

“Riots” in French cities in November 2005: visions and revisions

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Words can hide more than they reveal and language has the power to make all look similar. Scholars have thus the duty to bring forward distinctions that have been conflated by common language. Regarding the forms of urban violence which inflamed over three hundred sensitive neighbourhoods in France in November 2005, the media as well as numerous social scientists and politicians referred to “riots”. The term evokes fewer riots due to starvation in India than the racial riots in American cities in the 1960s and later, those of Los Angeles in 1992, the images of which have been seen all over the world (Cachet et.al., 2008, p. 263-280) (1).

The use of this word is not appropriate in the French case, as will be shown. Charles Tilly himself (Tilly, 2003, p. 18) explains indeed that this term “embodies a political judgement rather than an analytical distinction”, an opinion I share.

To analyse what went on in France in 2005, the questions that President Lyndon Johnson asked Judge Otto Kerner when he appointed him in 1967 as the head of the *National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorder* may structure our roadmap. What happened? How did it happen? Why did it happen? What can be done? What is specifically French in these outbursts conclude this essay.

(1) This text borrows from and updates “Urban “riots” in France: Anything new?” in: Cachet, L. et. al. (2008); *Governance of Security in the Netherlands and Belgium*, Den Haag, Netherlands: Boom Legal Publishers, p. 263-280.

What happened?

The first tinder that sparked these disorders occurred on October 27, 2005, at Chêne Pointu, a neighbourhood of Clichy-sous-Bois (referred to by its shortened nomenclature as Clichy), a locality in Seine-Saint Denis (one of 100 *départements* or territorial units), in the Greater Paris. At dusk, a group of boys from a nearby housing project after playing soccer headed to their homes to break the day’s fast during Ramadan. Three boys, one of Turkish descent, the other two of African heritage, took a shortcut across a locked construction site. An employee from a nearby funeral home called the police. A patrol car from the Brigade Anti-Criminalité (the BAC, France’s anticrime unit) arrived at 5:20.

In Clichy, like much of the Seine-Saint Denis, confrontations are common between the police and boys from public housing projects, who are notably of North African and African descent. As the police car approached, the boys fled, since they were not carrying their identity cards. The BAC unit called in reinforcements and three more cars arrived, a total of eleven policemen. The three boys sprinted and finally came upon a three meters high wall, topped with barbed wire, the property of Électricité de France (EDF). The boys ignored the “Danger/High Voltage” signs and went in (2).

(2) This description borrows from Canadian journalists Luc Bouchard and David Wright who did investigative work after the events in the concerned localities. May they be thanked.

At 5:36, a pursuing officer reported over his radio that the boys were seen climbing into the installation. But as the official report investigating police behaviour (Inspection générale des services) stated one year later, he did not go any further and spotting no move inside the EDF property, he gave up and the police patrol went back to the police station.

At 6:12, the entire neighbourhood went suddenly dark. Two of the youth had misstepped and 20,000 volts of current caused their instant death. The survivor managed to climb out and stumbled upon older boys. A rumour spread among the youth that the police had provoked the incident. Later that day, Interior Minister Sarkozy suggested that if the boys had not been guilty of something, they would not have run. Three days earlier, visiting one of the Paris suburbs, he had declared that he would rid the residents of the riff-raff (*racaille*), a term interpreted as an insult by the youth. The mention of a possible theft, reported as such by the media discrediting the victims, shocked numerous youth who expected words of compassion or at least some respect towards the grieving parents. They took the Minister's statement as a provocation.

Within two hours, in an explosion of rage that was neither planned nor organized, around one hundred young men descended onto the streets of Clichy, chanting "Dead for nothing!". Hiding their faces with hoods and bandanas, they threw rocks at city buses and the police and set twenty three cars ablaze. In usual circumstances, the disorders should have stopped after three or four days. The scenario is well known. French urban areas have experienced it since the first urban disorders took place in 1981 at the periphery of Lyon, then during the 1980s and 1990s with a peak in 1990 in Vaulx-en-Velin, again at the periphery of Lyon. The youth express their anger after an incident with the police with their limited repertoire, they torch cars and garbage cans, break windows and vandalize public goods, they confront the police and after a climax, the disorders recede.

