

The struggle to belong

Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.

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“Social disorder and convivència in Salt, Catalonia”

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Abstract

Recently, when considering conflicts in urban contexts of Catalonia (Spain) there seems to reign a negative idea about the effects that these conflicts have for social cohesion. In this paper I pretend to critically review the concept of social cohesion through an analysis of a paradigmatic conflict of “convivència” that I have studied in the Catalanian region of Spain. The conflicts, which took place in the municipality of Salt (Girona), were around “native” neighbours perceptions of insecurity and juvenile crime linked to immigration and ideas around social cohesion. As a consequence of this unrest, the town hall administration decided to implement strong punitive measures.

Concerning the structure of the paper, first of all, I will critically assess the concepts of social cohesion and *convivència*, especially in its relation to social conflicts. Basing my argument on an anthropological review and discussion of the concept of conflict, I then proceed to argue that instead of understanding the conflicts negatively (as the word disorder could easily imply) one should also consider their cohesive mechanisms and politics. Finally I conclude with the main argument of the paper: that the contrast between punitive crime prevention policies and social policies on “coexistence”, is in fact the material and ideological face of the same coin: the process of cancellation of the conflicts, some of which articulate a structural conflict between the social reproduction of the conditions of exploitation of the actual economic system and a systemic transformation.

Key words: Social cohesion, convivència, conflict, social disorder, juvenile crime, migration, urban transformation and economic restructuring.

Introduction

For about four months, during 2009 and 2010, I carried out some fieldwork in a small coastal town in the Metropolitan Region of Barcelona. I had come around an interesting case that I found relevant to study: a conflict concerning opposition to a proposed mosque construction. The conflict had started in the late nineties, at a moment when especially African immigration were beginning to cause a lot of worry, a reading promoted by sensationalist media and the main right-wing party in government at that time. It reached its climax in the spring of 2002, where opposition for moments became quite ferocious, nonetheless the conflicting parties reached an agreement which included a temporary postponement of the construction. In any manner, the interesting aspects that I was able to observe during the episode, were, on the one hand, a generalized rising fear of confrontation, or conflict, and its perceived consequence: «social fracture». This observation really intrigued my interest, mainly because it seemed as if a negative idea of social conflict was implicit in this. Secondly, another quite important remark, subsequently the conflict has been described as a conflict around *convivència* (coexistence)¹, with implicitly involves a reference to cultural and ethnic traits. Moreover, since then social policies have been implemented with a explicit reference to this *convivència*, which thereby seems to have become a social policy tool.

Taken into consideration the mentioned features, there is a clear connection between this first case and the second case that I am doing my research on currently.² The question remains though, what is the connection between these two above mentioned observations?

To throw light upon this matter, I would like to take my point of departure in the case that I am studying currently, introducing the historical and geographical context. From there on I start with a brief discussion of the concept of social cohesion, mainly distinguishing between the practical use of it and its academical signification. Whereupon I criticize the political use of the concept relating it to the negative idea of social conflict. And finally I present the main argument of the paper: that the contrast between punitive

1 Although I do agree with the quite interesting possibilities that this concept has to offer, as arguments Erickson (2011), I believe that it has some rather different implications in the cases that I am studying.

2 For any further information please see Lundsteen (2010).

crime prevention policies and social policies on 'coexistence', is in fact the material and ideological face of the same coin, which is *a process of cancellation of social conflicts*, some of which articulate a structural conflict between the social reproduction of the conditions of exploitation of the actual economic system and a systemic transformation.

The case: Salt, a social laboratory

In February 2010 Salt became a known location through the media. A town hall meeting was interrupted, and subsequently cancelled, due to the loud protests of some residents who demanded more security in the town. Shortly hereafter a verbal clash between 'natives' and 'immigrants' took place right in front of some television cameras in the town hall square. Apparently the protest was encouraged by a rising sentiment of insecurity in the town mainly due to what some persons perceived as an increase in delinquency mostly committed by young immigrants, the great majority of whom are from Morocco and Senegal. The youngsters and other migrants, however, expressed their annoyance at the fact that they all were being labelled and accused of delinquency on the grounds of the acts of a little minority, they too felt insecure sometimes. In their opinion this discrimination is present both in the public opinion as well as amongst the police in their day-to-day interactions.

