

France, November 2005: the hyper real building process of peripheries on fire

France, novembre 2005 : la construction hyper réelle de périphéries en feu



Dominique CROZAT

Département de géographie, Université Paul Valéry Montpellier 3
UMR 5185 ADES-Tempos, CNRS-Universités de Bordeaux 2 et 3

d.crozat@ades.cnrs.fr

d.crozat@univ-montp3.fr

France, November 2005: the hyper real building process of peripheries on fire

- **Genesis of the riots: a well worked « communication » problem**
- **The framed production of the press images**
- **After the event: the communication always replaces action**

French 2005 riots and manipulation of multi-ethnic boroughs' images

- **Before:** a long time problematic situation; “usual” violence (from 50 to 100 burnt cars every night): a great lack of interest (political actors, press)
- **During the event:** limited and too late public action to reduce the event; control of large-scale production of images (mainly to give a violent representation of these multi-ethnic boroughs)
- **After:** symbolic action (state of emergency) giving a violent representation of multi-ethnic boroughs; few law sentences; return to the violent routine: “usual” violence (from 50 to 100 burnt cars every night): still lack of interest

Chronology of the different phases of 2005 French suburbs riots

- **Phase 1** before the November events: few and incomplete information; “usual” violence (from 50 to 100 burnt cars every night; Spring 2005 in Perpignan : Arabs vs Gypsies riots,...)
- **Phase 2** day one of the event: massive press coverage of the event on Clichy-sous-Bois during the visit of the minister; at the night, riots on Clichy-sous-Bois
- **Phase 3** the two first riots days: press reporters are trying to find direct information unaccompanied; the riots stay bordered on the North-East of Paris
- **Phase 4** the first weeks after the event: press reporters are going accompanied to riot places; progressive riots extension to the Paris suburbs before all urban France
- **Phase 5** second week: information shut-out; the riots reach their largest size
- **Phase 6** third week: progressive decrease; progressive prohibition of sale of petrol to minors; government asks for state of emergency
- **Phase 7** fourth week: end of riot around Paris; number of riots rapidly decrease in France; parliament votes for a state of emergency (1 month)
- **Phase 8** after mid-December: riots are finished but still many violent events (about 100 burnt cars every night); few comments by the press; Renewal of the state of emergency; New years night “traditional” riots (425 burnt cars).
- **Phase 9** January: end of the state of emergency; “usual” violence (from 50 to 100 burnt cars every night). December to April: about 300 were (few) condemned in all of France.

Consequences of the TV Channel A2's diffusion of car burning throughout the world (3rd day of riots)

- 1-** Expansion of the violence establishing a competition between places where teenage gangs tried to get the challenge to be filmed for the TV on the “sarkoton” (i.e. joke with the Telethon and the name of the police Minister, Sarkozy; later on to be televised on the evening news with the greater number of burnt cars)
- 2-** Many journalists are afraid: they work using bullet shields (although gun shots were rarely reported); often they interview the people from the window of their car; many returned to their office working with press agencies
- 3-** Arrival of many international correspondents from the whole world provoked by this surprising situation in France and the *telegenic* images of fires

SEARCH



THE WFR



CNN.COM

Search

powered by **YAHOO!** SEARCH

More CNN.com sections:

[CNN.com Home Page](#) - [World](#) -

[Special Reports](#)



French PM calls for 'urgent' reform

France has a very serious social problem that requires dramatic solutions, the French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin tells CNN. He says the government is taking urgent action in the areas of justice, housing, education and employment.

The moves follow a wave of arson attacks and riots across the country that left 130 police injured, and more than 9,000 cars burned.

[FULL STORY](#)

CRISIS

Gallery:

[Violence in Paris subu](#)

- [Peace march set for Paris](#)

ANALYSIS

TIME.com:

[The core problem](#)

- [French PM: 'Urgent' reform nee](#)

QUICKVOTE

Would the recent violence across France influence your decision to visit the country?