A second unanticipated event then took place. On the evening of October 30, a tear gas canister, as those belonging to the police, fell into the entrance of a storefront mosque causing those inside—parents, family elders—to rush out, angry and humiliated. Some youth claimed that the police had thrown it on purpose and

that Islam was disrespected, the police denied being the author of the act. The consequence is that disorders started again, spreading to seven localities. Then, a strategic error was made by the police headquarters in Paris. Despite local mayors' urgent warnings, the HQ decision was to heavily protect the National stadium in Saint-Denis where a high risk soccer game was to take place on November 2. 800 experienced policemen were sent there rather than to localities adjacent to Clichy where insufficient and uncoordinated police forces including gendarmes confronted the youth. The fourth spark came from the four-day week end (All Saints' Day) which prevented local mayors from mobilizing their usual resources. After six days, 200 cars had been torched. But until November 4, except for one locality, the Eastern and Southern parts of the region remained quiet. Most clashes opposed Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (anti-riot squads) and small groups of youth in the Parisian region.

During 25 nights of unrest in November 2005 in three hundred neighbourhoods of two hundred cities (Rivayrand, 2006, p. 56-57):

- 10 346 vehicles were burnt (4 207 in the Parisian region),
- 233 public buildings and 74 private buildings, 7 bus depots, 22 buses or trains damaged or burnt, including 18 religious sites,
- 4 770 persons were stopped (2 808 during the crisis), 4 400 kept in custody,
- 800 people were incarcerated (including over 100 juveniles),
- 11. 500 civil servants, including 4 500 police officers and gendarmes (60 units per night) were mobilized on November 13 and 14,
- over 200 of them were injured during the outbursts (Waddington, King, Jobard, 2008, p. 5).

How did it happen?

As is usual in urban violence, a small core of youth groups moved rapidly from one area to the other and arson spread to localities West and North of the region. The torched cars or huge garbage cans which attracted the television crews based in Paris were frequently limited to one or two streets. Arson would start in the evening (darkness shielding the youth) and

would stop after the journalists had left. In no locality, did unrest last more than four consecutive nights ⁽³⁾.

After November 6, the disorders reached provincial cities: Dijon, Rennes, Soissons, Evreux. In Toulouse, a public library and a commercial mall were damaged. The number of torched cars kept climbing and 274 localities were concerned. On November 7 marking the apex of the contagion, after the Prime Minister had delivered a speech on TV, about 1200 cars were burnt in 300 localities around the country. Then a decrescendo took place and, after November 14, the number of torched cars averaged 100 a night. The weather had turned cold, the actors were tired, numerous arrests followed by real time justice process had occurred and a state of emergency had been imposed.

More than half of the violent actions took place in three regions: Ile de France (35%), Rhone-Alpes (10.7%), Nord-Pas-de-Calais (7%); and in 40% of the urban problem zones of the eight most industrialized and socially polarized départements ⁽⁴⁾. (700 urban areas are labelled "sensitive" or high risk by the French administration). 60% of immigrant families in France live in these three regions.

During these three weeks, "only" one death was registered, that of a senior citizen, the cause being personal revenge rather than the disorders. A 56-year old woman was severely burnt after a bus was torched in the Parisian region. She was rescued by the bus driver (of immigrant origin). Damages have been estimated between 200-250 million Euros, according to insurance companies.

Limited copycat attacks occurred in neighbouring countries. World-wide coverage was given to the incidents with interpretations of racial riots that do not match those offered in France. A proliferation of extremely diverse interpretations followed the events, reflecting the ideology of those who either criminalized the youth or empowered them as the vanguards of a new social movement. The few youth who talked offered a very diverse range of viewpoints, either stating what they thought was expected of them

by the interviewers (we are victims) or denouncing the arsons as "irresponsible" or suggesting other motivations.

