nothing has been left of the past. The pillars, those famous pillars of the Halles of which so much has heretofore been said, have disappeared; the criss-cross passages, dirty, unhealthy, by which one arrived with difficulty on the square, have given way to large passageways, airy and commodious; those cabarets which, at midnight, opened their doors to the entire vagabond population of the big city...have been uprooted and moved outside the limits of Paris; in modifying this area, in stripping it, it has been moralized.<sup>93</sup>

Du Camp's study is evidence that reservation towards change is not unique to the twentieth century. Each intrusion of "progress" appears to come at the cost of something familiar. As the passage shows, even in the 1860s Parisians resisted the new (the Baltard Pavilions) and pined for the old. Like their predecessors, Parisians of the 1970s worried that the loss of an icon would result in a Paris they no longer knew or understood.

One potential reason for Parisians' resistance to modernization is the false association of "modern" with America by many of the preservationists. The popular stereotype of "American" ideas of modernity included the idea of an increasingly mechanized, globalized, and corporatized world. As André Malraux said in an interview with *Le Monde* in June 1968, "We do not confront the need for reforms, but rather one of the most profound crises that our civilization has known...This general rehearsal of a future drama expressed, among the strikers as well as among those who watched them

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<sup>92</sup> Lefebvre quoted in Peter Muir, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Conical Intersect: 'Luxury will be king,'" *Journal for Cultural Research* 15 (April 2011): 177.

<sup>93</sup> Muir, "Gordon Matta-Clark's Conical Intersect," 178.

pass, the consciousness of the end of a world...Our society is not yet adapted to the civilization of machines.”<sup>94</sup> Among the “machines” that Malraux may have been referring to was the emergence of mass consumerism and consumption that was brought from America, by both Americans looking to expand operations abroad and the new wave of American-educated French business leaders discussed earlier.<sup>95</sup> These technocrats created a platform that was interpreted as having a focus on profit-making and individual interests, rather than supporting French universalism, the bedrock principle staunchly defended since the French Revolution. The proposed projects at Les Halles, the skyscrapers, the office space, the luxury apartments were all symbols of the new future that France had long resisted.

The original Gaullist plans for the Les Halles site rallied Parisians because they wanted to stop the “Manhattanization” of Paris.<sup>96</sup> These fears were not unfounded, as the Tour Montparnasse had just been erected, and the plans for La Défense made clear that the view up the Champs Élysées past the Arc de Triomphe would never quite be the same.<sup>97</sup> As Fermigier wrote in the *Nouvel Observateur*:

There was a Paris to which everyone was attached, and within which was born another city, humane, welcoming, tolerable on both the social and urban level. The least which one can say is that modern Paris, the Paris of the second half of the twentieth century, is a miserable failure. Look at Maine-Montparnasse...the sector around Place d’Italie...the lamentable Front de Seine of the 15<sup>th</sup> arrondissement...and the things we shall see tomorrow...Paris resembles more and

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<sup>94</sup> Brown, *Protest in Paris*, 31.

<sup>95</sup> For a discussion of the “Americanization” of Europe, including the French response see Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire, America’s Advance through 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Europe*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005).

<sup>96</sup> “Manhattanization” became a popular term of comparison for any of the construction projects in Paris during the 1960s and 1970s that involved skyscrapers. In the article “Skyline of Paris to Get New Look,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1967, John Hess wrote “Nearly all the architects (for Les Halles project) have agreed that to fit all the required construction into 80 acres of space will call for skyscrapers of double or triple the height of the nearby towers of Notre Dame, St. Eustache and St. Jacques.” Likewise, “Paris in the Sky,” *New York Times*, November 23, 1972, is written like a poem that laments, “The Manhattanization of Paris has its admirers...but Paris is a civilized work of art turning into a catastrophe.”

<sup>97</sup> As Charles Rearick says, “By the mid-1970s some of the new towers rising at La Défense were three to four times bigger than the early ones...Responding defiantly to critics of the new Manhattan visible from central Paris, President Pompidou (in an interview with *Le Monde*) called for ‘a forest of towers’—not just a timid five or six—as a backdrop to the Arc de Triomphe. See Charles Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories: The City and Its Mystique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011) 89.



more the capital of an undeveloped country, bristling with capitalist symbols and poor counterfeits of an architecture which has some meaning in New York, but which here is the architecture of deception.<sup>98</sup>

Fermigier was an ardent opponent of Gaullist “modernization.” Where the Gaullists wanted to introduce modern skyscrapers that were a sign of progress for the time, Fermigier believed that character and identity should be figured into the equation. While corporatism and skyscrapers had long been a part of the New York experience, Paris had a different architectural identity, one where most buildings were of a standard height, had a longer history, and told a story about Paris. To replace such an identity with another so foreign was not only to deceive Paris but, in many ways, to betray Paris as well.

Although it appeared that Paris was on the fast-track for a New York-style makeover, not all of the politicians at city hall agreed with the master plans of corporate architecture. Some of the existing councilors of the left sided with “the people” and argued for the protection of the Baltard pavilions.<sup>99</sup> They, and noted architects and architectural critics, believed that their destruction would be a mistake. According to Peter Blake, editor of *The Architectural Forum*, Les Halles’ architecture was “the object of admiration by many foreign architects and the pavilions serve as one of the finest examples of nineteenth-century industrial architecture anywhere in the world...the demolition of this important monument of European architecture would be a cultural loss without excuse.”<sup>100</sup> The world famous architect Mies van der Rohe, who invented the modernist international style of architecture, echoed this sentiment. Van der Rohe said of Les Halles, “I fully support the principle of the conservation of the pavilions of Les Halles, they are symbols of the golden age of French building technology.”<sup>101</sup> For a short period of time, the voices of these politicians and the people were heard, especially following the

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<sup>98</sup> André Fermigier, “Qui a vendu les Halles?” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 12 July 1971, 12.

<sup>99</sup> Large, *Des Halles au Forum*, 56.

<sup>100</sup> Large, *Des Halles au Forum*, 56.

