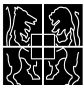
Observatoire sociologique du changement

Notes & Documents
n° 2007-02
Juin 2007

The French Republican Model of Integration: the Theory of Cohesion and the Practice of Exclusion*

Marco Oberti

* Translated from French by Brian Shevenaugh (DePaul University, Chicago).


SCIENCES PO

Observatoire sociologique du changement
27 rue Saint-Guillaume
75337 Paris Cedex 07
http://osc.sciences-po.fr
Tel +33 (0)1 45 49 54 50
Fax +33 (0)1 45 49 54 86

Résumé :

Cet article analyse de façon comparée les émeutes et le mouvement étudiant anti-CPE. Ces mouvements reposent tous les deux sur une mobilisation de la jeunesse, mais les dimensions les plus structurantes ne sont pas identiques.

Les émeutes révèlent un sentiment de relégation et un profond ressentiment qui renvoient simultanément aux dimensions ethnoraciales et sociales. Mais elles ne se sont pas développées uniquement sur la base de l'âge et de l'appartenance sociale, elles mettent en jeu également des formes urbaines liées à la ségrégation des populations précaires immigrées ou issues de l'immigration.

La ségrégation renforce l'imbrication entre toutes ces dimensions et participe d'une lecture du monde social et de sa propre expérience en termes de discrimination. Cette lecture tend à se diffuser à l'ensemble des domaines de la société.

Pour citer ce document :

Oberti, Marco (2007). « The French Republican Model of Integration: the Theory of Cohesion and the Practice of Exclusion. Some sociological reflections after the riots in France », Notes & Documents, 2007-02, Paris, OSC

Pour une version électronique de ce document de travail et des autres numéros des Notes & Documents de l'OSC, voir le site web de l'OSC : http://osc.sciences-po.fr/publication/pub_n&d.htm

Abstract:

This paper deals with the comparative approach of the riots on one hand, and the student movement on the other. If both movements are based on young people mobilization, not all the dimensions which are important in explaining the riots (social classes, ethnicity and race, generation, space, family structure, gender) are so pertinent for the student movement.

The riots were indeed the expression of relegation and a profound resentment that have bought into play both ethnoracial (youth from African immigrant backgrounds, directly concerned by discrimination and racism) and social dimensions (low-income backgrounds). But the riots did not develop simply on the basis of age and class, but rather that they bring into play the urban forms (segregation) of the increasing precariousness of part of the low-income population, particularly those of immigrant origin.

Segregation reinforces the interaction and the association between these dimensions, and is a favourable condition for riots because of the concentration in the space of all the characteristics which are perceived as object of discrimination and because of the best control of territory. This shift, from inequalities to discrimination, is particularly visible in some specific social spheres like political representation, labor market, police, housing, and school.

Readers wishing to cite this document are asked to use the following form of words:

Oberti, Marco (2007). "The French Republican Model of Integration: the Theory of Cohesion and the Practice of Exclusion. Some sociological reflections after the riots in France", Notes & Documents, 2007-02, Paris, OSC

For an on-line version of this working paper and others in the series, please visit the OSC website at: http://osc.sciences-po.fr/publication/pub_n&d.htm

Introduction

For three weeks a wave of riots shook more than two hundred towns in France. Beginning in the east Paris suburbs and following the deaths of two adolescents who believed they were being pursued by the police, the riots spread across the country between the end of October and the middle of November 2005. Less than six months later, a large youth movement mobilized against a new measure taken by the Dominique de Villepin government in response to the November riots—the "First Job Contract," or "*Contrat Premier Embauche*[1]" (CPE). Strikes and blockades of universities began in February whilst the law was still under discussion in Parliament. Three quarters of French universities would be blockaded or have classes interrupted as a result of the movement. In March 2006, these blockades spread to secondary schools, over a thousand of which would be affected by collective action. Simultaneously, an intense round of demonstrations began to unfurl across the country.

In my paper I will focus more on the riots than on the student movement, using the comparison between these two social movements to reflect on social cohesion in a society which boasts of having a strong specific model of integration. In fact, the so-called "*modèle d'intégration républicaine*" (republican model of integration) was hardly discussed in terms of its capacity to maintain social cohesion after the riots. I will also reflect on the methodological and theoretical aspects of analyzing this kind of social movement, as well as its impact on public policies designed to enhance integration in France.

What are the main characteristics of this model? Has it ever really existed[2]?

Essentially, this model is based on a national conception of citizenship that negates using certain criteria (such as ethnicity, race, or religion) to categorize individuals and to treat them as specific groups.

In theory, this means that the state interacts with the individual independent of these criteria, which implies equal treatment for all. This is the reason the state refuses to recognize interest groups and official public institutions that are based on these criteria. In addition, there is a restrictive conception of "*laïcité*" (secularism), which prohibits religious practices and identities from appearing in the public sphere and restricts them to the private sphere.

---

[1] Job contract for young people under 26 years which gives the possibility of laying of the person without justification during a period of time of two years.
[2] This part takes up again arguments which were presented in Lagrange and Oberti (Eds), 2006.

