Pascale Cohen-Avenel,
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(eds.)

Whose Space is it Anyway?

Place Branding and the Politics of Representation

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This volume examines the potentially deleterious impact of place branding on the social fabric, ecosystems and local economies of the places concerned. As the different essays show, place branding is a fundamentally political practice, often driven by hidden agendas that marginalize certain groups within society. Contributors explore place branding from a wide variety of angles, including: the role played by the visual arts in city branding; the applied arts, and specifically the fashion industry's potential for shaping perceptions of a particular place; the different ways in which sport has been exploited by the political elites; the role of design in place branding, including the architectural design of sports stadia; and the potentially insidious economic and societal consequences of excessive consumption of branded places.

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Whose Space is it Anyway?

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In collaboration with the CRPM (Centre de Recherches Pluridisciplinaires Multilingues) of the University of Paris Nanterre, the "Travaux Interdisciplinaires et Plurilingues" series aims to promote interdisciplinary and plurilingual research. It welcomes works which contribute to the understanding of cultural, national and transnational imaginaries, in their historical, political, translational and media dimensions.

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Summary

Introduction

Whose Space Is It Anyway? Place Branding: Past, Present, Future

Pascale Cohen-Avenel & Graham H. Roberts

'[W]hen we reject the single story,
when we realize that there is never a single story
about any place,
we regain a kind of paradise.'

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

The eponymous hero of Douglas Stuart's recent novel *Young Mungo* is a gay, working-class, Protestant teenager growing up in the fiercely sectarian Scottish city of Glasgow in the early 1990s. At one point in the novel, the narrator describes the profound contempt felt by Mungo's older brother Hamish towards the English students living in the city. The narrative continues (Stuart 2022: 191–92):

> Yet to Hamish, the worst of them were not the English. The worst were the chinless lambswool milksops from the West End or Perth or Edinburgh. These Scots spoke the Queen's English with a snooty clarity that would embarrass even Etonians. […] Middle-class Glaswegians were the worst; they had no loyalty, when it suited them they draped the city about themselves like a trendy jacket, but they knew none of its chill, none of its need. These Glaswegians were acceptably foreign and endlessly entertaining to the English. Their das were not being put out of work on the Clyde or pulling slag from the coalfaces in Cardowan. Their daddies were catching the commuter flight down to London and eating smoked Scottish salmon at business lunches in Canary Wharf. They preferred to take their oatcakes with French pâté and drank uisge beatha by the glass, not by the bottle. Hamish took one look at them and knew he hated them.

In Hamish's mind, there is a very sharp divide between those with a legitimate claim to move freely within Glasgow's urban space, and those

with no such claim. This divide cuts across the city itself. This is especially clear in the bloody street fighting he organises between his own, Protestant, gang and a group of young Catholics living on a neighbouring housing estate. The violence these rival gangs mete out to each other is driven by a particular worldview. As such, it is eloquent testimony to the way in which public space, and more specifically the policing of that space, is bound up with questions of identity – both individual, and collective.

The brutality with which Hamish and his acolytes seek to impose their own specific worldview calls to mind recent events in Iran. On 16 September 2022 the young Iranian woman Mahsa Amini died in police custody after being arrested in Tehran for the way she was wearing her hijab (Rana 2022). At the time of writing – December 2022 – protests sparked by her death are continuing across the country (Wintour 2022). Many of those protests have involved women reclaiming the kind of access to public space that has been denied to them by Iran's Islamic regime for decades (Agence France Presse 2022).

Deciding who should, and who should not, gain access to public space raises a whole raft of ethical questions. More importantly – at least for our purposes here – that decision process may be intricately bound up with how a given place sees itself, and how it wishes to be seen by the outside world. An excellent example of this is Qatar, a country which at the time of writing is hosting the 2022 Football World Cup. This sporting event is the latest in a long series of branding initiatives undertaken by the Qatari regime (see for example Knott 2022). In this respect it appears to have been highly successful (Meryn 2022). At the heart of this initiative, however, lies a contradiction: if (wealthy) foreign fans have been given free access to public space in Qatar, the same freedom has been denied to groups such as (poor) foreign workers, and members of the LGBT+ community within Qatar itself (see for example Boycott Qatar 2022, and Moss and Parry 2022).

