Identity Building through a Sense of Injustice for Housing Estate Kids Historical Transmission, Segregation Processes and Radical Stances

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Abstract

Made up for the most part of children of blue-collar workers and immigrants, the youth of French housing estates is yet denied the social organization of the labor community. The legacy of its working-class past is all the more heavy to carry that its present is as uneasy and uncertain as ever. This is why these young people have developed, over two generations, a way of life that is partly specific to them, from creating their own "street culture" to practicing Islam with varying degrees of assiduity, to starting a career in petty crimes – the latter aiming to counteract unemployment and general precariousness. While most are not delinquents, they are faced, as the "inheritors of the working-class neighborhoods," with economic hardship and discrimination, making them the scapegoats of a country that yet is a democracy. That is why within less than 30 years, as a response to both social frustration and the contempt shown by elites and administrative institutions alike, a sense of collective injustice permeates the youth-and those who are now adults-in these neighborhoods.

Youth-Immersion-Plurality-Distrust-Sociological Survey

When one looks at studies undertaken in the densely populated areas of the city outskirts known as les quartiers or la cité, it would seem that the "experience of injustice" is reaching its apex for "outer-city kids." Inherent in the issue of youth in these neighborhoods are themes known through such buzzwords as immigration in the 1980s, insécurité in the 1990s, and the October 2005 riots-the "inheritors of the working-class neighborhoods" appear to embody the fears and anxieties of our society [1]. While riots are only the tip of the iceberg, a daily, continuous study tends to show that feelings of injustice, abandonment and anger, associated to a perceived institutional cynicism, are ubiquitously expressed by youngsters and adults. Acts of "urban violence" appear at specific times, often following a serious conflict with the police-which will not be discussed here-but the "experience of injustice" is a daily occurrence in working-class areas. It must be noted, however, that the people interviewed have been socialized in a republican background promoting an ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity.

In other words, what must then be questioned is the reason why individuals growing up in a democratic country (one which furthermore sees itself as the cradle of human rights) have designed a cynical, at times "conspirationist" view of the society they live in. How do some teenagers and adults-les jeunes de la cité, those that make up what is called the "housing estate youth"-go so far as to develop

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radical political ideas and extremist viewpoints in France? Beyond the descriptions of the transformations of the economy, the decline of the institutions (in particular state institutions, linked to the decline of the welfare state) and the many forms of identitarian claims, the political views of interviewed individuals reveal a very real "social malaise." Such discomfort must be considered within the social history of the "working class," and of a more recent history of the neighborhoods which create the experience injustice as it structures the identity of the individuals met with for the present study.

To this day, there are no in-depth study of the relationship that these teenagers and adults entertain with the institutions, society, and the world; hence this effort to contextualize the words of the people interviewed in the housing projects. While attempting to offer a better understanding of the situation, this article will briefly look into the history of working-class neighborhoods, and how their evolution is perceived as the source of current issues; it will then focus on how the "inheritors" of these neighborhoods develop, on a daily basis, their relationship to institutions. Lastly, this study will aim to understand to what extent this sense of injustice permeates their perception of the world and their future.

Five Working-Class Generations in the "Red Outskirts": from Steel-Working "Métallos" to "Outer-City Kids."

In order to understand the issues at stakes in so-called working-class neighborhoods, outskirts and suburbs, primarily regarding social relations, a brief look back into the past is necessary. The historical dimension remains essential to a better grasp of the current processes; regarding working-class neighborhoods, one must keep in mind that the labor community has played an active part in the changes taking place over the last century.

On the Methodology followed for the Present Study

I was born and have lived in a working-class environment. I wrote a Master's degree thesis, in Contemporary History, on the emergence of the working class in the northern outskirts of Paris between the World Wars. My following graduate work, in Sociology, focused on the evolution of working-class communities between the inter-war period and the end of the 1990s. In addition to the demographic and quantitative approach, a short ethnographic study was carried out on the last working-class generation in the area – the children of workers and, for a majority of them, immigrants, which are called the jeunes des cités, "housing estate kids." Lastly, my doctoral dissertation, in Sociology, focused on the daily life of

children and immigrants, while preserving a socio-historical approach. My work as an historian thus completes that of the sociologist who spent over seven years on the ground; this article is based on these works and findings. While the exact words of teenagers and adults – met in cafés, building lobbies, and during their daily activities-are not transcribed here, their content is used toward the study. Also of note is the fact that the interviews conducted for this study were recorded during informal conversations and (often participative) observation. During the study of the lifestyles of the youth of a neighborhood outside of Paris, it became obvious that over the course of the 20th century, working-class neighborhoods have seen five generations of workers:

