

## Spatial peripheries, social peripheries: Reflections on the ‘suburbs’ of Paris

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### Abstract

In this paper we seek to contribute to debates on disadvantage and social exclusion by examining the evolution of the concept of ‘periphery’, with specific reference to Paris. We draw on research undertaken on the ‘suburbs’ Paris in order to highlight some of the socio-spatial dimensions of social exclusion. The notion of periphery has evolved from being a purely spatial concept, to a functional concept, and during the crises of the 1980s it became a key social concept in France. Today, it is the absence of employment, or common values which characterises those who make up a social periphery. It is the unwaged, or the poor (in waged work or retirees), and immigrants, who live in the Parisian socio-suburban periphery.

Key words : periphery, suburbs, social exclusion, housing, work, identity

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### **Introduction: the evolution of the Parisian periphery**

In the autumn of 2005 civil unrest occurred in France. It was triggered by the deaths of two teenagers in Clichy-sous Bois, a poor commune in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis on October 27<sup>th</sup> 2005<sup>i</sup>, in the suburbs (les **banlieues**) of Paris. Unrest quickly spread to other mainly poor, run-down suburban housing estates, home to African and Arab migrant communities. The unrest was blamed on resentment caused by high levels of unemployment, heavy-handed policing, racial discrimination, and poor housing. Feelings are harboured that they are ignored by the state, or at worst the state stands in the way of their attempts to ‘escape’ these estates (BBC News 24). In an article in 2001 in this journal, similar feelings about life in France were expressed by North African migrant women (Killian, 2001). Killian drew on Bourdieu’s concept of ‘symbolic violence’ to help understand the women’s inability to fully join the dominant cultural landscape of France; and she suggested that the cultural and moral boundaries that separate them from the majority French population may be being reinforced (ibid, 80).

Three decades earlier the social debate in France centred on the same locations, those people and places that society had ‘left behind’ and ‘cut off’ from the mainstream of ordinary national life (Castel, 1995). The concept of social exclusion<sup>ii</sup> was used to describe the condition of the 1980s residents of the same massive French suburban housing developments (Martin, 1996), les banlieues of Paris and elsewhere, that were the focal point of the riots of 2005. In the 1980s, the residents of these estates experienced lower than average incomes, higher than average rates of minor crime and poor quality housing. Social exclusion is seen as a dynamic process of being shut out, fully or partially, from any social, economic, political and cultural system which determines the social integration of a person in society (Blanc, 1998; Sackmann et al; 2001; Morrow, 2001). Social exclusion rapidly became a popular political rhetoric in France<sup>iii</sup> and across Europe, and was incorporated into the European Union’s (EU) policies for tackling issues of poverty and deprivation (Jarman, 2001). In 1997, with the advent of New Labour social exclusion became integrated in United Kingdom (UK) policy too (Hague *et al*, 1999, 293; Marsh and Mullins, 1998).

While the concept of social exclusion is deeply spatial, associated with ‘local’ communities, ‘neighbourhoods’, the ‘worst estates’ (Cameron 2005, 194; Somerville,

1998), in two recent articles the relative absence of debate on the 'spatial' or 'mobility' dimensions of social exclusion was commented upon (ibid; Cass et al, 2005). An attempt to address this lacuna was undertaken by Cass et al (2005), who focused on the temporal and spatial dimensions of social exclusion by examining the various ways in which people are geographically unable to access the components of social life at appropriate times of the day, week or year. They argue that T H Marshall's model of citizenship based on civil, political and social rights be extended to include mobility rights.

Mobility (that is the social nature of movement) and migration have been identified as the 'markers of our time' (Said, 1994). A number of geographers and sociologists have examined the relationship between career advancement (sometimes referred to as social mobility) especially of male workers, within the internal labour markets of large organisations and geographic migration (sometimes referred to as spatial mobility) between different branches of such multi-site organisations (Green, 1997; Hardill 2002; Montagné Villette, 1990; Savage, 1988). This body of work has largely placed emphasis on the way in which male managers and professionals have built a career, achieving social mobility through spatial mobility. But there are others for whom life is characterised by spatial and social immobility, and spatial entrapment in communities because of their inability to access economic and social opportunities largely because of the lack of skills, racial discrimination etc (Montagné Villette, 2005; 2006).