<sup>101</sup> Mies van der Rohe, quoted in interview with *Le Monde*, April 9, 1969.

increased sensitivity the Gaullists had to public opinion following May 1968. By 1969 all of the merchants (with the exceptions of the meat market) had been moved to Rungis. However, the pavilions continued to function as a public cultural space for the next two years.

As this chapter has shown, when the Gaullists came to power France was in dire straits, having endured a disengaged government at the beginning of the century and two devastating wars and decolonization afterwards. In the minds of the Gaullists and their supporters, France needed a new direction towards a course in which France “married its century.” The project at Les Halles was one opportunity to do so, however, not everyone in France agreed. The preservationists saw in Les Halles the memory of a better time, a symbol of true French identity marked by a graceful beauty and egalitarian qualities. They believed Les Halles was a place for everyone. When plans for the marketplace’s destruction gained momentum, the fear was Les Halles would be a place that was for a select few. These fears were emblematic of larger tensions that were beginning to grow in France as a whole that placed technocrats and business elites against the working classes. The next chapter will explore those tensions and the physical and symbolic role Les Halles played in that larger discourse.

#### 4 THE DESTRUCTION OF LES HALLES AND THE END OF AN ERA

The postwar years and the new Gaullist regime brought great changes to France; among them was the perceived level of control by the government. This fear of control would be a central issue in the May 1968 uprising that nearly brought the Fifth Republic to an end. According to French sociologist Raymond Aron, “In the long run the French are not intended for a symbolically tough government; they crave men sympathetic to their grievances, even unjustified, and who temper the rigors of administration by concern for private interests—even if these interests do not appear worthy of respect to those devoted to the sole rationality of the collective interest.”<sup>102</sup> Aron’s comments are illustrative of the conflict between the Gaullists and those who supported the preservation of Les Halles. The symbolism of Les Halles was one of a battlefield for control. To the preservationists, Les Halles represented a connection to France’s past that joined them to a time before the rigors of two wars, an economic depression, and decolonization. For the Gaullists, Les Halles meant opportunity, the opportunity to align Parisian infrastructure with their vision for the future.<sup>103</sup> This battle between the past and future, and over what degrees of governmental control are appropriate came to a boiling point in the events of May 1968, the result of which would prove important in the outcome over the battle for Les Halles.

This chapter will begin with a brief overview of the events that unfolded in May 1968, when tensions between students and government officials reached their apex and resulted in demonstrations that gripped the nation for more than a month and threatened to bring the Fifth Republic to an end. These events are important to Les Halles, because the lessons learned by the Gaullists, and Prime Minister Pompidou in particular, would be applied at Les Halles in the summer of 1971 by President Pompidou when tensions again were on the rise. The chapter will then discuss the efforts to save Les

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<sup>102</sup> Raymond Aron, *La Révolution introuvable*, (Paris: Fayard, 1968), 129-130.

<sup>103</sup> As Pierre Schneider said in the *New York Times*, “Paris: Timely Requiem for Les Halles,” May 25, 1970, “...for so large an area in the heart of Paris has not been and may not be available again for centuries.”

Halles from destruction, as well as those by the preservationists after destruction when both sides of the conflict battled over what would be built in Les Halles' place. After the narrative of Les Halles' destruction and redevelopment is complete, I will briefly discuss Les Halles' current renovation, announced in 2004, and what Les Halles' ongoing saga may tell us about urbanism today. Finally, I will attempt to answer why the story of Les Halles matters, what it symbolizes, and what it tells us about history.

What would become known as the "events of May" first came to life in the western suburb of Nanterre, a town consisting of stark postwar housing projects and one of the largest Algerian slums in the area. Ground zero for the rebellion was the local university. Recently built and poorly constructed, the campus was without many of the standard amenities found in the traditional universities of central Paris. As the revolt grew in scale, so too did its geography. The battles during the spring of 1968 were fought in many places; what started in Nanterre and spread to a Renault factory, and then Paris itself, would find prime symbolism (and a brief renewal of the spirit of rebellion) in Les Halles.<sup>104</sup>

The May uprising started in quite a simple manner; it would be hard to imagine anyone foreseeing how quickly the tensions would spread, and how deep.<sup>105</sup> In November 1967, students at the Nanterre campus of the University of Paris began to protest over the right to entertain members of the opposite sex in their dorm rooms. Added to the qualms were overcrowded classes, displeasure at the poor state of the facilities, and dissatisfaction with the amount of financial support students were receiving. These were all issues that had been voiced earlier in 1966, and what then was a series of small gatherings soon became a mass rally in 1967. The new wave of student protests in May of 1968 came with the addition of more radical and militant students seeking a larger social revolution. These militants managed to interject additional issues such as Vietnam and American capitalism into the

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<sup>104</sup> Charles Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories, The City and Its Mystique* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 102.

<sup>105</sup> The following discussion of the events of May 1968 is a summary of Bernard Brown, *Protest in Paris: Anatomy of a Revolt* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, 1974).

debate, and soon the students' desire for more sexual freedom seemed insignificant. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, after battling the police in the streets of Paris, the students managed to take control of the Sorbonne, declaring the University of Paris "an autonomous people's university."<sup>106</sup>

The reaction to the students by then Prime Minister Pompidou and President de Gaulle was very conciliatory. Pompidou believed that if he gave in to the students' demands, the government would gain the moral high ground and eventually could take control once public opinion swung in their direction. Instead, the concessions only emboldened the students, and their movement spread to include workers and professionals of various classes. Throughout the rest of May, the movement seemed to pick up steam until de Gaulle made his theatrical move. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, de Gaulle secretly went to Baden Baden, the German spa town, to meet with one of his top generals to gauge the loyalties of the military. With the assurance that French troops were behind the Republic, de Gaulle was ready to take action. The Gaullists began to stage mass rallies of veterans and supporters of their own, and tanks began to patrol the streets of Paris. De Gaulle then announced he was dissolving parliament and calling for new elections. The bold moves by the Gaullists paid off; the "revolution" lost fervor and the Gaullists won the elections.

