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**Flat by flat.**  
**Producing micro-scale social differentiation in an arrival neighbourhood of  
Marseille**

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**Abstract** - This chapter explores the spatial patterns of micro-scale social differentiation in two housing structures in the same block of a disadvantaged neighbourhood of central Marseille. It describes how the individual strategies of city residents, public policy, and the resilience of the urban fabric interact to produce fluid flat by flat, and building-by-building spatial patterns of social stratification. It shows that such patterns are typical features of central “arrival neighbourhoods” marked by marginal gentrification and new models of social mix policies. It also questions whether such micro-scale social differentiation can be described as “segregation”.

## Introduction

Since the 1990s, debates over increasing social inequalities and spatial segregation in globalizing cities have revived study of urban segregation in France. Such studies show that despite a slight growth of social inequalities, neighbourhood segregation indexes remain low in France and have not notably increased in recent years (Préteceille, 2006 and 2009; Oberti and Préteceille, 2016). Although suburbanization and the formation of socially homogenous communities on the urban periphery started in the eighteenth century in France and developed with industrialization, socially mixed neighbourhoods have always remained present in the urban core. Historians have thoroughly described the vertical social pattern characterizing the nineteenth-century Haussmann-era buildings in Paris that is still found in large parts of Central Paris (Lepoutre, 2010), with a top floor filled with small rooms for domestic workers and the middle floors given over to large bourgeois apartments (White, 1984). Other studies have highlighted the relevance of street segregation, such as the opposition between bourgeois boulevards and disadvantaged side streets, which used to be a very common feature of pre-industrial European cities and can still be observed in historical centres of the Mediterranean area (Pfirsch, 2011).

But globalization brought new patterns of micro-scale socio-spatial divisions to French cities, and they are still largely unexplored. Gentrification has profoundly reshaped French urban core areas in the last decades, in patterns that differ from the classic “stage model” (Van Criekingen and Decroly, 2003) wherein low-income first wave gentrifiers will ultimately be followed by a more affluent urban elite that will inevitably displace the working class. Instead, most French cities are characterized by “marginal gentrification” (Rose, 1984), consisting of long periods of co-existence between pioneer gentrifiers and the working classes in central neighbourhoods. Public policy has encouraged micro-scale social divisions in French cities by promoting “social mixing,” which has become a key word in urban policy agendas across Europe since the early 2000s (Blanc and Bidou-Zachariassen, 2010; Bridge and Aliter, 2014). The debate over gentrification and social mix policies has shifted researchers’ attention from macro- to micro-scale segregation. While policy makers often idealize the spatial proximity of socially distant groups under the label of “social mixing,” critical studies have shown it could also be considered “micro-scale segregation,” sometimes increasing social separation processes between residents of the same blocks and neighbourhoods (Blanc and Bidou-Zachariassen, 2010). Thus, most studies of micro-scale segregation in French cities have focused on the effects of spatial proximity on social distance and left the spatial patterns of micro-scale segregation and its relationship with the urban fabric largely unexplored.

In this paper we use two apartment-building case studies to explore micro-scale residential social differentiation in a disadvantaged neighbourhood of central Marseille. We analyse how the individual strategies of city residents, public policy, and the resilience of the urban fabric interact to produce new spatial patterns of social

stratification at the very local scale. We show that such patterns are marked by fluidity and are typical features of central “arrival neighbourhoods” (Saunders, 2012, Bouillon et al, 2017). We also question whether such micro-scale social differentiation patterns can be described as “segregation” - that is, a process of separation occurring in social spaces and urban activities.

In the first section, we situate our work in the academic literature on micro-scale segregation in France. The second section presents the field sites in Marseille, and the third focuses on the urban morphology of the two case-study sites, underlining the key role of the urban fabric in producing micro-scale social divisions. The fourth section describes the patterns of social differentiation in the two case-studies, mainly due to social housing policy in one case and spontaneous gentrification processes in the other. Finally, the last section explores interactions between residents in each of our field sites. It identifies two ways of managing the spatial proximity of socially distant groups: “urbanity of convenience” (Roncayolo, 1991) and “micro-segregation.”