In this paper we focus on the spatial entrapment of marginalised communities by drawing on the concept of periphery and in doing so we seek to emphasise the spatial or mobility dimensions of social exclusion. To this end we draw on recent research undertaken in the very communities who were described as socially excluded in France in the 1980s, the residents of the 'banlieues' of Paris in the département of Seine-Saint-Denis (Montagné-Villette, 2005).

The notion of periphery is most often associated with Marxist reflection, which places the periphery in opposition to and dominated by a centre or core. This paradigm is based on power, and economic and social behaviour, and we argue that it deserves to be re-examined in the light of the demographic, socio-economic and mobility changes

that have occurred over the last twenty five years. In France in general and in Paris in particular, the interplay of three factors: de-industrialisation, residential zoning, and immigration have contributed to the evolution of a new form of periphery. These social, geographical and cultural changes have not only brought the spatial periphery of the nineteenth century to an end but have re-established this paradigm with new elements and in more diffused spaces. After this introduction the paper is divided in four parts. Part two highlights the development of the concept of an urban periphery; part three focuses on the emergence of the peripheries of 2006. The penultimate part focuses on today's diversified social peripheries, and this is followed by a conclusion. Throughout the paper we illustrate the changes in the concept of periphery by drawing on the example of the 'suburbs' of Paris. We recognise that French cities in general, and Paris in particular, has a distinctive urban morphology when compared with Anglo-American cities, in that the central city retained its exclusivity as a residential address during the industrial and post-industrial era.

The development of the concept of 'urban peripheries': from the suburbs to the *cité*<sup>iv</sup>

The word 'periphery' was first used in geometry to define the circumference of a circle (1544), and was later applied to the external limits of an object (1813). The meaning of the word has been extended to define the border of a territory. By 1913, it referred to those districts that were remote from the centre. Its derivative, 'peripheral', has been applied to a district (1935), a boulevard (1959), radio (1963) and informatics (1968) (Rey, 1999). The term periphery in this sense has a meaning and significance only in relation to the centre or core. Thus when it is applied to a town or city, i. e., a dense and often continuously built up urban area, the periphery is spatial, and refers to the peripheral districts located on the edge of the agglomeration. In the UK the core-periphery model has been used as an explanatory tool for uneven economic development (Holland, 1976; Howells, 1999; RSA, 1983), and has been used more recently by Paul Krugman (Fujita and Krugman, 2004; Krugman, 1999). The term can imply opposing flows. The centre displays diverging flows of order and finance, while the periphery directs flows of population and production to the centre. It also implies a dependency (occasional protection, investments) and limits (ramparts, wall, border). During the twentieth century, first the suburbs and then the semi-rural fringe have constituted the urban periphery par excellence. As can be seen

from this brief review since the term was first used in 1544, the meaning of periphery has evolved and changed over time.

### Functional periphery

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the suburbs formed a contiguous and concentric space around Paris and had two distinctive features. First, the suburbs housed people from lower socio-economic groups and the least attractive activities and infrastructures of the industrial era, in contrast to the bourgeois streetcar suburbs of Anglo-American cities (Fishman, 1987). The working class housing served rural migrants attracted to Paris because of job opportunities (such as Saint-Denis, Boulogne, and Ivry, Map 1)( Montagné Villette 2006). These suburbs became left wing strongholds and were called the *ceinture rouge* or 'red belt' of Paris (Harvey, 2005; Montagné Villette, 2006). The zone was only a few miles wide and was functionally part of the capital, an extension of it, from which it was economically dependent for investment and infrastructure. The second defining feature of the suburbs of Paris was the functional incorporation of former rural villages dispersed around the functional periphery. These villages gradually became functionally integrated with the city through the Parisian bourgeoisie, who built country residences as either second or permanent homes there. These former rural villages also became residential suburbs (such as St-Germain, Le Perreux, Fontenay-aux-Roses, Map 1) , similar in form to the streetcar suburbs of Anglo-American cities. They were also dependent upon the centre (Paris) for services, but they remained relatively autonomous notably with regard to employment and planning.