School, health, and housing are classic public services that officially must not take these differences into consideration. For example, school is viewed as a basic institution with a social integration function that is supposed to guarantee equal opportunity independent of social, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The idea is that being French means accepting to be a part of this national "community of citizens," and in fact relegating the other dimensions of one's identity to the private sphere. This is the reason that alternative social forms of this model are rejected. It also explains why social and ethnic segregation is perceived as dangerous for social cohesion.

But this position implies guaranteeing equal opportunity independently of where one lives spatially. For a long time, even though it was not true, the State claimed to guarantee a relative homogeneity of the conditions required to maintain social integration and equality of opportunity for all.

Historical and economical conditions made this model of "republican integration" more or less efficient. Despite war and conflict related to decolonization, the period of the "*Trente glorieuses*" (1945-1975) following the Second World War was a sort of "golden age" for this model: economic growth; expansion of the welfare state; belief in progress; strong political and trade union representation of the working class; and high upward social mobility all favored strong social integration. While conflict and violence accompanied the integration of early- and mid-20th century European immigrants, the next generation—the "baby boomers" whose children were born in France—took advantage of this period. Not only were they able to become French, but they were also integrated at school and work. Thus, theirs was an experience of social mobility. If segregation, stigmatization, and discrimination had plagued their parents, they themselves were less affected.

I don't want to emphasize a sharply contrasted opposition between the "*Trente glorieuses*" and the most recent period of the crisis that began in the 1970s. This model has always been an ideal type that was never completely realized. However, conditions such as economic growth, the belief in a better future, and a strong working class movement gave it more consistency and credibility. Labor shortages created by the reconstruction and modernization of France provoked the arrival of the first immigrant generations to come from the former colonies, in particular from North Africa. This first wave of immigrants, which was mainly composed of men, arrived intending to return home. They were crammed into slums and bore the full weight of rejection by French society, which was bogged down in the Algerian war and other conflicts linked with decolonization. The social conditions of these immigrants, such as work and housing, were very difficult. Moreover, their position as "foreigners" from former colonies meant they were regarded as second-class citizens. The first generation's experience of humiliation and exploitation is part of a collective memory that is still prevalent in the third generation.

During the 70s and the 80s, the possibility of returning to one's country of origin diminished. The definitive settling of these immigrants created the "*regroupement familial*" (reunification of the family in France as a justification for residence there). It also brought the arrival of the second generation, which was born and socialized in France. Unlike early 20th century European immigrants, these second-generation North Africans are penalized not only by a sluggish economy, but also because of their ethno-racial characteristics. The gap between what the French republican model implies—meritocracy, rights, citizenship—and the actual situation is one of the major causes of the frustration and resentment felt by these young French people. Theirs is an experience of stigmatization, segregation, and discrimination (racism) based on their African backgrounds and the situation of social fragility that both they and their parents share. In some cases, the appeal of Islam or violence becomes a way for them to express their discontent and reclaim their ill-treated dignity and identity.

The autumn 2005 riots and the spring 2006 student movement: complex processes… which implies a complex framework

The succession of these two movements in the span of three months has provoked some rash comparisons. The way in which the socio-spatial exclusion of low-income families is linked to the increasing precariousness of young people merits meticulous analysis.

In their interpretations of these urban riots, most foreign media focused on the question of multiculturalism and the role of Islam in France. Some newspapers went so far as to compare these events to those of Los Angeles in 1992, thus promoting an overly-racialized interpretation of the riots. Others didn't hesitate to stigmatize Muslims as being "hostile to the rules and customs of Western countries." The difficulty French society has with integrating Muslim immigrant populations—or even its inability to do so—was thus surreptitiously highlighted. By extension, the challenge that multiculturalism poses for France would appear to come down to this religious aspect, that of the difficulty Islam would have in finding its place in a society characterized both by the pervasiveness of Christianity and a secular political culture. Better-informed foreign commentators viewed these events as a revolt of the most deprived groups, made of people who are immersed in deep social despair and faced with a waning "French Republican Model" that has demonstrated its inability to recognize other identities, to cooperate with them, and to assure a high level of integration. While all of these factors should be taken into account, the November riots and the social tensions they revealed must not be reduced to questions of multiculturalism or religion alone. Rather, it is precisely the overlap of these questions with the "social question" that creates its complexity.

Periods of protest, especially when they take violent forms, tend to give a unified picture of the participants. So it was for the riots in November 2005, which were interpreted not only as a violent response to the insulting comments of a Minister and the death of two young people, but also as a general expression of the relegation and disqualification felt by the youth in these underprivileged areas. To understand these events, we must take into account numerous factors. Not all underprivileged areas were affected by the riots; many young people not living in social housing and less affected by racial discrimination were not heavily involved. These riots were indeed the expression of relegation and a profound resentment that have brought into play both ethno-racial (youth of African immigrant background, directly affected by discrimination and racism) and social dimensions (youth of low-income background). Emphasizing these aspects does not mean denying the increasing precariousness of young people in general, nor does it mean neglecting the growing intergenerational employment inequalities and lack of upward social mobility. Rather, it allows us to demonstrate that the riots did not develop simply on the basis of age and class, but that they bring into play the urban forms of the increasing precariousness of part of the low-income population—particularly those of immigrant origin.

