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Autumn 2005: A Review of the Most Important Riot in the History of French Contemporary Society

Laurent Mucchielli

In Autumn 2005, France witnessed the most important urban riots in its contemporary history. What exactly happened? Through the study of press dispatches and government communiqués, I first present a detailed summary of the three weeks of rioting by analysing their birth and development. Second, utilising interviews conducted with rioters and inhabitants of two ‘quartiers sensibles’ (deprived neighbourhoods), I attempt to understand the motivations of the rioters and perceptions of them by other categories of the populations of these neighbourhoods. I then investigate the social geography of the riots and highlight those characteristics of the ‘zones urbaines sensibles’ (deprived urban areas) which have been addressed within the contexts of security and city politics over the last quarter of a century. Finally, I discuss the political and social significance of these riots and their possible extension in the future.

Keywords: France; Riots; Police; Integration of Minorities; Political Protest

Introduction

The history of France is punctuated by popular uprisings, some of which have made ‘History’ (Tilly 1986). However, it is generally agreed that, since the end of World War II, social and political protest movements have become increasingly less frequent, more institutionalised (through political parties, trade unions or other associations representing particular interest groups), and less and less violent (Crettiez and Sommier 2006). Since the ‘May ’68 events’ and aside from the activities of separatist

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movements (essentially in Corsica) the Fifth Republic will have experienced relative quiet until the end of the 1980s.

Over the last 15 years, however, French society has again experienced riots, this time connected with a ghettoisation process. These riots take the form of car-burning and fighting, with groups of youths (mostly of immigrant descent and jobless) confronting the police, called in to restore law and order.¹ The phenomenon was officially noted for the first time in July 1981 in the Minguettes neighbourhood of Vénissieux, a suburb of Lyon, where close to 200 cars were burned in the course of the summer. At the time these youthful provocations and clashes with the police were referred to as the 'Minguettes rodeos'. The event elicited enough public debate, however, for the Socialist government of the time to set up a prevention scheme called 'anti-hot-summer' to keep idle youth busy during the ensuing summers. The word 'riot' was not used until 1990, when some more consequential events occurred (during which not only cars but also buildings were burned, stores plundered, and fights involving hundreds of individuals broke out and caused injuries). The riots took place first in the Mas du Taureau neighbourhood of Vaulx-en-Velin (a suburb of Lyon) following the death of a boy in a crash between a motorcycle and a police car, then several months later in the Val Fourré neighbourhood of Mantes-la-Jolie, in the Paris region, when a boy died in the local police station. These riots had tremendous repercussions on public debate. They led the government, again Socialist at the time, firstly to set up a Ministry of Urban Affairs in charge of coordinating 'urban policy' (known as 'anti-ghetto' policy), and secondly to develop new instruments for repression—the creation of the Anti-Crime Brigades (BAC),² and of a new section within the intelligence service (RG) in charge of studying this anti-establishment violence and preventing rioting—in order to combat what then came to be known as 'urban violence'.

Since this turning point, in 1990–1991, and despite this urban policy, urban riots have become a permanent fixture in French society. The list includes housing projects in the Fontenelles (Nanterre, September 1995), in the Saint-Jean district of Châteauroux (May 1996), in Dammarie-les-Lys in the Seine-et-Marne *département* (December 1997), the Mirail district in Toulouse (December 1998), Vauvert, in the Gard (May 1999), the Grande Borne and Tartarêts neighbourhoods in Grigny and Corbeil-Essonnes respectively (September 2000), the Borny neighbourhood of Metz (July 2001), Vitry-sur-Seine (December 2001), les Mureaux, Yvelines (January 2002), the Hautepierre neighbourhood in Strasbourg (October 2002) or the Monclar neighbourhood in Avignon (December 2003).

For the previous two years the government had been very optimistic about this 'urban violence', which was, officially, declining. And then, in Autumn 2005, France experienced the most consequential riots in its entire contemporary history.³

The Greatest Spontaneous Social and Political Agitation since May 1968?

The Human, Material and Judicial Toll

What happened in France between 27 October and 17 November 2005? In a talk on the US TV station CNN, French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin preferred to speak of 'social disorders' rather than 'riots'. Also, in a country where the 54 deaths in the 1992 riots in Los Angeles were still in people's memories (and still are today), he pointed out that the French 'social disorders' had not caused a single death.

It is a fact that the toll of those three weeks, in terms of human lives, is particularly moderate.⁴ Contrary to what Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy inferred on several occasions, there was no link between those events and the killing of a photographer in Epinay-sur-Seine on 27 October, nor with that of a retiree in Stains on 7 November. The main direct victim was no doubt a 56-year-old disabled woman who was seriously burned on 2 November because she was unable, unlike the other passengers, to get off the bus on which she was riding when it was attacked in Sevran (Seine-Saint-Denis) by a bottle of petrol being thrown inside it. The Minister of the Interior announced 201 wounded among the tens of thousands of police officers and *gendarmes* on duty over the 21 nights. Most had relatively minor injuries; only ten were considered unable to work for over ten days. In addition, 26 firemen were injured. There is no official count for the rioters, but the emergency wards of the public hospitals did not report any substantial influx of wounded individuals during that period. It is probable, then, that the many flash-balls and tear-gas grenades fired by the police did not cause many serious injuries either. Aside from the fact that the CRS and *gendarmes mobiles* are very skilled in order-maintenance and in controlling the degree of violence used, the few casualties are no doubt due to the way these youthful rioters operated. Unlike previous rioters (especially during the 1990–91 events), they tended to act in small, highly mobile groups rather than through direct, large-scale confrontation with the police.

However, the material toll was much higher. According to the Ministry of the Interior, close on 10,000 private vehicles and some 30,000 rubbish containers were burned. Several hundred public buildings (mostly school buildings—which is a novelty in itself—but also sports facilities, town halls, internal revenue offices and police stations) were also damaged or burned down, either partially or totally. About one hundred businesses were also attacked in the Paris area alone. The transportation company for the Paris area, the RATP, estimated that rocks were thrown at 140 buses and several dozen were partially or totally burned. The Post Office reported around one hundred burned-out vehicles for the entire country. The vehicles used by the police and fire departments were the target of tens of thousands of stones and miscellaneous projectiles, as well as a much smaller number of handmade Molotov cocktails. Lastly, about 20 places of worship (churches, mosques and synagogues) were damaged. In all, at the end of November, the French Federation of Insurance Companies was to estimate the bill at about 200 million euros (20 per cent of which involved private property-owners and 80 per cent state properties).