Using the plural of suburb is significant. The pejorative connotation of the word applies only to the industrialised and working class suburbs of Paris. Only these suburbs, which were shaped by the Government's hold on land (transport, infrastructure etc.), as well as policy decisions (such as the location of Bagneux, Thiais, Pantin, and Saint-Ouen cemeteries) and the presence of the large polluting factories (such as Christofle in Saint-Denis, Map 1) are 'peripheries' insofar as they are deprived of autonomy, they are dependent on the centre. By the beginning of the twentieth century the suburbs of Paris were already a distinctive periphery, economically, socially and politically.

### Residential periphery

The housing stock of the Parisian ‘suburbs’ underwent a radical change in the post war period as a result of housing shortages and slum clearance schemes. Large modern publicly funded estates, symbolised by high-rise concrete blocks were constructed that were designed to solve the acute post war housing shortage in a number of European countries including France, Germany and the UK (Power 1999, 140). Politicians seized upon the modernist idea of cellular, pre-cast homes in giant high rise blocks as a visionary and futuristic solution (ibid, 141). ‘Streets in the sky’ concepts born of the pre-war Bauhaus movement in Germany and Le Corbusier’s unrealised dream of ‘nuclear cities in parks’ (Le Corbusier, 1946; Wolfe, 1981). The essential idea was to obliterate the slums and create a uniform, replicable neatly packaged solution to the post-war housing shortage. Most of the new housing units were on large estates usually on the edge of existing towns and cities, often in concrete, often in high rise blocks above five storeys, invariably utilitarian, monochrome, imposing in style and monofunctional in purpose largely built between 1960-75 (Jaillet, 2003).

In France social housing is mainly located in suburban high-rise estates (Blanc, 1993). These estates are essentially an inheritance of Le Corbusier’s utopian urbanism, conceived for middle class dwellers accepting a ‘functionalist’ separation between residence and work place (Chamborédon and Lemaire, 1970, Montagné Villette 2006). Initially there was no shortage of demand for the new homes in these mass housing estates, which were based on a ‘dormitory’ model of housing devoid of economic activity. But very quickly these estates deteriorated (Blanc 1993), and became some of the most stigmatized estates. In Paris they shifted from housing almost exclusively European, employed populations to high proportions of ethnic minorities doing menial work for low wages. These estates were described as ‘ghettos at the gates of our cities’ by a French minister in the 1990s (cited in Power, 1999, 146), and soon became targets for urban regeneration almost as soon as they were built (Taylor 1998)! These residential peripheries added to or succeeded the functional periphery of nineteenth century Paris.

### Social periphery

The second major change in the evolution of the Parisian suburbs was prompted by the economic crisis of the 1970s, and the meaning attached to the periphery of Paris changed from functional to social. Notions of dependency became accentuated along with feelings of isolation on the part of the residents of the suburbs. The periphery of Paris - the cradle of the Parisian Industrial Revolution - underwent profound economic restructuring the result of deindustrialisation and the forces of globalisation. The functional periphery of Paris along with other European industrial areas, lost their *raison d'être*; they no longer provided employment opportunities for the residents of this residential periphery. Those with few or no qualifications, including the unwaged, remained, they were spatially trapped in the residential periphery, while those with qualifications and the resources to find employment elsewhere left, and they were socially and spatially mobile. A social gap arose separating the unemployed or those with low level skills – the socially and spatially immobile, from those able to adapt to the ‘new economy’, by finding new job opportunities and/or relocating to residential locations accessible to the new spaces of economic activity.

