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# URBAN OUTCASTS

## A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality

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To my mother,

for teaching me the sense of social justice

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## Tools For Rethinking Urban Marginality

*Ghetto* in the United States, *banlieue* in France, *quartieri periferici* (or *degradati*) in Italy, *problemområde* in Sweden, *favela* in Brazil and *villa miseria* in Argentina: the societies of North America, Western Europe and South America all have at their disposal in their topographic lexicon a special term for designating those stigmatized neighbourhoods situated at the very bottom of the hierarchical system of places that compose the metropolis. It is in these districts draped in a sulfurous aura, where social problems gather and fester, that the urban outcasts of the turn of the century reside, which earns them the disproportionate and disproportionately negative attention of the media, politicians and state managers. They are known, to outsiders and insiders alike, as the 'lawless zones', the 'problem estates', the 'no-go areas' or the 'wild districts' of the city, territories of deprivation and dereliction to be feared, fled from and shunned because they are – or such is their reputation, but in these matters perception contributes powerfully to fabricating reality – hotbeds of violence, vice and social dissolution. Owing to the halo of danger and dread that enshrouds them and to the scorn that afflicts their inhabitants, a variegated mix of dispossessed households, dishonoured minorities and disenfranchised immigrants, they are typically depicted from above and from afar in sombre and monochrome tones. And social life in them thus appears to be everywhere the same: barren, chaotic and brutish.

Breaking with the exoticizing cast of media discourse as well as with the semi-scholarly approximations of conventional research, this book takes the reader inside these territories of relegation in two advanced countries – namely, the black ghetto of the United States and the working-class *banlieue* of France – to show that such is not the case: urban marginality is not everywhere woven of the same cloth, and,

all things considered, there is nothing surprising in that. The *generic mechanisms* that produce it, like the *specific forms* it assumes, become fully intelligible once one takes caution to embed them in the historical matrix of class, state and space characteristic of each society at a given epoch. It follows that we must work to develop more complex and more differentiated pictures of the 'wretched of the city' if we wish accurately to capture their social predicament and elucidate their collective fate in different national contexts.[1]

## Ghetto, *banlieues*, state

The chapters that compose this book dissect and compare the postwar upheavals and contemporary makeup of the American 'Black Belt' with the structure, dynamics and experience of urban dispossession in France's deindustrializing 'Red Belt' (the peripheral working-class areas that were the traditional stronghold of the Communist Party). The immediate empirical thrust and ulterior analytical purpose that animate them are closely linked. The primary empirical aim is to describe and explain *the institutional transformation undergone by the African-American ghetto* caught in the undertow of the wave of riots that swept the metropolis in the 1960s, in the wake of the reorganization of the regime of racial domination, the capitalist economy and public policy in the United States in a way that integrates, rather than separates as is customary, the roles of the labour market, ethnic division and the state. The secondary analytical goal is to extract from the similarities and differences displayed by the American 'hyperghetto' and the declining French 'outer city' the elements of a sociological sketch of *advanced marginality*, i.e., the novel regime of sociospatial relegation and exclusionary closure (in Max Weber's sense[2]) that has crystallized in the post-Fordist city as a result of the

[1] We would likewise gain from 'broadening the horizon of our gaze' on the neighbourhoods of relegation of the First World metropolis by replacing them in the broader spectrum of variegated forms taken by the urban constellations of the dispossessed caught 'between war and city' in the countries of the global South (Agier 1999: 6–8).

[2] By closure (*Schließung*), Weber ([1918–20], 1968: 32, 33) designates the set of processes whereby a collective restricts 'access to the opportunities (social or economic) that exist in a given domain': its members 'draw on certain characteristics of their real or virtual adversaries to try and exclude them from competition. These characteristics may be race, language, confession, place of origin or social background, descent, place of domicile, etc.' A succinct and effective presentation of this approach to social and spatial stratification can be found in Mackert (2004).

uneven development of the capitalist economies and the recoiling of welfare states, according to modalities that vary with the ways in which these two forces bear upon the segments of the working class and the ethnoracial categories dwelling in the nether regions of social and physical space.

