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Railways and Trains. A Set of Relations

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Railways and Trains. A Set of Relations

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Abstract

Behind train journeys and their contemplative representations of the movement in literature and cinema, a set of relations affecting the space and the people travelling, seems a field worthy of interest for social sciences to grasp some social transformations in their movements. This article focuses on the regional train line in between Saint-Étienne and Lyon. This particular line is one of the busiest in France outside Ile-de-France. It is also historically the first line opened to transport goods (metal, coal, wood...) in 1832. This article deals with a diachronic and synchronic approach. It envisions how railways have been, in the 19th and 20th century, a colossal project to “implement progress and development” all over the colonial empire and the French metropolis. Do this past still influences the railways policies? This means of transportation is, from its starts until now, entangled between apparently contradictory governmentalities as public service and private profits. Beyond these institutional structures and the concept of “mobility” developed in the early 21st century how daily transportation habits are reconfigured by urban development and globalization. Some observations made in the stations on the regional line, will help to envision the diversity of interactions, travelling modes and the different heterotopias in which one travels – the ones prescribed by the station settings, the ones resulting from securitarian policies, the ones driven by personal *motto*. This work is a work in progress which intend to map socially a modern technic in its social developments, the power and the affects it distributes, produces and reproduces.

Biography: Céline Belledent is associate researcher in the sociology research department Max Weber (section Public Cultures) in Saint-Etienne (France). Her researches intend to map hegemonic and minoritarian relations of the contemporary, at a local and global level. Her PhD dissertation explored the links between sexuality and civilization concerns. She actually studies a local train line between Saint-Etienne and Lyon. She teaches social sciences and social methodologies in the educational sciences and sociology departments of the University Jean Monnet as well as in a social workers school.

“...what thrills me about trains is not their size or their equipment but the fact that they are moving, that they embody a connection between unseen places.”

Mariane Wiggins, *The Shadow Catcher*, p 313.

“Ce qui caractérise une tribu d’amazones c’est son manque d’attaches à un lieu en particulier, c’est son sens de l’aventure, son goût pour les déplacements, le mouvement, les exercices physiques et la vie en plein air.”

Monique Wittig, *Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes*, p. 208.

During about ten years I conducted researches on sexuality. I was at this time a student in sociology and it is how I learned to do fieldwork (women and body modifications; women practicing sm; queer people and sm), I learned how to conduct participant observations and to be critical about what it means to participate (especially in unusual spaces like nightclubs), I learned to conduct interviews, to conduct them nicely, to exploit them and try not to divert the people words and ideas (even when it was on sensible or private topics like sexuality considered as perverse or sex work), I learned to be able to extract some knowledge from these interviews and of course I learned to analyze them and write down some articles. Meanwhile I had to read other sociologists, or other human and social scientists and to take my space in an already set field. It is this “already set field” that triggered my curiosity. We do have a field of sociology of sexuality in France, a well set one. Reading the classical texts of sociology of sexuality in the last 50 years, in French, in German and in English, I realized the same basic categories and

the same regime of truth are mobilized by the scientists.¹ A “regime of truth” is an expression of Michel Foucault to describe the fact that “truth isn’t outside power, or deprived of power”, that means “each society within a given time as its regime of truth” some discourses are considered right or wrong and are repeated. Starting from there, and after the reading of Foucault, *The Will to Know*, 1976; and its critics Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, 1995, I left the fieldwork on the side, I went to the archives exploration and I wrote my PhD dissertation on the scientific production of the sexual categories at the end of the nineteenth century in Western Europe. I studied the medical discourses: the theory of sexual perversions focusing precisely on the writings of Dr. Krafft-Ebing an Austrian forensic doctor, one of the fathers of sexology and the testimonies he collected from perverts, about 600 of them. I particularly focused on the construction of a scientific regime of truth and on the way minoritarian discourses enter in play and legitimate it. I won’t go deeper into this topic in this article, I would just like to share some of my thoughts and explain how I actually end up studying trains and railways.

Even though I tried to locate sexuality geopolitically in Western Europe, my approach still tends to define sexuality as an object that could be clearly identified and could apply universally. This problem comes from my studies, and can be a general critics addressed to French thinkers

¹ Daniele Lorenzini, <https://michel-foucault.com/2013/10/31/what-is-a-regime-of-truth-2013/> Foucault introduces the concept of ‘regime of truth’ in chapter one of *Discipline and Punish* where, speaking of the formation (within the new penal system in the xviii and xix centuries) of a corpus of knowledge, techniques, ‘scientific’ discourses that became entangled with the practice of the power to punish, he argues that a new “regime of the truth” emerged (Foucault 1975, p. 30; 23). Now, what makes this concept so interesting is the fact that, through this expression, Foucault links the notion of truth to the explicitly political notion of regime – as he does also in the February 18th, 1976 lecture of “*Society Must Be Defended*”, where he speaks of “our regime of truth and error” and incidentally makes it clear that ‘regime’ means here a certain *power* of separation between truth and error (Foucault 1975-76, p. 145; 164). But the most interesting text, before 1980, with regard to Foucault’s use of the concept of regime of truth – leaving aside a short passage in *The Birth of Biopolitics* (Foucault 1978-79, p. 20; 18) –, is without a doubt the 1976 interview *The political function of the intellectual*, where Foucault argues, in contrast to a certain philosophical myth, that “truth isn’t outside power, or deprived of power”: on the contrary, truth “is produced by virtue of multiple constraints [a]nd it induces regulated effects of power”. This is to say that “each society has its regime of truth”, and by this expression Foucault means: (1) “the types of discourse [society] harbours and causes to function as true”; (2) “the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements” and (3) “the way in which each is sanctioned”; (4) “the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth”; (5) “the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (Foucault 1976, p. 112; 13). Therefore, “truth” is “a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and functioning of statements”; it is linked “by a circular relation to systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it”. And right at the end of the interview, Foucault adds that the essential political problem for us, today, is trying to *change* our “political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth” (where truth is modeled on the form of scientific discourse), in order to constitute a new “politics of truth” (Foucault 1976, pp. 113-114; 14).

(Spivak, 1988), I learned to produce objects, that I can then study – this is a general comment, of course I also had exceptional professors that taught me why it is problematic to build an opposition between object and subject. Even though I wanted explicitly to criticize the fact that sexuality was pictured and politically used as a western trait of culture I kept being trapped in the frame. I don't have any solution to this problem for now and it's the first reason why I take my distance with "abstract topics" like sexuality and gender matters.

My second problem within the French context is that gender and sexuality became trapped topics encountering at least two limits. One is the conservative one, if we want to use simple binary opposition. Since the legalization of homosexual marriage (2013) many collectives, associations and personalities emerged to defend the traditional family, the traditional gender roles and its values. They strongly opposed to the marriage and after that to the gender equality programs the state wanted to implement in schools what these groups name "the gender theory". They made themselves unavoidable.

The other side is the progressive side: It's a side which considered gender equality and homosexual rights as a western democratic value. Appropriating political processes and considering them as achieved is of course problematic since they can't be pursued any more, they are considered finished, done. The concrete effects of this thought in France is the political and social exclusion of the ones who are considered non democratic enough, non-able to access to gender equality and sexuality freedom these are migrants especially from Middle East and Africa, descents from migrants having a Muslim background or considered as having one. In that case, gender equality and sexuality freedom tend to become a racist approach, a civilizing pattern reinforcing the national identity and used for implementing new restrictive rules targeting already exposed populations (lower class people, poor suburbs of big towns, refugee shelters...). Within the sexual minorities we call this "pinkwashing", that means whitewash with sexual minorities and feminist politics the hegemony and its power structures.

I studied sexuality in the minoritarian perspective of feminist and homosexual groups and scholars (Guillaumin, Rubin...), that means my research intention was to question the way sexuality was a private and public concern, managing people and subjectivities. This is almost not understandable nowadays in the French context and elsewhere, sexual categories heterosexual and homosexual became "natures of love" and are hardly seen as social managements of people and subjectivities. So for now, I shifted my research interests towards

a “concrete topic” that is railways and trains, as a mean of “transports”, more precisely, transportations how and why do we link people and places? But also “transport” in its older meaning “movements of emotion”.

