



A study of the evolution of the city's public policies from the perspective of the mobility of residents in priority neighbourhoods

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Abstract

Mobility inequalities in French priority neighbourhoods, or *Quartiers Prioritaires de la Politique de la Ville* (QPVs), have historically been addressed through transport infrastructure and urban regeneration policies. However, these approaches do not explain the mobility difficulties experienced by residents, which also stem from social, economic and educational inequalities. This paper examines how French public policies addressing mobility in priority neighbourhoods have evolved from an infrastructure-centred approach towards a broader conception of inclusive mobility. It asks to what extent this shift reflects a transformation in the understanding of mobility inequalities. The article combines a historical and policy analysis of urban and transport legislation with a review of academic literature and institutional reports (INSEE, CEREMA, ANRU, ANCT, SYTRAL). It also includes a thematic analysis of French press coverage of priority neighbourhoods using *Europresse* to identify changes in public debate over time. The analysis shows that mobility remained largely secondary within successive urban policies, which primarily focused on housing renewal, social mix and urban regeneration. Since the 2000s, and particularly following the 2019 Mobility Orientation Act (LOM), public action has progressively incorporated the notion of inclusive mobility through personalised support measures such as mobility advice, social driving schools, cycling schools and community-based initiatives. These innovations recognise that access to transport alone is insufficient without developing residents' mobility capabilities. The paper argues that mobility policies are gradually shifting from an infrastructure-based model towards a capability-oriented approach, although investment in personalised mobility support remains marginal compared with expenditure on transport infrastructure.

Keywords

Inclusive mobility; Urban policy; Priority neighbourhoods; Mobility inequalities; France

1. Introduction

Mobility challenges in priority neighbourhoods cannot be explained solely by a lack of infrastructure; they also stem from social inequalities and the unequal distribution of resources, whilst public policies have long favoured a territorial and infrastructure-based approach. The paper will therefore ask the following question: How have public policies addressed mobility in priority neighbourhoods, and to what extent is the emergence of inclusive mobility transforming this approach?



2. Data and methods

This research adopts a qualitative approach, combining historical, policy, and documentary analyses to examine the evolution of French public policies addressing mobility in priority neighbourhoods (QPV). First, a historical analysis was conducted to reconstruct the evolution of French urban policy from the emergence of large housing estates after the Second World War to the introduction of priority neighbourhoods under the 2014 Lamy Act. This historical perspective enables understanding how mobility issues progressively emerged within broader urban regeneration policies.

To complement the institutional perspective, the study includes a thematic analysis of French press articles retrieved through the Europresse database. Articles relating to priority neighbourhoods were classified by dominant themes (housing, employment, security, and mobility) to examine how public debate evolved over time and whether media attention reflected shifts in public policy priorities.

Although this study is primarily based on documentary and policy analysis, illustrative examples from the Lyon metropolitan area are used to show how national mobility policies are implemented at the local level. The objective is not to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives empirically but to illustrate the practical translation of national policy orientations into local mobility measures.

Finally, the documentary analysis was complemented by a review of the academic literature on mobility inequalities, urban policy and inclusive mobility. The theoretical framework is mainly based on the concepts of motility (Kaufmann et al., 2004), mobility capital (Joxe, 2022) and the transition from transport planning to sustainable mobility management (Debizet, 2004). These concepts provide the analytical framework for interpreting the evolution of French mobility policies.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Priority neighbourhoods: an overview of a fantasised urban space at the heart of urban policy

The history of working-class neighbourhoods began after the Second World War with the construction of large housing estates during the *Trente Glorieuses* (1945–75). Faced with a housing shortage in the wake of the war's devastation, growing demand for labour from industry, rural depopulation and an influx of migrant workers, the State responded rapidly by creating entire neighbourhoods on a massive scale. These housing estates (*grands ensembles*) were initially conceived as modern urban projects intended to provide decent housing close to employment opportunities. The example of Vaulx-en-Verin illustrates the scale of development relative to what existed at the time: 40,000 new residents were expected to join the approximately 21,000 recorded in 1968 (Lévêque, 2019). These neighbourhoods were subsequently populated by French and immigrant working-class people, civil servants, young households and returnees from Algeria (Lévêque, 2019), maintaining a high degree of social diversity within the new housing estates. However, this was criticised by Chamboredon and Lemaire (1970).

