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A Decolonized Visibility for Invisible Minorities

**Street Art in a State of Exception: Between Opposition and
Normalization in 21st Century France**

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*There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.*¹ — Elie Wiesel

¹ Elie Wiesel, Nobel Lecture: Hope, Despair and Memory on 11 December 1986, Nobel Media AB 2014, Access: 27.03.2017.

Introduction

The goal of this Master thesis is to analyze the role of street art in the construction of new identities that can foster minorities in contemporary France. It will combine an analysis of three case studies of specific contemporary street artists in France with three chapters including theoretical analyses of the production of French public space and political landscape over the last sixty years.

The Paris massacre of 17 October 1961, the demonstrations of May '68 and the 2005 riots constitute three major events in recent French history. These conflicts are exemplary for understanding the production of public space and make up the historical background of this thesis. They will be linked to present-day France through a close examination of the French “republican model” and the notion of multiculturalism in order to ask whether these concepts are still relevant and can still function within French society. Finally, the history and theory of “the state of exception” will show how the republican form of government reinvests the principles of colonialism and is reminiscent of the French colonial empire. The case studies consider the work of three different artists: Princess Hijab’s in the Parisian subway; Combo’s on the Parisian walls; and Banksy’s in Calais around and in the Calais Jungle (the refugee and migrant camp).

No scholarship to date has treated the specificity of such interventions in the contemporary French public sphere. While scholars have written much about street art in various international contexts, scant attention is paid to street art in France. Literature on French street art tends to focus on graffiti with, for instance, studies about graffiti during May '68 and a few articles that perform formal analyses on Parisian graffiti.

Yet, street art in France has received little critical attention. It seems that nothing has been written about contemporary street art in France from a more political point of view, a gap which this thesis aims to fill. There are indeed no academic articles or studies concerned with the political implication and context of French street art today and its link to artistic activism. Moreover, artists such as Princess Hijab and Combo – unlike Banksy – are not represented outside of the press or Internet articles. This thesis, therefore, also aims to present their works within an academic context.

Through a close analysis of French street art, this thesis makes evident how street art is questioning the so-called French “republican model” and how it can create a new decolonized model, with the aim of creating a “decolonized visibility”, free from the colonial legacy and the

discrimination that has resulted from it and which continues to manifest today. Another concern is understanding the historical and sociopolitical situation of the state of exception and to which extent the return to this procedure is reminiscent of the exercise of colonial authority. Finally, this thesis considers whether there can be such a thing as an "artist of minorities", namely an artist who consciously decides to foster invisible minorities by providing them with visibility.

Literature Review

The relevant literature for this thesis consists of a mix between secondary literature and press articles (including interviews). It is multidisciplinary in that, apart from art history, it is also concerned with the disciplines of post-colonial studies, sociology, philosophy, and political science. The literature can be described in terms of its connections between schools of thoughts and authors. Post-colonial studies are represented here by authors such as Hannah Feldman and Kristin Ross; public space theory by Chantal Mouffe, Rosalyn Deutsche and David Harvey; performativity theories by Judith Butler; sociology by Didier Lapeyronnie; finally, philosophy and (bio)politics by Giorgio Agamben, Achille Mbembe and Jacques Rancière.

In terms of post-colonial studies, for example, both Hannah Feldman and Kristin Ross have similar theses. Using their theories makes it possible to reflect on the issues they present in their works in the present-day context. Updating their theories highlights the same mechanisms in contemporary history and shows how important the concept of cultural activism is when reflecting on minorities in terms of aesthetical and political identity.

Hannah Feldman's *From a Nation Torn. Decolonizing Art and representation in France* is a key work for this thesis.² Focusing on the Algerian War in France (in particular the Paris massacre of 1961), but also taking into account the 2005 riots, she argues that the "decades of colonization" in France's history deeply influenced its cultural production. Feldman shows how certain people and minorities are rendered invisible by government and how these practices are acknowledged slowly, hence the importance of finding other ways of political and aesthetical representations that would be free of the colonial legacy: a decolonized visibility.

Kristin Ross, in her own right, provides a new view of the May '68 events in France in her book *May 68's and its Afterlife*.³ She identifies May '68 as an event that disappeared from the collective memory, just like the Paris Massacre of 1961, and whose roots can be found in the

² Feldman, Hannah, *From a Nation Torn. Decolonizing Art and representation in France, 1945-1962*, London, 2014.

³ Ross, Kristin, *May 68's and its Afterlife*, University Of Chicago Press, 2002.

aftermaths of the repression of 17 October 1961. Decades later, May '68 is still perceived as a “mellow, sympathetic, poetic ‘youth revolt’ and lifestyle reform”⁴ “stripped of its violence and profound sociopolitical implications”⁵. The original conflict dealt with questions of identity and equality, and Kristin Ross gives this movement back its original meaning.

In terms of democracy, political science and public space, Chantal Mouffe, Rosalyn Deutsche and David Harvey can be grouped together. Chantal Mouffe and Rosalyn Deutsche are essential authors for understanding the aesthetic and political implications of the notion of public space. In articles such as “Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism”⁶, Chantal Mouffe provides one of the most important accounts on public space theory. In this clear and succinct essay, she describes an alternative way of considering democracy. In her agonistic model, in which society is a place of conflict, she claims that “the main question of democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power that are compatible with democratic values”⁷.

Another landmark of public space theory is Rosalyn Deutsche. In her book, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*⁸ she investigates the production of public space, public art and its politics, and acknowledges the conflicts that they produce. The essay “The Right to the City”⁹, by David Harvey, analyzes the production of public space from the perspective of economic power. According to Harvey, urban space is produced by specific socio-economic conflicts that transform public space into a product of this conflict. He describes the right to the city as “a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart’s desire”¹⁰.

A link can be established between public space theories to theories of performativity, which connects public space to the creation of new identities. In *Excitable Speech: A politics of the Performative*¹¹, Judith Butler analyzes language, communication and speech acts to demonstrate how they define and create identities. Most of the interventions discussed in this thesis can be seen not only as mere representations, but also as performative actions. They constitute a real strategy, creating a link between the spectator and the artwork, and the creation of new identities.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5-6.

⁶ Mouffe, Chantal, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism", Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna, December, 2000.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸ Deutsche, Rosalyn, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, Cambridge MA, 1996.

⁹ David Harvey, "The Right to the City", 2008

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹¹ Butler, Judith, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York, Routledge, 1997.

As with language, these identities cannot be pre-given: they are constantly being re-imagined and are constructed in the gesture, by the fact of looking at the artwork, for example.

On the other hand, sociologist Didier Lapeyronnie at Paris-Sorbonne has written about the 2005 French riots, a subject that has thus far received too little focus by scholars.¹² Generally, he has dealt with the question of minorities in France and the *banlieues* (suburbs) since the 1990s and is one of the main specialists in this domain.¹³ According to him, the discrimination towards the French suburbs is, of course, social and urban, but also – more important – political. The 2005 riots were an example of a frustration felt by large portion of the people living in these areas. Therefore, for him, the solution lies in acknowledging the existence of these minorities by giving them a voice and hearing them out: “On ne sortira pas de la spirale de la dégradation (ou des pièges du statu quo) sans favoriser la mobilisation des gens autour d’enjeux politiques, sans leur donner la parole et accepter d’écouter qu’ils ont à dire.”¹⁴ (We will not make our way out of this spiral of degradation (or traps of the status quo) without fostering the mobilization of people around political concerns, without giving them a voice and hearing what they have to say)¹⁵.

Giorgio Agamben and Achille Mbembe constitute the cornerstone of the theory on the state of exception and biopolitics. In *Homo Sacer I*¹⁶, Agamben connects the notion of power with political and social ethics, by using Michel Foucault's concept of “biopolitics”.¹⁷ In the economy of biopower, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death, making possible the murderous function of the state. Biopower puts state power above bodies. According to Agamben, the right to kill and the mechanisms of biopower can be seen as constitutive elements of state power in modernity. In *Homo Sacer II.1*, he describes the mechanisms of the state of exception.¹⁸

Achille Mbembe takes this a step further in his essay “Necropolitics”¹⁹. He argues that Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics is no longer sufficient and introduces his concept of

¹² Lapeyronnie Didier, "Révolte primitive dans les banlieues françaises. Essai sur les émeutes de l'automne 2005", *Déviance et Société* 4/2006 (Vol. 30) , p. 431-448

¹³ Dubet, François, Lapeyronnie, Didier, *Les quartiers d'exil*, Paris, Seuil, 1992.

Lapeyronnie, Didier, *Ghetto urbain: ségrégation, violence, pauvreté en France aujourd'hui*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2008.

Lapeyronnie, Didier, *L'Individu et les Minorités. La France et la Grande-Bretagne face à leurs immigrés*, Paris, PUF, 1993.

¹⁴ Michel Kokoreff, Didier Lapeyronnie, *Refaire la cité. L'avenir des banlieues*, Seuil, 2013, p. 69.

¹⁵ All translations by the author.

¹⁶ Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer I: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1997.

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, 1997, p. 213-234.

¹⁸ Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer II.1 : State Of Exception*, 2005.

¹⁹ Mbembe, Achille, "Necropolitics", in *Public Culture*, 15:1, 2003, pp. 11-40.

“necropower”, in which the ultimate expression of power and sovereignty resides in the ability to “dictate who may live and who must die”²⁰. According to Mbembe, late-modern colonial occupation is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical, which grants the state absolute power over the inhabitants of occupied territories.

Along with authors such as Michel Foucault and Hannah Arendt²¹, Agamben and Mbembe both converge on the description of the concept of "bare life", a life that is only physical and not worth being lived, which is illustrated by the example of refugees and the situation of the camp. It brings up the question of human rights and humanitarian interventions, a topic that Jacques Rancière writes about. He proposes that the rights of man be described as the "rights of those who have no rights"²² to break the continuity between nativity and nationality (human rights have to be different than the rights of the citizens).

For both Mbembe and Agamben, the state of exception represents a danger when it becomes permanent. Indeed, this permanent state of exception allows biopolitical experimentation and triggers the creation of the figure of the *Homo Sacer* (a person whose existence is valueless and who can be killed with impunity). Finally, it creates camp situations, which are places where the state of exception is the rule and where bare life is concentrated to its maximum.

All of these concepts, summarily treated in this introductory section, will be developed further in the thesis.

Methodology

The sources concerning the specific artists chosen for this thesis only exist in the form of press articles available on the Internet. Journalists have been writing about Princess Hijab, Combo and Banksy's interventions in Calais, but it has always stayed punctual and short. Published books on street art mainly focus on the medium and form, and more rarely reflect on its context and meanings. That is why this thesis' methodology and primary sources are principally based on press articles and interviews.

The Guardian has made impressive efforts in finding, interviewing and writing about Princess Hijab, which was not an easy task because of the artist's anonymity. The French press has been writing about Combo, especially after he was attacked in 2015, but unfortunately the articles

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 1.

²¹ Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, 1966.

²² Rancière, Jacques, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103:2/3, Spring/Summer, 2004, p. 298.

were focused on the attack rather than the work itself. Very little material is available from his solo exhibition at the *Institut du monde arabe* in early 2016 since no catalogue or document was issued for this event. On the other hand, while sources about Banksy are the easiest to find, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualitative articles. A few critical articles have been written, for example about his intervention in Palestine by Chad Elias at Dartmouth University.²³ The few monographs written about Banksy during the last years are closer to a tribute to the artist rather than a critical appraisal of the works, therefore they did not come into consideration for this thesis' literature.

The timeframe of this thesis stretches from the period of the Algerian War (1954-1962) with the defining moment of 17 October 1961 until summer 2016. It does not take into consideration the events that have happened since then, such as the shutdown and dismantling of the Calais Jungle. Indeed, the decision was taken by Interior Minister Bertrand Cazeneuve in September 2016 to dismantle and close the Calais Jungle. By the end of October 2016, the Jungle began to be evacuated under heavy police presence, "following clashes between residents and police as refugees living in the camp are told they must get on buses that will take them to reception centres across France. [...] They will have to claim asylum in France within a set period of time or face deportation – but it is unlikely that all of the camp's residents will agree to board."²⁴

Street art is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "Artwork that is created in a public space, typically without official permission"²⁵. As examples, it includes stencil graffiti, murals, installations, stickers, posters, and sculptures in public locations. Throughout this thesis, street art will be differentiated from graffiti, which is made of slogans that do not carry any meaning, as stated by Jean Baudrillard in his essay "Kookiller" in 1976.²⁶ Baudrillard refers to graffiti as slogans (like "kookiller"), or "non-signs", that do not really make any sense. According to him, "[such terms] resist every interpretation, [...] in this way they escape the principle of signification and, as empty signifiers, erupt into the sphere of the full signs of the city, dissolving it on contact"²⁷. On the other hand, street art knowingly conveys a message and a meaning that is, for the most part, political.

²³ Elias, Chad, "Banksy in Palestine", *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 2013, Vol. 5(1).

²⁴ Bulman, May and Sims, Alex, "Calais Jungle evacuation begins after clashes with riot police", *The Independent*, 24 October 2016, Access: 03.03.2017

²⁵ Oxford English Dictionary: Street Art. Access: 28.02.2017

²⁶ Jean Baudrillard, "Kookiller ou l'insurrection par les signes", 1976, p. 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

One could say that the history of street art in France started in the 1960s with such movements as *Nouveau Réalisme* (New Realism) and artists such as, for example, Jacques Villeglé, Raymond Hains, François Dufrêne and Daniel Buren. With activities like poster pasting, collage, décollage or tearing up posters, all these artists were very tightly connected with interventions in the public sphere.

Daniel Buren's installation "Affichages sauvages," which he applied to common advertisements in Paris in 1968²⁸, affirms how concerned the artists were with investing both the streets and public space with artistic practices. Fifty years later, these installations can be compared with works such as the ones by Princess Hijab who also investigates the prevalence of advertisements in public spaces.

Importance of topic

The recent 'events' of 2015 in France – the two terrorist attacks – have left a mark on the socio-political landscape and profoundly changed the conditions of the public sphere. After the November 2015 attacks in Paris, the French government declared a state of emergency: "Dans la nuit du 13 au 14 novembre, le président de la République a décrété l'état d'urgence sur l'ensemble du territoire métropolitain. [...] Vendredi 20 novembre, après l'Assemblée nationale la veille, le Sénat a voté la prolongation de l'état d'urgence pour trois mois"²⁹. (In the night from 13th to 14th November, the President of the Republic declared a state of emergency on the whole metropolitan territory. [...] On Friday 20 November, following the national Assembly's vote on the previous day, the Senate voted to extend the state of emergency for three months). To clarify: a state of emergency is a form of the state of exception, which allows the state to take measures to restrain personal liberties (such as forbidding demonstrations or declaring a curfew). The law of 1955 regulates the state of emergency and is framed by the Law n°55-385 of 3 April 1955.³⁰ This has happened before in France, for example, during the Algerian War and, more recently, during the 2005 riots and following the 2015 terrorist attacks. It is currently ongoing.

Given its history, France is particularly receptive and sensible to street protests. From the French Revolution to the latest demonstrations in the summer of 2016 against the "Loi du Travail", the French public sphere is constituted by a strong democratic right to protest. Indeed, the last sixty

²⁸ See fig. 1 in appendix

²⁹ *Gouvernement.fr*: "Etat d'urgence: quelles sont les nouvelles mesures? #AttentatsParis", 18 November 2016, updated on 20 November 2016, Access: 03.03.2017

³⁰ Légifrance: "Loi n° 55-385 du 3 avril 1955 relative à l'état d'urgence". Access: 16.03.2017

years have seen various significant demonstrations and protests that left an indelible socio-political mark on the country.

Both opposition and normalization have a place in the streets. This thesis aims to give an insight on street art in Paris and Calais, where those means were used to make statements about democracy, politics and identities. Interventions in the street are a way of re-appropriating this space, which should be universal. Indeed, gentrification is seeing people forced out of their cities and advertisements are invading the walls of a space that should belong to everybody. Moreover, certain places, such as the suburbs and periphery of cities, suffer from a territorial stigma and reproduce inequalities and discrimination. This territorial discrimination polarizes the space into an "inside" and "outside", forcing people to stay out of a space that should be universal. Using David Harvey's terminology, it takes away their "right to the city". The privatization of public space and the repressive power exercised on it have rendered this essential right of universal accessibility in danger, so that certain people and populations are fighting to take it back, such as the artists presented in this thesis.

How can street art be placed in parallel with a neo-liberal society where public space is slowly being locked down? What is the meaning today of the French slogan "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" in a so-called republican and post-colonial society, where a state of emergency is still ongoing? The purpose of this thesis is to show how artistic practices can be used to challenge the power relationships within the public space and foster the constitution of different identities.

Limitations and key assumptions

This thesis concentrates solely on the île-de-France region (around Paris) and the city of Calais. Due to practical constraints, a comprehensive review of the rest of France or other countries is not provided. There might be some territorial differences, for example in comparison with the south of France – Marseille in particular – that will not be included in this study. The information in this field is much more scarce than it is for Paris and the Calais Jungle, and sources are much more difficult to find. Moreover, including more territorial distinctions would make it challenging to comprehensively examine Paris and Calais.

This thesis does not contain any fieldwork. One of the original conceptions was to cover the Parisian *banlieues* with an analysis of the graffiti present there. This task appeared to be quite difficult, firstly because of the size of the field to cover, but mainly because no sources or other data are available for comparing, discussing and analyzing (and this not only in regards to a

formal analysis). Enough sources were available on the chosen artists and, mentioned previously, a formal analysis is not at the heart of this study: rather the social and political context, which made it possible to conduct a rigorous study by only using images and without requiring any fieldwork.

All the artists investigated in this thesis have somehow already entered the status of a "private citizen". As with Banksy or Princess Hijab, they may be anonymous yet still possess a certain "persona" or embody a figure that grants them a level of recognition for their art. Analyzing graffiti (in the *banlieues* for example) was abandoned quickly because it is almost impossible to make sense of works that are completely anonymous and therefore unknown. All the works in this thesis had to somehow be "famous-anonymous" in order to be relevant for this study and therefore analyzed.

This work sheds new light on the study of French street art by looking at it in a more critical and global way and by analyzing artists that have not previously been taken into account by any academic research. Understanding the link between street art and contemporary political practices should make for an important contribution to the field of art history, but also to other disciplines, such as political science and sociology. This study provides new insights into artistic activism and suggests new ways of looking at modern forms of opposition and protests that defend democratic rights.

Overview of the thesis

This thesis is organized in two parts: the first establishes the historical and theoretical background for this study, the second consists of three case-studies of three different artists: Princess Hijab, Combo, and Banksy.

The first chapter, titled "Space and Identities", analyzes the creation of the French public sphere through its history of conflicts throughout the past 60 years, in order to understand how these conflicts have shaped the notion of public space in France. Three key historical events will be at the heart of this chapter: The Paris massacre of 17 October 1961 perpetrated by the Parisian police against Algerian demonstrators; the street occupation during May '68; and the 2005 riots in the Parisian *banlieues*. Besides this, the notion of "public space" and "public art" will be closely investigated using the theories of Rosalyn Deutsche and Chantal Mouffe.

The second chapter, titled "Multiculturalism in the Context of a Republican Model", defines key notions that are essential for understanding the political context of contemporary France.

Republicanism and the republican model will be defined, bringing to light different understandings of the notion of "laïcité" and its various meanings today, a debate that has its roots in the history of republicanism and fundamental positions such as conservative republicanism and liberal republicanism. Multiculturalism is examined by looking at criticisms of it but also the possibility of its existence within the French republican model. Finally, the second half of this chapter consists of a concrete example of the Parisian *banlieues* and their territorial stigma. Is the so-called republican model really working or has the republican idea failed?

The third chapter, "The State of Exception", defines what the state of exception or state of emergency is and retraces its history in France since the colonial decades of the Algerian War up until today. Through the theories of Giorgio Agamben and Achille Mbembe, the goal is to highlight the link between the state of exception and bio- and necropolitics. Both authors state that the state of exception allows mechanisms such as biopolitics to become possible, and with it, the creation of camp structures and the *Homo Sacer* figure that can be juxtaposed with that of the refugees.

Princess Hijab appears as the topic of the fourth chapter and crystallizes the question of the artist of the minority. Princess Hijab is an artist that sprayed hijabs and burqas on advertisements in the Parisian subway around 2010 and defines her/his art as "hijabism".³¹ Firstly, her/his works is analyzed from a religious angle because, here, the hijab stands as a symbol for Muslims. Secondly, they are analyzed as a protest against capitalism, because they were painted on advertisements in the Paris Metro.

The artist Combo is the subject of chapter five, which focuses on two of his projects: his "Coexist" tag in 2015 for which he has been attacked, and his mural "La France aux Français – les Françaises aux Africains" (France for the French – Frenchwomen for Africans). Through these interventions, Combo is dealing with the issues of multiculturalism and the climate of general tension in France following the terrorist attacks; he is also contributing to new forms of identity.

The sixth chapter focuses on Banksy and his interventions in and around the Calais Jungle. Indeed, Banksy went to Calais in 2015 to spray four stencils and later that year decided to bring pieces of his exhibition "Dismaland" to the Jungle to be used as shelters by the migrants and

³¹ The artist says: "with "hijabism" I was certain that I had a real idea" in Sabrina Champenois, "Princess Hijab, voilons voir", 11.12.2010, *Libération*, access: 22.08.2016.

refugees living there. Through close examination, the Calais Jungle is analyzed as a camp structure according to Agamben's criteria ("the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become a rule"³²). Finally, by looking at Banksy's interventions in Calais but also in Palestine, this chapter treats with the relationship between activism and capitalism, which Banksy seems to master. Does he actually bring visibility and attention to the problems of Calais, or is he instrumentalizing a humanitarian cause for his own good and reputation?

Finally, the last chapter highlights the subject of the "artist of the minorities". Although this topic is embedded in the entire thesis, this chapter aims to foreground it as one of the main contributions of this thesis and a major paradigm.

³² Agamben, Giorgio, 1997, p. 108.

Chapter 1

Spaces and Identities in France

1.1 The production of French public space and its meaning

France's history cannot be understood without taking a look at the street and its occupation. This chapter aims to analyze the creation of the French public sphere through its history of conflicts throughout the past 60 years in order to understand how these conflicts have shaped the notion of public space in the country. Before looking closer at each artist, it is important to understand how France has dealt with these issues so far, over the last few decades. Firstly, the very notion of public sphere requires analysis in order to think about which cultural and artistic practices are possible to interrogate past and current events.

What is the relationship to the street in this particular country in relation to conflicts of the last 60 years and which repercussions did they have on the collective imagination? Indeed, France has a particular relationship with its streets, due among other things to specific events such as the massacre of 1961 by the French police against Algerian demonstrators – and to a further extent the Algerian War; the street occupation during May '68; and the violent suburb riots in 2005. These historic events are therefore at the centre of this chapter, followed by a look at public art and the many possibilities offered by aesthetic practices in this regard. To understand this relationship to the street, it is important first to look at the notion of the public sphere through the concepts developed by theorists such as Chantal Mouffe and Rosalyn Deutsche.

1.2 The Public Space

According to Rosalyn Deutsche, urban space is the product of conflict. The lack of absolute social foundations makes conflict a feature of all social spaces. Indeed, the destruction of monarchical society instituted a form of power that no longer comes from a transcendent source, but emerges from the people themselves. What used to be embodied in the figure of the king would now reside within the people.³³ People create public space themselves by forming political identities and constructing a society. Urban space is also produced by specific socio-economic conflicts, motivated by the intensification of capitalism as well, as shown by David Harvey in his essay "The Right to the City". The restructuring of global capitalism (innovations

³³ Deutsche, Rosalyn, "Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy", *Social Text*, n°33, 1992, p. 51

set in motion during the 1980s and the setting up of new financial institutions) shaped our cities, thus making them a product of this conflict.³⁴

As a result of this antagonistic relationship, democratic power and public space have raised the question of who owns the street and the city. “Democratic power cannot appeal for its authority to a meaning immanent in the social. Instead, the democratic invention invents something else: the public space”³⁵. This is an essential definition of public space by Rosalyn Deutsche and a key concept in her more elaborate theory on public space. According to Deutsche, public space is the physical but also discursive space where the meaning and unity of the social is (re)negotiated. Public space and democratic power could be regarded as two sides of the same coin. This is the agonistic/antagonistic model of democracy that Chantal Mouffe³⁶ discusses about and to which Rosalyn Deutsche accurately refers to: “conflict, division, and instability, then, do not ruin the democratic public sphere; they are the conditions of its existence”³⁷. Public space is the place where debate occurs about what is legitimate and illegitimate, in other words the place where our rights are constituted.³⁸

It is also the space where identities are constituted. However, Chantal Mouffe specifies that power should not be considered as an external relation between two pre-constituted identities; rather, it constitutes the identities themselves “in a precarious and always vulnerable terrain”³⁹. According to Mouffe’s deliberative approach “the more democratic” a society is, the less power would be constitutive of social relations”⁴⁰. However, power is a constitutive part of the social: therefore, the question is not how to eliminate power from shaping the social, but how to adapt forms of power that can be compatible with democratic values.⁴¹

Politics are always concerned with the creation of an “us” in opposition with a “them”, which will be illustrated in this chapter – its goal being to achieve unity in a context of conflict. Chantal Mouffe advocates that this problem be considered from the point of view of “agonistic pluralism”. The “them” should be constructed not as an “enemy”, but rather as an “adversary”, “somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into

³⁴ David Harvey, “The Right to the City”, 2008, p. 9.