At the judicial level, too, the toll was very high for those 21 nights of fighting. According to the statement finally drawn up by the Ministry of the Interior in mid-December, the police rounded up some 5,200 individuals, 4,800 of whom were placed in police custody and 800 committed to prison. The Ministry of Justice, in turn, announced at the end of November that 600 persons (489 adults and 108 juveniles) had been given unsuspended prison sentences. The number has certainly risen since then, as the investigations begun during the events progressed to completion.

All in all, although there were, fortunately, no deaths, the material and judicial tolls were particularly high. Never before had rioting in France been as long-lasting or as widespread. In just three weeks, more than 280 towns (*communes*) reported incidents of very variable seriousness (ranging from setting fire to a few dustbins to the burning of whole buildings, from a few stones thrown at police cars or fire engines to handmade Molotov cocktails and dozens of youths and hundreds of police officers chasing each other around all night). Never before had the administration galvanised such repressive resources: at the height of the crisis, there were as many as 11,500 police officers and *gendarmes* on the streets each day, supported by seven helicopters equipped with projectors and cameras and covering some areas for whole nights.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the government was so panic-stricken that the Prime Minister decided to resort to a curfew. On 8 November he decreed a state of emergency in the whole of metropolitan France, to enforce an Act dating back to 3 April 1955, voted during the Algerian War and used only once since then (in New Caledonia in 1985). This act enables prefects to prohibit the circulation of individuals and vehicles at certain times and in certain places; to temporarily close entertainment halls and social meeting places; to place some individuals under house arrest; and to make it possible to order searches at night and even to pursue fleeing suspects into private residences.⁵ Twenty-five *départements*⁶ were authorised to implement these measures in some of their towns and cities (even if only seven actually did so). Next, the administration had the state of emergency prolonged—by an act voted on 18 November—until 4 January 2006.

For all of these reasons, and irrespective of whether we speak of ‘events’, ‘social disorders’ or ‘riots’, the fact remains that, during those three weeks, France experienced its most serious spontaneous social agitation since May 1968.

How the Rioting Started

The scenario has been more or less the same since the first ‘urban riots’ in 1990 and 1991 (Bachmann and Leguennec 1997). The riots were triggered by the death (intentional or accidental) of local youths connected (in various ways) with police intervention. What happened this time, in the little town of Clichy-sous-Bois⁷ on Thursday 27 October 2005?

It was late afternoon, the schools were on vacation, and three teenagers (one aged 15, the other two 17) who lived in Clichy, all three of North African descent, climbed over the fence around a power transformer. Two of them were fatally electrocuted,

while the third suffered severe burns. Why did they go into that particularly dangerous place? As is often the case, at least two conflicting versions of the facts were given immediately. Youths from the neighbourhood were convinced that the boys had been forced to run to escape the police, who were pursuing them for no good reason. They were therefore 'dead for nothing', as the youth would write on their t-shirts at the following Saturday's demonstration. The Ministry of the Interior, in turn, presented various versions of the facts, all of which aimed at exonerating the local police force of any kind of responsibility for the tragedy. On the following morning, Nicolas Sarkozy began by suggesting that there had been some form of delinquency (attempted burglary of a shed on a building site) and assured that the police 'had not been physically pursuing' the boys. Then the Ministry of the Interior, following a deontologically questionable interrogation of the surviving boy—severely injured, questioned on his hospital bed the very day after he had been electrocuted—said there had been no chase. The police had returned to the police station after apprehending the real perpetrators of the theft in the building-site shed and there did not seem to be any reason to blame any officers. This theory was initially supported by the Public Prosecutor's office as well. However, the boys' families were dubious of this version of the facts, and hired a lawyer who decided to file a complaint for failure to assist a person in danger, in order to force the justice department to initiate a judicial inquiry and to name an examining judge. On 3 November the Public Prosecutor announced the opening of a judicial inquiry, repeating that 'there had not been any chase' but that, nonetheless, there remained some questions that required the designation of an examining judge. The IGS (*Inspection Général des Services*) investigation (based primarily on recordings of radio communications between the police cars and the central police station) did indeed show that a police officer had seen the three teenagers enter the power transformer and had informed his superiors of the risk incurred by the boys. At that point the Public Prosecutor acknowledged the validity, *a priori*, of a suit for failure to assist a person in danger.

Lastly, according to the testimony of the only survivor (not immediately after he woke up on his hospital bed, after the tragedy, but at a hearing before the examining judge on 10 November, and again in an interview on 15 December to a daily newspaper, *Le Parisien*, after he had left hospital), the three boys were returning home from a rugby football match in a neighbouring town (Livry-Gargan) when they heard some police sirens, passed other youths on the run, and then saw a police car, and a plain-clothes policeman with a flash-ball gun in his hand. They felt directly threatened, since they did not have their identity papers with them and one of the youths had a record with the justice department (he was subjected to an educational measure). They, too, began to run and took refuge in the power transformer, where they remained hidden for about half an hour—not daring to go out while they heard sirens, the voices of police officers and dogs barking—before they were electrocuted.

The overall impression derived from press reports in November and December 2005 and from the book published by the lawyers of the families of the three young victims (Mignard and Tordjman 2006) is that the three boys were caught up

inadvertently in a police operation that was not directed against them (and that ultimately turned out to be unfounded). They ran, at the same time as other youths, and were seen entering the transformer by at least one police officer whose superiors apparently felt that he and his colleagues had more important things to do than to attend to the boys, although their lives were in danger. If we are to believe the families' lawyers, this affair may constitute one of those little state lies that reveal the opaque functioning of the Ministry of the Interior, as well as its constant determination to control, to its own advantage, what the media are allowed to reveal (Recasens *et al.* 2006: 173).

The Three Phases of the Riots

The riots lasted three weeks, from 27 October to 17 November 2005, at which date the Ministry of the Interior announced that the situation was 'back to normal'; that is, that the fights between groups of youths and the police had stopped, and that the number of cars burned nation-wide each night had dropped below the 'usual' figure of 100. The riots went through three phases during those three weeks.

The first phase was the local riot in Clichy-sous-Bois. It lasted five days, essentially, from 27 October to 1 November. It began the very evening on which the two boys died in the power transformer, crescendoed on the following night (28–29 October) after Sarkozy's statement denying any involvement of the police in the two deaths, quietened down on the night of 29–30 October after 500 residents of Clichy went on a morning's silent march despite provocation from the police in the evening, but started up again after the night of 30–31 October, during which a tear-gas grenade was thrown in front of a mosque in Clichy by the police. Finally, it seems that this mosque incident played an important role in the shift from the first phase of the riot to the second. After the denial of any police responsibility for the death of the two boys, this phase was experienced as a second terrible humiliation.