Although the Gaullists were able to claim "victory," at least over the ideological conflict as it existed in those limited months during the spring of 1968, the larger struggle between the parties was carried on in the debate over Les Halles. As has become obvious now, this debate was rooted in the confrontation between humanistic ties to the past character of Les Halles that resonated with preservationist supporters and the opportunity for progress and modernization that the site presented city planners. Local associations used the image of Old Paris, and a narrative of Les Halles as the heart of that Paris, as the starting point for their defense. The market and surrounding neighborhood was described in terms of its energy, its smells coming from the charcuteries, cafes, bistros, or flower stalls,

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<sup>106</sup> Brown, *Protest in Paris*, 12.

and the eclectic mix of people who could be found patronizing, walking, and working in the streets and market stalls, such as the prostitutes, hefty porters, and *flaneurs*. It was a place where the homeless and drifters came to find work or the social elites a bowl of onion soup after a night of partying on the town. Les Halles was a place where after the nine o'clock trading bell was rung (at the wholesale market) signaling the end of the trading day, the local poor was given ten minutes to sift through the crates of unsold food before the city sanitation workers came to haul it away.<sup>107</sup> Les Halles was a place for everyone. Andre Fermigier noted that, "all true Parisians adore this quarter, those who live in it, those who come to it to dine, to buy their flowers or their crate of tomatoes, to hear an accordionist, to breathe the scents of former times, to seek—in their poverty alas and their solitude—a little warmth and comfort, or simply some work."<sup>108</sup>

While many Parisians may have felt a unique emotional connection to Les Halles, such was not the primary sentiment at city hall where technocratic practicality ruled the day. The time had finally come to take definitive action, and on March 4-5, 1969, the hustle and bustle of Les Halles came to an end when the market was shut down and transferred to the new facility at Rungis. The panoply of pleas to save the market, via petitions, letters, editorials, and books had fallen on deaf ears. The urbanist Gaullists had won another important round, with the market activity now moved to the suburbs. The next step would be to destroy the pavilions and begin the work of building something new that would capture Gaullist ambitions for the capital.

The move of the market left many people in shock; several had believed such a move was so drastic that neither de Gaulle nor Pompidou would actually allow it. Up to the point of the market's removal, the effort to save Les Halles had been somewhat demure. Once the initial shock of the move began to wear off, a new preservation movement began in earnest, this time with a goal of saving the actual pavilions from destruction. While debate on what to build at the site stagnated, many of the

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<sup>107</sup> Michael Spingler, "Where Les Halles Stood, Alphaville is Coming," *The Village Voice*, December 9, 1971.

<sup>108</sup> Andre Fermigier, "La mort de Paris II, Le secret d'un secret," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, May 24, 1967.

pavilions were converted for use as art galleries, theatre productions, public lectures, concerts, a circus, and even an ice-skating rink. Les Halles also hosted a special exhibition of the works of Picasso, an event that drew over 70,000 visitors to the pavilion.<sup>109</sup> Although the idea of using Les Halles to build a new cultural space had been considered by the government, the people of Paris had shown that one could already exist in the old pavilions. New businesses even began to move in to cater to Les Halles' new clientele, including bookstores, antique dealers, cafés, and a range of fashionable boutiques. The robust cultural resurgence that began to emerge at Les Halles gave the preservationist associations great hope for the future. For one leftist magazine, many of the partisans of the 1968 revolt found Les Halles "the natural place for creativity in a popular setting and the starting point for a cultural revolution."<sup>110</sup> The idea of a "cultural revolution" did not sit comfortably with Pompidou, nor did the possibility of even mere festive gatherings that could lead to further contestation. The more enthusiasm for Les Halles as a cultural space grew, the harder it would become for Pompidou to realize his dreams of turning the neighborhood into a financial center and example of international modernization. By 1971 the Gaullists' resolve to move forward with their redevelopment plans began to solidify.

In July 1971, as the last grains of sand fell to the bottom of the hourglass, the preservationists knew they were operating on borrowed time. Over the course of the month, a flurry of articles began to appear in the major Parisian papers as well as many smaller papers with a targeted audience. The headlines talked about "the suspense at Les Halles" and reported when various demonstrations were being planned. On July 11, 1971, a decidedly leftist paper, *La Cause du Peuple*, came out with a headline that read, "Pompidou détruit les Halles. Il exile en Banlieue 600 familles. Elles résistent," (Pompidou destroyed Les Halles. He exiled 600 families to the suburbs. They resist.)<sup>111</sup>. Within the article there are sub-headlines that talk about Pompidou's desire to make Paris a city without people and focused on

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<sup>109</sup> Large, *Des Halles au Forum*, 55.

<sup>110</sup> *L'Idiot international*, June 30, 1971.

<sup>111</sup> For similar articles, see *Combat*, July 20, 1971, *L'Aurora*, July 16, 1971, as well as *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*.

corporate profits. The article then describes the residents of the Saint Martin and Beaubourg neighborhoods (near Les Halles) as the final defenders against the attack of the bourgeoisie, urging readers to come to their aid. Four days after the article, on July 15<sup>th</sup>, over 3,000 protesters came to Les Halles to protest its destruction and create a barrier of people around the pavilions.<sup>112</sup> One paper later called this demonstration a re-run of 1968.<sup>113</sup> For several hours, the thousands of protestors engaged in screaming and shoving with 500 officers of the *Compaigne Republicaine de Securite*, the State's anti-riot unit, in an effort to assert control over the pavilions. Similar protests continued for much of the month, but the end result in each was a draw. With each mass rally the protestors managed to delay the bulldozers, but they did not manage to change the will of Pompidou.

As the protests grew in intensity, a Marxist theater group staged an anti-government play in a section of the pavilions. These developments had the Pompidou administration on edge, and in their view the actions of these protestors represented a direct test of their authority much like the test they had faced in 1968. Three years earlier Pompidou had urged de Gaulle to be lenient with the students in an effort to gain the moral high ground and with hopes that the protestors would then stand down. Of course that strategy failed and events soon got out of hand, Pompidou did not want a repeat performance at Les Halles. By the end of June the prefect and other officials had decided with finality that the essential part of the demolition had to be completed by the end of August in order to create "an irreversible situation."<sup>114</sup>

On August 2, 1971 the bulldozers were given final approval and the physical destruction of the Baltard pavilions began. The fact that destruction came in August is of no surprise. Many Parisians had left the capital to begin their August holiday, including many of the protestors, and they were all shocked at what had happened in their absence. By waiting until the August vacation period, officials

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<sup>112</sup> Bertrand Lemoine, *Les Halles de Paris* (Paris: l'Équerre, 1980), 219.