### **1. Revisiting micro-scale social divisions in French cities: the “residential-building case-study” method**

Most recent studies of micro-scale social divisions in French cities focus on debates over social mix policy, mainly in central gentrifying areas. They demonstrate that social mix policy has mixed results. It often fails to reduce segregation and can even increase processes of separation affecting schools (Audren, 2015), work, and leisure activities rather than place of residence. As Chamboredon and Lemaire showed in their seminal work (1970), spatial proximity can strengthen social distance between different groups living in the same building. Indeed, recent studies of French cities call for a more complex approach to urban segregation, which is more often partial than extreme and can affect various social groups in a range of forms and intensity, increasing in some parts of the city while declining in others, or affecting social activities rather than place of residence. This updates the initial North American definition of segregation – the intentional process of socially and spatially excluding a minority group, often based on race. Recent French research refers to segregation as any form of physical and social separation of a group (based on class, race, family status, etc.), disadvantaged or not, voluntary or not (elite self-segregation is very high, for example), institutionally encouraged or not (Oberti and Prêteceille, 2016). It can also occur at scales smaller than the neighbourhood such as blocks, streets, and even apartment buildings. This multi-layered, micro-scale segregation is a typical feature of the fragmentation process produced by flexible global capitalism in contemporary cities.

The few studies that do address the spatial forms of such fragmentation processes have identified new micro-segregation patterns such as isolated social housing programs in more affluent neighbourhoods (Launay, 2011). Some work also stresses that despite the “embourgeoisement” processes underway in contemporary Paris, there is still a vertical pattern in many of the Haussmann-era buildings in the city centre (Lepoutre,

2010), where top floor servants' chambers are still housing insecure residents (students, recent immigrants, low-wage workers...). In the old buildings of Chateau Rouge, a disadvantaged area undergoing gentrification, the large middle-floor apartments were the first to be gentrified and renovated, while the small apartments at the top and ground floors resist gentrification longer and still house insecure tenants (Chabrol, 2011). But in addition to the legacy of such vertical patterns, new forms of segregation have appeared in the wake of recent social mix policies. In France, the national "Solidarité et Renouvellement Urbain" (Solidarity and Urban Renewal) law requires municipalities to keep a minimum of 25 per cent of their housing stock as social housing. Many new housing complexes are designed to include diverse social groups within the same building in order to foster "social mixing." Other municipal programs seek to produce social mixing by purchasing units in privately owned condominiums, often located in middle-class or upper-class areas, and converting them into public housing. Such policies have led to deep oppositions within such buildings, between established residents and newcomers, owners and renters, highly skilled and lesser-skilled workers, and between ethnic minorities and majority groups (Launay, 2011).

But micro-segregation studies remain very rare in France as in the rest of Europe, partly because most countries lack quantitative data for the very local scale. Qualitative studies about social differentiation within residential buildings are also very few, because they require long ethnographic fieldwork often consisting of collecting "apartment-building biographies" (Grafmeyer, 1991, Pinol, 1991) or tracking apartment buildings over time ("*suivis d'immeubles*," Chabrol, 2011). Such biographies are based on interviews with all residents of one building and aim to reconstruct the social and architectural history of that building over several years. This ground-level approach allows a more complex view of urban change, since it studies both gentrifying and "gentrified" residents, and focuses on their interactions and intersecting residential careers. The residential-building approach also has the advantage of showing how public policy, economic conditions, individual strategies, and the built environment interact in everyday life.

This chapter is based on case studies of two residential structures in the same block in Noailles, a disadvantaged neighbourhood of central Marseille (Figure 1). We call them case studies rather than biographies because we only reconstructed the changes of the residents over a limited timespan (2-3 years). The first case study analyses a four-story single-landlord building (eight rental apartments) located on Aubagne Street (referred to as "Housing Structure A"). Apolline Meyer conducted the case study of this building retroactively, in 2019 and 2020, after its November 2018 evacuation following the collapse of other buildings on the same street (Meyer, 2021). Interviews with seven of the eleven former residents made it possible to document their social and residential histories before and after the evacuation, and reconstruct the recent history of the building. The second case study (referred to as "Housing Structure B") focuses on a gated condominium complex called "Domaine Ventre," on the same street, composed of 7 condominium buildings (one of which occupied by priests, and another vacant) located in the interior of the block and controlling access to its internal alleys and open spaces. This second case study was conducted by David Emain (2017a) between 2016 and 2017.

He interviewed 40 residents of the 49 households living in the Domaine's 5 inhabited buildings. In this paper, we compare the published results of David Emain's study to our own study of Housing Structure A<sup>1</sup>. While both studies took place in the same block of the Noailles neighbourhood, they present very different patterns of socio-spatial differentiation and intensity of micro-segregation.