The second phase began on the night between 31 October and 1 November—the gradual extension of the rioting to the Paris area. At first it spread mostly to the 'problem urban areas' (ZUS) in the towns of Seine-Saint-Denis, the *département* involved. In addition to Montfermeil (the town adjacent to Clichy-sous-Bois), the towns affected were Aulnay-sous-Bois, Bondy, Le Blanc-Mesnil, Neuilly-sur-Marne, Sevran and Tremblay-en-France. There was also Chelles, located in the Seine-et-Marne *département* but touching Montfermeil. On succeeding days all other towns with a ZUS or with large working-class neighbourhoods had their riots, including Aubervilliers, Bobigny, Drancy, Epinay-sur-Seine, Gagny, La Courneuve, Le Bourget, Livry-Gargan, Montreuil, Noisy-le-Grand, Noisy-le-Sec, Pantin, Pierrefitte, Rosny-sous-Bois, Saint-Denis, Saint-Ouen, Stains, Villepinte and Villetaneuse. By the night of 1–2 November, and even more on the following night, fights with the police and/or the burning of cars and buildings spread to other *départements* in the Paris area, beginning with the Yvelines (Mantes-la-Jolie and Trappes, then—to varying extents—Achères, Carrières-sur-Seine, Chanteloup-les-Vignes, Chatou, Les Mureaux, Poissy

and Sartrouville), although the *département* is located at the other, south-eastern extremity of the Paris area. The incidents then spread to towns in the Hauts-de-Seine, Val-de-Marne and Essonne *départements*, and lastly to the Seine-et-Marne and the Val d'Oise. Hundreds of cars were then being burned each night (over 500 for the night of 3–4 November) and there were a great many fights with the police and stone-throwing at police cars, fire engines and buses, as well as some burning of buildings (mostly public facilities). Close to 80 towns in the Ile-de-France area were affected to varying extents (with the exception of Paris proper), and the region was not to calm down completely until the end of the first week of November. In the meantime, the riots had taken on a new dimension.

During the third phase of the rioting it spread to the rest of France. It was low-key at first, during the night of 3–4 November, during which there were more cars burned, especially in the metropolitan areas of Rouen, Lyon, Rennes, Soissons and in the *Département du Nord*. It came into full force the following night, when those ZUS well-known for their tradition of rioting came to the fore, especially the 'heavy' places, the large working-class neighbourhoods of the regional metropolises of Lille, Toulouse, Strasbourg, Rennes, Rouen and Bordeaux.⁸ In two days the number of towns affected across the country soared to 200. By the night of 6–7 November, the rioting was clearly as strong in the provinces—where it would, in fact, continue essentially during the following week—as in the Paris area. At the intersection of those two phases of the riots, between 6 and 8 November, the turbulence was at its height. The number of vehicles burned, for instance, reached 1,500 for the night of 7–8 November, spread over 274 communes, mostly in the provinces.

Within a few days the number of towns affected in one way or another approached 300. Aside from the Paris area and the very large cities and metropolitan areas already mentioned, almost every middle-sized town with a ZUS was touched, in about 40 *départements*.⁹ The phenomenon ebbed at a variable pace, depending on the region, mostly starting on 14 November, the eighteenth night of rioting. Finally, the 'situation was back to normal'—according to the Ministry of the Interior—on 17 November.

How the Rioting was Propagated in Political and Media Debates

How was the rioting propagated? I will not go into subsidiary and not very serious debates such as the indictment of rappers—recurrent over the last ten years—or again, the connection with polygamy suggested by some politicians.¹⁰ I examine, however, the two main questions that pervaded the public debate—the organised, criminal character of the riots, and the role of television in propagating them—before pointing to the role of other, usually neglected but nonetheless far more powerful, factors.

The theory of the organisation of the riots by 'delinquent gangs' was very rapidly proclaimed by the then Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, and by the network of his allies in parliament. The theory is not actually new, and may be found behind

some police discourse on ‘urban violence’ since the early 1990s (Mucchielli 2002: 40–54). It was reactivated as soon as the rioting began, and led Sarkozy to state, at the National Assembly, that ‘75 to 80 per cent’ of the rioters taken in are well-known delinquents, and that the riots express, in particular, ‘the intention of those people who have made offending their main activity to resist the ambition of the Republic to restore its order, the order of its laws, throughout the country’.¹¹ This view was to be contradicted by the judges, especially those working at the Bobigny *correctionnel* (criminal court), who presided over the summary trials of most of the rioters prosecuted in Seine-Saint-Denis. They stated that ‘the vast majority [of the rioters judged] had a profile of first offenders’. This fact was corroborated by the Public Prosecutor’s offices of Créteil, Lyon, Nice and Nancy,¹² and later confirmed in a study by Delon and Mucchielli (2007). The theory of organised delinquency was finally contradicted by the Minister of the Interior’s own services, the *Renseignements Généraux* (RG), in a report on the riots dated 23 November—revealed by the daily newspaper *Le Parisien* on 7 December 2005—which diagnosed ‘a sort of unorganised urban insurrection’, ‘a popular revolt in the housing projects, with no leader and no programme’, conducted by youths ‘inhabited by a strong sense of their identity which does not rest solely on their ethnic or geographic origins, but also on their social condition, as people rejected by French society’. The report added that the government had been primarily concerned with ‘the rising tide of radical Islamism and religious terrorism’ and had ‘neglected the complex problem of the suburbs’. At a time when the French extreme-right and the foreign press were raising the issue of the role of that ‘radical Islamism’, and when Sarkozy had mentioned the threat of ‘extremists’ (Seine-Saint-Denis, 6 November) and announced his intention to expel any rioters with a foreign passport, even if their residency papers were in order (National Assembly, 9 November), it was the RG, again, along with the Territorial Surveillance Bureau (DST) which denied any involvement of radical Muslim groups.¹³ This raises questions about the attitude of the Minister of the Interior, who seemed to have adopted, long ago, a deliberate strategy involving the provocation and stigmatisation of youths from working-class neighbourhoods. This point will be addressed in detail below.