³⁵ Deutsche, Rosalyn, 1996, p. 273.

³⁶ Mouffe, Chantal, “Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism”, December 2000, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna.

³⁷ Deutsche, Rosalyn, 1996, p. 289.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Mouffe, Chantal, 2000, p. 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14

questions”⁴². For Mouffe, liberty and equality are ethico-political principles that should be respected in this relationship. In this regard, Mouffe draws a differentiation between the definitions of “antagonism” and “agonism” – antagonism being a fight between enemies and agonism a fight between adversaries. Thus, according to Mouffe, the aim of democratic politics is to transform *antagonism* into *agonism*.

At the heart of Mouffe's thesis is the thought that *agonism* is, indeed, very far from being an obstacle to democracy. On the contrary, it is the very condition of its existence. The legitimization of conflict and “the refusal to suppress it by imposing an authoritarian order”⁴³ is the proof of a modern democracy. A well-functioning democracy, according to her, calls for a clash of different political positions and therefore fosters the constitution of different identities. The idea of a rational consensus reached in a society is simply impossible because it would be against the natural conflictual nature of democratic contestation. Thinking that a time will come in which society will finally be “well ordered” and all goals achieved is purely utopist. Instead, an “agonistic approach” acknowledges the frontiers, forms of exclusion, social relations and creations of new identities and therefore creates more democracy.

1.3 History

1.3.1 Paris Massacre of 17 October 1961

The Algerian War was a conflict between France and the FLN (Algerian National Liberation Front) from 1954 to 1962 and resulted in Algeria finally gaining its independence from France.⁴⁴ It is important to note that it was not referred to as a “war” at the time but euphemistically called “the events”. It is only in 1999 that the term “Algerian War” was officially adopted by the French Parliament, as a retrospective historicization. One of the conflict's consequences was the succession of the Fourth Republic by the Fifth Republic of President Charles De Gaulle. Opposition to the conflict grew in metropolitan France during this time, leading to forms of state repression and counter-insurgency that developed in colonial North Africa but were adapted to metropolitan France.⁴⁵ Slowly, colonial violence penetrated into the “imperial heartland”, with the FLN raising huge amounts of money in France to finance the war in Algeria, assassination of military and police personnel, and a new form of urban guerrilla warfare. On the other side, the

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ France invaded Algeria in 1830 and annexed the country in 1848 with the creation of the “départements français d'Algérie” (French departments of Algeria). From 1848 until 1962, Algeria was a French colony and an integral part of the French Nation and overseas territories.

⁴⁵ House, Jim and Macmaster, Neil, 2006, p. 25.

Prefect of Police, Maurice Papon, introduced colonial techniques and practices into Paris, despite the opposition growing. This slid into arbitrary arrests, systematic violence, the implementation of curfews, weakening of the rule of law, all of which lead up to the Paris massacre of 17 October.⁴⁶

Maurice Papon (1910-2007) joined the Interior Ministry in 1935 and was appointed General Secretary of the Prefecture of Gironde, where he ran the administration in Bordeaux. During World War II, as a part of the Vichy Government⁴⁷, he directed the "Service des questions juives" (Department for Jewish Questions) and collaborated with Nazi Germany's SS.⁴⁸ He played a key role in the arrest and deportation of thousand of Jews from Bordeaux to concentration camps (between July 1942 and June 1944, 12 trains left from Bordeaux to Drancy with approximately 1600 Jews in total who were finally sent to Auschwitz).⁴⁹

Papon became Prefect of Police for Paris in 1958. The systems of control and techniques introduced by Papon in Paris during the Algerian War are therefore rather a continuation of the fascism of World War II, now transferred onto other populations. While he was originally in charge of the Jewish population under the Fourth Republic, he was made responsible for the Algerian population under the Fifth Republic. House and Macmaster note "the convergence between the methods for policing Jews and Algerians", which was "more than superficial"⁵⁰, for example, "the creation of specialized intelligence agencies for the policing of target groups (Jews, Algerians); the total census of minority populations; elaborate card-index files to identify and locate individuals; special police interventions units; mass holding centres and camps for those rounded up"⁵¹ among others.

Under Papon "state terror, as an instrument of political control, was not restricted to instances of physical pain, incarceration, and killings, but constituted an integrated system of quasi-totalitarian proportions for the close destabilization of target populations, a goal achieved through a constant erosion of morale through economic damage [...], dislocation of social structure, continual harassment and mass arrests and ritual humiliation [...]."⁵² Indeed, the Prefecture, developed a system based on cultural and scientific knowledge of the Algerian immigrant

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁷ Vichy France (régime de Vichy) is the common name for the French State during World War II headed by Marshall Philippe Pétain

⁴⁸ House, Jim and Macmaster, Neil, 2006, p. 34.

⁴⁹ "Procès Papon: les archives" (in partnership with the INA – Institut National Audiovisuel). Access: 06.03.2017

⁵⁰ House, Jim and Macmaster, Neil, 2006, p. 35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

society – a tool very similar to the techniques already used during the 1940s towards the Jewish population. Maurice Papon, chief of police, even had his own sociology experts to locate weak points in the Algerian community), making this state terror effective.⁵³ The mobilization for the demonstrations of 1961 can be better understood in this context.

The communication describing the implementation of a curfew – which was to begin on 5 October 1961 went as follows: “In view of bringing an immediate end to the criminal activities of Algerian terrorists, new measures have just been taken by the Prefecture of the Police. In view of facilitating their execution, Muslim Algerian workers are advised most urgently to abstain from walking about during the night in the streets of Paris and the Parisian suburbs, and most particularly during the hours of 8:30 PM to 5:30 AM”⁵⁴

On the evening of 17 October 1961, 20,000 to 30,000 men, women and children of the Algerian community demonstrated in the streets of Paris in opposition to the curfew that had recently been issued by Maurice Papon. “Nine months before Algeria would achieve its independence, but already well after it had become clear that this would be the nearly inevitable conclusion to seven years of fighting”⁵⁵, Algerians asserted their right to the public space thus far available only to the French, with whom they shared the same citizenship, although “politically” they were not French citizens.⁵⁶ For the first time since the beginning of the war, an organized and sizable demonstration marched through Paris and congregated in the city centre to reach designated locations in the major boulevards and squares. The FLN had provided clear instructions: it was absolutely forbidden to carry any weapon and people were ordered to demonstrate “peacefully, with dignity and an absolute calm”⁵⁷. They planned to reach the centre of Paris around 8:30 PM, the time the curfew came into force, and demonstrate until 9:30 PM.

Protesters clashed with approximately 7000 police and special unit forces, who had been mobilized by Papon to “contain” the demonstration. As history shows, Maurice Papon and police forces understood this “containment” to include exceptional and even lethal violence. The number of people killed by gunshot, beaten to death or who drowned in the Seine is still matter of debate in France, but this number should be somewhere between one and two hundred. However, on the morning of October 18, police claimed that only two Algerians had been killed,

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Communications by Maurice Papon, 5 October 1961, cited in Einaudie, *La bataille de Paris*, 85, in Ross, Kristin, 2002, p. 54.

⁵⁵ Feldman, Hannah, 2014, p. 159. dnd p. 168.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126, see note p. 256.

⁵⁷ House, Jim and Macmaster, Neil, p. 114.

and only because they had fired first.⁵⁸ The official response did everything possible to clean the public record, and Maurice Papon did not go to trial until 1997. Papon was accused of crimes against humanity in 1983 for his participation in the deportation of Jews to concentration camps between 1942 and 1944, but the trial only started in 1997. Being one of the biggest and longest trials in France since World War II, it marked a watershed: what historian Henri Rousso called the "Vichy syndrome" was the quasi-consensus that "after the Liberation, the humiliation of French defeat and occupation by the Germans in 1940 was salvaged by mythical versions of the heroic Resistance led by the national savior de Gaulle"⁵⁹. This quasi-official consensus was shattered when the level of French collaborationism in the Final Solution was finally revealed in the 1970s. Two decades later, the Papon trial marked a kind of closure and permitted to play out this "Vichy syndrome", "simultaneously open[ing] the door to an "Algerian syndrome", and a new preoccupation with truth work (travail de vérité) on the nature of the colonial repression and violence"⁶⁰.

It was only in 2001 that a commemorative plaque was finally placed on the Quai du Marché Neuf, "in the memory of the many Algerians killed during the bloody repression of their peaceful demonstration of 17 October 1961".

Public silence masked these events for at least two decades, although for the Algerians this silence did not mean forgetting. The massacre that occurred in plain sight vanished from public discourse, making the victims' bodies disappear not only once, but twice: massacred and erased from public discourse. Still, some activists worked to highlight the repressive power of the state and these absent bodies, such as the photography of Jean Texier in 1961⁶¹, or the mounds of unclaimed shoes amassed by politician and founder of "SOS Racism" Harlem Désir outside of a café in 1984⁶². The paradox is that these rare images were rarely reproduced in the literature, which focused on the absence of the bodies, and, in this way, "perpetuate the absence they mean to counter"⁶³.

Hannah Feldman uses Jacques Rancière's theories to explain the rhetoric of absence, amnesia and separation surrounding 17 October 1961. Rancière proposes the term of "dis-identification", which stands for belonging outside of the structures of the state (which, in this particular

⁵⁸ Feldman, Hannah, *From a Nation Torn*, p. 160.

⁵⁹ House, Jim and Macmaster, Neil, p. 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ See fig. 2 in appendix

⁶² Feldman, Hannah, *From a Nation Torn*, p. 162-163.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

example, would be the police).⁶⁴ Rancière writes: “Around those bodies, which disappeared twice, a political bond was effectively created, made up not of identification with the victims or even with their cause but of a dis-identification in relation to the “French” subject who massacred them and removed them from any count.”⁶⁵ This mechanism permits the creation of an opposition organized around the denunciation of wrong-doing, and new politics organized around the refusal of the government and police-controlled consensus. However, the evidence shows that this dis-identification process does not occur immediately but requires the passage of time to solidify into new politics. Indeed, it is not until 1997 that Papon's trial permitted (or obliged) French society to come to terms with the reality of state violence, and in 2001, forty years after the events, that a commemorative plaque fully acknowledged the repression of 17 October 1961.

However, Hannah Feldman only agrees with Rancière's view up to a certain point: the Algerians who were denied the “right to the city” by Papon were juridically citizens (they had French citizenship as well but, in fact, lacked the same status), and unlike French subjects (from France) could only become citizens politically when they seized both the state authority and public sphere that wanted to deny them this status. Feldman then claims that “instead of disidentifying with the state on the basis of its exclusions, those who demonstrated chose to refuse instead those same exclusions”⁶⁶. It is difficult to observe the thin line between disidentification and refusal, as disidentification itself is centered around the notion of refusal. Feldman points out that is it a regime that denies “the will to a mean of representation that had been denied the marchers explicitly because, through the visual a logic of imperialism, they were seen as invisible”⁶⁷.

The massacre of 17 October 1961 did not enter French public history, yet “Charonne” did. On 8 February 1962, a demonstration against the Algerian War organized by left-wing parties in Paris, was suppressed by police forces, directed by Maurice Papon, and led to the death of nine people, who were crushed by the crowd in the metro station Charonne. The Charonne incident registered heavily in public memory, being actively referred to during May '68, giving precedence to nine French victims over the many uncounted Algerian dead.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁶⁵ Rancière, Jacques, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, Chicago, 2002, p. 139

⁶⁶ Feldman, Hannah, *From a Nation Torn*, p. 168.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁶⁸ Ross, Kristin, *May 68's and its Afterlife*, University Of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 48

1.3.2 May '68

As it has been previously shown, some events tend to disappear from the collective memory. In the case of the 1961 massacre, this was achieved by covering it up and avoiding it. On the other hand, in the case of May '68 an enormous amount of narrative labor facilitated "the active forgetting of the events in France"⁶⁹, according to Kristin Ross. Discourse was used this time, but would only obscure the history of this massive revolt. May '68 might indeed look like one of the most "visible" event in recent French history, but has actually been completely stripped of its real meaning and the collective memory has ignored the real authors of this revolution.

Instigated by student groups, May '68 was the largest mass movement in French history. About nine million people simply stopped working, creating the biggest general strike in French worker's movement and huge demonstrations between May and June 1968. The country was paralyzed for about five to six weeks by the synchronized insurrection of both intellectuals and workers against the reigning ideology.⁷⁰

Kristin Ross identifies three targets of May '68 movement in France: capitalism, American imperialism, and Gaullism. In effect, it began with the student arrests on 3 May 1968 at the Sorbonne, which turned into violent popular demonstrations in the weeks thereafter. On May 30, De Gaulle delivered a speech threatening to intervene with the army. In June, nearly nine million workers went on strike. However, this chronology and the massive politicization of French youth in the 1960s can only be understood, once again, by looking at the violent state repression – the same that played a role during the Algerian War, because, although Maurice Papon was not in power anymore, the same forces he had formed during the Algerian War were still in place in 1968.

The underlying causes for May '68 can be directly found in the follow-up to the repression of 17 October 1961. Only two small and very new student groups decided to take the street to protest (the Comité Anticolonialiste CA and the Comité du Front Universitaire Antifasciste FUA). They had already organized mass demonstrations in 1960, and by doing so, launched the student struggle against the Gaullist regime. What started as a struggle for Algerian independence by student organizations was the starting point of a revolutionary combat. These organizations were

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

no longer focused on student issues, but concerned with general problems in French society, acquiring their own tradition of struggle and independence.⁷¹

17 October 1961 is therefore the first mass demonstration of the 1960s but, more importantly, is also the first big experience of the “cover-ups” by French police and governments. Keeping these events out of sight gave way to a dis-identification (as Rancière would say) for many who felt part of the French identity, especially among the youth and student community. According to Kristin Ross, the student movement “had less to do with the university than fleeing it”⁷², highlighting that these events introduced a huge disparity in student identity and “what it meant to be French”, allowing, but also probably stressing the need to espouse “the cause of the Other”.⁷³

De Gaulle, who resumed his political responsibilities in 1958 as a consequence of the Algiers putsch after a twelve-years absence⁷⁴, decided to use the same military to hold on to it. De Gaulle wanted to represent the country as a whole but in reality, had simply allowed the bourgeoisie to reinforce its economic power. For him, 1968 was an occasion to consolidate state power through this political crisis but when nine million workers joined the strike, this was no longer possible. On May 30, De Gaulle announced in a speech on television and radio that he would not resign and that he would dissolve the National Assembly, threatening to use force to fight this “totalitarian communist” dictatorship.⁷⁵ The same day, Gaullist organizations decided to demonstrate in favor of the regime and over 300,000 “pro-order” individuals walked on the Champs-Élysée, shouting slogans such as “La France aux Français” (France for the French) or “Les ouvriers au boulot” (workers back to work), which meant, as Kristin Ross also writes: “let students study, teachers teach and France be France”, and everything would be settled).⁷⁶

Once again, people decided to take to the streets. The streets were an extremely conducive place for the expansion of the student revolt to the young workers. Not only in Paris, but everywhere in France, people began occupying the streets and with this, students were leaving the university and workers the factories.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ A political crisis burst in May 1958 after insurrectional demonstrations and a putsch in Algiers. The junta's demand was that De Gaulle be named by French President René Coty to head a government invested with extraordinary powers to prevent the "abandonment of Algeria". Two days later, De Gaulle replied that he would assume the powers of the Republic.

⁷⁵ See speech in appendix

⁷⁶ Ross, Kristin, 2002, p. 60.

However, Maurice Papon had found a double in the character of Raymond Marcellin, appointed Minister of the Interior on May 31st (the day following de Gaulle's speech), who put an end to the strike, and to a further extent, to the May '68 movement. According to Kristin Ross, he would execute de Gaulle's commandment: "nothing more must happen, neither in the streets, nor in public buildings"⁷⁷. Writer Maurice Blanchot said in July 1968, while talking about policemen, "each citizen must learn that the street no longer belongs to him, but to power alone, which wishes to impose muteness, produce asphyxia"⁷⁸. So the state fortification and its extensions to every walk of life was complete, including the street.

According to Kristin Ross, May '68 was considered as a disembodied and vague event in French collective memory, a big set of ideas, rather than a political event. It has been regarded by some as the beginning of a capitalist and individualist era, "a moment of adaptation in the modernity of a slumbering capitalism, a moment of self-regulation"⁷⁹. Kristin Ross underlines once again the political and intellectual consensus ("consensus, in the literal meaning of the term, means an agreement on the evidence"⁸⁰) to ignore the authors of this revolution. She writes: "Despite the consensus interpretation's emphasis on May's importance in engendering contemporary individualism, its authors showed not the slightest curiosity about the groups or individuals who had acted in the May uprisings"⁸¹. Whether people had taken over the street, demonstrated and gone on strike or not, nothing would have changed and capitalism would still have arrived, according to some historians to which Kristin Ross refers.⁸² According to her, a new interpretation of May '68 can be made by looking at current events (she takes as example the French strikes of 1995, the biggest since May '68). These modern events can help us enlarge the frame of May '68 and transform "the event of '68 from a fact into a force, a force free now to be displaced and return again in quite dissimilar but related events"⁸³.

1.3.3 2005 riots

Rather than taking the strikes of 1995 as an example, this section will focus on the riots that occurred in the Parisian suburbs in 2005. Looking at the past, the riots of 2005 can be regarded as an event related to those of the decolonization decades (17 October 1961 and May '68) in relation to the political and representational demands.

⁷⁷ Viansson-Ponté, *Histoire de la république gaullienne*, 648, quoted by Ross, Kristin, 2002, p. 60

⁷⁸ Maurice Blanchot, "La rue", anonymous tract dated July 17, 1968, quoted by Ross, Kristin, 2002, p. 63-64.

⁷⁹ François Dosses's phrase in "Mai 68, mai 88: les ruses de la raison", quoted by Ross, Kristin, 2002, p. 183.

⁸⁰ Ross, Kristin, 2002, p. 184.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 184-185.

⁸³ Ross, Kristin, 2002, p. 215.

The riots started with the death of two teenagers, Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré, of Tunisian and Mauritanian origin respectively, electrocuted at the substation of Clichy-sous-Bois on 27 October 2005, and a severely injured third teenager, Muhittin Altun, of Turkish origin. The teenagers were apparently being chased by the police for a control and tried to hide in the electrical substation. Almost immediately, riots broke out the same evening in an act of protest. Three days later, a tear-gas grenade was thrown into a mosque by police forces in Clichy-sous-Bois provoking a general uprising throughout suburban and urban France. It being Ramadan at the time further aggravated the situation. A state of emergency was declared on 8 November 2005 by President Jacques Chirac, giving the impression of a situation of civil war. In the weeks following, 10,000 cars, 200 buses, 100 postal vehicles and several dozen police cars were burnt or stoned. Dozens of homes, schools, libraries, churches and mosques were destroyed and about 5,200 rioters arrested.⁸⁴

Didier Lapeyronnie is one of the main sociologists who worked on the 2005 riots. He noticed that the many different interpretations of these riots (in the press, by historians) often analyzed them by actually refusing to hear what the rioters had to say. The French riots were seen as the consequence of unemployment and social behaviors, reflecting social mechanisms, or simply the consequence of some savage, barbaric youth who use violence as a language. The riots were made into a manifestation of a social situation, and just like the two precedent situations in this chapter, its meaning does not belong to the rioters anymore but to their interpreters. Didier Lapeyronnie stresses the fact that it is important to “read” these riots as a collective and political action before trying to decrypt it.⁸⁵

The anti-police dimension of these riots is particular and has to be underlined. Triggered by the death of teenagers on the run to escape the police, it is only the product of daily urban violence that places the police in opposition to the inhabitants of the suburbs. This relationship is considered to be the triggering factor of the riots. In Clichy-sous-Bois, for instance, graffiti makes this quite clear with “Fuck la police” written on the wall.⁸⁶ This hostility is visible in the records that journalists received from those *banlieues*. The population there is convinced that beyond their normal duty, police forces are clearly racist. Reciprocally, police forces are convinced of the violent and illegal nature of some practices. Police discrimination feeds these tensions, creating violent interventions, when finally, racism, harassment and police pressures

⁸⁴ Feldman, Hannah, 2014, p. 211.

⁸⁵ Lapeyronnie Didier, “Révolte primitive dans les banlieues françaises. Essai sur les émeutes de l'automne 2005”, *Déviance et Société* 4/2006 (Vol. 30), p. 432.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 436.

end with an opposition between “us” and “them”.⁸⁷ This collective “us” is constituted negatively by police hostility and a feeling of injustice, creating the sentiment that police forces would rather work against the population than for them. The suburban youth can be seen, therefore, not only as offenders, but also as the daily victims of harassment and racism, which, situated in the context of this drama, has a very emotional tone. According to Lapeyronnie, emotion is the propagation mechanism of riots and always has been, for example, during the French Revolution.⁸⁸ Nicolas Sarkozy (Minister of the Interior at the time) referred to rioters as “racaille”, which means scum, and suggested that “the suburbs be cleaned with a *kärcher*” (a pressure washing tool used to clean dirt off of surfaces) and that the “foreigners” who incited these riots be deported. His comments simply confirmed the feeling of injustice, transforming individual experiences into collective anger and reinforcing the idea of an “us” against “them”.

In 2005, rioters felt so disenfranchised from the political system that the only solution they saw was violence and destruction. Destruction was, indeed, a way of imposing their presence within public space and expressing their feelings and set of demands. As Lapeyronnie writes, this could not be reduced to pure delinquency.⁸⁹ Maybe the “failure” of May '68 to penetrate the system justified another intervention during a different historical moment. On 2 November 2005, an inhabitant of the Parisian suburb of Clichy declared: “Vous parlez de faire une marche, mais ça ne sert à rien. On a des papiers depuis des generations mais on n'est pas des Français comme les autres”.⁹⁰ (“You are talking about marching, but it is useless. We have had papers for generations but we are not French like the rest”). The riot may therefore be seen as a radical and ad hoc form of jumping over the (legal or administrative) obstacles in order to finally gain some visibility and be recognized as such, even if it has to be done in a negative and violent way.⁹¹ When citizenship is questioned not only by the Minister of the Interior, treating some of those people as “scum”, but also by those people themselves who cannot see themselves as “normal” French citizens, there is little hope left for such a thing as Rancière's dis-identification, because these people themselves have never identified with the state, nor the state with them. The 2005 rioters are neither revolutionaries, actors of a social movement, nor savages. But their situation cannot just

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 437.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 441.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 443.

⁹⁰ Inhabitant of Clichy, 40 years old, *Le Monde*, 2 November 2005, quoted by Lapeyronnie, Didier, 2006, p. 445.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

be translated into political claims because the French republican system is closed and locks them up inside their marginality and exclusive normative relation.⁹²

By declaring a state of emergency, president Jacques Chirac reinvested the colonial methods by suspending the country's normal procedures. It was the first state of emergency since 1963 in metropolitan France, and once again a single person was able to maintain the colonial conflicts by imposing curfews, censoring the press, and prohibiting public gatherings. In this regard, the 2005 riots echoed the long process of decolonization and were implicated in the history of the urban segregation of these decades.⁹³

However, as Achille Mbembe suggests, contemporary society might be a “postcolony” society rather than a post-colonial society: “the notion “postcolony” identifies specifically a given historical trajectory—that of societies recently emerging from the experience of colonization and the violence which the colonial relationship involves.”⁹⁴ Indeed, this return to the familiar administrative patterns and political repression reminds one of the exercise of colonial authority. Mbembe insists on the fact that the postcolony, although considered as a “system of signs” and “simulacra”, is made up of real institutions and political apparatuses that constitute a regime of violence.⁹⁵ In a postcolony, state power not only creates its own world of meanings through administrative practices, but institutionalizes this same world of meanings: in an attempt to make this world real, the state power turns it “into a part of people’s “commonsense” [...] by integrating it into the period’s consciousness”⁹⁶.

