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DISSIMULATING & LANDSCAPING RACISM: SEXUALITY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND NEO-ORIENTALISM IN FRENCH DISCOURSES

Abstract

In this article, I explore the links between marginalized territories, French "banlieues" and negative representations, biased media coverage and structural discrimination towards the (alleged or real) immigrant from North Africa, and therefore presumably Muslim population. I argue that racism becomes reshaped through the defense of supposed republican values as women's rights, freedom of speech, and the combating of anti-Semitism. Furthermore, I illustrate how French banlieues and their poor and working-class first- and second-generation migrants of Muslim background come to embody the "lost territories of the Republic." This research is based on media and discourse analysis of public presentations of these bodies and spaces as emblematic of the social stigmas of unemployment, gender and sexual violence, involvement in the drug trade, and receipt of welfare. This article is concerned with how urban spaces can trace the symbolic and material boundaries of gender, racial and economic discrimination. Its findings are critical and necessary for better understanding the current popular process – and its consequences – whereby stereotypes are reinforced by an aesthetic and politics of "speaking the truth" and "anti-PC" rhetoric nowadays in France and globally in West Europe. Finally, this article endeavors to analyze the geographic relationship between political activity and cultural practices in urban landscapes.

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Dissimulating & landscaping racism: embodiment, intersectionality, and otherness in French suburbs

The connections between racialization, migration and religion are not self-evident. In the past fifteen years[1] (Geisser 2003), the distinction between discrimination based on religious identification and discrimination based on ethnicity has been promoted by two different groups of people, whose goals are polar opposites, but whose actions have had convergent effects. Among the "moral entrepreneurs" (Becker 1985) invested in promoting this distinction were, on the one hand, academics[2] (Hajjat and Mohammed 2013), activists[3] (Asal 2014) media and political figures[4] who were raising awareness on the existence of a specific form of racism affecting Muslims or anyone perceived as such based on clothes or physical appearance[5]. The question of how to call this form of racism has sparked heated debates and although the term is still contested[6], it is now widely used: islamophobia[7]. The legal, semantic and epistemological importance of using a specific word to refer to the various discriminations

that Muslims are exposed to, comes from the need to distinguish them from the other forms of racism, including anti-Arab racism, to which they cannot be reduced. On the other hand, the second group of people promoting the de-racialization of Islam were interested in operating this distinction for opposite reasons: they were claiming their "right to blasphemy", in the name of freedom of speech[8]. In other words, the people who were fighting anti-Muslim racism and the people who were fighting Islam and its believers paradoxically agreed on the need to distinguish race/ethnicity from religion.

The differences as well as the overlap between religion and race have been rendered all the more glaring by these debates. The term racialization and ethnicization will be used interchangeably. The suffix "ization" is meant to emphasize the process of assigning racial or ethnic categories. Race and ethnicity should not be understood as natural or biological facts, but rather as fluctuating identifications, subject to change depending on circumstances. In an attempt to provide an analysis that articulates religious and ethnic identities, this article will deliberately draw away from the binary visions that either separate or conflate ethnicity and religion.

Instead I will try to adopt a dynamic approach to account for the intricate imbrication of these notions. To put it in stark terms, the claim that anti-Muslim racism is nothing but a new version of anti-Arab or xenophobia or a reminiscence from colonial times, and conversely, the stance that the persistence of biological racism against North Africans can be explained merely as a manifestation of latent islamophobia, can both be dismissed as tautological, circular reasoning. Studying white converts to Islam is interesting in this regard, since Muslims who are not racialized are only discriminated against when they are perceived as Muslims, through physical markers of religious practice[9]

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1. The term islamophobia started circulating in the English-speaking world in 1997, following the release of "Islamophobia: a challenge for us all", a report published by Runnymede Trust. In France, the first book that addressed islamophobia as a specific form of racism dates back to 2003.

2. Another example is the *Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project* initiated at University of California Berkeley.

3. The CCIF (Collective against Islamophobia in France) and the CRI (Collective against Racism and Islamophobia) were created to fight this form of racism. In the UK, the "Runnymede Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia" has been operating as a think tank addressing these issues since 1997.

4. Such as Alain Gresh, French journalist and former chief editor of Le Monde Diplomatique. See also LMSI, http://lmsi.net/A-propos-de-l-islamophobie, 2003 (online as of 10/12/15).