Another issue agitated the world of politics and the media once the riots had spread to the provinces: the role of television. Was competition and emulation between neighbourhoods encouraged by showing cars burning, day after day, and groups of youths throwing stones at CRS officers? To stop cars being burnt, would it be enough to stop showing these images? It is doubtful. It was not the first time that riots had been reported on television but, until Autumn 2005, this had never caused such a spread of violence. It seems clear that modern media techniques accelerate the propagation of news about the riots, but they do not generally reveal anything about the cause of the violence, the effect the news has on those who hear it, nor what action they decide to take. This implies that, in the minds of the rioters, the target area of these arson attacks is above all local. If they have to make comparisons, it is with the adjacent neighbourhood, not neighbourhoods located on the opposite side

of the country. So, media influence should be better understood to be at this local level, where the influence is usually clear. For example, when TV or newspapers publish maps showing the number of cars burning in the different neighbourhoods of a city, they do stimulate comparison and motivation among some young people. Likewise, when the media question why the rioting has 'still not' spread to a particular neighbourhood, and when they speak about the local authorities' fears, they bring to mind what Robert K. Merton used to call a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Boucher 2006).

Once again, there was no ideological structuring of these riots, and no organisation at either the neighborhood or the national levels. At most, it may be said that the pictures shown on television demonstrated to young 'potential rioters' that others had done it before, thus serving as a triggering factor. It remains for us to understand, firstly, the local function of these riots and the motivations of the rioters, and secondly, the underlying reasons for which so many potential rioters existed in so many French towns and cities.

The Reasons Behind the Anger: A Sociological Analysis of the Riots

During the month of November, journalists with the French press agency (*AFP*) wrote a number of articles based on interviews with young residents (including some rioters) of working-class neighbourhoods in the Parisian area, including the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*, where the rioting was the most intense.¹⁴ These interviews showed, firstly, that these youths were mostly intent on fighting the police, and secondly, that they also wanted to respond to the verbal provocations of the Minister of the Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, whose deliberately chosen communication strategy over the last few months had consisted of strongly stigmatising these young residents of working-class neighbourhoods: Sarkozy stated that he wanted to 'rid France of those hoodlums', 'do a Karcher cleaning job'¹⁵ on neighbourhoods supposedly terrified by 'gangs of scum' (Demiati 2007).

The Rioters' Voice

With my student Abderrahim Aït-Omar, we attempted to check this two-sided hypothesis by conducting 12 interviews, one month after the end of the events, in a 'problem' neighbourhood in the Parisian region (in a *département* bordering on the Seine-Saint-Denis). The interviewees were aged 15 to 20, and had participated actively in the events without having been picked up by the police. The study was a modest one, looking at just one neighbourhood. However, the reader will find expressions here which are both representative of the rioters in that neighbourhood, and authentic, in that those youths knew and respected Abderrahim Aït-Omar, who was from the neighbourhood and who conducted most of the interviews, knew they would remain anonymous, and had no reason to exaggerate, as they sometimes

tended to do on the radio or in front of TV cameras, especially when caught up in the excitement of the riots and knew they were being watched by their friends.

What did the rioters say? They mentioned many factors, some more important than others. They did talk about the Clichy-sous-Bois tragedy, but mostly to say that the police *was* involved and that the Minister of the Interior had tried to hide that fact. With a single exception (a boy with friends in Clichy-sous-Bois), the initial tragedy was mentioned with no particular emotion. Others mentioned the tear-gas grenade thrown in the direction of the mosque in Clichy but, there again, it was less the grenade itself that revolted them than the fact that the police did not apologise for it. As for the role of local sociability, some admitted that there was competition and one-upmanship both between neighbouring districts and between youths from a same neighbourhood: some 'little kids' wanted to show their courage so as to gain a higher status in the local hierarchy of reputations.¹⁶ All this was present, then, but secondary. The crux of the matter was elsewhere. It was not this which incited their 'rage' or 'hatred', their determination to 'smash it all'. It was something else. Their anger was above all a revolt against a situation that humiliated them. Some talked about their experience with discrimination in hiring, and about the lack of employment. But most saw that humiliation as starting at school. They all felt that the day-to-day source of their sentiments of injustice and humiliation was primarily their relations with the police. The narrations of these boys were all very similar, as can be observed in the following four examples:

Before the riots, things were on a routine, we hung around with our pals after school, we kidded around, we went out occasionally, we went to a Greek eating place, and if there was some bread to be made, we made it, cause your ma can't handle it all. For example, some guys brought cell phones from Thailand, that they had bought for 50 euros; well, we would sell them for 150 and they gave us a 50 euro bill. . . . You make do, you know. The cops, when they take you in with that, they know it isn't stolen stuff, but they take it to keep it. That's the kind of thing that enrages me, because with their police badge, they think they can do just anything, they know we can't answer back and they go after us all the time, waiting for us to make the slightest slip, and after that they take you in for insulting them or whatever, so they can keep you in custody. That's what happened to me. Once, I was selling a Rolex camera, they took it away and the cop said 'Thanks for the gift, I'll keep it all the time'. Since that day, I've got hate. The riots were revenge for all that' (H., 15, studying for a technical school certificate—BEP).

Why don't they leave us alone? We're in our neighbourhood, talking with our pals, and they come to fuck us off two or three times in the same day. Frankly, before the riots, we were pretty calm, a bunch of us were playing ball, and in addition, it was Ramadan, so we were being very careful about behaving, but they're always there to break everything up. And after that, things exploded real good. Anyway, there would have been an explosion some time or another . . ., with or without the death of those two guys in Clichy-sous-Bois. . . . I was just too happy when they got paving stones thrown at them; for once the roles were reversed, I wish you had seen them. This time they weren't such smart-arses. I told the guys, 'We shouldn't burn cars; if we're gonna do something, it's gotta be to beat up some cop; that way when

they have to come to the neighbourhood, before they get there they'll shit in their pants and they'll be so flipped they won't play the cowboys any more. . . . there ain't many neighbourhoods that did that out of solidarity with Clichy, I'm telling you, it's out of hatred for the cops, because they're too bad-mouthed. . . . I know that French people are going to hate the guys from the projects, but you know, it's not our fault, all we're asking for is respect, if a cop comes up to me politely and asks for my papers, politely, I'd give them to him, no problem (R., 16, studying for the BEP).

We were standing still, and the cops came over to see if we had petrol on our hands, they *hagar* [intimidated] us, there were three of them, but we didn't do anything wrong. I didn't give a damn about the guys who burned [in Clichy-sous-Bois], I wanted to fight it out with the cops . . . They began to yell and talk for nothing, while we didn't say anything at all. They insulted us—'Shut your trap!'—and they sniffed at our hands to see if there was any petrol. It was late afternoon . . . I was enraged . . . What we want is for the cops to be correct with us: 'Hello, identity control, do you have your papers?' But they go: 'OK guys, you hassling it out? We'll have a good time, then! Give me your identity card and shut your trap'. So you give it to him, and you shut your trap. No hello, no goodbye, they treat us like shit (B., 17, looking for a job).