I still need to precise something about mapping. I try to develop the mapping as a sociological method, allowing some interdisciplinary crossings. I am conscious that mapping is a powerful tool of representation, Ann McClintock describes mapping as a technic of colonial appropriation: “Map making became the servant of colonial plunder, for the knowledge constituted by the map both preceded and legitimized the conquest of territory. The map is a technology of knowledge that professes to capture the truth about a place in pure, scientific form, operating under the guise of scientific exactitude and promising to retrieve and reproduce nature exactly how it is. As such it is also a technology of possession, promising that those with the capacity to make such perfect representations must also have the right of territorial control.”² I postulate that the place and technics of resistance can relocate in the place of power. I work on an article in French called from the field and its categories to mapping. This part of my work has to be developed, I hope to find cartographers to work with and draw maps representing parts of the “order of things”.

How daily life can become a research? Even though I chose to study trains and railways I could also say that this topic came to me. I still remember the precise day I decided to start this research, it was in 2016, March 28th on a Saturday. I took the train from Saint-Etienne to Lyon in the morning, to reach a book launching. I wanted to come back with the train in the same afternoon, precisely at 5:24 pm. When I arrived at the platform, early enough there were many policemen, different kind of police, the national police, the train safety police, private safeguards from the station, some special forces against riots... and the train inspectors. They were making everyone enter through one door. I haven’t taken a picture, just imagine the crowd of a Saturday afternoon, managed by many policemen to enter the train through one door, the regular people, the people with kids and trolleys, the ones with their huge shopping bags, old and more or less disabled people, it was a complete chaos and the train left almost half an hour delayed. Of course, I wonder why? I asked they said no special reason and we want to make sure everyone travels with a valid ticket.

I took notes of an interaction – old man with a walking stick: “why do we all have to enter

² Ann McClintock, *Imperial leather: Race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*, Routledge, 1995, p. 27.

through one door, it's a mess, I am in pain, why can't I enter the train and sit". The train inspector: "Me, I'm not disabled, I'm doing my job, stop to complain and wait."

This interaction that I found pretty unjust and unuseful made me realized that lately I had piled up bad experiences when traveling on this particular train line. It made me realized that when I was picking up friends at the station, often they were telling me about something wrong that happened in the train. Arrived in Saint-Étienne, I bought a notebook and started my research on railways and trains.

My concerns are on the effects of structural domination on subjectivities, and vice versa. I work with a diachronic and synchronic approach, which means I envision the "decolonization" of the metropolis of French former empire.

I also try to understand and describe the consequences of discrimination on the bodies in relation to others, on political subjectivities and their consequences on the occupation of social "space".

I also try to open some space for imagination as J-F Billeter (Bì Láidé 畢來德), advocates in *Un paradigme*, 2016 and space for alternative practices within French society, its absolute "democracy" and its "fundamentalist capitalism" (Ngugi wa' Thiongo, 2004).

My sociological intention is to connect local and global levels. I need here to precise I'm attached to a research department studying public cultures, mostly on the local level in Saint-Etienne. According to me local and global levels are intertwined.

I use diverse methodologies to collect datas. I conduct some participant observations in trains and in the stations. I conduct some interviews with any kind of people – spontaneously within the trains and for now only in Saint-Etienne's station, I will come back on this. I did interviews in moments of « crisis », I will come back on this too. But it can also be outside of the context, when someone mention something about the train or when I speak about my research and then some add their observations, for example my students. I made also some discourse analysis. Train company communications, website, signposts in the train and the stations. Press articles present and past time. (I want here to point the fact that Internet is not systematically archived that means some resources can disappear really fast). I did some archive work: city and region archives, trade unions archive (less classified), civil engineering school of the town archive,

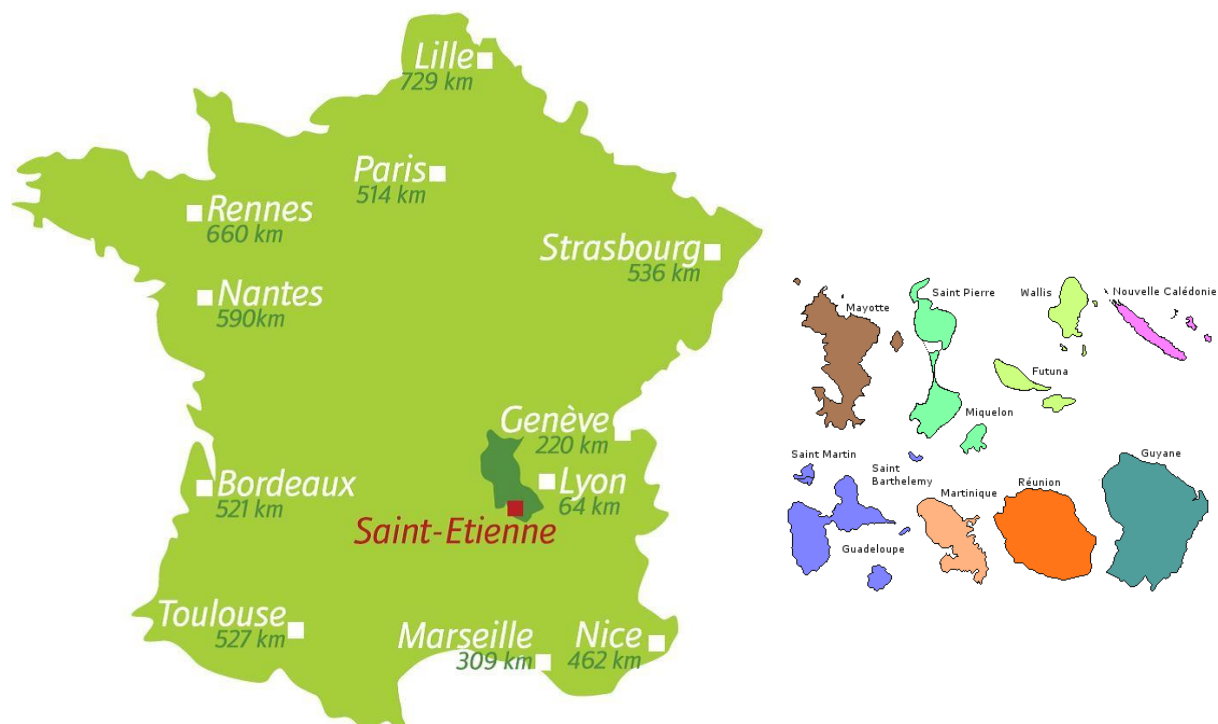
local press. I had also a special interest for commemorative anniversaries documentation. What is remembered, celebrated and what is not? I am also in a work in progress on the matter of how to question and observe the bodies and affects? Their readings, their interpretations and analysis. Also wandering if it is interesting to do it, I will come back on this too and share my doubts. In this article, I will expose briefly the three directions I pursue in this research on railways and trains.

1. Present economy containing its past and future.

Oikos: household / *nomos* : manage – The administration of goods doesn't have to be only money, depends what has value within the elements = management of the different elements around railways, trains, travellers (leave aside for now the freight – goods transportations). Notion of « value » connect economy with culture.

2. Ethnography: who travels on this train ? Why ? How ?
3. Affects and bodies: what can we see from affects and bodies in this train and these stations ? How to question people about their affects and bodies ? Legitimate bodies ? Outcasts ?

Let's start by a kind of travel to the actual railways between Saint-Etienne and Lyon.



