

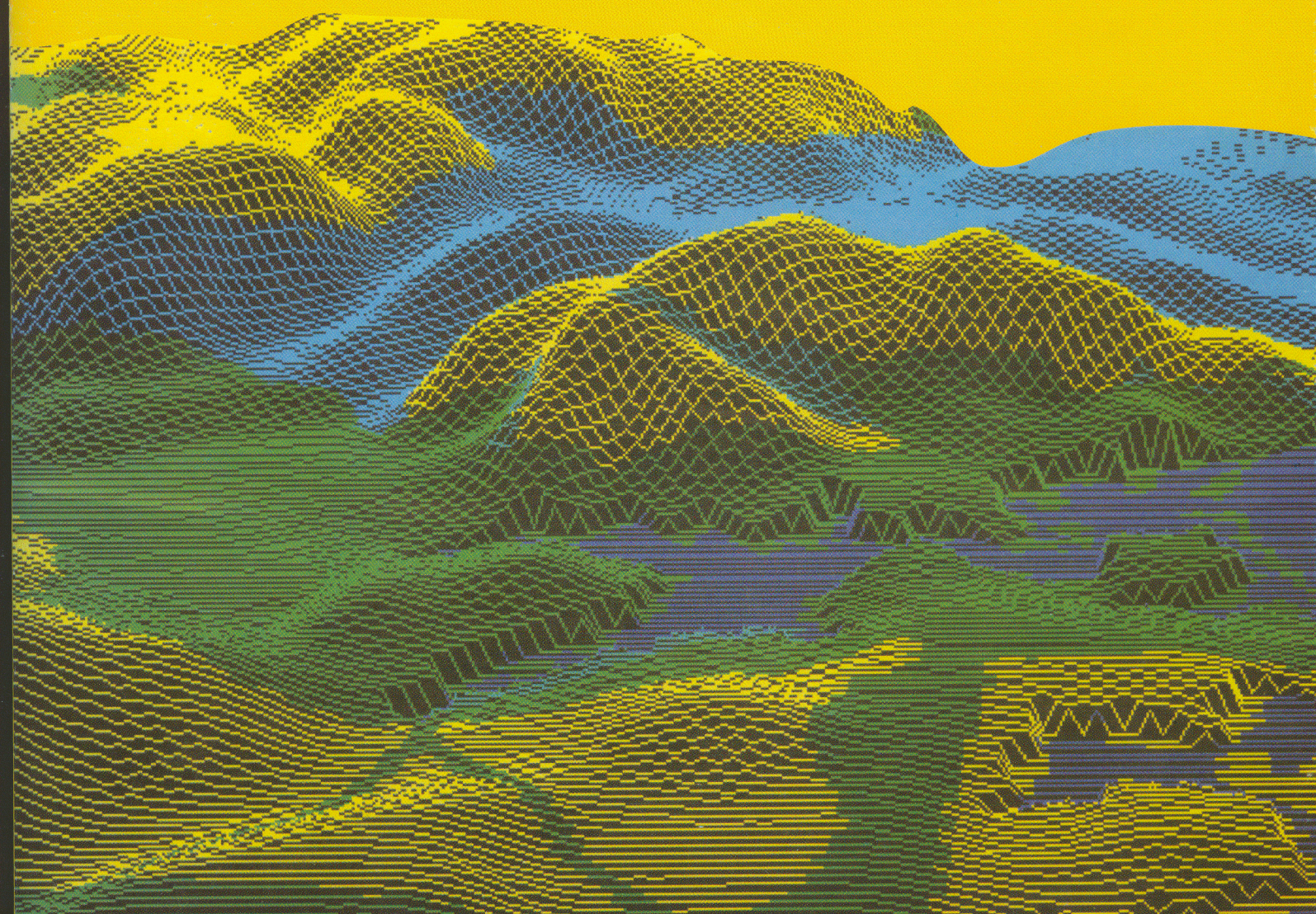
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URBAN AND RURAL GEOGRAPHY IN PARIS

Antonín VAISHAR, Jana ZAPLETALOVÁ

In Paris, urban and rural geography is developed mostly in workplaces of the National Center for Scientific Research¹, University of Paris (Pantheon - Sorbonne) and École Normale Supérieure in Fontenay - Saint Cloud. Although the research is being run at various institutions, it is considerably integrated in terms of personal collaboration.

In the CNRS, a P.A.R.I.S.² team of scientists works on four scientific programmes of which the first one is called Urban Systems. Subject of research are demographic and socio-economic changes in French towns as well as the development of living conditions of their inhabitants. The research team disposes of a data base for 400 French towns with the population over 10 000. It is also engaged in a study of European urban systems. ("Europe" in this study, however, is meant as countries of European Union without post-socialist countries and often also without Scandinavia and Switzerland). One of the objectives is to generate a comparable data base for all European agglomerations with more than 100 thousand inhabitants. The team is connected with the international scientific programme within NUREC³, where its eminent lady workers Denise PUMAIN and Thérèse SAINT-JULIEN hold leading functions.

One of important outputs of the programme is an edition series VILLES sub-edited by D.PUMAIN. Individual monographs of the series are of both theoretical and empirical character. Of them, the System of European Towns⁴ can be recommended for incorporation of the issue of Czech towns into whole-European context and for regional knowledge of West Europe.

There is another research programme of P.A.R.I.S. team that is interesting for Czech geography, viz. Territorial systems in political contexts. This programme includes among other also the Czech Republic (Ex-Czechoslovakia) and its transformation processes.