- Between the World Wars, the first steelworkers came from the countryside, unprepared for city life. They had to face a difficult social setting – furious pace inside the workshops, economic hardship, and very frequent interpersonnal violence, as evidenced by police reports of the time [2].
- After World War II, workers experienced a significant improvement of their living conditions, as they gain access, some time after "the others," to consumer society. Economic difficulties still persist for some families, and some young males form the ranks of the "blousons noirs," as were called the hooligans of the time [3].
- workers from North Africa settled in the mid-1970s in the dilapidated housing abandoned by their previous tenants. They faced issues specific to both their legal immigration status and their employments in low-level positions in the factories. During this period, the middle-class and more financially secure families of worker left the public housings, and were replaced by significantly poorer populations [4].
- The fourth generation of children of workers and, for most them, immigrants, were faced, in the 1980s and 90s, with the deindustrialization of the area, unemployment and criminality. This is the first generation of "outer-city youth," which comes to symbolize the unraveling of the "red outskirts" and the emergence of the issue of second generation immigrants in the French media.
- lastly, in the early 2000s, a fifth generation of workers can be added-rather to be called "working-class," as the world of labor, its organization and social system, had disappeared in the 1980s-and/or a second generation of immigrants, for whom unemployment, discrimination and segregation are very present, and who are associated with such issues as violence, riots, cultural separatism, and "Islamism."

This paper will focus on the last two generations on this list. With the 1980s comes a rupture, the end of the social framework of labor communities. For workers' children (the fourth generation in the community, one of the first public housing projects [5] of the interwar period), the era is characterized by economic changes (productivity

investments, closing of some factories, employment flexibility, etc. [6]) which translate, in the day-to-day, into unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. They are similar in many ways to the young people that Dubet met about twenty years ago, during the end of the "red outskirts," and whom he associates with the hardships of la galère [7]. These youngsters have witnessed the slow decline of the local working-class community, and constitute the first generation of workers who tend to stay away from factories (which have closed or drastically reduced their personnel) [8].

"Long as I've known him, my father was at the factory. I worked for two or three summers in my father's workshop... Then it was over! They weren't hiring anymore! Good thing my father was old, they gave him early-retirement quickly in 1991." (J., 45 in 2008, delivery driver, son of immigrants from Morocco, married, 2 children.)

This first generation of "housing estate kids"-which make up the fourth generation of blue-collar residents of the area – witnessed the metamorphosis of the city and the dilapidation of the working-class neighborhood, and began to experience the social manifestations of the recession. Some of them, unable to follow their elders' path as factory workers, turned to petty crimes (or to a more serious criminal career, for a small number of them). In contrast with offenses against property, fairly common within the working-class youth, this criminality is marked by exclusion [9]. Yet, the most significant sign of change is the arrival of hard drugs in these neighborhoods in the early 1980s [10], which will accentuate criminalization, as unemployment and poverty become rampant [11].

"I remember, it wasn't easy back then... Factories were cutting back, and with my vocational training as a machine operator, what was I going to do? I did some stupid shit at the time... Some friends, they really slipped into crime, they never really could make it out – some of them are dead! When you think about it, it's a tragedy!" (M. 39 in 2008, temporary worker, child of immigrants from Tunisia, single).