As this last example suggests, place branding is inherently political. This is because it discriminates in the way it presents, represents and indeed allocates one resource in particular, namely public space. But just whose space are we talking about? Our approach to that question is avowedly multidisciplinary. This is because the very raison d'être of the CRPM (Centre de Recherches Pluridisciplinaires Multilingues), our research centre at Paris Nanterre University (as indeed of Peter Lang's TRIP series), is to foster dialogue, not just between researchers studying

different parts of the world, but also between academic disciplines as diverse as linguistics, sociology, anthropology, geography and marketing. In our own research we have explored identity politics in a range of areas, including corporate branding, fashion, dance, universal exhibitions, and the satirical press. The main aim of the present volume is to bring together researchers working – each from their own perspective – on this particular aspect of place branding. In doing so, this collection of essays contributes to the broader research undertaken within the CRPM on space – more specifically on the representation of both local and global space in today's hyper-connected world.

The two chapters in section one, 'Imagining Space', examine the role the visual arts can play in helping to (re)shape public perception of a given place. First, contemporary artist Heidi Wood describes the art project she recently led with students from a school in the underprivileged French *département* of Seine-Saint-Denis, north of Paris. As she shows, this project was designed to counter negative representations of the area in the French media. This is followed by a chapter in which Tania Rossetto and Giada Peterle explore what they call 'the spectacularisation of urban diversity'. In particular, they focus on the representation of Milan's Chinatown in Italian graphic novels. As they show, these novels challenge clichés both about Chinese immigrants in Italy, and about the city of Milan itself. The next section, '(Re)fashioning space', contains a chapter on contemporary Mongolian fashion by Natascha and Babette Radclyffe-Thomas. They discuss the Mongolian influences of British-based sustainable luxury fashion brand Tengri. In their close and sensitive analysis, they show how Tengri actively contributes, not just to the international reputation of Mongolia, but to the country's sustainable development. Section three, 'Displaying space', contains chapters on the role of sport in place branding. In a chapter which will resonate with today's Qatar-watchers, Lukas Aubin discusses the way sport has been exploited by local authorities in the Russian city of Kazan. This is followed by an exploration by Bernard Cros of the importance of rugby for post-apartheid South Africa's image. As Cros points out, the sport has played a crucial role in the recent construction of what he calls 'an inclusive collective memory' at home, and the country's nation-branding efforts abroad. Next, Yéléna Mac-Glandières' contribution focuses on the importance for post-Soviet Azerbaijan's nation-branding initiatives of key architectural and infrastructure projects. What she calls the 'narrations of logistics' are central to geopolitical discourses in the region.

The final two chapters focus on the way branded places are not just represented, but actually consumed. Akbar Keshodkar examines the deleterious impact of mass tourism on the local residents of the rural coastal community of Newport, in the US state of Oregon. Finally, Joy Logan discusses the contemporary re-imagining of Mendoza, Argentina's major wine-producing region. Logan highlights the threat to Mendoza's traditional identity posed by government plans to extend fracking in the region. As she shows, the debate this has sparked between policy makers in Buenos Aires on the one hand, and locally based environmental activists on the other, reflects diametrically opposed views of the region's very identity.

Our volume is rounded off with an Afterword by Nadia Kaneva which looks at the future of place branding. One forthcoming challenge for brand managers will undoubtedly be the economic fallout from COVID-19. The pandemic has already had a major impact on place brands across the planet (see for example Skinner 2021). As Kalemba (2022) has argued, cities, regions and countries will now have to rethink not just their branding strategies, but what it actually means to be a place brand in a post-COVID world. If the current volume can contribute to that process, then it will have achieved one of its major objectives.