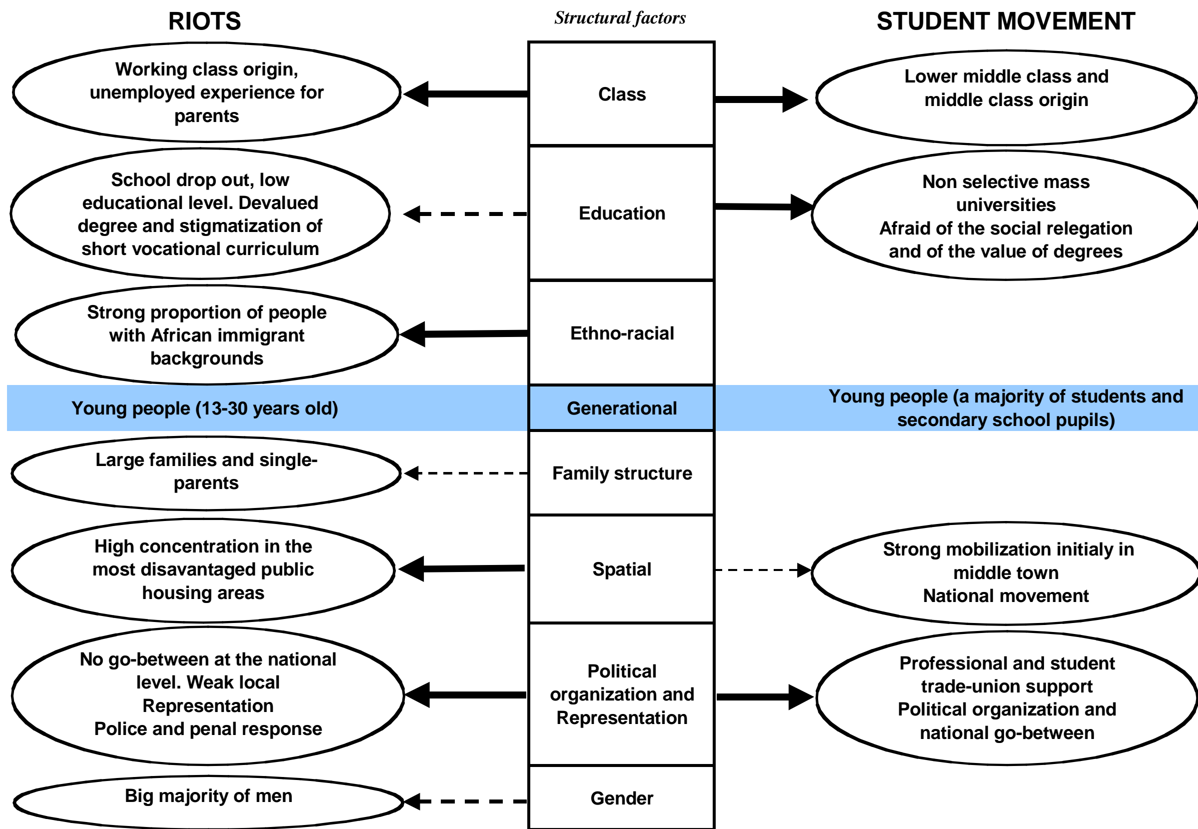
The protest movement in response to the CPE revealed this same tension between two main elements: a general reaction to a government plan perceived to be a reinforcement of the fragility and precariousness of working conditions for young people on one hand; and internal stratification stemming from social and educational inequalities during the long period between adolescence and employment on the other. This is exacerbated by the fact that, in terms of its recruitment program and the performance of degrees in the labor market, the French school system pits prestigious universities (the famous "*grandes écoles*") against non-selective "mass" universities.

Why compare the riots to the student movement?

The occurrence of two large mobilizations of French youth in a short period of time allows us to not only highlight the fundamental differences at the heart of the two respective groups (which reveals two different forms of collective action); it also allows us to identify the factors and dynamics at work in each case.

The different dimensions indicated below in Graph 1 enable us to better comprehend the greater complexity of the riots relative to the anti-CPE student movement. In effect, the events of November 2005 are not reducible to one dimension alone, whether it is social, ethnic, spatial or political. It is precisely the intermingling of all of the factors listed below that explains much of the intensity of the riots, along with their territorial diffusion, their weak politicization, and the profile of the youth involved. By comparison,

the anti-CPE movement appears to be a classic student demonstration, similar in both its form and its demands to the protests against various government bills proposed between 1980 and 1990.



Graph 1

Comments: Graph 1 shows which social dimensions were important in structuring and explaining the two social movements. The thicker the line is, the more important the factor is.

Above all, Graph 1 allows us to understand that the same dimension can play an important role in both contexts while having different content. Moreover, we see that it is possible for some factors that are particularly important in one case to play only a minor role in the other. This is especially true for the ethno-racial and spatial aspects, which played decisive roles in the riots but were of merely secondary importance in the structuring of the student movement against the CPE.