Here you can locate the two cities on the map of France it's only 64 km/40 miles between them

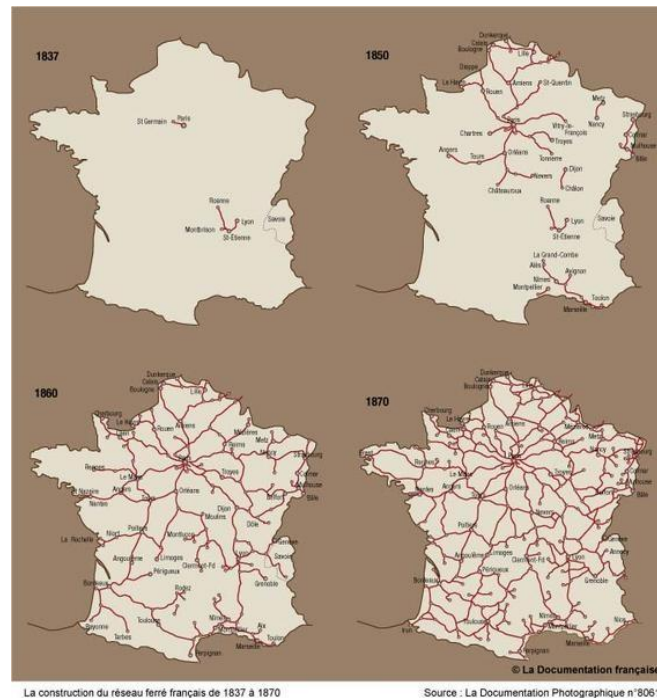
(Hukou/Taipei). You see here a complete map of what's France in 2018 with all its departments and territories, that means I added to the metropolis, the overseas territories often forgotten, that are French administered territories outside of the European continent. They have different status and autonomy: overseas departments (all together in 2018 about 3 millions inhabitants), Guadeloupe, New Guiana, Martinique, Réunion, Mayotte ; overseas collectivities (all together in 2018, 621000 inhabitants) ; French Polynesia, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Wallis and Futuna, Saint Martin, Saint Barthelemy ; overseas territories, French Southern and Antarctic Lands (no permanent inhabitants). Special status, New Caledonia (about 300000 inhabitants) and Clipperton Island (no inhabitants).

Right now and outside Ile *de France* department (Paris and its suburbs), the train line between Saint-Etienne and Lyon is the busiest in France. Trains are running from Saint-Etienne to Lyon: 5h20 to 22:20/Lyon to Saint-Etienne: 5:20 to 00:24 (last one is a bus since about a year) during the week with less trains on Sunday and blank days.

The amount of people traveling goes more from Saint-Etienne to Lyon. Lyon is the second or the third city of France (along with Marseille depending on the calculation with or without the suburbs) in terms of both population and economical significance.³

When I started my research I realized this railway line Saint-Etienne to Lyon was the first opened for passenger use in 1832 (<http://www.sncf.com/fr/portrait-du-groupe/histoire-sncf> in French). The railways development takes the shape of a star, called the star of Legrand according to a law of 1842 "Charte des Chemins de fer".

³ The statistics are from 2013 only on the metropolis, it is about 9 million people under the poverty rate. Women are poorer than men in general even if rich (within the poor population women are 52,1%). The poverty rate is calculated on the median income in the metropolis, 2 calculations 50% of it or 60% of it. According to INSEE, poverty is increasing in amount of people in France in the last 10 years (2005-2015); 50% rate 600.000 more people, 60% about one million. A precision, if overseas departments would be added the poverty rate would be more important for France. The poorest people actually living in France are the refugees, especially the ones without a legal status these people are not included in the statistics. Furthermore, the statistics are based on the incomes declared to the tax office. Many people in the poorest categories don't declare their incomes since they anyway don't pay any tax. Tchèque Republic is the European country with the lower poverty rate, 9,1%, Spain and Greece are the highest poverty rate 21%.



The railways in France were developed by several regional private companies. The line Saint-Étienne to Lyon was then run by the Paris-Lyon-Mediterranee private company – commonly referred to as PLM – one of the biggest railways company, until the nationalisation of railways and the creation of the SNCF (French National Railway) in 1938. From the late 1980s, the liberalisation policies of the railway market within the SNCF has led to the creation of the TER (regional express trains), that is to major transformations in both the structure of the train lines and the balance between private and public funding. I will come to this but first I would like to jump to history.

The railway project was colossal, building itself up through a precarious balance between the French state and private companies; when only 548 km of railroads were in use in the French Metropolis in 1841, in the early 20th century, railways were covering the whole territory – transporting goods and people.

When why what for and how started the French railways project? (of course this question can be asked elsewhere it's the limit of my field for now).

Imperialist railways

The first French railways were installed in the 1830's to transport coal to metalworking industries around the city of Saint-Étienne and to convey metal and wood to Paris in connection with the river Loire.

Some testimonies from that time say trains were originally not made to transport people but coal. Many people jump on the trains with the goods and the company PLM decides in 1832 to open the line to people.

In a speech made in 1827 in front of representatives from the Society of agriculture, arts and trade, Mr. Smith,⁴ explains that it is really important and new to be able to expose the situation of the country at different levels: its agricultural production, its economy, the amount of books published in the year, etc. He advocates for alliances, in between political parties on the economical level in order to improve the situation of the country and its civilization. It's important according to me to see that within the colonial metropolis there has been also political campaign advocating for civilization especially in the rural areas – civilization is not a culture but a political process linked with an economy.

Many farmers were expropriated from their lands in order to build the railways. We find tracks in the archives of these expropriations which were announced in the local newspapers. When the expropriations were made on public use order people were not getting any money in exchange. Around Saint-Étienne public use orders were declared to build the coal mines and the railways which all together concerned many people and many square kilometers of land. I found traces of resistance against these expropriations until the 1930s, that means a century after the process of civilization with industry and railways had started in this region of France. One has to imagine, and on this I'm still working in the archives what have been these huge building sites all around France. It meant many workers and all the equipment needed for their daily life. Many things are still to study on this level, documents are not easy to find. Apparently the men who built the railways were partly farmers believing in the adventure of civilization and who wanted to travel around, partly farmers who had no choice but to follow the building sites since they had lost their lands with the expropriations, partly foreigners from Eastern and

⁴ Joannès Erhard Valentin-Smith, *Aperçu sur l'état de la civilisation en France*, Paris, Ambroise Dupont, 1828. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4253310.r=joann%C3%A8s%20valentin%20smith?rk=64378;0> (in French).

Southern Europe, hired for lower costs by the companies. At this time no law limited the duration of work, nor established limits to the working conditions. This came later, workers organized trade unions, mutual solidarity and fund, resistance against abusive working conditions, etc. I found a document “working rules” in a company in the 1840’s, they explain they want to build a collective atmosphere among workers to avoid the fights and the rivalry at work. They force the workers to wear a coat that needs to be button up in the back, that means one needs another one to button it up. It seems that this cooperation which has been implemented by the companies, have the encourage the union of the workers against their companies. Last comment that should be developed. If you have traveled in France by train, you might have noticed that many stations or bridges are really beautiful, comparable to churches. Actually most of the railways and stations were designed and build by two main journeymen corporations of handcraft, the ones who had built the Roman churches and the ones who built the Gothic churches, these two styles are still visible in the stations and the sceneries around railways. This is one of the links between Christian religion and industrial revolution. More can be found. The Catholic church was involved in the management of the workers in different companies, especially in the factories where mostly women were working. The matter of time also has to be thought with the Christian religion. I will come back on this later.