5. This is how the CCIF, among others, defines islamophobia.

6. The semantic controversy played out in public institutions such as the HCI (High Council for Integration), or anti-racist organizations such as the MRAX (Movement against Racism, Antisemitism and Xenophobia), SOS Racisme, the LICRA (League against Racism and Antisemitism), etc. The crux of the debate lied, and still lies, in the fear that the word islamophobia might lead to a confusion between criticism of Islam as a religion, and discriminations against Muslims.

7. Before 2015, the Petit Robert dictionary defined islamophobia as "a specific form of hatred directed at Islam and Muslims which is manifested in France by attacks and ethnic discriminations against North African immigrants." Islamophobia was then defined as a racism intrinsically based on ethnic criteria. In the 2015 edition, both the Petit Robert and the Larousse dictionaries stuck to a definition strictly linked to religion, as they described islamophobia as "hostility against Islam and Muslims."

8. Christine Tasin, the leader of the organization Riposte Laïque, declared in a 2011 interview: "islamophobia is not racism, it is the right to blasphemy", which would later become a slogan. In 2014, after another controversial declaration about Islam, she was found guilty of hate speech and sentenced to pay a fine.

9. The French government launched a campaign called "Stop Jihadism", which included a document entitled "Jihadist radicalization. The first alarming signs". It was circulated soon after the January 2015 shootings. 9 criteria were included, each represented by an icon. A change in dietary habits and clothing were listed among the "signs" of a

– beard, headscarf, "prayer bump" on the forehead, observance of dietary restrictions, etc. The racism they are faced with is not biological, but cultural[10]. Here the term "racialized" should be understood as characterizing any person who, based on physical appearance, clothing, ancestry or origin, is assigned an essentialized, marginalized and dominated racial identity. This is also the case with Muslim women. Whether racialized or not, they are much more exposed to discriminations[11] when they are bearing the stigmas, in the goffmanian sense (Goffman 1990), of their religion, mainly manifested and materialized by religious clothing such as the veil, jilbab or niqab. When they are not wearing a head covering, Muslim women tend to be less exposed to discrimination than Muslim men in accessing housing, employment or leisure. But Muslim women who wear a religious marker, or something perceived as such, are placed at the center of public and political controversies around Islam(Khemilat 2018b). They crystallize and catalyze the interpenetrations between race, religion and gender to such an extent that their situation cannot be fully understood without introducing the notion of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991). This concept refers to the situation of individuals who belong to several dominated social groups and are therefore confronted with several axes of discrimination. However, it is not about merely adding up social disadvantages. Intersectionality is an interactive, circumstantial and dynamic relation, that allows for one or more identifications (ethnic, economic, religious, geographical, etc.) to become prevalent factors of discrimination and categorization at a given moment. Intersectionality is also embodied in territories and spaces. The French category "jeune de cité", whose equivalents in English-speaking world would be the equally racially coded "urban youth" and "inner city youth", refers to a rather vaguely defined age group (Bourdieu 1984) and to a rather vaguely

identified space, the "cité". The expression brings to mind a set of images, meanings and norms, or rather counter norms, as it is mainly used in a derogatory way. These norms relate to clothing (sweat suits, visible socks, baseball caps, waist packs, sneakers), as well as techniques of the body (Mauss 1973)[12] (specific ways to walk, to look at someone, to speak, to interact with each other, to occupy public space) and specific values, whether real or imaginary (prohibition of snitching, defiance towards the institutions of the state, violence, machismo, lack of manners, antisocial behaviours, etc.). The "urban youth" category is both highly gendered and highly racialized. It is used almost exclusively to refer to young men living in working-class neighborhoods, most often descending from Muslim immigrants. Understanding this term and the consequent cognitive causal chain(i.e. the set of ideas, perceptions and representations that are, consciously or not, associated to it), therefore requires an analysis in terms of gender and ethnicity in order to fully comprehend the classification without missing some of its central aspects. Here, we will examine the controversies related to sexuality[13] (Dorlin 2009) or to gendered issues in general, as well as Islam and the suburbs, through the public discourse and interventions of a number of personalities between 2010 and 2012 corresponding to a highly controversial period in French.

How race was replaced by religion as the main factor delineating civilization: from "exotic territories" to the "lost territories of the Republic"

"People of Muslim appearance", in the words of former French president Nicolas Sarkozy[14], are as-

possible "radicalization", which directly designated Muslim converts as specific targets of surveillance.

