Review:

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Dietmar Loch (2005). Jugendliche maghrebinischer Herkunft zwischen Stadtpolitik und Lebenswelt [Youth of Maghrebian Origin Between Municipal Politics and the Life-World]. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 381 pages, ISBN 3-8100-2271-3, EUR 44,90

Abstract: In his book "*Jugendliche maghrebinischer Herkunft zwischen Stadtpolitik und Lebenswelt*" [Youth of Maghrebian Origin Between Municipal Politics and the Life-World], Dietmar LOCH uses an ethnographic study in Vaulx-en-Velin to examine the socio-economic and political integration of Maghrebian youngsters in French society. He elaborates on the connection between immigration, social cohesion and urban development in France by working out the relationship between the life-world of socio-economically excluded youth of North African origin and the institutions of French municipal politics in Vaulx-en Velin through a participatory policy analysis. He provides a detailed description of the young people's life-worlds, their experiences of their urban surroundings, and their responses to exclusion, and discusses the way municipal politics deals with diverse forms of discrimination and socio-spatial segregation. This is a significant work addressing not only sociologists and anthropologists but all those who are interested in looking inside the banlieues and in hearing the voices of youngsters in Vaulx-en-Velin.

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1. Introduction

> "*… it did not start because of the murder. It was just a spark in the tinderbox … All of them were unemployed people who wanted to say: 'Stop! Think of us! You got a good life in the city, but look what is going on in the suburbs! Misery, poverty, drugs!' … These boys are fed up … What they need is a job … People understand it only after a riot … It is only to say: 'We are here, too!'*"
>
> Khaled Kelkal quoted in LOCH (p.358)

The recent unrest in France made headlines around the world and triggered a debate on the inclusion/exclusion of immigrants, and the success (or failure) of the French model of integration. Reasons for the unrest, and the possibility of further violent events and their dissemination to other European cities, have been discussed widely. Yet the violence in the suburbs is nothing new. There have been similar disorders in disadvantaged urban areas containing dense concentrations of minority ethnic populations since the late 1970s. Among the most famous were events in two suburbs of Lyon, in Minguettes in 1981 and 1983 and Vaulx-en-Velin in 1991 (KASTORYANO, 2005; ROY, 2005; HARGREAVES, 2005). [1]

Discussions of the causes of the riots have centred on the economic, socio-cultural and political exclusion of certain groups in banlieues, and their limited access to goods, positions and participation chances. Banlieues, as areas where the social questions raised by immigration have been crystallized, have become spaces in which tensions and violence prevail as modes of collective expression (KASTORYANO, 2005, 2006). Deep-seated problems that have been festering for decades, including poverty, unemployment, social and political exclusion, xenophobia, racism and institutional discrimination, have bred despair, resentment and anger among banlieue residents (HARGREAVES, 2005). The riots came to be revolts of the excluded, the signal sent by the invisibles who feel they can only be seen through violence (SCHIFFAUER, 2005). [2]

At the centre of this situation are young adults with immigrant backgrounds. They are predominantly French citizens, but have experience of belonging to an ethnic minority that derives from the migration of their parents, their experience of xenophobia and racism, and the mobilisation of origin-oriented cultural resources. As such, some of them constitute an urban minority to which fellow French citizens of different background belong. What brings them together is not blood or kinship (KASTORYANO, 2006, p.66) but a common experience of exclusion and discrimination, and a sense of belonging to an underclass that is despised, excluded and ignored (ROY, 2005). A study on the social situation of the suburbs, published a few days before the start of the protests in 2005 and cited by SCHIFFAUER (2005) shows that youth unemployment is about 23 percent overall

but that it is 36 percent within the immigrant community, and that applicants from the suburbs are five times less likely to be invited to a job interview than applicants from "better quarters". Moreover, young people with immigrant backgrounds have everyday experiences of discrimination by the state, especially the police. Youths of Arab or African origin have high levels of contact with the police and their appearance alone is apparently reason for suspicion. This everyday experience contradicts the official state ideology of republicanism, which emphasizes the equality of all French citizens. These young people are treated as "enemies inside" rather than as equals, and the tension between the promise and the reality is erupting against the state (SCHIFFAUER, 2005). [3]

