



## **A New Paris?: Visitors and The Faubourg Saint-Denis Neighborhood**

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The neighborhood of Faubourg Saint-Denis, in the 10th arrondissement of Paris, has existed since the 17th century. When one walks through its streets today, it gives off a feeling of an older, more distant Paris—its buildings date from the late-18th and early-19th centuries, its streets curve subtly and beautifully, and it has a palpable energy, a quality that is becoming rarer and rarer in an increasingly quiet and calm city. Even though the neighborhood predates Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris in the 1860s and urban planners have brought only small, gradual changes to it, the character of Faubourg Saint-Denis has changed significantly during the last fifty years. During the economic crisis 1970s and 1980s, this old-fashioned working and lower-middle-class French neighborhood, focused on industries that were quickly disappearing from the city center—leather and fur, for example—became the center of the growing Turkish community in France. With some of the cheapest rents in the city center, excellent access to transportation, and proximity to the clothing manufacturing industry, it became an attractive place for new immigrants to settle. Faubourg Saint-Denis has remained the cheapest at the core of the city center, but during the last 15 years, it, like the rest of Paris, has become too expensive for most workers to continue to live there. Even though very few Turks continue to live in the neighborhood, it continues to be the most important Turkish neighborhood in Paris. While the many of the apartments have been redone and gentrified, the street remains bustling and diverse.

In this paper, I will describe the history of Faubourg Saint-Denis since the 1970s with special attention to the use of public space in the neighborhood. I will explain how the architecture of its streets and buildings—both its public and private spaces—have made it an accessible and popular place for not only Turks but for all of its other users and residents, including Pakistanis, Chinese, West and Central Africans, Algerians, Mauritians, and other groups. It is not a coincidence that the rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, the neighborhood's central thoroughfare, and many more of the most popular and crowded streets in Paris, are old, narrow, and untouched by heavy-handed urban planning. There is something about the feeling of this neighborhood that attracts so many of its users, many of whom commute an hour each way to spend the day at a café or hanging out in the street with their friends, even if they do not have work to do in the area—they find the neighborhood exciting and beautiful, qualities that they often do not find in Haussmann-era or postwar construction in Paris. I will include the results of over a year of ethnographic research of the users of this neighborhood to help explain why they choose to come to this neighborhood everyday, to understand their taste in urban space, and to see the responses of locals to planning decisions during the past 30 years

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