

# Strasbourg's Inclusive Policies for Migrants and the IBA Urban Developmental Paradigm

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# Abstract

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RUS 6: INCLUSIVE URBANISM

The issue of limiting motorized traffic can sometimes generate unexpected problems. For example, the city centre of Strasbourg is crossed by a major motorway, which is constantly congested and polluted. This source of irritation is now at the heart of debates on urban planning. The public authorities wish to transform the route into a boulevard as well as to develop surrounding areas. Currently, the numerous vacant spaces around the transport infrastructure are used by various associations, whose right of residency is relatively unsettled. An increasing number of small illegal settlements can also be found here as well as in adjacent neighbourhoods. While the city council is implementing inclusive policies towards migrants, how can these issues be translated locally into urban planning tools?

Strasbourg is an important transit point for migrants between France and Germany. Further, due to its border location, the city has always been an important hub for the exchange of ideas; in particular, new concepts of urban planning find fertile ground here. In order to transform the motorway, the public authorities intend to implement the German urban development tool known as the International Building Exhibition (German: Internationale Bauausstellung or IBA). In the following, we examine the IBAs of Hamburg and Berlin in order to try to identify good practices which could inspire French town planners and elected officials. This study is conducted through the prism of Henri Lefebvre's book *The Right to the City* (1968).

## KEYWORDS

IBA, Strasbourg, inclusive policies, migrants

## 1. Introduction

According to the Commission on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of the United Cities and Local Governments organization (*Towards a World of Inclusive Cities 2013*)<sup>1</sup>: “inclusion policies must guarantee universal access to basic services and the safeguarding of citizens’ rights; they must be oriented towards the transformation of the social reality as dictated by the values of equity, solidarity and respect for differences.” This organization defends the interests of local governments internationally by advancing a vision of urban development based on the principle of the *right to the city* while reconciling the “recognition of differences with the promotion of a coexistence based on common civic values.”<sup>2</sup> In France, this concept appeared almost 50 years ago when Henri Lefebvre, who taught sociology in Strasbourg from 1962 to 1965, published his book *Le droit à la ville* (1968). Today we are witnessing renewed interest in this work as the paradigm of the neo-liberal city asserts itself. Of course, the world has changed a great deal since the 1960s, and urban planning is no longer solely the business of powerful public authorities; yet many of the questions raised in this famous essay are still highly relevant. Indeed, some specialists such as Laurence Costes invite us to re-read this work. In an article published in 2010 in the journal *Espace et Sociétés* entitled “Le Droit à la ville de Henri Lefebvre: quel héritage politique et scientifique?”, she asserts that Lefebvre’s work delivers an anticipatory vision. Indeed, the great sociologist developed an analysis that has on occasion proved perfectly correct. Firstly, he rigorously asserted that socio-spatial segregation would increase and cities would experience the growth of marginalized sectors. Secondly, he expected that new urban projects, and especially public spaces, would increasingly reflect standardized and codified uses. To face these challenges, the French philosopher and sociologist argued in favour of three rights. The first is the *right to difference*, meaning that several populations with disparate social and geographical origins can cohabit within the same neighbourhoods. Their presence, which should not be questioned by others, will necessarily lead to the mutual recognition of groups and balanced participation in public debate. Secondly, all inhabitants should enjoy a right to centrality. This means that everyone, especially individuals from the most deprived groups, has equal access to places of social, professional and intellectual opportunity. Here the main objective is the emancipation rather than the homogenization of society as well as to ensure that no one is subject to alienation. Thirdly, the author argues that we must challenge the understanding of urban planning as a matter for specialists, elected officials and special interest groups. This implies a *right to participate* in the debate on

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1 United Cities and Local Governments (2013), *Towards a World of Inclusive Cities*, UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, p. 11.

2 *ibid.*

the future of cities, in parallel with the development of a science of the city. Everyone must be able to get involved in the future of the city. In his theory, the author considers this right to be inseparable from the two previous ones.

Situations of confinement can be observed if these principles are not respected: some inhabitants find themselves trapped not only in their local neighbourhood but also by their social condition. Such conditions have been exacerbated in recent years as European countries have faced an influx of migrants, particularly into urban areas. Reception facilities have been overwhelmed, and the necessary conditions for development and emancipation are rarely met. While some local and regional authorities have endeavoured to assert their own humanist values, their actions have at times been complicated or even countermanded by other political decisions. Through the study of a practical case of the exclusion of migrant populations in Strasbourg, we will try to understand elements of this phenomenon. Just what are the dynamics of evolution, the risks and opportunities that make the city more inclusive for its new and marginalized inhabitants?