The outcomes of these socio-economic and political exclusion processes are not only violent events and uprisings. They stretch from self-isolation to community building in neighbourhoods and from delinquency to a turn to Islam on the side of youngsters. On the part of the institutions, preventive measures are implemented to deal with the problems of banlieues. Associations, as intermediaries between the state and society, play an important role in the delivery of political demands and function primarily to encourage the integration of youngsters. [4]

LOCH's study is a detailed description of these positions and perspectives in which the author tries to understand and describe the dynamics of exclusion and segregation in French society. The book is composed of seven chapters and a long appendix (47 pages) including the interview materials (a short questionnaire and the guideline that he used as a basis for the interviews), short biographies of all interviewees informing the reader about the situation of youngsters in 1992 and in 2004 (and the changes in-between), and the full text of the interview conducted with Khaled Kelkal[1]. [5]

LOCH starts with a description of the structure of his research (Chapter 1), and follows this with a detailed discussion of the relationship between social cohesion, immigration and urban development in French society (Chapter 2), including a special focus on the transformation of French society after the 1970s. This theoretical framework leads the author to a methodological discussion (Chapter 3) and a description of the area of Lyon and Vaulx-en-Velin (Chapter 4). He goes on to inform the reader about Maghrebian youth in the banlieues, focusing on their profile, their experiences of socio-economic and political exclusion, and their responses to diverse forms of discrimination. In the sixth chapter, he analyses municipal politics through a participatory policy analysis and concludes (Chapter 7) by discussing the relationship between municipal politics and the life-world of youngsters based on his observations in the field, the interviews he conducted, and his analysis of municipal measures. [6]

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1 Kelkal was a young Algerian from Vaulx-en-Velin, who was wanted by the police all over France, and was shot dead in October 1995 in Lyon by a police taskforce. LOCH's interview with Kelkal, which appeared in Le Monde (07.10.1995), gives an exemplary account of the lives of suburban youth and is also included in the book.

2. Theoretical Framework

> "*I had the capability to make my mark, but there was no room for me.*"
>
> Khaled Kelkal quoted in LOCH (p.354)

LOCH's book is based on the dissertation he submitted to Justus-Liebig Universität Gießen (Justus-Liebig University, in Gießen) in which he explored Vaulx-en-Velin, one of the banlieues lying on the border of the city of Lyon that had been the site of violent unrest in the 1990s. The author reports his observations in the area and the interviews that he conducted with young Frenchmen of Maghrebian origin as well as with representatives of administrative bodies and opinion leaders during his fieldwork in 1992 and his later visits in 1996 and 2002. [7]

To assess how the integration of immigrants into French society takes place, LOCH starts with the history of immigration to France and the transformation of French society, looking in particular at the industrialization of France in the 19th and 20th centuries. He stresses the constitutive role of immigration in the development of French society by discussing immigration flows into France at the end of the 19th century from Belgium and Italy, in the beginning of the 20th century from Poland and other eastern European states, and after the Second World War from West and North Africa, and the relation of these waves of immigration to demographic, military and economic factors. [8]

Following HÄUßERMANN (1995), LOCH refers to the Fordist city as a "robust integration machine" (p.35) and points to the role of institutions and the labour market in the integration of immigrants and their children into French society. The church, army, political parties, trade unions, schools and the labour market all played an important role in integrating immigrants and socializing their children:

> "… while youngsters used to get together over affective communities like family and the peer group, socialization occurred through the institutions and the labour market. One of the central characteristics of the national industrial societies was the substitution of familial socialization of youth with their socialization in school" (p.52; reviewer's translation). [9]