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Imagining Space

From Drancy to Alentour: A Symbolic Metamorphosis. From Disadvantaged Suburb to UNESCO World Heritage Candidate

Heidi Wood

Residential inequality is a fact of life. If, a century or two ago, winds bearing industrial odours made some areas less desirable for settlement, there is a good chance that the disadvantage remains today, incarnated in the architecture, the socio-economic profile of residents and often, the quality of public services offered. In France, a range of strategies are employed to alleviate the social determinism of living in zones characterised by post-war social housing projects, high unemployment and social unrest. As the ills of these suburbs are unanimously linked to middle class flight in the 1970s, reintroducing social diversity is seen as a key to development. Clearly, isolated areas need to be linked to public transport networks to allow residents access to employment and struggling schools need to be allocated special means. As a complement to these essential investments, my project tackles the issue of self-perpetuating urban disadvantage on a symbolic level. Can a shift in the way residents see their environment modify the way they see themselves and their prospects? Is imagining a needy periphery as a prosperous centre an effective step towards making it a reality?

In November 2019, I won a competition to create a public art project for the new middle school (*collège*) in Drancy, situated in Seine-Saint-Denis, the poorest *département* in mainland France. My proposal was an extension of ten years of art projects concerned with the media representation of suburbia in France as a force for stigmatising the inhabitants of disadvantaged zones and reinforcing their social immobility. It was also grounded in more recent research into heritage as a means of generating a sense of shared identity and boosting tourism. The artworks produced for the school's walls – mine and theirs – were to be based on

a story. We would imagine a new and better city called *Alentour* (which translates as *Surrounding*). Alentour would have the school as its centre and flexible, inclusive borders to accommodate all aspects of their lives. It would replace the three towns (Drancy, La Courneuve and Bobigny) from which the school's population was drawn. Once mapped, we would identify its tangible and intangible qualities and put together an application to have it classified as a UNESCO World Heritage site. In this project I played the role of an outsider with a positive view of their neigbourhood, curious to know more. It was also as an outsider that I inadvertently raised the issue of secularism in schools.

The funding context

The Alentour project was funded as part of the *1 % artistique* programme, a legal obligation in France since 1951 for funding bodies of public buildings to commission a contemporary art project corresponding to 1 % of the cost of construction after the subtraction of various expenses.

Morton Salling, Seine-Saint-Denis' head of public art, describes the *1 % artistique* programme as meeting two objectives: Exhibiting art in the urban environment is an effective way of both bringing contemporary culture to new audiences and providing financial aid to emerging and established visual artists (Salling). The cultural benefits for inhabitants are accompanied by financial benefits to specific artists, which irrigate the cultural ecosystem as a whole.

Inhabitants and heritage

Seine-Saint Denis is the poorest *département* in mainland France. 29 % of its 1.6 million inhabitants live under the poverty line (compared with 14 % nationally) and 39 % live in 'priority neighbourhoods' (Morin). In 2017, INSEE statistics put the unemployment rate of 15–64 year-olds in Drancy at 20,3 %, in La Courneuve at 26 % and in Bobigny at 24,1 % compared to 13,9 % nationally (INSEE).

In 2003, the Seine-Saint-Denis Heritage Department put together a heritage inventory of Drancy, which is available online (Patrimoine n.d.). Most of the heritage listed is modest: two-storey corner houses; all the schools; war memorials; some of its social housing; industrial and

railroad buildings. There is also a castle from the late 19th century containing an art centre and surrounded by a park.

Drancy contains one site that was classified as a historical monument in 2001[1]. It is the Cité de la Muette, built in 1932 by architects Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods. The first collective social housing project in Ile-de-France was recognized as a 'major 20th century architectural and town planning achievement […] and also because of its use during the Second World War, first as an internment camp, then as an assembly camp before deportation, which today gives it a significant place in national history.' The only piece of heritage recognised beyond the *département* is thus a transit zone to Nazi concentration camps. Its concomitant claim to host the first skyscrapers in the Paris area (the two towers have since been demolished) is unlikely to incite pride in local residents due to a well-documented phenomenon: in France, social housing has always been at the cutting edge of architectural experiments and those who live in social housing 'reject innovation when it applies to their domestic environment' (Lahmini) (see Figures 1, 2 and 3: Photographs taken of the neighbourhood around Collège Aretha Franklin, Drancy, in 2019)[2].