This first tense moment culminated a few days later with the creation of 1) a 'Round Table of *Convivència*' (coexistence) in cooperation with some Moroccan entities of the town, 2) more police presence on the streets, and 3) an agreement between local government and the police to implement a kind of «zero tolerance» towards 'multiple offenders' (that is, delinquents who commit crimes multiple times) even suggesting expulsion if the conditions permit it (that is, if the person has no Spanish citizenship).³

The second tense moment took place in the beginning of 2011, when a young boy fell from a patio in a five-story building while he was trying to escape from the police who was chasing him due to an alleged scooter theft. He was badly injured and was admitted to the

³ In October the same year a news paper article stated that 84 so-called «multiple offenders» had been expelled, which supposed a rise in 14 % compared to the previous years.

ICU (actually he died some weeks later), and a few days later a group of between 50 and 100 youngsters gathered in front of the police station, and later the town hall, manifesting in support of the injured boy. The uproar, full of anger directed towards the police, turned into a riot and around seven containers were set on fire, it later ended with a police intervention and three persons arrested. As a result the now former mayor, Iolanda Pineda from the Catalan Socialist Party (social democrats)⁴, announced that she would increase police presence and demanded firm hand with the multiple offenders. A few days later many entities of the town - including migrant entities - announced a peaceful demonstration. A question that seems extremely relevant to me at this point is, how are these conflicts interpreted on the part of the administration of Salt?

According to the town council the 'insecurity issue' is all about a minority of delinquents committing crime continuously⁵, and the proposed solution is “stronger police presence on the streets” together with an expulsion politic. Nonetheless, they also acknowledge that the socio-economic status of some of the inhabitants is not the best so, although the municipal budget is low (a fact that the mayor have stressed a lot), they have proposed some «social reforms» as well. Among the most important of these are a huge urban transformation project and an “inter-cultural integration project”⁶ (Pineda, 2010).

To sum up: a series of conflicts have taken place in Salt, which are chiefly described as 1) social conflicts about 'insecurity issues', and/or 2) “conflictos de convivència”⁷ (roughly translated this means *coexistence conflicts*, although some nuances shall be made), that is, conflicts with a clear cultural backdrop⁸. The political measures taken were, on the one

4 The 22nd of May 2011, municipality elections were celebrated and the opposition party CiU, *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union) won the majority: 9 town councillors out of a total of 21. The Catalan Socialist Party won 6, and the extreme right-wing party/platform, *Plataforma per Catalunya* (Platform for Catalonia), won 3. Amongst the last three, two were given to the left-wing coalition IPS (*Independents for Salt*) and one for the right-wing party *Partido Popular* (Popular Party).

5 In this way they actually recognize the existence of a such a phenomenon. Another possible reading is that the so-called 'insecurity issue' is actually, rather than a question of insecurity in the streets, one of the consequences - although not necessarily a direct one - of the dismantling of the social state, that is, the social security of the workers or the poor classes, or the increasing precariousness due to the imposed flexibility, etc., which has taken place in the last 20 years (Wacquant, 2004).

6 Actually the direct translation would be “welcome” or “reception”.

7 I have chosen to maintain the Catalan version because Catalan is the institutional language of Catalonia, I believe that what is said in this paper on *convivència* goes for its homonym in Castilian.

8 Obviously in some discourses these readings overlap.

hand, punitive measures, such as, (a) a stronger police presence on the streets together with, (b) an expulsion politic. On the other hand, we have got what we could call, «social reform» interventions⁹, such as (a) a huge urban transformation project, and (b) an «inter-cultural integration project».

