

Transformation of a Migrant Neighborhood–Culture and Religion in the Goutte d’Or of Paris

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The Goutte d’Or of Paris is a migrant neighborhood in France. Since the 19th century, this area has been home to the working class of both French and migrants. Currently, North African (Maghreb) and Sub-Saharan African migrants reside here. France had no housing policies for Algerians when they migrated to Paris after the Second World War. Therefore, many of them were forced to live in poor environments. In the Goutte d’Or, the rooms in an apartment were rented out at affordable rates, so it was possible for migrants to live there. African migrants could not benefit from the housing policy because most of them migrated after the suspension of immigration of unskilled workers. They entered the houses after Algerians. The existence of furnished hotels (*hôtels meublés*, flophouses) also drew migrants to this area.

The Parisian administration feared “ghettoization” ; therefore, this area became the target of an urban planning project in the 1980s. The method evolved over time and results were achieved gradually. After decades, apparent gentrification was observed from the socio-professional data of the residents. However, the appearance of the area is still a migrant neighborhood. The shops of alimentation and clothing, restaurants, and tourist offices for Maghreb and African migrants concentrate there and people from other areas visit this area to shop and socialize.

The migrants living in the Goutte d’Or practiced the custom of a collective prayer on the street every Friday until 2011. People who saw photos or movies involving this custom perceived it to be fanatic. A segregationist group criticized the situation and attempted to offend the Muslims in the area by holding an event called “Salami and cheap wine,” which were prohibited items for Muslims. However, it was possible that people prayed on the street because their former places of prayer, mosques, were demolished by the urban planning project. The period during which the houses of migrants and mosques were demolished coincided with the start of their practice of praying on the street. After the demolition of mosques in the 19th arrondissement, the instances of collective prayer on the street increased.

The city administration did not ignore the situation. In 2002, it permitted the practice of street prayer on the condition that it would not obstruct the way of passers-by. In 2006, the administration established the Institution of Islamic Cultures and began the construction of its building. It also tried to encourage a decrease in street prayer by lending a floor in the building for prayers. However, before the completion of the construction in 2013, the city decided to lend an old barrack for prayers and prohibited street prayer in 2011. Perhaps this decision was a response to the criticisms. Thus, the development of infrastructure in the neighborhood changed the life of the people living there, but they retained their habitude.