Yes

No

Journalists' strategies

- Afraid, some return to their office, working with press agencies telegrams and photographs: many of the French news weeklies (all national) and, necessary, local press, far from the Paris events
- The major part follows the police and used to be *embedded* on the most spectacular but controlled situations
- Others (that I name *insiders*) rent the services of people living in these boroughs to enter quietly into these hotspots, sometime buying the images produced by the gangs: mostly TV teams (Paris) or the local journalists (outside Paris), with better contacts with the residents living in the outskirts of the city
- Many of media representatives pay ethnic journalists (usually discriminated against) coming from the Arab, African or French West Indies minorities : TV teams and the local press

In fact, the major media, mainly the French TV channels, had two to four teams, each of these using different strategies. So, on the final production of this information, it transfers the major part of the responsibility to the post production and the editorial staff, politically dependent (state media sources) or ideologically close to the political power (big trusts like TF1 TV channel)

A limited public action

- **Before:** long-standing debate between social and security solutions, neither one being from an ethnic perspective; long stay in building halls becomes an offence
- **Phase 2 to 4:** only action taken is to have policemen converge on rioted boroughs
- **Phase 5:** Shutting-out of the information
- **End (phase 6):** progressive prohibition of sale of petrol to minors; Government asks Parliament vote state of emergency
- **End (phase 7):** National representation vote for a state of emergency (1 month)
- **After:** Renewing of the state of emergency (another month); government *speaks* of positive action against discriminations; from December to April: about 300 were (few) condemned in all France

Inventing a *telegenic* reality (1): from the *insiders* point of view



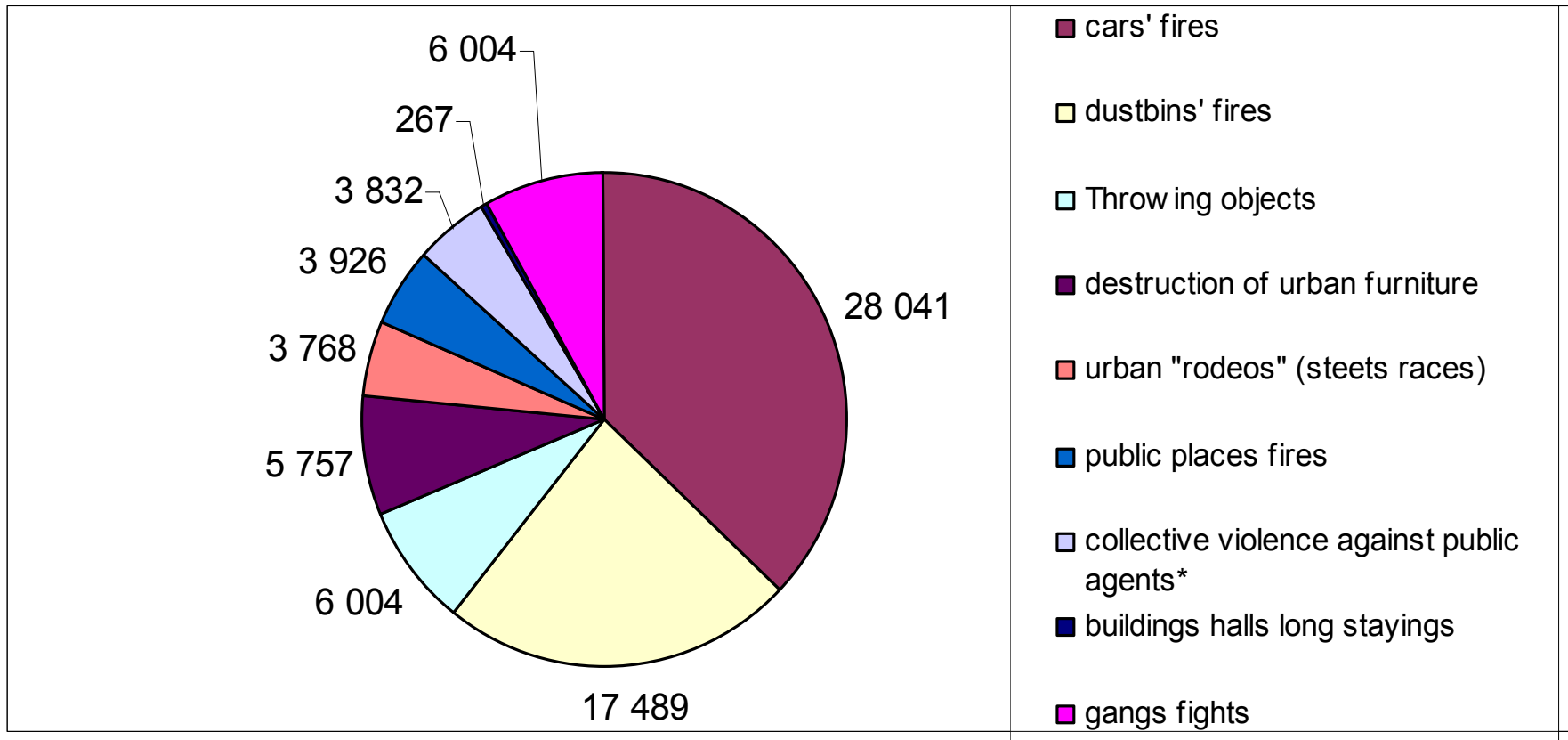
Inventing a *telegenic* reality (2): from the *embedded* point of view