## **2. Exploring micro-scale social divisions in Marseille**

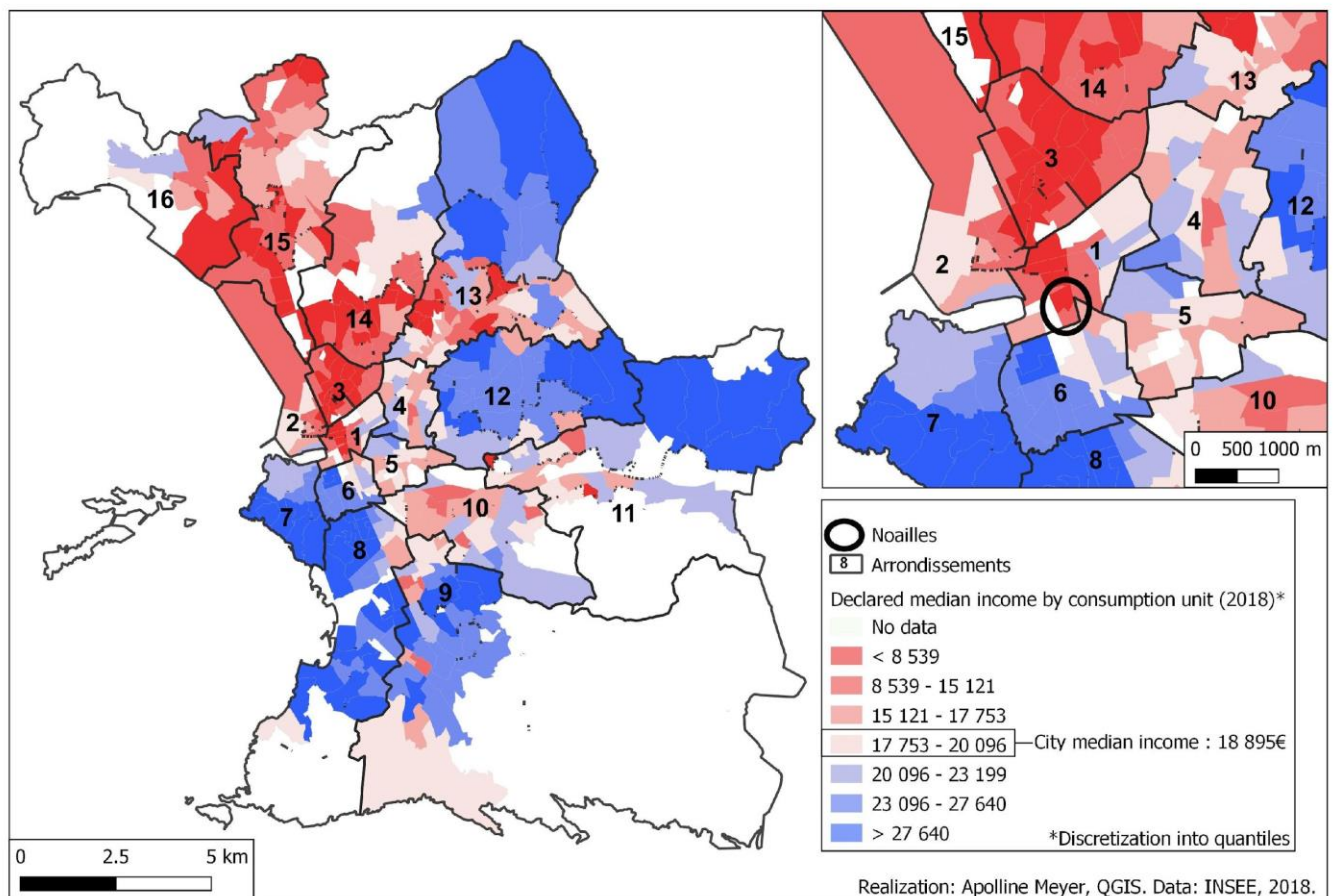
While most of the few existing studies of contemporary vertical segregation in France focus on Paris, this paper concerns Marseille, which is more representative of large French cities as a whole. Marseille has much less corporate executive activity tied into global capitalism than Paris, and its gentrification processes are often more limited. Marseille can also be compared to other Mediterranean cities, which have been presented as more resilient to the socio-spatial changes of post-Fordist metropolises (Leontidou, 1990, Pfirsch and Semi, 2016). Despite ambitious urban renewal policies since the 1990s aiming to upgrade the historical city centre, the core of Marseille remains socially diverse. The academic literature presents Marseille as a "dual city" (Donzel, 2005) and a "mosaic city" (Roncayolo, 1996), with strong neighbourhood segregation at the metropolitan scale and highly heterogeneous social cohabitation at the micro-scale.

As figure 1 shows, a strong north-south social divide splits the city on both sides of the Old Port (Roncayolo, 1996). There is a significant income gap between the high status and middle-class areas to the south, and the disadvantaged northern neighbourhoods (the 13th-16th arrondissements). In between, the historical centre surrounding the old port (1st-5th arrondissements) is composed of mixed and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, fuelled by twentieth-century immigration from Southern Europe and North Africa. The segregation in Marseille's neighbourhoods is largely due to the long-running southern and outward movement of the city's elite that started with the enlargement of the city in 1666 (Roncayolo, 1996). From the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, the bourgeoisie flocked to newly built upscale neighbourhoods south of the old port and urbanized the countryside between Marseille and the wealthier city of Aix-en Provence (PERALDI et al., 2015). This trend intensified with the economic crisis that hit the port in the 1970s, which led the city centre, settled primarily by recent immigrants and insecure populations, into significant decline.