After diagnosing the unexpected resurgence of the repressed realities of collective violence, material destitution and ethnoracial division in the First World city over the past three decades, the first part of the book focuses on the nexus of racial domination, class inequality and state (in)action in the racialized core of the US metropolis. Breaking with the trope of 'disorganization' that has guided mainstream research on poverty in America since the early works of the Chicago School, I develop an institutionalist conception of the ghetto as concatenation of mechanisms of ethnoracial control founded on the history and materialized in the geography of the city.[3] Against the tale of the 'underclass' that came to dominate the scholarly and policy debate in the 1990s, I retrace the historic shift from the *communal ghetto* of the mid-twentieth century, a compact and sharply circumscribed sociospatial formation to which blacks of all classes were consigned and bound together by a broad complement of institutions specific to the group and its reserved space, to the fin-de-siècle *hyperghetto*, a novel, decentred, territorial and organizational configuration characterized by conjugated segregation on the basis of race *and* class in the context of the double retrenchment of the labour market *and* the welfare state from the urban core, necessitating and eliciting the corresponding deployment of an intrusive and omnipresent police and penal apparatus.

I draw on a range of empirical data from quantitative surveys, in-depth interviews with residents, and ethnographic observations conducted on the South Side of Chicago in 1987–1991 to delineate the fabric of everyday life in the contemporary ghetto and pinpoint the economic and political factors that have propelled its recent evolution, among them economic informalization and deproletarianization, the persistence of a rigid and all-enveloping racial segregation, the erosion of America's rump welfare state, and local measures of 'planned shrinkage' of government services in the inner city. In the final analysis, however, it is *the collapse of public institutions*, resulting from state policies of urban abandonment and leading to the punitive

[3] For a compressed discussion of the perennial biases and limitations of mainstream research on racial division and urban poverty in the United States, the reader is referred to Wacquant (1997a and 2002a for its ethnographic strand).

containment of the black (sub-)proletariat, that emerges as the most potent and most distinctive cause of entrenched marginality in the American metropolis.[4] In contrast with Wilson's (1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged*, which prioritizes the role of the economy, and Massey and Denton's (1993) *American Apartheid*, which stresses the weight of racial segregation, this book highlights the gamut of racially skewed and market-oriented state policies that have aggravated, packed and trapped poor blacks at the bottom of the spatial order of the polarizing city. The implosion of America's dark ghetto and its flooding by extreme marginality turn out to be economically underdetermined and politically overdetermined: properly diagnosed, *hyperghettoization is primarily a chapter in political sociology*, not postindustrial economics, racial demography or urban geography.

The second part of the book develops a comparison of the structure, lived experience and political-economic foundations of urban marginality in the United States and France based on an empirical study centred on the notorious public housing estate of the Quatre mille in La Courneuve, a depressed industrial exurb of Paris emblematic of the festering 'crisis of the *banlieue*'.[5] This comparison is motivated by the fact that, throughout Europe but especially in France, the US ghetto has been taken as embodying the urban pattern with which the poor neighbourhoods of the postindustrial city everywhere are aligning. It draws out the contrasted social morphology, organi-

[4] The invention of the policy of penalization of social insecurity in the United States, translating into the hyperincarceration of black subproletarians (one African-American man in three is presently under criminal justice supervision, and two of every three blacks without school credentials will serve a prison sentence during their lifetime), is analysed in *Punishing the Poor: The New Government of Social Insecurity* (Wacquant 2008, orig. 2004), and its internationalization in *Prisons of Poverty* (Wacquant 2009, orig. 1999).

[5] Technically, the term *banlieue* designates a peripheral town or zone administratively attached to a larger urban centre. Originally, in the French medieval city, it refered to the ring of one league (*lieue*) falling under the *ban* or juridical authority of the city. A *banlieue* can thus be bourgeois or working-class, affluent or impoverished. Since the mid-1980s, however, the word has been increasingly reserved to denote lower-class districts of the urban periphery harbouring high densities of deteriorating public housing (projects known as *cités*) considered prime breeding grounds for the 'urban ills' of the age, combining economic deprivation, ecological degradation, social dislocations, postcolonial immigration and youth delinquency (Boyer 2000). Such *cités* are typically composed of large estates of cheaply built high rises that generate an atmosphere of monotony and dread.

zational makeup and functions that neighbourhoods of relegation on Chicago's South Side and in the Parisian periphery fulfil for their respective metropolises. It highlights the desolidarizing effects of territorial stigmatization on local social structures and strategies, and it uncovers the principles of social vision and division that pattern the consciousness and practices of their residents, anchored by the pervasive opposition between blacks and whites on the American side and the vivid dualism of 'housing estate youths' against the rest of the world on the French side. This analysis reveals that the declining urban periphery of France and the African-American ghetto constitute *two disparate sociospatial formations*, produced by different institutional logics of segregation and aggregation, which result in sharply higher levels of blight, isolation and hardship in America's dark ghetto.