On 25 March 2019, some fifty years after the publication of *The Right to the City*, the City Council of Strasbourg adopted a “Manifesto for a dignified reception of vulnerable migrants”. In so doing, this official seat of the European parliament wished to draw attention to an important issue. For the past few years, the city’s ambition has been to embody the role of a “capital for human rights”. The World Summit on Democracy is one of the spearheads of this ambition, reflecting the presence in the city of the European Court of Human Rights. Currently, the EU is facing major difficulties due to increased migratory pressures, exacerbated by the rise of far-right political parties. While some politicians seem to prefer to build walls, various cities leaders have affirmed their willingness to do the opposite. But just which concrete actions can be taken in the field of urban planning to realize these good intentions?

Today, there are a number of illegal migrant camps near the central motorway of the Strasbourg conurbation. In the medium term, it is planned to transform this transport route into a boulevard and to develop its surroundings into parks and new residential districts. Here, the important question is: How can we transform these marginalized sectors in an ethical and inclusive way? The municipal authorities are considering implementing project methods inspired by Germany’s tradition of IBAs (International Building Exhibitions). But how can this urban planning tool be aligned with the desire to function as a European capital of human rights? Further, to what extent and how can the local authorities draw inspiration from previous IBAs for their own needs? In the following, we first discuss the challenges and actions undertaken by the city of Strasbourg in its policies towards disadvantaged migrant populations. We then consider the extent to which the project to set up an international building exhibition questions initiatives in favour of an

inclusive city. Then we will try to identify which types of feedback (IBA Berlin and IBA Hamburg) could potentially be useful to Strasbourg. As the studied topic is at an early stage of development, we finally ask ourselves: what are the prospects for the city of Strasbourg?



**Figure 1.** Image on the walls of the so-called “city of human rights”; rue St-Michel (own picture)

## 2. Strasbourg: portrait of an ambition to realize inclusive policies for migrants in precarious situations

At first glance, Strasbourg can be considered a city with many assets. It is one of the administrative hubs of the European Union and is integrated into the famous urban corridor known as the “blue banana” megalopolis. Many positive indicators confirm a burgeoning local economy. In addition, it is one of the main French regions “for jobs created by foreign investment”. The university is also recognized as the “second in France for the attractiveness of foreign researchers and scientific publications.”<sup>3</sup> However, if we take a closer look, we see that this European capital is not free of the phenomena of exclusion. Indeed, an important issue is the marginalization of migrant populations.

<sup>3</sup> According to Eric Pilarczyk (2015), *Strasbourg, capitale européenne*, City of Strasbourg URL : <https://www.strasbourg.eu/documents/976405/1066267/0/2d9e9172-e58d-7564-ae0b-ba0d41718bff>

Located at the border to Germany, Strasbourg is a major entry point to France.<sup>4</sup> While there has always been a certain number of asylum seekers here, the metropolitan region saw a significant increase in the number of asylum applications in the period 2014–2018.<sup>5</sup> Some official figures show an increase from 1,800 per year to 4,000. Recent data for the metropolitan region of Strasbourg (Département du Bas-Rhin) showed nearly 3,462 refugees<sup>6</sup> being cared for by state services<sup>7</sup>, most often in hotels or emergency accommodation. It should be noted that the city is confronted with the growth in informal settlements and migrant squats on its territory. Two new sites arose in the 2019, one of which is a migrant camp for eastern Europeans located in the Cronembourg district (see Figure 2), where 190 people (including more than 60 children) found refuge in less than a month.<sup>8</sup> To relieve pressures on such sites, the state services carry out periodical evacuations. However, this is only possible if alternative accommodation is available. One such evacuation took place in October 2019<sup>9</sup>, after which the processing of asylum applications continued. In general, some people are escorted back to the border, while others are placed in detention centres before being evicted. For those who can stay, it is often the beginning of a long administrative process, and a succession of relocations. More recently, another phenomenon has appeared,

4 Before continuing, it is necessary to give a definition of the term “migrant”. According to the United Nations, this is “any person who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year, regardless of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, of the movement, and regardless of the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate.” (United Nations website <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/fr/d%C3%A9finitions>) There exist some particularities in the French case. While the government issues estimates of the number of people without a residency permit as well as the number of naturalized persons, it has been strictly prohibited since the end of the Second World War to gather statistics on the basis of ethnicity.

5 Figures provided by regional TV broadcaster FR3 on its website, Marie-Christine Lang, 02/10/2019, URL: <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/grand-est/bas-rhin/strasbourg-0/strasbourg-campements-migrants-se-multiplient-hebergement-urgence-ne-suit-pas-1731081.html>.