<sup>113</sup> Spingler, "Where Les Halles Stood, Alphaville is Coming," *The Village Voice*, December 9, 1971.

<sup>114</sup> Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories*, 106.



knew they could minimize outside interference and create the irreversible situation they desired. The reaction was brutal. Some onlookers cried, “they (the Gaullists) killed the pavilions,” while Andre Fermigier wrote in the *Nouvel Observateur* of the “heart-rending sight, (by a) disgrace of a regime.”<sup>115</sup> Other critics considered the damage done to Paris irreparable and fatal, using language like “massacre” and the “murder of Paris.”<sup>116</sup> Whatever new life was beginning to emerge in the pavilions had been put to death while still in its infancy, and with it (so Pompidou likely hoped) was any remaining remnant of the spirit of 1968. The bulldozers claimed more than just the marketplace; along with the pavilions another fifty-six buildings were destroyed, some among the oldest remaining buildings in Paris at the time. The second battle over Les Halles was now complete, and just as before, Gaullist urbanism had emerged victorious.

In the wake of the pavilions’ destruction was a large hole in the center of Paris. Preservationists like Louis Chevalier were quick to make the connection that there was a hole in “the heart of Paris,” and that the city needed to be mended. The issue of how to mend Paris and what to replace the pavilions with was now center stage and brought a general sense of uneasiness to many preservationists. This was with good reason. Gaullist urbanism had several projects that were either planned, in construction, or had just been constructed in 1973. A series of concrete apartment towers had just been constructed on the Front de Seine and in the Place d’Italie, in addition to the Tour Montparnasse, an office skyscraper stretching 690 feet built not far from the Luxembourg Gardens.<sup>117</sup> When it was constructed, Montparnasse was the tallest building in Europe and drew severe criticism as an intrusion to the view of Paris’ more traditional monuments. Also in the final planning stages was the Left-Bank Expressway, Pompidou’s pet project, which was to be a multi-lane highway that was to cut through the center of

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<sup>115</sup> Andre Fermigier, “Des Maisons qui avouent,” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, September 6, 1971.

<sup>116</sup> Louis Chevalier, *The Assassination of Paris*, trans. David Jordan, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994) 235, 265.

<sup>117</sup> Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories*, 108.

Paris by running along the Seine in the shadows of the Notre Dame. Such projects, in light of Les Halles' recent destruction, left preservationists and the neighborhood associations galvanized for action.

Fueling the fire of the preservationists was also the way in which many of the "modernizing" projects were chosen and organized. In the late 1960s Parisian redevelopment was becoming synonymous with realty speculation, corruption, and state control. Many project administrators were working in concert with private developers and banks, and often left their government jobs to take highly paid positions at these firms once large government projects had been procured.<sup>118</sup> Paris Prefet Marcel Diebolt is a prime example of such a figure.<sup>119</sup> Secrecy was also deemed to be a problem as technocratic planners often made decisions without open discussions or architectural competitions. Neighborhood associations were instrumental in combating this behavior. As one report from the *Préfecture de Police* shows, these neighborhood associations did not go unnoticed.<sup>120</sup> The report is a series of correspondences between the Préfet de Police and the Préfet de Paris. The most recent memo, dated March 27, 1969 is simply titled "Association." The police Préfet states that they are watching a group called the "*Association des Locataires du Quartier des Halles et des Secteurs Limitrophes.*" The letter states that the purpose of the group is to defend the material and moral interests of the tenants of the Halles district, including any actions arising from the decisions of the Council of Paris. Attached to the letter is a list of the association's officers and a copy of the association's constitution.

What likely caught the attention of the police is found in the previous memo of November 6, 1968, which states that the association, which also operates as the "*Action Culturelle et Sociale du Quartier des Halles,*" had been distributing leaflets around Les Halles. The leaflets were meant to draw attention to the inhabitants of Les Halles and the consequences those residents could face based on the

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<sup>118</sup> Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories*, 109.

<sup>119</sup> See footnote 81.

<sup>120</sup> Mémorandum, Préfecture de Police, Archives de Paris, file number 101/77/10, boxes 1-6.

city council's potential actions in the neighborhood. The leaflet urges people to share their concerns with the Council and to support cultural and social uses of the space that serve the existing residents. According to the police report, the association may have been trying to capitalize on a "manifesto" published in June 1967 in *Le Monde* on the need to give priority of the Les Halles neighborhood to cultural activities. The "manifesto," which was signed by sixty-seven world personalities of the entertainment industry, states that the associations defending Les Halles are "determined to fight any project with the primary imperative of profit, or that will lead to a concentration of administrative offices or businesses and destroy the balance of the social center."<sup>121</sup>

The parent association of both the aforementioned associations was the Union Champeaux. The police report expressed its concern that the Union Champeaux envisioned the consolidation of all the local associations in order to maximize their power and the report notes that such a group would trend "gauchiste" (leftist) in nature and notes that the association had over 300 active (dues paying) members. At the end of the report, the police assembled one-page dossiers on each of the five board members of the Union Champeaux.

The dossiers provide an interesting insight into the makeup of the association. The President, Mr. Lucien Gaillard, was 40 years old at the time of the dossier (1968) and was married with two children. He worked as a trade representative for several different businesses, including a coffee company and a jam company. In addition to his sales position, Mr. Gaillard was also the deputy mayor of the 2<sup>nd</sup> arrondissement of Paris and lost a bid in 1965 for the city council as the representative of the "Freedom for Paris" party. The other members have similar profiles, ranging in age from their late-twenties to mid-sixties, most professionally employed, with political leanings that were either leftist or centrist.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Mémorandum, Préfecture de Police, Archives de Paris, file number 101/77/10, boxes 1-6.