Why did it happen?

It is complex to distinguish between the specific circumstances which triggered the events and the structural dimensions brought forward in the interpretations: they interplay in various degrees, according to contexts. What can be learnt from the perspective of this 'urban violence'? What are the differences between what looks like similar causes and processes and the numerous variations observed in time, place, and social setting?

First of all, a fraction of 15-20-year old male youth from poor areas, French and frequently of immigrant origin (because immigrants are the major component of the working classes in France) acted out of emotion and anger. By any measure, it was not a whole cohort of youth who mobilized. Youth – a deceptive word – are very diverse, some are students, some have regular jobs and keep away from the justice system, some are high school students eager to have fun, others are idle and resentful, their attitudes and age vary along a wide spectrum.

It appears that two interacting factors contributed to urban violence: first, angry teenagers acted out collectively and their actions, made visible by the media, had a contagious effect on other youth; second, other individuals instrumentalised chaos and violence for specific motivations. The first type of actors frequently set fire to public goods including some primary schools (close to their housing projects, schools are the symbol of their frustrated hopes for mobility). It has been estimated that one fourth of those sent before the judge were school dropouts. It seems the choice of targets was discussed collectively and the risks assessed; it was not just mass hysteria (Mohammed).

These events gave an impression of "déjà vu" because every year, since the 1980s, around 10-15 outbursts happen, with a noteworthy evolution. After 1997, as in other countries (Norway, the Netherlands, the U.S. for instance), half of the time, turf wars or quarrels

⁽³⁾ Cf. *Violences urbaines: une exception française*, Note externe de veille 31, Centre d'analyse stratégique, October 23, 2006, p.3

⁽⁴⁾ According to a 2006 Report from Délégation à la ville on urban violence.

about girls or family feuds cause the disorders. Police shootings or chases or justice decisions are less often the cause of disorders. Whether the turfs controlled by dealers remained quieter than others or had been disrupted is a matter of debate.

What was new, besides the four sparks already mentioned, was the huge television coverage of the events. "The fact that at the start, they counted the number of burnt cars, the number of cities, even concerned neighbourhoods, does not help. It creates a sort of Top Ten of the hottest city and as they are somewhat stimulated by the fact that they compete with the youth of the nearby city, they want to cause more damage to be seen", remarked Antoine, a 22-year old (Ciccellini et al. 2006, 35). Then, the media and Sarkozy's political opponents were probably hoping that he would repeat the mistake the Chirac government had made in 1986, when a young man, Malik Oussekiene, chased by a motorcycle police squad, died during a student demonstration. The national emotion caused by this event is said to have eased the victory of F. Mitterand in the Presidential election (Fillieule and Jobard, 1998). Youth were stimulated by the presence of television crews and by the potential attention they could get. "Had we engaged in peaceful demonstrations, it would have achieved nothing. The only means for us to be heard was to torch cars while on TV. I would say it worked", a teen-age remarked (Kokoreff, 2008, p. 149-150). The media acted as a magnifying glass, making sense out of isolated acts, rewarding negative heroes, but after a while, denouncing them for their excess.

Torching cars is one resource in the limited repertoire these youths have in marginalized areas. About one hundred cars are torched every week end in France with peaks on Bastille Day and on New Year's Eve. But it should be said that numerous cars burn simply by contact, others are burnt by their owners to get the insurance, conceal a robbery, or get rid of wrecks.

Yacine admitted having thrown objects and "cocktails" at the police during the riots (see Wright & Bouchard, 2006). "It was an incredible release. I felt super." He pointed at a scar above his eye as he was stopped by a squad of CRS with a trunk-load of glass bottles filled with gasoline. He spent the next five days in detention and then was sent to the judge.