Orsay - Paris

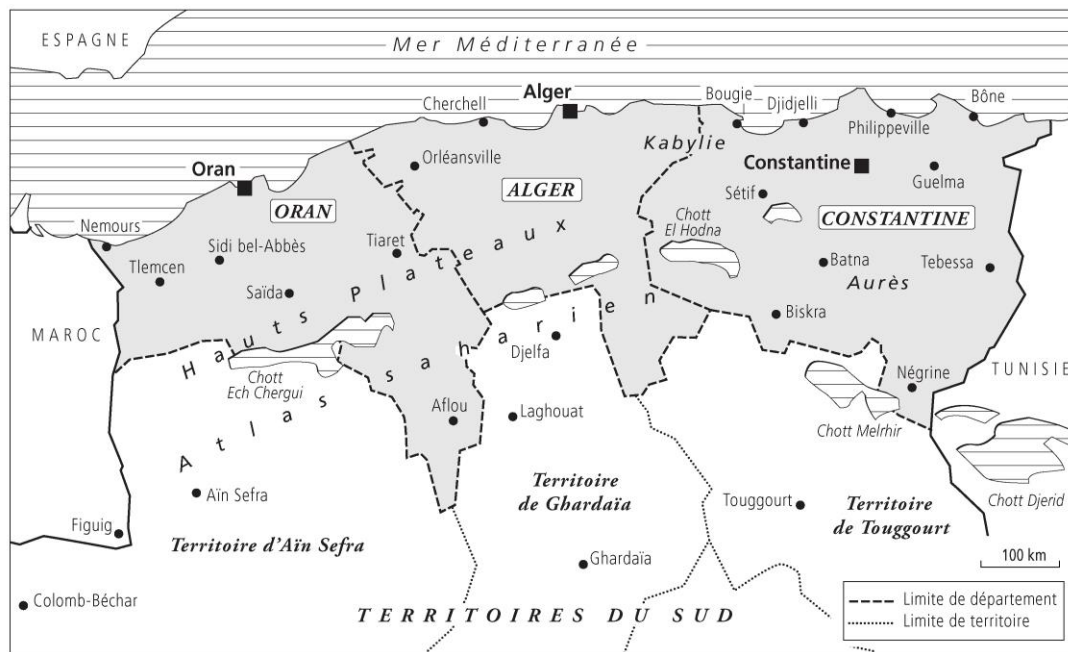
In the 19th century railways became a major tool, discursively and on the field to “*implement progress and development all over the colonial empire*” as quoted in *Aperçu sur l’état de la*

civilisation en France.

The railways were built through the whole empire but each country as to be watched closely with its contextual reality.

In Algeria, the decision was taken to building railways in 1857, April the 8th. A journalist commented this decision in one of the local newspapers of Saint-Étienne: “An important matter nowadays is the imperial decision to build railways lines embracing the development in the different provinces of the new France of Africa. Algeria stops to be this barbarian piece of land, which threatens only when its name is evoked” (My translation). Then the article describes the happiness with which the news was received, the great party that was given by the settlers who were thankful to the Marshall Randon “for the part he took in this matter”. In conclusion the journalist precises: “impetus, trust and hope are huge, unanimously universal” and then comment on the good quality of the harvest to come “harvest” in French has a double meaning harvesting grains and make a lot of money.⁵

⁵ « La grande affaire du moment, pour l’Algérie, est le récent décret impérial qui décide de l’établissement d’un grand système de voies ferrées, embrassant dans son développement des trois provinces de cette nouvelle France de l’Afrique du Nord. Il y a trop longtemps que nous appelions de nos vœux et de notre plume cette importante déclaration du pouvoir pour que nous n’accueillions pas avec bonheur et reconnaissance la pensée qui l’a dictée. Désormais l’Algérie cesse d’être une terre barbare fermée à l’esprit d’entreprise par la crainte des difficultés qu’éveillait son nom. Le décret qui la dote d’un réseau de chemin de fer attire forcément sur elle l’attention du monde industriel, démontre la parfaite tranquillité dont on y jouit, et la classe d’un seul coup au nombre des pays appelés à recevoir la vigoureuse impulsion de l’instrument du progrès le plus énergique qu’ait inventé le génie créateur de notre siècle... Le décret impérial produit en Algérie une sensation difficile à décrire. La chambre de commerce d’Alger à signé immédiatement une adresse de remerciement à l’Empereur et convié les colons à témoigner leur gratitude au maréchal Randon, pour la part qu’il a prise dans cette affaire, par une éclatante réception à son retour en Algérie. Arcs de triomphe, aviation, illuminations, feu d’artifices, rien n’a manqué à la fête. De plus, une souscription est ouverte pour faire frapper une médaille qui rappelle d’une manière indéfinie et directement destiné à faire époque dans les annales du pays et ce qui vaut mieux encore, à produire une révolution à la fois pacifique et féconde dans la situation actuelle. L’élan, la confiance, l’espoir, sont immenses, unanimement universels. Ces dispositions morales se trouvent d’ailleurs favorisées par la magnifique apparence des récoltes prochaines, qui, dans les trois provinces, s’annoncent sous les plus admirables auspices. Sur nombre de points, les foins sont dès à présent coupés, fanés et emmeulés, et, depuis plus d’un mois, les orges ont commencé à montrer des épis qui sont riches en promesse pour le cultivateur. De leur côté, les blés n’ont pas un moins bel aspect, et partout on songe déjà à la moisson. En présence d’une si remarquable fécondité, d’une précocité si précieuse, comment ne pas songer aux immenses services que l’Algérie pourrait rendre à la France, au rôle véritablement providentiel qu’elle pourrait jouer dans l’alimentation. » 1857, April 23 (Hyppolite Pent, Mémorial de la Loire et de la Haute-Loire)



Huge investments of public money with interests guarantees to private companies, plus their corruption and willing to make fast benefits led to the implement of lower quality railways. “Ainsi les voies étroites (1 m de largeur au lieu de 1,45 m) qui sont l’exception en France en 1900 représentent 42 % de la longueur totale des lignes dans la colonie ».⁶ Railways were steeper, narrower and made up with less steel even though they were made to transport heavy trains with goods. This produced more accidents and a need to renovate the railways more frequently.

Decisions made by Europeans French and other Europeans who got the French citizenship in 1870 (plus Jewish indigenous with the Crémieux decree), public money provided mostly by indigenous people who do not have the right to vote. Railways to transport goods, not on the road taken by people. Trains are too expensive for Algerian people « indigenous » to use them, and in certain period of time people are not allowed to travel across the three “French” departments Oran, Constantine and Alger, three regions of what became Algeria in 1962 after *the Independence* French perspective and way of saying or *the Liberation* Algerian perspective and way of saying.

I will explore further the history of trains in Maghreb under colonial time and with its developments. You might know that the terrestrial border between Morocco and Algeria is

⁶ Didier Guignard, *La capture de l’investissement public*, in *L’abus de pouvoir dans l’Algérie coloniale (1880-1914)*, Presse universitaire de Nanterre, 2010.



Railways Lao-kai to Yunnanfu. Bridge in the valley of Namti. Built in six years 1903-09. 60.000 workers, 12.000 died. 465 km (290 miles), 3.400 pieces of work (tunnels, bridges...)

closed since 1994, the two countries do not agree upon this border until now. The border between Algeria and Tunisia is also the theater of violence even though its route was agreed in the UN in 1993. This situation might change in the coming years at least for goods. On the 4th of February 2019 a call for investment was launched to renovate a trans Maghreb railway linking Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, in order to envision the construction of a high-speed train after a study of feasibility sponsored by the African Bank for development.⁷

The Algerian colonial railways serve as an example and motivation to build railways around the French empire. France founded Indochina (Indochinese Union) in 1887 the term gathering together the territories of actual Vietnam Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina, Cambodia and Laos (added in 1893). When Algeria has been a settlement colony, Indochina was confined to trade and economical exploitation especially goods coming from agriculture.

The railway project in Indochina was launched by Paul Doumer, General Governor of Indochina in 1897. After Algeria, Indochina was the colonized region which receive the biggest

⁷ https://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/entry/luma-veut-lancer-une-ligne-ferroviaire-reliant-le-maroc-lalgerie-et-la-tunisie_mg_5c581072e4b08710475513e2

investments from the metropolis. The state encouraged private investments especially early in the 20th century to develop the rubber plantations (in the center and south) which made France a leading producer of rubber at the time of the development of cars and tires. This is almost another topic. I say almost because the common point with the settling of rubber plantations and the construction of railways in Indochina is a realization of an almost unimaginable and impossible work in order to make profits.⁸ It is only a hard exploitation of labor force implying many deaths which made these projects realizable. I still need to understand deeper this history. Indochina was also for the French a way to access China, the Indochinese railways enter the Chinese territories in Yunnan, the colossal building site was conducted by the French construction company the Society of Batignolles.