"It's painful to talk about all this! It was a party at the time but when you look at it a little closer... I lost friends who took the wrong path! […] Somehow our generation was sacrificed! […] Pupuce, Didine, Jaffar, died of an overdose! Brahim, they found him in the trunk of a car, and Nordine died after a fight that went wrong..." (D., 42 in 2008, house painter, son of French nationals for several generations, married, 3 children)

As shown in these excerpts, the common experience, structured around delinquency and marginality, also had consequences on the lives of these individuals. This generation was marked by police arrest, acts of violence, psychiatric hospitalization and death – for a great number

in the early 1990s, in tragic circumstances-directly linked to criminal careers and drug abuse. In addition, this first generation of "outer-city kids" was faced with racism and difficult relations to institutions, the police in particular. Some twenty years later, in the mid-2000s, circumstances are still to take a turn for the best for the young people of working-class neighborhoods. While these are not the same kids – rather their younger siblings or sometimes their children-they share the same social background, and more importantly the same geographical backdrop. During the intervening years, the processes of social exclusion, which emerged in the 1970s, only became more present. The second generation of jeunes des cités, the fifth generation of workers (in the "red outskirt" studied here) came of age on a very harsh socio-economic background, as difficult for their economic situation as it was on the level of their socialization [12]. Illegal trafficking, somewhat on the rise, included a number of young people facing unemployment and poverty. While working-class youngsters had always been unruly, their involvement in the illegal economy intensified the many manifestations of "le bizness" [13], and forms of violence associated with a competition for recognition and "status [14]."

"Hard drug trafficking, it screwed up the atmosphere in the neighborhood. You don't have friends anymore: it's money, and every man for himself! Guys who grew up together can get into real fights over business deals!" (M., 27, child of Algerian immigrants, job seeker, single) of course, phenomena such as gangs, violence and criminality only concern one fifth of the young population-and for drug trafficking, only a very small part, because of the risks associated with it-as the social careers of outer-city kids are much more varied than is usually shown [15]. Yet, for the "kids" with college degrees, holding a position in a company, and who want to make a living legally, the shrinking numbers of perceived "good positions," discrimination in hiring, the lack of a professional network and social capital all tend to turn those who have "made it" into workers in precarious situations, under-qualified graduates, or simply unemployed. For some academic success becomes professional failure: schools and colleges, to some extent, contribute to discredit institutions.

"Honestly, we're doomed! I didn't go college, and then when you look like an Arab you never find a job. My older brother, he has a Master's, and he doesn't work either. It's a shame. We got played." (H., 22, child of Algerian immigrants, unemployed, single) For young people without qualifications, the situation is catastrophic, all the more so because, while in the 1980s institutions tried to facilitate the access of the youth to labor, in the 2000s, professionals are only concern with trying to fight "disaffiliation [16]." Over twenty years, between the two generations of jeunes des cités, the

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social situation has significantly worsened. In addition to the criminality, alienage and exclusion that marred the generation of la galère in the 1980s, manifestations of religious fanaticism, of interpersonal violence as well as urban riots, have demonized the young people of the working class neighborhoods [17]. The image of the jeunes de la cité has thus been strongly damaged, over two generations – while the first generation demonstrated for equality in 1983 [18], the second generation makes its public collective appearance with the riots of the autumn of 2005 [19]. The successive hardships of the past thirty years or so are leaving their mark on the residents of these neighborhoods.

Experiencing Otherness and the Systematic Confrontation with Institutions

The lifestyles of "outer-city youths" of all and any generations are a reflection of such hurdles as the job market, racism, police racial profiling [20], the demonization of their cultural practices, etc. In the day-to-day of the "cité," perceptions and experiences are strongly impacted by those. The ever-present tension between young people and the police [21] sometimes leads to violent clashes [22] from riots to ambushes. "It's true, I'm not a thug... Today, I'm employed, I've always been honest and hardworking. But honestly, the French police have a problem: they frisked me I don't know how many times for no reason. I got slapped for no reason. That's what democracy is? I'm really losing it..." (E. 30, son of Algerian immigrants, computer specialist, married, no children) While the police force faces its own hardships, and is often given a rough time in some "high-risk neighborhoods [23]," its presence in the cité creates more problems than it solves: too often, the police is nowhere to be found for ordinary disputes or day-to-day issues, and shows only for widespread policing operations and arrests that sometimes border on the "excessive use of force [24]." Similarly, relations with supervising institutions- those that include a variety of social workers-have gradually worsened, to the point that some individuals appear extremely suspicious toward educators [25]. All this tends to show that republican institutions are less and less trusted.