The open call

The call for applications for the 1 % art project for the new Aretha Franklin middle school in Drancy was presented in these terms (extract):

> The school is situated in a historically dense transport network (rail and road) that is to become part of the Greater Paris urban master plan. The art project could be inspired by this particular heritage using forms that evoke 'networks', 'flows' or 'circuits', which are also characteristic of the vocabulary of new technologies, and could thus appear in several areas of the school. The artwork could also be in the form of a sign placed in the forecourt, which, like a public square, would create an outlook connecting not only the old and new neighbourhoods, that of the school, but also the two municipalities of La Courneuve and Drancy.

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[1]   There are 45,684 protected *monuments historiques* in France. <https://data.culture. gouv.fr/explore/dataset/liste-des-immeubles-proteges-au-titre-des-monuments-hist oriques/information/> Consulted 28/2/2021.

[2]   This and all subsequent illustrations can be found at the end of the chapter.

There were other pointers: 'The municipality asks that the project take into consideration the history of the neighbourhood and its settlement by railway workers, as well as its great social diversity.' The building is designed so as to 'provide a very protected learning environment in a context exposed to disturbances (railway lines, freeways, trucking depots)' and as a 'cocoon for the students'.

Genesis of the proposal

In the initial phase of candidature, I offered to symbolically re-establish a passage between the two separate worlds of the 'cocoon' and the city. Once I was short-listed along with two other artists, I began a study of the school's surroundings. To start with, I intended to bring the city into the school by representing it at its best in a series of polyptychs for the corridors. During my long walks, I was impressed by the monumentality of the rail network and the shunting yard (the presence of which is contested by some inhabitants due to the presence of toxic waste in some of the wagons stationed there). I also intended to highlight the neighbourhood's most generic features: cars parked in front of houses, roads, post-war social housing projects… I took photographs, which allowed me to create different types of visuals: pictograms, photographic silhouettes, collages made with strips of black tape and graphic representations of the façades of housing projects. These were the elements of the polyptychs that would occupy the 1.2-metre strip of wall space between the beige tiles and the ceiling in the corridors of the first and second floors. There would be a colour code for each floor, chosen to complement the colours already there (Figure 4: polyptych 1st floor and figure 5: polyptych 2nd floor, polyptychs based on a study of the school neighbourhood. Elements of the winning proposal, 2019).

This part of my proposal was based on experience acquired during ten years of art projects devoted to an alternative representation of French suburbs. As an Australian, the association in the French mind of suburbia (*banlieues*) and burning cars has always struck me as strange as well as inaccurate. Ignoring the social diversity of French suburbanites, media representations, as well as the government's urban policy (*politique de la ville*)[3] focus on a minority of zones that concentrate high unemployment, poverty and urban violence. They are also most often characterized by

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[3]   The homepage of the government website **cohesion-territoires.fr** presents its *politique de la ville* in these terms: In order to mitigate social and urban inequalities,

the presence of post-war social housing projects and middle-class flight dating back to the 1970s.

Without denying the reality of the disadvantage concentrated in some regions (such as Seine-Saint-Denis, just north of Paris), I have long sought to rehabilitate the utopian impulse behind collective social housing (disassociating income and a right to decent lodgings), which is now widely seen as the root of all social malfunction. My work, in a range of forms, also juxtaposed the façades of these stigmatized zones with evocations of domestic life, presenting them as 'Settings for an Ordinary Life' to quote the title of one of my exhibitions.