<sup>122</sup> Mémorandum, Préfecture de Police, Archives de Paris, file number 101/77/10, boxes 1-6.

In addition to the leaflets, another successful event (perhaps the association's most successful preservation effort) was the production of a photographic exhibition of the neighborhood's old buildings. The exhibition was staged in March 1968, and attracted more than 30,000 people. The success of this exhibition helped to win public support for preservationist causes, and over the succeeding years, government officials broke down and allowed greater public participation in the urban planning process.<sup>123</sup>

Although the preparation of dossiers on the association's officers and the creation of a running narrative of the association's activities may at first glance suggest that the police and city officials were concerned with the existence of such associations, my knowledge of the Paris Police Department (based on my research in police archives) would suggest otherwise. The Paris Police Department has a long history of keeping detailed records and maintaining surveillance of nearly all activities in the city of which it is aware. Rather than classify the existence of such records as concern, a more likely descriptor would be prudent caution; this is especially true in the wake of May 1968, when the file on the Union Champeaux was opened. Nonetheless, these police records are valuable because they provide unique insight into the personalities and structure of the associations that lobbied to save Les Halles. The members of the Union Champeaux came from arrondissements across the city, held a wide range of occupations, varied in age, marital status, and to lesser degrees political affiliation. Such a composition suggests that there was widespread appeal to save Les Halles, and that preservation efforts were being generated from areas beyond the Les Halles neighborhood itself. Such widespread support shows that a wide array of Parisians felt they had a stake in the outcome of Les Halles and that the battle over the neighborhood and the pavilions involved more than the working class, the market workers, or Gaullist ambitions. Les Halles was truly a place for everyone.

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<sup>123</sup> Mémorandum, Préfecture de Police, Archives de Paris, file number 101/77/10, boxes 1-6.

Despite the small successes in the issues of governmental transparency won by the neighborhood, the larger problem of what to build in the “*trou*” remained. The technocrats had been planning for this opportunity for several years. Everyone at city hall seemed to agree that the site would be a transportation hub and transfer point for the Paris Metro and the RER lines connecting the suburbs to Paris; it was what was to be built around the transportation center that remained up for debate. One popular proposal was for an underground shopping mall, or forum, which would keep the purpose of the site in line with its history as a market. To this end, officials went to Montreal to visit the Place Ville-Marie as a recently constructed example of a subterranean shopping complex.<sup>124</sup> President Pompidou continued to push for the idea of an international trade center and a complex of hotels that would cater to business travelers. Pompidou was firmly against leaving any open public space available, as he feared it would immediately become occupied by hordes of “hippies.” According to Charles Rearick, Pompidou’s vision for “the heart of Paris” was squarely in the Second Empire and Haussmannian tradition of “Paris as an economic dynamo and international capital...urban renewal without regard for the ‘little people’ or their sentiment toward a vital quarter of Paname.”<sup>125</sup>

In April 1974, Pompidou died suddenly in office. Pompidou’s death would be of great consequence to Parisian urban renewal projects, as his successor, Valery Giscard d’Estaing (while on the political right) was not a Gaullist in the traditional sense and had a different vision for the future of Paris than Pompidou. Immediately plans for the Left-Bank Expressway were scrapped, as was the international trade center. Height restrictions were placed on new construction in La Defense, and Giscard made known his preference for a traditional French garden on the surface level of the Les Halles site. Giscard announced he would shift his focus from commercialism to “*la qualité de la vie*,” a return to a more “French” way of being. Whether Giscard truly believed in such an ideological shift or whether

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<sup>124</sup> Pierre-Francois Large, *Des Halles au Forum: Metamorphoses au Coeur de Paris* (Paris: l’Hartmattan, 1992), 61.

<sup>125</sup> Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories*, 112.

it was one of necessity is to be debated. This new emphasis on quality of life followed a sudden lack of available financing for the planned commercial center in Les Halles.<sup>126</sup>

Giscard was not the only voice directing the course of events in Paris or what was in store for Les Halles. Jacques Chirac, who was Prime Minister under Giscard and later became the first mayor of Paris in 1977, was a rival of Giscard's and supported the use of Les Halles as a commercial center. Although Chirac's vision for Les Halles differed from Giscard's, he did not support the type of international urbanism that was popular under Pompidou. Chirac used Les Halles to position himself as a voice for the people and argued that building a shopping mall, such as the proposed Forum, would create a space useable for all much like the old Les Halles. In line with his populist rhetoric, Chirac claimed that Les Halles should "smell of French fries."<sup>127</sup> By the late 1970s, it had become clear that the urbanism of Pompidou was no longer in vogue. Vast amounts of office space in the towers of La Defense sat empty and nearly all of France was now in agreement that tall buildings of any sort would not be appropriate for Les Halles. In 1977, as Chirac was elected mayor, Giscard backed down in the Les Halles debate and Chirac's vision of the Forum shopping mall was built to fill the hole in Paris's heart. The Forum was likely well-intentioned and included space for cultural and recreational amenities, six movie theaters, 250 stores, and a FNAC as the anchor store.<sup>128</sup> Among the cultural amenities was a branch location of the Grevin wax museum, which feature reproductions of several famous Bell Époque figures in a possible attempt to connect the space back to its glorious past.

Despite all of the amenities, and the fact that the Forum became the largest grossing retail center in all of France, many lovers of Paris, cultural critics, and large numbers of the preservationists deemed the Forum a complete failure. In fact, the Forum des Halles has been included in the Project for

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<sup>126</sup> "At the Barricades," *New York Times*, September 18, 1974, 40.

<sup>127</sup> Rearick, *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories*, 115.

<sup>128</sup> FNAC is a national chain retailer in France, specializing in books, electronics, and some home goods.

Public Space's "Hall of Shame" as one of the worst architectural and park developments anywhere in the world. According to the Project:

Forum des Halles is essentially a subterranean mall; it completely disorients you from the real city on the surface. To experience a city is to be aware of one place flowing into another, to encounter a staggering variety of stimuli continually flowing all around you. But traversing Forum des Halles is a deadening experience; every time through we have been gripped by the urge to leave as quickly as possible.