Social closure and spatial relegation in the Black Belt operate on the basis of race first and foremost, modulated by class position after the break of the 1960s, and both are anchored and *aggravated* by public policies of urban triage and neglect. It is just about the reverse in the Red Belt, where marginalization is primarily the product of a class logic, in part redoubled by ethnonational origin and in part *attenuated* by state action. It follows that the American hyperghetto is an ethnically and socially *homogeneous* universe characterized by low organizational density and weak penetration by the state in its social components and, by way of consequence, extreme levels of physical and social insecurity; whereas the French urban periphery is typified on the contrary by a fundamentally *heterogeneous* population according to ethnonational provenance (and, secondarily, class position), whose isolation is mitigated by the strong presence of public institutions catering to social needs. This internal heterogeneity is, moreover, redoubled by the external heterogeneity across different French working-class *banlieues*, which constrasts sharply with the social and spatial monotony exhibited by the ghettos of the major US cities. That is why we shall, whenever possible, speak of the ghetto in the *singular* and of the *banlieues* in the *plural*.

The balance sheet of similarities and differences between the 'new poverty' rooted in the French working-class periphery and its structural counterpart in the United States highlights the *specifically racial dimension* of urban marginality in the American metropolis. It directly refutes the furiously fashionable thesis of a transatlantic convergence leading to the emergence of 'ghettos' along the outer ring of

European cities.[6] And it confirms that *state structures and policies play a decisive role* in the differential stitching together of inequalities of class, place and origin (whether ethnoracial or ethnonational), and this *on both sides of the Atlantic*. At crosscurrent with the political ideologies and scholarly discourses that concur to stress the weakening of the state so as better to bring it about, it emerges that Leviathan remains the main vector commanding the genesis and trajectory of advanced marginality in each country. Even where it might at first glance seem to be absent, passive or puny, it is still the national state that, through its multisided action, shapes not only the markets for housing, employment and educational credentials, but also the distribution of basic goods and services, and through this mediation governs the conversion of social space into appropriated physical space. In the United States no less than in France, 'effects of place' (Bourdieu [1993] 1999) turn out to be essentially *effects of state projected on to the city*.

Finally, the methodical comparison of the black American ghetto with the French working-class *banlieues* enables us to discern the main properties that distinguish fin-de-siècle marginality from the 'Fordist' regime of poverty that had dominated the period of industrial consolidation during the three decades after World War II. Having refuted the thesis of transatlantic *convergence* (i.e., the 'Americanization' of the European city), I move to formulating the thesis of the *emergence* of a new regime of urban poverty. The analysis of polarization from below presented in the third part of this book is intended as both critique of and complement to the studies of urban polarization from above carried out under the banner of the 'global city' and 'dual city', which have paid insufficient attention to the processes of social fragmentation at the bottom that have accompanied processes of unification at the top.[7] It underlines, *inter alia*, the

[6] This thesis rests on a complete sociological misconstrual of what constitutes a ghetto, produced and perpetuated by (1) ignorance of the historical realities of the American city (whose empirical investigation is conveniently replaced by the endless rehashing of clichés which, being shared by tabloid-style journalism, political rumour and the more worldly sectors of scholarship, appear in the end to be founded on fact) and (2) a persistent conceptual confusion between ghettoization and spatial differentiation, residential segregation, economic pauperization, concentration of foreigners or immigrants, physical enclosure, degradation of the housing stock, criminal violence and so on (either taken *in seriatim* or in clusters).