Just prior to compiling my application, I had written a Swift-inspired modest proposal exploring the possibility of taking the opposite approach. Rather than producing deliberately domesticated representations that corresponded to a middle-class Australian definition of suburbia, I imagined highlighting so-called priority neighbourhoods' scariest aspects (i.e. reinforcing the work traditionally undertaken by the media). My ironic hypothesis was that economic development would result. My essay suggested that the notoriety of disadvantaged French suburbs could be exacerbated to generate a niche tourist market much like that of Chernobyl, whose popularity had gone through the roof following the international distribution of an American series of the same name. In weighing up the various implications, I ultimately concluded that a UNESCO heritage listing would be more respectful of local inhabitants than a promotion campaign that drew a parallel between urban unrest and a nuclear apocalypse. Rather than aspiring to economic development leveraged by dark tourism, a form of grassroots "light tourism" could potentially involve inhabitants in defining and implementing their urban aspirations.

My research for this essay provided me with a history of the notion of heritage. Art historian and heritage expert Dominique Poulot identifies two turning points in the contemporary definition of heritage in the West. Once considered as a collection of monuments, between the end of the 18th century and the 1830s, the category was extended to all elements of material culture from the past. Then, in the 1970s and 1980s, there was official recognition of 'new heritage' aimed at reinforcing the

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France has implemented, since the 1980s, a policy of urban development in so-called priority neighbourhoods…

identity of diverse communities. At the same time, the notion of intangible heritage emerged, recognizing traditional lifestyles and know-how as heritage to be safeguarded (Poulot 2006: 21–2). Dominique Poulot also identifies a constant struggle in the recognition of heritage between the will of the State to honour great men and exalt the homeland on one hand, and militant struggles to denounce the shortcomings of official heritage on the other.

At the turn of the 21st century, he wrote, heritage 'must contribute to revealing each person's identity, thanks to the mirror it holds up to each individual and the contact that it allows with others…'. (Poulot 2006: 5). It seemed given that local residents are those most able to identify tangible and intangible heritage worth protecting. From there, it was a small step to imagining recognition of heritage that was a work-in-progress. A utopian aspiration formulated by those concerned could potentially impact reality if encouraged by an official, prestigious entity. A UNESCO certification would thus serve to bring utopia to life.

The proposed workshops

My proposal included workshops with the students as part of the usual cultural outreach that goes with these projects in schools. But it was also an opportunity for me to test my ideas out in the real world. As well as bringing the city inside the cocoon by representing it in my polyptychs for the corridors, the flow between inside and out, school and home, would be established by discussing their lives and aspirations. Perceptions of their neighbourhood would be at the heart of our discussions. My view as an outsider would be confronted with theirs as insiders.

The workshops would be structured around the creation of a new city called Alentour. There would be several phases: the definition of its borders and positive features by the subjective mapping of the area surrounding the school; the creation of heraldry as a base for making eight coats of arms; the promotion of our UNESCO heritage list application via slogans, posters and a blog to document our undertaking.

I offered to do these workshops during 20 hours of class time, spread between subjects based on the willingness of teachers to collaborate on the project (history-geography, English, French or art). If the project gathered sufficient momentum, it could be extended. I imagined a group of motivated students communicating on our UNESCO quest beyond

the school walls, addressing Alentour's inhabitants or journalists. We could also possibly negotiate placing our posters in the city's advertising space.

During the presentation of my proposal, a jury member asked a question I had asked myself: given that the application to UNESCO was destined not to succeed, would it not reinforce a sense of failure among the students? I quoted a retired school principal whom I had consulted during the planning phase. He said, 'You can do anything with students as long as the guidelines are clear.' I promised that the fictional, playful aspect of the project would be made explicit.

Experience has taught me that it is important to prepare an ambitious programme of workshops and be prepared to scale it back if the school is incapable of incorporating it into the timetable or if no support is found among the teaching staff. For this project, the objective of the workshops went beyond initiating students into how I work and an understanding of the artworks that were to be part of their everyday environment. I intended to confront issues raised by my research in the company of the people concerned. If we admit that there is a geographic hierarchy that favours the inhabitants of some areas and disadvantages others, is it possible to act on the perception the students have of themselves and their prospects by modifying their view of where they live? In imagining a utopian city, could they bring it about?