6 In 2019, the state allocated more than 23 million euros to help migrants; Communiqué de la préfecture du Bas-Rhin (22 /10/2019), *Strasbourg: le campement des Ducs d'Alsace démantelé, la préfecture promet des solutions adaptées à chaque personne*, DNA, URL : <https://www.dna.fr/actualite/2019/10/22/strasbourg-le-camp-des-ducs-d-alsace-a-nouveau-demantele>.

7 Alongside the different public services, there also exists: Direction départementale de la cohésion sociale (DDCS) and the Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration (OFII). The different roles are to “take care of the integration of migrants during the first 5 years of their stay in France. The OFII's other tasks include managing professional and family immigration procedures, managing the national reception system for asylum seekers, providing return and reintegration assistance as part of solidarity development, and combating illegal work.” OFII website URL : <http://www.ofii.fr/qui-sommes-nous/nos-missions>.

8 Marie-Christine Lang, *Strasbourg : les campements de migrants se multiplient, l'hébergement d'urgence ne suit pas*, FR3 Alsace, 02/10/2019, URL : <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/grand-est/bas-rhin/strasbourg-0/strasbourg-campements-migrants-se-multiplient-hebergement-urgence-ne-suit-pas-1731081.html>.

9 *ibid.* Communiqué de la préfecture du Bas-Rhin (22 /10/2019).

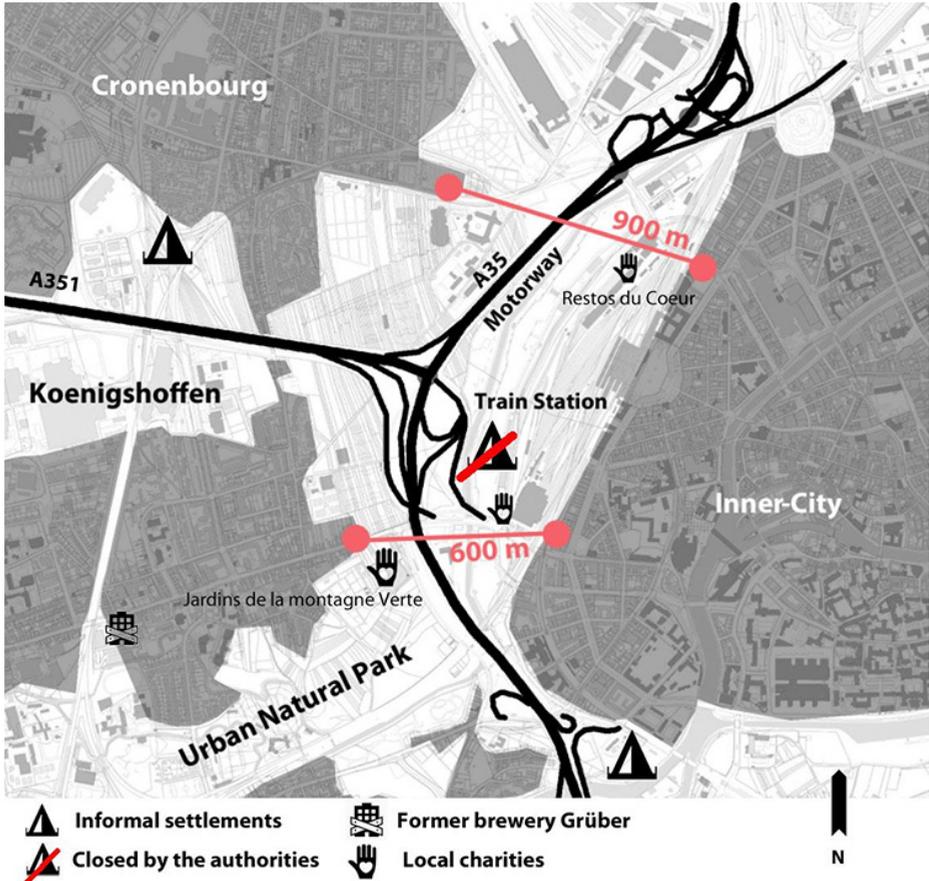
namely citizen's initiatives providing assistance to migrants. Activists have illegally occupied buildings (often abandoned for several years), thereby confronting the city authorities with the issue of squatting. For instance, we can mention a case study concerning the former Grüber breweries. After these buildings were purchased by the city to provide public services, construction work was delayed. In the Koenigshoffen district, a non-registered charity transformed one former brewery building into a reception centre that also provides some services.<sup>10</sup> The site, which offers accommodation to homeless people, is regularly targeted by racist slogans on the walls. In addition to the provision of public services, the city of Strasbourg is not passive in the face of these various challenges. Many NGOs and public institutions are working together to welcome and integrate migrant populations. For example, the university is helping to teach the French language in order to facilitate the immigration process. Nevertheless, the large number of partner structures is significant. For the city, the overall management of the migrant population is complex. It is necessary to coordinate many different activities. In order to try to improve the collaborative work of 36 different actors<sup>11</sup>, the municipality decided to implement a common charter of values and an action plan for public services. In addition to the passage of migratory flows, the city is also a place of settlement. In this regard, the municipality has decided to consolidate all its actions aimed at welcoming vulnerable migrant groups. When the Manifesto presented to the Strasbourg City Council in March 2019 was adopted, a number of points were discussed. The Charter is organized along several axes, including commitments to meet basic needs (food, housing and health) as well as to raise awareness among residents of the challenges of migration such as the dangers of illicit border crossing. The keyword of this strategy is social inclusion, which constitutes a major pillar of urban policy. According to the European Commission, social inclusion is a process "enabling people at risk of poverty and social exclusion to benefit from the opportunities and resources necessary to participate in economic and social life, enjoying a lifestyle considered normal in the society in which they live."<sup>12</sup> To achieve this objective, a series of concrete measures are being taken. In particular, the city is committed to ensuring that non-French speakers have a dedicated interpreter in order to promote access to legal assistance and food as well as to provide information on hygiene and health. Several actors are involved, for example *Médecins du Monde* and *Migrations Santé Alsace* for healthcare, the *Service Intégré d'Accueil et d'Orientation* for shelters and the *Cimade*, which provides legal assistance to foreign refugees. In addition, the city wishes to