Other factors, beyond the economy, contributed to the marginalization of the young residents of working-class neighborhoods. This marginalization by the institutions has always been an issue, but since the early 1980s, with the settling of immigrant populations and family reunification efforts, the interest for working-class youngsters has changed. The appearance of children of North African origin in the 1980s [26] clearly seemed to be a turning point in the perception of the youth. First- and second-generation North African migrants made up fifty percent of this population, along with young people of French origins, and a little under a fourth of individuals of Italian, Spanish and Portuguese

descent. Their generation had specific characteristics-the oldest among them had found employment in steel-mills and yet, paradoxically, were the first to develop strategies to distance themselves from the factories. They navigated between the working class, small jobs, high school, and independent commercial or criminal activities (from pickpocketing to initiations into drug trafficking, to the learning of the techniques of armed robberies for the boldest of them). They also pioneered cultural practices that still characterize urban and suburban youth-a passionate love for soccer, delinquency or, for a few of them, criminal careers, a taste for Adidas or Tacchini tracksuits, and a preference for keeping with fellow youngsters of the neighborhood.

When of North African descent, they tended to keep parts of the traditional habits transmitted by their parents: they were the first to observe Ramadan in schools and in the neighborhood. They were the first to listen to and perform rap music, popularize pop-and-lock dance moves -known as smurf -and generally come to embody hip hop culture. This age class was also a wounded "generation," the first one confronted to racism, and may symbolize the disappointment that followed the walk for equality of the early 1980s. They are also associated with the introduction of hard drugs in housing projects, along with the criminal and sanitary issues related to them: one fourth of this population would not live beyond their thirties, as AIDS, addictions and violent activities took their toll [27]. They were the first to be faced with the decline of the world and school system, and such collateral issues as exclusion, unemployment and la galère [28]. Some fell victim to police brutality, because of their ethnicity; the first scenes of urban violence ignited by law enforcement blunders happened in the Minguettes projects, in Lyon, in 1981 [29].

During the 1990s, a number of researchers focused on the lifestyles of public housing younger residents. Beyond the cultural characteristics-hip hop culture, jumpsuits, brand-name sneakers, baseball hats, baggy jeans-differentiating them from other young people, the subjects interviewed have developed a language based on "verlan," and borrowing from North African dialects, English, and French slang. Most make extensive use of hand gestures and body language, and speak in a strong voice (thus imposing themselves and appearing more impressive), their words flowing fast, and with a concern for efficiency in their choice of words and syntagms. This street language has some commonalities with the vernacular of the Black neighborhoods described by an American linguist in the 1950s [30]. The author describes the research for efficient and fast communication-time in the street passing fairly fast for working-class teenagers-as well as confrontational and positional structures, through ritualized verbal attacks against family honor, and mothers in particular. The same was witnessed by a French ethnologist

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in the mid-1990s, during a study of teenagers in the housing projects of les 4000 in the Parisian suburb of La Courneuve; he further notes the existence of a tradition of teasing and mocking centered on agonistic values specific to working-class culture [31]. He also insists on provocative practices, aimed to taunt young people of the same group, but also "the others," especially within institutions. Beyond linguistic symbols, the majority of the young people interview in the cité-a [32] group at times much more heterogeneous than what is shown by the media, institutions and some experts [33] have also developed specific codes within a shared "street culture. This culture, in which prominently feature honor, virility, and difficult relations to the institutions, the police in particular, seems to structure the behavior of youngsters and some adults. Numerous anthropologists have studied this street culture, the specific practices of which are often frowned upon by society and institutions-in a number of the cases examined, it reveals deviant practices, and acts of resistance through illegalism, ritualized violence and specific lifestyles [34]. Most of the young people of the working-class neighborhoods, penetrated with "street culture," meet difficulties in the school system and on the job market; they are also the individuals that institutions describe as performing "incivil" or disorderly acts, and who run into the more trouble with the police [35].