Frankly, there were all kinds of things in the riots. There were guys who were angry against the cops, others who were enraged against schools, because they didn't have any school any more, others because they didn't have a job, others to look big in the neighbourhood. The guys were all enraged against something or other, and they took advantage of the riots to fuck everything. But most of the guys, their hate was against the cops because they try to look big, lots of them are racist, and they treat us like shit . . . when someone hits on a Jew, the 8 o'clock news makes a big fuss about it and the President in person apologises, but when it's an Arab or a black, it's not a big thing, or even worse: Sarkozy, didn't he try to hide it when the cop threw that tear-gas grenade in the mosque? It's a country full of hypocrites (T., 18, looking for a job).

Revenge against the police may therefore be viewed as the main motivation of the rioters, especially when the police were not simply exposed to the violence of these youths but, and there is much converging testimony on this,¹⁷ they sometimes went there to provoke it (for example by deploying police forces massively around the neighbourhood and multiplying identity checks in areas where there had not yet been any rioting). Once again, this may seem surprising, given the degree of concealment by the political and media discourses of this down-to-earth reality; these power relations, provocations and violence; the revengeful acts; in fact, everything that structures the day-to-day relations between groups of youths and of police officers, and all of which constitute *a major dimension in the life and experience of these young people* (Mohammed and Mucchielli 2007). And yet, to misjudge this reality is to rule out any comprehension of the onset and progression of some riots. Finally, to misjudge this reality is to rule out any understanding of why Sarkozy's speeches really impacted on these young people: they crystallised the youngsters' feelings of humiliation.

In addition, a second feature is visible, behind revenge against the police, in the discourse of over half of the rioters interviewed and especially those school dropouts who are jobless and often subsist on small-time offending such as dealing in cannabis (Duprez and Kokoreff 2000). That is, aggressive, resentful feelings about another national institution: schools. This may account for the unusual number of school buildings attacked by the rioters. Here, too, they express very strong anger against an institution accused of having ruined their future. Here are four significant excerpts on this subject:

The neighbourhood I live in is rotten, filthy, falling apart, and a long way from the city centre. It's a tough life, there's no jobs, it's fucking terrible . . . In school, the courses were lessons dictated word-for-word by the teacher. You'd think we were robots, we weren't supposed to talk, or speak up; if you did, you got punished right off. Worse, as soon as you didn't understand something, the teacher didn't give a damn, he would say you had to read the book and after that you'd understand. So what's the use of going to school? . . . So me, I was held back twice in eighth grade, I wasn't doing very well, the courses were rotten and so were the teachers. Oh yeah, I want to add one thing, it was the guidance counsellors, they're real fat bastards, they don't even know how to advise you, they don't give a damn about you. Later they suggested that I do a BEP [certificate] in plastics technology but I didn't want to, that's old hat now. So after that, I went wrong . . . When I see some friends and my big brother, who have diplomas and five years beyond high school and then they work in supermarkets as security guards, how crazy can you get?! I don't get it. They got an education, they worked at it, and after that they end up [like that], it's not fair. So you see that school only brings a tough life, in the end. During the riots, I wanted to participate real serious, 'cause those bastards in society they're don't give a damn about us, they're paid tons and tons, and they don't even do their job of supporting problem students. So I'm telling you the truth, I burned some cars near the high school to show them that we exist and that we're not going to let them fuck us over like fuck. We're going to scare them, like that they'll change their behaviour and they'll respect us . . . we've got nothing to lose, since they've fucked our lives up. You see, I have to sell shit to help my parents; if I don't, who's going to hire me without any qualification? . . . You know when schools will be run right? When it'll be the guys from the neighbourhoods who do the teaching, because they know what a mess we're in. Fuck, they don't know what fuck efforts we've gotta make. We don't have Mum and Dad to help us with our homework when we get home. Most guys, their poor parents, they don't even know how to read and write. So if no-one takes the time to explain things to us at school, there's no way. We're done for in advance. (S., 20, jobless, small-time cannabis dealer).

In this second excerpt, the boy makes a direct parallel between the police and teachers, accused of committing the same humiliations.

Me too, I participated in the riots and I'm proud of it, it was to overthrow everything and to fuck over the cops, those dirty bastards who think they're too much. I'm disgusted, because I wanted us to burn that shitty high school too, with its racist teachers. I swear, I'm not lying, if I succeeded in getting my diploma it wasn't thanks to the teachers, those louses. They would have preferred that I get a BEP certificate. It was thanks to my brothers, who bawled me out when I didn't

study, that I got my qualification. For example, I swear, the teacher, Ms. M., I know very well that no-one's going to believe me when I say that some teachers are racist. But I know what I'm talking about. I experienced it directly . . . I've seen lots of my pals humiliated (*hagar*) for nothing by teachers, just because they didn't like them. I must say, some of them went overboard, but I give my word, you have to admit that there are teachers who abuse of their authority to destroy the future of some students. . . . most teachers, all they want is to go through the curriculum and too bad for anyone who can't follow. And yeah, that's how lots of guys, and even some chicks give up. So look, you know what I did? We went out, some friends and I, we took some petrol and we set fire to the entrance to the high school. But the cops came and we ran. Too bad, otherwise the whole high school would have burned. My dream is that those dirty profiting teachers, who get paid for working in problem areas, get the hell out because I have the impression that they really want everything to stay the same so they can continue to get paid extra at the end of the month. . . . *The 'hagra' [humiliation] by the cops and by the teachers is the same.* They're people who abuse their fucking power without weighing the consequences of their acts. Teachers don't say: 'He's a guy who's already got problems, why should I throw him out and give him even more problems?' They don't give a damn about his future! . . . All those guys in the neighbourhood who're having a rough time, without schooling, it's the same story for practically all of them, that is, teachers who didn't give a fucking damn about them (M., 20, high-school graduate, unemployed).

Finally, in the last two examples the boys lay the blame for their lack of success squarely on the shoulders of the schools.