[7] Among the key works charting the parameters of that current are Sassen (1991b, revised and expanded 2001), Mollenkopf and Castells (1991), Fainstein et al. (1992), Abu-Lughod (1999), Marcuse and Van Kempen (2002), and the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation (O'Connor et al. 2001).

fact that post-Fordist poverty or 'advanced marginality' in the city is fuelled by the growing instability and heterogeneity of the wage-labour relation in the context of rising inequality; increasingly disconnected from the short-term cyclical fluctuations of the national economy and accentuated by the recoiling of the social welfare state; and tends to concentrate in defamed and desolate districts where the erosion of a sense of 'place' (referring to both a shared objective position and the subjective sentiment of having a 'place of our own') and the absence of a collective idiom of claims-making exacerbate the experience and effects of deproletarianization and destitution. Drawing on Erving Goffman's (1963) analysis of stigma and on Pierre Bourdieu's (1982/1991) theory of group-making, it stresses the distinctive weight and effects of territorial stigmatization as well as the insuperable political dilemmas posed by the material dispersion and symbolic splintering of the new urban poor.

As a new century dawns, the incapacity of the governments of the advanced countries, that is, the refusal or reticence of their ruling classes converted to neoliberalism to check the social and spatial accumulation of economic hardship, social dissolution and cultural dishonour in the deteriorating working-class and/or ethnoracial enclaves of the dualizing metropolis promises to engender abiding civic alienation and chronic unrest which pose a daunting challenge to the institution of citizenship. The deep rooting and wide reverberations of the social disorders generated by advanced marginality are major springs behind the spectacular expansion and generalized hardening of police and penal policies trained on the urban subproletariat in the United States and the European Union since the denunciation of the Fordist–Keynesian social compact (Wacquant 1999). But the penalization of urban poverty only aggravates the very ills it is supposed to treat, while traditional welfarist approaches leave largely untouched the causal mechanisms feeding the new urban poverty. So much to say that, to make a real difference, public policies aimed at combating advanced marginality will have to reach beyond the narrow perimeter of wage employment and move towards the institutionalization of a right to subsistence outside of the tutelage of the market via some variant of 'basic income' (Van Parijs 1995).

## Towards a comparative sociology of urban marginality

By specifying the distinctive causal dynamics, social modalities and experiential forms that fashion relegation in the metropolis in the

United States and in France, this book endeavours to forge tools for rethinking urban marginality in the advanced societies. It intends thereby to help invigorate the *comparative sociology of social polarization from below* in the cities of the First World but also of Second World countries, such as Argentina, South Africa and Turkey, and of the nation-states that have issued out of the rubble of the Soviet empire, where the diffusion and intensification of urban poverty in recent years are even more pronounced.[8] From this comparison – provisional and subject to revision – between the American ghetto and the French working-class periphery at the close of the twentieth century arise five principles that may usefully orient future research.

First and foremost, it is imperative to establish a clearcut separation between, on the one hand, the *folk concepts* used by state decision-makers, city authorities and the residents themselves to designate neighbourhoods of exile and, on the other, the *analytical concepts* that social scientists must *construct*, against the pre-notions of urban common sense, to account for their evolving makeup and position in the sociospatial structure of the metropolis. This implies that particular attention be given to the critical examination of the categories and discourses (including those produced by social science) that, under cover of describing marginality, contribute to moulding it by organizing its collective perception and its political treatment. As a corollary, one must beware of the international circulation of phony concepts – such as that of the 'underclass' – which are not only unsuited to their contexts of *importation*, but do not even have purchase at home on the urban realities in their *exporting countries* (Wacquant 1996a). One must likewise guard against the confused and confusing invocation of notions, like that of 'ghetto', that operate as mere metaphors calling forth an emotive imagery that hides fundamental structural and functional differences, thereby stopping inquiry just where it should get going.[9]

[8] Cf. the extension of the problematic of the nexus of poverty and ethnicity to post-Soviet societies in Eastern Europe (Emigh and Szelényi 2001; Ladányi and Szelényi 2002), the resurgence of the debate on marginality in Latin American cities (Auyero 2000; González de la Rocha et al. 2004; Lago 2005), and the blooming of work on urban exclusion in post-apartheid South Africa (Robinson 1996; Gervais-Lambony et al. 1999) and Turkey during the phase of integration with Europe (Erder 1997; Keyder 2005). This debate is also of burning significance in China (Wu 2004).

[9] This is what I will attempt to demonstrate in *The Two Faces of the Ghetto*, the book that is the sequel and complement to this tome, by directly confronting the controversial question of the ghetto.