It is covered aboveground by a park that no one ever seems to visit, consisting of a fussy, unconnected set of elements. We encountered the ultimate sign of a failed space at one of the entranceways, where we found some of the most overt drug-dealing we have ever witnessed in Paris.<sup>129</sup>

This sentiment has been echoed by numerous other newspapers and books. The site's constant criticism led to the announcement in 2004 of Les Halles' planned renovation. A concise summary of Les Halles' life, death, and resurrection appeared in the *New York Review of Books*:

Les Halles had been a vital connection to the cycle of nature, a living embodiment of the chain of production and consumption, a tremendous social equalizer, a place where the jobless could always find pickup work and the hungry could scrounge for discarded but perfectly acceptable food, a hub with its own culture and customs varnished by nearly a millennium of use. It was often called the "soul" of Paris as well as its "stomach," and it was destroyed impersonally, by administrative decree, and eventually replaced by a nightmarish pit of a shopping mall that appears to have been designed for maximum alienation.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> "Hall of Shame," Project for Public Spaces, [http://www.pps.org/great\\_public\\_spaces/one?public\\_place\\_id=725](http://www.pps.org/great_public_spaces/one?public_place_id=725), accessed April 3, 2013.

<sup>130</sup> "In Search of Lost Paris," *The New York Review of Books*, December 15, 2010.

A nightmare may be an accurate depiction of Les Halles after its destruction. When the Gaullists had first begun making plans for Les Halles in the 1950s; they had hoped to eradicate the problems of prostitution and other vices, as well as create a space that would bring new life into the center of Paris and position France as a commercial destination for the new century. It seems they fell short. Ironically, after the development was completed, the park above the shopping complex became (once again) a center for prostitution and drug exchange. Many of the impoverished ethnic youths who had been exiled to the outskirts of Paris during the destruction of the Les Halles neighborhood have continued to use Les Halles as a place of refuge in the city.

What is Les Halles' relevance to Paris's larger history? In a fourteen-page special report on the current state and future of France published in *The Economist*, there is a small feature on Paris, entitled "Losing its sparkle, Paris is not what it was."<sup>131</sup> The article discusses how Paris, like France, is suffering from under competitiveness compared to many of its neighbors. As late as 1967, Paris was arguably still considered the financial capital of Europe. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that an American investment bank, Morgan Stanley, chose to open its first overseas office in Paris before London. Since then, the table has turned and Paris now lags behind London, as well as other European cities, as a financial capital. Many have said London also has better restaurants, or that Milan now rivals Paris in fashion, and Berlin's art scene "has a buzz that Paris largely lacks." What has gone wrong? According to *The Economist*, "Paris, like France as a whole, prefers a culture of preservation to one of innovation. Cranes and new high-rise buildings are a perpetual feature of London, but are rare in Paris. Young people and immigrants, always a source of inventiveness and creativity, can no longer afford to live in or anywhere near the city's centre."

As this article shows, France has struggled in the postwar years to retain its former position as a world leader. One reason for this may be found in the tensions over how to modernize after that war,

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<sup>131</sup> "Special Report: France, So much to do, so little time," *The Economist*, November 17, 2012.



tensions that are clearly present in the Les Halles narrative. The article suggests that the Gaullists may have been right in part to focus their attention on reorganizing France to compete in the postwar capitalistic world, even if that meant scrapping years of history. As Europe emerged from the war, each nation was forced to assess its values as plans for reconstruction were being drawn. Les Halles and its old-fashioned market was representative of a world in which France had a clear sense of its identity and still had great influence in world affairs. After the war, that reality had changed, but for the preservationists, the memory of such a France may have provided an attractive space to take refuge.

As *The Economist* article points out, Paris's main source of competition and comparison within Europe is London. As luck would have it, this comparison can be extended to urban (re-)developments involving historic marketplaces. Thus, before concluding this chapter, I would like to briefly explore a comparison of the redevelopment of Les Halles with that of London's Covent Garden.

Les Halles and Covent Garden have much in common. Both markets served as wholesale markets, with Covent Garden supplying all of the fruits and flowers to the London and Southeast England market and Les Halles providing the same function for Paris and at times, much of France. Over time similar problems plagued each market—traffic congestion, neighborhood decay, unsanitary conditions—and calls for a solution continually resurfaced. Just as the market at Les Halles was closed in 1969 and moved to suburban Rungis, the market at Covent Garden was closed in 1974 and moved to suburban Battersea. Both markets were built in the nineteenth century, Les Halles in 1888 (having begun in 1854) and Covent Garden in 1830, with the addition of the glass ceiling later in the century.<sup>132</sup>

In the late 1960s, both Paris and London planners had grandiose schemes for redeveloping their central market areas in a modern fashion. As each group announced their plans for the historic markets, the response they received from the public was one clamoring for preservation. With mounting public pressure, as well as the financial constraints each faced as a result of the economic crisis of the early

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<sup>132</sup> Welcome to Covent Garden, Architecture and History, <http://www.coventgardenlondonuk.com/history-architecture>, accessed April 14, 2013.

seventies, both cities saw their ambitious plans for the future end in failure; but this is where the similarities end.