In this process, immigrants and French workers came to share the social milieu of banlieues rouges, with similar working conditions, a similar lifestyle and a shared class consciousness. The majority of them identified as unionists or members of workers' parties. From a functionalist perspective, the republican integration model functioned well: social integration was followed by "cultural assimilation" (BRUBAKER, 1994, p.24) and led eventually to national identification. The immigrant transformed into a worker, Frenchman (or Frenchwoman) and citizen. [10]

However, in the 1970s European cities began to lose their integration function. Modern cities became sites not only of networked communication with a plurality

of life styles and participation forms, but also of social exclusion and spatial segregation. Banlieues became spaces where increasing fragmentation and disintegration—brought about by the changing relations between economy, culture and the state—were crystallized. [11]

Alongside these transformations, the social sciences in France discovered the problem of suburbia as a topic of research in the late 1970s.[2] Although it is not possible to talk specifically about a field of banlieue research, studies on the subject have merged different fields and concentrated on different aspects of the problem. PAUGAM (1996) studied inclusion-exclusion issues, while GALLAND (2001) concentrated on youth, and DEWITTE (1999) and REA and TRIPIER (2003) concentrated on migration into France. ROCHE (1998) and MUCCHIELLI and ROBERT (2002) studied criminality, whereas KEPEL (1994), KHOSROKHAVAR (1997), CESARI (1998) and TIETZE (2001) researched Islam in suburban areas. KRONAUER and NEEF's (1996), LOCH's (1999) and OTTERSBACH's (2004) were German-language contributions to the field. [12]

LOCH's current work discusses the inclusion-exclusion issue with a special focus on young people with immigrant backgrounds, and examines the role of municipal measures in the process of their integration into French society. He hypothesizes that the development of the labour market no longer enables the social integration of ethnically heterogeneous urban lower classes—and with them a part of the acculturated immigrant youth—into urban French society. According to him, the resulting social exclusion and disintegration go along with new forms of self-organization and community building within the suburban population. [13]

In his analysis, the author stresses the importance of the relationship between the state, society and the labour market as well as the intermediary space between them, which is composed of the "third sector" and the "intermediary instances". While referring to the "third sector" as the intermediary space between the state and the labour market, through which municipal politics aims at the socio-economic integration of citizens, he defines "intermediary instances" as the space between the state and the society in which political integration is promoted. These instances were embodied by political parties and trade unions in industrializing societies, but their role has today been taken over by associations in banlieues. [14]

On the basis of these three reference points (state, society and the labour market) and the intermediary spaces between them, LOCH discusses processes of social integration and segregation in France. It is by means of these processes that young adults of North African origin appear not only as the target group of municipal politics but as the subjects whose world the author is trying to understand and describe. [15]

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2 As BORKERT, PEREZ, SCOTT and DE TONA (2006) argue in their introduction to the *FQS* Issue on "Qualitative Migration Research in Contemporary Europe", new research topics that started to appear from the 1970s enlarged the scope of migration research.

3. Field and the Methods

> "*… sociologists must change their methods. Instead of generating models before they have seen things, they should first observe and try to understand.*"
>
> Opinion leader cited in LOCH (p.26)

The words of the opinion leader in this quotation hint at LOCH's aim of exploring and "understanding". He starts the chapter on the field and his methods with an exploration of Vaulx-en-Velin and provides a detailed description of his experiences in the field, including his worries and his efforts to approach potential interviewees and informants. As he is shuttling between institutions, associations and youngsters, he finds himself in a position to define his role across each of them and reflects on his concerns in this process. [16]

To "understand" and describe the course of conflicts in the banlieues, and to reflect on the perception of institutions as well as that of youngsters on the problems in the suburbs, LOCH interviews representatives of institutions, young adults of Maghrebian origin, and opinion leaders.[3] [17]