All of these are what we could call preventive measures, since they are, in one way or the other, implemented in order to prevent a “social fracture” and/or strengthening the social cohesion (understood as the foundation necessary for the upholding of the social order). Secondly, they are based on 'insecurity issues': the fact that the residents seem to have a perception of an increase of insecurity¹⁰. Furthermore, the measures taken submit to the premises of a racist discourse which connects the sense of insecurity with petty crimes, mostly committed by young immigrants¹¹, instead of i.e. a growing 'structural incoherence' or socio-economic disparities. Last but not least, a certain ontology of “the social” and its relation to conflicts (such as certain expressions of disorder) is implicit in these policy measures. Throughout this paper I will try to get around all of these four dimensions.

Social cohesion and conflicts

When journalists and politicians in Catalonia talk about *convivència*, they talk about a certain kind of coexistence. Actually in the official discourse, *convivència* refers to a participative coexistence, where a mutual respect is at the base, a kind of reciprocal relation between the members of society, in contradistinction to 'coexistence', a kind of liberal multiculturalism which presupposes nothing more than minimal, passively produced relations between neighbours. Although, *convivència* imply inter-cultural interactions between the members of society, instead of culturally separated communities as liberal

9 Interventions that have social reforms as their intention, as for instance, improving the social or physical life for the affected people, in stead of structural reforms. In this case for instance, the reforms only intend to influence on the physical conditions (housing conditions, urbanism, hygiene, etc.) as in contrast to material conditions (equality in salary, job opportunities, etc.).

10 Considering the local police statistics from 2009 to 2010 there was a no significant rise in the crime in general: i.e. the cases of robbery or theft had fallen drastically, meanwhile the cases of burglary had risen.

11 A frightening tendency that has flourished in Europe in the last decade (Wacquant, 1999; 2004).

multiculturalism postulates, it bears some resemblance with the concept of multiculturalism, namely because it is an idyllic/utopian concept. Utopian in the way that people might be born equal in Spain, but when it comes to legal rights, social equality, etc., people are certainly not equal¹².

In recent years another concept has come to play an important role in the social policies of the European countries, namely that of *social cohesion*. In Britain, particularly, the concept seem to have become important around 2002 (Berkeley, 2003; Reeves, et. al., 2009), right in the aftermath of the disturbances of 2001. Actually it seems that its entrance in the social policy sphere has been directly linked with conflicts around immigrants and particularly in periphery towns. On this ground the question remains how they interrelate.

Social cohesion refers to diverse aspects of the dynamics of social relations, such as social inclusion/exclusion, participation and belonging. The majority of its contributors have stressed its multidimensionality, but actually, according to recent studies and reviews (Bernard, 1999; Friedkin, 2004; Jenson, 1998; Novy, et. al., 2008; Solé, et. al., 2011), no consensus exists on the exact meaning of the concept although some have tried to clarify it (Chan, et. al., 2006). Nevertheless, my object with this article is neither to present an alternative nor a final definition, instead, I am interested in analysing its political application and public use.

First of all, while *convivència* is mostly a 'lay notion', *social cohesion* is chiefly an academic notion. Nonetheless what is of my interest here is the fact that in the 21st century Catalonia and Spain, both of them have become important social policy concepts or tools, to the point that one is connected to the other. A 'convivència conflict' supposes a threat to the 'social cohesion' of the given community, neighbourhood or town. Following the hegemonic discourse in the social policies, social cohesion presupposes *convivència*. I think that a critical rereading of the concept of social cohesion might be a good idea.

The fact is that the concept of social cohesion originates from the thinking of Durkheim and has since then been taken up by his successors. When talking about cohesion Durkheim

12 While this would lead us to some quite interesting discussions, I will not engage in them here due to the reduced aim of the paper.

referred to the interdependence between the members of a society, their shared loyalties and solidarity. Then again the concept of solidarity is further differentiated into mechanical and organic solidarity. In organic solidarity what makes social cohesion is the division of labour, that is, the mutual dependence of people. In mechanic solidarity, on the other hand, what makes cohesion is the identity of everybody, the feeling of community¹³. However, the further development in political practice (cf. 'Imagined communities') is that one needs a common ideology of representation, and the production of identity feelings and 'cultural values'. In this way, two different strands of Durkheimian analytical concepts get mixed up in practice.