Besides the universally-important generational aspect, only two dimensions (social background and political organization/representation) played a deciding role in both movements. However, they differ radically in their content. Most of the youth that were implicated in the riots were of working-class background, with parents who were either unemployed or who were beneficiaries of minimum income

support. By contrast, most of the youth who mobilized against the CPE were either from the stable minority of the working class or from the lower-middle class.

As for the political dimensions, the differences between the two events are not only prominent; they reveal thoroughly the difficulty that the political and trade union systems have in effectively representing the interests and expectations of young people living in working-class areas. If from the beginning the student mobilization was able to profit simultaneously from the involvement of, and the taking of more radical positions on the part of, political parties and trades union; it was reserve, hesitation, and suspicion that characterized their reaction to the riots. It was especially in the communities that were most affected by the riots that political representatives on both the right and the left were heavily mobilized, often supported by active networks of associations and local spontaneous demonstrations. At the national level on the other hand, in addition to the police response orchestrated by the Minister of the Interior, the engagement of the political parties and of the trades union remained moderate in the face of the scope and duration of the riots. Few overall interpretations proposed by major politicians have sought to give a political sense to the riots, or to translate differently the revolt of the underprivileged youth who live in areas of relegation. In this sense, we can say that the political response to the riots was mostly repressive and penal.

The difference is flagrant when we compare the rapidity of the mobilization with the political support from which the students were able benefit. Certainly, the politicization of this category of young people has been institutionalized for quite some time. This is especially true in France where, despite a continual drop in electoral participation of its representatives, the tradition of the student syndicate remains a structuring element of university political life. It remains an easily-accessible resource in the event of a social movement, whose public demonstrations always have numerous implications for the political and national trade union systems.

The ethno-racial and spatial dimensions, which were of minimal importance in the structuring of the student mobilization, played a determining role in that of the riots—thus accounting for many of its particularities. The first factor intervened in two ways. First, it served as an easily-accessible method for the youth to explain the behavior of the police towards the adolescents they were pursuing, who ended up accessing a forbidden zone and dying of burns from a voltage transformer. Numerous authors have shown how the relationship between working-class area youth and the police has degraded in the last twenty years. They have also shown how this relationship is increasingly based on a philosophy of physical confrontation and provocations during which the recourse to violence becomes banal. The strong presence of youth of immigrant background contributes heavily to the “ethnicization” of police intervention, which these young people experience as racial profiling—making these North African or black African youth the

target of choice for law enforcement agents. Thus, the death of the two adolescents was interpreted as the dramatic consequence of ethno-racial discrimination, a recurrent theme in the lives of youth of immigrant background. The explosion of violence that followed the announcement of their death equaled the resentment of working-class youth that share the experience of ethno-racial stigmatization.

The ethno-racial dimension also intervened, for reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraph, simply because a significant part of the youth who were directly implicated in the riots were of immigrant background. Moreover, this element insidiously led certain commentators and mass media (principally foreign) to present the events of November 2005 as “ethnic” riots. But if it is true that a majority of the implicated youth were of immigrant background, in no instance were the actions organized on an “ethnic” basis—just as the violence was at no moment aimed at a specific ethno-racial group. This is a major difference with the 1992 Los Angeles riots, during which the violence put ethno-racial groups in opposition to each other, with logics of territorial control playing an important role. This dimension did not play an equivalent role in the emergence and development of the student movement; it manifested itself ephemerally during certain incidents towards the end of the protests, throughout the course of which limited and isolated groups of non-students (a majority of whom were black) attacked some protesters. These events, which contributed to the attacks and the looting that took place during the protests, were able to sow discord in the unity of the university and high-school movement without ever making the ethno-racial difference a dividing line.

This is even more noticeable on the social and academic levels, between high-school students engaged in the curricula of general education (often of middle-class origin) and those who are engaged in vocational education (whose degrees are more often devalued and significantly less favored). This cleavage has sometimes taken the form of opposition towards vocational education at the high-school level in working-class areas and towards general education in the most privileged areas, with the first group summoning a section of the youth implicated in the riots. In this way, some protests have taken place in certain “bourgeois” high-schools, which lead to violence and the destruction of property.

The spatial dimension is easier to analyze by comparing the two events because it is woven intimately into the logic of the diffusion of the riots, whereas it appears marginal in the other case. The geography of the riots clearly demonstrates the particularity of the neighborhoods concerned: a majority of the areas affected were among the most working-class and precarious neighborhoods, with a strong presence of immigrants or people of immigrant background. These neighborhoods are also considered “sensitive” by urban policy, and it is common to find deteriorating public housing in such areas. We will see in the following section how the level of segregation in these neighborhoods has helped to transform the conception of the social world from one that is thought of in terms of inequality to one that is

conceived in terms of discrimination. The situation of stigmatization and segregation has contributed to the consolidation of a "community of destinies" (that is, one of "pariahs") among young people. The territorial dimension also played a determining role because the most intense conflicts with the police, as well as the most flagrant civil rights abuses, took place in specific areas (either inside or on the immediate frontier of blocks of Public Housing Projects). Intimate knowledge of these spaces gave a strategic advantage to the youth, who were operating on terrain that was difficult for the police to control. The "urban guerilla warfare" quality of certain violent episodes is explained by the specific territorial configuration of such large public housing projects, which function like territorial units that are difficult to penetrate and control.