As a result the northern peripheral suburbs of Paris, the functional periphery of the Plaine Saint Denis became an industrial wasteland, and the residential periphery of Villetaneuse, and Garges (Map 1) were abandoned by the working class and lower middle class of the industrial era. These communities were subsequently settled by new residents from North and West Africa, who formed a social periphery. Similarly the residents of the semi-detached private housing estates on the urban fringe of Paris, in places such as Osny also experienced unemployment, some struggled to find employment, and because of limited material resources they struggled to maintain their properties, and these neighbourhoods slowly evolved into ‘problem areas’. From the 1970s therefore, the social peripheries became geographically grafted onto the functional or residential peripheries of Paris.

One outcome of these changes is a confusion of semantics in that the term suburbs lost its spatial characteristic ("la banlieue", the suburb) in favour of a social characteristic ("les banlieues", the suburbs). For some French people, the term applies only to those peripheral spaces in ‘crisis’ and more particularly to ‘cités’, and refers only to those high-rise estates where the majority of the immigrant populations from North and West Africa live. For others, for example in the Anglo-American world the

term also applies to those semi-detached private housing estates semi-rural/urban fringe, the large periphery (or grande couronne) where middle class households reside. The term has therefore acquired a derogatory connotation in France (Boyer, 2000). The limits of the ‘sets’ considered (housing estates or deprived sites) are for most of the time virtual, and imperceptible to the uninitiated, they are however tacitly recognised as the border of a territory where ‘other’ rules and regulations apply and feelings of deprivation prevail.

**Table 1**  
**The evolution of the concept of periphery**

	Dates	locations
Spatial periphery		Metropolitan towns (market towns)
Functional periphery	1850-1950	Suburbs
Residential periphery	1960-1973	High rise estates
Social periphery	1974-2003	Diffuse (not localised)

## **II The peripheries of 2006**

With the loss of its spatial and functional characteristics, the term periphery also loses its relevance unless it is redefined. We begin by looking at the changes in the semantics. Not all communities on the edge of Paris are part of the ‘suburbs’, for example for social reasons, neither Issy-les-Moulineaux nor Neuilly are defined as suburbs or peripheries, despite their geographical location because of the socio-economic characteristics of the resident population. Similarly, the remote Orsay or Roissy-en-France can not be defined as peripheral; rather they are areas of economic activity and/or research of the new economy (Montagné Villette, 2004). Conversely, Sarcelles, Grigny-la-Grande Borne, les Courtilières (Pantin), Saint-Christophe (Cergy-Pontoise), la Goutte d'Or (Paris) and many other housing estates scattered at

various distances around Paris, have become the symbolic places of today's periphery. The diversity of their geographical location, architecture and minority ethnic populations must be noted. The periphery of Paris in 2006 is much more complex; it no longer appears to form a continuous circle around the central city (Figure 1). Rather today's periphery is more nebulous and consists of a mosaic of socio-economic landscapes.

#### The paradigms of peripheries.

As spatial peripheries disappear because of developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) (Castells, 1996), where are today's peripheries? As Joel Garreau (1991) has described for the USA the dynamic spaces for economic, social and residential life of the new economy are the edge cities. Contained within the spatial periphery of Paris, that is suburban Paris in general and Saint-Denis in particular there are dynamic socio-economic edge city spaces similar to those described by Garreau. Within the last ten years new job opportunities have been created in producer and consumer services in parts of suburban Paris, the old functional periphery (Montagné Villette, 2005). One such cluster is around the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, along with gentrified housing, with Saint-Denis being a residence of choice for managers and professionals.