Surely these issues compose the problem of the concept, and this is one of the reasons that brought Jenson (1998), and following her, Bernard (1999), to critically review it and subsequently conclude that social cohesion is not an unmitigated good. Jenson is quite critical with the usage of the concept and analyse its genealogy. According to her, social cohesion is rather often used to mask social inequality (issues). Bernard calls social cohesion a *quasi-concept* (Bernard, 1999: 2). I will follow Wacquant and Bourdieu (2005) and call it an “agglomerate concept”. Basically it has become a political tool, a concept capable of explaining everything, it is adaptable, and politically operative. It promotes status quo and the pacification of the subjects exposed to the policies. It is a concept that require social intervention, in a social field completely dissociated from the political and economic field, something 'sui generis'. In this way a possible reading is that the concept of social cohesion, in policy discourse, implies the reproduction of the social conditions of exploitation on part of the State and civil society through the third sector (Bernard, 1999: 4). Following this, in these days it seems as if social investigators and politicians make of the “social body” something fragile which constantly is at the border of dissolution.¹⁴ So it seems that social cohesion have become an aim in itself, an aim that cancels all kinds of conflict - as could be the kind of social disorder I exposed in the case of Salt - and which opposite is social fracture.

13 The latter is a more 'ontological' force behind the binding together, the former is a more 'sociological' force. So social cohesion is not so much dependent on 'values' in the Durkheimian complex societies, but on mutual dependency: the metaphor is that of a body with different functional parts, whereas mechanical solidarity is about sameness.

14 In this way the concept forms part of a political tendency, close to what has been called “middling modernists” (Holmes, 2000) and “social economist” (Álvarez-Uría & Varela, 2004), which I would situate within the social reformism.

Social disorder and conflicts

Indeed, if social cohesion depends on an integration - that is integration as participating in the whole although not necessarily an equal participation nor in coherence, as would mean assimilation - integration depends on the processes of socialization that the individual enters through groups and social institutions. Theoretically the street could be comprehended as such an institution, although a marginal and autonomous one (autonomous in the way that it largely evades state control). On the other hand, so would street gangs, as social groups clearly part-taking in the process of socialization (Hannerz, 1980: 287). This was one of the conclusions that William Foote Whyte got at in his book on the *Street Corner Society* (1943). An interesting consideration because it shows some positive elements of an otherwise negatively described phenomenon. Actually the great majority of investigators from the Chicago School were interested in deviance and social order, supposing mainly that disorder was a urban anomaly, a kind of indicator of a “non-functioning” social cohesion:

“[T]here was a strong tendency in this group of scholars to regard everything but conformity with the standards of conventional society as a matter of disorganization.” (Hannerz, 1980: 56)

In fact the concept of social cohesion, in its lay and 'political tool' version¹⁵, has a lot of similarity with Robert Park's idea of a «cultural» social order, based on a moral order guided by shared principles, values and meanings. Contrasting readings on the interrelation between social disorder and social cohesion, have been made though.

According to Sluka (1992), the most accepted definition of violence is to see social conflict as “a struggle over values and claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals.” (Coser, 1968: 232 in Sluka, 1992: 22). An interestingly and valid reading of the role of conflict in relation to social cohesion, is the one that Max Gluckman presented in his famous book *Custom and conflict in Africa* (1956):

“The result is that conflicts in one set of relationships, over a wider range of society or through a longer period of time, lead to the re-establishment of social cohesion.” (Gluckman, 1973: 2)

“A man's several loyalties strike at the strength of his loyalty to any one group or set of relationships, which is thus divided. Hence the whole system depends for its cohesion on the

15 I recall that this version of social cohesion is the one described above as a mixture of the two notions of Durkheim, *organic* and *mechanical* solidarity.