Territorial aspects were of only secondary importance for the student movement. We note that just as with other mobilizations during the 1990s, middle-sized provincial university towns are often the first to mobilize on a large scale, with the size and influence of the student body in local life being conducive to this type of demonstration. These are also universities at the heart of which the mass curricula are the most numerous and where, by extension, the uncertainty as to the value of their diplomas is the most elevated.

Finally, two dimensions which are represented by dotted lines in the case of the riots (familial structure and gender) are absent in that of the anti-CPE student movement. The choice to make them appear dotted here consists of two elements. The few facts available and the observations made at the moment of the riots have clearly shown that a majority of the rioters were young men; the charges that were filed and information obtained during police interviews confirm this. On the other hand, few works have sought to thoroughly examine this question, even if classic explanations could help explain why the young men's most intense involvement was in violent actions against the police.

We also notice that a significant part of the youth implicated in the riots came from families of three or more children, usually residing in single-parent households**.** Living in this situation appears to increase the likelihood that a young man will be involved in conflicts with the police.

This leads us to distinguish two ideal types:

1 <u>For the riots</u>: young male of working class or underprivileged origin and of African immigrant background; living with a large family and in a very depressed public housing project; low educational level and no direct connection with political and trade union organizations.

2 <u>Student movement</u>: either male or female attending university and of middle- or lower-middle class origin; no specific residential or ethnic characteristics; well-connected to collective action and to formal or informal political organization.

Segregation and Discrimination

From the 1990s onwards, the notion of discrimination became a major issue in the political and institutional arenas, in common discourse, and in the social sciences. This process has been accompanied by the creation of institutions, such as the High Authority for the Fight Against Discrimination and for Equality (*la HALDE*).[3] Although this organization aims to counteract all forms of discrimination, special attention is paid to offenses of ethnic or racial character due to the tendency of French society to not give them high priority and to not devote enough resources to their legal and statistical pursuit. Far more than just a realization of the necessity to identify, measure, and eliminate ethno-racial discrimination, this trend refers to the transition from an idea of society conceived in terms of class and social inequality to one founded on the dimensions of ethnicity and discrimination.

While numerous sociologists have pointed out this process, many of them have failed to give segregation a deciding role in their analyses. This has certainly helped reinforce the paradigm of the transition mentioned above—that is, the shift towards a society in which ethno-cultural (ethno-racial) identities, and the discrimination they imply, take precedence. Unequal access to housing, employment, and healthcare services, as well as unequal treatment by the police and in jails, thus tends to be analyzed primarily in terms of ethnic or racial discrimination.

We must clarify the more general link with segregation, as it is the subject that is most often approached in reference to a specific urban configuration: that of working-class areas with a high concentration of first- or second-generation immigrants. A more general analysis of urban segregation implies taking into account all of the logics of socio-spatial differentiation that contribute to the intentional practice of grouping together by common characteristics. Logically, this leads us to reflect on the relationship between segregation and discrimination in other types of urban spaces.

The principal difference between privileged areas and those that are distinctly disadvantaged and stigmatized is that the first group is able to participate in the process—directly or indirectly, intentionally or otherwise—of the relegation of the second group, while this extreme segregation does not make the inhabitants of well-to-do neighborhoods victims of discrimination. In the case of underprivileged working-class neighborhoods on the other hand, segregation is accompanied by a diffusion/concentration of the

[3] *La Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité* (HALDE) is an administrative authority that was created in December 2004. "Our general mission is as follows: to combat discrimination as prohibited by law; to provide all necessary information; to accompany the victims; and to identify and promote just practices in order to introduce the principle of equality to conventional wisdom. We retain the legal right to conduct investigations concerning such matters." (http://www.halde.fr)

concrete experience of discrimination, which consolidates and amplifies an interpretation of the world in reference to this logic.

For this reason, we will focus on this specific type of urban space, which was at the center of the November 2005 riots. Apart from the initial incident that triggered them, these riots can be interpreted as the violent manifestation of profound resentment in the face of a situation that was perceived to be the result of deliberately discriminatory treatment of certain categories and spaces. The intensity of this resentment can only be understood when put in comparison with other categories and spaces.

It is in the way that people *perceive* but also *are perceived* that the situation is interpreted in terms of discrimination. This is why the feeling of being a victim of discrimination can affect other categories and other better-off areas, simply stemming from the judgment of being intentionally deprived of certain opportunities or resources. Evidently the nature, intensity, and effects of such discrimination are in no way comparable to those that affect the population of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Often, the ethno-racial characteristics of the inhabitants of these areas provide the basis for principal discrimination and the most profound inequalities.