This is just one aspect of the complex socio-economic mosaic of the old functional periphery, which also includes the social periphery. Within a few metres of these economic and social hubs of the new economy there is another world – cités of despair. But neither urbanism, nor distance from the centre, nor public transport services, nor the absence of public services called upon by some to explain social exclusion are key defining features of the Parisian periphery of today. Take for example, the high rise estate of Courtilières on the border of Aubervilliers, Pantin and Bobigny in Seine-Saint-Denis, it is a "problem area" and symbolic of the peripheries. Within 500 m of the social housing estate there are numerous facilities: two gymnasia, a post-office, a départemental sports centre with two stadia, a further stadium, an equestrian centre, a community centre, two commercial centres, a bus station, a Faculty of Medicine, an underground station, a church, a market and various public buildings. Is this exceptional ? Another example is that of the "Cité des 4000" in La Courneuve or the one of Franc Moisin in Saint-Denis, within sight of the Stade

de France, there is the Stade de France, the RER (a high speed regional rail network for the Paris region), mosque, fire station, and a secondary school. As can be seen from this one cité there has been public investment in infrastructure.

Hence, from where does that feeling of deprivation mentioned by the inhabitants come from? The particular distance of the periphery and the derogatory connotation linked to it are mainly of a social nature. Not spatially isolated from the edge city spaces and places of the new economy, but one is far from the social norm. A recent in-depth study (Commune of Saint-Denis, 2000) of the Franc Moisan housing estate reveals that it suffers more from the difficulties of its inhabitants than from its geographical location, its architecture or a lack of infrastructure: 25 per cent of residents are single parent families; 76 per cent of families are in waged work and 25 per cent of households are unemployed, compared to 20 per cent in the commune of Saint-Denis and only 12 per cent in France according to the most recent French Census of Population (1999).

Being on the periphery today we argue implies lacking employment, accessible or obtainable spatially as well as socially for populations with few or no qualifications. This form of periphery – a social periphery - developed because of the two concurrent developments: economic restructuring (and the relocation of productive activities) and migration. We suggest that the social periphery of Paris is a feature of globalisation whereby some population groups are ‘placed’ in relation to employment, social services and credits.

A recent study (op cit) undertaken in Saint-Denis pointed to the lack of employment. Of those surveyed<sup>v</sup> 59 per cent employment was an issue, while for 41 per cent it was security. Only 15 per cent wished for planning developments while 60 per cent wanted new employment opportunities in the area. A small majority felt that their estate has undergone positive developments, while 48 per cent felt the estate was not safe, but only 37 per cent wished to relocate and move out. The responses also reveal that changes should come from ‘outside’ from the local authority/government (85 per cent), while 58 per cent felt it should come from ‘within’, from the local population (58 per cent) and from the government (48 per cent). As was noted above the commune of Saint-Denis has actually created a significant number of new jobs, most

notably since the refurbishment and renovation of the southern part of the commune and the creation of Plaine-Commune<sup>vi</sup>. Nine per cent of public sector jobs between 1990 and 1999 and 14.5 per cent private sector jobs between 1992 and 1999 have been created while the total resident population declined by about 4.3 per cent. Job growth is partly the result of the relocation of headquarter functions to Saint-Denis (such as Gas de France and Panasonic). Conversely, it is more the nature of the jobs than the number which is a problem; in 2002 96 per cent of job vacancies were in the tertiary sector, but only 10.6 per cent of vacancies were unskilled jobs.

To sum up the residential periphery which has replaced the functional periphery after the Second World War is becoming a social periphery. Today the periphery is no longer marked by the absence of the attributes of the centre but by the marginal position of the population with regard to employment.

#### Where and how are peripheries formed ?

In the past, the spatial periphery often gathered ‘problem’ populations and jobs and was easily recognised and accepted. The social periphery is more complex, less visible in the general urban landscape, particularly as it is officially confronted. While the paternalistic capitalism of the nineteenth century could plan for working class housing estates, mining villages etc, today planning policy dictates that housing should be socially mixed. Whatever is the awareness, the periphery still appears to be ‘spontaneous’ due to the convergence of populations in ‘trouble’ from various social and ethnic origins, in cheap public or private sector housing.