However, as living standards in France improved and private car ownership became more widespread, the detached house model gained ground shortly after the construction of the *grands ensembles*. – largely because the rise of the car made it possible to live farther from their workplaces. The middle classes living in these estates, who had access to mortgages due to their more stable financial situation than others, moved out of housing estates, leaving the more financially vulnerable part of the population behind. This process progressively concentrated poverty within these estates and transformed what had been presented as symbols of modernity into neighbourhoods increasingly associated with social exclusion.

Whilst the *grands ensembles* were seen as utopian at the time of their construction – offering access to amenities such as heating, lifts and bathrooms, as well as proximity to employment – they were fairly quickly criticised by the late 1960s for their failure in terms of socialisation, housing and the Act of living. Following a period of strong growth, several events were expected to impact these neighbourhoods significantly. In 1973, the first oil crisis hit, and in 1974, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing suspended labour immigration and opened family reunification to immigrants



already in France. French society then experienced a sharp slowdown in growth, placing the working-class population, amongst whom immigrants were particularly prominent, in a highly precarious position. With deindustrialisation, unemployment soared, rising from full employment in the 1960s to mass unemployment (5.6 per cent in 1980 and 9.1 per cent in 1985) severely affecting the working class.

The 1980s saw the onset of urban riots, notably in the Lyon housing estate Les Minguettes, and brought the issues of the suburbs and discrimination to the fore with the March for Equality and Against Racism. This represented the beginning of urban policy aimed at addressing the negative effects of concentrated poverty. The introduction of the 'Social Development of Neighbourhoods' (*Développement Social des Quartiers*, DSQ) programme marked a shift in scale in French public policy, with an ambition that already extended beyond individual neighbourhoods. This first generation of programmes laid the foundations for subsequent urban policies, which progressively expanded their objectives beyond urban renewal. These events marked the emergence of French urban policy, initially focusing on combating territorial inequalities through neighbourhood-based interventions. Working-class neighbourhoods did not become areas of concentrated immigration and poverty through a single mechanism, but through the accumulation of constraints limiting residential mobility and public policy measures that encouraged this demographic pattern. This concentration is thus part of a broader history of inequalities in access to housing, employment and urban resources.

The analysis of the current population must be assessed from several angles. Firstly, it is important to assess the population's social characteristics and compare them with those of the rest of France. It can then be seen that the population in working-class neighbourhoods is younger (average age: 35 years compared with 41 years in the rest of urban areas) and has a higher unemployment rate. Social diversity is limited in these areas, with a low proportion of professionals and a predominance of clerical and manual workers. The most challenging social circumstances are often concentrated here, with a considerable number of large and single-parent families, tenants and those living below the poverty line. Youth unemployment is particularly high in these areas.

The case of Lyon, the metropole, highlights this phenomenon. The map produced by the Lyon Urban Planning Agency shows that towns with a high density of priority neighbourhoods have youth unemployment rates of up to 33 per cent. Conversely, towns without any priority neighbourhoods are less affected by mass unemployment. The populations of QPVs have a higher proportion of people from immigrant backgrounds than the rest of France, two to three times that proportion. This, therefore, gives rise to other issues: access to education and language learning amongst young people, social exclusion, and difficulties in understanding the services available to them. Educational disadvantages and language barriers further restrict access to employment and everyday mobility. Lower driving licence ownership, lower car availability and reduced access to public transport contribute to lower levels of daily mobility. Thus, travel is infrequent: 20 to 30 per cent of the population in priority neighbourhoods only go out when necessary and make only essential journeys. Economic deprivation also limits access to leisure, employment opportunities and mobility because travelling itself represents a financial cost.

Residents of QPVs are therefore fairly sedentary due to limited resources and a lack of understanding, yet they are largely deprived of public services. Whilst QPVs are fairly isolated from state services, they do have other strengths. The voluntary sector is strong and, above all, essential to local life, as evidenced by its role in shaping public policy. It enables several things: it addresses the State's shortcomings in QPVs regarding public services, maintains strong social ties within neighbourhoods, and makes it easier to bring local issues to the attention of public authorities. Despite these difficulties, local associations play a crucial role in compensating for limited public services, supporting residents and acting as intermediaries with public authorities. However, their dependence on public funding often limits their autonomy. They are frequently in a precarious position despite the importance of the tasks entrusted to them (mediation, education, social integration).