The main difference between Les Halles and Covent Garden was the size of the sites. The Covent Garden site was sufficiently small enough, that even in the initial planning, the marketplace itself was to be retained and only the surrounding area redeveloped in a modern style. Les Halles by contrast covered more than 30 acres, or more than 15 times the area of the Covent Market building. Les Halles seemed destined to be an all or nothing project. Another large advantage for Covent Garden was that the then Minister of the Environment, Geoffrey Rippon, supported preserving the market building and moved to name it and 250 of the surrounding buildings as publicly protected. Where Paris moved for destruction and redevelopment, London moved for preservation and restoration. The choice would be a good one for London, and even Ricardo Bofill, the original architect hired by President Giscard to oversee the redevelopment of Les Halles, admitted that the best solution for Paris would have been to save Les Halles' pavilions and convert them to new uses.<sup>133</sup>

Despite similar beginnings and sharing a vision of converting their respective market areas into high-quality shopping and commercial destinations, it is remarkable that the end result would be so different for Les Halles and Covent Garden. The Forum in Paris was designed to be a high-end shopping center that would effectively monetize and enliven central Paris. Instead, the restaurants and up-market clothes shops, such as Pierre Cardin, quickly went out of business. Fast food chains and non-descript discount stores took their place. The park area became a center for drug dealing and prostitution, and the core base of shoppers has been the suburban immigrants who were forced out of the neighborhood to build the mall. Both in architectural terms, with its odd combination of glass tubes and mirrors, and in financial and social objectives, the Forum was a failure. By contrast, "The Market" at Covent Garden has been a wild success. The Market became a destination for books, fine food, clothes,

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<sup>133</sup> Stephen Wood, "A Tale of Two Markets, Contrasting Approach to Developments in Covent Garden and Les Halles," *Retail & Distribution Management* (September/October, 1981), 23.

and expensive items for the home. When The Market opened, it had 37 store locations available and over 800 lease applications.<sup>134</sup> Covent Garden is continuing to expand and the success of The Market seems to have ensured a permanent place for the historic market in London's future.

It has now been more than 40 years since the Baltard Pavilions were destroyed, cleared for what would become the much-maligned Forum shopping complex. The battle for Paris, however, continues to rage on. In October 2010, after eight years of debates, it was announced by Paris mayor Bertrand Delanoë that Les Halles would once again go through another major renovation that offered to redefine the heart of Paris.<sup>135</sup> As the gentrification of Paris continues, many Parisians are wondering if their city is destined to become the exclusive playground of tourists and the wealthy. In the case of Les Halles, while remaining a popular stopping point for tourists, the planned gentrification of the neighborhood by Gaullist planners in the 1970s failed to materialize. While the Forum was supposed to bring new life to the center of Paris, the result was a series of chain stores and restaurants, and the return of the immigrant youth (many descendents from those exiled from the neighborhood to build the Forum) who now sell drugs and engage in petty crime around the mall.

Anne Hidalgo, Delanoë's urban planning chief and the deputy mayor of Paris, echoed the enthusiasm of some of her earlier predecessors when she stated, "For Les Halles, this is the beginning of a new chapter. In touching Les Halles you stir up everything—you stir up history, you stir up the beating heart of the metropolis."<sup>136</sup> Of course, Parisians have heard this before; however, Hidalgo hopes the renovation will correct the mistakes of the Forum. Yet, much of the rhetoric of the renovation remains similar to that from the Forum project. As the redevelopment brochure states, "with Les Halles—

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<sup>134</sup> Wood, "A Tale of Two Markets," 26.

<sup>135</sup> Jeffrey Iverson, "Paris Finally Gives Les Halles a Facelift," *Time* (October 19, 2010), <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2026326,00.html>, accessed April 17, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

destined to become the heart of a great metropolis, reflecting the vibrancy and excitement of the French capital—the Paris of tomorrow is taking shape.”<sup>137</sup>

A point of pride for Hidalgo is the way in which the current renovation (unlike the last, which left a large whole in the center of Paris than when unfilled for 10 years) has not disrupted life in Paris, or for that matter, Les Halles as well. Despite having entered the demolition and construction phase of the project, Hidalgo states, “Inside the fence, life goes on. All access to shops, public facilities, and public transportation have been maintained. The activities of this ‘city’ remain normal. Similarly, around the yard, the neighborhood streets retain their usual animation. I am delighted.”<sup>138</sup>

Étienne Jojot, President of the Free Commune Association des Halles and proprietor of *Louchebem*, a restaurant established in 1878 and which sits opposite the construction site, seems to concur with Hidalgo’s sentiments. When asked if his customers complain about the construction, he says, “Oh, for the French any change is a problem! My clients get angry just trying to find parking when they come here. So for them, it is the construction’s fault. However, they are very interested in the project and ask about what is going on inside the fences. I try to answer them as best as possible. I put posters in my restaurant about the renovation so servers can explain.”<sup>139</sup>

Jojot also lives in the Les Halles neighborhood. In response to the impact of the project to his life as a local resident Jojot says, “I understand that a number of people are disturbed by the demolition operations, which begin early. Please, do not start outside of normal business hours! But, it is a construction site, it makes noise, it is normal. It is dusty; it is normal. In my restaurant, there are elements that need to be cleaned every two hours. It is a part of life. I hope that the time limit for the

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<sup>137</sup> *Les Halles Redevelopment Project* (Paris: Parimage, 2011).

<sup>138</sup> *demain les Halles*, June 2011, 3. Translation mine.

<sup>139</sup> *demain les Halles*, 6. Translation mine.

work is exactly that which has been announced, five years is a long time! One thing is certain, it is better than before.”<sup>140</sup>

One of the goals of the redevelopment is to create something for everyone at Les Halles. To that end, there is a planned refurbishment of the retail shops, the creation of a music conservatory, a library, a hip-hop center, and a workshop and cultural center for the deaf and hearing-impaired. Above ground, there are plans for 2,500 square meters of playgrounds for 7 to 12 year olds, 1,370 square meters of playgrounds for 2 to 6 year olds, over 8,000 square meters of lawn space, 4 hectares of parkland, and over 9,000 linear feet of park benches. The signature element of the renovation is *La Canopée*, a giant translucent canopy that covers approximately a fourth of the immediate construction site and marks the main entrance into the underground amenities. Although the canopy’s design is meant to connect to visions of nature and blend with the park space, at night it will be illuminated in an array of colors that will certainly call attention to the center of Paris. The project is a large one, and so as not to interrupt the transit functions of the space, the project will be done in phases. It is expected that *La Canopée*, as well as the new park space, should be completed sometime in 2014.<sup>141</sup>

Much like the destruction of Les Halles in 1971, the current project has seen its own set of schisms form. Representative of the views of the city and those supporting the project is Dominique Hucher, of SemPariSein, the public body charged with overseeing the development, who believes the project will create a much needed safer and more welcoming place. In addressing one of the main concerns, that of the local crime, Hucher says, “the current site has tons of little hidden corners, which tends to favor a certain delinquency.”<sup>142</sup> The new design will create open green space and leave few clandestine places to engage in suspect activity. By eliminating the crime aspect of Les Halles, the city

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> *Les Halles Redevelopment Project*. This is a brochure available in the Les Halles Information Office.