Referring to the 2005 riots, Jean Baudrillard describes the “French exception” as collapsing, and more generally, as the disintegration of the “West”. Many have noticed the problem of “integration” (of immigrants), or its failure. However, Baudrillard identifies this integration as a problem with France itself: “a society which is itself disintegrating has no chance of integrating its immigrants, who are at once the products and savage analysts of its decay”⁹⁷. Indeed, integration into what? It is the indefinable notion of France and its “frenchness” that makes this task impossible at the present time. Baudrillard claims that this society will soon be defined only by foreign bodies that were excluded: “those it has expelled, but who are now ejecting it from

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 447.

⁹³ Feldman, Hannah, 2014, p. 214.

⁹⁴ Mbembe, Achille, *On the Postcolony*, Berkeley : University of California Press, 2001, p. 102.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁹⁷ Baudrillard, Jean, 2006, p. 5.

itself”⁹⁸. Immigrants that are the daily victims of relentless discrimination are indeed calling out to French society in a violent way that might, hopefully, create awareness.

These historical problems of visibility and representation reveal the immense efforts that were made to obscure certain realities. Mbembe states that to counter the “postcolony,” one must find another model, which would be decolonized, and make efforts to see the invisible or to aim for what Hannah Feldman calls a “decolonized visibility”. Finding new models is something that can be achieved through cultural and artistic practices, which deal with notions of identity. Moreover, what the artists presented in this thesis all have in common is that they work in the public sphere, which is why explaining the matter of public art is important in order to fully understand the impact and significance of their work.

1.4 Public Art

Public art combines two terms – ‘public’ and ‘art’ - that are a symbol of “universal accessibility”. But it goes against this very same public space by becoming less and less public. Indeed, more privatization of public space occurs via gentrification, surveillance systems, policing and controls of all kinds. The repressive power exercised in the public space puts the very meaning of “public space” in danger. Therefore, public space is a very contradictory term.⁹⁹ Rosalyn Deutsche reminds us that the recognition of the conflict in our society is important, if not necessary. But as she remarks, “the public/private opposition has also been mobilized to unite, rather than polarize ‘art’ and ‘public’”¹⁰⁰. Although the two formulations can be seen as contradictory, they can also be seen as a symbol of universal accessibility. Street art, which is at the heart of the artistic practices in this thesis, is therefore about democratic issues in public space. This artistic practice can bring up the difficulty of power relationships within the public space.

Chantal Mouffe writes: “since the dimension of “the political” is always present, you can never have a complete, absolute, inclusive hegemony. In that context, artistic and cultural practices are absolutely central as one of the levels where identifications and forms of identity are constituted”.¹⁰¹ It is in this regard that the next chapters of this thesis deal with artists and cultural practices that, to some extent, question France’s identity. During each of the time periods cited in this chapter, a strong artistic response was always part of the opposition. Hannah

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁹⁹ Deutsche, Rosalyn, “Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy”, p. 37.

¹⁰⁰ Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, p. 281

¹⁰¹ Mouffe, Chantal, 2001, p. 99-100.

Feldman analyzes Raymond Hains's exhibition *La France déchirée* in 1961, which displayed torn and lacerated posters and collages collected between 1949 and 196 by Raymond Hains and Jacques Villeglé about the Algerian War.¹⁰² They collected these posters from a wooden fence, tearing them down and taking some fragments home, which is an illegal act. Indeed, according to the law of 29 July 1881 that prohibits public posting¹⁰³, tearing down posters that have been properly placed is also illegal.¹⁰⁴

1961 is particularly important as it marked a juncture in the Algerian War but also in the artistic and intellectual response to it. During this year, the “Manifeste des 121” written by Maurice Blanchot alongside Dionys Mascolo and Jean Schuster was published and signed by 232 leading intellectuals, professors and artists. This manifesto does not articulate specific reasons for not supporting the Algerian War, rather it identifies the right to disagree with it (on the grounds of refusing to serve in the army).¹⁰⁵

The exhibition *La France déchirée* became visible on the walls of the gallery and so started to circulate within the “space of appearance”, in reference to Hannah Arendt’s notion.¹⁰⁶ It designates a symbolic space akin to Habermas’ public sphere, where private persons engage in matters of public interests, particularly through visual manifestations. Public participation is determined by the fact of being seen and political recognition becomes a possibility through the interaction with the city’s physical spaces.¹⁰⁷ These posters testify to the productive capacity of people and the masses facing the reality of space being less and less available as the result of its reconfiguration into an increasingly privatized space.¹⁰⁸

The concept of “space of appearance” and its presence in public space can be directly put into perspective with all the artists in this thesis. Through their interventions in public space, they all engage in matters of public interest no matter what the subject is. Artistic opposition is essential

¹⁰² See fig. 3 in appendix. “The series of twenty-one posters [...] effectively constituted a historical snapshot of France’s politics of the previous decade; unsurprisingly, the single issue dominating these placards was the anticolonial insurgency in Algeria, in revolt since 1954. With historical hindsight, one critic later could describe this series as unveiling “the psychological, political, and social chaos of French society” according to McDonough, Tom, “Raymond Hains’s “France in Shreds” and the Politics of Décollage”, in *Representations*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 75-97.

¹⁰³ Légifrance: “Loi du 29 juillet 1881 sur la liberté de la presse”, Access: 13.03.2017

¹⁰⁴ Feldman, Hannah, *From a Nation Torn*, London, 2014, p. 111-113.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

to all protest because artists are responsible for bringing to light visibility strategies that can sometimes be occulted by the state itself.

1.5 Performativity

Other key theories that could be used to explain these strategies of visibility are the theories of performativity. Indeed, it is important to reflect not only on how these strategies work as a representation, but also how they become an imaginary. In other words, how they reflect on the act and strategy itself rather than their representation and content.

Performativity theories can be identified as the link between public space and an identity that is always "in process" or "in progress". The construction of identities is caused by performative actions that create an "emerging" identity, being relentlessly re-imagined and therefore never pre-given.

Judith Butler, in *Excitable Speech: a Politics of the Performative*, uses communication and speech acts to demonstrate how it defines and creates identities. Writing about speech acts as interpellation, Butler gives the example written by Louis Althusser in which a "policeman hails the passerby with "hey you there" and the one who recognizes himself and turns around (nearly everyone) to answer the call"¹⁰⁹. What is particularly exemplary here, is that "the act of recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence"¹¹⁰. It is the speech act, the utterance itself, which "brings that subject into being" and therefore also constitutes its identity.

The performative speech act itself can be described by Butler as follows:

"[...] an "act" is not a momentary happening, but a certain nexus of temporal horizons, the condensation of an iterability that exceeds the moment it occasions. The possibility for a speech act to resignify a prior context depends, in part, upon the gap between the originating context or intention by which an utterance is animated and the effects it produces. For the threat, for instance, to have a future it never intended, for it to be returned to its speaker in a different form, and defused through that return, the meanings the speech act acquires and the effects it performs must exceed those by which it was intended, and the contexts it assumes must not be quite the same as the ones in which it originates (if such an origin is to be found)."

¹⁰⁹ Butler, Judith, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York, Routledge, 1997, p.25.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

According to Butler, there is a gap between the act itself and its future effects. It is this interval that allows the possibility of agencies to be opened up. Moreover, speech is always in some way "out of our control": speech acts can sometimes be delinked from the subject and the words themselves are constituted elsewhere.¹¹¹

All the interventions presented in this thesis can be analyzed as performative acts. They are not simply mere representations but function as well as strategies by themselves and truly *perform* an effect. They allow the works presented to become an imaginary that opens up to everybody and that complicates an unstable identity, which is constructed in a performative gesture (for example, by the act of looking at the artwork).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.

Chapter 2

"Multiculturalism" in the Context of the French Republican Model

What is the link between the rise of extreme right wing parties in France, such as the "Front National", and the interpretations of the republican model? Firstly, the notions of multiculturalism and republicanism need to be explained in order to understand their significance in contemporary France. The French political landscape will be looked at in relation to differing interpretations of the concept of "laïcité", which is a very important basis for the rest of this thesis. Finally, the Parisian *banlieues* provides a concrete example of multiculturalism in the context of the republican model and the creation of a territorial stigma.

2.1 The republican model

Under the notion of *republicanism*, a state's objective and the reason for its very existence must be the common good. In France, it has historically defended the notions of popular sovereignty and democracy in opposition to the monarchy. Indeed, France became a Republic following the events of the French Revolution in 1789, in which the monarchy was removed. In a Republic, the government's power resides in elected individuals that represent the citizens. Government leaders exercise power according to the rule of law.

The roots of republicanism as a political thought can be found in the tradition of *humanism*, which spread across Europe from Italy around 15th century during the Renaissance. It is from that point that republicanism was able to develop itself further in different countries such as England, the Netherlands, the United States or France.¹¹² Humanism attaches "prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters"¹¹³. It affirms the ability to human beings to improve their life through the use of reason: an educated individual can make its own choices in its own will, which results in freedom and autonomy. Jim Livesey writes: "Through participation in the sovereign power to make the law, individuals can be returned to themselves as dignified autonomous human beings"¹¹⁴. Humanism also led to *universality*, the principle of human rights and their fundamental texts in the 18th century during the Lumières (Bill of Rights in 1776, Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen in 1789), because it also defends a certain ethics

¹¹² Livesey, Jim, "The culture and history of French republicanism: terror or utopia?", in *The Republic*, 2001, 1 (2), p. 50-51.

¹¹³ Definition by the Oxford Dictionnary "humanism". Access: 12.03.2017

¹¹⁴ Livesey, Jim, 2001, p. 54.

through the use of reason and the concept of human dignity.¹¹⁵ These ethics should apply *universally*, regardless of specific features (sex, race, religion, culture, etc): human rights are insofar universal.

In republicanism, the state became responsible for protecting the principle of equality. Equality has to be understood here as a principle of non-domination. The principle of equality therefore stands for an absence of the arbitrary, which can guarantee a certain liberty, hence the logical following in the slogan "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité". Ideally, in the public sphere, the state's common good is defended through the republican ideal of the virtuous citizen; in the private sphere, the conception of individual good can be expressed.¹¹⁶ In this way, the republican ideology provides a certain moral unity but implies duties and somehow, ideally, the subordination of the private sphere to the public sphere. In other words, the first principle of the republican model would be the "republican citizenship" or "republican equality".¹¹⁷ Ideally, there should be no communities or minorities but rather simply citizens, all equal in the eyes of the law. Jim Livesey writes on republican citizenship:

"Through its institutions and its culture, French republicanism gives life and meaning to the idea of citizenship. Citizenship extends far beyond participation in the formal political system [...]. [It] infuses the institutions of daily life, and on occasion can generate extraordinary initiatives on the part of citizens mobilised to address particular problems."¹¹⁸

However, French republicanism is unique and has to be differentiated from other types of republicanism, for example, the American model. American republicanism was created by the Founding Fathers who signed the "Declaration of Independence" in 1776 and does not actually have an egalitarian creed: "Citizens in the classical tradition were differentiated by their capacity for virtue or public service. There was no contradiction between the tenets of classical republicanism and the adherence of many of the founding fathers of the United States, including Jefferson, to slave-holding"¹¹⁹. In opposition, "the central intuition of the French revolution was that, despite the obvious social, economic and cultural inequalities generated by modern commercial societies, men should be politically equal"¹²⁰. "[French] republicanism has no founding fathers, no sacred texts; it is instead inspired by the icons, symbols and ideals of the

¹¹⁵ Kant writes in 1785 "Act as though the maxim of your action were to become, through your will, a universal law of nature" in *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*, section two.

¹¹⁶ Heine, Sophie, "La dimension communautarienne du républicanisme français: l'affaire du foulard islamique comme réactivation d'un imaginaire national", *Raison publique*, n° 9, octobre 2008, pp. 59-85. Access: 27.07.2016.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Livesey, Jim, 2001, p. 49.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

first French revolution of 1789-99"¹²¹. A key difference between both models is that in the French model, the political function is not derived from the social function like the American model. Instead, all men are politically equal and through a social contract with institutions, the citizen commits himself to the common good.¹²²

2.2 The notion of "laïcité"

The second principle of the republican model is *laïcité*. In French, "laïcité" means that the state is neutral toward one's spiritual beliefs and that religion should be separate from politics. This term is derived from Latin *laicus* and Greek *laikos*, which mean "common", "from the people"¹²³. Before 1789 and the Revolution, France was majorly catholic and the clergy was economically very powerful. The Lumières' philosophy did not lead to a decline in religion but rather to a mutation. Indeed, religion became more of an individual inner matter and the "utilité sociale de la religion"¹²⁴ (social utility of religion) was praised. For example, Rousseau advocated for a "religion civile" (civil religion) in the *Social Contract*.¹²⁵ With the "Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen" in 1789, all men were declared equal and were free to exercise the religion of their choice, according to the universal principles. Ever since the law of 28 March 1882, school must be secular as opposed to the former religious education. In the years following this, more secular measures were taken, for example, the possibility of divorce and the abrogation of public prayers.¹²⁶ The "law of 1905" institutionalized the official separation between religion and state.¹²⁷ France was finally established as a "République laïque" (secular republic) in the Constitution of 1946: "La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale"¹²⁸ (France is an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic).

Jennifer Fredette gives her own definition of the term as follows:

"Too roughly but often translated into English as mere "secularism," *laïcité* is the French republican style of secularism that involves a strict separation of religion and state. Theoretically, no images or references to religion should appear in public discourse whatsoever. The degree to which this has been and is today the case in France is debatable. Public money, for example, goes to Catholic cathedrals but not mosques, because cathedrals are part of France's "cultural heritage." *Laïcité* has gone through different phases and

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹²² The social contract (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 1762) explains how citizens accept to surrender some of their freedom to an authority or institutions in exchange for the protection of their rights.

¹²³ Institut Français de l'Education: "laïque". Access: 13.03.2017

¹²⁴ Jean Baubérot, *Histoire de la laïcité en France*, 2013, p. 7.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, quoted from G. Waterlot, *Rousseau, religion et politique*, Puf, 2004.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹²⁷ Légifrance: "Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat". Access: 13.03.2017

¹²⁸ Conseil constitutionnel: Constitution de 1946, IVe République. Access: 13.03.2017

meant different things. While it is frequently mobilized by politicians, the media, and intellectuals today as an obvious paradigm, it is anything but."¹²⁹

The two characteristics of *laïcité* (common good expressed in public sphere and individual good in private sphere) praise and defend both unity and plurality at the same time. However, moral unity and individual liberty can arrive at a paradox and show two opposed interpretations of republicanism: liberal republicanism espoused by the likes of and theorized by scholars such as Hannah Arendt, John Pocock or Quentin Skinner¹³⁰ agrees with the plurality of concepts of the common good, while conservative republicanism, defended by the likes of writers such as Eric Zemmour and Alain Finkielkraut (see below 2.3), insists on assimilation and a single notion of the good.¹³¹ It would be possible in liberal republicanism to have different religions co-existing, for example, while only one religion would be possible in conservative republicanism. Liberal republicanism makes the coexistence of many cultures possible, because it allows for more than one conception of the good. The relationship and entanglement between republicanism and multiculturalism is visible here, because their understanding depends on one another.

However, in the last decade, *laïcité* has begun to be used in France in an anti-communitarian way, in which it makes religion an exclusively private matter that should not be made visible in the public sphere. Sociologist and historian Jean Baubérot notices a turn in the interpretation of *laïcité*.¹³² A report from deputy François Baroin in 2003 advocates for a "nouvelle laïcité" (new *laïcité*), less political and more "cultural" as part of the French identity towards the "Muslim world" and "a part of the immigrants"¹³³. President Nicolas Sarkozy spoke in 2007 in a speech of "une laïcité positive qui valorise les racines chrétiennes de la France" (a positive secularism that values the Christian roots of France). In this regard, the Catholic religion is interpreted not only as a religion, but also as a cultural fact. According to Baubérot, this type of *laïcité* does not take its roots from the same history: instead of the Revolution, it refers to the colonial conflicts where the Republic was also an empire (indeed, the "Muslim French" had a different status).¹³⁴ According to him, this "nouvelle laïcité" is synonymous with state control over religion and does not resemble the historical *laïcité* framed by the law of 1905. This law separated religion and

¹²⁹ Fredette, Jennifer, *Constructing muslims in France : discourse, public identity, and the politics of citizenship*, Philadelphia, Pa. : Temple Univ.Press ; 2014, p. 184.

¹³⁰ Arendt, Hannah, *On Revolution*, 1963, Pocock, John, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 1975, Skinner, Quentin, *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, 1990.

¹³¹ Heine, Sophie, "La dimension communautariste du républicanisme français: l'affaire du foulard islamique comme réactivation d'un imaginaire national", *Raison publique*, n° 9, octobre 2008, pp. 59-85. Access: 27.07.2016.

¹³² Jean Baubérot, *Histoire de la laïcité en France*, 2013, p. 118.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

state but also granted the freedom of choice and practice of religion: it did not require one to hide it, like in the concept of "nouvelle laïcité".

On the contrary, *laïcité* should be accepting of difference and singularity. In this new vein, the *burqa* ("a long, loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet, worn in public by women in many Muslim countries"¹³⁵) was banned from public space in 2010. Indeed, the 2010 law states that "nul ne peut, dans l'espace public, porter une tenue destinée à dissimuler son visage"¹³⁶ (no person is allowed wearing a face-covering outfit in public space). The right-wing's appropriation of *laïcité* has largely resulted in the eviction of Islam from the public space. As it will be demonstrated in the first case study, artist Princess Hijab shows the impact of religion in the public sphere and what the different possible interpretations of the concept of *laïcité* in France are.

According to Stéphanie Hennette-Vauchez and Vincent Valentin, "le projet politique, républicain, de la "nouvelle laïcité" cherche à créer un espace commun, une société pacifiée. Mais il lui faut alors une société laïque - plus seulement un Etat laïc. Voire une société athée"¹³⁷ (The political republican project of "new laïcité" looks to create a common space, a pacified society. In this respect, a secular society is needed – not only a secular state. Even maybe an atheist society). By forbidding religious signs in public, this conception deprives people of a very private and intimate part of themselves within the public space and becomes a part of conservative republicanism.

2.3 The notion of "multiculturalism"

Comparatively, *multiculturalism* is defined as the coexistence of different cultures. In France, it has been the topic of several discussions since the 1970s, when the families of North African immigrants working in France arrived there as well (in 1976, French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing set up the "family reunification" program).¹³⁸ Historically, the French vision has been opposed to multiculturalism, because the idea of "Nation" assumes that immigrants abandon their original culture in favor of embracing the French one. According to Dominique Schnapper,

¹³⁵ Oxford Dictionnary, "Burka", Access: 13.03.2017. The *burqa* differentiates itself from the *niqab* and the *hijab* in the sense that it covers the whole body integrally, including the face that is veiled. The *niqab* allows only the eyes to be seen while the *hijab* only covers one's hair (leaving one's face and the rest of their body visible).

¹³⁶ Légifrance: "LOI n° 2010-1192 du 11 octobre 2010 interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public". Access: 13.03.2017.

¹³⁷ *Libération*, 28.11.2014, "l'Affaire Baby-Loup ou la nouvelle laïcité".

¹³⁸ Légifrance: "Décret n°76-383 du 29 avril 1976 relatif aux conditions d'entrée et de séjour en France des membres des familles des étrangers autorisés à résider en France". Access: 12.03.2017

"toute nation est par définition multiculturelle, le problème politique étant de savoir si la diversité culturelle, en termes de religion, de différences sociales, d'appartenance nationale, est susceptible d'être transcendée par un projet commun"¹³⁹ (Every nation is multicultural by definition. The political problem is knowing if cultural diversity – in terms of religion, social differences and a national sense of belonging – is likely to be transcended by a common project). By doing so, a nation could be multicultural if the cultural differences can be transcended by a common project, which could be the common good, as explained above.

Multiculturalism creates many debates and a strong opposition in France, because it implies the coexistence of different cultures, while, on the other hand, the French Nation was founded on a strong unity and a belief in a universal project of citizenship. According to criticisms of multiculturalism, to be French is to embrace French values – which are deeply cultural – and not to be concerned with other things such as religion, ethnicity or how long one has been living in the country.¹⁴⁰

Writers such as Eric Zemmour and Alain Finkielkraut are famous figures who are opposed to multiculturalism in France and advocate for cultural assimilation, the process by which a person or a group abandons their own culture to embrace the one of another group. Eric Zemmour was already convicted twice for incitement of racial hatred after, for example, declaring that most drug dealers were mostly "blacks and Arabs".¹⁴¹

"Je n'ai jamais dit que le multiculturalisme ne fonctionnait pas. Il fonctionne, mais il détruit la France. La France, c'est l'assimilation, devenir le même, c'est la constitution d'un peuple à partir d'éléments qui éventuellement viennent d'ailleurs. Avec le multiculturalisme, l'autre reste l'autre. Je dis simplement que ce n'est plus la France. La France se nie en étant multiculturelle."¹⁴²

"I never said that multiculturalism does not work. It works but it is destroying France. France is assimilation, becoming the same, it is the constitution of a people according to elements that come from somewhere else. With multiculturalism, the other stays the other. I am simply saying that it is not France anymore. France is denying itself by being multicultural."

According to Eric Zemmour, France cannot stay France and be multicultural at the same time. He continues to defend this point of view in his book "Le Suicide Français", which became a

¹³⁹ Dominique Schnapper, *La France de l'intégration : Sociologie de la nation en 1990*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991, p. 77.

¹⁴⁰ Heine, Sophie, "La dimension communautarienne du républicanisme français: l'affaire du foulard islamique comme réactivation d'un imaginaire national", *Raison publique*, n° 9, octobre 2008, pp. 59-85. Access: 27.07.2016.

¹⁴¹ Chrisafis, Angélique, "French journalist convicted on racism charge over drug dealer comment", *The Guardian*, 18 February 2011, Access: 01.01.2017

¹⁴² Anonymous, "Zemmour : Le multiculturalisme fonctionne mais détruit la France", *L'Avenir.net*, 6 January 2015, Access: 01.01.2017

major bestseller in 2014, with between 300,000 and 500,000 sold copies.¹⁴³ Alain Finkielkraut has a similar point of view:

"La coexistence des cultures n'est harmonieuse que dans les magasins: toutes les cuisines, toutes les musiques peuvent cohabiter. Dans la vie, c'est autre chose. Les modes d'existence entrent en collision. Cette société multiculturelle risque d'être beaucoup plus violente que la nation qu'elle vise à remplacer."¹⁴⁴

"The coexistence of cultures is only harmonious in shops: all the cuisine, all the music can cohabitate. In life, it is another thing. Lifestyles clash with each other. There is a risk that this multicultural society will be much more violent than the nation it is trying to replace."

Alain Finkielkraut also commented on the 2005 riots in the Parisian suburbs, which caused many negative reactions. He said that instead of reducing the riots to their social dimensions, it should be seen as a religious and ethnic revolt because most of the suburb's population is Arab and black with a Muslim identity.¹⁴⁵

Multiculturalism is increasingly considered a threat to France because of the fear that people cannot integrate and fit into the nation state. Indeed, multiculturalism assumes that all individuals share a common objective. The contemporary understanding of multiculturalism and the republican model in France has been shifting from liberal to conservative. Especially in the last ten years, the appropriation of these concepts by the right is troublesome. As an example, the former UMP party changed its name in 2015 to *Les Républicains* (The Republicans). In his work, the artist Combo – who is presented in the second case study – shows how the right has reappropriated important symbols. His work has also spurred further debates and discussions on these issues.

However, it is less the first principle of the republican model – the equality of the citizen – that is at stake here. Rather, it is the second principle of *laïcité* that is much more subject to reappropriation by right wing parties. With shifting notions of the term "laïcité" to a more conservative understanding such as "nouvelle laïcité", this key principle of the republican model finds itself in opposition to the values it has traditionally conveyed. It is indeed not guaranteeing the equality of the citizen and is in total contradiction to the defense of each individual's convictions. The work of Princess Hijab sheds light on how the reappropriation of these notions by the right is part of a general movement of latent racism and is used against minorities, such as Muslims.

¹⁴³ Guyard, Bertrand, "Éric Zemmour : les vrais chiffres de vente du Suicide français", *Le Figaro*, 16 October 2014. Access: 12.03.2017

¹⁴⁴ Eric De Bellefroid, Interview with Alain Finkielkraut: "La société multiculturelle porte en elle une extrême violence", *La Libre.be*, 8 December 2013, Access: 20.12.2016

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

The Parisian *banlieues* are a concrete example of how the principle of equality is losing more and more of its value.