Implementing the workshops

Once I got the go-ahead for my project, I needed to negotiate the implementation of its collaborative component. Although I had a clear vision for what I wanted to produce during the workshops, I was vague on logistics. The school principal, Loraine Grison, and the head of visual arts in Seine-Saint-Denis, Morten Salling, were both essential in translating my intentions into a feasible programme. The principal wanted to know in detail how I would proceed and insisted that I stay concrete and give examples. Although I had done workshops in a school environment before, her demands helped me prepare an accessible presentation of the more theoretical aspects.

My offer to present the project to every student in the school in one-hour talks for each level or short presentations in each class was deemed impractical. The principal chose the five groups I would work with.

Three groups were in their fourth and final year at the school. One group was in first year and another was a language class for recent arrivals in France. The preference for older students was in order to provide them with subject matter for their oral presentations at the end of the year (*brevet de collège*). I suggested getting them to write paragraphs for the blog. She replied, 'Writing is difficult for them,' the implication being that it was best not to solicit a weakness.

A meeting was organised with four teachers who were prepared to work with me. It became clear that my ambitions for the blog were excessive. I imagined providing a virtual platform that could be used by them beyond my presence. There would be four streams of information and I hoped a teacher would administer each of them. This administrator would put the students' contribution on-line after validating the content and correcting the spelling if necessary. In the end, the blog was a four-part description of the different phases of the project, which I wrote and administered. The students' contributions were visual, with the exception of the slogans, which were produced collectively.

The principal organised a timetable of two two-hour workshops with five classes. For four of the groups, the first workshop replaced their history-geography class. The second was in their art class. Their usual teachers were present. They participated in discussions, maintained order where necessary and reformulated ideas that they feared had not been understood. The first workshop would be devoted to presenting the project, creating subjective maps of Alentour and planning the posters. In the second, we would create heraldry for Alentour. Then the group of students in the remedial French section would turn the heraldry into eight coats of arms that would become permanent fixtures in the stairwells.

The first workshop

For four of the five groups, the initial two-hour workshop took place in the history-geography class. The same programme was followed with all four groups. To indicate a role that was not the same as their teachers', I asked the students to use my first name. The first hour was devoted to a brief presentation of the project, defining heritage and mapping Alentour. I briefly showed them the artworks I had designed based on a study of the area around the school and told them of the plan to imagine a

new city and have it recognized by UNESCO. We looked at UNESCO certified sites such as the Eiffel Tower and discussed UNESCO's criteria. A fire had recently ravaged Notre Dame and we considered the international outpouring of sympathy that the event had provoked. Likewise, bushfires had recently devastated Australia and I showed photographs of scorched koalas, which had also sparked emotional responses worldwide. I asked why people beyond Australia cared about the suffering and possible extinction of its furry heritage and people beyond France cared about Notre Dame. We agreed that some heritage concerns all humanity and as such, deserves protection and recognition. We also established a link between heritage and tourism, and thus of heritage as a motor for economic development.

We then worked on the subjective mapping of their trajectory from home to school each day. In line with the principal's request that I 'stay concrete', I showed them examples of subjective maps done by others, followed by different versions of maps of my own life using a street map, post-its and drawings. First I indicated in black the places I can get to on foot (cinema, park where I draw flowers, The Louvre, café where I do the crossword with a friend…). Then I added in red places that are off the map (my family in Australia, my studio in Montreuil, their school in Alentour…). On the whiteboard, I drew a map of my trajectory from home to school on the metro and on foot with markers every time I turned. I insisted on the fact that Alentour has flexible borders that are different for everyone and that our new city is big enough to include everyone's lives. I reminded them that their school in Drancy had students from Drancy, La Courneuve and Bobigny (figure 8: my map 4, map 4 of 7 indicating different approaches I took to mapping my own life in Paris).