In the public sector, the high rise estates - which were a defining feature of the residential peripheries – have provided numerous vacant apartments. Today, 50 per cent of the priority applicants for apartments in social housing are immigrant families (Montagné-Villette, 2005). The housing policy of the thirty year boom period after World War II, including the social housing policy and the slum clearance programme had the net effect of creating poverty clusters in the cités. An unintended consequence of French housing policies that have ‘democratised’ home ownership through the provision of interest-free loans, to buy social housing, have concentrated families, with limited financial resources into specific geographical areas. While some suburbs have attracted middle class migrants, some estates of semi-detached housing and/or

tower blocks, whose residents have become owner occupiers have become the focal point of social problems (such as Osny, Roissy-en-Brie, surroundings of Sénart, Pontoise, the Monument in Plessis-Tréville). The peripheries of Paris can therefore be defined as residential spaces with a largely poor, unqualified or immigrant population.

### **III A diversified social periphery**

Socially, peripheries display a 'dominating heart' and a 'dominated populace', a manager and his/her employees, an owner and his/her workers; founded on strength, power or money relationships, the two linked by a variety of flows. Those who comprise the 'heart' distribute orders; money, protection, and the 'populace' provide labour for the hardest and least prestigious tasks. This dichotomy of the social body underlined by differences in appearances, or invisible limits (decline in status, upbringing, contempt) did not prevent some kind of unity based on geographical and religious origin (rural communes), know-how and production (working-class communes). If the social peripheries were notably different from the higher socio-economic groups, in the framework of paternalism, the two were still in symbiosis. The noble, the owner, the boss, the manager shared a common culture and spaces; they met at church, in the village, in the factory. Without being from the same social background, they had common frames of reference.

The social periphery, of the past, was the result of birth or financial means, today for many reasons - technical, statutory, sometimes identity-related- contribute to this situation. Employers in the new economy are placing emphasis upon qualifications, ICT literacy etc, and a technical periphery is emerging composed of those without key qualifications (Sennett, 1998). Technological change therefore places greater emphasis on qualifications and therefore marginalises all those people who are not in a position to gain qualifications (technical periphery). The shift from production targets to financial targets in companies, largely endured by employees induces or reinforces a precarious status (statutory periphery). Besides, organisations in the global economy create competition between workers and employees in different parts of the world.

#### The technical periphery and the vulnerable

The notion of a technical periphery can be applied to those working age adults without training, an inability to adapt to the demands of the new economy. The technical periphery applies mainly to people with limited qualifications, (lacking cultural and professional knowledge) or persons unable to adapt to rapid technological changes (such as the refusal or inability to use the new ICTs). Limited literacy or numeracy skills or limited ICT skills can prove an insurmountable barrier to finding employment. Limited qualifications restrict people to low paid jobs. Technical peripheries are of a long duration. All vulnerable persons are affected; persons with low qualifications, older adults, especially men over 50 years, even those of retirement age that need to supplement pensions with an income from paid work and the disabled. The revenues, their capacity for change and their perspectives are limited. Often deprived of an access to information, they have very little chance to improve their labour market position, their housing or their life. They feel all the more bitter as they do not consider themselves as being properly rewarded for their efforts or they have not perceived the opportunities of their upward social mobility. "I have nothing", or "I have nothing left" means most of the time that "I am not an owner" or "My house has lost value", or else "my salary is too low". Their crisis with personal identity may result in them withdrawing into themselves.

#### Statutory periphery and lack of job security

A statutory periphery is confined to specific jobs and can affect salaried and non-salaried workers, and includes those workers with fixed-term contracts, temporary jobs, zero hours contracts, periodic layoffs, as well as modifications made by the state to unemployment or pension schemes (Montagné Villette, 2006). This periphery, which involves people in increasing numbers, results in individuals facing financial uncertainty and anxiety but they are also placed into marginal situations regarding housing, credit and social rights. Job insecurity, even temporary, among an ever increasing number of people affects people of all social classes, and means that people cannot make long term commitments, life is lived at the 'short term' (Sennett, 1998; Beck 2000). Moreover the strikes and social unrest that swept France during March 2006 about the CPE (contrat première embauche) is a visible manifestation of the discontent of this statutory periphery which plagued the French Government.