In Indochina, the French administration tried really hard to show why colonization has to be presented as something good to the colonized, Jules Harmand, business administrator for the French government in Tonkin 1884-85 in a text published in 1910: “conquest is allowed by superiority, necessity excuses it, but it stays an act of huge seriousness, an excessive force that can only be forgiven [the word is with Christian connotation, he might mean God here] thanks to the good it provides to the ones enduring it” (my translation).⁹ He means to transform the people into a proletariat serving the metropolitan capitalism, same page of the book: “the indigenous work will be more productive, when he will be able to understand its conditions” ;

⁸ « *L'attrait du marché indochinois, de sa monnaie refuge qu'est la piastre et ces perspectives de profits, sont les trois principaux éléments expliquant cette arrivée massive de capitaux métropolitains de 1923 à 1929, ce secteur captant plus de la moitié des investissements en Indochine (plus d'1 milliard de francs). Se développe alors un secteur agricole moderne et capitaliste qui recueille particulièrement l'attention des pouvoirs publics. L'attrait du marché indochinois était d'abord dû aux efforts de l'État pour attirer les capitaux. Cela se traduit d'abord par la distribution d'immenses concessions à de grandes sociétés aux mains des colons, sociétés indochinoises mais surtout métropolitaines, à des conditions financières et fiscales très favorables ; ensuite par le financement massif des infrastructures de transport (routes, ports, chemin de fer) utiles à l'essor du commerce et notamment des planteurs (une des caractéristiques de l'économie de plantation selon Philip Curtin).* » Eric Panthou. *L'hévéaculture indochinoise, des origines à la Seconde Guerre mondiale*. Master. Cours d'Agrégation sur “Les Sociétés coloniales, 1850-1950”, Université Blaise Pascal, Clermont-Ferrand, France. 2013, pp.32. Il cite: Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History*. Cambridge UP, 1990, 222 p.

⁹ « [...] si la conquête est autorisée par leur supériorité, si elle s'excuse par la nécessité, elle n'en reste pas moins une action d'une immense gravité, un abus de la force qui peut trouver son absolution seulement dans le bien qu'elle procure à ceux qui doivent la subir. » Jules Harmand, *Domination et Colonisation*, Flammarion, 1910, p. 157. Chargé d'affaires pour le Tonkin 1883-84. « La politique d'association, Utilitaire encore dans ses résultats, elle ne produit tous ses effets et ne devient le meilleur de tous les calculs que si elle est vivifiée par des inspirations d'ordre moral et par la conviction que le conquérant, en assumant la tutelle des populations, prend aussi charge de leurs âmes, de leurs besoins intellectuels et de leurs sentiments ataviques, et l'engagement de les satisfaire, qu'il se fait leur initiateur, la μαῖευτική [maïeutique, ce qui fait accoucher] de leur esprit. »

then he advocates for a politics of association with moral inspirations. He advocates “the conqueror” but in the Indochinese case it is the economical business owners to “accept the guardianship of the population, to take care of their soul, of their intellectual needs, of their atavistic feelings and to commit to satisfy them, to be the ones operating maieutics” [Socrates to start to have opinions/a mind through philosophical dialogue]. He then advocates for building a solidarity among workers¹⁰ and for politics of contracts in the sense Jean-Jacques Rousseau developed the « social contract »¹¹ His conclusion : “The example of Cochinchina : the indigenous, even without us starting to educate him and preserve him from unavoidable sicknesses, has started to reproduce, to increase his paddy fields and to adopt notions like the value of time, of money and of savings”.¹² Please remember the “value of time” I will come back on it, since I think it’s an ambiguous value brought by railways to the world.

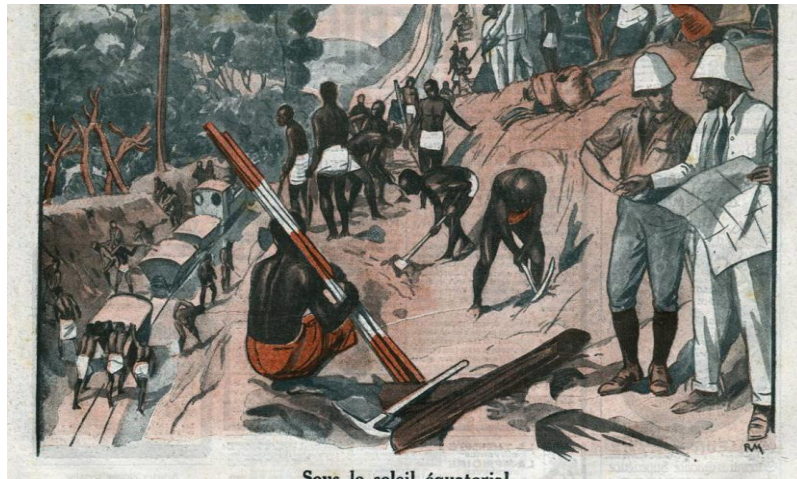
In 1934 July the 10th, the construction of the Congo ocean railway has been achieved after 13 years of difficult work. We are able to picture the building site as well as the French colonial discourse watching this short movie of colonial propaganda released in 1934 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0m9pkQ5CcE> (in French): “A great French colonial piece of work has been achieved, the junction from Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire, Congo (river) to the ocean has been realized after 13 years of work, started in 1921 it took 13 years to build

¹⁰ La politique d’exploitation intégrale, pour ainsi parler, c’est l’esclavage et ses formes mitigées, le servage agricole ou industriel, où l’individu, lié à la terre ou à la factorerie, mais propriété personnelle sûre, n’est qu’un instrument, d’un rendement toujours médiocre, que le maître possesseur du fonds ne considère qu’à titre de machine et comme individu séparé de ses congénères. La politique d’association, loin de rompre la solidarité des divers groupements indigènes, prétend la consolider pour s’en servir, mais pour servir aussi les sujets en les faisant participer consciemment à son œuvre. » Idem, p. 158.

¹¹ « Sans tomber dans les rêveries à la Jean-Jacques, on doit faire remarquer que qui dit association dit contrat et l’on conviendra que cette idée, en ne la prenant guère d’ailleurs que comme une « illustration », est beaucoup plus acceptable, lorsque, au lieu de l’appliquer, comme le faisait Rousseau, à une société unique, formée par des procédés naturels, elle envisage la coexistence et la coopération de deux sociétés profondément différentes venues en contact d’une manière aussi brusque qu’artificielle. Voici comment l’on pourrait imaginer les termes de cette implicite convention. Le conquérant européen apporte l’ordre, la prévoyance et la sécurité dans une agglomération humaine, qui tout en aspirant ardemment, dans chacun de ses membres et dans son ensemble, à ces biens fondamentaux, sans lesquels aucune communauté ne peut progresser, n’est pas apte à les faire sortir elle-même de son sein. Elle végétait, au jour le jour, dans la crainte universelle, étioyée sous le poids des abus et des injustices. L’État européen lui communique, avec la paix publique et particulière, la puissance mécanique, l’argent, le crédit, la science, l’hygiène qui vont vivifier les activités latentes de ces populations, multiplier leur nombre en transformant leur sol. Avec les instruments matériels et intellectuels qui leur faisaient défaut et dont il les arme, il leur procure l’idée et l’ambition d’une existence meilleure et les moyens de la réaliser. » Idem, p. 161

¹² « L’exemple de la Cochinchine: L’indigène, sans que nous nous soyons encore préoccupés de l’instruire et de le préserver des maladies inévitables, commençait à se multiplier, à accroître ses rizières et à acquérir la notion de la valeur du temps, de l’argent et de l’épargne. » Idem, p. 166.