The Etouvie Social and Cultural Centre illustrates these tensions between civic mobilisation and institutional dependence. During discussions on the launch of the 2014 National Urban Regeneration Plan, numerous community groups participated, as documented in AC Le Feu's report. This report, co-authored by Mohamed Mechmache, an educator, and Marie-Hélène Bacqué, an urban planner, was sent to Mr Lamy to highlight the needs of residents in priority neighbourhoods (QPV).



Priority neighbourhoods are also of interest to the media and politicians. Owing to their precarious economic and social situation and their large population, they attract significant attention from the political class. Figure 1 highlights an important point: employment and housing feature most prominently in discussions about working-class neighbourhoods (often accounting for nearly 60 per cent of all articles). Security, often associated with working-class neighbourhoods, has steadily declined as a proportion of total articles but has risen again in recent years, potentially linked to the urban riots following Nahel's death. The issue of mobility, meanwhile, emerged relatively late in the media and remains marginal in the debate despite its major importance for access to employment. Finally, another potential insight is that the press appears to be a good indicator of the public authorities' priorities. The figure shows that the overwhelming majority of the debate centred on housing during the Borloo Plan (Gallois, Nieddu, 2015). Conversely, housing took a back seat (-16 per cent) in favour of employment when François Hollande launched the employment laws (*emplois francs*). Similarly, in the year leading up to the National Front's second-round run-off in the 2002 election, the media focused on security (24 per cent of articles covered security and employment, and 26 per cent covered housing).

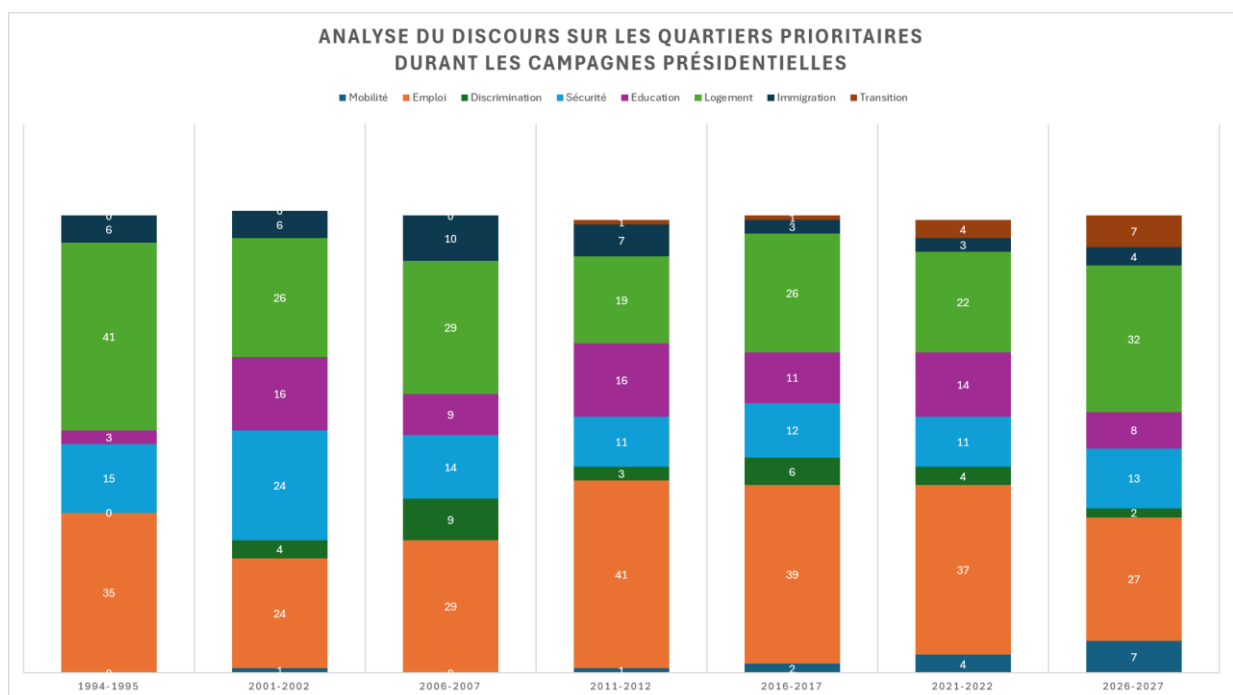


Figure 1 – Trends in the topics covered in press articles on priority neighbourhoods during presidential campaigns – Europresse data