2.4 The territorial stigma of the Parisian *banlieues*

In France, the *banlieues* mean the suburbs of a large city, in this case Paris. The "péripherique", a carriage ring road around the city, separates the city of Paris from the suburban municipalities. This area used to be a protection for the city from enemies. The Thiers Wall was built as a fortification by order of Prime Minister Adolphe Thiers between 1841 and 1844, before being destroyed during the 1920s.¹⁴⁶ After loosing the battle of Paris (1814) to Prussia, there was a concern to secure the city from foreign armies. However, the left-wing parties were opposed to this project, because they suspected that the Thiers Wall was instead being built to keep the Parisians away from fighting against royal power.¹⁴⁷ Today it serves as a reminder that this ring road used to function as a border.

Since the 1980s, high immigration in large part from the Maghreb, religious mixtures, marginalized and disadvantaged populations and drug trafficking are just a few of the stigmas related to these suburbs. However, the suburbs of Paris are very differentiated and diversified from one another. For example, Neuilly-sur-Seine in the West and Aubervilliers in the North are radically different. As illustrated in the appendix¹⁴⁸, the economic differences are also huge. For example, the annual income in Neuilly-sur-Seine (€55.000) is almost five times larger than the one in Aubervilliers (€12.500). These two *banlieues* are at opposite extremes but there is an obvious difference between the West of Paris, with the richest population, and the North, with the poorest. With €12.500 a year in Aubervilliers, life is more like a struggle than anything else. These inhabitants mainly live in the so-called "grands ensembles" or "cités", which are huge housing estates built in the 1950s and 1970s.

Until the 1980s, these housing estates were mainly occupied by French workers and a few immigrants (usually men alone). During the 1980s, the demographics of immigration changed: immigrants began coming largely from the Maghreb and not from Europe as they had before (Portugal, Spain or Italy).¹⁴⁹ Families gathered and settled in France. If the large majority of them quickly became well integrated, these immigrants were also the first victims of unemployment and salary cuts. Some had to face restructuring, absence of qualification and

¹⁴⁶ See fig. 4 in appendix

¹⁴⁷ King Louis Philippe I was indeed proclaimed "King of the French" in 1830 and abdicated in 1848.

¹⁴⁸ See fig. 5 in appendix

¹⁴⁹ Dubet, François, Lapeyronnie, Didier, *Les quartiers d'exil*, Paris, 1992, p. 82

discrimination.¹⁵⁰ According to Didier Lapeyronnie, "le décrochage d'une partie des populations immigrées alimente les problèmes des banlieues"¹⁵¹ (the disconnection of one part of the immigrant population encourages the *banlieue's* problems). A large number of immigrants were indeed present and more visible in these neighborhoods. Keeping in mind that Didier Lapeyronnie wrote this in 1992, he explains that the HLM organizations (Habitation à Loyer Modéré, rent-controlled housing) were discretely gathering the same nationalities in the same buildings, giving some *banlieues* the impression of a ghetto. He explains the "*banlieues'* problems" as the stigmatization of these "cités", which were expanding with the rising immigrant presence, that was blamed for any damaged caused, overcrowded apartments and problems with neighbors.¹⁵² School education is one central issue among these many problems.

According to Layperonnie, the republican model has failed. The aim of the republican model is indeed to guarantee people's equality, in terms of the society but also in terms of education. Yet in reality, only a certain part of the population can afford a private education, which is very expensive. The republican model of education includes at least the intention to educate everybody, schools being perhaps the place with the least discrimination towards minorities in France compared to any other public institution. However, while schools may not have disappeared from the *banlieues*, the education system has been transformed into one of mass education ("massification de l'enseignement").¹⁵³ The choice of school has become such an important choice (private or public) and is wholly part of the education strategy within this mass system. Some schools have been completely neglected by people with enough financial means and have instead welcomed the poorest children.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, the role of school is paradoxical: on one hand, it is one of the last republican institutions available to socially disadvantaged groups. On the other hand, the "massification" of education is transforming the schools into a selection apparatus where inequalities are crystallized within the education process. Failing in school in the *banlieues* therefore means social exclusion. School is one of the strongest channels for successful social insertion but the vicious circle of mass education along with limited financial means leads to a certain exclusion. For some second or third generation immigrant children, whose parents immigrated from the Maghreb to France, the feeling that they are trying to access a society that does not want them is particularly strong.¹⁵⁵ As Ahmed Boubeker writes:

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 33-35.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 35.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 147.

"In fact, far from abolishing differences in the public arena, the social equalization model has managed only to lock the heirs to immigration into a stigmatized identity"¹⁵⁶.

In this regard, the riots in 2005 were the logical consequence of the constant questioning of their "Frenchness", citizenship, belonging and visibility. As previously stated, it has to be underlined that with the declaration of a state of emergency in 2005, these riots echoed the long process of decolonization and were implicated in the history of urban segregation of the preceding decades. The 2005 riots attracted the attention towards the symbolic and social landscape of the *banlieues*, forcing the French public to acknowledge their presence.¹⁵⁷ David Garbin and Gareth Millington observe this phenomenon, writing that "the 2005 uprising across France was seen as a symptomatic of an acute societal crisis characterized by the exclusion of a large section of its multiethnic population from the 'Republican project' (le projet républicain)"¹⁵⁸.

Social space is reproduced in and through the urban landscape: in this regard, the *banlieue* is often regarded as both the source and the consequence of urban segregation.¹⁵⁹ The authors take the example of La Courneuve, a northeastern *banlieue*. Indeed, the individuals are already physically enclosed in this relegated space, families already deprived of capital and their exclusion only gets more dire "by reducing the likelihood that they may gain access to capital in the future"¹⁶⁰ These *banlieues* suffer from a territorial stigma that has an impact on their inhabitants. But how is this stigma expressed inside and beyond the *banlieues*? What does the external and internal representation of these spaces look like?

Sociologist and anthropologist Nacira Guénif-Souilamas speaks about the denial of territorial racism in France. According to her, the fact that many people are denying the existence of territorial racism proves how much it has invaded all territorialized relations:

"This is also why, sometimes, people have the feeling that racism is not something that is so widespread, because they don't know anything about the suburbs. They never go to suburban housing projects, "les banlieues" as we call them, or "les cités." So, of course they never encounter it, unless if it's on the TV, which means that it is something that is completely out of their world and out of their sight. I think that one way to understand how effective structural racism has become in France is to understand that it has led to some sort of mapping of not only differences, but of asymmetries and otherness... so much so that space has become a tool of othering. You know who you're talking to just by noticing where people come

¹⁵⁶ Ahmed Boubeker, "Outsiders in the French melting pot: the public construction of invisibility for visible minorities" in Tshimanga, Charles, Gondola, Didier, and Bloom, Peter J. (edited by), *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprisings in Contemporary France*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009, p. 75.

¹⁵⁷ Lapeyronnier, Didier, 2006, p. 21.

¹⁵⁸ Garbin David and Millington Gareth, "Territorial Stigma and the Politics of Resistance in a Parisian Banlieue: La Courneuve and Beyond", *Urban Studies*, 49 (10), August 2012, p. 2068.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2070.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

from: when people come from certain lines of suburban trains, you would guess that they come from spaces that are completely segregated and racialized."¹⁶¹

"Out of their world" and "out of their sight" indicates that there is an outside and an inside. Inhabitants of the *banlieues* are simply seen by the inhabitants of Paris proper as a race apart. As David Garbin and Gareth Millington write: "Racism is redefined as directed not at a particular ethnicity or phenotype (i.e. "noir", "arabe", "maghrébin", etc.) but to the social (and spatial) category of those who reside in the banlieue"¹⁶². The *banlieues*' inhabitants themselves speak in terms of opposition between the inside and the outside: "I have never experienced racism in La Courneuve, but outside yes, and also when I say I am from La Courneuve, like in my work. When I am outside, they know I am from the Quatre Mille"¹⁶³. When inhabitants of these spaces go *outside*, they are identified as symbols of "absolute social, cultural and moral difference"¹⁶⁴.

Nicolas Sarkozy referred to rioters as "racaille" (scum), and suggested "the suburbs be cleaned with a kärcher [a brand of pressure washers used to clean walls]" and that "any foreigner caught rioting be deported" as mentioned in the last chapter. Using a word referring to urban and ethnic cleanness and cleansing illustrates how violent and brutal this approach is and reinforces the opposition of "us"/"them" and "outside"/"inside". Furthermore, Nicolas Sarkozy's statement implied that the inhabitants of the suburbs were not French, questioning their citizenship and "Frenchness".

The republican model, which encourages individuals to "recognize themselves as alike beyond their original affiliations"¹⁶⁵, has come up against its limits. The *banlieues* are the sad example of centers that reproduce inequalities and discrimination and their institutions (for example school) failing at their integrative tasks.¹⁶⁶ The republican model on which French political thinking rests, along with questions of national identity, has to be reimagined. Indeed, it failed to contain the rise of ethnic and territorial discrimination from which the French *banlieues* are suffering. Ahmed Boubeker writes: "for in a French society that aspires to economic equality but that dreams only of individual privileges, it is in the first place corporatism, nepotism, personal favors, forms of insularity, and police misconducts that provide the rich soil for ethnic

¹⁶¹ Interview with Nacira Guénif-Souilamas. Originally recorded on April 11, 2016, in University of Paris VIII (Saint-Denis) for The Funambulist's podcast, Archipelago. Léopold Lambert, "France's Neocoloniality and Structural Racism: A Conversation with Nacira Guénif-Souilamas", *The Funambulist: Politics of Space and Bodies*, 25.08.2016, Access: 24.10.2016

¹⁶² Garbin David and Millington Gareth, 2012, p. 2072.

¹⁶³ Samadia, 53 years old, inhabitant of the "cité des 4000", La Courneuve. Quoted in Garbin David and Millington Gareth, 2012, p. 2072.

¹⁶⁴ Garbin David and Millington Gareth, 2012, p. 2072.

¹⁶⁵ Boubeker, Ahmed, 2009, p. 81.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

discriminations"¹⁶⁷. France is in dire need of a public debate around the question of national identity. Moreover, new forms of this outdated republican model that can acknowledge and foster ethnic, religious and territorial minorities need to be reflected on.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Chapter 3

The State of Exception

3.1 The definition of the state of exception and its history in France according to Giorgio Agamben

The concept of the state of exception was developed by the jurist Carl Schmitt in 1922 and is similar to the state of emergency¹⁶⁸. It is based on the sovereign's ability to suspend the law in the name of the public good. The state of exception is situated at the intersection between the political and the legal and is highly paradoxical: indeed, it appears as the legal form of what cannot have any legal form (because these juridical measures, resulting of periods of political crisis, "cannot be understood in legal terms"¹⁶⁹). According to Giorgio Agamben, the voluntary creation of the state of emergency has become, since World War II, one of the essential practices of contemporary states (even of the so-called democratic ones).¹⁷⁰ That is why it appears to be on the border between democracy and absolutism. Many examples of its use can be listed, from the Third Reich to the creation of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, where the state of emergency's biopolitical significance clearly emerges.

Analyzing the state of exception requires an understanding of the legal concept of necessity. The Latin adage "necessity has no law" can be understood in two ways: either necessity does not recognize any law, or necessity creates its own law.¹⁷¹ The theory of necessity is none other than the theory of the exception, by virtue of which a particular case is released from the obligation to observe the law.¹⁷² Necessity is neither a source of law, nor does it suspend the law: it merely releases a particular case from the literal application of the norm. The state of exception appears to be illegal (because it is contrary to the law) yet constitutional, which produces a set of new norms.¹⁷³

In fact, the state of emergency allows the representative of the state to establish a curfew, to stop traffic, to inspect residence permits, deliver permit bans and house arrests. It also gives the authorities the license to close down anything in public spaces, including theatres, cafés, meeting

¹⁶⁸ Carl Schnitt, *Politische Theologie*, 1922.

¹⁶⁹ Agamben, Giorgio, *Homo Sacer II.1 : State Of Exception*, 2005, p. 1

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 25

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

rooms and to forbid demonstrations and public gatherings. Furthermore, they are allowed to seize personal weapons, control the press, publications, and radio, and to forbid screenings of films and theatre plays.¹⁷⁴ Lastly, it withdraws some essential juridical prerogatives since authorities can then search places or people day or night. Even the military can be given power over civil authority.¹⁷⁵

France regulates the state of exception in three different bodies. The Article 16 of the Constitution (Exceptional Powers – *Pouvoirs Exceptionnels*), Article 36 of the Constitution (State of Siege – *État de siège*) and the law of 1955 (State of Emergency – *État d'urgence*).

Article 16 of the present Constitution establishes that the president of the Republic may take all necessary measures "when the institutions of the Republic, the independence of the Nation, the integrity of its territory or the execution of its international commitments are seriously and immediately threatened and the regular functioning of the constitutional public power is interrupted"¹⁷⁶. This article of the Constitution was used only once, from 23 April 1961 until 29 September 1961, in combination with the law of 1955.

Article 36 of the Constitution regulates the "State of Siege" which is also a part of the concept of the state of exception. It is only declared in the case of an armed insurrection or war and allows for the transfer of power from the civil authority to the military authority. The Article 36 has not been used since World War II.

The law of 1955 regulates the state of emergency and is framed by the Law n°55-385 of 3 April 1955.¹⁷⁷ It states that a state of emergency can be declared by the president in the Council of Ministers. A state of emergency can only last for twelve days but can be extended by a law passed through the Parliament.

A state of emergency has been declared in metropolitan France on three occasions during the Fifth Republic (current republican Constitution in France, introduced on 4 October 1958). The first time was during the uprisings in Algeria (23 April 1961 – 31 May 1963), then during the 2005 riots (8 November 2005 – 4 January 2006), and finally following the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 and is presently ongoing.

¹⁷⁴ Thénault, Sylvie, "L'état d'urgence (1955-2005). De l'Algérie coloniale à la France contemporaine : destin d'une loi", *Le Mouvement Social* 1/2007 (no 218) , p. 64.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p 64.

¹⁷⁶ Agamben, Giorgio, 2005, p. 14.

¹⁷⁷ See law text in appendix "Loi n° 55-385 du 3 avril 1955 relative à l'état d'urgence"

On 23 April 1961, French president Charles de Gaulle declared a state of emergency in France. According to Article 16 of the Constitution he would be given "exceptional powers". In this case, the state of emergency was extended until 9 October 1962. During this time and without parliamentary control, police custody was extended to 15 days, and finally, on 17 October 1961, the Paris massacre happened during which between hundred and two hundred people were killed by national police in the repression of the FLN (National Liberation Front). In February 1962, a state of emergency was still ongoing and an illegal demonstration saw nine people killed at the Charonnes subway station. The president decided that the state of emergency would then be extended until 31 May 1963.¹⁷⁸ During the Algerian War, the state of exception permitted the government to allow administrative detentions, impose curfews, perform administrative searches (without legal authorization) and house arrests, and forbid demonstrations as they wished.

President Jacques Chirac promulgated the state of emergency on 8 November 2005, in an attempt to stop the riots that had started a few weeks before with the death of two teenagers trying to escape a police check in the Parisian *banlieues*. The Parisian suburbs were the theatre of violent uprisings between police forces and the inhabitants of the suburbs. The state of emergency was extended to 4 January 2006. Mainly, it was used to impose curfews and to force people to stay in their homes, as well as to forbid demonstrations.

On 13 November 2015, following the terrorist attacks in Paris (mass shootings and suicide bombing at the Stade de France, cafés, restaurants and the Bataclan theatre), President François Hollande declared a state of emergency, which is presently still ongoing and has been extended several times past its deadline. As in the previous cases, it allowed the government to impose curfews and house arrests, and enforce administrative searches. A law extending the state of emergency was voted in place on 20 November 2015, which also made some changes and additions to the original law of 1955, for example, on house arrests. Instead of a person's activity being relevant for imposing a house arrest it was made a person's behavior, making a more blurry and broader definition of people who could theoretically be placed under house arrest.¹⁷⁹

The state of exception is a mechanism by which the rule of law can be bypassed. In an over-secured and military society, this security apparatus can have consequences and victims, especially since the state of exception is starting to be permanent as is the case with France right now. It is indeed the permanency of the state of exception that makes it worrisome, because it is

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹⁷⁹ Légifrance: "Loi n° 2015-1501 du 20 novembre 2015 prorogeant l'application de la loi n° 55-385 du 3 avril 1955 relative à l'état d'urgence et renforçant l'efficacité de ses dispositions". Access: 17.03.2017

made to be exceptional, as the very word states. If permanent, the state of exception can grant extreme power to the state and can disavow democratic rights.

3.2 Achille Mbembe: necropower and biopower and the threat of a permanent state of exception

In 2003, philosopher Achille Mbembe published an article entitled "Necropolitics" in the journal *Public Culture*, in which he adapts Michel Foucault's concept of biopower for his theory of necropower.

With his notion of "biopower" Michel Foucault states that sovereignty is expressed through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations".¹⁸⁰ This presupposes the distribution of people into groups, which Foucault denotes as racism.¹⁸¹ As Hannah Arendt has already suggested, the politics of race are linked to the politics of death.¹⁸² In the economy of biopower, the function of racism is to regulate the distribution of death, making possible the murderous function of the state. According to Foucault, the right to kill and the mechanisms of biopower can be seen as constitutive elements of state power in modernity.

Mbembe considers slavery as one of the first biopolitical experiments. The slave's condition is the result of a triple loss: loss of home, loss of rights over one's body and loss of political status, which implies a social death. The slave is kept alive only for their master's purpose, which is a form of death-in-life. The person's humanity is destroyed to such a point that it becomes possible to be owned by a master.¹⁸³ As it will be shown in the last chapter, refugees today suffer from biopolitical experimentation as well.

However, biopower is thought insufficient when accounting for contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death. This is what Mbembe calls necropower, which is a specific terror formation. According to him, "the ultimate expression of power and sovereignty resides [...] in the ability to dictate who may live and who must die"¹⁸⁴. Violence and sovereignty claim a divine foundation: peoplehood is forged through the worshiping of one deity, and national identity is imagined as an identity against the Other, other deities.¹⁸⁵ According to Mbembe, examples of necropower forms are Palestine and the apartheid regime in

¹⁸⁰ Michel Foucault *The History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, 1976, p. 140.

¹⁸¹ Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, 1997, p. 57-74.

¹⁸² Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New York, 1966.

¹⁸³ Mbembe, Necropolitics, in *Public Culture*. 15:1, 2003 p. 21.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 27.

South Africa. These territories were occupied by forms of necropower, which separated space into cells and borders, organized in such a way as to divide races. Furthermore, late-modern colonial occupation is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical, which grant the state absolute power over the inhabitants of the occupied territory.¹⁸⁶

Mbembe states that these systems can only function in a state of exception.¹⁸⁷ This happens when the state of exception ceases to be a "temporal suspension of the state of law" and becomes "a permanent spatial arrangement that remains continually outside the normal state of law"¹⁸⁸. These conditions make it possible to establish, for example, the aforementioned systems or camp structures.

3.3 *Homo Sacer* and bare life

To understand this camp structure philosopher Giorgio Agamben has developed one of the most useful and interesting theories by with the concept of the *Homo Sacer* in his book "*Homo Sacer I: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*", published in 1997. Agamben begins by providing a definition of the *Homo Sacer* with a quote from Pompeius Festus in the 2nd century BC: "The sacred man is the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide; in the first tribunitian law, in fact, it is noted that 'if someone kills the one who is sacred according to the plebiscite, it will not be considered homicide.' This is why it is customary for a bad or impure man to be called sacred"¹⁸⁹.

Agamben argues for the importance of the figure of the *Homo Sacer* as the point at which bare life is concentrated. "Homo" means human/man, and "sacer" has the double meaning of "sacred" and "taboo". *Homo Sacer* is defined as someone who can be killed, but not sacrificed. They cannot be sacrificed to the gods because they are defined as outside the recognized terrain of valued life (there is nothing left in them worth sacrificing; to sacrifice them would be sacrilege), but for the same reason, they can be killed with impunity. The *Homo Sacer* is a life without any value.

The Jews living under Nazism were *Homo Sacer* in the sense that they could be killed but not

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 30.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 16.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer I: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1997, p. 47, quoting Pompeius Festus, On the Significance of Words, 2nd century AD.

sacrificed. The theories of Arendt and Foucault converge on the concept of "bare life", where life and politics become closely intertwined. Bare life is defined by Agamben as a form of life which is "naked", only physical, and therefore valueless.¹⁹⁰

For Agamben, the ability to declare someone *Homo Sacer* is fundamental for claiming state sovereignty:

"Along with the emergence of biopolitics, we can observe [an] expansion beyond the limits of the decision on bare life, in the state of exception, in which sovereignty consisted. If there is a line in every modern state marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and biopolitics can turn into thanatopolitics, this line no longer appears today as a stable border dividing two clearly distinct zones. This line is now in motion and gradually moving into areas other than that of political life, areas in which the sovereign is entering into an ever more intimate symbiosis not only with the jurist but also with the doctor, the scientist, the expert, and the priest."¹⁹¹

"The limits of the decision on bare life", which Agamben is talking about here, can be seen today in the example of the refugee crisis, which is illustrated by the Calais jungle in France. As Agamben writes, "by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, nativity and nationality, they put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis".¹⁹² Refugees bring to light the differences between birthplace and nation because they leave the country they were actually born in, and with it a nation, a power and a system to go somewhere else. Indeed, modern sovereignty works under the assumption that nationality and nativity are intimately connected. As Jacques Rancière sees it, the rights of man would be an abstraction if they were merely considered the rights of the citizen – "the rights attached to a national community as such"¹⁹³.

By breaking up the link between nationality and nativity, refugees put bare life in the middle of the political domain. As Hannah Arendt previously clarified, the refugee is truly "the man of rights" because he is the only instance of rights outside of the fiction of the citizen – which is no longer a valid denotation for them.

In a similar way, Rancière proposes that the rights of man be described as "the rights of those who are only human beings, who have no more property left than the property of being human, [...] put another way, the rights of those who have no rights [...]"¹⁹⁴. This is the basis for

¹⁹⁰ Agamben, 1997, p. 76-77.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹⁹³ Rancière, Jacques, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103:2/3, Spring/Summer 2004, p. 298.

¹⁹⁴ Rancière, Jacques, 2004, p. 298.

Agamben's concept of bare life in relation to biopolitics, which he defines in *Homo Sacer* as "a life taken within a state of exception, a life beyond oppression"¹⁹⁵.

The rights of man were thought to be the same as the rights of the citizen but are now separated from the context of citizenship for the sake of the supposed protection of bare life. However, every time refugees represent a mass phenomenon (and not individual cases), despite the invocation of the "rights of man", states and organizations find themselves absolutely incapable of resolving the problem and even confronting it as can be observed today.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, the separation between the rights of man and the rights of the citizen has led to a separation between humanitarianism and politics. Humanitarian organizations find themselves capable of grasping human life only in the figure of bare life, "and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight"¹⁹⁷. According to Agamben, a humanitarianism separated from politics isolates bare life as a form of biopolitical paradigm. In this sense, he advises a separation of the concept of refugees from the concept of the rights of man.

The denial of democratic rights is flourishing as politicians are making proposals to keep records of people, or even interning individuals in camps. Following the attacks of November 2015 Laurent Wauquiez of the "Les Républicains" party proposed interning people on whom the government had a "Fiche S" record, a kind of file used by law enforcement to flag an individual considered to be a threat to national security. There are around 10,000 individuals in France tagged with a "Fiche S".¹⁹⁸ In response to this interning proposal, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said he "would be ready to examine any realistic and effective solutions, in keeping with [French] values and the right"¹⁹⁹. In his interview, he insists that solutions against terrorism are not a legal problem but rather a question of effectiveness.

The different appropriations of notions like "laïcité" and multiculturalism by conservative ideologues and the rise of the extreme right-wing parties raise concerns about biopolitical experiments (power of control over biological life meaning a "control over life"), which would be sustained by the state of exception. Such biopolitical experiments could be, for example, putting to use Laurent Wauquiez's proposal, or one that exists already, namely the situation in

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 301.

¹⁹⁶ Agamben, 1997, p. 85.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 85.

¹⁹⁸ Anonymous, "A bloody siege shows the strengths and limits of French security work", *The Economist*, 18 November 2016, Access: 06.12.2016

¹⁹⁹ Video interview of Manuel Valls, "Il n'y aura pas un moment de répit pour ceux qui s'attaquent aux valeurs de la République", *Gouvernement.fr*, 14 November 2015, Access: 06.12.2016

Calais. If sovereignty is defined by mechanisms of exclusion, then it triggers the creation of a new figure of the *Homo Sacer* in the refugee, the migrant, the Arab or the Muslim.