To learn about the way institutions perceive and go about addressing the problems that arise, LOCH conducts *expert interviews* with the representatives of these institutions. Because the exclusive and sometimes technocratic top-down view from the institutions cannot cover the meaning that youngsters attach to their actions, LOCH tries to enrol some of these youngsters (in Vaulx-en-Velin) as interviewees. In doing so he tries to get into their world, to be able to describe the problems of suburban areas "from inside" and through their eyes. His outsider status causes some difficulties in accessing people and finding his way in the field, but it also proves to be an advantage because his status (as a "stranger") means youngsters do not find themselves confronted with the code of the postcolonial ruling relationship that might exist between a French interviewer and a North African immigrant. LOCH reports that this had a positive impact on the interview situation and made it easier for youngsters to present their stories.[4] [18]

With the help of the institutions, associations, and opinion leaders and through personal contacts, he approaches youngsters between 15 and 25 years of age who are at the stage of schooling and vocational socialization. He conducts *problem-centred interviews* with youngsters, which, as a qualitative method, "[aim] to gather evidence on human behaviour as well as on subjective perceptions and ways of processing social reality" (WITZEL, 2000, para.1). [19]

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3 Opinion leaders are people recognized as experts in social groups through their communication behaviour, who play the role of a mediator between group members, institutions and the media, and have a guiding impact on the subject under discussion through their leading role (p.31).

4 For further reading on insider-outsider roles and positionality in the interview process see DE TONA (2006), GANGA, DEIANIRA and SCOTT (2006), and MILNE (2005).

Apart from the interviews with administrative authorities and youngsters, LOCH approaches opinion leaders to learn more about their social and political function as representatives of intermediary instances in the foreground, and their perceptions of conflicts in banlieues. He shuttles back and forth between different state offices and associations, which subsequently sharpen his awareness of the present gap between the way youngsters and institutions perceive the problems and conflicts in the area. [20]

He conducts a total of 45 interviews with 30 male and 15 female informants whose short biographies are presented in appendix, with additional information on their situation in 2004 providing a chance to observe the changes between 1992 and 2004. He reports that the interviews were analyzed on the basis of the guiding questions and implicit hypotheses, but this part falls short of giving a concrete idea of "how" the evaluation was carried out. [21]

4. Between the Life-World and Municipal Politics

"*… do not come simply and say, here is the completed plan. We will put everything in order. Minister, if we were in your situation, we would come hither for a few months, see how people are, how they are living and thinking, where their problems are, and also how the state is functioning here, whether the local authorities fulfil their obligations or not ...*"

Opinion leader cited in LOCH (p.26)

On the basis of the interviews, his observations in the field and his analysis of municipal measures, LOCH ascertains that municipal politics, which aim at the prevention of social exclusion and segregation of the urban underclass, are facing a dilemma. A politics of (socio-spatial) positive discrimination and the promotion of certain districts can counter exclusion, but can also lead to a strengthening of the stigmatization of certain quarters. LOCH argues that the attitude of the mayor of Vaulx-en-Velin lies within this problematic of socio-spatially positive discrimination that constitutes a rupture of the "egalitarian intervention" of the French state. [22]

LOCH makes the point that while socially integrated youngsters emphasize the engagement of the mayor and identify with republican values, marginalized ones do not accept the offers of political integration in the form of district forums and shuttle back and forth between unrest and retreat. He observes that while the majority of the young adults living in Vaulx-en-Velin are integrated into the labour market, a minority of them experience integration either after a delay or not at all. An improvement occurred when firms hired some less qualified youngsters in 1990s. However, the rate of unemployment in Lyon has started to rise again since 2001. [23]

In terms of access to employment, the essential mark that distinguishes youngsters with immigration background from other youngsters in the banlieue is their experience of xenophobia and racism. Common to all in their inter-ethnically shaped life-world is the socio-spatial discrimination they are experiencing as residents of Vaulx-en-Velin: "… [in Lyon] if you are looking for a job and say that you are living in Vaulx-en-Velin, you do not even need to tell your name … the matter is closed, immediately" (pp.366f.) As residents of Vaulx-en-Velin they have limited access to resources and employment opportunities. This boosts their feelings of exclusion and brings them together on the basis of the common experience of exclusion and segregation, leading to milieu-dependent affiliations and neighbourhood identities. [24]