Numerous French commentators have resorted to a social stratification perspective and to the theory of relative deprivation to explain the events. They emphasize mounting and cumulative burdens on specific groups in specific places. Clichy is indeed the poorest locality in Seine Saint Denis. Dependent families make up 67.4% of the population and 46.6% are under the poverty threshold. 33% of the residents are not French (45% in Chêne Pointu) and among them, 60% are jobless (Kokoreff 2006, 166).

The (improperly used) term *banlieue* evokes poorly designed urban space including public housing, insufficient and costly transportation, dysfunctional public services (for instance Clichy had no police station at that time, despite continuous political promises to create one). But, when budget cuts hit community organizations in 2002, disorders did not follow. It should also be pointed out that numerous "sensitive areas" remained quiet during the outbursts. The structural explanation is thus limited.

The zones marked by urban violence in 2005 had no prior tradition of disorders. There was no transmission of a culture of protest from the older ones to the youngest. The new sites of violence were characterized by large sub-Saharan families, recently settled. Their concentration and their level of segregation correlate very significantly with the geography of the riots, according to Lagrange. The political representation of these residents is non-existent (Lagrange, 2008, p. 113).

Place mattered and the areas which remained calm (like Marseille or Strasbourg for instance) were frequently those with a strong local culture, energetic social control exerted by families and community organizations. In some of these localities, previous social work had been done, crisis cells established, dialogues led.

Paris never burnt, unlike what was evoked on the international media ⁽⁵⁾, but for other reasons. The city is a highly protected sanctuary and a high priority on the police list ⁽⁶⁾. What occurred was not a Jihad-led

⁽⁵⁾ CNN sent C. Amampur, back from Irak, as if this were a war and Ben Laden to be found in Seine Saint Denis.

⁽⁶⁾ When there was a rumour on a blog that youth would march on Champs Elysées, 1500 policemen were mobilized, just in case.

mobilization nor race riots (Body-Gendrot, 2007) ⁽⁷⁾. Identities in France emanate from turfs, gender, marginalisation. Ethnicity constructed here and now is only one element. Most of these youth acted as French.

What was done?

At the national level, the state kept the upper hand but with a delay. A state of emergency was pronounced by decree on November 9, reviving a law passed in 1955 at the beginning of the Algerian war. It allowed curfews and home searches all over the territory, the ban of group reunions and the closure of cafés and entertainment places in the risk zones in 25 *départements*. *Préfets* were required to deport undocumented foreigners implied in the outbursts. The Police Prefect from the Seine-Saint-Denis forbade the selling of gas cans in local stores. The state of emergency meant to last three months was terminated after January 4. Very few localities resorted to curfews.

The police and gendarme forces were praised for their efficiency, competence and self-control in order maintenance. It was suggested however that their mode of intervention, while effective and cautious, impacted on the length of the disorders. Their goal was not to enforce mass arrests but to contain urban violence within the sensitive zones. It thus left the fastest running youth free to continue their actions. Due to the politicization of French society, also labeled a delinquent or distrustful society, the use of authority and force is blamed when it is exerted at the expense of the weakest. Vandals are ostracized, but so is heavy repression; disobedience is tolerated, yet people expect the state to intervene to solve their problems. In an opinion poll ⁽⁸⁾, 66% of the French trusted the Interior Minister for bringing solutions to the marginalized *banlieues* and 63% approved the deportation of foreigners arrested during the outbursts, whether they were legal or not. In 1968, the Paris Police Prefect had warned his men that they might win the battle on the streets but that if they lost their self-control after the first

violent necessary move, “they would lose something very special that they rank highly – their reputation. To hit a man on the ground is to hit oneself”, he had said. Consequently, numerous police chiefs admit that their job is to calm their men and “when confronted with fifty youth armed with iron bars, the only civic reaction for the police is to leave and not treat the problem when it is inflamed: it would only worsen the situation and make it impossible to redress later on. The police refuse to contemplate a Pyrrhic victory” (Body-Gendrot, 2007, p. 237).