### **Figure 1. Social divisions in the municipality of Marseille (2018 - census tracts)**

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<sup>1</sup> We thank David Emain for his kind permission to use his field work's material that has been published in Emain, 2017b



But in Marseille, neighbourhood segregation goes hand in hand with micro-scale segregation. Figure 1 shows that central Marseille (1st-5th arrondissements) is still socially diverse, with great contrasts between blocks. Its diversified housing stock (large and small apartments mixing renters and homeowners, mainly on the free market) fosters social diversity. Since the early 1990s, this longstanding micro-scale social differentiation has intensified as a consequence of ambitious urban renewal policies to upgrade central Marseille, such as the state-funded Euromed Project, launched in 1995. Such policies brought in new middle-class populations: people in the intellectual, communication and artistic professions are now slightly over-represented in central Marseille (in 2018, 37.4% of the inhabitants of the 1st arrondissement had graduated from university, compared to 33.6% city-wide<sup>2</sup>). Faced with higher-status newcomers, local associations fear the gradual displacement of lower-class residents. In actual fact, however, higher-income populations have arrived in lesser numbers than expected. Marseille has a “paradoxical” gentrification (Peraldi et al, 2015) that benefits somewhat insecure young workers and pioneers but fails to attract new waves of wealthier gentrifiers. There are also downgrading processes at work, since the municipality failed to significantly improve the old housing stock. The collapse of two apartment buildings on Aubagne Street on November 5, 2018, threw this situation into the spotlight. After the

<sup>2</sup> INSEE, *Recensement general de la population*, 2018.

tragedy, more than 400 buildings in Marseille were evacuated as a safety measure (Dorier and Dario, 2020). Furthermore, the deterioration of the aged housing stock in the centre goes hand in hand with the rise of the enclosure of private property as a marker of distinction (Dorier and Dario, 2018). Recent urban renewal policies have thus resulted in increased social differentiation between adjoining streets and blocks in central Marseille (Peraldi et al, 2015, Bouillon et al, 2017).

### **3. Producing micro-scale social divisions in an “arrival neighbourhood”**

In the core areas of Marseille as in those of other French cities, micro-scale social differentiation is largely due to the density of the urban fabric and neighbourhood effects. The Noailles neighbourhood is located in the heart of Marseille’s historical centre (1st arrondissement) and was built after the enlargement of the city in 1666. Its architecture is highly constrained by the steep incline of the streets. In the eighteenth century, the area was home to small business owners, and it still relies on the food trade and cottage industry. Thanks to its central position and proximity to the port, it rapidly became an “arrival neighbourhood” (Saunders, 2012), playing a key role in immigration settlement: Italians starting in the late nineteenth century; Armenians, Algerians and *pieds-noirs* after World War II; sub-Saharan Africans and Comorans in the late twentieth century to this day. Its housing stock has been constantly reshaped to house such newly arrived, poor and highly mobile residents, notably with furnished rooms (Bouillon et al, 2017). Indeed less than 5% of Noailles’ housing stock is official social housing, and the vast majority of its residents (82%) are private tenants, generally living in cheap and run-down accommodations that serve as *de facto* social housing. In 2015, 41% of Noailles’ inhabitants still lived under the poverty line (a percentage far above those of Marseille [26%] and France [15%]). Since the 2000s, however, municipal actions have led the median income in Noailles to rise continuously even though it is still far behind the Marseille median (1574€). The two residential structures studied in this chapter are situated in upper Noailles, the relatively better-off part of the neighbourhood (figure 1, inset).

The block in which these two structures are found was not planned, and its varied urban fabric reflects the history of Noailles. Housing Structure A was probably constructed between 1730 and 1740. Its commercial ground floor indicates that it participated in the local economy. Almost all of the street frontage was built in 1785. Housing Structure B was built later, in the nineteenth century, at the initiative of a single owner who used the empty interior of the block to construct a dyeing factory and several warehouses (Bottero and Lott, 1989), which were later transformed into private dwellings.