Secondly, it is vital to replace the state and fate of a neighbourhood (be it upscale or deprived, noble or ignoble) in the *diachronic sequence of historical transformations* of which they are the material expression and which never find their source and principle in the neighbourhood under examination. Any 'cross-sectional' slice of the metropolis is comprehensible only as a synchronous precipitate, artificially frozen by analysis, of 'longitudinal' tendencies of the long run that traverse social space and appropriated physical space. Thus the *brutal implosion* of the black American ghetto in the wake of the urban uprisings of the 1960s was propelled from the outside, by the confluence of the decentring of the national political system, the crumbling of the caste regime, the restructuring of urban capitalism, and the policy of social regression of the federal government set against the backdrop of the continued ostracization of African Americans. The same is true of the *slow decomposition* of the working-class territories of the French (and more generally European) urban periphery in the post-Fordist era which, like their consolidation during the period between 1910 and 1980, is overdetermined from above by the triangular relationships between the state, social classes and the city. To forget that urban space is a *historical and political construction* in the strong sense of the term is to risk (mis)taking for 'neighbourhood effects' what is nothing more than the spatial retranslation of economic and social differences.[10]

A third recommendation pertains to methodology: *ethnographic observation emerges as an indispensable tool*, first to pierce the screen of discourses whirling around these territories of urban perdition which lock inquiry within the biased perimeter of the pre-constructed object, and secondly to capture the lived relations and meanings that are constitutive of the everyday reality of the marginal city-dweller. But, lest one condemn oneself to monographic myopia, fieldwork cannot for a single moment do without institutional analysis, and vice versa – even if one or the other is sidelined or muted at certain moments of the research and its end-product. It must be guided at every step by the methodical knowledge, itself constantly revised and enriched by the first-person study of concrete situations, of the

[10] As Pierre Bourdieu forcefully reminds us ([1993] 1999: 123, 124, my trans.): 'One can break with falsely self-evident notions, and with the errors inscribed in substantialist thinking in terms of *places*, only on condition of effecting a rigorous analysis of the relations between the structures of social space and the structures of physical space', relations that are the historical product of 'struggles over the appropriation of space' in which the state plays a doubly decisive role as the ground of confrontation and as interested protagonist.

macrostructural determinants that, although ostensibly absent from the neighbourhood, still govern the practices and representations of its residents because they are inscribed in the material distribution of resources and social possibles as well as lodged inside bodies in the form of categories of perception, appreciation and action (Bourdieu 1980/1990). This is here a matter not of collecting 'fresh' data to compose 'lively' illustrations of theories elaborated outside sustained contact with the prosaic reality but indeed of enrolling ethnographic observation as a necessary instrument and moment of theoretical construction.

Although this book does not belong to the established genre of the ethnographic monograph, ethnography played an essential role in it. For field observation, structural analysis and theoretical construction advance in unison and mutually reinforce each other in it,[11] rather than opposing one another in a sterile conflict of priority. Without the direct information obtained through personal participation in ordinary scenes of life in Chicago's South Side ghetto, I would not have been able to validate my initial intuition of the incongruous and unconvincing import of the academic legend of the 'underclass', and I could not have rearticulated the question of race, class and state in the despised space of the *inner city* (the geographical euphemism used by normal US social science to designate the black ghetto, precisely to avoid *naming* it). Similarly, the data produced firsthand during the investigation carried out in La Courneuve and among the municipal and ministerial services charged with French urban policy in 1989–1991 were vital in helping me set aside the false problems imposed by the current political debate and its administrative focus, and then to triangulate the view from below and the view from above of the pauperized estates in the Parisian *banlieue* with the relevant economic and demographic data. The more abstract theorizations – such as the analytical sketch of 'advanced marginality' with which this research culminates – always gain from being solidly harnessed to a carnal grasp of the historical experience for which they purport to account.[12]

[11] Two models of synergistic integration of these three elements are Virgílio Pereira's book (2005), *Classes e culturas de classe das familias portuenses* (especially Part 3, 'Cidade e Territorio', pp. 479–767), and Mario Small's (2004) study of a poor Puerto Rican enclave of Boston, *Villa Victoria*.

[12] This grasp can itself be thematized by means of *comparative* ethnography, based on parallel fieldwork conducted in two sites chosen to throw light upon theoretically relevant invariants and variations, as opposed to the currently fashionable 'multi-sited fieldwork' which is too often a handy excuse for escaping the practical drudgery of ethnography by not doing fieldwork anywhere.