existence of conflicts in smaller sub-systems.” (Gluckman, 1973: 19-20)

Basically Gluckman builds his argument as follows. In studying societies without governmental institutions anthropologists were immediately confronted with the problem of where social order and cohesion lay. The critical result of their analysis was to show that these societies are organized into a series of groups and relationships, that people who are friends on one basis are enemies on another. This is, according to Gluckman, where social cohesion lies, rooted in the conflicts between men's different allegiances. In this way the conflicting loyalties and divisions of allegiance tend to inhibit the development of open quarrelling, and the greater the division in one area of society, the greater the chance that there is cohesion in a wider range of relationships, provided that there is a general need for peace, and recognition of a moral order in which this peace can flourish.

While the great majority of conflicts tend to cohesion, Gluckman also admits that some might tend to create distances and separation, difficult to resolve:

“[A]s the policy of *apartheid* is applied more and more consistently, any sort of amicable or loyal relationships between Whites and Blacks become impossible. Those sections within the White group which were linked in some friendly relationship with sections of the Black group, are being attacked. This is symbolic of the deepening, irresoluble, unbalanced conflict. If these sorts of links are eliminated, Black will deal with White only as authoritarian ruler and employer, always as an enemy, and never as an ally.” (Gluckman, 1973: 164-165)

The fundamental idea that Gluckman exposed can be resumed in a few words: conflicts, as well as violence, contain both functional and dysfunctional tendencies, capable of both positive and negative outcomes¹⁶. The existence of social cohesion does not necessarily imply a non-existence of conflict, while conflicts are inherent to all relations between individuals and groups. Although, as Sluka affirms in his relevant essay (1992: 32):

“A degree of conflict and violence may be inevitable in social life, but no social condition is inevitable. Social conditions are created by people, and what people create, they can change. Social conditions can, at the very least, be changed so that conflict and violence will no longer appear as the only effective political resource many oppressed and powerless groups have at their disposal. As psychologists Kardiner and Ovessey pointed out forty years ago in *The Mark of Oppression*, “there is only one way that the products of oppression can be dissolved, and that is to stop the oppression” (1951: 387)” (Sluka, 1992: 32)

¹⁶ A positive outcome could be that they provoke change towards a dissolution of the existing forms of oppression, that is if they lead to a less oppressive future change.

Social insecurity and neoliberalization

“The dominant perception is that crime in the city is the fault of the migrant other, thus obscuring the larger picture of increasing crime facing the entire urban society. This view does not merely reflect or distort the reality, but is itself a form of social ordering, with real political consequences. Because the migrant population is constructed as a high crime group and to a certain degree a social anomaly (being out of place), it has been subject to arbitrary official campaigns of ‘cleaning and reordering’” (Zhang, 2001: 157).

Salt is a small town situated west of Girona, one of the important cities of Catalonia. As a matter of fact, from 1975 to 1983 Salt figured as a neighbourhood of Girona, nowadays it is autonomous municipality and a suburb of Girona. Salt, like many other suburban towns in Catalonia (i.e. the industrial belt of Barcelona: Badalona, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, etc.) has worked as a kind of catalyst for the surrounding towns through the last forty years, receiving the surplus, and commonly precarious, populations arriving, which is basically the migrants.

When we take a look at the Spanish context in general, it was not until the nineties that Spain turned into a destination of immigration, that is with a positive migratory balance¹⁷. Nonetheless, until then, although primarily during the sixties and the seventies, the internal migration had been quite important, with migration of workforce mainly from the south and east (Murcia, Andalusia, Extremadura and Galicia) to the centre and north (Madrid, Basque Country and Catalonia), in short, the industrial regions of Spain. The new migration started in the late seventies, beginning of the eighties, and was mainly comprised by Africans, that is, Moroccans, Senegalese and Gambians, but as mentioned before, the migratory balance was not positive until the nineties. Finally, at the end of the century it began to increase considerably. In Salt this trend accelerates exponentially at the beginning of the 21st century: in the year of 2000 Salt had 22.520 inhabitants¹⁸, of whom 2.095 had a different nationality than Spanish, in 2010 the corresponding numbers were 30.304 and 12.756, so the Spanish residents made up 58% and the «non-Spaniards» 42%¹⁹.