3.2 Public policies and their impact on mobility in the suburbs

The term *urban policy* first appeared in the late 1980s. Prior to that, urban policy had focused on the neighbourhood level, an approach that many reports sought to move beyond through the 'quarrel over scales'. In this context, the drive for urban continuity and the development of autonomous neighbourhoods were a cause for concern. Creation of city contracts with a social cohesion component resulted in the development of the Solidarity and Urban Renewal Act (SRU), which introduced an inter-municipal allocation system for social housing (Kirszbaum, Epstein, 2010: 46). In these public policies, mobility was therefore focused on travel within neighbourhoods and had not yet been generalised. Mobility gradually gained prominence amid criticisms of a breakdown in social cohesion and a 'fragmented city', which began to concern the public authorities. However, this did not prevent certain metropolitan areas, such as the Lyon metropolitan area, from failing to develop heavy transport infrastructure linking high-density residential areas to the conurbation's centre.

Subsequently, social cohesion was placed at the heart of these ambitious policies. The Borloo Plan was the first large-scale initiative to address the effects of urban inequality. As part of its reforms, it established the National Agency for Urban Regeneration (ANRU), which is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of urban policy. The



programme relied primarily on large-scale demolition and reconstruction to promote social mix and improve the physical environment of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. The SUZ (Sensitive Urban Zone) areas were portrayed as 'disadvantaged' neighbourhoods that the government wished to bring up to standard. In addition to forced residential relocation, this also involved infrastructure works to improve access. No consideration is given to the history of these neighbourhoods, to the promotion of their strengths, or even to residents' attachment to them. The systematic demolitions were reformed under the New National Urban Renewal Plan (NPNRU), in which public authorities sought to engage in more dialogue and involve residents in the initiatives, notably by creating 'project centres'. Although mobility appears among the programme's objectives, urban renewal remained primarily centred on housing and employment rather than mobility itself.

Mobility was not the primary objective of these large-scale urban renewal programmes, which focused mainly on housing, urban regeneration and social cohesion. However, during the same period, French transport policy underwent a profound transformation. As highlighted by Debizet (2004), it progressively shifted from a transport-planning paradigm to a broader mobility-management approach. This evolution was accompanied by a transformation in the expertise that supports public decision-making and a diversification of policy objectives beyond infrastructure provision. It is within this broader evolution that the main transport and mobility laws should be understood.

In 1982, the Pierre Mauroy government introduced the Framework Act on Domestic Transport (LOTI) (Saroli, 2015) in order to implement a "right to transport that enables users to travel under reasonable conditions of access, quality and price, as well as in terms of cost to the community, in particular through the use of a means of transport open to the public". The legislation places an emphasis on geographically disadvantaged populations ("Disadvantaged social groups, particularly those in island areas and remote or hard-to-reach regions of the national territory, may be subject to provisions tailored to their situation."). The issue of transport features in the Act and, with it, the emergence of the issue of mobility. Indeed, Article 2 includes "the right of users to be informed", which could be understood as the beginning of the consideration of the individual beyond infrastructure. The LOTI remains, however, first and foremost a law that defines the role of each public institution in mobility by presenting mobility as a joint effort between local authorities and the State. It provides for the introduction of urban transport plans (PDU).

This was followed in 1996 by the Act on Air Quality and the Rational Use of Energy (Belot, 1996). This Act radically changed the PDU's vision, giving it a much stronger environmental focus to reduce car use and develop public and sustainable transport, particularly to improve air quality, as set out in Articles 28 and 28-1. It also makes it compulsory to draw up a PDU within two years of the Act coming into force. The PDU thus becomes more than just an administrative tool; it is an environmental policy instrument aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, and at promoting alternatives to car travel (public transport, cycling, etc.). However, the effectiveness of the PDU is often questioned. The multitude of plans (Local Urban Development Plan (PLU), Territorial Cohesion Scheme (SCOT), Local Housing Plan (PLH) and Urban Transport Plan (PDU)) makes coordination difficult. There are also significant developments: the growing importance of mobility – "mobility is increasing through more frequent journeys over longer distances" – and the role of the State in addressing the lack of coherence between plans: *"Establishing a better balance within urban areas. This is impossible when housing, transport and planning policies are neither designed on the right scale nor in a way that is consistent with a genuine urban area development plan, one that takes social and territorial balances into account."*