According to me, the big reason for these riots is mainly schools! School is a place where you're supposed to learn things, they have to explain things to us, but actually, school has turned into a place where they throw out guys like me, they don't give them a chance to succeed, they do everything they can to throw us out and to keep the French kids. Even when people like me succeed, they end up working with undereducated people or else in jobs that aren't right for them. That's the reality, you have to stop kidding yourself. Another example, [at school] I worked normally, no more than necessary, but my pals and I, in class, we didn't always pay attention. My teachers always made fun of me in front of the others instead of encouraging me and explaining things to me. Sometimes the teachers didn't even pay attention to us, they left us alone in our corner and got the best students to participate, they talked among themselves and often they threw us out so as not to be disturbed and to stay among themselves, you see. I was disgusted . . . That hurts, to see you're being taken for an imbecile! After that I decided to leave high school because I saw that they weren't helping me, the counsellors wanted me to be a fireman, I didn't want to. So after that I went from one odd job to another, without really finding my place. Schools don't know how much harm they can do if they don't pay attention to other people. School fucked my life up and I'll never forget that! . . . Frankly, I'm enraged against my teachers because if they had taken the time to look after us we wouldn't be here today dealing [*bicrave*] a little shit and risking our hides (R., 18, unemployed, small-time cannabis dealer).

Me, what I wanted during the riots was to set fire to the high school, because they're the ones who fucked up my future. In fact, when I was in school I wasn't very good but I tried to do my best. In class, I had problems following some courses, because basically, I had always got through with very middling grades. When I asked the teacher to explain some things, he said I should go and see the good students, that he wasn't going to get behind with the curriculum. One day I told him that I didn't understand something in his course and he said 'I don't have time, and besides, the whole class knows that. What are you doing in this class, you're really crass, you're beyond recuperation'. I was ashamed because all the students were laughing, and looking at me, observing me. I had hate, I had asked him some old thing and he threw me out like a piece of shit. Besides, since I was the only *rebeu* student [of North African descent] I was ashamed to go and see the first in the class, especially after all the humiliating things the teacher said about me. So when there were tests, I had bad grades. When I returned home my father beat me with his slipper. He would say that the school was always right and that it was my fault. I know that I should have worked on my lessons at home, but when you didn't understand the course in the classroom, how can you go over it at home? Very frankly, I gave up by the fourth month, I stopped doing anything. I went to school for my parents, but I didn't give a damn any more. ... And at the end of the year, the guidance counselling, they got me real good. They sent me for a BEP certificate in bodywork. ... Looking back, I hate those louses in the school system, yeah, because they fucked up my future and I was stupid enough to go along with them. ... School is behind me now, but if I run into one of those teachers who broke my balls, I'll insult that bastard (S., 19, jobless, small-time cannabis dealer).

So, for these youths, school symbolises an institution that 'ruined their future', that is, one which cut off the possibility of being integrated in society, and which humiliated them. Furthermore, they accuse teachers of being hypocrites, whose talk about succeeding is contradicted by their practice in teaching, which marginalises these young people of immigrant origin within their class, and does not provide the aid of which they are particularly needful since their parents cannot help them with their lessons.

These interviews with rioters show the reasons for their anger, the different types of humiliation they experience in their daily life and in their relations with the police, the lack of employment resulting from their early failure at school, and their feeling of being second-rate citizens, almost pariahs (Marlière 2008). Underlying their revolt we find feelings of injustice, abandonment and rejection. They are under the impression that they have no future and that the rest of society is cynical towards them. This ends up constituting a mentality that I call 'collective victimisation' (Mucchielli 2003). The 'moral legitimacy' claimed by the rioters (Lapeyronnie 2006) justifies their fears and releases their anger.

We need, now, to go beyond recording that immediate anger, and start to understand the conditions that produced those riots. For they did not take place in just any neighbourhood of just any town or city. The social geography of the riots clearly shows that the phenomenon is characteristic of those 'problem urban areas' (ZUS) inventoried by urban policy agencies since the 14 November 1996 Act.¹⁸

Behind the Riots: A Process of Ghettoisation

With many scholars¹⁹ having studied working-class neighbourhoods and analysed their connections with urban policy over the last two decades, the case is very clear-cut. According to the 1999 national census of population, the 751 'problem urban areas' inhabited by 4.7 million individuals (representing 8 per cent of the population of metropolitan France) are concentrates of precarious situations and of exclusionary processes. As we can also see in Table 1 (which compares demographic, social and economic indicators between metropolitan France, the Ile-de-France region—the richest in France—the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*, the poorest in this region, and the communes of Clichy-sous-Bois—one of the poorest in this *département*—and Le Raincy—one of the richest), these 'problem urban areas' share a number of features:

- large, and sometimes very large, families (whence a youthful population) living in flats (generally low-rent) in small and overcrowded quarters;
- a lack of social mingling and a concentration of groups of immigrant descent, both of which factors reinforce feelings that they are 'different';
- many parents and children with learning difficulties which cause—more than elsewhere—early educational problems, failure at school and orientation toward technical schools;
- discrimination of all types because of the place of residence, cultural features (dress, ways of expressing oneself, wearing 'signs of one's religion') and sometimes skin colour;
- an unemployment rate twice or three times as high as in the rest of the country, overall (whereas the residents do not have any other source of income, aside from welfare), higher rates of precarious and of undesired part-time employment, and a proportion of low wages much higher than the national average, resulting in insecure economic conditions—sometimes to the point of dire poverty;
- an unemployment rate of 30 to 40 per cent for youths aged 16 to 25, sometimes as high as 50 per cent or over for youths of immigrant origin who left school without a diploma or with a mere vocational training certificate (CAP);
- more health problems than elsewhere, already visible during childhood due to a less satisfactory diet, more sight and hearing problems and more obesity and dental problems;
- more social isolation and complaints about the quality of the environment;
- ambivalent relations with institutions (social services, municipal and prefectural administrative services, school, the police) which, in return, give them a negative self-image, both individual and collective (feelings of dependency, inferiority or even of scorn, suspicion and violence);
- a lack of political representation and structure in the broadest sense (trade unions, citizens' groups);
- a feeling of being cooped up in the neighbourhood and abandoned, if not rejected, by 'others' (other social groups, politicians);

Table 1. Demographic and socio-economic indicators (%)

	Metropolitan France	Ile-de-France region	Communes of:		
			Seine-St- Denis (93)	Clichy- sous-bois	Le Raincy
Total population (millions)	58.5	11.0	1.38	0.03	0.01
% under 25 years in total pop.	30.9	31.9	34.8	45.6	28.8
% employees + workers among working pop. over 15 years	51.9	46.0	60.9	71.1	35.2
Unemployment rate	12.8	11.5	17.2	23.5	9.0
Unemployment rate, under 25s	25.6	19.7	26.6	32.0	17.2
Men under 25 working part-time	17.8	24.3	24.3	31.1	21.5
% tenants in main dwelling	40.7	51.1	57.0	53.1	34.0
% council tenants in main dwelling	16.0	23.4	36.0	30.2	4.8
No qualifications	20.0	16.5	24.4	32.4	9.5
CEP/BEPC	25.4	18.3	24.6	21.8	22.6
CAP/BEP	24.8	18.2	23.5	26.1	19.3
Baccalaureate	12.2	14.6	12.4	10.9	16.2
Higher baccalaureate	17.6	26.9	15.0	9.5	32.3
Students aged 15–19	90.3	91.7	90.3	89.8	94.0
Youth 15–19 years, no qualifications	4.3	3.7	4.9	5.0	2.7
% one-parent families	8.8	9.8	12.3	11.5	10.9
% families with 3+ children	10.8	11.6	14.7	28.6	8.0
% non-French-nationality households	5.8	12.1	19.3	35.6	6.4

Source: *Insee, Recensement 1999.*

- petty and moderately serious offending (vandalism, thefts, fights, cannabis-dealing) more frequent than elsewhere.