Police handling of events have very different outcomes. How to manage outbursts varies according to police leadership, initiatives, public expectations, accountability, police ethics, etc. Sometime stops and searches are more revealing about modes of policing than the race or ethnicity of those who are stopped. Compared with the community mode of policing which is much more accountable, the French national police are only accountable to the Minister via the Prefect, which may give some of them a sense of impunity. But accusations of racism are denied.

The accumulated *savoir-faire* regarding the role police have to play when disorder occurs should to be mentioned. Riot policemen first resort to water pipes against demonstrators, then throw tear gas, then launch an assault, which is the inverse order of what demonstrators expect. They also attempt to isolate the provocateurs or ‘potential assaulters’ from the followers and voyeurs that they force to disperse. Riot policemen are aware that they are being watched by television crews which may give a hostile coverage of their actions and the presence of which boosts the demonstrators. On the one hand, it is because the police maintain a spatial distance with hostile groups, that journalists can approach the latter so closely. On the other hand, this assumption can be reversed and the police may use the media in the pursuit of their own interests. It is a chicken-and-egg question. Most policemen however are trained to ignore such coverage.

Unlike what happened after the riots of the 1960s in the US with the appointment of the Kerner commission or the Brixton disorders of 1981 followed by the Scarman report, there was no commission of that type convened by the government. It can be interpreted as

⁽⁷⁾ The report from the International Crisis Group in 2006 hints that because radical Islam is in decline in France and does not attract male youth from housing projects, the latter resort to urban violence. Only 28% of Muslims in France are regular religious practitioners according to recent polls.

⁽⁸⁾ National Gallup Institute IPSOS published in *Le Point*, nov.12, 2005.

its unwillingness to implement strong changes before the national elections in 2007.

As for justice, the curve of massive arrests (2 808 demonstrators were stopped and frisked during the crisis followed that of disorders and shows that real time judicial processes resulted in massive sentencing. 800 people were incarcerated, including over 100 juveniles and the prosecutors were required to be tough by the government. In more than one third of the cases however, youth were not convicted because the proofs against them were not strong enough. Most of them were accused of throwing stones and other objects at the police, others were indicted for arson or vandalism. Those convicted were sentenced to four months of incarceration on average, with two months and a half of suspended sentencing.

At the local level, numerous mayors of urban vulnerable areas mobilized their city police forces (between 16000 and 19000 officers in France), made use of private safety agents, summoned the anti-violence wake cells that had been created years ago. Mediators, volunteers, some of them religious leaders, others adult residents watching the sites and talking to the youth all night long intervened. Special mention should be made of public housing managers in charge of numerous units. Their accumulated expertise led them to 1) systematically review security, alarms, locks, CCTV's, lights, power rooms, elevators, basements, terraces, parking lots, vacant apartments and green spaces. 2) clean wrecks immediately 3) negotiate with youth required to burn garbage cans elsewhere than on the premises. They had daily debriefing sessions with partners (including local police) during the three weeks of outbursts.

What is so French about these disorders and the responses?

The outbursts are a symptom of the disconnection of an inflated central state and its elites from the people at the margins. The heart of the matter is that the central state does not know what to do with these marginalized *banlieues*. The state acts on long trends, whereas media pressures requires quick responses; its answers are usually technocratic, whereas *à la carte*, tailor-made measures are needed. Hardly any resident

of immigrant origin from these areas is asked to explain how people there feel, think, evaluate the situation and what ideas they have. In France, the higher spheres of the state and intellectuals speak in the name of sensitive areas' residents and do not even try to empower them. The failure of integration in the sense of belonging and "feeling part" of a multicultural society comes from an archaic path dependency characterizing French society and its system of political representation. France is not the only country to blame for its difficulties to deal with "visible minorities" (the very word minority has no official recognition). The Netherlands, Belgium, the UK experience similar problems with some of their Muslim populations but at least experimentations are tried and can be successful. In France, a strongly centralized country, with the largest number of civil servants (30% of the working population) and the largest Muslim population in Europe, it appears that empowering civil society in the solution of its problems is a dream deferred.