Thus, following the SRU Act of 2000, the Urban Transport Plan has been strengthened and aligned with the Territorial Coherence Scheme (SCoT), thereby enabling better coordination between transport policies and territorial development. This development also reinforces the role of urban transport organising authorities (AOTUs). The development is mainly carried out by public inter-municipal cooperation bodies (EPCIs), now responsible for drawing up the PDUs. This evolution reflects a broader shift towards integrated mobility governance. Recent studies underline that accessibility depends not only on transport infrastructure but also on the coordination between land-use planning and transport policies, as fragmented urban development may reinforce territorial inequalities in mobility (Macsinka, 2025).

In 2010, under President Sarkozy's leadership, there was a desire to simplify transport management. The Transport Code was drafted with this aim in mind. Its preamble states: *"This Code therefore pursues two*



complementary objectives: to bring together, organise and clarify a fragmented and heterogeneous body of law, and to place this reorganised body within a framework that gives full effect to the founding principles defined by the aforementioned Act of 30 December 1982." It therefore brings together the various modes of transport by harmonising them. One objective stands out clearly: the desire to develop intermodalisation in urban transport. Indeed, this is the first requirement cited in the President of the Republic's report on the Act: *"a comprehensive transport policy establishing coordination of public authorities' policies, the promotion of intermodality, environmental protection and citizen participation"*. The report also details the responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the mobility sector: the State, the Transport Regulatory Authority, and the port authority.

This decentralisation of the State's powers continued with the NOTRe Act, which focused on rail transport, and then the Mobility Orientation Act (LOM) in 2019, which completed the devolution of powers to local authorities. Whilst this approach has evolved gradually – as evidenced by the differences between the PNRU and the NPNRU on issues of dialogue and individuals – the LOM Act also reflects this change by building on new proposals: financial incentives for sustainable transport, financial assistance for driving licences, and the development of innovative solutions. However, the LOM also indirectly affects QPVs. Indeed, the LOM broadens the scope of action on solidarity-based mobility: *"funding for voluntary organisations promoting 'inclusive mobility' to develop and sustain support for mobility among certain vulnerable groups, with services going beyond mobility advice: learning to ride a bike, community garages."*

Overall, the evolution of French transport policy illustrates a gradual shift from infrastructure provision towards a broader understanding of mobility that combines accessibility, territorial planning, and individual support. This evolution provides the institutional context for the emergence of inclusive mobility initiatives, which are examined in the following sections. This evolution is consistent with broader European trends in transport governance, where sustainable mobility policies increasingly combine multimodal transport, accessibility, digitalisation (Mobility as a Service) and social inclusion rather than focusing exclusively on infrastructure provision (Tánczos, 2025).

3.3 From access to transport to mobility capacity: understanding mobility inequalities in priority neighbourhoods

This paper examines the history and specific characteristics of priority neighbourhoods and their role in public policy. Whilst there are many forms of inequality within these neighbourhoods, this section will now focus on one in particular: mobility inequality.

3.3.1 Improving access as the primary response to inequalities in mobility

Priority neighbourhoods, the majority of which are drawn from ZUPs, are situated mainly on the outskirts of major urban centres and are difficult to access. As public transport is often concentrated in the more densely populated city centres, QPVs are often less well served than the rest of their metropolitan area. However, residents of these neighbourhoods are also those with the least access to a car: 60.6 per cent hold a driving licence, compared with 85 per cent in the rest of France. Due to its high cost, a driving licence is a scarcer resource among residents who are, nevertheless, more dependent on it. Goudie (2000) has highlighted the importance of – and indeed the heavy reliance on – cars amongst residents of QPVs by demonstrating that, despite this disparity in driving licence ownership, a working-class man is more likely to use his car when he lives in a QPV. This issue, therefore, raises the question of the degree of isolation.