The point is not to dwell on the sordid, or to present these people as unable to act and to change (Kokoreff 2004; Mohammed 2007a). Nonetheless, the situation continues to degenerate. Comparisons conducted at regular intervals on the basis of the census and of INSEE surveys show that the *process of ghettoisation* has been at work for over 20 years, at the crossroads of the exclusionary processes generated by the housing market (combined with the residency policies of public agencies and local elected officials), the school system and the labour market. The question of employment is also crucial here. It mediates the entire process of integration in social life and of access to adulthood. Without employment (in the dual sense of a status and an income allowing for something other than short-term subsistence), a youth cannot have access to housing for himself or even for a couple, it is impossible for him to project himself into the future, on both the professional and family levels. He is condemned to a hand-to-mouth existence, law-abiding or not. And when he has any past history of offending, he often cannot seriously think of changing his ways, even if he wants to.

Firstly, the overall unemployment rate of men aged 15 to 24, which had dropped in 2000–2001 thanks to the Youth Employment Scheme, has risen again since 2002, and is now somewhere around 25 per cent. Secondly, the unemployment rate of young men who left school without a diploma rose consistently throughout the 1990s and has been between 40 and 50 per cent for the last decade and more. This state of affairs applies mainly to the ZUS, where the overall situation deteriorated enormously during the 1990s, especially for young people (Le Toqueux and Moreau 2002). Moreover, the disparity between jobless men without a qualification and those with the *baccalauréat* (not to mention higher education) has increased steadily, bringing the frustrations of the former to a peak.

Finally, these data do not take into consideration the effects of discriminatory hiring practices, which affect young French people of immigrant descent, including those—and their numbers are increasing—who do have diplomas (Frickey 2005; Tavan 2005). This is perhaps the last lesson to be drawn from these riots: contrary to what the administration insistently contends, ‘wanting to succeed’ is not enough to get one out of a situation of being a social outcast. In what are known as ‘problem’ neighbourhoods, many educated youth are also excluded from the labour market (Marlière 2005), meaning that they are unable to ‘set a good example’ to other young people, or to dissuade them from revolting. *On the contrary*, they can only represent a further source of despair for those who did not succeed at school, and they understand and even encourage the rioters.

Conclusions: Despairing Youth in Working-Class Neighbourhoods and a Chronicle of Future Social Violence

The three weeks of rioting in Autumn 2005 were of surprisingly long duration and geographically widespread. They testified to the feelings of hopelessness of some categories of young people, who felt not only that they were living on dead-end street, but also that they were looked down on. These youths are faced with a two-fold crisis in integration—as are youth in many other European countries (Bradley and Van Hoof 2005; Van de Velde 2008), though perhaps to a lesser extent (Loncle 2007). The first aspect is economic and social: *access to a social status* is made particularly difficult for hundreds of thousands of young men who find themselves disqualified and sometimes the object of discrimination on the job scene. The importance of work in the overall process of social integration and of entering adulthood has already been emphasised. The second crisis is symbolic and political: *access to citizenship* is made particularly difficult for these young men, who view themselves as completely overlooked by the model that prevails in the present political order, who are no longer solicited or represented by the traditional political forces, and who are relatively unprepared for the construction of independent, sustained, non-violent collective action as opposed to the fleeting, hot-blooded outbreaks embodied by riots.

In their way, however, these youths are definitely sending out a message of a political nature (Castel 2006). They are appealing about their future in French

society; to the extent that, instead of being frightened of their violence, we would do well to worry about the flimsiness of the response it has received from the political arena. Now that 'order has been restored', neither the responses of the present right-wing government and its parliamentary majority nor the vague proposals of the Socialist Party provide any indication that they are really aware of the depth of the malaise and are determined to make fundamental changes (Le Goaziou 2007). On the contrary, the prevailing discourse on working-class neighbourhoods is still that of fear and a denunciation of delinquency and 'urban violence', with regular, extensive moral panic (Mucchielli 2006). Under these circumstances, further explosions of anger are to be feared in years to come. *De facto*, several local riots have already taken place in France since November 2005, always prompted by the same type of incident—the death of a young person(s) in relation to police intervention. In the current context of a strong rise in unemployment figures, a new general explosion of anger is still possible.

Notes

- [1] For an historical overview of 'the problems of French suburbs' see Bachmann and Leguennec (1996).
- [2] The BAC are squads composed mostly of young police officers who work mainly in 'problem neighbourhoods' at night and in civilian dress, in an attempt to catch offenders in the act.
- [3] For a sociological viewpoint on the riots see Kokoreff (2008); Lagrange (2006); Mucchielli (2006); Mucchielli and Le Goaziou (2007).
- [4] Our information about the onset and actual course of the riots comes from an examination of the entire series of stories wired by *Agence France Presse* (AFP), which represents the main source of information for the entire French press pertaining to the riots (about 3,000 documents) and of a selection of national daily newspapers. The other information produced or used is referenced in the course of this paper.
- [5] *Journal Officiel*, 9 November 2005, pp. 17593–4.
- [6] The *départements* were: the Alpes-Maritimes (Nice, Saint-Laurent-du-Var), the Bouches-du-Rhône (Marseilles), the Côte d'Or (Dijon, Chenôve, Longvic), the Eure (Évreux, Gisors), the Haute-Garonne (Toulouse, Colomiers, Blagnac), the Loiret (Orléans), the Meurthe-et-Moselle (Nancy, Vandoeuvre-lès-Nancy), the Moselle (Metz, Woippy), the Nord (all towns forming the urban community of Lille-Métropole), the Oise (Méru, Creil, Nogent-sur-Oise), the Puy-de-Dôme (Clermont-Ferrand), the Bas-Rhin (Strasbourg, Bischheim), the Haut-Rhin (Mulhouse), the Rhône (Lyon, Vénissieux), Paris, the Seine-Maritime (Rouen, Le Havre), the Seine-et-Marne (all towns), the Yvelines (all towns), the Somme (Amiens), the Vaucluse (Avignon), the Essonne (all towns), the Hauts-de-Seine (all towns), the Seine-Saint-Denis (all towns), the Val-de-Marne (all towns) and last, the Val d'Oise (all towns).
- [7] Located 15 km east of Paris, Clichy-sous-Bois is a small town in the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*, with a population of 28,300 according to the 1999 census. It is a working-class town, like many others in the *département*. Its population rose considerably during the 1960s and 1970s, mostly due to an influx of working-class immigrants. Eighty per cent of the population lives in blocks of flats, almost half of which are at least 10 stories high. One third of the town's housing consists of high-rises and long blocks built within the framework of an urban development project designed in 1960 by one of the 'great architects' of the period, whose vision was believed to be 'futuristic'. The Cité du Chêne Pointu, where the rioting broke out, is located in the heart of this project. It was built in two sections (in 1961 and