If the link between segregation and discrimination appears to be particularly tenuous for this specific socio-urban configuration, it may not, however, be only reduced to ethno-racial aspects. Thus, it is necessary to specify the nature of this link and its dynamics. This allows us to understand why, in this context, urban segregation acts on school segregation not only in quantitative terms (e.g., highest concentration of underprivileged students), but also in qualitative terms, favoring an interpretation of academic difficulty and failure as the result of deliberately discriminatory treatment on the part of the academic establishment and its personnel (Oberti 2007) Thus we witness, on the part of the youth themselves, a more diffuse recourse to discrimination to explain their situation of difficulty or failure, for which the intentionality of discrimination tends to prevail over the structural and/or personal elements of maladjustment/dysfunction[4].

Such logic reappears when we consider the difficulties that youth in these areas have in finding employment (Kakpo 2007). Very few sociological works focus on the custom of denouncing discrimination as a way of masking one's own dysfunctions/maladjustments (at work, at school, etc.) by diverting them to social determinations (such as unacknowledged or bottled up inequality, for example).

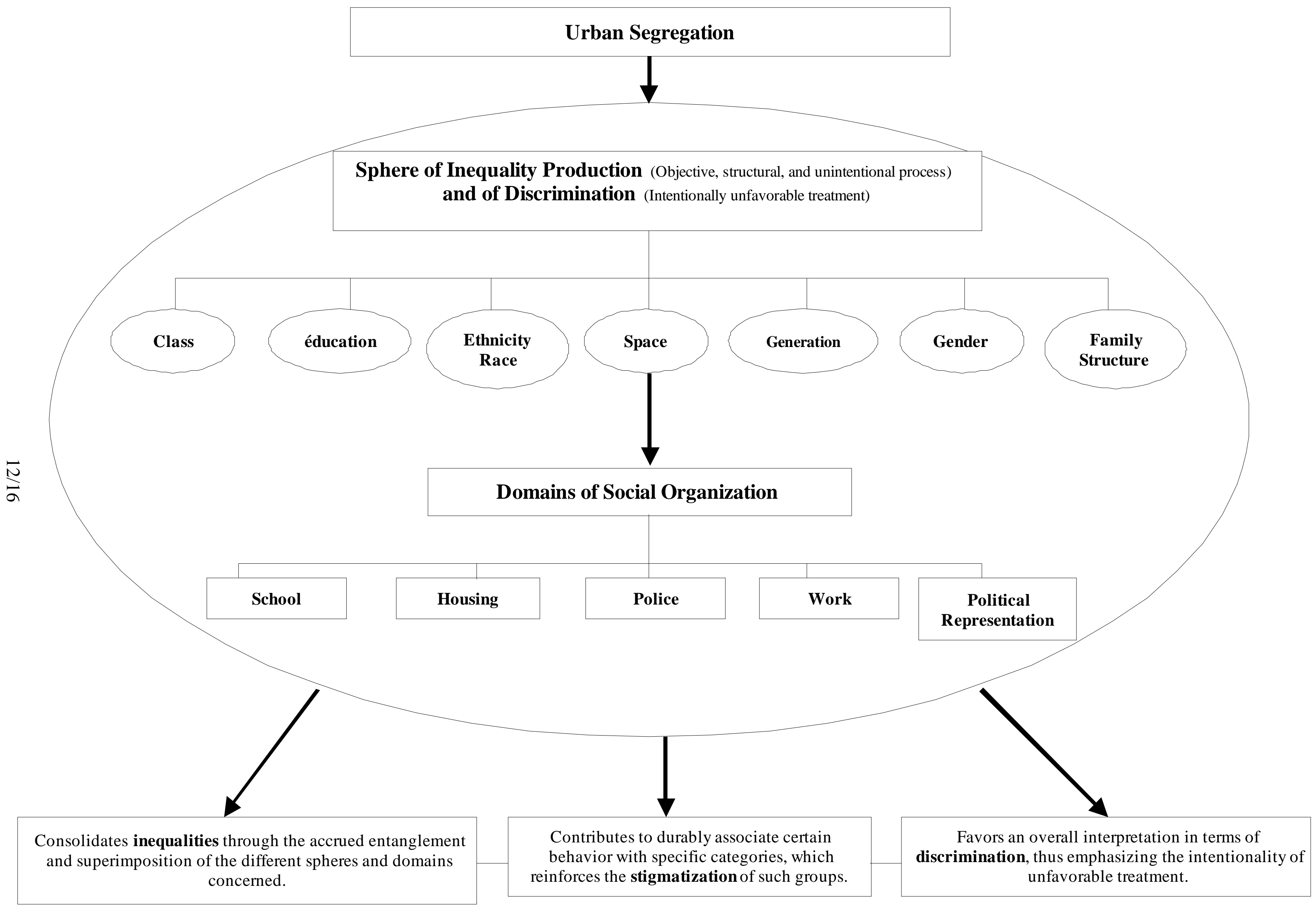
---

[4] This marks an evolution from what François Dubet highlighted in his work on "the hassle" (*la galère*), in which he demonstrated how some youth living in public housing attributed the difficulties they had at school or in integrating themselves into society to "personal" weaknesses or shortcomings (Dubet 1987).