This isolation is often physical, caused by roads, 'impassable' areas, such as cemeteries or airports, and other obstacles, or by topographical features such as steep slopes. This can therefore create a strong sense of separation from the rest of the city and discourage residents from leaving the neighbourhood. This isolation can also make it more difficult to provide efficient public transport and force people to take long detours to reach urban centres. However, where these barriers are significant, such isolation is, in extreme cases, largely offset by public authorities, which sometimes step up efforts to improve access to public transport.

However, one point clearly highlights a major difference in mobility between residents of priority neighbourhoods and those in other neighbourhoods. Goudie (2000) has, in fact, shown that residents of priority neighbourhoods



spend the same amount of time travelling as other residents. However, the distance travelled is shorter, except for small urban units (Goudie (2000) attributes this difference to the fact that the sample of urban units with a population of less than 50,000 consists of areas on the outskirts of major urban centres).

Early public policies focused primarily on infrastructure. It was not until the 1990s that other forms of support began to emerge. In 1991, social driving schools emerged with the 'Permis pour l'avenir' initiative in Nanterre. The stated aim of the initiative was to promote social integration in priority neighbourhoods by enabling the most vulnerable people to obtain a driving licence. Then, in the 2000s, 'mobility centres' and the role of mobility adviser emerged. However, the government was slow to invest heavily in these schemes. In 2024, whilst billions are invested each year in infrastructure, the Inclusive Mobility Laboratory estimates 'the economic value of inclusive mobility at 150 million euros'. Support organisations still rely heavily on volunteers (50 per cent use them), and 14 per cent of their working time is spent seeking funding. This support has helped 200,000 people, compared with an estimated 5 to 7 million who need such assistance. The scale of the gap between mobility support and spending on new infrastructure raises questions.

In the Lyon metropolitan area, investment in new infrastructure in 2026 amounts to 1.057 billion euros. The development of tram lines is quite costly, and the introduction of the T9, T10, and TB12 lines, as well as the extension of the T6 line, is significantly driving up costs. It is claimed that, once these projects are completed, investment levels are expected to fall again.

However, whilst infrastructure development is essential for providing residents with access across the region, mobility support is irreplaceable, particularly in priority neighbourhoods, where rates of employment, language proficiency, driving licence ownership and car ownership among households are lower. The Lyon Metropolis offers personal financial assistance, socially responsible pricing, the expansion of the 'free-vélo' scheme, and the development of cycling schools. However, the investment is much lower. The Mobility Inclusion Scheme (DMI), with a budget of 150 million per year, is estimated at 400,000 per sector – less than 0.3 per cent of the budget allocated to developing new infrastructure.

3.3.2 Inequalities in mobility beyond social isolation

Gender inequalities in mobility are not unique to the "suburbs", but they are sometimes particularly pronounced there. This is already evident in the proportion of immobile people. The Goudie (2000) survey reveals a striking finding: women in the "suburbs" of the Paris urban area are twice as likely to be immobile as those in other areas. Similarly, outside Paris, there is a 4% gap compared with the rest of the urban area's population, even though no such gap is observed between men in priority neighbourhoods (QPVs) and the rest of the urban area. There are several explanations for these results. Firstly, the rate of economic inactivity is higher amongst residents of QPVs, and even higher amongst women. This therefore implies a reduction in commuting and a more general decline in mobility (half the distance travelled compared with those in employment). Furthermore, households in QPVs have, on average, fewer motor vehicles: whilst the proportion of households owning a motor vehicle is the same as outside QPVs, few households own two motor vehicles. Consequently, one of the two partners often has to give up driving, with women disproportionately bearing the burden of this sacrifice. As a result, they quite quickly exceed their daily 'transport budget' (travel time budget) because public transport is far less efficient, and so they do not venture out again after making essential journeys. In addition to this difference in usage, there is also a difference in objectives. Indeed, women play the leading role in care-related travel, even when their husbands are not at work. This role therefore accounts for a large proportion of their travel, once again reducing their daily 'transport budget' by taking up a significant part of their daily lives. This time spent on accompanying others is therefore time not spent on personal travel, such as commuting to work or other activities. Whilst gender-based inequalities do exist, other factors also influence mobility. Among these, age is a notable example.