1965) and contains over 1,500 flats. Of those local labour-force participants who are employed, over 70 per cent are blue-collar workers or employees, 17 per cent are in middle management, 6 per cent are crafts or business people and another 6 per cent are in management or the higher intellectual professions (the proportion of these is constantly declining). However, the number of women and men who do *not* have a job rose consistently throughout the 1990s. At the end of that decade, the overall unemployment rate for the town was 24 per cent. Youths under the age of 25 were particularly affected, with a rate of 32 per cent. Add to this the fact that young people under 25 represent about half of the town's overall population (Clichy is the youngest town in the whole *département*), and we measure how this weighs on the social situation.

- [8] Only Marseilles and Nantes seem to have had relatively few incidents compared to the size of their working-class neighbourhoods.
- [9] These were: Bourg-en-Bresse (Ain), Saint-Quentin and Soissons (Aisne), Nice (Alpes-Maritimes), Sedan (Ardennes), Dijon (Côte d'Or), Romans-sur-Isère (Drôme), Besançon and Montbéliard (Doubs), Évreux (Eure), Brest and Quimper (Finistère), Bègles (Gironde), Béziers, Montpellier and Sète (Hérault), Saint-Malo (Ile-et-Vilaine), Châteauroux (Indre), Tours (Indre-et-Loire), Grenoble (Isère), Blois (Loir-et-Cher), Dole (Jura), Roanne and Saint-Étienne (Loire), Orléans (Loiret), Laval (Mayenne), Nancy (Meurthe-et-Moselle), Metz (Moselle), Dunkerque and Valenciennes (Nord), Beauvais and Creil (Oise), Arras and Lens (Pas-de-Calais), Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme), Pau (Pyrénées-Atlantiques), Tarbes (Hautes-Pyrénées), Perpignan (Pyrénées-Orientales), Colmar and Mulhouse (Haut-Rhin), Vénissieux (Rhône), Chalon-sur-Saône (Saône-et-Loire), Le Mans (Sarthe), Le Havre (Seine-Maritime), Amiens (Somme), Montauban (Tarn-et-Garonne), Draguignan, Fréjus and Toulon (Var), Apt, Avignon and Carpentras (Vaucluse), Épinal (Vosges) and Belfort (Territoire de Belfort).
- [10] Two hundred parliamentary representatives from the UMP (Presidential) party were to complain to the Minister of Justice, asking him to prosecute some rappers accused of incitement to hate and violence (*AFP*, 23 November). The statement on the role of polygamy was made by the president of the UMP parliamentary group and the ministerial delegate for labour as well as by the Minister of the Interior, Sarkozy (in an interview with *L'Express* on 17 November).
- [11] Several days later, he was to add that 'the main cause of despair in the suburbs is drug dealing, gang law, the dictatorship of fear and the abdication of the Republic' (*AFP*, 19 November).
- [12] '*Les juges ne confirment pas le portrait des émeutiers dressé par Sarkozy*' (*AFP*, 17 November).
- [13] RG director: '*La part des islamistes dans les violences a été nulle*' (*AFP*, 23 November); DST: '*Les islamistes "pas impliqués" dans les émeutes en banlieues*' (*AFP*, 24 November).
- [14] '*À Clichy-sous-Bois, "la guerre à la police" pour se venger et se distraire*'—'In Clichy-sous-Bois, "war on the police", for vengeance and entertainment' (2 November); '*À Aulnay-sous-Bois, des jeunes des 3,000 narguent les CRS en pleine nuit*'—'In Aulnay-sous-Bois, youths from the 3,000 [housing project] defy the CRS in the middle of the night' (3 November); '*Des adolescents du 93 fascinés par les troubles: "Sarko cherche, il trouve"*'—'Teenagers from the 93 [Seine-Saint-Denis *département*] fascinated by the disorders: "Sarko[zy] finds what he's looking for"' (5 November).
- [15] Karcher is a well-known make of high-pressure cleaning equipment!
- [16] For an analysis of this juvenile sociability, see Lepoutre (1997); Mohammed (2007a); Sauvadet (2006).
- [17] The mayor of Clichy himself stated to the *AFP* on 2 November 2 that 'the policing set-up that night would be appropriate and definitely less provocative' and that, for that reason, things should go better. Similarly, my research team found that there had been police provocation in several suburban Paris neighbourhoods.

- [18] True, some incidents did take place in a few towns that do not contain and are not immediately adjacent to a ZUS, but in practically every case they were minor, isolated incidents (usually a few sporadic rubbish bin or car burnings). The true riots, and especially the fights between groups of boys and the police, took place in the ZUS. This does not mean, conversely, that every ZUS in France experienced rioting in November 2005. The analysis developed here aims at clarifying the necessary but not sufficient conditions presiding over the propagation of riots. Other factors, which tend, rather, to prevent the onset of a riot or to limit its extent, should also be taken into consideration, such as the way in which town halls and institutional and citizens group partners handle the situations locally, and whether or not there has already been any previous collective and political mobilisation in these neighbourhoods (Mohammed 2007b).
- [19] *Inter alia*, Bachmann and Leguennec (1996); Beaud and Pialoux (2003); Duprez *et al.* (1996); Fitoussi *et al.* (2003); Goldberger and Le Toqueux (1998); Lagrange (2006); Observatoire National des Zones Urbaines Sensibles (2005, 2006).

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