610 km of railways and overcome the difficulties of an unhealthy and uneven region: 92 bombs were used, 10 millions cubic meter of leveling, 130 millions were spent for this piece of work that made possible to connect directly the river to the ocean. It is not only a progress for the development and improvement of the French colonies but also an improvement of the destiny of the indigenous people of equatorial Africa.” (my translation of the voice-over).



Construction of the railway Congo-Ocean. Le petit illustré, 1924.

Even if the propaganda for the colonial project was really strong in the French metropolis and controlled most of the images of the colonial territories, there has always been people opposed to the colonial project and its exploitation. Albert Londres – investigative journalism, serial published in a Parisian newspaper 1929 gathered under the title « Land of Ebony » criticize the French policy in Africa for the working conditions and displacements of the workers building the railway.

Olivier le Cour Grandmaison,¹³ French historian of the French colonial empire quotes a depute André Maginot who declared in 1928, « 140 kilometers of railways were built, 17000

¹³ <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/travail-force-dans-lempire-colonial-francais/article/110416/travail-force-et-exploitation-coloniale-souvenons-nous> : “Ainsi fut construit, par exemple, le chemin de fer destiné à relier Brazzaville à Pointe-Noire, sur la côte atlantique. Bilan de cet “exploit”, réputé témoigner de la glorieuse « mise en valeur » du Congo français : 17000 morts « indigènes » pour la réalisation des 140 premiers kilomètres et un taux de mortalité sur ce chantier de 57% en 1928. Qui a livré ce dernier chiffre? Un anticolonialiste farouche? Non, le ministre des Colonies, André Maginot, dans une déclaration faite devant une commission *ad hoc* de la Chambre des députés. L’entreprise chargée des travaux? La Société de construction des Batignolles dont la prospérité est en partie liée aux nombreux contrats remportés dans les possessions françaises. Son héritier et successeur n’est autre que le groupe bien connu aujourd’hui sous le nom de SPIE-Batignolles. En 2013, Jean Monville, ancien PDG de ce groupe, rappelait benoîtement « la fierté de ce qu’on avait fait dans le passé, de notre professionnalisme et de notre engagement dans nos “aventures” d’outre-mer ». (*Le Monde*, 21 mai 2013).

« indigenous » that means west Africans died, the death rate on the building site was 58 % » Historians actually think the death rate was about 20 %. The company « société des Batignolles, has become Spie Batignolles, one of the important French construction and public work company who made a lot of benefits in the colonies and is nowadays achieving many building and infrastructure constructions. For example, in the 70s the trans Gabon railway in Western Africa, or the Channel Tunnel between England and France in the 90's. In 2013 May 21st, its director Jean Monville referred in an article in the newspaper Le Monde: *“the pride of what we did in the past, our professionalism and our commitment to overseas “adventures”* (my translation).

Even though in 2014, the CRAN (Representative Council of France's Black Associations) sued the French state and Spie Batignolles for forced labor and crimes against humanity (following the Taubira Law of 2010 which qualify slavery and forced labor under colonial rule as crime against humanity), no excuses nor reparations were given. The French President François Hollande (2014) declared no economical reparations will be engaged and advocate for peaceful and reconciliated histories.

At this level no bridge. If you are interested in bridges, I will recommend you a short movie from the artist Pierre Michelin, *Vers l'Outremer, Towards Overseas*, 2010, about 4 minutes of old postcards showing the bridges built during the French colonial time (see attached document). Pierre Michelin works on the transmission of colonial history and hospitality nowadays. This short movie makes us think about bridges, what do bridges connect and who? Are they used both sides? Following the text of Georg Simmel called *Bridges and doors*, 1909, what are we connected to? What do we connect in imagination and for real?

“Imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere – a disagreeable fact of history external to Western identity. Rather, imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity. The invention of race in the urban metropolis, which I explore in more details below, became central not only to the self-definition of the middle-class but also to the policing of the “dangerous class”: the working class, the Irish, Jews, prostitutes, feminists, gays and lesbians, criminals, the militant crowd and so on.” (McClintock, 1995, p. 5)

I understand imperialism as the imagination of colonization or other appropriations. When

territories became independent by force most of the time, the metropolis like France but also others haven't decolonized their imperial imaginary and the system of thought attached to the technics that were deployed as railways were. Railways as means of transportation physically but also with the imagination. Exploring the fictional uses of trains and railways in movies and literature is a good way to understand their role on imagination. Two examples can be taken, one on modernity and its patterns in Joseph von Sternberg, *Shanghai Express*, 1932. Another one on the relation between time and daily life, in the German fantasy novel, from Michael Ende, *Momo, or the strange story of the time-thieves and the child who brought the stolen time back to the people*, 1973, (the book was translated in Chinese: 默默) and made into a film in 1986 in which the picture used to enter the story is one of the train.¹⁴

I postulate and want to go into this hypothesis deeper that with the train was promoted a way of life, standards that are in use broadly nowadays and appear to us as the only possible way of living: the social class categories and their split in space, the geographic mobility and maybe the social mobility also which is something really interesting to question in a country like France, the closeness of the geographic and political centers, the distance between the small towns and the suburbs, the partition between the time for work and the time for leisure, the fast food and its plastic boxes... The matter of time appears to me really crucial and is always attached to railways and trains, in the stations, in our representations and in the cultural productions. With the railways and train the capitalist time is set in the whole word.



¹⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q_JYYcBP2Q

Train companies have been private until 1938. At the dawn of the Second World War 2, the French train exploitation became nationalized and centralized; starting on the 1950's the grandeur of the project fades for the benefit of the road transportation and the private car. The train and railways became national priorities again in the late eighties, with high speed trains. A document in a review "Le Génie civil en France et à l'étranger" [*Civil Engineering in France and Abroad*], 1938, June, the 25th, advocating for nationalization with exactly the same arguments as the ones developed in the last 20 years to advocate for privatization.¹⁵ I postulate that even though the train governance shifts from private companies to the State and now back to private companies, there is a continuity. Different elements to push this hypothesis. Almost all the directors of the French train companies private and public governance studied since the beginning in the same school, that is the Parisian polytechnic. This famous school is one of the most prestigious and selective public French Scientific and Engineering schools. It is one of the most famous "grandes écoles" that means selective and pretty elitist. Its motto is "for Homeland, for Science and for Glory". The studies start with three weeks of military training. It opened up to women in 1972 (the school exists since 1797). Until now they are between 15 and 20%, when the percentage of workers in France is 17,8%, the percentage of students from working class is 1,1%, furthermore few people living outside Paris are entering the school. A research sociology conducted between 2013 and 2017 by a member of Polytechnic Nicolas Berkouk, shows the reproduction of its elite with selective unofficial practices. https://www.liberation.fr/france/2018/10/05/a-polytechnique-l-entre-soi-en-taille-xxl_1683480.

It would be interesting to draw a map of each president and its connection to other public sectors and businesses in France and abroad. We can notice the Presidents of the train company also were, depending on moment of time, presidents of the post office company, of petrol companies, of electricity companies, of different kind of trading companies.

In the last 20 years, the national train company was privatized and segmented in several fields of activity: the stations, regional trains, national high-speed trains (diapo: here you see a map with high speed trains, it's about the same as the one from 1960 – diapo 9)

High salaries and investment priorities are not topics discussed in the media. The only matter that was pointed out in the media in 15 last years were the strikes, it is almost never explained why the workers are striking, the strikes are pictured and named "hostage taking" of the users

¹⁵ <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k64888708.item>

of the train. In 2007, President Nicolas Sarkozy implemented a rule on the “minimum service during the strikes”. That means even if everyone would want to go on strike, trains will run and some workers be forced to work. The media presented this law as a great progress for mobility. Between March and June 2018, the train company workers went on strike repeatedly 3 days per week during 3 months. They protested against the fact that they will lose the social advantages they had in their working conditions (earlier retirement because difficult working conditions, some economical bonuses, the right for them and their family to travel for free or almost...). The media pictured them as workers having “privileges” (the word is strong in French it refers to nobility during the 1789 revolution) from an old time, they were pictured as privileged workers from a public service which needs to adjust to a time and its economy. This necessary adjustment always presented like the only development possible for our time is what Thiong’o describes as “capitalist fundamentalism”, only one destiny, the same for all, no choice.