10Hélène Janovec, (31/07/2019), *La vie s'organise au nouveau squat Gruber*, Rue 89 Strasbourg, URL: <https://www.rue89strasbourg.com/la-vie-sorganise-au-nouveau-squat-gruber-deja-complet-158391>.

11City of Strasbourg (March 2019), *Manifeste pour un accueil digne des migrants vulnérables Strasbourg, ville-hôpitalière*, p. 13.

12Idem. p. 7.

promote the social and professional inclusion of migrants (*Migreval* project) by offering university scholarships to young people without diplomas as well as to provide civic education. A further action is to implement measures to raise the general awareness among ordinary citizens of the problems faced by these vulnerable groups. Another interesting measure can be mentioned, namely a call for projects aimed at encouraging bottom-up initiatives. Here the term “bottom-up” implies that such initiatives are not implemented by public authorities. Projects can be eligible to receive funds of up to 50,000 euros.<sup>13</sup> Particular measures are, for example, a project to improve refugee accommodation with the support of associative actors and hosted by a landlord.



**Figure 2.** Around the motorways, i.e. between the city centre and district of Koenigshoffen, important vacant spaces are served by a “charity cluster” composed of a network of associative structures (own map).

<sup>13</sup>City of Strasbourg, DIAIR, (2019), *Appel à projets “Mobilisation citoyenne pour valoriser la place des personnes bénéficiaires d’une protection internationale dans la Ville de Strasbourg”*, p. 5.

In a similar vein, the city wishes to promote volunteer work by Strasbourg residents. A further aspect is the implementation of inclusive measures to encourage professional, artistic and sporting encounters between residents and refugees. As this process is recent, there is as yet no assessment on the efficiency of the realized actions. However, in the following we will try to understand how these could influence other areas of public action. As an example, we take planning processes for urban projects. The actions taken by the city of Strasbourg are commendable in creating a welcoming city for migrants. However, it must be understood that the question of Lefebvre's *right to the city* goes further.<sup>14</sup> It is not just about organizing calls for projects and public consultations; fundamental is also the ability of the most vulnerable people to grasp the issues at stake in the public debate. We will investigate the phenomena of marginalization near Strasbourg city centre and determine which potential resources and non-governmental actors could provide a basis for an inclusive strategy aimed at integrating migrants.