France must observe the rule of law. Nonetheless, the climate of terror and the state of exception have fostered a mentality that could give rise to a kind of new Guantanamo, for example. Agamben describes the camp situation as "the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become a rule"²⁰⁰. This is a space that places power in opposition with nothing else but bare life and becomes a catalyst for biopolitical experimentation. This camp situation, as described by Agamben, might already have happened in the Parisian *banlieues* with the creation of a territorial stigma (some would even speak about a ghetto) or in the Calais' Jungle that is non other than a real camp, as is detailed in the last chapter of this thesis.

Yet, opposition is present. The artists chosen for this thesis share the characteristic of using art as a cultural weapon in their denunciation of various violations of public space and democracy. In the first two cases, Princess Hijab and Combo deal with topics such as multiculturalism and religion, while in Calais, the state of exception and constitution of a camp can be observed observable directly from the inside. Examining Banksy's work in Calais makes visible the issues of confronting such a topic in an artistic form.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Chapter 4

Princess Hijab: hijabism in the Paris Metro

4.1 Presentation of the artist

Princess Hijab is an artist who sprays hijabs and burqas on advertisements in the Paris Metro. Very little information is available on the artist, apart the fact that he or she was apparently active in Paris around 2010 and 2011. According to her/him, she/he chose the pseudonym in reference to both the French Revolution (princess) and to ethnic minorities (hijab, which is the veil worn by Muslim women, also Islamic headscarf).²⁰¹ According to journalists, the artist is most likely a man, although this remains uncertain: "the identity behind Princess Hijab is of no importance", declares the artist.²⁰² In this chapter, the artist will be referred to as "she", as the character itself is female, even if the person behind it is perhaps not.

Her interventions are featured uniquely in the Paris Metro, a closed and hyper-monitored place. As a result, most of her pieces only stay visible for about 45 minutes to an hour, before being discovered and destroyed by the authorities.²⁰³ She has become highly selective, doing only four or five graffiti "interventions" in Paris a year, but each is carefully photographed and has its own afterlife circulating online.²⁰⁴

The artist herself defines this art as "hijabism". Her work features images of veiled women, men or couples on advertising billboards. Princess Hijab's first intervention was in 2006 with the "hijabisation" of the album poster of the famous female rapper Diam's (see figure 6 in the appendix). By strange coincidence, Diam's has now converted to Islam.²⁰⁵

There are two possibilities for examining Princess Hijab's work: first, from a religious angle because the hijab stands here as a symbol for the Islam and second, as a protest against capitalism because the work is painted on advertisements in the Metro. The first part of this chapter concentrates on the religious symbol itself and the second part on the medium and context.

²⁰¹ Matilda Battersby, "Rare interview with urban artist Princess Hijab", June 2011, *Independent UK*. Access on 27.07.2017.

²⁰² Angelique Chrisafis, "Cornered – Princess Hijab, Paris's elusive graffiti artist", 11 November 2010, *The Guardian*, Access on 31.07.2016

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ Angelique Chrisafis, "Cornered – Princess Hijab, Paris's elusive graffiti artist"

4.2 Artist of the minorities: questioning Muslim identity in France

People, especially journalists, have claimed Princesse Hijab's work to be a protest against the veil ban in France by President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2010. However, the artist claims that her work has nothing to do with this. Although hijabs and burqas have been painted on both women and men in advertisements, the symbol remains a religious one. As illustrated in figure 7, 8 and 9 of the appendix, Princess Hijab painted, for example, on the bodies of all the men in a "Dolce & Gabbana" advertisement but also on an advertisement for the Megan Fox movie "Jennifer's Body" (2009), on which "funny, gore and sexy" was written. In the last image, the hijab is painted on what appears to be both a man and a woman in a fashion advertisement. Also ironic here, the advertisement says "Before, boys never wanted to play with me".

The artist also specifies that her work had already begun in 2005, when the burqa ban was not yet a topic of discussion.

"If it was only about the burqa ban, my work wouldn't have a resonance for very long. But I think the burqa ban has given a global visibility to the issue of integration in France. We definitely can't keep closing off and putting groups in boxes, always reducing them to the same old questions about religion or urban violence. Education levels are better and we can't have the old Manichean discourse any more. Liberty, equality, fraternity, that's a republican principle, but in reality the issue of minorities in French society hasn't really evolved in half a century. The outsiders in France are still the poor, the Arabs, black and of course, the Roma."²⁰⁶

The artist herself evokes the question of an "artist of the minorities"²⁰⁷ because, despite the republican model of equality, there are still a lot of minorities in France who are not becoming integrated. Princesse Hijab would, therefore, be painting for those who "do not belong", such as the poor, Arabs, blacks and Roma. As she says, beyond the veil ban, the debate on what is to be French has actually stigmatized third and fourth generation young immigrants, who were already stigmatized before. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Princess Hijab uses a Muslim symbol, even if she claims that it should not be seen as such. The hijab is supposed to cover a woman's head from the sight of other men when not at home, and conforms to a certain standard of modesty. Princess Hijab makes this significations clash by painting it on advertisements showing models in sexy poses, whether male or female. This clash between symbol and context is what makes her work so striking.

The fact that the artist links her work to the problem of integration in France and mentions minorities proves that the hijab, and by extension, Islam and Muslims are part of this minority

²⁰⁶ Angelique Chrisafis, "Cornered – Princess Hijab, Paris's elusive graffiti artist", 11.11.2010, *The Guardian*, access on 31.07.2016

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

that Princess Hijab wishes to represent. She chooses the hijab and not any other symbol, religious or not, because the hijab has a particular significance in France, where Muslim integration is a sensitive debate. With another symbol or object, her work would probably not have created such a fuss. Indeed, the commentary on Princess Hijab and her work began in 2010, when Nicolas Sarkozy and his government decided to ban the burqa from the public space. In many articles, journalists suggest primarily the hypothesis that the artist is actually a fundamentalist Islamist, who is fighting against suggestive advertisement or an extreme right activist, who is trying to insult Islam by using the hijab in a provocative way.²⁰⁸ Of course, Princess Hijab is neither of these. In an interview, she says:

"Je sais bien que le voile a une connotation religieuse mais pour moi, il s'agit avant tout de surprendre. Ça fait partie de la stratégie du street art. Je ne suis pas là pour dénoncer ou défendre quoi que ce soit : je fais un constat, je réfléchis, j'essaie de voir quelles choses pourraient être impactantes, sachant qu'en tant qu'artiste, j'estime que tous les symboles peuvent être détournés. Avec le "hijabisme", j'avais la certitude de tenir une vraie idée. Dans mon cas, cela n'a rien à voir avec une quelconque religiosité. Ce sont plutôt les questions sociétales qui m'intéressent, et là, en l'occurrence, la mythologie urbaine autour du voile et ce qu'elle engendre."²⁰⁹

"I know very well that the headscarf has a religious connotation but for me, it is firstly about surprising. It is part of the strategy of street art. I am not here to denounce or defend anything: I am just doing an observation, I reflect, I try to see what could have an impact – knowing that, as an artist, I think that all symbols can be deflected. With "hijabism" I was certain that I had a real idea. In my case, it does not have anything to do with any religiosity. It is rather societal questions that interest me, in this case the urban mythology surrounding the headscarf and what it produces."

Even if she claims that her work does not have anything to do with religion, using the hijab is the detail that makes her work so interesting but also what draws people and the media's attention. Some could even say that she took advantage of the situation in France at the time by using such a sensitive symbol that she probably knew would be shocking. Indeed, by using the hijab instead of another symbol, Princess Hijab also questions Muslim identity in France in a time when many would see this gesture as a provocation. In her book "Constructing Muslims in France", Jennifer Fredette provides a very interesting analysis of the situation: "Yet for all their differences, Muslims in France still share the social situation of being a particularly new and feared religious minority in a strongly secular country with a history of colonial domination over the Muslim and Arab world – not to mention that for many there is a family experience of immigration."²¹⁰ Colonial history, immigration and too little knowledge of this religion is how she explains the discussion about Muslims in France and whether they feel French or not. By saying that she considers herself as an artist of the minorities and using a Muslim symbol to represent those

²⁰⁸ Sabrina Champenois, "Princess Hijab, voilons voir", 11.12.2010, *Libération*, access on 22.08.2016

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Fredette, Jennifer, *Constructing muslims in France : discourse, public identity, and the politics of citizenship*, Philadelphia, Pa. : Temple Univ.Press ; 2014, p. 5

minorities in France, Princess Hijab shows that the marginalization of Muslims is real and that anti-immigration laws, the burqa ban and the debate on national identity is strengthening this feeling.

Princess Hijab strikes right at the heart of the issue of notions of multiculturalism and republicanism. As stated in the second chapter, historically, the French vision is opposed to multiculturalism, because the idea of "Nation" assumes the abandonment of the immigrant's original culture in order to embrace the French one. Muslims typically fit this statement because their "Frenchness" is always questioned. To some people, their religion would be incompatible with the French identity, they would always be Muslim before being French and unlikely to embrace French values and culture.

So what is it that makes the discussion about Muslim identity in France so sensitive, even for the last generation of immigrants? Jennifer Fredette explains that the political claims of Muslims are too often seen as religious ones or as religiously motivated, when in fact they are not always as such.²¹¹ Only looking at Muslims from a religious angle prevents us from seeing them as diverse individuals who are simply part of a social group. The fact that elite discourse in France and even academic research focuses on narrow issues that are part of a bigger and more general policy area, such as the hijab at school, accommodation for prayer at work, tends to perpetuate the idea of Muslims as solely religious.²¹² In fact, not all political claims of Muslims are religiously driven and focusing too narrowly on religion hides the diversity of opinions and political assertions. Moreover, French elites have been discussing housing and Muslims in a similar way, focusing on criminality and creating a false perception of this criminality especially in the suburbs, as will be seen in chapter five of this thesis.

Princess Hijab decided to depict hijabs because of their stigmatization and the crystallization of the polemic around the hijab in political debates and public opinion. The women wearing burqas and hijabs were seen either in a political way or juridical way, in absolute polarization. Around 2003, the controversy reached a peak and the consensus of most of the French political scene was that the veil was a problem, something dangerous for both the *République* and young women wearing it.²¹³ In the ideal of a *république laïque* – which is seen as something an untouchable principle – the hijab was a threat to both the public order and the very symbol of

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹³ Valérie Amiraux, "De l'Empire à la République: l'Islam de France", *Ruptures postcoloniales : les nouveaux visages de la société française*, Paris, 2010, p. 388.

French citizenship. *Laïcité* is used in France to manage and regulate differences in public space and to acknowledge a plural social reality. Muslims find themselves faced with a paradox: one side of *laïcité* requires them to be unseen and fit the "invisible immigrant", while the other acknowledges different religions and praises equal rights. This paradox means that significant identification forms (such as the hijab, which is a very important part of the Muslim identity for some Muslim women) are to be kept outside of public space, denying certain populations access to it.²¹⁴ Being made an invisible immigrant by having to remove their veil is to deprive them of an essential part of their identity in order to participate in a community or society.

The acknowledgment of other religions is a product of multiculturalism and a fight against discrimination. However, one of the disqualified attributes of the republican integration model is religion. Yet, the Muslim individual tends to be locked in his religious identity in defiance of his other social memberships.²¹⁵

The concept of *laïcité* decrees the neutrality of the state towards religion and guarantees freedom of conscience for every individual.²¹⁶ An interpretation of this concept that would command an absence of freedom of religious expression to many parts of social life is, therefore, not fair. Lately, the concept of *laïcité* is being used in France in an anti-communitarian way to remove Islam from the public sphere. With his concept of "new *laïcité*", Jean Baubérot explains that, for some, *laïcité* has become less political and more cultural, polarizing the French identity against the Muslim world, which would be against the principle of *laïcité*. He concludes that "longtemps considérée comme une valeur progressiste, la laïcité pourrait également devenir une valeur de droite"²¹⁷ ("*laïcité* was considered as a progressive value for a long time but it could just as well become a value of the right"). The main issue is the refusal of "communitarianism", which for some is a political instrument for extremist groups, and for others a result of politics and attitudes, leading to social ghettoization and discrimination.²¹⁸

Jennifer Fredette also gives her opinion on the interpretations of this key concept: "All the while, French Muslims are exploring the meaning of citizenship. Some French Muslims are challenging the dominant articulation of French citizenship as difference-blind. For these French Muslims, who often are young French people who were not adults in the 1980s, *laïcité* means the freedom to practice one's religion as long as one does not actively proselytize. Furthermore, these

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

²¹⁶ Baubérot, Jean, *Histoire de la laïcité en France*, Paris, 2013, p. 117.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

Muslims do not perceive sartorial gestures alone (such as the hijab) as active proselytizing."²¹⁹ In this regard, the Republican slogan "liberté – égalité – fraternité" can be re-interpreted: for them, freedom means to be able to practice a religion freely, equality is "exposing the hypocrisy of a fabricated "public–private" divide that promises public equality but delivers public and private indifference and scorn"²²⁰, and fraternity does not mean tolerance but rather respect. "These Muslims tend embrace the multiplicity of identity. They recognize their various affiliations, such as "French" and "Muslim," in a nonhierarchical way and insist on the compatibility of these affiliations."²²¹

As quoted in the second chapter, Dominique Schnapper explains that "toute nation est par définition multiculturelle, le problème politique étant de savoir si la diversité culturelle, en termes de religion, de différences sociales, d'appartenance nationale, est susceptible d'être transcendée par un projet commun".²²² (Every nation, every society has the power to be multicultural if the cultural diversity can be transcended by a common project. The cultural diversities imply religion and social differences, exactly as can be observed nowadays in France).

The discussion surrounding Princess Hijab's work shows that these differences have not yet been transcended yet but the artist at least wants to reflect on the issue of religion and interpretations of *laïcité* in France today. If, as she says, she is trying to point out issues of integration, and societal questions or to question Republican principles, and foster minorities and outsiders, then she has succeeded.

4.3 The fight against capitalism: the Right to the City

Apart from the obvious religious aspect, there are many more ways to examine the veils that Princess Hijab has been painting in the Metro: firstly, considering the other meaning of the veils, secondly, reflecting on how and where this painting occurs, namely advertisements in the Metro. Looking at these interventions in this way allows other important non-religion driven analyses to be suggested.

As Princess Hijab states, the veil has many meanings and is also part of our collective memory

²¹⁹ Fredette, Jennifer, *Constructing muslims in France : discourse, public identity, and the politics of citizenship*, Philadelphia, Pa. : Temple Univ.Press ; 2014, p. 18.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² Dominique Schnapper, *La France de l'intégration : Sociologie de la nation en 1990*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991, p. 77.

of, for example, death and mourning as much in Western society as in Asian societies. As a paradox, while isolating and protecting the person from the looks of others, it also puts the person wearing it in the spotlight; it can be empowering or frightening.²²³ The artist explains the many meanings behind this symbol: "The veil has many hidden meanings, it can be as profane as it is sacred, consumerist and sanctimonious. From Arabic Gothicism to the condition of man, the interpretations are numerous and of course it carries great symbolism on race, sexuality and real and imagined geography."²²⁴

The painted hijabs on advertisements work with this same paradox: on the one hand, the paintings hide the symbols, posters or photos underneath it and the advertisement is altered for the eyes of a spectator. On the other hand, painting a hijab on an advertisement's figure is something so unexpected and contrasting that the commercial becomes suddenly even more visible to the eyes of the spectator, but no longer in its original form. The artist herself declares: "by disappearing of the public sphere, you take possession of the public space"²²⁵, which is the exact description of the phenomenon that happens while wearing a veil.

By painting a veil on an advertisement, not only is the dogma of the religion, but also the dogma of the image questioned, which is also very problematic in a society where advertisements have invaded our walls and public space. In this sense, Princess Hijab's work is related to a form of battle of the image and a revolution against modern capitalism and advertisement. In "The Right to the City", David Harvey explains that the right to the city as a collective right is "a right to change ourselves by changing the city more after our heart's desire"²²⁶ and this is what Princess Hijab does by painting hijabs on advertisements. Princess Hijab differs from Harvey's definition that "changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the process of urbanization"²²⁷ in the sense that she does not act within a collective but rather individually. Furthermore, she does not work with collective political institutions but through rogue, activist non-governmental politics. Yet, the collective power that Harvey describes could be seen as "the collective", the people living in the city, with each of them providing changes to the urbanization process and, therefore, exercising their rights as citizens of the city even if this intervention has to be illegal. While Princess Hijab acts alone, she is still part of this collective movement of participating in the city's urbanization process. Harvey does not tackle the issue of

²²³ "Princess Hijab's veiling art", author unknown, *Aljazeera*, 06.07.2010, access on 22.08.2016

²²⁴ Angelique Chrisafis, "Cornered – Princess Hijab, Paris's elusive graffiti artist", 11.11.2010, *The Guardian*, access on 31.08.2016.

²²⁵ "Princess Hijab's veiling art", author unknown, *Aljazeera*, 06.07.2010, access on 05.09.2016

²²⁶ David Harvey, "The Right to the City", 2008, p. 1.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

graffiti or illegal gestures. However, he refers to a "shaping power over the process of urbanization" and claims to "do so in a fundamental and radical way"²²⁸.

Princess Hijab's individual approach could also be seen as the refusal of a collective movement to favor an artistic approach, which is very often individualistic, yet anonymous in her case. The location being highly illegal and acting like she does is the only possible process to fight a wave of advertisements which is imposed by the ruling classes.

The Parisian Metro is a highly frequented public space, supported by public money. Yet, a privatization of experience occurs through advertisement, which transforms this public space into a private space. The individual or consumer-to-be is left with the purchasing power to be inserted into the capitalist system. Princess Hijab breaks this link by re-appropriating the space, literally opening it and changing its meaning.

Her approach is reminiscent of Raymond Hains' exhibition "La France déchirée" (1961) at the Galerie J.²²⁹ The same mechanisms are at stake and the same strategies employed for a contestation of the public sphere through these interventions. Princess Hijab's "hijabism" is similar to the *affichisme* or *décollage* movements of the 1960s in France and Hannah Feldman's statement on Hains' posters might be just as pertinent to Princess Hijab's work: "The torn surface of Hains's *décollage* posters mined the depth of the relationship between the average person, political representation, and the language of the media as enacted in the public space of the street [...]"²³⁰. Of course, the question of the Algerian War dominates these posters. Just as Princess Hijab's, the lacerated posters address a crisis "as an anonymous and undetermined acts of vandalism"²³¹ From the 1960s to the 21st century, the question of the minorities is embedded and comes back to "haunt" the public sphere fifty years later. In both cases, "political recognition becomes a possibility through interaction with the physical spaces of the city, such as the defacement of posters or acts of graffiti and vandalism"²³².

Just like Hains' posters, Princess Hijab's interventions could operate within Hannah Arendt's "space of appearance" and testify to the public space being reconfigured into an increasingly privatized space.²³³ As a reminder, the space of appearance is a symbolic space, where private

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²²⁹ See fig. 3 in appendix

²³⁰ Feldman, Hannah, 2014, p. 140.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

persons engage in matters of public interests, particularly through visual manifestations (see p. 29).

Another comparison can be made with Daniel Buren who just like Hains was active in the 1960s in Paris. Daniel Buren's installations are indeed very much akin to Princess Hijab's artistic strategies. In "Affichages Sauvages"²³⁴ in 1968, Daniel Buren also dealt with advertisements in the Parisian public space. By covering advertisements with stripes, Buren attracted the attention of the spectator to these advertisements and highlighted the inseparable relationship between the artwork and the space and how the context can influence an artwork and vice versa.²³⁵ Right before the events of May '68 and within the context of the protests, it is a striking re-appropriation of the public space and the streets. Similarly to what Princess Hijab said of her works, Buren states: "C'est un geste – limité – contre l'invasion de tous ces slogans mercantiles dans le quotidien, une réaction "plastique" contre la société de consommation. Une sorte de nettoyage de l'image au niveau de la ville"²³⁶ (It is a limited gesture against the invasion of mercantile slogans in daily life, a "plastic" reaction against the consumer society. A sort of image cleaning at the level of the city). In a way, Princess Hijab reinvests – whether consciously or not – the aesthetic strategies of the 1960s with the occupation of the public space and a fight for the right to the city.

A link can be established as well to Guy Debord and the *The Society of Spectacle* (1967) in which he describes the relation between the intensification of capital and human relations through images. What he calls the "spectacle" is the relationship between people that is mediated by images and the fact that social life has been replaced by its mere representation.²³⁷ With "spectacle", Debord refers to the mass media-saturated society and the increasing manifestation of capitalism in our everyday life. Advertisements in the subway would be typically a manifestation of the "spectacle", which Princess Hijab tries to contend. Indeed, in the "spectacle", images and commodity are linked (advertisement presenting the consumer more products and desires). However, if images mediate and reconfigure sociality, then Princess Hijab and her images outside of the "spectacle" can therefore serve as a new economy.

The Metro is the greatest window for advertisement because it is seen by everyone, which makes it a symbol for urban capitalism but also for globalization. In this sense, advertisement can

²³⁴ See fig. 1 in appendix

²³⁵ Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Daniel Buren, "Affichages Sauvages"

²³⁶ Interview with Claire Farrow. "Sign and Context – An Art & Design Interview", in *Art & Design*, 1990.

²³⁷ Debord, Guy, *La Société du spectacle*, Paris, 1967, fourth thesis and first thesis.

potentially also open up a narrow definition of "French" identity to other actors and agencies. Advertisement can become a space of possibility to imagine new subjectivities. Of course, it can be seen as a capitalist occupation of untainted space. However, it can also mean contenting with a reality, rather than abolishing it. Princess Hijab re-appropriates this space and breaks the subjugation to images that Debord is talking about, leading to the creation of new hybrid identities, or at least their possibility.

It is no wonder that a revolt would come precisely from this place. On signs of revolts, David Harvey writes that "any of these revolts could suddenly become contagious. [...] However, the urban and peri-urban social movements of opposition, of which there are many around the world, are not tightly coupled at all".²³⁸ Princess Hijab is one actor coming from a broader wave of opposition, aiming to fight against private interests controlling the city's walls. By re-shaping advertisements in the Metro, the artist is taking back control of something much more important: the right to the city.

4.4. Conclusion

Drawing hijabs on commercials in the middle of Paris might not seem like a significant gesture, but it is indeed something that gives Muslim minorities a visibility at a time when it is highly needed. Princess Hijab can be seen as an artist of the minorities, not only because she reproduces a religious symbol, but because she is re-shaping public space. Some artists of the 1960s were fighting against the "société de consommation" (consumer society) but Princess Hijab chooses to accept this reality and empower through advertisement. In this way, advertisement becomes a vehicle for globalization and thus, towards non-national identities.

It would obviously be too reductive to look at Princess Hijab from only a religious aspect because her art is actually more clever than that. Although looking at her work from a religious point of view is already quite interesting, it is rather disappointing that so many do not understand that there is more to see. Even Banksy's "Antique Roadshow" only discusses the burqa ban issue in the few minutes devoted to Princess Hijab. The "Antique Roadshow" is a 47 minutes long documentary focused on "famous pranks and acts of activism which have become iconic"²³⁹ and presents a few interventions selected by the artist Banksy himself. Princess Hijab is described as "applying a strict dress code to the ads". While this may be true, it is also very reductive.

²³⁸ David Harvey, "The Right to the City", p. 12.

²³⁹ Wikipedia: The Antics Roadshow , Access: 05.09.2016

Princess Hijab manages to question two different and very questionable dogmas: the veil and advertisements. Both represent an issue in our society and are worth being questioned. One could say that Princess Hijab chooses to re-invest the walls in her own way. By creating a new economy of images and advertisement, she use this space to empower and provide visibility for those that do not have enough, but are definitely in need of some.

Chapter 5

Combo: jih-art in Paris

5.1 Presentation of the artist

Combo was born in France to a Lebanese Christian father and a Moroccan Muslim mother, as part of the so-called "second generation" of immigrants. "Combo" is short for "combination" and he is also sometimes called "Combo Culture Kidnapper." He was born in Amiens in 1987 and began doing street art in 2003 in the south of France. In 2005 he attended art school at the Villa Arson, Nice and finally moved to Paris in 2010.²⁴⁰ He worked there as an art director in an advertising agency for two years, for brands such as Peugeot, MacDonald's and for Canal +.

Afterwards, he began traveling and intervening at different locations such as Chernobyl, Hong Kong and Beirut. In April 2012, he sneaked into Chernobyl's nuclear site to paste up advertisements for nuclear energy companies on the anniversary of Fukushima. In January 2013, the artist went to Hong Kong and distributed printouts of Google pages in the streets that had been censored by the communist party. They were concerned with such topics as the Tian'anmen demonstrations, the artist Ai-Weiwei or the discussions about Tibet, all of which are very sensitive and taboo topics in China. Following this, he returned to Paris, where he began working with Femen and other street artists. On Bastille Day (14 July) in 2013, Combo reimaged together with Femen (a feminist group founded in Ukraine) the famous painting by Eugène Delacroix "Liberty leading the people" (1830) as "Femen Leading The People (or the street's tribute to feminism)" depicting topless women marching towards their freedom²⁴¹.