Two scandals concerning the train company occurred in the last 10 years. They were quickly reported in the mainstream media.

First one concern the Jews deportation during the second world war. The French railway company deported 76.000 Jews to concentration camps in between 1942-44.¹⁶ The director recognized and apologized in 2011, after a US company from Maryland refused to sign a contract with the french Railway company until it will recognize its participation in the deportation and pay reparations to the concern families. In 2014, the French State paid 60 million USD to the concerned families their number was not precise and the US accepted not to suit the company. This is another detour I will not enter today but I want to mention. First, I recommend you to read the book of Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, 1961, to understand the role played by the different countries within Europe in the deportation of Jews. It is important to notice that the citizenship in France protected the Jews, only the refugees were deported. Another point, I develop elsewhere, especially in my classes it’s the competition among victims regarding of the injustices of the past. This is especially strong in France between the victims of the WW2 and the victims of slavery and colonization and plays in the way the Israël-Palestine context is referred to in France. I refer here to the work of Lim Jie-Hyun, *Mourning Nations Victimhood Nationalism and Historical Reconciliation*, 2008. Sara Ahmed in the *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2004 also addressed this topic in regard with shame.

¹⁶ https://www.lemonde.fr/ameriques/article/2014/12/05/etats-unis-paris-va-indemniser-les-victimes-de-la-shoah-transportees-par-la-sncf_4535530_3222.html

The matter sediments, Sara Ahmed would say it “sticks”.

Second scandal concerns the status of « Chibanis », ¹⁷ Chibanis means « grey hair » in Arabic, it refers to old people who came from Northern Africa to work right after the decolonization. Several French companies went in Northern Africa to recruit working forces in the 1960's and until 1973. The French train company hired about 2000 Moroccans to work in France. They conducted a court case against the company and won it in autumn 2017. They did the same work as the French employees but because of their nationality, they were not paid the same, they had to work ten years longer, they were not allowed to study and access to the internal promotions like the other workers, and their pension is lower. The French railway company was condemned for discrimination and paid them some compensation.

Since its foundation in 1938, we find back discourses about the fact that the company has made a loss. This reason is the one advocate for example to close lines that are not making enough profit and contribute to the loss of the company. The loss is the argument used for opening market to competition since about 10 years, I need to trace back precisely this discourse. The market should start to be open this year 2019 on the regional level, it has already been opened on the national level, but still not completely. It is really difficult to understand these economical movements. I will leave on the side for now the general situation and focus on the governance of the stations. “Gares et connexions” is a company affiliated to the main SNCF, it was launched in 2009, but became visible in the stations only lately, in the last two years. Their slogan is “let's create another experience at the station” [*créons une nouvelle expérience en gare*], Their motto, “bring more well-being in people's life” <https://www.gares-sncf.com/fr>. Patrick Ropert actual president of the company published a book last year “City Boosters” (the title is in English, the book in French). According to him, stations have to become hubs, city boosters within the competition between megalopolis.

I list here some projects already going on or achieved:¹⁸

- Luxury renovation of the Gare du Nord in Paris, which is the station where many people living in the Northern Suburb access the city of Paris. Opening of luxury shops inside the station, which is a really beautiful building.

¹⁷ https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2018/01/31/la-sncf-condamnee-a-180-millions-deuros-pour-discrimination-envers-les-chibanis-marocains_a_23349531/

¹⁸ <http://plus.lefigaro.fr/tag/patrick-ropert>

- Opening of a top-of-the-range gym club in Gare Saint-Lazare in Paris.
- Gare de Montparnasse another station in Paris, here it is possible to eat some “grande cuisine française” for about 120 euros the lunch (4200 NTD).
- The station of Lyon Part Dieu, is actually renovated. It will be bigger and have its own commercial center. It is yet not possible to know which kind of shop will be there, since the station was built in 1983 and at this time was already a “hub”, pretty strange in the landscape and turned to the commercial center, with its 22000 parking lots for cars.¹⁹

Everywhere around the country stations are disconnected from the trains and attached to business and upper-class living standards. The problem is not everyone is rich in France, poverty is even increasing. Stations have until now been places where poor people were coming to beg, maybe to dream about mobility in space or socially. (Diapo).

Three sociologists Dominique Memmi, Emmanuel Taïeb, Gilles Raveneau launch recently a call for paper for an important sociological gathering in August 2019. They question the fact that lately social spaces are more and more excluding the outcast, especially the ones having bodies which provoke disgust: older people, disabled people, poor people who can't access to hygiene equipment... They state in the call for paper that this exclusion of the non-legitimate bodies is also more important in the hospitals and other health care centers.²⁰

With this research, I intend to understand the difference between securing and reassuring (*le sécuritaire* and *le sécurisant*).

After the terrorist attacks of 2015, safety policies were actively deployed especially in the stations and the trains, considered as risky public spaces. The army is present in the stations (*operation sentinelle*) most of the time 4 to 8 armed soldiers. The railway company has also its own police, in the train between Saint Etienne and Lyon they are about 6 to 10 depends on the time of the day. The national police. The local police assisting the controls. The private security watching the platforms and station. This is regular days. There may be also the border police,

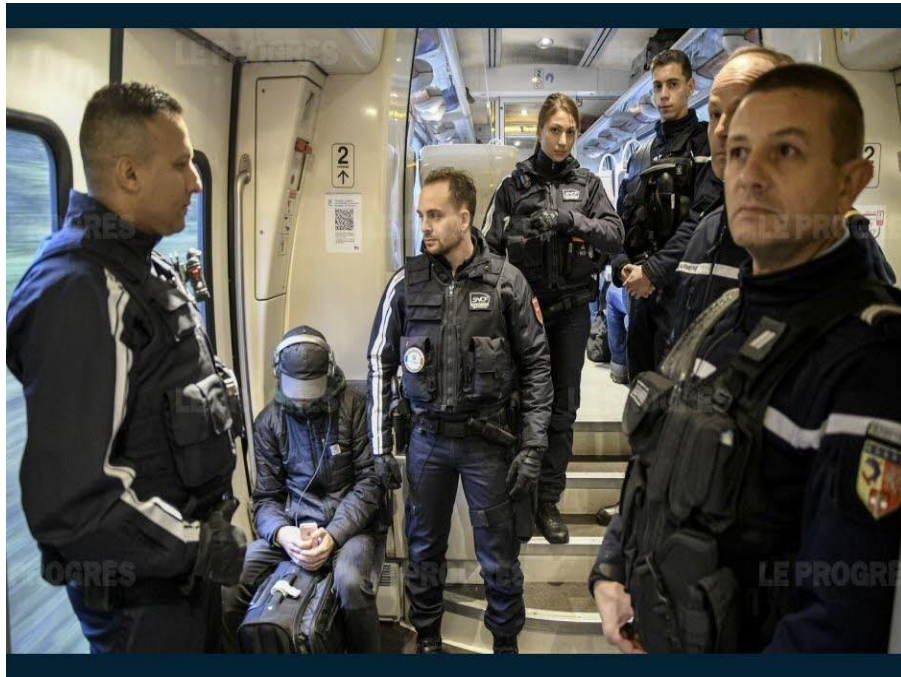
¹⁹ La Partdieu vu par les jeunes lyonnais, INA, 1977 (2 years after the reconstructions of the district, its commercial centers, its business buildings (mainly banks and insurances) and its train station (1983). <https://sites.ina.fr/lyon-partdieu/focus/chapitre/2>. Les chantiers de la Part Dieu en 1970, <https://sites.ina.fr/lyon-partdieu/focus/media/LXC9706184444> at this time bigger commercial center of France.