**Figure 2. Views of the two Housing Structures (A on the left, B on the right)**



Source: A: Google View (2021, view from the street), B: David Emain (2017b; view from the inner courtyard)

Housing Structure A offers a striking illustration of the predominance of *de facto* social housing in Noailles. In recent years, it had been an informal and accessible part of the housing market for insecure populations and in 2018, its rents were lower than the Marseille median (12.10€/square meter). Its longest-term tenant, Solenne, moved there in 2002 after having been homeless and housed by relatives for four years, and was unemployed. Contrary to the usual practice, the landlord didn't ask her for a guarantor, because the rent was incredibly low (6.50€/square meter) and the apartment was in poor condition. Moreover, the building was broken down into individually owned units and some of them were neglected; one was a squat for undocumented migrants from 2005 to 2007. Housing Structure A's population changed slightly after it was all sold to a single landlord in 2012, thus introducing a soft social upgrading process.

In contrast, two architects had already spotted Housing Structure B in 1989 and identified it as a dilapidated structure needing a strategy for a residential upgrade (Bottero and Lott, 1989). Indeed, until the late 1990s, many of the apartments in the *Domaine Ventre* were abandoned (one of its seven buildings is still vacant) or inhabited by residents living in great insecurity; a few small businesses and an ethnic social club were set up in the block's internal courtyards, also home to illegal activities at night (prostitution, drug use; Emain, 2017b). The number of vacant units and the fragmentation of the property between many non-resident landlords presented highly attractive opportunities for new investors to exploit the rent gap.

#### **4. Two spatial patterns of micro-scale social differentiation**

Each according to its morphology and ownership patterns, Housing Structures A and B thus took different paths to social diversification, mainly due to a social housing policy for the first (A) and free-market gentrification strategies for the second (B).

### *A pattern of suitability due to a filtered housing policy*

The floor-by-floor snapshot of building A in 2018 (just before its evacuation) illustrates this slight social diversification (figure 3). Although nearly all tenants' incomes were under the median for Marseille, they had a variety of social positions: financially insecure and/or immigrant tenants lived alongside younger, well-educated, and mainly French-born, more highly educated workers who came to Marseille more recently (in the 2010s) for their studies or job opportunities, and wanted to live in an affordable but central neighbourhood.

The first floor was one four-room apartment. It had been shared by a revolving group of young adults since 2015. In 2018, two tenants (Amélie and Amandine) were officially on the lease, and they had two roommates, an undeclared sub-tenant (Pablo) and someone staying there for free (Ashkan). Amélie and Amandine both had Master's degrees and stable employment contracts. On the contrary, Pablo and Ashkan were in disadvantaged situations because neither had French citizenship, a French guarantor allowing him to rent his own place, or an employment contract. Pablo was Argentinian and had a PhD in anthropology. He came to Marseille in 2012 and worked as a freelance tour guide. Ashkan came to France in 2017 from Afghanistan, and was still waiting for his refugee status to be granted. When his right to free emergency shelter expired, Amandine invited him to stay with them for free. The second and third floors were split into two apartments each. Two young couples lived on the second floor. On the street side, Félicien, a freelance graphic designer, and Natalia, an Italian working for a non-profit, both about thirty, were skilled but insecure workers. So were Lola and Timothee, both about 25, social workers, living on the rear side of the building. Despite their Masters' degrees, they had insecure employment contracts. In contrast, the two apartments on the third floor were occupied by single occupants with more disadvantaged profiles. Solenne (48) was the oldest tenant of the building and had lived there the longest (since 2002). She had had a chaotic professional and residential career before she settled there at the age of 32, after spending four years living with relatives. Coming from a disadvantaged background, she had haphazard earnings and was still unemployed in 2018. Her next-door neighbour, Meryam, was an undocumented migrant from the Comoro Islands. She worked as a house cleaner and had an informal arrangement with the landlord, doing housekeeping in the building in exchange for lower rent. The top floor was divided into three apartments. On the rear side, Claire (25) and Thomas (22) were art students living off of public assistance and intermittent under-the-table jobs. Next door, Julia (25), studied in the same art school. On the street side lived Jessica (22), an office worker, and Dimitri (25), a cook. Both came from working-class backgrounds, and this was their first experience living on their own (unlike the other young workers, who were from middle-class backgrounds and had already lived away from their families during university).