My decision to keep the instruction simple (a map of their trajectory from home to school) allowed them a framework to which they could add existing markers in the urban landscape (roads, shopping centre, fast food restaurants, cinemas, etc.), and then imaginary ones (luxury spa, Gucci store, museum, The Eiffel Tower, river, theme park). One student dreamed of more rubbish bins. Many of them wanted more trees. This framework may have limited the evocation of 'off-map' features, however. For example, while I estimate that nearly all the students had family ties to countries beyond France, these were rarely represented on the maps with the exception of a few flags (two Korean, one Japanese – these seemed related to restaurants rather than origins – and one Portuguese).

They may also have limited 'off-map' mobility due to their age or other reasons.

We also discussed the UNESCO category of intangible heritage and brainstormed the cultural particularities of Alentourians that we could put forward in our application. One 15-year-old girl insisted that she went nowhere besides home and school and had no extra-curricular activities whatsoever, not even social media or watching television. I asked her to draw on an imaginary life. In vain. Many of them found it difficult to identify anything they considered special or interesting. The majority of responses revolved around eating together and religious ceremonies. Shopping featured prominently. Sport was almost entirely absent. The youngest group wrote their lists of both collective and personal traditions on their maps. Celebrating New Year's Eve, Christmas, Ramadan, Halloween and birthdays were the main ones. One student listed 'buying bread'. Two wrote, 'cleaning my room'. Others wrote, 'watching a film on Saturday with my family' or 'pyjama party in the school holidays.' At the end of the class, I went around and stamped each map with an Alentour-UNESCO heritage list logo (figures 7-10: map 1, 2, 3 & 4 Subjective mapping of the trajectory from home to school including possible improvements).

After a break, the second hour was devoted to creating posters to promote our application to UNESCO. I gave the example of Le Havre's successful application in 2005 to be placed on the UNESCO heritage list based on recognition of its exceptional post-WWII social housing. I also showed them examples of posters from the different phases of Paris' long campaign to host the Olympic Games. We discussed the choice of visuals for the posters. I showed them photographs I had taken during my study of the area and the visuals I had created for the corridors. They expressed preferences and then voted. None of the options worked for them. They formulated suggestions for something better. We brainstormed slogans, which I wrote on the whiteboard.

Some ideas were expressed spontaneously. One suggestion was that we rename France *Alentour*. They hesitated between calling its capital 'Alentourville' and 'Alentourcity'. We voted. *Alentourcity* won. I suggested replacing Greater Paris with 'Greater Alentour'. Paris would then be the suburb of Alentour. Their reactions: it's impossible. It's poor here and Paris is rich. We don't have any monuments. Tourists won't come.

In another exchange, a student suggested knocking down the school and replacing it with a cinema, no, an aquapark!

Question (me): Will UNESCO put Alentour on the word heritage list if it's the land of the illiterate?

No answer.

Question (me): If you spend seven days a week at the aquapark, what will you do for fun? Read books?

No answer.

Question (student): If we don't go to school, how will we find a job?

Answer (student): We'll work at the aquapark!

The second workshop

When I returned for the second session, I checked that they remembered the ideas from the previous workshop. They remembered more easily if the lapse of time between sessions was short. I saw the group 3ème 3 on the 16th and 17th of January 2020:

Me: Who can remember my name?

Group: Heidi

Me: Who remembers the name of the project?

Group: Alentour

Me: What's Alentour?

Group: It's Drancy only better; it's an imaginary city; it's a city for everyone…

Me: What are we going to do for Alentour?

Group: Make ads.

Me: Why are we going to make ads for Alentour?

Group: So tourists will come.

Me: Why do we want tourists to come?

Group: For their money. Tourists will spend money and Alentour will become rich like Paris.

Me: What's our strategy for getting tourists to come?

Group: We're going to ask to be classified… world heritage.