### 3. The surroundings of the urban motorways: areas of marginalization or of opportunity?

In addition to discussing the policies carried out by the city authorities, it is first necessary to comprehend the location of migrant camps and squats as well as the places where the homeless gather, all of which are located near Strasbourg's various urban motorways (see Figure 2). These sectors and surrounding neighbourhoods host a large number of migrants, both legally and illegally. Due to its status as a border city (formerly surrounded by medieval ramparts), many interstitial zones long remained unbuildable in Strasbourg. A series of motorways was built in these vacant spaces from the 1960s onwards. In addition to creating a physical barrier between inner-city neighbourhoods, these developments generated many residual spaces in the immediate vicinity of the city centre. According to researcher Catherine Sélimonovski, such transport routes are markers of exclusion. In an article entitled *La frontière de la pauvreté à Strasbourg*<sup>15</sup> published in 2004, the geographer already highlighted the significant income disparities between residents in the core urban area and those in peripheral sectors. In particular, it is possible to superimpose the location of the previous fortifications (replaced by the A35) onto maps showing differences in income and access to jobs. Lower-class districts close to the transport infrastructure are "landlocked" and suffer high levels of pollution. However, the existence of such residual spaces also brings some benefits. Specifically, they constitute resources for a more inclusive city, encour-

<sup>14</sup>Note that while migrants were certainly not central to the demands in the 1960s when Lefebvre formulated his thesis, today they can be assimilated to vulnerable populations.

<sup>15</sup>Sélimonovski C. (December 2004), *La frontière de la pauvreté à Strasbourg* (The border of poverty in Strasbourg). In: *Bulletin de l'Association de géographes français*, 81e année. Les frontières dans la ville / Problématique urbaine en Suisse, sous la direction de Jean-Luc Piermay et Rita Schneider-Sliwa. pp. 498-508, DOI : <https://doi.org/10.3406/bagf.2004.241>

aging local charities to settle due to the practical location near the inner-city. The most attractive feature, however, is the low rents of these public plots of land (mostly owned by municipality). Here we can find charitable restaurants (such as *Resto du Cœur*) as well as housing for the homeless. Another important example is the urban agricultural association *Jardins de la Montagne Verte*, which employs people who are marginalized and excluded from the labour market; these are often migrants, hired for the market gardening of organic fruit and vegetables in the city as well as for canning and carpentry. Over one decade, around 1,800 people have benefited from an integration contract.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the financial situation of such associations is not easy: in 2010 a major social movement (of about 1,000 to 1,500 people) expressed dissatisfaction with the decline in state subsidies<sup>17</sup>; many members of local associations were present. For the past few years the situation has changed. In particular, there is now a general appreciation of the need to transform the motorways in order to reduce the level of pollution and traffic as well as to bridge the gaps between the various districts of the Alsatian metropolis. Every day 160,000 vehicles cross the city via the motorway system.<sup>18</sup> Because of frequent urban congestion, the metropolitan council members wish to reduce the traffic load by turning the motorway into a metropolitan boulevard.<sup>19</sup> Beyond the problems of pollution and traffic jams, the A35 acts as a barrier between the different parts of the urban settlement. One possible (negative) repercussion of improving living conditions in those sectors would be to encourage the process of gentrification. Will the poor inhabitants of these neighbourhoods, especially the homeless and migrants, be chased away by rising land prices? Such transformative processes could potentially have huge impacts on such areas of the city. The main question is to determine whether associations can continue their work to integrate people suffering exclusion. The sale of their premises, which are very close to the city centre, could potentially offset the cost of infrastructure transformation. Clearly, this important aspect should not be ignored in the inclusive policies already drawn up by local decision-makers. While this project is still in the exploratory phase (and

16Poure, C. Ruiz Suri, V. Biehler, C. (29/06/2013), *Les Jardins de la Montagne Verte : 10 ans au service de l'insertion*, FR3 Alsace, <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/grand-est/2013/06/29/10-ans-de-reinsertion-aux-jardins-de-la-montagne-verte-279621.html>.

17W. p (01/12/10), *Des chantiers d'insertion échaudés par le gel des aides*, 20 Minutes.

18The expressways are twenty minutes' walk from the cathedral spire. Website of the local newspaper [www.dna.fr](http://www.dna.fr), 1 March 2013, URL: <https://www.dna.fr/economie/2013/03/01/l-a-35-a-strasbourg-160-000-vehicules-par-jour-10-de-poids-lourds>.

19The main topic of this initiative is to turn Strasbourg's main motorway, the A35, into a boulevard. This project aims to reduce the level of fine particles in the atmosphere, which is substantial in the city and its periphery due to the large flow of trucks crossing Alsace every day. Following the construction of a controversial road bypass, the municipality also intends to explore other ways of reducing the flow of private traffic. As the project is very complex, it will be subject to widespread consultation with all the stakeholders.

in any case will only be implemented after the 2020 elections), it is timely to investigate the implications for specific areas in the metropolis.