In discussing the emergence of neighbourhood identities and local affiliations, LOCH touches on the discussions on the formation of ghettos and subscribes to WACQUANT's (1997) critique of the arguments on ghetto research in the USA, which see ghettos only as places of disorder, inordinateness, poverty, deviance, anomie and pathology. According to WACQUANT, a ghetto is by no means disorganized; its organization is just based on different principles resulting from structural constraints. Similarly, William F. WHYTE (1943), describing the Italian slum in Boston in his "The Street Corner Society" argues that what seems to be social disorganization to an outsider is: "often only another form of social organization, if one takes the effort to look closer" (p.273). WHYTE mentions that

> "[t]he trouble with the slum district, some say, is that it is a disorganized community. In the case of Cornerville such a diagnosis is extremely misleading … Cornerville's problem is not lack of organization but failure of its own social organization to mesh with the structure of the society around it" (1943, p.272). [25]

Similar to WACQUANT (1997) and WHYTE (1943), LOCH warns against seeing marginalized suburban areas solely as places of disintegration and violence, and shows that—contrary to the pictures presented by the media—there is another face of life in banlieues, one that involves group-based solidarity, self-organization and suburb-specific ways of life. [26]

An important point to mention in community-building and the development of territorial identities is the emergence of youth gangs in suburban areas. LOCH stresses that gang-formation is not synonymous with delinquency (p.192). Involvement with gangs does not have to lead to criminality or delinquent behaviour and not every delinquent youngster is a member of a delinquent band. Moreover, the bands in these areas are not gangs of the type found in Los Angeles; they are based on neighbourhood identity and a loose affiliation. Fights between different gangs are mostly spontaneous and territorially limited acts with sudden outbreaks of violence (cp. ROY, 2005). [27]

Beyond territorial belongings and community-building in suburban areas in the form of gangs or youth groups, it is possible to observe a rise of religious identification as a response to discrimination and socio-spatial segregation:

> "… the fact is that we are left out. One has to make a room for oneself, a room some-
> where, where one can assert oneself. A room, where one is put a little on an equal
> footing with others … And it is only religion that can present us this …" (p.223). [28]

LOCH's interviews demonstrate that the motives for the turn to Islam range from needs for spirituality to reactions to diverse forms of exclusion. Some of the young adults express that they find a shelter in religion, a new inner equilibrium, an "escape from the black hole" (*trou noir*) and from the feeling of senselessness. Others stress equality, solidarity and the discovery of sincerity they find through contact with other Muslims. Religious identification enables them to construct a world without racial and class inequalities, a world far from diverse forms of discrimination:

> "… in religion, one finds a mainstay, because from the French society, one is a bit
> excluded. In Islam, we are all equals. There is no racism and one finds a mainstay in
> god" (p.223).
> "… I am neither Arab nor French, I am a Muslim. I do not differentiate at all … [in
> Islam] there are no races, nothing, everything is wiped out. There is only unity, we are
> united. When you go to a mosque today, you see that there are lots of French people.
> There is no racial difference … There is not this mistrust, no prejudices … This is the
> recognition of the other … We are brothers, even if we do not know each other"
> (p.365). [29]

5. Conclusion

Having presented youngsters' experiences of exclusion and discrimination, their responses (such as self-organization, community-building, delinquency or a turn to Islam), and the analysis of municipal measures taken to integrate them into the labour market and to hinder further segregations, LOCH concludes with a discussion on the French integration model, noting that not only French, but all national integration models in Europe have lost their power of cohesion. Not only the French but also the British, German and Dutch models face challenges, and the future of European cities will show whether the national models are able to adjust themselves to the new conditions or not. [30]

LOCH's work is an important contribution to scholarship on the inclusion/exclusion of immigrants in France and an exciting record of North African youngsters' life-worlds from their own mouths. I strongly recommend it to those who are interested in looking inside Vaulx-en-Velin and in listening to the youngsters who are trying to make themselves heard. [31]

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