10. Since Islam, seen as a singular, totalitarian and monolithic entity, is perceived as belonging to a foreign culture, and even to a pathological civilization.

11. When they wear a veil, they cannot work as public servants in any institution, neither can they go to public schools, from kindergarten up to higher education. Besides, more than 4 out of 5 of the 764 islamophobic acts reported to the CCIF in France in 2014 were targeting women (81,5%). For more details, see the CCIF's 2014 report.

12. By this expression I mean the traditional ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies. I call technique an action which is effective and traditional [...]. It has to be effective and traditional. There is no technique and no transmission in the absence of tradition".

13. Elsa Dorlin, among others, has emphasized the importance of articulating sexuality and gender issues with the understanding of racialized dynamics in colonial contexts.

14. On March 26th, 2012, then president Nicolas Sarkozy used that expression on the air of French radio station France Info, where he had been invited to comments on the remarks of extreme right-wing leader Marine Le Pen, who had conflated immigration with the threat of terrorism.

sumed to be recognizable[15](Dorlin 2009) based on exterior markers that are not only ethnic but also territorial, and that serve to establish their assumed religious affiliation[16]. This was made evident in the heated debate[17]that took place between the two rounds of the 2012 presidential election when, fiercely opposing his socialist challenger François Hollande on the issue of granting foreigners the right to vote in local elections[18], the incumbent President of the Republic conflated the three figures of the Muslim, the immigrant and the "urban youth". He conflated the feeling of identification to the Muslim religion to ethnic identification, and to behaviours perceived as problematic, especially the wearing of the niqab, which was extensively discussed during the debates. Nicolas Sarkozy emphasized the "tension between communities" caused by Muslims in France, claiming it is so glaringly obvious that one would have to be "completely ignorant of the reality in the neighborhoods of our country" to deny it. He did not even bother to specify which neighbourhood he was referring to, which implies he assumed everyone would know. And indeed, the association of the coded words "communities" and "neighbourhoods" left no room for doubt that he was talking about the "banlieues", also known as "the lost territories of the Republic" (Bensoussan et al. 2017). In these suburbs, he said, "the problem of community tensions is extremely challenging for the Republic". The examples he mentioned are the requests for separate hours for men and women in swimming pools, halal food in school cafeterias, and the demands of female patients to be examined by female doctors in hospitals. Out of these three examples, two are related to gender, women and segregation. The presidential debate is a major ritual of the Fifth French Republic, its duration is limited, but the two candidates to the highest function

of the state then spent almost ten minutes discussing their respective positions on the headscarf and on the full face-covering veil. This shows how much importance is given to the topic.

There appears to be an implicit consensus establishing that if you believe in the values of democracy and republic, you have to be in favor of gender equality, and that gender equality cannot be compatible with covering your face or your hair. Besides, the shift from the topic of migration to the "issue" of religion in the *banlieues* and then to gender equality shows how racialized, territorialized and gendered the discourse on Islam has become. The notions of immigration, Islam and the status of women are being linked as if there was an intrinsic causal relation between them, and all three of them being viewed under a negative prism : immigration only perceived as illegal and clandestine, Islam as the cause of tension between communities, and the status of Muslim women as backwards and oppressive. Illegality, tension between communities and sexism are then conveniently seen as circumscribed to specific territories.

In a similar sense, two months before that, Claude Guéant who was then Minister of the Interior, declared that "all civilizations, all practices, all cultures, with regard to the principles of our Republic, aren't equal", February 5th, 2012 on the radio station France-Inter. The arguments he used to back his claim were two examples related to Islam: the niqab, and the so-called "street prayers" (Khemilat 2018a). Again, the gender issue is presented as a crucial factor to determine compatibility or incompatibility with the values of the Republic, and more importantly, with the values of our civilization. Religiosity becomes a new criterion of social differentiation, thereby replacing race which operated for centuries as a marker for the hierarchy of civilizations. Anti-religious discourse becomes a fig leaf, used to conceal mechanisms of discrimination. Ramon Grosfoguel also notes that public officials have deliberately abandoned the use of the language of "race" when responding to "the challenge represented by the movements of colonized people. Cultural racism is a form of racism that doesn't even need to mention the word "race" anymore. It is based on the idea of the cultural inferiority of a category of people." (Ramon Grosfoguel 2012). And one of the

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15. Frantz Fanon operates a distinction between Black people, who are recognized outwardly by their skin color, and Jews, who face discrimination once their Jewishness has been revealed.