He also had a residency in Beirut in 2014, where he started working on his "jih-art", a project dedicated to western fears of certain Arabic features and medias clichés.²⁴² He would indulge people in "Less Hamas, more hummus" or "No Imam, no cry", would write random Arabic sentences on a black flag and see how Westerners reacted to this. He described his Lebanon experiences as an eye-opener due to the country's very open-minded and multicultural mentality.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Facts impossible to verify

²⁴¹ See fig. 10 in appendix

²⁴² Impossible to verify in which institution this residency was spent

²⁴³ Daniel Brown, "France: Artist finds coexisting hard in streets of Paris", 14.04.2015, *Artsfreedom*, Access: 22.09.2016

This chapter presents two different works by Combo: the first part focuses on the famous "Coexist" tag, the assault against the artist and the collective movement that followed, and the second part, the less famous piece "La France aux Français – Les Françaises aux Africains" in Paris.

5.2 "Coexist" and the creation of an agonistic space

Following the Charlie Hebdo attacks on 7 January 2015²⁴⁴, in which twelve people were shot at the headquarters of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* by Al-Qaeda terrorists, Combo started painting the tag "Coexist" in Paris. The "Coexist" tag was actually conceptualized by the Polish artist Piotr Młodożeniec in 2001, who used it to illustrate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁴⁵ In his tag, the word "Coexist" includes religious symbols of three religions: the "C" has been transformed into a Muslim crescent, the "X" into a Jewish Star of David and the "T" into a Christian cross as illustrated in figure 12 of the appendix. Combo does not claim to adhere to any religion, but tries to defend all of them, as well as the right not to believe. Next to the "Coexist" tag, he created a posted of himself in a *djellaba* (a long loose unisex robe worn in the Maghreb region), a kind of alter-ego used to deliver his message.

Combo declares that, "Au début, je croyais que j'étais français, j'ai vite compris que j'étais arabe, puis beur... Maintenant, on me dit que je suis musulman"²⁴⁶ (In the beginning, I thought I was French, but I quickly understood I was Arab, then beur²⁴⁷... Now, I am being told I am a Muslim). He therefore tried to create a caricature to get out of the one he felt locked into. By painting on the walls of Paris, his aim was to provide more visibility to "a community who does not feel heard"²⁴⁸. The Paris terrorist attacks against the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo had just occurred, triggering all kinds of allegations against the Muslim community. Combo therefore wanted to intervene in an ecumenical way, in an attempt to bring communities that were growing apart back together. For example, he tagged "Did you know that Muslims finish their prayers "Amen" like Christians and Jews"²⁴⁹, always accompanied by his *djellaba* alter-ego. However, it was obviously not pleasing to everybody. The artist noticed that his latest murals

²⁴⁴ Between 7 and 9 January 2015, a series of terrorist attacks by Islamist terrorists occurred in Paris, killing seventeen people. One of the attacks targeted the newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, the following day, a policewoman was shot and killed and on the 9th, a gunman took hostage in a kosher supermarket, killing four more victims.

²⁴⁵ Johann, "Combo – Culture Kidnapper", *Addict- Culture*, 28.01.2016

²⁴⁶ Laurent Carpentier, "Le street artiste Combo agressé à Paris", 04.02.2015, *Le Monde*.

²⁴⁷ Slang term in French to designate European-born people whose parents or grandparents are immigrants from North Africa.

²⁴⁸ *Le Monde*, 04.02.2015

²⁴⁹ See fig. 13 in appendix

were being erased after only a couple of days, or even hours, and not months or years as had previously been the case. A swastika was even painted on one of the mural mentioning the fifty thousand French Muslim soldiers currently serving.²⁵⁰

On 30 January 2015, as he was putting up one of his "Coexist" poster on a wall in Porte Dorée, south east Paris, four young people asked him to erase it, which he refused to do. They then started to beat him up, dislocating his shoulder as well as giving him many painful bruises.²⁵¹ For the first time, the artist was physically assaulted due to his ideas and his art. At the same time, however, he received a lot of support from around the world, which encouraged him to react publically to this assault.

Following this, he decided to organize a meeting entitled "Coexisting" with the assistance of the "Institut du monde arabe" on 8 February 2015 and invited people to the institution on 8 February 2015 via his Facebook page. The "Institut du monde arabe" (Institute of the Arab world) in Paris is a cultural institute that was conceived to establish links between cultures as well as dialogues between the Arab world, France and Europe.²⁵² Combo and the museum distributed around 500 "Coexist" sheets to the public, which they could then plaster anywhere they wanted in Paris.²⁵³ Some people also decided to download the sheet and plaster it in their own city in France, but also in countries like the United States, for example.

In Combo's action, the public itself could take the initiative to plaster something on a wall and truly "coexist" with the artist and the rest of the public. Created to support the artist, this poster campaign can be seen as an example of collective power, to which David Harvey refers: "changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the process of urbanization"²⁵⁴. Contrary to Princess Hijab, the right to the city is not exercised in an individual way; Combo triggers a movement that becomes collective, where people gather to change the urbanization process and exercise their rights as citizens. Furthermore, in opposition to the rogue, non-governmental politics of Princess Hijab, Combo works with an institution whose mission is to promote the "Arab world", which is even supported by French public funds.

After Combo launched his message on Facebook about organizing this "happening", Jack Lang, president of the "Institut du monde arabe" since 2013 offered to let him use the institute for the

²⁵⁰ *Les Observateurs*, 16.02.2015 see fig. 14 in appendix

²⁵¹ See Combo's statement published on Facebook on 01.02.2015 in appendix

²⁵² Institut du monde arabe: mission. Access: 14.03.2017. The IMA is funded by a foundation, created together by the French state and with eighteen Arab countries, all members of the Arab League.

²⁵³ *Les Observateurs*, 16.02.2015, see fig. 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3 in appendix

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

meeting. This was very strong symbol, because Jack Lang is not only the current president of this national institution, but also the former minister of culture and the former minister of education.²⁵⁵ He is therefore not only famous, but also incredibly important for promoting culture in France. For example, he institutionalized the "fête de la musique" (World music day), encouraging culture in the streets, increasing the budget of the department of culture, thus forging new cultural politics. His motto has been since 1981: "économie et culture, même combat"²⁵⁶ (economy and culture, same battle), investing on the development of culture.

So what does it mean for an institution to decide to support an artist's initiative such as this one and how does that make it critical? In this case, it becomes very clear how politics and artistic practices are linked. According to Chantal Mouffe, the political and the artistic are not two different fields and need to be linked to one another. She proposes looking in such a way that "there is an aesthetic dimension in the political and there is a political dimension in art"²⁵⁷. Mouffe favors an "agonistic approach" to achieve a form of critical art. That means the aim is not the creation of consensus, but rather fomenting dissensus and making visible what the dominant consensus tries to obscure. She concludes that "[critical art] is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony"²⁵⁸.

Clearly, Combo's intention through the utilization of the "Coexist" tag is to give a voice to those who are silenced, in this case the French Muslim community. In a post-attacks atmosphere (January 2015), his message is that Muslims are in many ways no different than other people and that Islam is a religion just like any other. As it has already been explained in this thesis, the "existing hegemony" tends to lock Muslim individuals into their religious identity and refuses the multiplicity of identities, such as being "Muslim" and "French". Triggered by the attacks committed by Islamist terrorists, the conflation between Muslims and terrorists became much more intense, leading to much negative commentary towards the Muslim community.

However, Combo is not only complicating the identity of Muslims in France but also that of Jews and Christians, the evidence being that the original tag was used to comment on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see p. 65) or the association of a swastika, a Nazi symbol synonymous with

²⁵⁵ Institut du monde arabe: présidence. Access: 14.03.2017. Jack Lang was Minister of Culture from 1981-1986, then from 1988-1993. Between 1992-1993, he was both Minister of Culture and National Education. He was Minister of National Education between 2000-2002 and, since 2013 is President of the "Institut du monde arabe".

²⁵⁶ Levy Marie-Françoise, "Interview de Jack Lang", in *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 1/2011 (N° 101-102), p. 74-76.

²⁵⁷ Mouffe, Chantal, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces", Summer 2007, p. 4.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5.

the Holocaust, to one of Combo's mural (see p. 66). Historically, the Jewish population was forced to assimilate and vilified as not being French, first during the Dreyfus Affair and then during the Holocaust. The Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906) showed an incredible predominance of anti-Semitism in France at the time. During the accusation of betrayal of Alfred Dreyfus, a French and Jewish officer who would eventually be found innocent and officially exonerated in 1906, a real "haine contre les minorités"²⁵⁹ (hatred against minorities) took place. During the time when *laïcité* was finally becoming institutionalized ("law of 1905", see 2.2), the catholic alliance was still trying to overturn the government by inciting fear of a "Jewish France" or a "Jewish conspiracy".²⁶⁰

The appropriation of the concept of *laïcité* by the conservative parties today and the concept of "nouvelle laïcité" used against the Muslim community is very similar to the way *laïcité* was used at the time against the Jews, who were considered "second-class citizen", while still promoting the Catholic church.²⁶¹ The creation of new minorities across centuries (Jews, Muslims) through racialization makes the economy of biopower visible as a constitutive element of state power, as stated by Foucault.²⁶²

According to Mouffe, the issue that arises is "the type of identity that critical artistic practices should aim at fostering"²⁶³. Along with Princess Hijab, for example, Combo can be considered an artist of the minorities. By supporting and highlighting the Muslim identity, Combo clearly is going against the "existing hegemony", even after violence was used against him and he was assaulted for his message. By refusing to lock individuals into their religious identity and by fostering the multiplicity of identities, such as being "Muslim" and "French", but also "Jewish" and "French" or "Christian" and "French", Combo highlights and complicates the plurality of French identities. The fact that he stood up and decided to transform this experience into a collective movement (and that people actually followed him) makes visible the creation of an agonistic space that can work to "challenge the existing consensus"²⁶⁴.

5.3 "La France aux Français – Les Françaises aux Africains"

On 13 June 2015, Combo inaugurated a new fresco on the wall of an association in Oberkampf street, in the heart of Paris (in the 11th arrondissement, once a worker's neighborhood and former

²⁵⁹ Baubérot, Jean, *Histoire de la laïcité en France*, 2013, p. 61.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁶² Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, 1997, p. 57-74.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 4-5

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

place of the Bastille prison during French Revolution). This association (le M.U.R. - Modulable Urbain Réactif) is "one of the principal street art spot in Paris"²⁶⁵. Combo painted the mural "live" in front of a public audience. As shown in figure 15.1 in the appendix, it depicted a young blond lady with an aureole and the inscription "Jeanne de Paname", in reference to Jeanne d'Arc or Joan of Arc as she is known in English (Paname being another word for Paris in French). The lady was painted with the posture of a soldier, helmet on her head and a red flag on her shoulder, on which "Liberté, égalité, humanité" was written instead of the famous "Liberté, égalité, fraternité". On the left the famous nationalist sentence: "La France aux Français" (France for the French) was crossed out with red paint. Written underneath in the same red painting was: "Les Françaises aux Africains" (Frenchwomen for Africans).

Within 48 hours, the red slogan had already been damaged: apparently, two people showed up and threw paint on the inscription, saying that "they did not agree with what was written"²⁶⁶. The day after, the mural had been altered even more and the slogan completely replaced with another message saying: "Les Françaises aux Français" (Frenchwomen for the French).²⁶⁷ With his new mural, Combo attracted the anger of the right wing political scene, who accused him of "anti white" racism and sexism.

The collective "Culture, Libertés, Création", which was created by the Front National party of Marine Le Pen²⁶⁸, published a statement on 16 June 2015 with the following title: "Fresque raciste, sexiste, et pro-immigration clandestine en plein Paris" (Racist, sexist and pro-clandestine immigration in the heart of Paris):

La mairie de Paris soutient un projet qui appelle à ne pas respecter la loi, et n'hésite pas à laisser une association faire la promotion de l'immigration massive et illégale. En outre, le message 'Les Françaises aux Africains' est tout aussi raciste que sexiste, laissant penser que les Françaises doivent s'offrir à tous les immigrés clandestins. Dans cette peinture au propos abject, les femmes sont réifiées au profit des hommes.

The City of Paris is supporting a project that calls for not respecting the law, and does not hesitate to let an association promote massive and illegal immigration.²⁶⁹ Moreover, the message "Frenchwomen to Africans" is just as racist as it is sexist, suggesting that French women have to offer themselves to every clandestine immigrant. In this painting with despicable intentions, women are reified for men's advantage.

²⁶⁵ Mathieu Dejean, "Le street artist Combo accusé de "racisme" et de "sexisme" par l'extrême droite", 17.06.2015, *Les Inrocks*, Access: 05.10.2016

²⁶⁶ Mathieu Dejean, 17.06.2015, *Les Inrocks*, Access: 05.10.2016.

²⁶⁷ See fig. 15.2 in appendix

²⁶⁸ Mathieu Dejean, "Quand le FN entend le mot "culture", il dégage son collectif", 02.06.2015, *Les Inrocks*, Access: 11.10.2016

²⁶⁹ The association le M.U.R. apparently received 17 millions euros every year in subventions from Paris's mairie (city council).

Other extreme right wing associations such as the "AGRIF" (General alliance against racism and for the respect of French and Christian identity) decided to press charges against Combo the association. They state that this mural is "doublement raciste, d'abord à l'égard des femmes françaises ravalées au rang de butin et à l'égard des Français en général. [...] C'est tout simplement un cri de domination barbare et d'appel au viol"²⁷⁰ (doubly racist, first against French women considered as loot and against French people in general. [...] It is simply a cry of barbaric domination and a call for rape).

The mural and its message were shocking and attracted the anger of the right wing political scene, but of course not without a reason. The message that French women belong to Africans is of course shocking. However, so is the famous slogan stating that France belongs to French people. The artist declared himself: "'Les Françaises aux Africains'" est le contraire, tout aussi absurde, de la première phrase"²⁷¹ ("Frenchwomen for Africans" is the opposite, just as absurd as the first sentence). By writing this absurd opposite slogan, Combo was aiming to break the reflection mechanism which led to the creation of a statement such as "France for the French". It allowed him to deconstruct this and show that the first sentence is just as absurd as the second one.

First of all, "La France aux Français" (France for the French) was the slogan of the "national anti-Jewish federation" created by Edouard Drumont, which was active between 1901-1904 during the "Dreyfus Affair".²⁷² This clearly positions France against minorities and is historically highly anti-Semitic and racist. It presupposes that a country, a territory, only belongs to a certain type of people – in this case, "French" people, in clear opposition to "Jewish" people.

Combo stated that the opposition to his mural was due to French society's refusal to deal with topics such as religion and politics, which are sometimes considered taboo:

"Dans le street art, dès qu'on commence à toucher à des sujets un peu tabou, comme la religion ou la politique, des gens tentent d'effacer ce que l'on fait, ou nous agressent. Ils refusent que la société civile s'interroge sur ces problématiques. Les politiques veulent garder la mainmise sur le politique et la religion pour pouvoir s'en servir, alors que n'importe qui devrait pouvoir en parler librement."

"In street art, as soon as we start to touch on taboo subjects, such as religion or politics, people try to erase what we are doing or attack us. They don't allow civil society to question itself on these subjects. Politicians want to keep the stranglehold on religion and politics in order to use them for their own benefit, while everybody should be able to talk about it freely."

²⁷⁰ Statement on the AGRIF's website, 16.06.2015, "Les Françaises aux Africains" sur un mur de Paris: L'Agrif porte plainte!"

²⁷¹ *Les Inrocks*, 17.06.2015.

²⁷² "Pour ou contre Dreyfus: Édouard Drumont" (1844 - 1917), Access: 14.03.2017

According to Combo, the accusations of sexism from these nationalist collectives and associations are completely unfounded. He claims that his mural is actually in favor of women. Indeed, Combo decided to replace the famous motto of French Republic "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" by "Liberté, égalité, humanité", because "fraternité" actually means "brotherhood" and refers to a masculine feeling. "Humanity" of the other side, is a sentiment that applies to both women and men and refers to people instead of to one gender. Combo stated, that he felt his painting was rather "feminist".²⁷³

Furthermore, the main character in Combo's mural is Joan of Arc, which is no accident. Also called "the maid of Orléans", this fifteenth century figure is considered as France's national heroine and is a Catholic saint. She was declared a French national symbol in 1803 by Napoléon himself, because she played a major role in freeing France from English domination late in the Hundred Years' War (early 15th century).

As a matter of fact, the figure of Joan of Arc is the symbol of the extreme right-wing party the "Front National". Indeed, when Jean-Marie Le Pen created the party in 1972, he decided to choose her as the party's symbol to remind people of how she saved France from the invaders. Bruno Mégret, one of the party's leaders wrote in 1987: "Elle est là pour nous dire que nous appartenons à une communauté qui nous est propre, qui est différente de celle des autres et dont nous devons être fiers parce que c'est la nôtre et celle de nos ancêtres"²⁷⁴ (She is there to tell us that we belong to our own community, which is different from the one of the others. We need to be proud of it, because it is ours and that of our ancestors). Joan of Arc rapidly became an icon of this party's nationalist mythology. The 1st of May, the date of her anniversary, has become one of the Front National's biggest assemblies.

As a virgin and a Catholic saint, Joan of Arc is the perfect figure for the party's Catholic public target. Since the end of the 19th century, she has been lionized as an incarnation of nationalism in France. Many parallels can be drawn from her image: just like Joan of Arc who freed France from the English, nationalists want to free France from other "invaders". During World War II, the invaders were the Jews, nowadays the Muslims, for example. She symbolizes the power of one single individual, taking the faith of a country into their own hands. The Front National uses her to show that if the ruling class fails to protect the people, they should fight for their own freedom, as Bruno Mégret writes again: "Elle nous rappelle qu'aujourd'hui comme hier, alors que

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Wikipedia: "Mythes de Jeanne d'Arc", Access: 21.10.2016

les classes dirigeantes ont renoncé à assurer l'avenir de la nation, c'est de notre peuple que doivent venir les forces de renouveau"²⁷⁵ (She reminds us that today, just like yesterday, when the ruling class gives up ensuring the future of the nation, it is from the people that the strength for renewal should come).

However, Joan of Arc is not used as a counter-narrative exclusively by the extreme right-wing parties. Nicolas Sarkozy declared in 2012 during his presidential campaign that she is "above all the parties" and that "nobody can take her away".²⁷⁶ Before that, Jacques Chirac and François Mitterrand both emphasized how this figure belongs to everybody and that "[elle] ne s'est jamais laissé aller à la haine de l'étranger" (she never let herself succumb to hatred of foreigners).²⁷⁷

Right or left, catholic or anticlerical, patriot or nationalist, Joan of Arc is "une figure suffisamment souple pour être utilisée par tous"²⁷⁸ (a figure flexible enough to be employed by all). In the case of Combo, Joan of Arc even becomes a feminist figure. He uses the same symbol but again, gives it an entirely different meaning and context than the one given by other political parties, such as the "Front National". He emphasizes the fact that Joan d'Arc is firstly a woman fighting for her country:

“C’est une Jeanne d’Arc avec des cheveux courts, moderne, et sur le drapeau on peut lire : ‘Liberté, Egalité, Humanité’, et non plus ‘Fraternité’, ce qui signifie que les femmes aussi sont incluses. De plus elle a une position très virile dans sa manière de combattre, ce qui est traditionnellement l’apanage des hommes.”²⁷⁹

"It is a Joan of Arc with short hair, who is modern, and on the flag is written: Liberty, Equality, Humanity, and no longer Fraternity. This means that women are included as well. Moreover, she has a very manly position in her way of fighting, which is traditionally reserved for men."

While it is a shame that Combo feels that Joan of Arc must look "manly" to be considered equal to men, at least he breaks up the idea of the figure of Joan of Arc as a pure French woman living in France, which is so important to the "Front National". It is the association between her character and the sentence "France for the French – Frenchwomen for Africans" which can really be considered as a counter-narrative against the myth of Joan of Arc, the maid of Orléans. Combo tried to affirm that Joan of Arc can still be regarded as a positive symbol, regardless of whether she is depicted together with an African, a Frenchman, or alone. He breaks the narrative

²⁷⁵ Margaux Baralon, "Jeanne d'Arc est-elle de droite ou de gauche?", *Europe 1*, 06.05.2016, Access: 21.10.2016

²⁷⁶ Anonymous author, "600 ans après sa naissance la Pucelle d'Orléans toujours récupérée", *Marianne*, 29.08.2012, Access: 22.10.2016

²⁷⁷ *Europe 1*, 06.05.2016

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.* Olivier Bouzy, historian and director of the Joan of Arc center in Orléans, France

²⁷⁹ *Les Inrocks*, 17.06.2015

of the white, pure, virgin and catholic saint by replacing it with a modern and multicultural Joan of Arc.

5.4 Conclusion

Combo speaks in an interview about the "French des-integration"²⁸⁰. Despite his ecumenical proposal, Combo collides with a general state of tension in French society. "Des-integration" refers not only to an opposite of integration, but also to the collapse of entire society, a society that is lost in its republican icons and landmarks, and where a single proposal is seen as a threat. It seems that by giving voice to a community, one is automatically put in conflict with another community.

Nevertheless, Combo accomplished an important work by deconstructing these prefabricated ideas and identities. Identities are never pre-given, but rather the result of an identification process, which is exactly what Combo attempts to reflect on. This identification process can be analyzed as a performative act that negotiates between a plurality of identities and tries to complicate them. Indeed, these identities are created through his gestures and interventions.

Combo shakes up the consensus, creating a new narrative, which contributes to new identity forms and the idea of a "pluralist democracy". As Chantal Mouffe writes, "the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, in order to render a rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs"²⁸¹. Indeed, Mouffe believes that confrontation is a key argument for democracy. In this respect, Combo acknowledges an ongoing conflict, which is essential for the creation of democratic society.

²⁸⁰ *Le Monde*, 04.02.2015

²⁸¹ Mouffe, Chantal, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism", *Institute for Advanced Studies*, Vienna, December 2000, p. 16.

Chapter 6

Banksy's interventions in the Calais Jungle

During late 2015, Banksy went to Calais to spray four stencils around the city and at the refugee camp, which is also known as the Calais Jungle and often described by journalists as Europe's biggest slum.²⁸² Additionally, Banksy brought his exhibition *Dismaland* (which featured in England during Autumn 2015) to Calais so that refugees could use the exhibition's material as shelters.

By intervening in the jungle of Calais, one of the biggest refugee camps in Europe, Banksy shows his solidarity to those people being denied access to Europe and sarcastically criticizes migrant crisis politics. As per usual, his interventions in Calais got a vast media response. Indeed, Banksy is always very careful about where his stencils are featured and in which political framework they are exposed. Nevertheless, his interventions in Calais could also receive similar criticisms to those he received in Palestine. Did Banksy's work in Calais attract important and valuable media attention to an issue too often ignored, or was he simply taking advantage of this particular situation to better his own reputation? Should Calais be regarded as the new "West Bank Wall"?

6.1 Presentation of the artist

There is little to say about Banksy that the public does not already know, considering he is one of the most famous street artists and regularly receives much attention on the internet with his newest stencils. In regards to the actual person behind "Banksy", his identity remains unknown. Based on suppositions, he was born around Stoke, UK in 1974 and his name is Robert Banks or Robert Gunningham. Banksy works mostly with the technique of stencil, which means that a part of the work is already done before painting the surface. This allows him to work faster, and therefore, not to get caught by the police. He began his artistic career on the Bristol graffiti scene in the 1990s with his famous humoristic, political and critical stencils combined with slogans.

Banksy gained notoriety and popularity in the 2000s. In 2007, Sotheby's auctioned one of his works which was sold for over £102,000.²⁸³ People even eventually started cutting his pieces off

²⁸² Gentleman, Amelia, "The horror of the Calais refugee camp: 'We feel like we are dying slowly'", *The Guardian*, 3 November 2015. Access: 14.03.2017

²⁸³ Anonymous, "Record price for Banksy bomb art", *BBC*, 8 February 2007, Access: 17.11.2016

the walls they were originally painted on, in order to sell them. In 2013, one of his works "Slave Labour" painted on a wall in London was cut off, stolen and later sold at a Sincura Group auction, where it reached a price of £750,000.²⁸⁴ Through his website Banksy said: "Banksy would like to make it clear - this show has nothing to do with me and I think it's disgusting people are allowed to go displaying art on walls without getting permission."²⁸⁵

Banksy also got involved with pranks and various interventions, such as the fake £10 notes in 2004 on which was featured "Banksy of England" instead of "Bank of England" and Princess Diana's face instead of Queen Elisabeth. In 2005, he painted nine pictures on the West Bank Wall at the border between Israel and Palestine and in 2006, as a critic of Guantanamo's detention camp, he sneaked a doll representing a Guantanamo prisoner into Disneyland. He painted a series of paintings in the Gaza strip in February 2015 to highlight the destruction of the region. Being interested in political issues and border regions, Banksy sheds light on some of the human injustices caused by wars and politics and could be described as an "engaged artist". However, Banksy could also be accused of instrumentalizing these issues in order to advertise his art. His stencils in the Calais Jungle late 2015 have received tremendous media attention, just as his previous interventions have and can be looked at from many different perspectives.