²⁰ <http://afs-socio.fr/appele-a-communication/160/declasser-par-corps-classements-declassements-sociaux-et-affects/> (in French)

the anti-riot police these would be let's say still exceptional even though since the last yellow vest movements (autumn 2018 to spring 2019), the control of the anti-riot police are reinforced in the stations.



The Center of Regional Safety of Transportations, said to be the most modern in France opened in La Part Dieu Lyon in November 2018, it is said it will watch the 123 stations around the region.²¹ These stations are described in French as “*sensibles*”. This adjective is also used within the media to qualify the poorest suburbs of France, “*les quartiers sensibles*”. “*Sensible*” means at the same time sensitive and noticeable, it became in the media and within the frame of securitarian policies synonymous of dangerous.



On this picture illustrating a journalist article on police patrolling in local trains, in the local newspaper, *le Progrès*, 2018, December the 1st, we can see someone eyes to the ground, wearing a cap, listening to some music. How to read this picture? Who is sensitive? Who is noticeable? Where the protection becomes and occupation?

Until last year in stations it was postsiged according to the law “*you are in a video watched space*”. The signposts were changed (for now, I couldn’t find the expenses attached to this change of vocabulary). Now one can read “*you are in a video protected space*”. To be watched or to be protected becomes an important question of democracy and public freedom?

²¹ https://www.auvergnerrhonealpes.fr/uploads/Presse/a4/344_130_DP-10-15-inauguration-CRST-vf.pdf (in French)

In the region Rhône-Alpes Auvergne in between 2015 to 2021, 85 millions euros will have been invested into safety in trains,²² new security forces, new cameras and watching equipment and the fact that since 2017, the different policemen and army members are allowed to travel for free in the regional trains with their weapon outside of their working time.

Studying a train line means questioning the concept of mobility, of displacement that is the capacity for the body to move and to interact with others. What is at stake here is not only how we are transported (the train line economics) but what is transporting us? What becomes “*sensible*” – sensitive or/and noticeable in the trains between Saint-Étienne and Lyon, and in the different stations. The train users tend to belong to rather disadvantaged social groups because of tariff modulation practices (reduced fare cards such as the regional 75 %-reduction *illico-solidaire* card), impossible or limited access to private car for poor people, young people, women and the elderly, the necessity to go to Lyon for administrative procedures – especially for refugees and migrants, and the disparity of economical and cultural attractiveness between Saint-Etienne and Lyon.²³ What are the impressions formed and left by a train travel on this regional line?

“To form an impression might involve acts of perception and cognition as well as an emotion. But forming an impression also depends on how objects impress upon us. An impression can be an effect on the subject’s feelings (‘she made an impression’). It can be a belief (‘to be under an impression’). It can be an imitation or an image (‘to create an impression’). Or it can be a mark on the surface (‘to leave an impression’). We need to remember the ‘press’ in an impression. It allows us to associate the experience of having an emotion with the very effect of one surface upon another, an affect that leaves its mark or trace. So not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave me with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me. I will use the idea of ‘impression’ as it allows me to avoid making analytical

²² https://www.lamontagne.fr/lyon/transport/securite/2018/10/27/le-centre-regional-de-securite-ferroviaire-de-lyon-en-cinq-chiffres_13030745.html

²³ Lyon is the second or the third city of France (along with Marseille depending on the calculation with or without the agglomeration) in terms of both population and economical significance. In 2013, the unemployment rate was 13,5 %, the poverty rate 14,5 %, the median equivalised household income was 21 883 euros, the share of taxed households was 65,1 % (INSEE – French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Research). For a city of its size Saint-Etienne is the poorest agglomeration of the region Rhône-Alpes, the town also has a low ranking nationally. In comparison, still according to the figures from 2013, the unemployment rate was 19,8 %, the poverty rate at 21,6 %, the median equivalised household income was 17 694 euros, and the share of taxed households was 49,1 %.

distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought as if they could be 'experienced' as distinct realms of human 'experience'." Sara Ahmed. *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 2004, 2014, p. 6. How does a train travel shape our personal and collective experience?

A train line is a social space which gives the possibility to observe the circulation of affects and try to see how they impress upon us: the announcements controlling passenger flows, the relations between train staff, security officers and users, the fleeting and more or less friendly exchanges between passengers, the different uses of communication (or isolation) technologies, the different moods or states of mind of people as individuals or as part of social groups... A train line is synonymous with affect sharing. We use the French word "*partage*" here in its double meaning (Rada Ivekovic) of *sharing* and *partition*: we occupy a space at a given time while at the same time cutting ourselves off from others – we chose a compartment (the compartment as subdivision).

Observation Saint-Etienne Chateaucieux 2018 December the 14th 2018:

I just travelled to visit some friends in Lyon for the evening. Mail hall of the station Saint-Etienne Chateaucieux, 19h46. (4 soldiers are pointing their rifles to the entrance, one in each corner. In one corner 4 national policemen) I walk to one of them, a woman officer and start a conversation:

- *"Is something happening?"*

- *"No, a regular evening"*

- *"Really, I was worried when I entered the station and saw all these police forces."*

"That's a pity, it is made to reassure you."

"to see a soldier in each corner doesn't feel really reassuring."

"it's every day like this, we are here, we are here to keep a close watch to the arrival of the highspeed train [from Paris]"

"usually the soldiers are walking together they don't spread in each corner..."

"them they are l'opération sentinelle, I don't know how they are supposed to stand. We are here and it's just usual."

On the platform, are standing four railways policemen. The train is on time.

Observation La Part Dieu Station in Lyon, 2018, August 2nd. Around 2 pm. Outside the

station, I smoke a cigarette during the transfer. I go and visit friends in Grenoble. A Roma woman with a baby having the face full of chocolate is asking the crowd for some baby-wipes. A woman sitting beside me comment the scene, *“they always need to make themselves visible”*.

Observation Saint-Etienne Chateaucieux, 2017, January the 16th. I arrive at the station at 14h56, I plan to conduct an observation for the whole afternoon. I see a young black boy all dressed up in black, 14h59. I wonder how long it will take before the police control him? The police arrived at 15:07, it took 8 minutes. After an identity control, they explain to him, he scares the people around him dressed up all in black with a hood on his head, they leave him with an advice: *« try to make yourself unnoticeable! »* Later, I speak with him, he is 19 years old, used to police controls in his daily life.

The same day I sit on one of the ten sun loungers, set in a part of the station converted into the “total relaxation space”, between each sun lounge a thin plexiglass partition, on top of each sun lounge broad lamps are playing relaxing music, a soft voice comes from the loudspeaker and says regularly “listen with a quiet mind”. From this “relaxing space” one can read a sign on which it is written: *« Careful together. Label your luggage, don't leave your personal belongings, watch under your seat or around, if you see abandoned luggage, speak with your neighbour. If you have some doubts call the safety officers, follow their instructions, they are trained for your safety. SNCF Emergency number 3117. »*

Carefully exploring the architecture and available information in the station of Saint-Etienne Chateaucieux (main station) shows we travel with extremely contradictory information and atmosphere.



My picture. On January, Thursday 31st 2019. In the train between Hsinchu and Tainan.

How could these different affects be mapped and how to describe these heteropias?²⁴

How does history “stick” to the present and keep on producing emotions in time, space and movement?

How do the trains understood as “intense spaces of transitory sociality” (Sara Ahmed, 2004, p. 215) shaped by capitalist policies shape in return our bodies and life?

Even if trains are the space per se of the in-camera movie, studying the railways and trains open up to many relations, in the time, in the space. Like in *Shanghai Express*, when do we close the curtain? Or open the door? To what? To whom?

Trains and railways might be a space to transform oneself and the world around. In some movies the frame of the train is the time and space where a mystery will be solved. What links

²⁴ « The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. Of course one might attempt to describe these different sites by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined. For example, describing the set of relations that define the sites of transportation, streets, trains (a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by). » *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, March 1967 (Des Espace Autres), translation from the French, 1984 by Jay Miskowiec.

can be made between global local economies, global governance and democracy?

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