Oppenchain (2013) and Gallou (2021) have both worked on typical profiles of priority neighbourhoods. The first example concerns the approach to children. Various fairly typical profiles may emerge, for example, those of 'protected' girls. These children, the majority of whom come from minority backgrounds and socio-economically vulnerable families, grow up under parental pressure that leads them to fear the neighbourhood in which they live. The children, therefore, associate their environment with danger and are more often less mobile. This obviously has



a significant impact, as mobility is acquired through experimentation and repetition. These children, therefore, fall significantly behind in mobility. This has an even greater impact as they are not necessarily well integrated into the local area around their homes. A contrasting profile also emerges. Often female, this profile of 'flâneuses' (strollers), as described by Oppenchain (2013), is characterised by a high degree of mobility. Their rejection of the neighbourhood is reflected in their increased use of public transport. Repeated experiences enable a better understanding of the transport network and social norms. The other rather distinctive profile is that of immigrants, including a group that Gallou (2021) has focused on: elderly immigrant women. Gallou (2021) describes this group as often finding themselves in difficult circumstances due to precarious employment, limited language proficiency and poor health. As a result, they often rely more on their local community than on public institutions, which are too complex to understand. Although these profiles are fairly typical of QPVs, they have still been studied relatively little. Few public policies take these specific circumstances into account. These profiles raise questions about the effectiveness of public services in QPVs.

These profiles prompt us to question the economic model of mobility. Indeed, what is the point of focusing on new, large-scale infrastructure projects if the people that must be helped are not actually helped in the end due to a lack of personalised support? This question leads us to the final section of the article, namely, the response to the specific problem faced by priority neighbourhoods regarding residents' mobility.

3.3.3 Towards a capability-based approach to mobility

This paper has therefore examined mobility inequalities and their impact on priority neighbourhoods (QPVs). These inequalities stem from a combination of factors that reduce travel and its efficiency. Firstly, there is physical access to transport, the State's primary objective in these public policies, which have brought about the construction of roads, buses, trams and even the underground to provide access to transport. Secondly, as seen in the previous section and in relation to the typical profiles of QPVs, there is the issue of transport acceptance. A fear of travelling or a lack of knowledge of the social norms typical of public transport can lead to journeys being cancelled or, at the very least, restricted. Finally, the concept of competence or the development of 'mobility capital' becomes significant. Even if the conditions for access and mobility plans are met, one still needs to know how to get around. Without this competence, a very dense network could reinforce the feeling of exclusion (Maguer et al., 1997). This competence can be seen as a form of capital in its own right, in the Bourdieusian sense. Kaufmann points out that the ability to move about, to be mobile, depends largely on this capacity. Thus, the objective – following the major policies on access to public transport implemented by the State and metropolitan authorities – would be to develop this capacity in order to reduce inequalities in mobility (Kaufmann et al., 2004).

These inequalities affect not only daily life but also work. The ability to move around, and indeed to have lived abroad, offers an added advantage during the recruitment process. This can be the case in research professions or within international organisations (e.g., Médecins Sans Frontières), where mobility serves as a springboard for promotion (Joxe, 2022).

Thus, providing everyone with the ability to get about in their daily lives and, potentially, to move abroad could help to rebalance each person's mobility capital and facilitate access not only to employment but also to more skilled jobs and promotions.

As part of this initiative, the Vienna and Gartempe Community of Communes has developed the concept of urban walking tours. The local authority chose this approach to promote active travel, with the walk comprising both theoretical and practical components. However, this phenomenon is also evident in priority neighbourhoods. The exploratory walks organised by SYTRAL and Keolis in the Lyon metropolitan area provide a better understanding of the difficulties women face when travelling in areas with higher levels of insecurity (Famy et al., 2008). This approach, which aims to tackle gender inequalities, could be used to examine various forms of inequality (age, family situation, etc.) and to take stronger and more effective action through public policy.

In Essonne (France), it was the public transport operator (TICE) that sought to address transport issues. To this end, it sent staff to primary and secondary schools to help younger pupils understand the transport network and make them aware of the services they were entitled to. This initiative has led to an increase in the number of passengers and in the number of people accessing the network's services, including income- or age-based season ticket fares.



These approaches show that it is possible to view mobility in a different light than purely state-led action. Local initiatives – whether public or private, professional or voluntary – are possible, and each can help us address different issues and reach a wider audience.