Within the CNRS there is another scientific team - STRATES⁵. Especially interesting are the first two of its scientific programmes: Collective agents and individual strategies of housing localiza-

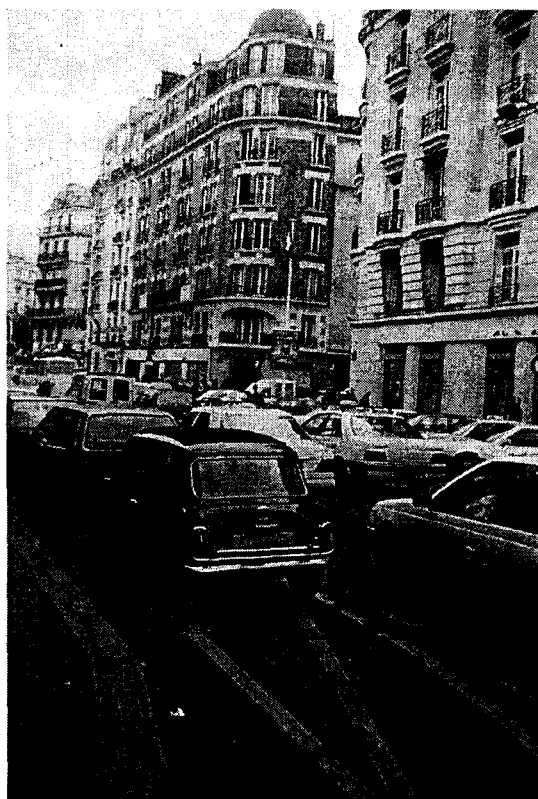


Fig. 1. A house in Rue du Four 4 is among other also a seat of the P.A.R.I.S. team

- 1 Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
- 2 Pour l'Avancement des Recherches sur l'Interaction Spatiale
- 3 Network on Urban Research in the European Union (former European Community)
- 4 CATTAN, N.-PUMAIN, D.-ROZENBLAT, C.-SAINT-JULIEN, T.: Le Systeme des villes européennes. Editions Economica Paris 1994. 208 p.
- 5 STRATégies Territoriales et dynamiques des ESpaces

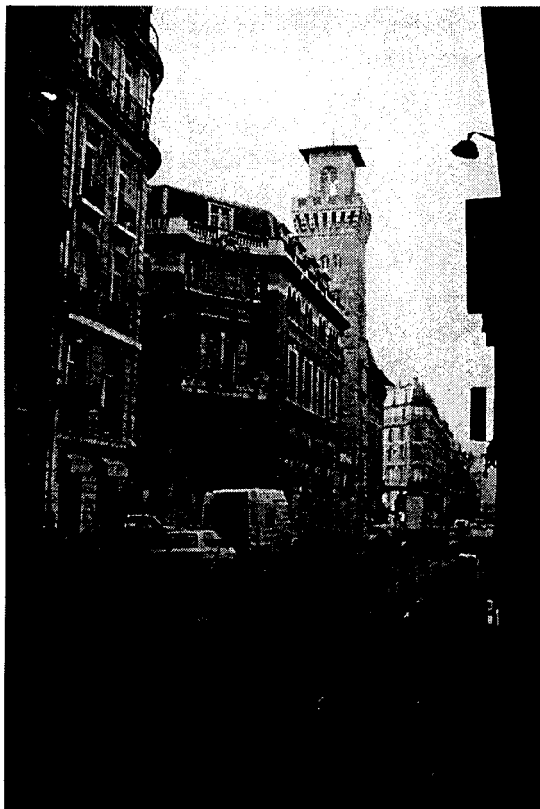


Fig. 2. The building of Geographical Institute in Rue St. Jacques 191 that belongs to the University of Paris is among other also a seat of the STRATES team

tion in Paris area, and The systems of power and dynamics of rural spaces. The first of them, represented for instance by Ms. Martine BERGER, could become an inspiration and guidance at the future research into problems of suburbanization that is certainly to be expected also by Czech geographers in the future.

The second programme opens an issue of rural geography in France. Differences between the metropolitan region of Paris and marginal countryside areas are considerably greater than those between the towns and countryside in the Czech Republic. Processes that are subject to warning in our country such as depopulation of whole rural areas and the high percentage of derelict land are a hard reality in some French districts. This is why the issue is very topical in France. Jean-Pierre FRUIT from the GEOPHILE team assumes that a solution consists in diversification of rural activities whose necessary pre-requisite is countryside identity.

The GEOPHILE scientific team (Center of Rural Geography) operates at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure in Fontenay-aux-Roses. It is led by the popular geographer Violette REY. The principle piece of work is a theoretical study by doyen of the group Jacqueline BONNAMOUR:

The GEOPHILE scientific team (Center of Rural Geography) operates at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure



Fig. 3. The building of École Normale Supérieure in one of Paris satellites in Fontenay-aux-Roses is among other a seat of the GEOPHILE team.

Géographie rurale⁶. Also this team pays a considerable attention to the problems of Central and East Europe in general, and of the Czech Republic in particular within the scope of one of its research projects devoted to South-North and East-West relations. The research works have been focused on the issue of consequences following out of decollectivization of agriculture.⁷

The French geography offers a whole series of inspirations to Czech geographers, which not only concern technical problems but also organization of scientific work. The environment of ideas is a characteristic and original identity, supported by language barrier, which makes the French school different from other west-European geographies. Even this is the reason for drawing from the original ideas and no less original works. It is also worth mentioning that the social prestige of French geography is much higher than in our country. There is no doubt that this is contributed to by a considerable number of thematic atlases issued by French geographical institutions among which one of the most important roles is that of Maison de la géographie in Montpellier. Surprising is also the number of studies dealing with the eastern Europe where France can probably sense good markets.

6 Masson, Paris, Milano, Barcelona, Bonn 1993. 134 p.

7 e.g. the research work by REY, V. (ed.): Nouvelles campagnes d'Europe centrale et Balkanique