This way of thinking implies that we must first distinguish inequality from discrimination. We will thus speak of inequality as the result of a structural, unintentional process that translates into unequal access to resources and social positions according to classic sociological factors such as: social origin; level of education; ethno-racial dimensions; location of residence; age; gender; and family structure. By contrast, discrimination refers to an intentional process of differentiated and unfavorable treatment of an individual or of a group based on one or several characteristics. The intentionality of this unfavorable treatment is perceived as such by individuals who are affected by it. This point is complex and important because inequality can result from a deliberate process of "putting aside" certain groups without necessarily aiming for them to be treated in an unfavorable manner. This process reveals what is commonly referred to as "perverse effects" in sociology, which is a phrase used to describe an action that has unintended consequences. In some cases, the outcome may even be contrary to the actor's intentions. For example, parents may very well desire to avoid establishments with a strong presence of children of immigrant origin without, however, hoping to accord unfavorable treatment to such people in terms of educational conditions or breath of curriculum. Neither the protagonists of this "avoidance" nor the people stigmatized by it perceive such behavior as discrimination. What is important in the definition retained here is the individual's subjective perception of a situation that he or she will interpret as the result of a deliberate action seeking to accord to them unfavorable treatment on the basis of one or several characteristics. If stigmatization often implies discrimination, the link is neither mechanical nor systematic.

Thus, discrimination is composed of a profound subjective dimension. However, pronounced inequality is not necessarily interpreted in terms of discrimination, just as real discrimination is not necessarily perceived as such by those concerned. It is indeed the combination of these two aspects—their intentional character on one hand, and the perception of this intentionality by the affected people on the other hand—that generally constitutes the point of departure for revolts or large-scale mobilizations (especially when discrimination scoffs at the laws and rules currently in force).

The diagram below lays out the overall scope of our analysis:


Urban Segregation
Sphere of Inequality Production (Objective, structural, and unintentional process)
and of Discrimination (Intentionally unfavorable treatment)
Class
éducation
Ethnicity Race
Space
Generation
Gender
Family Structure
Domains of Social Organization
School
Housing
Police
Work
Political Representation
Consolidates inequalities through the accrued entanglement and superimposition of the different spheres and domains concerned.
Contributes to durably associate certain behavior with specific categories, which reinforces the stigmatization of such groups.
Favors an overall interpretation in terms of discrimination, thus emphasizing the intentionality of unfavorable treatment.

The analytical dimensions indicated above (social origin, level of education, ethnicity/race, location of residence, age, gender, familial structure) correspond to the domains that are typically linked to the production of inequality. They all played a role in the structuring and development of the riots.

However, two factors merit special consideration:

1. These dimensions do not necessarily act on the production of inequality with the same intensity or according to the same logic. Likewise, their multiple combinations give rise to complex interpretations.
2. Depending on the category in question (education, housing, security, employment, political representation), each dimension will have varying structural effects on social inequality. Consequently, the extent to which they are perceived as discrimination will differ. In other words, certain factors are more linked to an interpretation in terms of inequality, while others are more linked to an interpretation in terms of discrimination. For example, social class is more commonly associated with inequality than with discrimination, whereas the inverse is true for ethnicity and gender.

Examining a few examples will help us better understand this dynamic.

For quite some time now, sociologists have brought to the fore educational inequality linked to social origin. The social actors themselves most often perceive this situation as the result of an unintentional process on the part of individuals or institutions; they tend to attribute it to the unequal endowment of economic and cultural capital, which manifests itself as disproportionate access to knowledge and an unequal relationship with the modes of academic evaluation. Their feeling is that it is not a deliberate intention of the institution or of specific groups to discriminate against people on the basis of social class in granting them access to education and academic degrees. Thus, they do not make an initial interpretation in terms of discrimination.

The logic behind educational inequality that is linked to ethno-racial dimensions is different in France. Not only has the perception of the academic failure and relegation of some immigrant children been experienced and interpreted as resulting simultaneously from inequality and discrimination (of deliberate intentions and differentiated treatment); the tendency has also been to stress a discriminatory vision of school and its verdicts.

However, in areas such as law enforcement, housing, or even employment, ethno-racial discrimination appears to be determinant and is often experienced as such. Concrete and ordinary experiences with racism contribute to their construction as discrimination rather than as inequality, and

bring to the foreground ethno-racial aspects as the main source of discrimination. Sources linked to social background, gender, and neighborhood are thus diluted, whereas it is precisely urban segregation in the most disadvantaged areas that produces an original intermixing—which is liable to amplify discrimination. In effect, those that are linked to the ethno-racial dimensions find themselves intimately linked to those referring to other criteria, such as age, gender, and location of residence.