3.4. The city's priority neighbourhoods: a key urban arena for political life

The term *priority neighbourhood* (Quartiers Prioritaires de la Politique de la Ville, QPV) is a relatively recent concept in French urban policy. It first appeared in the Lamy Act, named after the Minister for Urban Affairs, of 21 February 2014. QPVs are defined in Article 5 by their location within urban areas and are characterised by a disparity in economic and social development, assessed based on residents' incomes. Therefore, these are the country's most socio-economically disadvantaged urban areas, where public intervention is considered necessary. In practice, the State designates neighbourhoods as 'priority' solely on the basis of their residents' income. Whilst this term is new in the history of urban policy, the concept itself dates back much further. The desire to identify areas facing difficulties within public policy stems in particular from the history of working-class neighbourhoods under the Fifth Republic.

The article reveals the transformation of the French public policies on mobility in priority neighbourhoods. Policies were initially focused on urban regeneration and housing improvements, when mobility was a focal issue. At first, mobility was understood as access to transport with the development of roads, buses, tramways and subways.

However, the literature and institutional reports reviewed in this paper show that physical accessibility alone does not explain the mobility difficulties experienced by QPV residents. Lower driving licence ownership, reduced access to private vehicles, educational disadvantages, language barriers and limited knowledge of transport systems all contribute to restricting daily mobility despite the availability of transport infrastructure.

These findings also suggest that existing accessibility indicators based on travel time, network density or infrastructure provision may not fully capture mobility inequalities. Individual factors such as driving licence ownership, mobility skills, confidence in using public transport, language proficiency and knowledge of available services significantly influence residents' ability to access opportunities. Integrating these behavioural and social dimensions into accessibility assessment could therefore improve transport engineering models and provide a more comprehensive understanding of mobility exclusion.

Since the 2000s, and more clearly following the Mobility Orientation Act (LOM) of 2019, public policies have progressively incorporated a broader conception of mobility based on personalised support. The emergence of mobility advisers, social driving schools, cycling schools and mobility inclusion programmes illustrates this transition from transport provision towards mobility capability. These initiatives aim to provide more than access to transport by developing residents' confidence and autonomy in their mobility.

From an evaluation perspective, the effectiveness of inclusive mobility policies could be assessed through multidimensional indicators rather than infrastructure provision alone. Possible indicators include driving licence acquisition, frequency of daily trips, access to employment, participation in education or training, autonomy in public transport, and perceived accessibility. Such indicators would better reflect the objectives of inclusive mobility policies and facilitate comparisons with traditional infrastructure investments.

Nevertheless, this transition remains incomplete. Infrastructure remains the largest share of public expenditure on mobility, and inclusive mobility and social initiatives are still struggling to secure financing from public actors. As a result, mobility inequalities continue to persist despite significant improvements in transport infrastructure.

Overall, this article supports the argument that mobility policies are increasingly moving from an infrastructure-centred model towards a capacity- and inclusivity-centred approach. However, achieving mobility inclusion will require greater investment in personalised support alongside continued improvements in transport accessibility.



4. Conclusion

This paper examined the evolution of French public policies addressing mobility in priority neighbourhoods, from the emergence of urban policy to the recent development of inclusive mobility initiatives. It has been shown that mobility inequalities cannot be explained solely by deficiencies in transport infrastructure but result from the interaction of social, economic, educational and territorial inequalities.

The analysis demonstrates that French public policies have progressively broadened their understanding of mobility. Whereas early interventions concentrated on urban renewal and transport infrastructure, more recent policies increasingly recognise the importance of developing residents' mobility capabilities through personalised support and local initiatives. This evolution reflects a shift from ensuring access to transport towards enabling individuals to use mobility effectively.

The main contribution of this paper is to bring together the historical evolution of French urban and transport policy and the emerging concept of inclusive mobility within a single analytical framework. It highlights the growing importance of capability-based approaches while underscoring the persistent imbalance between infrastructure investment and mobility support.

This research nevertheless has several limitations. It relies primarily on documentary analysis, scientific literature and institutional reports and does not include primary empirical fieldwork with residents or mobility professionals. Likewise, the paper does not assess the operational effectiveness of inclusive mobility initiatives through quantitative accessibility modelling or performance indicators. Future research could therefore combine qualitative fieldwork with transport engineering methods in order to examine how residents experience inclusive mobility measures in their daily lives and to evaluate their effectiveness using multidimensional indicators. Comparative studies involving other European countries would also help assess the transferability of the French policy model to different institutional and urban contexts.

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