6.2 The Calais Jungle

The Calais jungle (Jungle de Calais) is a refugee camp located in the vicinity of Calais in the north of France.²⁸⁶ The original "jungle" was created after a center of the Red Cross was closed in Sangatte (close to Calais) by Nicolas Sarkozy and David Blunkett (ministers of the Interior of France and the UK respectively) in 2002.²⁸⁷ Since the 1990s, refugees and migrants have been coming to Calais because of its proximity to England. Often they dream of reaching England in hopes of finding a job there and having a better life. In order to achieve this goal, they risk their lives illegally trying to get onto the lorries going to England, or by boat or via the tunnel under the English Channel.

Due to the refugee crisis between 2014 and 2016, the number of refugees in the Calais Jungle has been rising drastically, reaching almost 7000 people living there in disastrous conditions

²⁸⁴ Alice Vincent, "Banksy condemns 'disgusting' Stealing Banksy exhibition on opening day", *The Telegraph*, 24 April 2014, Access: 17.11.2016

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ See overview in fig. 16 in appendix

²⁸⁷ Mélodie Bouchaud, "Remembering Sangatte, France's Notorious Refugee Camp", *Vice*, 5 November 2014, Access: 18.11.2016

(some associations have even estimated this number to be 9000).²⁸⁸ According to a 2015 study by "Médecins du monde", 63% of Calais' refugees are men with an average age of 33 years old.²⁸⁹ They come from various places such as Iraqi Kurdistan, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa (especially Eritrea, a country suffering from a despotic dictatorship) and many more.²⁹⁰ Most of them have paid smugglers to get to Calais (around €3000); first risking their life to get to Turkey and then by boat to Greece or Italy, and finally to France.²⁹¹ The journey did not end there since they all hope to reach England by hiding under lorries, risking traffic accidents, broken limbs and fractures from falling off (in 2014 alone, at least 15 migrants died under these conditions).²⁹²

The wasteland constituting the camp does not have any toilets, water or electricity. The Jules Ferry centre opened in the Calais Jungle in April 2015 in order to provide some facilities with showers (available after hours of waiting time), toilets, electricity points, advices on migration and about fifty sleeping places for women and children.²⁹³ However, the rest of the refugees are forced to sleep directly on the ground of this wasteland where "scabies, diarrhea, skin diseases and stomach bugs are already present"²⁹⁴.

The conditions were described by one refugee as being inhuman: "My animals didn't live like this. At least they had a shed. I don't care if I die trying to get to England. Looking round here, what's left to lose?"²⁹⁵ Charities and organizations such as Médecins du Monde distribute food, sleeping bags and tents: "it is stupefying that French authorities are, in an official way, setting up a shanty town. We're having to mobilise a humanitarian operation in a country that is the fifth economic power in the world."²⁹⁶ Indeed, the French and English governments have not ceased to blame each other for the existence of the Jungle. However, it seems that the only money invested to "tackle the problem" is a sum (£9 million) that contributes to the security facilities of the UK bound lorries, Channel Tunnel and Eurotunnel site.²⁹⁷ A five meters high razor wire has

²⁸⁸ See graphic fig. 22 in appendix

²⁸⁹ Anonymous, "Accès aux soins: Médecins du Monde alerte sur la situation des migrants", *La voix du Nord/Nordéclair*, 15 October 2015, Access: 18.11.2016

²⁹⁰ Anonymous, "Why is there a crisis in Calais?", *BBC*, 3 October 2015, Access: 22.11.2016

²⁹¹ Angelique Chrisafis, "At night it's like a horror movie' – inside Calais's official shantytown", *The Guardian*, 6 April 2015, Access: 18.11.2016

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.* and see fig. 17 in appendix

²⁹⁶ Jean-François Corty, director of "Médecins du Monde" French mission quoted by *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Anonymous, "Why is there a crisis in Calais?", *BBC*, 3 October 2015, Access: 22.11.2016

been built around the port of Calais, along with heavy CCTV and policemen guarding the site, as pictures show (see fig. 23 in appendix).

6.3 Banksy's interventions in Calais

6.3.1 The stencils

Around mid-December 2015, Banksy traveled to Calais to paint four different stencils. The first stencil (fig. 18.1 and 18.2 in appendix) is located at the entrance of the Jungle and depicts the inventor and entrepreneur Steve Jobs with a bindle on his shoulder and an old Apple computer in the other hand. The second piece was sprayed on the wall of a house and is a parody of Théodore Géricault's painting "Raft of the Medusa" (1818). The third stencil is featured in Calais' port and shows a little girl with a suitcase next to her, looking through a spyglass without seeing the vulture standing on it. Finally, the fourth piece is a simple message under a bridge of Calais that says "Maybe this whole situation will just sort itself out".

The "Steve Jobs" piece was followed up with a statement from Banksy's team: "We're often led to believe migration is a drain on the country's resources but Steve Jobs was the son of a Syrian migrant. Apple is the world's most profitable company, it pays over \$7 billion a year in taxes – and it only exists because they allowed in a young man from Homs."²⁹⁸ Indeed, Steve Job's biological father emigrated from Homs, Syria to the US to study. There he met his future wife who gave birth to Steve Jobs in 1955 before giving him up for adoption in San Francisco. The Syrian town of Homs has now been almost completely destroyed by war.

The "Raft of the Medusa" piece (fig. 18.5) shows a raft full of refugees drowning at sea, while a luxury yacht sails by in the background. The stencil is dubbed with the message "maybe we are not all in the same boat". With this piece, Banksy is depicting the harsh reality of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to reach Europe on overloaded boats. The UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) declared on 07 June 2016 in Geneva that more than 10.000 people have died in the Mediterranean Sea since 2014 while trying to reach European coasts.²⁹⁹

The "Girl and Vulture" stencil (fig. 18.4) depicts a little girl, hair blowing in the wind with a suitcase next to her. The suitcase could indicate that she is a refugee. She is looking through a spyglass, possibly in the direction of England, but does not see the vulture standing on it, which

²⁹⁸ Angie Kordic, "What is the meaning behind the new Banksy piece in Calais?", *Widewalls*, Access: 18.11.2016

²⁹⁹ Anonymous with APF, "Migrants: plus de 10 000 morts en Méditerranée depuis 2014, selon l'ONU", *Le Monde*, 07 June 2016, Access: 22.11.2016

could be interpreted as death. This little girl reminds us of the many children waiting in Calais (already 500 minors in 2014, eight times more than in 2011)³⁰⁰ in the hopes of reaching England and who suffer the same risks and conditions than the other refugees living there.

Finally, the message "Maybe this whole situation will just sort itself out" (fig. 18.3), written under a bridge in Calais is clearly a reaction to the inactivity of the French and British governments, but also probably a sarcastic critique of the international general handling of the refugee crisis. As mentioned previously, much of the money invested in Calais has only been used for security purposes. Charity organizations have been handling the basic day-to-day problems of the refugees, such as health, food, hygiene, etc.

The relationship between Banksy's interventions and the location is particularly important. As Cedar Lewisohn, curator of Tate Modern's 2008 exhibition "Street art" says: "when art is placed in the street without the input of a sanctioning body, everything around the image becomes important: the social context and the political context"³⁰¹. This is particularly relevant for all of Banksy's artworks, not only in Calais but also in other places such on the West Bank Wall in the Palestinian territories because the meaning of street artworks is contingent on the context, which, in these cases, is not even the street but a camp or a wall. All of these interventions do in fact take place outside of the norm of urban development: in a refugee camp and on the West Bank Wall. The West Bank Wall, for example, symbolizes the non-existence of a Palestinian state within the norm of the nation state, while the Calais Jungle is synonymous with the denial of the very space of the street to certain groups of people (refugees and migrants). The clash between the message and the location's context attracts attention and gives the intervention real meaning.

6.3.2 *Dismaland – Dismal Aid*

In October 2015, a couple of weeks before painting the stencils, Banksy decided to send pieces of his exhibition *Dismaland* to Calais so it could be used as shelters by the refugees. *Dismaland*, Banksy's "bemusement park", opened from 22 August 2015 until 27 September 2015 in Weston-super-Mare, in Somerset, UK.³⁰² Fifty-eight artists collaborated to create this park, which was supposed to be "a family theme park unsuitable for children". It featured some of Disney's most

³⁰⁰ Anonymous, "Accès aux soins: Médecins du Monde alerte sur la situation des migrants", *La voix du Nord/Nordclair*, 15 October 2015, Access: 18.11.2016

³⁰¹ Bengtsen, Peter, "Beyond the Public Art Machine: A Critical Examination of Street Art as Public Art", *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, 2013, Vol.82(2), p. 75.

³⁰² Press Association, "Dismaland to be taken down and sent to Calais to build shelters", *The Guardian*, 28 September 2015, Access: 28.11.2016

famous characters such as Mickey Mouse, Cinderella or the Little Siren, but in a depressing and morbid way.

When the exhibition closed, Banksy announced that the park would be dismantled and the timber and fixtures then sent to Calais to be used as shelters in the Jungle. On the *Dismaland* website Banksy wrote: “Coming soon ... *Dismaland* Calais. All the timber and fixtures from *Dismaland* are being sent to the Jungle refugee camp near Calais to build shelters. No online tickets will be available.” Additionally, he posted a photomontage of his Cinderella castle of *Dismaland* in the Calais Jungle.³⁰³

The pieces of the exhibition arrived mid-October and were set up in the camp. The logo “Dismaland” was turned into “Dismal Aid”.³⁰⁴ According to the press, eight shelters were able to be assembled from the exhibition and it provided helpful protection for women and children.³⁰⁵ By shipping these materials to Calais, Banksy and his team made a difference in the migrant's day-to-day life. Indeed, these shelters are made from hard materials instead of the tents in which people were sleeping, and kept them warmer and dryer.

The play on words, with the title transformed from *Dismaland* to *Dismal Aid*, referred to the very little and poor help that Calais's refugees and migrants have received so far and the horrible conditions in which they have to live. This was the first occasion in which Banksy denounced the Calais Jungle's conditions and existence, proving that a single artist can already make a difference in the comfort and attention (by providing physical help), when governments themselves are incapable of such things.

6.4 The state of exception and the camp structure

The situation in Calais is highly problematic: refugees are stuck there because they are not allowed to go any further. They are not allowed to be on French territory either but have made the terrible journey that far because of their hopes to reach England. Thus they stay in the Jungle because they have been denied the access to a “normal” space of the city and the streets. If in the *banlieues*, for example, the issue was about (dis)integration and people occupying a place while they are not welcome there, this issue is pushed even further in Calais. Refugees in the Calais Jungle have been pushed away from the space of the city and forced into a shantytown, a space

³⁰³ See fig. 20 in appendix

³⁰⁴ See fig. 19.3 in appendix

³⁰⁵ Lauren Provost, “Le Dismaland de Banksy est bien arrivé dans la “jungle” de Calais”, *Huffington Post* (in partnership with *Le Monde*), 16 October 2015, Access: 28.11.2016

that is away from everything else, out of everyone's sight, out of the city's reality, like a no man's land.

Giorgio Agamben and Achille Mbembe provide one of the most interesting and accurate theories to describe the situation in Calais and its camp. For Agamben, the situation of the camp is an example of sovereignty, where the state of exception becomes permanent. As stated already in chapter three on the State of Exception, Mbembe considers forms of necropower as a specific terror formation through sovereignty and the opposition of one identity against the Other.³⁰⁶ Examples are, according to him, regimes such as Israel and the Palestinian territories or the apartheid regime in South Africa. These regimes occupied territories, dividing them into "isolated cells" in order to control them, to survey them and "to render any movement impossible"³⁰⁷. According to Mbembe, late-modern colonial occupation is a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical, which grant a state absolute power over the inhabitants of the occupied territory.³⁰⁸

Agamben describes the situation of the camp as the place where "a state of emergency linked to a colonial war is extended to an entire civil population"³⁰⁹. These camps (as discursive space) are, therefore, not born out of ordinary law, but out of the state of exception.³¹⁰ He defines the camp as "the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become a rule"³¹¹. As already explained in chapter three, the state of exception can be declared by the ruling authority, for example, the president, as a temporary situation, but can be also be maintained by the same authority as a permanent arrangement. For instance, France has been under the regime of the state of exception since November 2015.

The situation of the state of exception is truly realized in the situation of the camp. Within this space, anything becomes possible. The distinctions between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit no longer make sense. In the concentration camps under the Nazi regime, Jews entering the concentration camps were already denationalized by the Nuremberg laws, which means they had no more rights as citizens, no political status and were, therefore, reduced to bare life.³¹² The camp is then the most "absolute biopolitical space ever to have been realized,

³⁰⁶ Mbembe, 2003, p. 27.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁰⁹ Agamben, Giorgio, 1997, p. 107.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 110. On the concept of "bare life", see chapter 3 (3.3 *Homo Sacer* and bare life)

in which power confronts nothing but pure life"³¹³. Politics become biopolitics and a person entering the camp, once a citizen, now becomes an *Homo Sacer* deprived of their rights.

Considering all these elements, if the situation of the camp describes the materialization of the state of exception where citizens can be reduced to a condition of bare life, then the creation of such spaces is much more common than what we would like to believe. Agamben lists some examples that can be considered as a camp situation, such as the stadium in Bari, Italy, where in 1991 the police held illegal Albanian immigrants before sending them back to Albania; the territories of former Yugoslavia; the Vel d'Hiv Roundup in Paris in 1942 when the police gathered the Jews under the Vichy authorities before consigning them to the Nazis; the waiting zones in French international airports where foreigners asking for refugees status are detained.³¹⁴

In this regard, the Calais Jungle can equally be considered a camp. Indeed, people gathered in this space have often lost their political rights and are, therefore, denationalized. They cannot return to their home country, nor are they allowed into another. They suffer as a result of biopolitical experiments in the sense that a sovereign authority delimits a space within which they have the right to be present. Refugees live in a state of bare life because their life is all that they have left, a form of "naked" life, only physical, and therefore, valueless. Inhabitants of the Calais Jungle could be considered as an example of *Homo Sacer* because their very own existence does not have any value in society's eye. Their situation of bare life is similar to the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay or the Jews under Nazism. They live but their lives are valueless and not politically recognized. The distinction between bare life and recognized life is made by the state, that decides who can live and who can die, and places people in these two categories depending on their race (in accordance with Foucault's notion of biopower and Mbembe's notion of necropower). The conditions of refugees in Calais's camp, as in any other refugee camp, are close to that of a slave's with the loss of home, identity, political involvement and social death. They live a form of a death-in-life.

Agamben considers the camp a symptom of modern politics that we are experiencing today: "The camp as dislocating localization is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we are still living, and it is this structure of the camp that we must learn to recognize in all its metamorphoses into the zones d'attentes of our airports and certain outskirts of our cities"³¹⁵. In this sense, the *banlieues* could also be considered as a metamorphosis of the camp's structure.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 112.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p 113.

Furthermore, a metamorphosis of the camp into other situations and places is highly likely in a Europe dealing today with a strong identity crisis. In this regard, Calais could be considered as the morbid consequence of a permanent state of exception in France and Europe.

By intervening in Calais, one could say that Banksy is showing his solidarity with the refugees, who are being denied access to Europe while also sarcastically criticizing migrant crisis politics. Just like his interventions in the Palestinian territories, for example, the ones in Calais received enormous media response. The question would then be: is Banksy providing badly needed visibility to the refugees of Calais' camp, or is he participating in their discrimination by taking advantage of their situation?

6.5 Making money with the camp: activism and capitalism in Banksy's artistic practices

The refugees fall out of every category and representation yet suddenly one of the world's most famous street artists decides to give them one by painting murals on walls. Does Banksy give these people visibility through his anonymity or is it indeed an exploitation of their status? This is not the first time that this issue has been raised over Banksy's work because it is not the first time that it deals with minorities. Indeed, he has already done several similar projects, such as "Santa's Ghetto", which aimed to provide more visibility to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Looking at this intervention can help to better understand the one in Calais because the same mechanisms are at play.

6.5.1 Santa's Ghetto

"Santa's Ghetto" was a collaboration between Banksy and an organization called "Pictures on walls". Banksy and fourteen other artists of different nationalities traveled to the Occupied Territories in 2007 to work with Palestinian artists. The original project was to hold an auction where buyers would have to be present in person and, thus, cross Bethlehem and the Occupied Territories to come and bid.³¹⁶ During their visits, artists took the opportunity to paint on the West Bank wall and that is how Banksy was able to paint more than ten graffiti stencils on the separation wall between Israel and Palestine.³¹⁷

During the trip and the intervention, an old Palestinian man told Banksy: "you paint the wall, you make it beautiful". Then: "we don't want it to be beautiful, we hate this wall, go home".³¹⁸ The issue is that painting on this wall is an aesthetic gesture that makes the wall look more

³¹⁶ Elias, Chad, "Banksy in Palestine", *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 2013, Vol. 5(1), p. 211-212.

³¹⁷ See fig. 21 in appendix

³¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 212.

beautiful and esthetic, but might makes us forget about the real meaning of this wall. Is painting it not, in a way, to sugarcoat it? It might actually turn a negative symbol into a positive one. Chad Elias grapples with this paradox by writing: "on one hand, a beautiful image would risk aestheticizing the state-sponsored physical and political violence that Palestinians are subjected to on a daily basis. On the other hand, any attempt to simply document the wall as it is would be in danger of reinforcing the inhumanity of the situation"³¹⁹.

Banksy is not the only artist who has sketched on the West Bank wall. The wall itself is full with graffiti of all forms and sizes from both anonymous people and recognized artists (Monsieur Cana, Face2Face project by JR and Marco)³²⁰. Most of the graphic interventions are drawn by European artists (English, French, Dutch etc.), or at least the ones that have been shown in the media and can be found on Internet. This could be interpreted as a kind of Western cultural imperialism on the East, which is even more disturbing knowing that Banksy is English and that Palestine used to be a British mandate until 1948. An English artist going to Palestinian territories to simply attract the media's attention in order to increase his popularity reinforces this idea of Western cultural imperialism.

Furthermore, Banksy described the barrier as "the ultimate activity holiday destination for graffiti writers"³²¹, and returned in December 2007 with new images for "Santa's Ghetto" in Bethlehem. In this case, the danger is that art becomes instrumentalized when it touches such a political issue as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chad Elias characterizes this situation as "the fraught relation between contemporary art and human right practices"³²².

The same intervention in England and in Palestine does not have the same meaning or effect, an issue that Banksy seems to ignore or to not be concerned with. It might be seen as a sign of contestation in England, while in Palestine it is regarded as a sign of normalization. This intervention illustrates how important the context is – whether geographical, political or social. By going to another country in order to get involved in foreign crises, Banksy has completely underestimated how context changes the meaning. This is a grave mistake for an artist, whose work tries to denounce injustice and raises issues of democracy in the public space.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Face 2 Face / Israel & Palestine / 2007 : Video for project's presentation. Access: 18.11.2016

³²¹ "Spray can prankster tackles Israel's security barrier", *The Guardian*, August 2005. Consulted on 18.11.2016

³²² Elias, Chad, 2013, p. 212.

6.5.2 The Calais Jungle

The same criticism can be made of Banksy's interventions in the Calais Jungle, especially the shipping of the *Dismaland* exhibition to the camp. Indeed, it could be perceived as a normalization of the camp, since the structures that Banksy shipped are hard wooden structures, as opposed to the tents in which the refugees live. These wooden structures are closer to permanent structures, suggesting they are meant to permanently stay there when one assumes that the goal should be to render the Jungle obsolete.

Furthermore, the fact that Banksy featured a photomontage of his Cinderella castle in the Calais Jungle is as if to say the camp is a fictive place, just like the park and its Disney characters. The Cinderella castle does not exist in real life, however, the Calais jungle does. Putting both these places – the fictive one and the real one – together could be a dangerous conflation. It risks transforming the Calais Jungle into a product of the imagination, just like a Disney gimmick. Finally, Banksy ironically writing on the exhibition website that "no online tickets will be available" is again comparing the camp to his own *Dismaland*. His park was a pop-up exhibition that attracted about 150,000 visitors who had to pay an entrance fee of £3³²³ while Calais Jungle is one of the biggest shantytowns of Europe. Comparing it to an exhibition reveals a kind of morbid voyeurism.

Banksy's interventions in Calais (both the stencils and the shipping of his exhibition) are quite similar to his interventions on the West Bank Wall. Both places are the product of a political conflict and are slowly forgotten by the public. They could both benefit from improved visibility and this was probably Banksy's intention with his works. However, considering the previous conditions, some agree that "a problem with painting the wall is that it does tend to make it into a great work of art instead of an aggressive prison wall"³²⁴. Indeed, aestheticizing a camp or a wall could see the real issue forgotten behind the work of art. What Chad Elias calls "the fraught relation between contemporary art and human rights practice"³²⁵ is indeed a real problem. According to him, "art is always in danger of being instrumentalized when it is put in the service of an activist campaign or a humanitarian action, no matter how worthy the cause"³²⁶.

³²³ Press Association, "Dismaland to be taken down and sent to Calais to build shelters", *The Guardian*, 28 September 2015, Access: 28.11.2016

³²⁴ Artist Ron English quoted by Elias, Chad, "Banksy in Palestine", *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, 2013, Vol. 5(1), p. 212.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

6.6 Conclusion

Banksy's interventions in Calais are less of a critical statement of the Jungle than they are a mass artistic product. He is using the global media environment and a humanitarian crisis to increase his own visibility. Banksy's intentions might be sincere but merging his exhibition and Calais's Jungle together is – just like for the West Bank Wall – a serious mistake.

Banksy does not leave room for identities to be created or negotiated, but instead directly "imports" and builds an infrastructure, in an attempt to impose a model. His strategy therefore renders impossible the construction of new identities created through his gesture.

Jacques Rancière speaks for example about a "humanitarian police"³²⁷, a sort of ethical consensus used to justify an action that is pursued on behalf of the "absolute victims". Conflicts are reduced to social problems and give some the power to decide who is worth helping, who the victims are, hence the "humanitarian police". What Rancière calls the "right to humanitarian interference" is described as a kind of "return [of the rights] to the sender"³²⁸: when "those who suffer inhuman repression are unable to enact the Human Rights that are their last recourse, then somebody else has to inherit their rights in order to enact them in their place"³²⁹. In the end, the rights "that had been sent to the rightless are sent back to the senders"³³⁰. The right to humanitarian interference allows some nations to assume themselves to be the "supposed benefits of victimized populations"³³¹ and to go against the advice of humanitarian organizations. These humanitarian interferences can transform the rights of men in this case into the "rights of the others".

The issue is knowing whether the end justifies the means, in this case if the intervention of a world famous street artist, bringing the attention of the press and the public, will truly bring more visibility to the Calais Jungle. The danger is that the public will look at the Jungle through the lens of the entertainment industry and not human rights.

Some of Banky's projects seem to need a certain "humanitarian" background to get the public attention and its support. On the West Bank Wall but also in the Gaza's strip³³² and in Calais,

³²⁷ Rancière, Jacques, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103:2/3, Spring/Summer 2004, p. 309.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 308

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

³³² Banksy went to Gaza in February 2015 to spray kittens on ruins because "on the internet, people only look at kittens pictures".

Banky's projects have lately focused on political conflicts where human casualties are countless. If his art has to have as a condition the instrumentalization of humanitarian crisis, it is then simply not worth it.

Chapter 7

Artist of the Minorities

The concept of the "artist of the minorities" is one the main contributions of this thesis. It is an important aspect of this work, relevant beyond the French situation and new to academic research.

An artist of the minority could be defined as an artist fostering minorities and those "who do not belong" through their art. Princess Hijab herself evokes the question of the artist of the minorities, speaking about the people that are not becoming well integrated in France: the outsiders, such as "the poor, the Arabs, black and of course, the Roma"³³³.