**Figure 3. The social differentiation of Housing Structure A, floor-by-floor (2018)**

4 <sup>th</sup> Floor	<b>Claire (26) &amp; Thomas (23)</b> RENT— 47 m <sup>2</sup> 650€ (300€*) - since 2016 French Art students ( <i>master's</i> )	<b>Julia (25)</b> RENT—33 m <sup>2</sup> Since 2018 French Art student ( <i>master's</i> )	<b>Jessica (22) &amp; Dimitri (24)</b> RENT—38 m <sup>2</sup> 380€ - since 2017 French Cook & office worker ( <i>technical and vocational qualifications</i> )	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor
3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor	<b>Solenne (48)</b> RENT— 48 m <sup>2</sup> 410€ (150€*) - since 2002 French Unemployed ( <i>vocational certificate</i> )		<b>Meryam (?)</b> RENT — 70 m <sup>2</sup> 480€ (informal rent reduction) since 2018 Comorian Domestic worker	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor	<b>Lola (25) &amp; Timothée (25)</b> RENT— 48 m <sup>2</sup> 580€ (480€*) - since 2015 French Social workers ( <i>master's</i> )		<b>Natalia (30) &amp; Félicien (30)</b> RENT— 70 m <sup>2</sup> Since 2016 Italian and French Freelance graphic designer & non-profit employee	
1 <sup>st</sup> Floor	RENT-SHARE — 118 m <sup>2</sup> 850€/month (280€ x 3, one pays no rent) Since 2016/2017			
	<b>Amandine (30)</b> French — PhD student in geography   <b>Amélie (28)</b> French — municipal employee ( <i>master's</i> )   <b>Pablo (32)</b> Argentinian — tour guide ( <i>PhD</i> )   <b>Ashkan (23)</b> Afghan refugee			
Ground floor	COMMERCIAL SPACE — 118 m <sup>2</sup> Association for social mediation and youth crime prevention			
	← <b>Back of building</b> <b>Rue d'Aubagne</b> →			

\*The first rent figure is the official rent, and the figure in parentheses is what they actually pay, after housing allowances are deducted.

This overrepresentation of recently arrived, highly educated young workers in Housing Structure A was enabled by a social housing policy that aligned with the landlord's financial interests. In 2012, the entire building was sold to a single landlord, marking a turning point as the new landlord sought to maximize his investment by using housing improvement programs. Since the early 1980s, central Marseille has been targeted by programs to reduce substandard housing and support lower-income access to affordable private housing via landlord incentive measures, funded by the state (ANAH: the National Housing Improvement Agency) and implemented by the municipality. Landlords in the targeted areas - highly sought-after and densely built neighbourhoods lacking social housing - have access to public subsidies for renovations if they commit to keeping the rent below a certain level for six or nine years. They can choose between "social," "highly social," or "intermediate" rent ceilings, established according to local market prices. Each determines the subsidies they can get and the maximum permissible income of their future tenants. In central Marseille, about 700 apartments were under ANAH rent-control agreements in 2020 (Dorier and Dario, 2020), which represented only 1.3% of housing

units in the 1st arrondissement. Since 2012, Housing Structure A's landlord has used ANAH provisions to control the rent of six of the eight apartments.

Despite its apparent public welfare objective, ANAH's policy was filtered through the landlord, who indirectly excluded more disadvantaged tenants. Landlords tend to prefer the less coercive "intermediate" rent ceiling, so most ANAH agreements are based on those criteria. ANAH agreements are also especially attractive for young couples, for whom the income limit is in fact higher, but with the same rent ceiling. In Residential Structure A, such young couples with little economic capital could use their social and symbolic resources (educational attainments, employment contracts, family guarantors) to prove their solvency to landlords. Less economically secure or long-term poor people still lived in the building, but their housing channels were different. Whereas young French and European workers benefited the formal social housing policy, immigrant tenants used informal networks to access *de facto* social housing, as seen here in an undeclared sublet and an agreement to exchange labour for part of the rent. This differentiation highlights the co-existence of two distinct "housing vulnerabilities" (Bouillon et al, 2015) in the arrival neighbourhood of Noailles. On the one hand are young people in a temporarily disadvantaged position on the housing market who aspire to better housing; on the other hand, a group characterized by structurally insecure status due to their nationality or employability that traps them in the substandard housing market.

Does this social differentiation mean Housing Structure A was "vertically segregated"? There was no clear social hierarchy between the floors. Housing Structure A is built following the typical Marseille structure where the only load-bearing walls are the exterior ones, so each floor can be easily converted or split into multiple apartments. Although the top floor's ceiling is lower than those on other floors (figure 2), which could be a sign that it was designed for poorer residents, there is no evidence in the literature of a historical vertical segregation pattern in Marseille. In our case study, social hierarchy follows suitable housing quality, depending on the renovations done by the landlord using ANAH subsidies. For instance, Claire and Thomas used to live on the third floor, but then moved to the top floor in a smaller but more expensive, freshly renovated, and quieter apartment overlooking the courtyard. Meryam, the Comoran immigrant, took their previous cheaper and less comfortable apartment. This example confirms that although insecure populations still settle in Housing Structure A (and Noailles more generally), they do not have the same living conditions as the younger and highly educated newcomers to Marseille. But it would be premature to speak of gentrification for Housing Structure A. Indeed, these middle-class newcomers were tenants, not homeowners. In contrast to Housing Structure B, they had no investment strategy and no plans to settle there for the long term (after the evacuation, Housing Structure A's residents' priority was to find a new flat as soon as they could, rather than staying in temporary housing until renovation work was completed). We have too little information about past residents to hypothesize that poorer households were systematically replaced, but the steady albeit slight social change in Noailles and the fact that ANAH measures are filtered through the landlord (thus excluding more disadvantaged tenants)

are significant. Rather than gentrification, the presence of young workers new to Marseille is closer to “downward raiding,” when middle-class households use neighbourhoods of social or informal housing to their advantage (Lemanski, 2014).