**Figure 3.** Areas near the motorway that formerly hosted illegal camps are now fenced off to prevent new settlements (own picture).

#### 4. An IBA to transform the motorways and their surroundings?

It is important to consider which methods the city will use to transform the transport infrastructure and surrounding areas. In 2017 a budget of nearly 204,350 euros was approved<sup>20</sup> to finance a study on the accompanying measures required to transform the A35 into a boulevard. According to the city council's decision of 3 March 2017, the purpose of this urban development study is to "reflect on the proposed project to transform this infrastructure in order to facilitate its urban integration and limit its disturbance in terms of noise and pollution." This financial commitment also officially marks the launch of a period of reflection on the opportunity to implement a multi-year urban process inspired by Germany's IBAs (International BauAusstellung). Widely known in Germany, the urban development tool of the IBA has drawn attention around the world. As town planning practitioners around the country face calls for change, Strasbourg is not the only French city to be inter-

<sup>20</sup>Budget agreed by the *Deliberation at the Eurometropole Council* held in Strasbourg on 3 March 2017; the sum includes an expected 50% subsidy from the national government.

ested in establishing an IBA. In the context of decentralization, some local authorities have been inspired by federal countries such as Germany to set in motion a reform agenda aimed at fostering sustainable development. For example, the DGALN<sup>21</sup> set up the EcoCités programme (originally a government initiative that arose within the “Grenelle de l’environnement” multi-party debate). Here the aim was to promote and subsidize the implementation of sustainable development strategies in French urban areas by setting up exemplary ecodistrict projects. While these initiatives are still mostly ecological projects, a social dimension is not excluded. According to the urban planner Bruno Yvin, we can go further and “draw a parallel with the German International Building Exhibition (IBA), which is also an instrument for financing innovative projects within a strategic framework similar to that of EcoCités.”<sup>22</sup>

It should be said that this idea of setting up an IBA is not completely new. At least a decade ago the idea of a potential implementation became increasingly attractive for some urban planning theorists and practitioners. One of the first articles on this topic was published during international consultations for the major development project *Le Grand Paris* (Lecroart, Palisse & Beltrando 2009).<sup>23</sup> The limited time for action was particularly highlighted. Furthermore, the authors extolled the idea of coordinating diverse projects driven by the same philosophy. In their report, the urban planners also mentioned that it would help French cities to stimulate their local dynamic forces. The aim is to build, step by step, a vision of the city’s future that could be shared with a wide group of political decision-makers. On the one hand, the timelimited steering structure may be viewed as a guarantee of independence from the usual structures of urban planning. IBAs can ensure a kind of “escape from monotony” (in German: *Flucht aus dem Alltag*) by avoiding conventional ways of conducting town planning. The call for proposals for an IBA is the perfect opportunity to set up an independent office to oversee the entire process of selecting, qualifying and supporting projects from the original idea through to implementation. It is expected that this will also generate innovative and creative solutions by means of, for example, forums, safety audits and urban planning workshops. In addition, this process can enable and support horizontal management for the city. Indeed, decision-making in most IBAs is run collectively with actors and research planners from other countries or regions. This guarantees a certain neutrality for arbitrations. Moreover, the executive staff of the IBA office can play a mediating role between the different actors to help ensure better coordination between institutional

21The (National) Directorate of Housing, Town Planning and Landscapes. There is a partnership with the German Ministry of Construction to promote the exchange of experience and the tool of the IBA.

22EcoCité official website (July 2018), *Préfiguration d’une approche IBA pour les EcoCité*; retrieved from URL: <http://www.ecocites.logement.gouv.fr/prefiguration-d-une-approche-iba-pour-les-ecocites-a171.html>

23Lecroart, P. Palisse J-P. Beltrando, Y. (July 2009), *Initier des projets métropolitains: l’IBA, une pratique féconde*, Note rapide, n° 478, IAU îdF.

structures and citizen associations. This can prove highly beneficial by taking account of broader themes such as urban planning, art, architecture, the environment, the economy, and social concerns.

To conclude this point, we can ask: What are the opportunities and good practices that could be implemented in this territory? What strategies could be put in place to strengthen the city's action on inclusive policies? In the case of Strasbourg, the initiative to transform the motorway presents challenges to the provision of services for vulnerable migrant populations. To better understand these challenges, we will attempt a forward-looking comparison. As the project of implementing an IBA in Strasbourg is still at the study stage, there are no concrete results to fall back on; rather, we must consider whether the choice of method could potentially bring added value to existing processes. So just what are the good practices that could inspire Strasbourg? What can we learn from Germany?