In addition, the 1990s saw the emergence of another stigma for the working-class youth, especially individuals of North African descent, with the actual or supposed practice of Islam. During the previous decades, children and grand-children of North Africans immigrants were the victims of more or less virulent anti-Arabic racism. In the mid-1990s, with the Algerian civil war and the rise of Islamic Salvation Front, the Muslim religion is practice more ostensibly [36]. The visibility of religious practices by French-born North Africans does not go without its problems. The 1995 bombings and the Kelkal affair bring more stigma to Islam, perceived as anti-democratic, violent, prone to terrorism and generally opposed to western cultures [37]. Particularly stigmatized are the housing estate kids, all the more so because of systematic suspicion from law enforcement.

The situation turned into a very negative atmosphere, as the intelligence services of the French police enter the housing projects in the early 1990s [38], and young Muslims, commonly referred to as les barbus, the beard-bearers, feel singled-out as the "new enemy from within." The emergence of Islam in the working-class outskirts raises controversy-from the matter of the headscarf to the virulent views of well-known media figures- leading to backward positions toward foreigners, children of immigrants and the working-class youth [39]. After the racism that targeted immigrants in the 1970s and 80s, which more or less sealed the fate of North African workers [40], a new form of prejudice appears,

pointing at Islam, as the otherness of religious practices, associated to danger, terrorism and barbarism. These emphasize the bitterness of religious and non-religious youngsters alike.

"I do the salat [prayer] and I wear a beard because I respect the sunna [verbal recommendation] of the Prophet Mohammed. I work, I don't do anything wrong... And then the French see me as a terrorist, an extremist fanatic! That's not normal, seriously! Muslims are pious people, who want to practice their faith in peace!" (B., 32, son of Algerian immigrants, working in the telephone industry, single) for a large number of them, the religious prejudice is only disguised racism, and a direct attack against their identity, as Islam is part of the legacy transmitted from their parents. The practice of Islam, after the stigmatization and a variety of attacks and, is however on the rise. While some are humiliated or face ordinary racism (exclusion from the job or housing markets), the stigmatization of religion is perceived, on the grounds of this study at least, as a threshold that should not be crossed [41]. Islam is thus understood as resistance against "the others" and a Western world who seems to despise part of the outer-city youth.

These factors have carved a form of collective memory for the younger people of the housing projects. Conflicts with the police, day-to-day racism, the stigmatization of religion, the criminalization of lifestyles all have in the past twenty-five years created a collective memory and social thought that are always reactivated by the current framework linked to the same living conditions [42]. The legacy of former cultures, as referenced in the "movements beurs," the isolated life of a working father alone in France in the 1960s [43], in addition to the social history of working-class neighborhoods-signaled above with mentions to riots, day-to-day racism and the relation to the police) is summed up in individual suffering and collective resistance to the "ideology of integration [44]," as a French national "culture is created. <the injunction to integrate the society of the host country gives its structure to the fate of immigrants, their children and grand-children. The latter, while French nationals, must still prove their allegiance to what is supposed to be "French culture [45].

They ask us to integrate! I was born in France, it doesn't make any sense." (G., 21, son of Algerian immigrants, apprentice, single) "Immigrants this, immigrants that. I have a French passport, screw them. [...] If the bled was better... I would already have left for the bled!" (H., 20, son of Moroccan immigrants, high school student, single) This somewhat difficult situation is behind the constitution of a form of "experience community" [46] with strong manifestations in even the third generation after the 1960s "zoufri" and the 1980s "beur"-for our purpose, the second generation of

"outer-city youth." A sense of oppression is ubiquitous for most those who inherited the working-class neighborhoods, left out of a former "working class" and the heirs to a family and migratory history that often is a burden. "They insult us but it's our old men who built this country. All the dirty jobs, it was our parents. When you say that to representatives and to racists, they get angry, because it's the truth..." (T., 24, born of Algerian immigrants, LLM student, single) The sense of injustice is all the more present that racism, stigmatization and unemployment have structural effects on the destiny of those individuals, at the origins of a "culture of resistance" made obvious by the media coverage of riots – those only being the tip of the iceberg.

From "Collective Victimization," To the Sense of Injustice as a Building Element for a Culture of Resistance?