*A pattern varying from building to building, due to spontaneous gentrification*

As figure/table 4/1 shows, the micro-scale social differentiation in Housing Structure B has a different pattern, with striking contrasts between its buildings. In 2017, the two northernmost buildings of “upper” *Domaine Ventre* (buildings 3 and 5, in yellow/grey) were on par with typical Noailles standards and had similarities with Housing Structure A: small units, mainly rentals with low rents housing unemployed or insecure workers and students from middle-class backgrounds. Whether they rented or owned, all households were small, composed of singles, retirees, or couples without children. In contrast, buildings 1 and 2 (in green/white), located in the southern, “lower” part of the *Domaine Ventre*, housed a majority of homeowners (57% and 71% respectively, far more than the Noailles average of 16%), and were composed of mid-sized and some very large apartments, scarce in Noailles (over 130 m<sup>2</sup> for building 1) that had attracted larger households with young children. In these two buildings, rental apartments were mostly owned by landlords who lived in the *Domaine Ventre* themselves, leading to control over the social profile of tenants (Emain, 2017b). As a result, these two buildings were socially diverse, but combined different fractions of the “decent” and solvent middle classes. Finally, building 4 (in blue/dark grey), located at the centre of the *Domaine*, had a very homogeneous upper-class profile that strongly contrasted the rest of the *Domaine* and Noailles. It was occupied solely by homeowners, mostly families with children living in large renovated apartments, with skilled occupations and high incomes (80 % earned more than 4000€ per month). The main social division between the residents was thus not the renter/homeowner divide (since the complex is home to small homeowners, in many cases retirees) or the newcomer/old-timer opposition (some affluent homeowners in building 4 arrived in the late 1990s, while many poor tenants in building 5 had arrived recently). It is instead a class opposition between buildings that is keenly felt by residents and expressed in spatial terms, in an opposition between “those of the lower *domaine*” and its other residents (Emain, 2017b, p.159).

**Figure 4. The social profile of the 5 inhabited buildings of Housing StructureB in 2017 (adapted from Emain, 2017, p.434)**

	Building	Social profile	Income (per month per household)		Homeowners	Size of lodgings (average, m <sup>2</sup> )	Average seniority in apartments (years)	No. of households	No. of components by household	Average age (of adult residents)	Resident profile
			<1000 Eur	>4000 Eur							
Lower Ventre	1	mixed (polarized)	29%	43%	71%	131	12	7	1.9	49	Dual-income homeowning households in renovated apartments (shopkeepers, retirees) coexisting with single, financially insecure tenants in small apartments (students, artists)
	2	mixed (variegated)	0%	14%	57%	64	3	7	2.3	36	Only skilled and working middle-class households (executives, teachers, civil servants, artists, skilled workers), mix of tenants and homeowners
	3	low status	60%	0%	30%	36	9	10	1.7	44	Mostly low-income single tenants and small homeowners, unemployed, retired, students or in insecure jobs (security, food service...), living in small apartments
	4	high status	0%	83%	100%	114	11	6	3,5	39	Mostly highly skilled dual-income households with children, senior executives and business owners, in large apartments
	5	low status	50%	10%	0%	59	6	10	1,8	41	Only tenants in small apartments, single or couples, unemployed or with low-skill or insecure jobs
Upper Ventre	Whole Domaine Ventre		35%	27%	40%	81	8	40	2.2	42	
	Noailles average (2012)				16%						