#### Cultural and identity periphery

Some migrants from North and West Africa form a cultural and identity periphery, in that for some the lived reality of life in France is one of disappointment, migration has not lived up to their expectations. Their places of residence are not the ones of their dreams; salaries are low and they have limited financial resources to send remittances back to relatives in their country of origin. Social benefits, including access to medical care, so coveted in the country of origin, are perceived as minimal. Migrants measure their material improvement in relation to the standard of living and norms of the host country and not their country of origin.

The second and third generations, born in France most of whom have been through the state education system through school, to college or university, and vote, find particular barriers in gaining access to the labour market where they do not always find a job in accordance with their qualifications (except in the public sector) (Killian, 2001; Montagné Vilette, 2005). Many feel that racism is responsible for their misfortune, their distance from the 'norm' places them almost automatically in the periphery, and some withdraw emotionally and find an anchor for their personal identity to a past and a culture often 'imagined', as well as in religion, and sometimes as happened in October 2005 when feelings of resentment spilled over into violence.

But these social peripheries are marked by dependency, including dependency upon social benefits, the basic state pension scheme, unemployment benefits, housing benefits, and legal aid. The language of social exclusion for people reliant upon benefits may stem from the fact that the aid is anonymous and there is a feeling of distance from the state and what is perceived as 'life' in France for the majority. A cheque or a bank transfer certainly improves their material situation, but many harbour feelings of being overwhelmed and useless because of the demands of globalised capitalism.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we have examined the evolution of the concept of 'periphery' with specific reference to Paris and in so doing have sought to highlight the socio-spatial dimensions of social exclusion. The notion of periphery has evolved from being a purely spatial concept, and today's periphery, is mainly social, but is also undergoing

spatial changes. The periphery of Paris is more diffused; it no longer appears to form a continuous circle around the central city (Figure 1). Rather today's periphery is more nebulous and consists of various clusters of dependencies scattered around at various distances. Those who comprise the periphery are less homogeneous, and now includes, unemployed people, poorly paid workers and those with insecure jobs, and those who, due to their age, culture, or ethnic origin, 'differ' from the majority. This social periphery constitutes the new borders of capitalism. It stirs up a real feeling of bitterness and resentment which is quite understandable in societies like France that are presented as being egalitarian. Without ever actually being 'outside' the peripheries they remain 'at the limits' or on the border', which explains a certain propensity to revolt or at the very least to contest, through casting votes for radical parties or in making identity claims.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> The deaths were preceded by a visit on October 25<sup>th</sup> to the Paris suburb of Argenteuil (in the neighbouring département of Val D’Oise) by the controversial French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, to see how measures against urban violence were working. Sarkozy, whose father was an immigrant from Hungary, commented that crime-ridden neighbourhoods should be ‘cleaned with a power hose’ and described violent elements as ‘gangrene’ and ‘rabble’ (BBC News 24).

<sup>ii</sup> The social application of a concept of exclusion is generally attributed to Rene Lenoir a member of Chirac’s government who in 1974 identified up to ten per cent of the French population as ‘the excluded’. The term gained wider currency in France in the 1980s (Martin, 1996).

<sup>iii</sup> There have been heated debates amongst French social scientists of the term social exclusion as a non-scientific and ideological notion (Blanc, 1998), and alternative concepts have been offered in France such as disaffiliation (Castel, 1995).

<sup>iv</sup> Cité has taken on a special meaning and refers to ‘problem’ social housing estates, often with minority ethnic communities.

<sup>v</sup> The survey contained multiple response questions.

<sup>vi</sup> An administrative structure for ten communes, this partnership has been established as a vehicle for creating employment opportunities and to tackle urban and social problems in an holistic way.