The new migrants clearly tend to gather in the same zones/neighbourhoods (mainly the

17 Until then Spain had been an important export country of migration labour, mainly to France and Germany.

18 The statistics are from the Statistical Institute of Catalonia (www.idescat.cat) and the Deputation of Girona (www.ddgi.cat/xifra/menu_ini.asp).

19 The biggest groups are from Morocco (4.661 = 15,38%), Gambia (1.761 = 5,81%), Honduras (1.154 = 3,80%), Mali (679 = 2,24%) and Senegal (501 = 1,65%). The percentage is out of the total of the population residing in Salt.

town centre in the case of Salt) that the old migrants (the ones from the south of Spain) gathered in, and in this way, Salt is a paradigmatic case of a general tendency in Spain, and particularly in Catalonia. This basically has something to do with the facility in housing. The new migrants take over some of the old migrants' homes at a cheap price and in this way a partial substitution takes place. This process happens around the end of the century and the start of the new one, and can be explained as follows.

At a given moment, coinciding with a quite favourable economic situation in Spain (there is a lot of work, a general rise in the PIB and the real estate prices are booming) and a rise in the amount of migrants coming to the country²⁰, the old migrants begin to sell their old homes to the new ones, while they themselves move to 'better' places, that is, newly constructed apartments, houses, villas, etc. in new neighbourhoods, new towns, etc. This way a lot of resourceful families and young residents (between 20 and 30 years old and mainly Spaniards albeit a small number of young Moroccans as well), moved away, while the ones who could not leave came to feel trapped. Preceding economic reforms had entailed a reduction in the flow of state redistribution and, following this, a higher dependency on the local tax revenues for the municipalities, a new kind of urban governance that David Harvey has coined "urban entrepreneurialism" (Harvey, 1989). Which means that municipalities begin to compete between each other in order to attract resources, money, jobs, wealthy residents, etc. The mayor would then become a kind of executive who would try to brand the city in a special and attractive way, or he would project huge urban transformations with the aim to start a gentrification process²¹, and so on. On top of all this, real estate prices continued to increase until the economic boom in the sector around 2008, and subsequently the financial sector entered a deep economic crisis, with a lot of lay-offs as the consequence. As a result thereof, a lot of apartments were repossessed by the banks. In Salt a lot of these simply stood empty or some were subsequently occupied illicitly. This happened mainly in the old and little attended town centre, which nowadays generally comprise a large portion of the new migrants (around 80%²²) and low-income families on the one hand, and on the other a lot of elder people. Anyway, this town centre is the specific

20 A huge amount of these work in the construction sector, in this way, in a paradoxical way, they are participants in the construction of the new houses and neighbourhoods, that later on will be the material segregation existent.

21 In the case of poor towns this would often be done by means of government funds, as in the case of Salt.

22 Source: La Vanguardia 28/02/2010.

local context in which the mentioned conflicts took place.

The above mentioned structural transformations are part of what we nowadays call the neoliberalization. The fact is that in recent years we have seen a withdrawal of the welfare state and privatizations - also known as neoliberal policies. These structural transformations, and the financial and economic crisis, have principally hit the lower layers of the community of Salt as I have tried to show, through a rising bewilderment and generalized insecurity concerning the future. As stated Jensen in her rapport (1998: 3):

“It is important to acknowledge where conversations about social cohesion originate. They take place among those who sense an absence of some sort. It is the vocabulary of those who judge that things are not going well.”

The fact is that in the context of economic crisis, North African migrants are more frequently treated with repulse. In Catalonia this repulse is promoted by the extreme right, who asserts the migrants as scapegoat (equating immigration with crime) and promoting discrimination in favour of the «native». In this way they offer a logical reading of the changes in society, and links the bad ones directly to the phenomenon of migration and the otherness of the subjects. That is how a presumed «petty crime» conflict can turn into a conflict about *convivència*.