<sup>142</sup> Iverson, “Paris Finally Gives Les Halles a Facelift,” *Time*.

hopes to recast Les Halles' reputation and encourage locals to come back to the area. As Hucher notes, Parisians make up just 15% of the site's (domestic) visitors, while "*banlieusards*" make up 85%.<sup>143</sup>

On the opposite side is Gilles Pourbaix, president of ACCOMPLIR, a residents' association which has sought to block the development of Les Halles in court. Pourbaix believes that many of the fears surrounding the immigrant youth who frequent Les Halles are irrational; he says, "some people, when they see a group of ten black adolescents fooling around, for them it's insecurity, but that's their problem, for me it's not insecurity, it's just kids having fun."<sup>144</sup> Pourbaix even appreciates the gritty image of Les Halles, which he feels harkens to its wilder years and hopes to protect the existence of sexshops and prostitutes for that reason. While Hidalgo has stated that the park to be built at Les Halles will create a place for Parisians like the Tuileries or Luxembourg Gardens, Pourbaix counters, "I wouldn't want to live in a neighborhood where everything is clean and orderly, as if we were in Switzerland. We want to live in Les Halles."<sup>145</sup>

On their website, ACCOMPLIR, which calls the current Les Halles project "ruinously expensive," lists their four primary objections to the construction. First, they state that the most important objective of the project is to upgrade the RER lines (which they support). However, they question why such upgrades require the destruction of the existing park or additions to the shopping mall. In relation to the old park's destruction, they dramatically charge, "already, 250 healthy trees have been savagely butchered." Second, they call the Canopée an "absurd and hideous" structure which will "close up the open-sky feel of the Forum," and which has no purpose. Third, they claim the cost of the project is 1 billion euros, thus making it "ruinously expensive." ACCOMPLIR's final complaint is that the project is "unending" as the construction is planned to last for six years. It seems, however, that Pourbaix's and

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

ACCOMPLIR's protestations are in vain; ACCOMPLIR has lost both of its court challenges, the bulldozers have begun their work, and the development project is fully underway.<sup>146</sup>

The project at Les Halles is an important one for the future of Paris. According to city councilman Serge Federbusch, "Today Paris is in a historic crisis, and to survive it needs to open itself up. But the reality is the Paris of Delanoë has closed in itself for the privileged few."<sup>147</sup> Federbusch would like to see Paris increase its transit connections with the suburbs and reconnect the social classes, but due to the protection of various interests, he seems to find that prospect unlikely. Also concerned for the future of Paris is Mark Kurlansky, a food historian who recently published a new translation of Emile Zola's *The Belly of Paris*. Kurlansky shares a disdain for Paris's urban policies similar to that of Zola's toward Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann. Kurlansky says, "I think it is terrible what is happening to Paris, but also New York and London—not only are they driving the poor out, they are driving the middle class out, and becoming enclaves for the rich."<sup>148</sup>

Why is the study of Les Halles important and what does it teach us? The story of Les Halles' plight during the second half of the twentieth century is important because it can serve as a microcosm of the French experience during the same period. Les Halles is particularly instructive of French struggles with the postwar modernization process. Foremost among those struggles was how to balance the kind of postwar modernization that an increasingly integrated world demanded (exemplified by the United States), while maintaining traditional notions of "Frenchness." As was evident from the writings of Fermigier, many preservationists equated modernizing with "Manhattanization"—something that was not French at all. Of course, as the Gaullists countered, "one must live in one's own time;" despite the preservationist's concerns, doing so did not necessarily require turning Paris into New York. The threat to Paris's architectural identity was real however, as the loss of

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<sup>146</sup> "Scand'Halles," association ACCOMPLIR, <http://www.accomplir.asso.fr/dossiers/renovation/ScandHalles-en.pdf>, accessed April 24, 2013.

<sup>147</sup> Iverson, "Paris Finally Gives Les Halles a Facelift," *Time*.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

the Baltard pavilions proves. Fermigier was right in many regards. Surely many Parisians regret the loss of Les Halles' curving iron arcs, but Les Halles may show us that "Frenchness" is more than beauty and attention to aesthetics.

Les Halles' greatest lesson likely lies in how it captured the developing class divisions of the postwar era. As Kristin Ross argues, "the ten year period of the mid 1950s to the mid 1960s in France saw both the end of the empire and a surge in French consumption and modernization."<sup>149</sup> Ross states that during this time France was increasingly pushed towards middle-classness. Prior to the wars, much of France was tied to rural or working-class occupations. In the aftermath of the wars, as the ranks of the middle-class grew, the need for urban space geared toward middle-class interests increased. What had been a France that was somewhat united, at least in its shared poor economic status, had now become more divided. Both the working-class and the middle-class needed space, and Les Halles, located in the center of Paris, became an obvious choice.

The way the battle over who controlled this space was decided was not only instructive of changes taking place in France, but in the Western world at large. A general common theme of the postwar world is the erosion of the working-class and the emergence of the middle-class as a center of political influence.<sup>150</sup> These themes, as well as that of converting urban space to middle-class needs, can be found in both the loss of the Baltard pavilions and the current redevelopment of the Forum. The lesson Les Halles provided in 1971 is that when a divided polity fails to work together on an important social issue the result can be a large hole in the heart of Paris, bandaged by the Forum, a failed development in which no one could claim victory. In other words, increasing class disunity is dangerous. In the current Forum redevelopment, Parisian officials and developers have taken greater care in

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<sup>149</sup> Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies, Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>150</sup> See Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Class: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).



communicating with the public and working with the community to find solutions that cater to a wide variety of citizens. Certainly this project has its detractors, but more so than in 1971, finding consensus has been a sought after goal. Nevertheless, a lesson that remains to be learned is whether or not the present Les Halles can become an example of how to bring a community together.

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