Fourthly, it is useful to distinguish, at a minimum, between the social *condition* characteristic of a zone of relegation and the conditionings it entails (which can, over time, crystallize into a local culture and panoply of typical strategies; cf. Bourgois 1995); its *position* in a hierarchized structure of places, measured by the double yardstick of material and symbolic value; and the *function* it performs for the broader metropolitan system. Some such districts serve as active and resilient reservoirs of low-skill labour force; others are mere warehouses for supernumerary populations that no longer have any identifiable political or economic utility in the new polarized capitalism; and others yet are spatial containers for the ostracization of undesirable social categories and activities. This is true of the lowly neighbourhoods of different countries but also of different cities in a single society or even in the same metropolis. In Brazil, for example, the label *favela* fuses and confuses stable working-class districts that continue to provide solid harbours of proletarian integration into the city, zones in which the victims of 'regressive deindustrialization' are forsaken to their fate in an informal street economy increasingly dominated by criminal activities and the entropic violence they generate, and enclaves for *marginais* defined by the experience of group stigma and collective taint.[13] The same neighbourhood can fulfil one or the other of these functions in succession or, depending upon the sector, simultaneously for different categories, according to proportions set by the history of its composition and position in the objective and subjective hierarchy of the districts that make up the city.

Lastly, one needs to specify the *degree and form of state penetration* in neighbourhoods of relegation as well as the changing – and often contradictory – relations that their inhabitants maintain with different public officials and agencies, schools and hospitals, housing and social welfare, firefighting and transportation, the courts and the police. These relationships cannot be assumed to be static, uniform, univocal or adequately summed up by the catch-all phrase of 'clientism' or by the familiar figures of conflict and complaint. On the one hand, indeed, even when poor city-dwellers fail to overturn the 'rituals of marginality' that bind them to the governing elite, their collective action continually engenders new meanings and multistranded exchanges that open up a possible space for collective demands and

[13] It suffices, to realize this, to contrast Ribeiro (1996) with Pamuk and Cavallieri (1998), Pino (1997) with Goldstein (2003), and, from a historical and biographical viewpoint, the works assembled by Zaluar and Alvito (1998). The same demonstration could be made for the *Problemquartier* in Germany, the *bairro degradado* in Portugal, the *ciudad perdida* in Mexico or the *varoş* in Turkey, and so on.

social critique (Vélez-Ibañez 1983). On the other hand, there exists a wide gulf between government policies 'on paper', decided and articulated by the centres of state power, and the ordinary practices of the street-level bureaucracies (Lipski 1980) that provide (or fail to provide) public services in a manner that is always differentiated and differentiating according to client category and location, a gulf that we can bridge only by empirical analysis of specific and prosaic cases.[14]

Among the institutions that stamp their imprint on the daily life of the populations and on the climate of 'problem' neighbourhoods, special attention must be accorded to the police. As the 'frontline' agency and frowning face of the state directly turned down towards precarious and marginal categories, the police are everywhere confronted with a deep crisis of legitimacy, mission and recruitment that the recent managerial turn can neither contain nor mask, since it finds its source in the overall reconfiguration of the state, the erosion of the public monopoly over systems of surveillance and sanction of deviancy, and the broad diffusion of a feeling of *social* insecurity to which political leaders have chosen to respond with the all-out politicization of *criminal* insecurity, which sets off an upward spiralling of expectations that the forces of order cannot but betray in the end.

Yet, while the social foundations of 'police fetishism' – the ideological illusion that would make it the 'solution' to the 'crime problem' (Reiner 1997: 1003) – are crumbling, the police have again been entrusted, not only with maintaining public order, but also, in a very concrete sense that returns it to the historic mission of its origin, with buttressing the new social order woven out of vertiginous inequalities and with checking the turbulences born of the explosive conjunction of rampant poverty and stupendous affluence engendered by neoliberal capitalism in the cities of the advanced and advancing countries around the globe.[15] And if putting working-class districts left economically and socially fallow under police restraint has recently become so popular among rulers, it is because it enables the high state nobility to give itself the comforting feeling that it is responding to the demands of the 'people' while at the same time exculpating its own historic responsibility in the making of the urban outcasts of the new century.