In this way, we better understand how each dimension acts differently on various areas of society. Urban segregation in disadvantaged working-class areas is at the very heart of this process, acting in three separate ways: first of all, it reinforces the association and intermingling of dimensions (such as class, ethnicity/race, age, gender, neighborhood, etc.) that are less spontaneously correlated in instances during which there is less segregation based on these elements.[5]

Secondly, it also tends to durably associate some situations and behaviors with certain social categories and specific ethnic groups to such an extent that these characteristics become unique to these groups, who end up being principally perceived and defined in reference to these phenomena. In this way, a significant number of youth of immigrant background in a school is most likely to be perceived as a factor of disorder, or as reducing the quality of academic instruction; just as their presence in a public place will be perceived as a potential factor of insecurity. To the extent that the segregated groups in these neighborhoods are already the most stigmatized, the visibility of their concentration reinforces this stigmatization and a homogenized vision of such groups. This is how violence, delinquency, incivility, academic failure, and so on are less related to the social contexts that generate them than they are to the stigmatized groups themselves.

Finally, it favors the transition from the logic of inequality to the logic of discrimination; in other words, it tends to transform one's outlook on society and on one's own situation from a perception that is conceived in terms of inequality to one that is thought of in terms of discrimination. It is not a question of rupture, but rather of a gradual shift that does not completely erase the vision conceived in terms of inequality.

This transformation is particularly noticeable in the educational sphere. The social and ethnic homogeneity of certain establishments, which are associated with a less-diversified and less-attractive curriculum, is no longer just perceived as resulting from social inequality (which is more "legitimate" and therefore more easily-accepted). Above all, it is perceived as the result of an intentional process of exclusion and of differentiated, unfavorable treatment based on characteristics of which the strong spatial

[5] This has already been revealed by Dominique Duprez, 1988.

concentration amplifies the stigmatization and visibility.[6] This works in favor of the dissemination of the logic of discrimination—which is traditionally associated with certain dimensions (mainly ethnicity/race and gender) and with certain domains (law enforcement, housing, and employment)—to the entire society.[7] This includes school, whose verdicts appear to be increasingly perceived as discrimination.[8]

The situation of areas with a strong presence of working-class citizens and of immigrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa provides a good example of this double process. The multiple factors that produce inequality in these areas are heavily interwoven. The image of the young man who is poorly educated, of working-class and immigrant background, and living in a housing project, incarnates these consolidated characteristics that can not only reinforce their own capacity to amplify inequality, but also promote their perception as discrimination. They cannot, however, be reduced to simply ethno-racial aspects. In this way, young men in these areas perceive actions taken by law enforcement agents as discriminatory actions, the basis of which is the young men's identification not only with a certain ethno-racial group, but also with a neighborhood, a gender, and a social class.[9] In this context, urban segregation contributes to the transformation of a personal experience into collective experience.

Last but not least, going back to the second graph, we understand that the French riots were not an ethnic conflict. Of course, the experience of ethnic and racial discrimination was a crucial aspect in producing hatred and deep resentment. But the revolt was never a clash between ethnic groups, and the movement was not organized on the basis of specific ethnic interests. In the same way, it was not only a class revolt. Segregation was the element that created a specific and favorable context for the riots by transforming inequalities into visible and intolerable discrimination. More than a wish of ethnic self-organization or community division, it was a strong request for state intervention in order to reclaim dignity and achieve equal opportunity. It also raised the question of political representation of working

---

[6] This is why urban segregation contributes to the dilution of the effects of each factor, acting simultaneously as an objective element and subjective dimension of discrimination. Comparative studies run on areas that sharply contrast with each other in respect to their social and urban profiles would allow us to more subtly understand the experience of discrimination according to the level and type of segregation, as well as the way in which discrimination is associated with certain factors.

[7] Of course, this has played a large role in explaining the scope of France's November 2005 urban riots (Lagrange and Oberti (Eds), 2006).

[8] I was able to fully comprehend the intensity of this process during a public conference where I tried to present the difference between inequality and discrimination using school as a counter-example to a deliberately discriminatory institution. Several spectators, who were relatively young and of North African or Sub-Saharan African background, raised their voices in opposition to this concept. They portrayed their own academic orientation as the deliberate choice of professors and academic advisors to relegate them to the least-valued curricula because of their immigrant roots.

[9] Some rap lyrics, in covering the theme of the ghetto, demonstrate the multidimensional aspect of the perception of discrimination and its effects on the amplification of "rage."

people of African immigrant background living in very depressed areas. The French national and local political system has some problems in facing this challenge.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dubet, François. 1987. *La galère*. Paris: Fayard.

Duprez, Dominique. 1988. "Entre discrimination et désaffiliation. L'expérience des jeunes issus de l'immigration maghrébine". *Les Annales de la recherche urbaine* 76: 79-88.

Kakpo, Nathalie. 2007. *L'Islam, un recours pour les jeunes*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.

Lagrange, Hugues et Marco Oberti (Eds). 2006. *Émeutes urbaines et protestations. Une singularité française*. Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.

Lagrange, Hugues (ed.). 2006. *L'épreuve des inégalités*. Paris: PUF.

Oberti, Marco. *L'école dans la ville. Ségrégation, mixité et carte scolaire*.Paris: Presses de Sciences Po.

Préteceille, Edmond. 2006. "La ségrégation sociale a-t-elle augmenté ?", *Sociétés contemporaines* 62: 69-93.