Inventing a *telegenic* reality (3): from the *embedded* point of view
Confrontation or conjunction of interests ?



70 000 urban violent events in France from January to October 2005



*police, fire department, medical, educational or social services...

Urban "rodeos" and gangs fights are presented by the authors like largely unexhaustive

Source: Direction Centrale des Renseignements Généraux, 2005 [a police informational Department]

- Since a generation, our societies have massively built spaces which are not any more representations: they are nothing more but representations because they are disconnected from the reality which gave them origin to become absolutely autonomous and perform in the production of quite real spaces: Baudrillard (1981) names these hyper real spaces, truthful images of spaces that don't exist, more real than the real.
- On the metropolitan outskirts, including segregated multi-ethnic boroughs like middle-class residential places (Rodriguez, 2005), Derrida's *topolotique*, i.e. acquaintance of the Other, mourning space and time,... is threatened because it is no longer contemplated. It's the essence of the *politique* itself that is at stake. Our senses are manipulated to generate realistic geographical experiences on an eternal present (Rodaway, 1994): this renders impossible any possible reference to the culture. The main violence is here.

Bibliography

- **Amorim, M.** (dir.) (2002) *Images et discours sur la banlieue*, Paris, Obvies-Université Paris 8/EVES, 199p.
- **Bachmann, C., Le Guennec, N.** (2006 [1996]) *Violences urbaines. Ascension et chute des classes moyennes à travers cinquante ans de politique de la ville*, Paris, Pluriel, 569p.
- **Beck, U.** (2001) *La société du risque. Sur la voie d'une autre modernité*. Paris, Aubier
- **Becker, H.S.** (1963), *Outsiders. Etude de la sociologie de la déviance*, Paris, ed. Métailé.
- **Boutang, Y. M.** (2005) *La révolte des banlieues ou les habits neufs de la République*, Paris, Ed. Amsterdam, 108p.
- **Derrida, J.** (1972) *La dissémination*. Paris, Le Seuil, 410p.
- **Derrida, J.** (1990) *Limited Inc*, Paris, Galilée
- **Goffman, E.** (1979) *La Mise en scène de la vie quotidienne. 1, La Présentation de soi*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 251p.
- **Pellegrini, C.** (2005) *Banlieues en flammes*, Paris, A. Carrière ed., 182p.
- **Ramond, C.** (2006) Déconstruction et Performativité : L'oral et le moral. Communication au colloque *Morale et Performativité –Nature, Normes, Conventions*, Bordeaux-3, juin 2004, à paraître
- **Rodriguez, I.** (2005) ¿"Privatopia" versus Ciudad Pública? La materialización del miedo en el espacio urbano, in Gutiérrez, O. (coord.) *La ciudad y el miedo*, VIIe coloquio de Geografía Urbana, Barcelona, sept. 2004, Girona (Esp.), Universitat de Girona: Servei de Publicacions, pp.127-152
- **Wark, Mc K.** (1994) *Virtual geography. Living with Global Media Events*, Bloomington/Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 253p.