However, an important difference has to be made between fostering minorities and taking advantage of them through aestheticization. In this regard, Banksy cannot be included in the category of artist of the minorities, because he is taking advantage of a humanitarian and political crisis rather than providing visibility. On the contrary, Princess Hijab and Combo could be included in this category, as they are truly concerned with a situation and are developing a new "economy of images". They do not simply propose a mere representation of minorities, but through performative acts, both question our relationship to this representation. They make visible the moment that occurs between the spectator and the image – the very moment where the creation of identities can take place.

They are artists who acknowledge the existence and importance of minorities, and in the case of France, those who have been rendered invisible by government and state power. As previously stated, aestheticizing minorities blurs the line between fostering them and taking advantage of them. That is why artists need to be extremely careful and aware of the specific social and political context of the issues they are trying to engage with. Therefore, such mass artistic productions as Banksy's interventions in Calais need to be strongly avoided: his interventions are merely the importation of a structure put in place by the artist and lack any sincere reflection on the identities at stake.

³³³ Angelique Chrisafis, "Cornered – Princess Hijab, Paris's elusive graffiti artist", 11.11.2010, *The Guardian*, access on 31.07.2016

Challenging the existing consensus can only be done through a negotiation between identities: Combo, for example, acknowledges identities, such as "French", "Muslim" or "Jewish" but also deconstructs these by confronting them, while Princess Hijab puts the Muslim community at the center of public space by hiding commercials with burqas. Instead of allowing Islam to be removed from public space on the grounds of laïcité, she decides to foreground it in the Paris Metro.

In this regard, confrontation can be seen as a useful tool to address such issues, especially in France, whose colonial past still needs to be overcome and dealt with. Consequently, the challenge for artists is to succeed in pointing out these societal issues, while including minorities and outsiders in this reflection process.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined concrete examples of artistic activism in contemporary France, some more successful than others. For instance, Banksy has proven not to fall into the category of "artist of the minorities". Some could argue that his interventions in Calais are helpful in a concrete way with, for example, the shipping of his *Dismaland* exhibition and by bringing media attention to this place. However, his work could be considered a consequence of the "humanitarian police" that Jacques Rancière writes about. Indeed, by merging the Calais Jungle with his own work, Banksy creates a dangerous conflation between a humanitarian crisis and a fictive place.

On the other hand, Princess Hijab and Combo are two artists that can be considered as "artists of the minorities". They both question Muslim identity in different ways and manage to successfully deconstruct pre-given identities. Their interventions can be analyzed as performative acts, connecting the spectator to an image and therefore stimulating the creation of an identity that is always provisional and "in construction". They both acknowledge a fundamental issue in contemporary French society, which is the problem of identification created by the so-called republican model. By deconstructing a consensus and creating new forms of identity, by reinvesting the streets, the walls, the public sphere, both of these artists succeed in fostering minorities – the Muslim minority in particular – and in acknowledging their voices.

One of this thesis' main conclusions is that the republican model has to be re-imagined. It was originally thought to be a model of citizenship and equality but seems to no longer be efficient today in challenging territorial and racial discrimination, islamophobia and prejudices. As illustrated in the Parisian *banlieues*, the republican model has failed. However, it is up to French society to recreate new models of citizenship and national identity(ies). This can be accomplished through and with the help of artistic practices.

However, in many ways, French society is still incapable of examining its colonial past in order to understand its current structural racism. The state of emergency, which is still ongoing in France, is a consequence of the colonial past of their country that uses violence as a political tool. Journalist Léopold Lambert writes: "We are in a state of emergency, but not the emergency to deploy more security, suspicion, and bombardments, but, on the contrary, the emergency to

dismantle the violence of our society's structures."³³⁴ The endless opposition of "us" and "them" has to be broken so that a new figure of "we" in all its diversity can finally emerge.

³³⁴ Léopold Lambert (editor in chief), "State of the Wrong Emergency in Paris", *The Funambulist: Politics of Space and Bodies*, 20.11.2015, Access: 24.10.2016

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Appendix 1: illustrations

Introduction

Fig. 1: Daniel Buren, *Affichage sauvage*, Paris, April 1968

Source: Daniel Buren, *Monumenta* 2012, Access: 27.03.2017



Chapter 1: Spaces and Identities

Fig. 2: Jean Texier, photograph, graffiti written in November 2061 on the Quai de Conti, *Ici on noie les Algériens* (Here we drown Algerians).

Source: Philippe Poisson, *CriminoCorpus*, 19 September 2016, Access: 27.03.2017



Fig. 3: Raymond Hains, *Cet homme est dangereux*, 1957

Source: "La poésie de la métropole. Les Affichistes, 22 octobre 2014 – 11 janvier 2015", Museum Tinguely, Access: 27.03.2017



Chapter 2: The Republican Model

Fig. 4: Porte de Versailles within Thiers Wall in Paris, 1913

Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Wikipedia, "Enceinte de Thiers", Access: 10.12.2016



Fig 5: Cartography of income differences in the Paris suburbs, cartography by Léopold Lambert for the purpose of the article, available for download in high resolution

Source: Léopold Lambert, "The Unequal Access to Fortress Paris: Different Gate Typologies for Poor and Wealthy Municipalities", *The Funambulist: Politics of Space and Bodies*, 16.09.2015, Access: 24.10.2016



Chapter 4: Princess Hijab

Fig. 6: Princess Hijab, *Diam's*, 2006, Paris

Source: Flickr, taken on 21 November 2006, Access: 27.03.2017.



Fig. 7: Princess Hijab, *Jennifer's Body*, ca 2010, Paris

Source: Morgan Vincent, "Can veiled women and street art be compatible?", *FatCap*, 6 December 2010, Access: 27.03.2017.



Fig. 8: Princess Hijab, *Dolce & Gabbana*, ca 2010, Paris

Source: Wikipedia (english), Princess Hijab, Access: 27.03.2017.



Fig. 9: Princess Hijab, *Avant les garçons ne voulaient jamais jouer avec moi*, ca. 2010, Paris

Source: Bennett, Gordon, "Princess Hijab's Veiled Messages", *Utne*, 24 February 2009, Access: 27.03.2017



Chapter 5: Combo

Fig. 10: Combo, "Femen Leading The People (or the street's tribute to feminism)". Detail. Paris, France, July 2013. (photo © and courtesy the artist)

Source: Rojo, Jaime, "Culture Jamming Street Artist COMBO Stages Topless Spectacle in Paris", *The Huffington Post*, 18 July 2013, Access: 01.01.2017



Fig. 11.1

Combo, Coexist, 2015, Paris

Source:



Fig. 11.2

Source: Chloé Lauvergnier, "Combo ou le street art pour que les religions "coexist", 16.02.2015, *Les Observateurs*, Access: 03.10.2016



Fig. 11.3

Source: Chloé Lauvergnier, "Combo ou le street art pour que les religions "coexist", 16.02.2015, *Les Observateurs*, Access: 03.10.2016



Fig. 12

Combo, *Coexist*, 2015

Source: Mathieu Dejean, "Quand le FN entend le mot "culture", il dégage son collectif", 02.06.2015, *Les Inrocks*, Access: 11.10.2016



Fig. 13

Combo, "Did you know that Muslims...", 2015, Paris

Source: Chloé Lauvergnier, "Combo ou le street art pour que les religions \"coexist\", 16.02.2015, *Les Observateurs*, Access: 03.10.2016

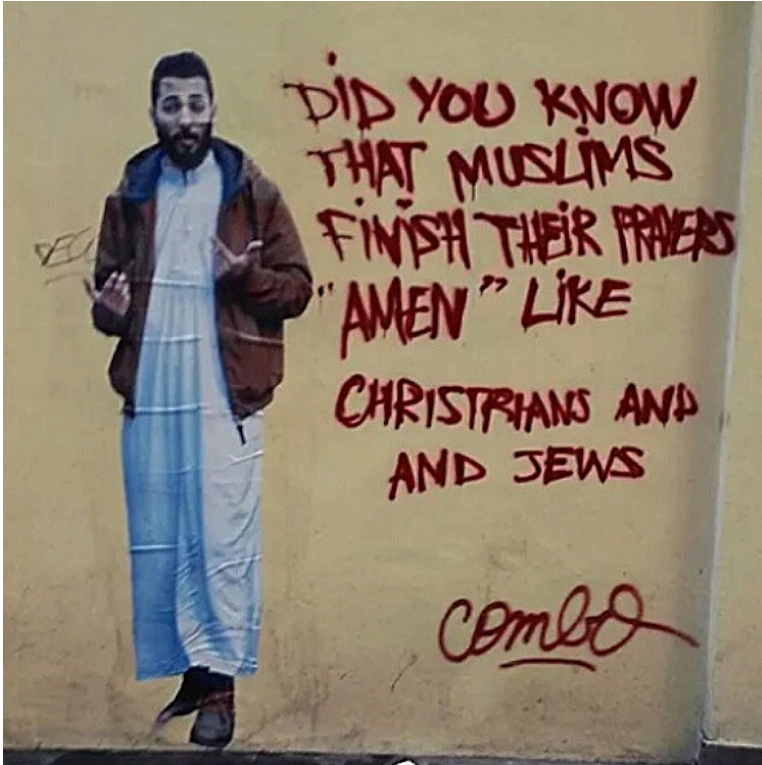


Fig. 14

Combo, "In France, we have 50,000 soldiers...", 2015, Paris.

Source: Chloé Lauvergnier, "Combo ou le street art pour que les religions \"coexist\", 16.02.2015, *Les Observateurs*, Access: 03.10.2016



Fig. 15.1

Combo, *La France aux Français – Les Françaises aux Africains*, 2015, Paris

Before and after alteration

Source: Mathieu Dejean, "Quand le FN entend le mot “culture”, il dégaine son collectif", 02.06.2015, *Les Inrocks*, Access: 11.10.2016



Fig. 15.2

Ibid. After alteration



Chapter 6: Banksy in Calais

Fig. 16

Overview of Calais's Jungle

Source: *The Daily Mail*, 14 February 2016, Access: 02.01.2017



Fig. 17

Inside the Calais Jungle

Source: *The Independent*, 12 January 2016, Access: 02.01 2017



Fig. 18.1

Banksy, *Steve Jobs*, Calais, 2015

Source: AFP statement, "Banksy peint Steve Jobs sur les murs de Calais pour illustrer la crise des migrants", *Le Monde*, 12 December 2015, Access: 11.12.2016



Fig. 18.2

Ibid.



Fig. 18.3: Banksy, *Maybe this whole situation will just sort itself out*, Calais, 2015

Ibid.



Fig. 18.4: Banksy, *Little girl and vulture*, Calais, 2015

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Fig. 18.5: Banksy, *Le radeau de la méduse*, Calais, 2015

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Fig. 19.1

Chester, Tim, "Banksy's Dismaland is now a refugee shelter in Calais", *Mashable*, 16 October 2015, Access: 11.12.2016



Fig. 19.2 *Ibid*



Fig. 19.3

Ibid.



Fig. 20

Photomontage, Banksy, 2015

Source: "Banksy déménage Dismaland à Calais pour fournir des abris aux réfugiés", *Le Monde*, Blog, 28 September 2015, Access: 27.03.2017



Fig. 21

Banksy, West Bank Wall, 2005

Source: *The World of Banksy*, 11 October 2012, Access: 27.03.2017

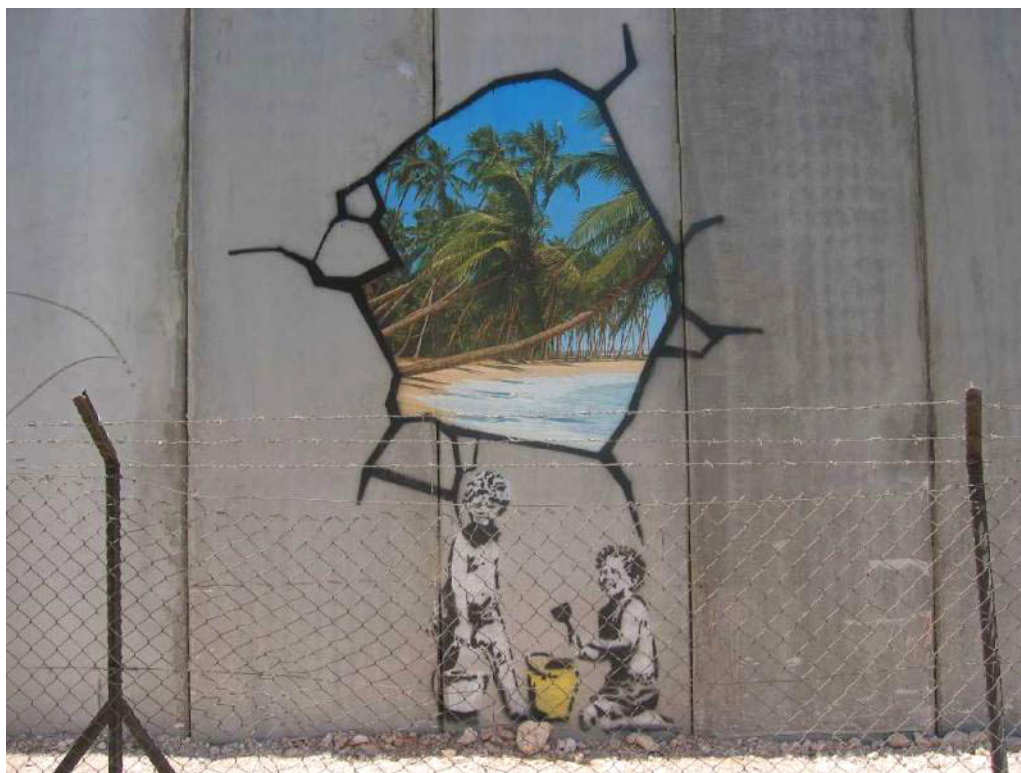


Fig. 22

Number of migrants living in Calais Jungle

Source: *FranceInfo*, 2 September 2016, Access: 02.01.2017

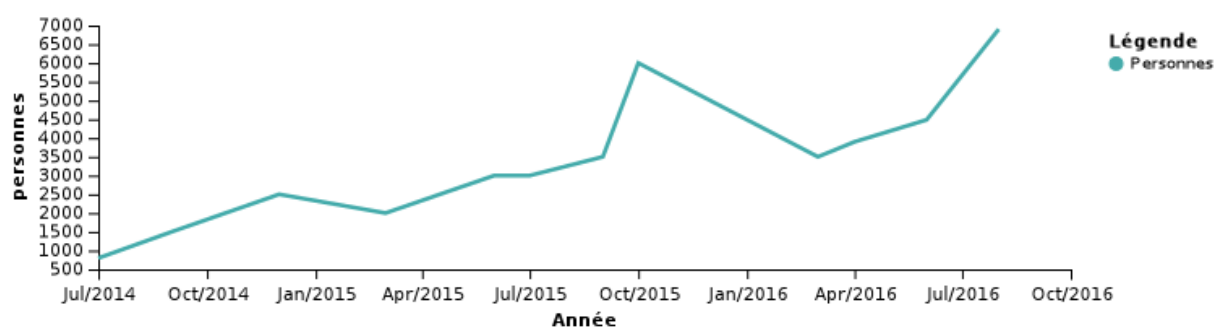


Fig. 23

The security perimeter around Calais' port

Source: *Europe 1*, 27 April 2016, Access: 02.01.2017



Appendix 2: Combo's statement, 1st January 2015

"Hier soir j'ai été agressé pour mon art.

La nuit dernière je collais dans les rues de Paris, il était tard et j'étais seul. Quand dans mon dos un groupe de 4 hommes m'ont interpellé. Ils n'aiment vraisemblablement pas mon travail et m'ont sommé de l'effacer en m'insultant. Ce à quoi j'ai répondu non.

Ils ont alors commencé à me frapper : un par un, deux par deux, tous en même temps. J'ai fini à terre, roué de coups. J'ai réussi à me défendre et à encaisser comme je pouvais. Lassés de voir que je ne lâcherais rien, ils m'ont laissé en sang et sont partis. En me promettant le même traitement si je recommençais, et en me conseillant de me raser la barbe.

Je resterai volontairement vague sur la description de ces lâches et le lieu exact où ça c'est passé, car pour moi peu importe d'où ils viennent, leur couleur de peau, leur religion ou leurs idées politiques. Dans ce contexte ils ne représentaient que bêtise et ignorance.

Je ne veux pas être pris en pitié car je suis conscient des risques que je prends dans mon métier. Mais je veux dénoncer ce type de comportements. On pourra dire que mon travail est provocant, que peut-être je l'ai bien cherché.. Mais rien ni personne ne m'empêchera de m'exprimer, de pratiquer mon art, et de me battre pour mes idées. Demain je retournerai coller, après-demain et le jour d'après aussi. Nos idéaux valent plus que leurs idées basses."

Source:

Combo, 01.02.2015, Facebook, Access: 27.03.2017

<https://www.facebook.com/combo.culturekidnapper/photos/a.426887390739395.1073741826.426860054075462/794605170634280/>

Appendix 3: De Gaulle's Televised Speech to the Nation, 30 May 1968

Men and women of France.

As the holder of the legitimacy of the nation and of the Republic, I have over the past 24 hours considered every eventuality, without exception, which would permit me to maintain that legitimacy. I have made my resolutions.

In the present circumstances, I will not step down. I have a mandate from the people, and I will fulfill it.

I will not change the Prime Minister, whose value, soundness and capacity merit the tribute of all. He will put before me any changes he may see fit to make in the composition of the government.

I am today dissolving the National Assembly.

I have offered the country a referendum which would give citizens the opportunity to vote for a far-reaching reform of our economy and of our university system and, at the same time, to pronounce on whether or not they retained their confidence in me, by the sole acceptable channel, that of democracy. I perceive that the present situation is a material obstacle to that process going ahead. For this reason, I am postponing the date of the referendum. As for the general elections, these will be held within the period provided for under the Constitution, unless there is an intention to gag the entire French people to prevent them from expressing their views as they are being prevented from carrying on their lives, by the same methods being used to prevent students from studying, teachers from teaching, workers from working. These means consist of intimidation, the intoxication and the tyranny exerted by groups long organized for this purpose and by a party that is a totalitarian undertaking, even if it already has rivals in this respect.

Should this situation of force be maintained, therefore, I will be obliged in order to maintain the Republic to adopt different methods, in accordance with the Constitution, other than an immediate vote by the country. In any event, civic action must now be organized, everywhere and at once. This must be done to aid the government first and foremost, and then locally to support the prefects, constituted or reconstituted as commissioners of the Republic, in their task

of ensuring as far as possible the continued existence of the population and preventing subversion at any time and in any place.

France is threatened with dictatorship. There are those who would constrain her to abandon herself to a power that would establish itself in national despair, a power that would then obviously and essentially be the power of totalitarian communism. Naturally, its true colors would be concealed at first, making use of the ambition and hatred of sidelined politicians. After which, such figures would lose all but their own inherent influence, insignificant as that is.

No, I say! The Republic will not abdicate. The people will come to its senses. Progress, independence and peace will carry the day, along with freedom.

Vive la République ! Vive la France !

French (original):

Françaises, Français,

étant le détenteur de la légitimité nationale et républicaine, j'ai envisagé, depuis vingt quatre heures, toutes les éventualités, sans exception, qui me permettraient de la maintenir. J'ai pris mes résolutions.

Dans les circonstances présentes, je ne me retirerai pas.

J'ai un mandat du peuple, je le remplirai. Je ne changerai pas le Premier ministre dont la valeur, la solidité, la capacité méritent l'hommage de tous. Il me proposera les changements qui lui paraîtront utiles dans la composition du gouvernement.

Je dissous aujourd'hui l'assemblée nationale.

J'ai proposé au pays un référendum qui donnait aux citoyens l'occasion de prescrire une réforme profonde de notre économie et de notre université et en même temps de dire s'ils me gardaient leur confiance ou non par la seule voie acceptable, celle de la démocratie. Je constate que la situation actuelle empêche matériellement qu'il y soit procédé, c'est pourquoi j'en diffère la date. Quant aux élections législatives, elles auront lieu dans les délais prévus par la constitution à moins qu'on entende bâillonner le peuple français tout entier en l'empêchant de s'exprimer en même temps qu'on l'empêche de vivre, par les mêmes moyens qu'on empêche les étudiants d'étudier, les enseignants d'enseigner, les travailleurs de travailler. Ces moyens, ce sont l'intimidation, l'intoxication et la tyrannie exercés par des groupes organisés de longue main, en

conséquence, et par un parti qui est une entreprise totalitaire, même s'il a déjà des rivaux à cet égard.

Si, donc, cette situation de force se maintient, je devrai, pour maintenir la république, prendre conformément à la constitution d'autres voies que le scrutin immédiat du pays. En tous cas, partout et tout de suite, il faut que s'organise l'action civile. Cela doit se faire pour aider le gouvernement, d'abord, puis localement, les préfets devenus ou redevenus commissaires de la République, dans leur tâche qui consiste à assurer, autant que possible, l'existence de la population, et à empêcher la subversion à tout moment et en tout lieu.

La France, en effet, est menacée de dictature. On veut la contraindre à se résigner à un pouvoir qui s'imposerait dans le désespoir national, lequel pouvoir serait alors évidemment et essentiellement celui du vainqueur, c'est-à-dire celui du communisme totalitaire. Naturellement, on le colorerait, pour commencer, d'une apparence trompeuse en utilisant l'ambition et la haine de politiciens au rancart. Après quoi, ces personnages ne pèseraient pas plus que leur poids, qui ne serait pas lourd.

Et bien non, la République n'abdiquera pas. Le peuple se ressaisira. Le progrès, l'indépendance et la paix l'emporteront avec la liberté.

Vive la République ! Vive la France !

Source:

The Digital History Reader, Evidence 8: De Gaulle's Televised Speech to the Nation, May 30, 1968, Access: 27.03.2017

http://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod05_1968/evidence_detail_08.html

Appendix 4: Abstract (english)

The goal of this Master thesis is to analyze the role of street art in the construction of new identities that can foster minorities in contemporary France. It combines an analysis of three case studies of specific contemporary street artists in France with three chapters including theoretical analyses of the production of French public space and political landscape over the last sixty years.

No scholarship to date has treated the specificity of such interventions in the contemporary French public sphere. While scholars have written much about street art in various international contexts, scant attention is paid to street art in France. This work sheds new light on the study of French street art by looking at it in a more critical and global way and by analyzing artists that have not previously been taken into account by any academic research.

How can street art be placed in parallel with a neo-liberal society where public space is slowly being locked down? What is the meaning today of the French slogan "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" in a so-called republican and post-colonial society, where a state of emergency is still ongoing? The purpose of this thesis is to show how artistic practices can be used to challenge the power relationships within the public space and foster the constitution of different identities.

While French society is struggling with its "national identity" and its republican model, this study provides new insights into artistic activism and suggests new ways of looking at modern forms of opposition and protests that defend democratic rights.

Appendix 5: Zusammenfassung (german)

Ziel dieser Master Arbeit ist es, die Rolle von Street Art in der Konstruktion neuer Identitäten, die Minderheiten gesellschaftlich-sozial fördern können, zu analysieren. Sie verbindet eine Analyse von drei Fallstudien zeitgenössischer Street Artists mit drei Kapiteln theoretischer Analysen der Produktion öffentlichen Raumes und politischer Landschaft in Frankreich in den letzten sechzig Jahren.

Bislang wurden keine Studien über solche Interventionen im zeitgenössischen öffentlichen Raum in Frankreich vorgelegt. Zwar existieren Forschungsarbeiten über Street Art im internationalen Kontext, der geografische Bezugsrahmen Frankreich stellt aber nach wie vor ein Forschungsdesiderat dar. Diese Arbeit beleuchtet Street Art in Frankreich durch einen kritischen und umfassenden Blick und durch die Analyse von Künstlern, die in akademischen Beiträgen bisher noch nicht behandelt wurden.

Wie kann Street Art mit einer neoliberalen Gesellschaft in Beziehung gesetzt werden, in der öffentlicher Raum zunehmend im Niedergang begriffen ist? Welche Bedeutung kommt dem Lema der Französischen Revolution - "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" - in einer republikanischen und postkolonialen Gesellschaft zu, in der seit November 2015 der Ausnahmezustand herrscht? Diese Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit den Möglichkeiten künstlerischer Praxis, um Machtbeziehungen zwischen religiösen, ethnischen und politischen Minderheiten einerseits und der der Norm entsprechenden Mehrheit andererseits im öffentlichen Raum aufzuzeigen und Ideenanstöße für ihre Veränderung und die Bildung neuer Identitäten zu geben.

Während in Frankreich das Konzept einer "nationalen Identität" und des "modèle républicain" nach wie vor kontrovers diskutiert wird, liefert diese Arbeit neue Erkenntnisse über künstlerischen Aktivismus und empfiehlt neue Möglichkeiten, moderne Oppositions- und Protestformen, die demokratische Rechte verteidigen, zu beobachten.