The social circumstances of the young people in working-class neighborhoods have not really improved over the past twenty years. The difficult living conditions in a developed country and, for many, the lost hope to ever access the "middle class" standards of consumption, contribute to the present process of social frustration within the young public. Admittedly, while rap music promotes a sense of "collective victimization [47]," there are in reality conflicts with law enforcement [48], a "deficit in citizenship [49] " in a democratic nation, and a somewhat critical situation that keeps worsening as poverty sets in. For the youth, the recent social history of les quartiers can be summed up as a drama showing the successive failures of all collective attempts at social emancipation, so much so that what was a plea for equality in the 1980s [50] became in the 2000s a violent clash of riots and urban violence [51].

"It's going to blow one day or the other! For almost thirty years they've been bashing our heads in: immigrants this, Islam that! The truth must be told! France won't accept us. […] The presidential elections rest on us: insecurity, criminality, headscarf, fanaticism: Sarko can thank us!" (M., 29, son of Algerian immigrants, shopkeeper, married, one child).

These remarks on the presidential campaign underline the changes imposed upon the French political and sociological landscape by the social history of the "difficult neighborhoods [52]." The lives of teenagers and adults, current or former residents of these neighborhoods are marked with interpersonal violence, conflicts with the police, difficulties finding and keeping employment, day-to-day racism – all contributing to the construction of an identity separating the residents of the "difficult" neighborhoods and those who never lived there. Beyond migration history, beyond working-class history and its specific memory-based

heritage, life within la cité structures an indelible collective memory, and a strong sense of personal identity, regardless of one's success at school, one's age or personal motivators. It's the history of "working-class neighborhoods" that shapes individual paths, all having in common a "sense of injustice" as the representation of society.

For a majority of the young people interviewed for this study, their relationship to institutions can be summed up in a few sentences: the police force is brutal and racist; social workers are incompetent careerists answering only to administrative criteria; school is useless, selective and discriminating. In addition, there exists a type of "ideology" – which certainly takes various forms from one neighborhood to the other, and is more or less nuanced from one individual to the other – somewhat radical, and follows a reasoning very close to "conspiracy theories."

"Honestly, the Joe Schmoes don't get it! Politicians work for secret societies, free-masons, etc. You have to blind not to see that... Democracy, it's baloney." (R., 28, son of Moroccan immigrants, fruit and vegetable vendor, married, without children)

"It's the Jews, who hold everything! Well, the Zionists, as they call them! They manipulate the media, buy off the politicians, and rig the whole society. And us, the Arabs, well, Islam, they hate us, and they fight us: the media are their weapons!" M., 20, son of Algerian immigrants, high school student, single) These radical comments raise the question of the identitarian claims by the young adults interviewed. While these "extremist" views are not shared by everyone, all the interviewees were critical of politicians, institutions and society in general.

"The system is rigged! The rich screw the poor. The police lie. Zionists hide. Institutions are rigged? There's only our immigrant parents that were tricked... and it's even worse for us, we're unemployed! All of this, it's just words." (23, of French descent, seeking employment with a vocational diploma, single)

The majority of the young people interviewed have difficulties believing in honest political mechanics and in the existence of an actual democracy: politicians, as well as the United States, are the corrupted instruments of the free-masons, themselves under the power of "Zionism," which is controlled by a small number of mythical families aiming to exert total control over the world. Consequently, these individuals feel "in the cross-hair" of this "occult" power, as they reckon that, unlike the "Français" and the "Joe Schmoes," they see clearly through the subterfuge, and thus feel persecuted. The third and last part of this assessment reveals worsening material conditions, very little hope in the future,

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and a flurry of daily issues. The "sense of injustice" finds its roots in the perceived absurdity of the young people's situation within a society that is experienced as inequitable.

These young victims of racism are also subjected to the restructuring of the economy in an unfavorable conjuncture, and are cornered into adapting pragmatically to illegality and "clientelism," making do as they can, finding refuge in alternative cultural spaces or at-risk activities. Radical and "extremists" thoughts are born of this context, and are fueled by the daily conflicts with the police, by the stigmatization by the media, the many forms of "discrimination," the ever-deferred hopes of richness and social success, and the expectations never met. Behind these violent words are feelings of distress, oppression, and fear for one's safety, in the working-class neighborhoods of France [53].