The solution on part of the ruling social democratic parties, has been to adopt some quite drastic punitive measures and social reforms. These supposedly preventive measures (both of them), implemented in order to handle the 'insecurity issues' and to prevent a “social fracture” and/or strengthening the social cohesion, have ended up, first of all, submitting to the premises of the racist discourse which connects the sense of insecurity with petty crimes, mostly committed by young immigrants. Secondly, in a rather more subtle way, they have disqualified all kind of problematic behaviour, which possibly is connected to some kind of social unrest amidst the youngsters of Salt. Thirdly, the punitive measures taken quite clearly implicates a change in the way that the State carries out its responsibility in what concerns the social reproduction. An interesting process that Wacquant (2009) describes as the construction of a post-Keynesian state that replaces the social-welfare treatment of poverty by its penal management. Actually we quite agree with Wacquant in his observations on these matters, it really do seem that there is a tendency

towards implementing punitive measures as solution to social and structural problems. Moreover, these are, at least in the case that I am studying, combined with social preventive measures, through what I would call an ideological notion: *social cohesion*. An amalgam concept, primarily based on 'lay notions' of 'coexistence' (in this case *convivència*), which works as a social policy tool in order to possibly pacify all kinds of social unrest or disorder. These two aspects of the new kinds of social intervention in Spain work together disqualifying social conflicts and so they pacify the social body, inhibiting its socio-cultural capacities, at a time when huge political and economical restructurings are taking place.

Conclusions

In this paper I have argued that social conflict is not necessarily a bad thing for cohesion (in the broad and Durkheimian sense), an argument in no way ground-breaking. I have showed, through a recourse to the ideas of Gluckman, that conflicts actually tend to cohesion rather than fracture the social body. This is a consideration that I find important to have in mind in these days where it seems as if social investigators and politicians make of the social (a rather problematic conceptualization) something fragile which is constantly at the border of dissolution. As I have tried to show, this is in no way a disinterested reading. First of all, this kind of reading delegates very little power to the members of the society, their auto-organization and strength, instead problems are to be prevented through political measures, which, in one way or the other, end up constituting the problematic and social fragility as real. Secondly, the measures that these readings call for, suppose beforehand a disintegration of the political, economic and social domains, thereby rendering difficult critical and more holistic readings. Furthermore, from what I have shown we can conclude that the concept of social cohesion works as a more moderate, that is reform-oriented, social policy tool. In spite of that, the hegemonic - and social policy - version of it, seems to have some ideological qualities (in the Marxian sense), a hypothesis which would be interesting to discuss more thoroughly in another occasion.

Society as we know it today in the western countries, has been built upon conflicts. One

of these is a politico-economical one, basically inherent to the operand production system, also known as capitalism. Because of capitalism, social inequalities exist and therefore, unavoidably, in the daily social life conflicts of interests are present. This does not necessarily take the character of class conflict and actually in recent decades other types of conflicts have arisen. In our case, these conflicts take the character of an intra-classist conflict - maintaining the class concept - between ethnically differentiated workers. In this, and in many other ways, the conflicts of Salt clearly resemble the revolts of the French banlieues.

So I propose to understand, that the contrast between punitive crime prevention policies and social policies on 'coexistence', is in fact the material and ideological face of the same coin: the process of cancellation of the conflicts, some of which articulates a structural conflict between the social reproduction of the conditions of exploitation of the actual economic system and a systemic transformation. These measures have to be comprehended in their interrelation, and cooperation: both prevent specific social conflicts of taking place, focusing merely on the negative aspects of these, or the rather problematic variant (as the one that the extreme right promotes, which intend to exclude whole collectives of the social body on the premises of an organic and socially coherent society). In this way conflicts emerging out of social unrest are disqualified and inhibited beforehand.

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