#### **5. Learning from Germany: what are the good practices for an inclusive city project in Strasbourg?**

In his book *Le droit à la ville* (1968), Lefebvre claimed that the proletariat would become engaged in urban planning issues and challenge the principles of territorial segregation. Yet, according to Laurence Costes (2010), social demands have subsequently been more concerned with the employment conditions of the working classes, such as expressed during the protests of May 1968. Nevertheless, many social experiments emerged in the decades that followed. The processes implemented in West Berlin from 1979 to 1987 in the framework of an IBA are of particular interest due to the scale of the intervention, the number of implemented measures and the large group of actors involved.

For a better understanding, let us consider the origin of these multiyear urban development processes. The very first IBA was launched in the city of Darmstadt back in 1901. While these innovative urban renewal projects were for many years restricted to Germany, today they are gaining popularity elsewhere; for example, there have been IBAs in countries such as Austria (Vienna), Switzerland (Basel) and the Netherlands (Maastricht). More than an architecture biennale, the IBA is truly a tool for cities and regional authorities to promote and experiment with new kinds of architectural and urban design.

The workings of an IBA are interesting because everyone involved develops their own strategies and ways of sourcing funding. Every management strategy, site selection process and implementation process is unique. Some piloting structures for IBAs are run by associations, for example in Basel; in Hamburg and in the Ruhr, on the other hand, we find a public Urban Development Company (GmbH). In the first case, an assistance and consulting structure for project management helps to raise funds for the implementation of

architectural projects as well as to suggest potential partnerships; in the latter, an urban developer is directly (and financially) involved in the process. These differences are not driven by chance. Rather, the working methodology is set by a precise political agenda. The main idea is not to *replace* existing planning structures but to make them work *more efficiently*. Most importantly, decision-makers should be inspired to imagine more suitable governance structures and tools to transform urban development. When cities or shareholders in metropolitan regions choose to declare themselves initiators of an IBA, the underlying motivation may be to increase their prestige. Indeed, there is currently a fad surrounding this kind of process, which can be viewed as a form of marketing. The risk here is of making IBAs less substantive and innovative.

It must be noted that IBAs have evolved a great deal over the course of the past century and, in particular, since the West Berlin IBA that concluded in 1987. During this exhibition, important debates were conducted by planners about the right way to rebuild a city still suffering from the devastation of WWII and reeling under the impact of the Berlin Wall. It is sometimes forgotten how critical the situation was in West Berlin at the end of the 1970s. Due to its physical isolation and a lack of investment, many homes were dilapidated and even abandoned by their owners. In fact, marginalized inhabitants, particularly Turkish migrants, had illegally occupied squats in Kreuzberg; they risked losing everything if their homes were destroyed. Facing a lack of resources, the city urgently sought solutions. An innovative strategy was developed under the leadership of the Berlin architect and urban planner Hardt-Walther Hämer. In parallel with more traditional forms of reconstruction, the principles of “soft urban planning” were formulated (Elodie Vittu 2005).<sup>24</sup> These aimed to keep residents in their own flats by developing forms of funding to allow them to restore their homes. It is interesting to note that a number of tools implemented in the 1980s as part of the *IBA Altbau* are still useful today. In particular, we can mention 12 principles of a “soft urban renewal” that were adopted by the West Berlin Senate in 1983. Some of these could be usefully introduced as amendments to the provisions of the Strasbourg Charter to help foster an open city. Two principles are of particular note. The first is that decisions concerning urban renewal in West Berlin were drawn up within the framework of a procedure open to inhabitants, including informal settlers. And secondly, there was a recognized right to housing as well as efforts to encourage alternative forms of habitation and co-living. Some other principles such as the definition of transformation and relocation schedules are also interesting. Perhaps the most striking element in the IBA is its mediating role between public authorities, owners and illegal occupants.

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<sup>24</sup>Vittu, E. (2005), *L'aménagement d'une place en zone de réhabilitation „Helmholtzplatz“, une place pour tous?* IFU, DESS Urbanisme et Aménagement, p 60.

Of course, the situation is somewhat different in the city of Strasbourg. Here the number of illegal occupants and squatters is lower than in West Berlin of the 1980s. Many homeless people and migrants<sup>25</sup> are already taken care of by various public agencies and private associations in a “charity cluster” (see Figure 2). Nevertheless, as we have already seen, some actors feel threatened by the motorway project. The objective must be to avoid stressful situations with regard to deadlines and hazardous relocations, as these could disrupt structures fostering the inclusion of migrants. In this case it would be helpful if a neutral structure were established in Strasbourg to play a mediating role. Marginalization is not only a question of material resources but also temporal indecision. An uncertain future is a source of anxiety. In this respect, it would be advisable, before launching the IBA, to involve local charities as well as residents in discussions.