[14] For a fine-grained study of 'the regulation of tensions and of the production of consent' by state administrations responsible for the everyday management of urban poverty (in the case at hand, two family benefits offices in two French towns), read Dubois (1999).

[15] On this issue, see Chevigny (1995), Palidda (2000), Jobard (2002) and Binder (2004), respectively, on the Americas, Italy, France and Argentina.

# Prologue: An Old Problem in a New World?

# 1

# The Return of the Repressed

## Riots, 'Race' and Dualization in Three Advanced Societies

In the expansionary decades following the mid-twentieth-century traumas of depression and war, the rich countries of the capitalist West came to think of themselves as peaceful, cohesive and egalitarian societies – in a word, as *civilized* in both the ordinary, morally effusive, meaning of the term denoting the most accomplished form of culture and human life, and in Norbert Elias's ([1937] 1978) sense of 'civilizing' as engaged in a long-term process of restructuring of social relations entailing the extension of chains of interdependencies, the multiplication of organizations, and the pacification of social exchange via the monopolization of the use of public violence by a centralized bureaucratic state.

Advanced nation-states such as the United States, France and Great Britain also embraced a vision of themselves as increasingly *democratic* in Tocqueville's understanding of the term, that is, oriented towards the ineluctable reduction of inequalities of condition, particularly those derived from 'ascribed' positions and identities. Indeed, one of the most salient dimensions of the self-understanding of First World societies during the immediate postwar period was that inherited statuses, such as class, ethnicity or 'race', were increasingly irrelevant for access to valued social locations and the attendant bundle of life chances.[1] Mass consumption, the supposed *embourgeoisement* of the working class, the growing weight of educational credentials in the competitive allocation of persons in an increasingly

[1] This broad-brush portrait does not allow recognition of significant variations among what are cursorily labelled 'First World' societies. For a pointed presentation of differences in the sociopolitical construction of inequality and poverty in France, Great Britain and the United States, see Silver (1993: esp. 342–8).

differentiated occupational structure, the diffusion of liberal individualism: together these factors promised to usher in an unprecedented era of personal well-being and social comity. Two books, published simultaneously in 1960 in the United States, may be taken as emblematic projections of this emerging societal vision, as revealed by their titles: Walt W. Rostow's (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* and Daniel Bell's (1960) *The End of Ideology*. Sociology gave a scholarly expression to this belief by elaborating the notion of 'meritocracy'. In the United States, a whole school of stratification research (based at the University of Wisconsin, Madison) laboured to formalize this vision of an increasingly fluid and porous class structure by making 'status attainment' the conceptual backbone of countless studies of 'opportunity'.[2]

During the same period, it became widely accepted that the more extreme forms of inequality in basic life circumstances had been or were about to be alleviated, if not eradicated, by the wide provision of public goods, such as education, health and housing, through the arm of the welfare state – in the case of Western European countries – or via the trickle-down effects of sustained free-market growth and targeted programmes of assistance – in the United States. Buoyed by industrial consolidation and by the continued expansion of newer services sectors, First World societies came to construe poverty as a mere *residue* of past inequities and backwardness or as the product of *individual deficiencies* liable to remedy – at any rate, as a phenomenon bound to recede and disappear with the full 'modernization' of the country.[3] Thus, on the eve of the contentious 1960s, the economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1958) called poverty an 'afterthought' and an anomaly in US society, characterizing it as pertaining only to 'case poverty' and 'insular poverty'. True, the so-called islands of

[2] The terminology itself is revealing of the ideological presuppositions of such research. Knotterus (1987) dissects the image of society underlying 'status attainment' research, carried out in particular by members of the Wisconsin School. One could show that the ideology of *social meritocracy* (as embodied by the writings of Talcott Parsons, Peter Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, on the American side, and Raymond Aron and Henri Mendras, on the French side) fulfilled for Euro-American societies a function similar to that performed for Brazil by the national myth of 'racial democracy', as formulated by Gilberto Freyre ([1938] 1946).

[3] Castel (1978) offers a historical account of this problematic in the case of the United States, while Wilson and Aponte (1985) record the cyclical 'disappearance' and 'rediscovery' of the question of poverty in American society over the twentieth century. On the corresponding gyrations of the French debate (around the theme of 'exclusion' after the late 1980s), consult Paugam (1993); on the British discussion, L. Morris (1994).