In France as in Britain, civil unrest involves second or third generations who, as citizens, expect an equal treatment. In Milan or in Barcelona, outbursts mobilize newcomers. But in UK, in the 2000s, as in former East Germany "Länders", far right activists contend with immigrants, which is not the case in France where symbols of the state are the first targets of the angry youth.

Local authorities do not have enough resources for initiative and remain supervised by Prefects in charge of law and order. A new law passed in the fall of 2006 gave them more leadership over police strategies but mayors did not enjoy being accountable on this matter without additional resources or major changes in the structure of power. The redistribution of social justice is politically risky when many impoverished populations do not vote.

As for the police, comparisons with other countries show that while the French police excel at order maintenance and investigation, they fail at preventing or at anticipating social unrest. French police academies almost never directly tackle the issues of discrimination and institutional racism in training sessions (Body-Gendrot and Wihtol de Wenden, 2003) and on the whole, police unions are hostile to the development of discussions on such issues. Residents are not invited by

police academies to give their reasons for antagonisms between police and youth.

New recruits in the police are frequently under the impression that they are doing the "dirty work" for which society does not want to take responsibility. They receive contradictory injunctions: they are submitted to a culture of results in terms of arrests, required to control the youth's behaviours and instil social discipline to them; yet they are also asked to avoid any escalation of disorder by going to 'hot' places at the wrong time.

It is most difficult for inexperienced policemen to exert control on housing projects where youth can easily hide. Significant sites like soccer field, buildings' basements and entrance halls, green spaces, commercial centre and stores are under the surveillance of youth groups. There is often only one access road to housing projects closely watched over by youth signalling the arrival of police cars to others.

The level of accumulation of grievances on the part of both youths and the police is a major explanation for why some neighbourhoods experience outbursts of violence and why similar neighbourhoods do not.

Their professional culture leads policemen to see youth in risk areas as 'hostile'. In a mimetic posture, the youth perceive the police as a gang trying to control the public spaces which they have somewhat appropriated and privatized. They complain of harassment and humiliation. Their honour is at stake. On each side, the memory of events and of clashes is perpetuated, with no option for understanding the position of the other. The training of young recruits by police chiefs looks like an uphill battle. The former ask for their transfer as soon as they are sent to Saint Denis. The same is true with the Educational system where students often have a better knowledge of their school than any of their teachers.

Such a social context explains why any incident involving youth and the police looks like a bomb waiting for a match. Youth with no hope for mobility do not believe that social change may reach them positively, they hold both fatalistic attitudes and a feeling of injustice. Under such conditions, why should they adopt the norms of those by whom they

feel rejected? Why would they resist the temptation of violence?

Conclusion

These forms of urban violence 'in crumbles', or 'paper riots' were not "a prelude to negotiation" (Hobsbawn, 1959), they did not lead to further social integration via their transformation into conflicts. Torching cars was not a political statement leading to an entitled empowerment. For the Intelligence Service (RG): "This was a form of unorganized insurrection with the emergence of leaderless and program-less revolt. No manipulation was observed, no action on the part of Islam fundamentalists. The far left did not anticipate the outbursts to its great dismay". This was neither an insurrection nor an uprising either. There were no leaders, no articulated program, no specific grievances, no attempts to connect with the political apparatus as was the case with the Black Power leadership in the U.S. in 1968 or even with the Crips and the Bloods after the L.A. riots in 1992. For the editor of *Le Monde*, "these were forms of violence, vandalism, the expression of a nihilistic rage, frequently from juvenile offenders. Very specifically, the stage before riots, which always have a defined goal, trigger looting, provoke deaths".⁽⁹⁾ It is noteworthy that almost no looting happened then and as mentioned before, only one accidental death was registered, almost no firearms were used. These youth asked for nothing, they made themselves visible. They are probably aware that there are no structures and no elaborated social proposals aimed at opening a dialogue with them. Protest is not enough. They are institutionally disempowered and politically ignored. Due to the disconnection of the centralized state and its elites from the meaningful and daily issues in marginalized areas, due to their "distant management" masked under a guise of repressive authority, due to society's and political parties' general indifference to segregated margins, due to a lack of plural political representation, disorders will erupt again.