**Figure 4.** A joke on a billboard: “From the motorway to the boulevard metropolitan nightmare” (own photograph).

The more recent IBA held in Hamburg between 2006 and 2013 is also an instructive example of the renovation of a marginalized housing area in a highly cosmopolitan city. This German city initiated collaborative efforts with inhabitants while also making use of studies by local historians. A set of recommendations was produced as a framework for the launch of urban planning and architecture competitions.<sup>26</sup> Despite these efforts, however, the

<sup>25</sup>Reminder: 3,000 people in the whole city.

<sup>26</sup>Lecroart, P. (October 2011) *IBA Hamburg 2013: cinquante projets pour fabriquer la métropole*, Note rapide N° 578, IAU IdF.

project did not always succeed in achieving unanimity. The protest campaign *IBA? nigs da!* was partly successful in mobilizing various inhabitants.<sup>27</sup> In particular, activists highlighted the risk of gentrification due to new green buildings constructed for the elite.

As we saw, Strasbourg is caught between contradictory aims, namely the wish to transform the motorway area vs. local policies concerning migrants. The decommissioning of the motorway calls into question the proximity of marginalized groups and local structures that assist them in the city centre. This can be viewed as a stumbling block to Lefebvre's theory, which claims the *right to centrality*. However, it has to be pointed out that these are not irreconcilable challenges in terms of territorial foresight and respect for commitments to creating a welcoming city for migrants. The possibility of setting up an IBA like that of Berlin in the 1980s allows us to imagine the creation of a flexible "space for action". One of the other lessons from the IBA Berlin is to understand the importance of the *right to difference*. Indeed, the work conducted in the western part of the formerly divided German capital is highly relevant. For Strasbourg, the particular aim is to give voice to associations that help the inclusion of migrants and enable them to express their point of view in future challenges for urban planning.

Further, in his book *The Right to the City*, Lefebvre also argued for the implementation of a "science of the city" to encourage public and democratic debate on settlement development. Departing from classical planning tools, the IBA-facilitated urban planning can create the right conditions for experimentation and debate. Similarly, the use of scientific committees to accompany the process can be a useful initiative. But the question remains: Will the Strasbourg conurbation be able to seize this opportunity?

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<sup>27</sup>Schirg O. (16.6.2013) *Gentrifizierungsdebatte: Wilhelmsburg als Vorbild?* Hamburger Abendblatt.

## 6. Conclusion

Between Strasbourg's city centre and its neighbourhoods to the west, railways tracks and motorways constitute a major barrier: they divide the city. The planned decommissioning of the motorway can be seen as an opportunity to develop a strategy for a more welcoming environment for migrants. At the same time, the metropolitan area of Strasbourg faces great challenges in terms of transportation and inclusion issues. Here it is necessary to innovate and take control of one's destiny. The city must experiment in new ways of conducting urbanism. The IBA in Strasbourg would provide a chance to explore issues of the *right to the city* and help to integrate actors who are often voiceless in the design processes of urban projects. In particular, certain practices should be adopted across sectors to address various social issues. The German methodology seems promising because it apparently facilitates ambitious projects while ensuring better coordination of diverse site-based policies. Furthermore, the "event strategy" of the IBA fosters experimental approaches outside the usual framework of urban planning, revealing solutions to new problems for which conventional tools are ineffective. Strasbourg's charter for the reception of migrants could also be strengthened through the inspiration of an IBA. Clearly, a major highway transformation project raises questions about the inclusive city. Although the implementation process of the IBA Strasbourg has been launched, it is still at a preliminary stage. For this reason, little empirical data is as yet available for analysis.

While an IBA can bring innovative problem-solving to daily working routines, it seems that this tool may be less formalized and rigid in its application in France compared to previous instances. But will it be possible for urban-planning practitioners to extricate themselves from administrative burdens and stimulate local initiatives in an exemplary way? Do the principles of "event strategies", labelling and limited time approaches imply a more participatory and creative output than traditional methods? The IBA will be considered a success insofar as it constitutes more than just a marketing ploy. However, we must view the current popularity of this tool with a healthy degree of scepticism. As an aid to urban planning, it still has to prove its usefulness in resolving the planning challenges of Strasbourg. Certainly, the IBA must be reconciled with the city's strategies of inclusion, which are not only vital for the interest of the community but also to promote the image and reputation of this so-called "European capital of human rights".

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