The feeling of exclusion (from the economy, the job market, decent housing, and the benefits of French citizenship) is common among the individuals interviewed for this research. While justice is given as the very symbol of a democratic ideal in Western democracies, it seems that in recent years this ideal has been faltering. The sense and experience of injustice is essentially linked to a free, democratic society. The young people of the working class have been socialized in France, have made the republican ideal their own, and when finding themselves left out by the institutions they learned to trust, they experience a perceived injustice directly related to unfulfilled republican normative expectations [54].

In other words, the internalization of republican norms within a political, economical and social context keeping them away from the republican ideal is at the source of both the sense of injustice and the violent and nihilistic activities associated with a part of this population. Behind these republican norms, however, are for a majority of these young people the consumerist norms of the middle class and petite bourgeoisie an ideal which is for now far from reachable. Similarly, elected representatives and the media criticize, stigmatize or deny the difficult (and sometimes chaotic) social situation of the residents, and these views add to the collective vexation. The reading of the situation by the institutions appears as even more denial [55]. Essentially, the radical views and actions observed for a large number of these young people can only be understood when seeing that they have no control over their past, their present, or their future. Teenagers and adults feel that, although they live in a free, democratic country, their rights and expectations are being denied. These frustrations are associated to forms of social injustice that seem constitutive to the new and increasingly contradictory political structures of democratic countries [56]. For the young generations who inherited the working-class neighborhoods, the feeling of injustice

stems from the paradoxes of French society-as the latter now lacks the means to deliver on its republican promise for civil society, and turns a matter of social inequity into issues of security [57]. All of the issues faced by the young working class, especially for the youngest residents of these neighborhoods, boil down to the attribution of security solutions to social problems.

Conclusion

The first part of this study traces the history of the population of a working-class neighborhood in the Parisian outskirts. However, in order to underline the state "social non-reproduction" of this group, these issues must be given their proper current context, after twenty-five years of economic changes affecting the working class as a whole. The situation-which seems to reach a critical point as the effect of the recession are looming-can be better understood through four factors that have been damaging for working-class neighborhoods:

- The lack of references and supervision offered to youngsters, a consequence of the decline of trade unions and, more generally, of forms of socialism.
- The political fabrication of a new domestic enemy, identified with the "kids from the projects" especially when they are of Northern or sub-Saharan African descent and perceived as Muslims.
- The social relegation of the children of immigrants and factory-workers who do not have access to work in factories, and who are therefore perceived as useless and dangerous for national cohesion.
- Pauperized and isolated social housing deserted by the middle and lower middle class, reinforcing stigmatization as well as the feeling of abandonment in younger people, during the development of their identity.

Recent changes have thus given shape to a form of identity building in teenagers and young adults finding themselves at odds with other social groups of the French society. These individuals are faced with issues and difficulties which single them out within society: they are the disinherited of the working class, they carry the burden of a history of family migrations, and the weight of the social history of neighborhoods associated with unemployment, violence, discrimination and racism. And it seems that, while most of them have been French for two or three generations at least, their belonging to the French society must be brought into question with every event or problem that makes the national news [58]. The sense of injustice shapes their collective identity, as well as the social perception of most young people from la cité or la banlieue. With bitterness and anger comes a collective malaise originating in fear (of others, of institutions, of the state), as these individuals feel that they are perceived as "enemies from within" [59] and

see themselves persecuted, demonized and marginalized by society.

In the face of a situation that questions the current processes of segregation and ghettoization [60] of poorer neighborhoods, the indi viduals have developed a set of behaviors focusing on honor, virility, violence [61] in their social conducts, and successive disillusions have brought them to display antagonistic postures with municipal and local institutions [62]. On a more political level, the collective identity building of the outer-city youth tend to take the path of more radical views [63] with post-colonialist elements [64], and display some degree of disappointment toward the left wing parties [65], as well as growing interest for Islam [66]. These identity-building strategies-provocative, violent behaviors, the cynical perception of institutions and politics-are as many questions raised about the future prospects this population is offered [67]. The young people of la cité have each their personal history, and share a common social, economic and institutional determinism which seems to create the conditions of the witnessed bitterness toward society. Only radically new options can guarantee both social peace at the local scale and social cohesion on the national level.

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