The length of the disorders, their contagion and the impressive damages they caused revealed the depth of accumulated problems of these areas. Most adults did not support the offenders, but a lot of them said that

⁽⁹⁾ Après le choc, *Le Monde*, 11/29/05.

they “understood” these violent reactions because, since the beginning of the 1980s, no governmental policy has efficiently alleviated the social and economic deterioration that these areas have experienced, given them more efficient institutions (the failure of public education is to be emphasized), dealt with the contempt, discrimination and racism that residents resent, nor has their participation been asked for in urban renewal policies. The images of these outbursts as seen on the media are not without consequences, even though their effect may not be voluntary. “This effect has produced something, like a “passive organization of revolt”, with the characteristics of a movement “à distance”. For its development, the movement indeed narrowly depended on the media reflecting its own image” (Balibar, 2006, p. 95).

Did the events change anything? They were never a theme of debate during the Presidential campaign which took place the following year. Majorities supported the return of order, after a moment of ‘normative fear’. With the formalization of insecurity as a unified and unifying category, a consensus seems to prevail.

Why does unrest not occur more often? It may be suggested that urban violence is catalysed through a maze of discreet and highly dispositional events which, at a defining moment, fold into one another. It is this combination of chance, context, and causation which should guide further research.

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Post-scriptum

Ten years ago, I ended my essay on the inability of French elites to increase the upward mobility of marginalized youths and to give a recognition to issues of humiliation, discrimination and racism making them feel second-rate citizens. I did not insist enough on religion, an issue that took a growing importance in the *banlieues*, after 2005. Inserting Islam's values into France's core values and giving a place to (rather than integrating) populations from the South was off the table then, partly due to the electoral strength of the far right in the 2007 elections and partly because of a strong belief in secularization in France. In the meantime, the Middle East and other conflicts took on localized, ethnicised and essentialised forms in neighbourhoods where Muslims are a major component of the population.

Since 2005, besides an urban renewal policy at a cost of 6,6 billion euros, no comprehensive governmental policy alleviated the downtrodden *banlieues'* social and economic deterioration in providing more jobs and public services for impatient new generations. Visible minorities' political representation hardly improved locally and nationally. The French model of policing of stop and search *in the banlieue* was reinforced with the threat of terrorism and the notion of policing by 'consent' was never debated. On the contrary, the police were praised for experienced and firm order maintenance and more weapons of protection were allocated to the forces in December 2005.

After the terrorist attacks of January 2015 against a satirical newspaper in Paris, *Charlie-Hebdo*, the government paid attention to the *banlieues* which were politically perceived as a breeding ground for home-grown terrorism. The Prime Minister, a former *banlieue* mayor, denounced 'a territorial, social and ethnic apartheid' prevailing in those areas. Besides specific anti-terrorist measures targeting 'violent public disorder', anti-racist and anti-semitic measures were given a priority. But then, more lethal terrorist attacks hit Paris again in November 2015. Policemen who had received a strong support from the public in January when some of them had acted as heroes to save potential victims, were approved again by 82% of the French, according to a poll (*Le Parisien* May 18, 2016), a 17% increase since 2014. 56% of the polled asserted that they trusted the police. However, a violent heterogeneous minority made of anarchists, ultra-radicals, politicized youths express hatred -and for some of them, a death wish- regarding the police. Not all of them come from the *banlieues*. Their violent emotions displayed in the public space are oriented against institutions, capitalism and mainstream society in general. As France is currently in a state of emergency, due to a very high risk of terrorism, the issue of the *banlieues* is no longer a priority on the political and media agendas.