In Housing Structure B, such a building-by-building pattern is due to the free-market investment strategies of a group of pioneer gentrifiers rather than social housing policy, as there are no ANAH agreements. In fact, the *Domaine Ventre* began to socially diversify in the mid-1990s, when a group of affluent shopkeepers in central Marseille started to buy, renovate and occupy large apartments in the complex, attracted by the rent gap opportunities (Emain, 2017b). In addition to renovation work in their own apartments, this pioneer group organized into a homeowners' association (composed of only some of the *Domaine's* homeowners) to secure the common areas and keep squatters and drug users out of the courtyards. They played a key role in the enclosure of the *Domaine* with coded locks, which was completed in 1999. The upgrading of the *Domaine* and its sheltered peacefulness stimulated the arrival of new middle-class residents (artists, executives, business owners), who were mostly concentrated in 3 of the 5 inhabited buildings in the condominium complex, in the *Domaine's* central and lower parts (see figure 4/table 1). This socially homogeneous grouping in 3 buildings was a way to share a lifestyle, but also a way to increase the value of real estate investments through the social upgrading of the buildings. Thus, the lower *Domaine Ventre* can be described as a micro-scale "gentrified island" (Emain, 2017, p. 138) that contrasts significantly with the rest of the disadvantaged neighbourhood of Noailles.

## 5. Social mixing or micro-segregation?

In Housing Structure A, the filtering of housing policy through a single landlord indirectly favoured young, highly skilled middle-class tenants, by creating a pattern based on renovation. In Housing Structure B, a more classic gentrification process led to a pattern that varied building to building arising from the investment strategies of some condo owners. But can these two patterns of social *differentiation* be referred to as *micro-segregation*? In both Housing Structures A and B, social diversity is positively valued by residents, but their actual urban practices and interactions differ from this idealistic rhetoric. In Housing Structure B, residents of the lower buildings do not send their children to local public schools (Emain, 2017b). They also have tense relations with other residents over the use of common spaces, imposing their middle/upper class standards discrediting working-class customs (children playing ball in a courtyard, hanging laundry out the windows, etc.). Many tenants do not attend the "Neighbour Party" organized by the homeowners' association, which is under the gentrifiers' control (Emain, 2017b, p. 151). In 2015 the association mobilized to oppose plans to open a municipal social centre at an entrance to the *Domaine Ventre*, fearing it would make it more porous to the disadvantaged neighbouring streets. So micro-scale segregation is at work in Housing Structure B (separate schooling and distant social interactions between residents) and is manifest spatially in the enclosure of the complex. A strong divide opposes residents of the lower part of the *Domaine* from the others. They have little contact because they belong to different social classes as well as different local "communities of interest"

(Authier, 2008), since gentrifiers see homeownership in *Domaine Ventre* as a capital investment to be optimized while other residents prioritize the use value of neighbourhood resources.

Social inequalities between residents are also high in Housing Structure A, but the social segregation is less salient. The ground floor premises are used by an association for social mediation that elicited no complaints from tenants. Several residents were social workers or expressed progressive positions on social diversity issues. They were aware of the social distance with the less advantaged tenants, but interacted with them daily in an “urbanity of convenience” (Roncayolo, 1991). For instance, Amandine and Amélie helped their first-floor roommate Ashkan with his French and his dealings with government administrations. Above all, the 2018 evacuation was a brutal experience of housing vulnerability for all of Housing Structure A’s tenants. They united against their landlord to obtain the same guarantees for everyone, including those without a lease. They had meetings and created a mailing list to share information, which they summarized in easier French for non-native speakers. Young adults in temporarily insecure positions and structurally disadvantaged people formed a “community of interest” in response to their circumstances, based on their common status as renters in cheap, centrally located housing. In Housing Structure A, spatial proximity did not reduce social distance nor did it lead to segregation, although resident mobilization was temporary and instrumental and mainly relied on the social resources of the more educated tenants. It did not prevent social differences from taking over: one year after the evacuation, the former tenants’ residential careers differed clearly according to their unequal resources and social networks (Meyer, 2021).

## **Conclusion**

Using two case studies, this chapter shows that micro-scale social divisions in Marseille follow new fluid spatial patterns that vary from one apartment to the next, and one building to the next. These are typical features of “marginal gentrification” (Rose, 1984) processes that are reshaping many central arrival neighbourhoods in France and Europe. In such neighbourhoods (Bouillon et al, 2017), the density and heterogeneity of the urban fabric, the importance of *de facto* social housing, and the presence of informal local networks allow insecure, mobile and ethnically diverse residents to continue living there for a long time, despite urban renewal and social upgrading policies. The fluid patterns of micro-scale social divisions we described are also due to new social mixing policies such as ANAH agreements, based on public-private and state-municipal collaborations that have surged with the restructuring of welfare states in Europe. Finally, the chapter identifies two ways of managing proximity between socially distant groups living in the same residential structure. Urbanity of convenience occurs when residents share a community of interest over local issues rather than a common social position. It is facilitated in single-landlord buildings with only rental units, offering cheap central locations for temporarily insecure young middle-class residents and disadvantaged

working-class residents. In contrast, condominiums are opportune for gradual spontaneous gentrification built upon property investments, which produce marked micro-segregation between more affluent condo owners and other residents.

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