16. There have been cases of white "converts" who were verbally assaulted with racially charged insults such as "dirty Arab". As a result of their religious choice, white "converts" go through a process of racialization or, so to speak, of racial downgrading. This is shown in the PhD thesis of GALONNIERJ., *Choosing Faith and Facing Race: White Converts to Islam in France and the United States*, Sciences Po Paris, defended in June, 2017.

17. May 2nd, 2012 on national TV channel France 2.

18. Proposition number 50 of the Socialist Party platform of 2012.

symptoms of inferiority of a civilization is precisely the issue of gender equality. This shift in the mode of discourse (Bayart 1985), this substitution of one r-word, race, by another, religion, comes from the fact that racial comments are increasingly frowned upon in France. Considering the controversy sparked by the comments made by Laurence Rossignol, the former Minister of families, children and women's rights, on March 30th, 2016, on radio station RMC. She compared the women who choose to wear the veil to "Afri-... American negroes who were in favor of slavery". Another example is when former minister Nadine Morano declared on national TV that France is "a Judeo-Christian country… of white race". In both cases, religious, racial and geographical references were assembled.

French public space is not simply the space in which racist discourse is transposed, it is the very condition of its materialization. All the more so that the theory of biological inferiority of the people of "non-white races" was based on the supposedly scientific premise of a categorization by geographical and climatic zones. The theory of the alleged impact of the climate on the "characteristics" or "dispositions" of populations already existed in the antiquity, and was further developed and promoted by Montesquieu, famous French philosopher (Pinna 1989). In other words, each race was assigned to a specific territory, both by the name it was given and by the physical and psychological characteristics attributed to it(Dorlin 2009). For example, in a French natural history book from 1885 written by Langlebert a biologist, four races were listed: "the white or Caucasic race", "the yellow or Mongolic race", "the black or African race", and finally "the red or American race". Nowadays, although these categories and theories have been discredited, the cognitive link between territory, behavior and religion remains prominent. That is why it is necessary to conduct what we could call a geographical study of race, religion and gender, or in other words, a cartography of intersectionality (Hancock 2011).

The strategic uses of territorially circumscribed sexism: Othering Muslims and invisibilizing the oppression of women

The visibility of Muslim religiosity, especially the visibility of women in the suburbs wearing distinctive clothes like the veil, is a display of what is presented as the very essence of sexism in French society: the control of women's bodies by racialized men for religious reasons. The greater visibility of niqab-wearing women in the *banlieues* can be explained partly by demographic and historical reasons. Indeed, poor immigrants and their descendants settled in areas where housing was less expensive. But that is not the only explanation. Niqab-wearing women are also more visible in the suburbs because law enforcement tends to be more flexible regarding the ban on the full-face covering veil in the periphery of cities. Besides the wish to avoid potential disturbances – such as the controversies sparked by the arrests of niqab-wearing women in the summer of 2013 in Argenteuil and in Trappes[19] –, there seem to be other elements that could explain this relative "tolerance" of the niqab in the *banlieues*. When the Constitutional Council[20] validated the general interdiction to cover your face in public space, it only mentioned one exception: places of worship. It is admitted that, in the surroundings of mosques, niqab-wearing women should not be fined. And for historical[21] and political reasons[22], the majority of mosques are situated in the suburbs.

Thus, the greater presence in the *banlieues* of women wearing the veil, which is presented as the banner of women's oppression, participates in bolstering discourse that constructs sexism as being spatially circumscribed. Such a territorial demarcation of gendered domination then allows to contain this social plague in areas that are perceived and described as foreign, due to the "culture" and alleged origins of their

19. In June 2013, the arrest of a niqab wearing woman and her husband during the month of Ramadan was followed by several days of unrest and clashes between the population and the police.

20. Constitutional Council number 2010-613, October 7th, 2010.

21. Many prayers halls were set up in factories located on the outskirts of cities, or in the social housing residences built for immigrant workers.

22. City councils often use their pre-emptive rights to prevent the building of mosques in the downtown areas, for electoral and/or economic reasons.

inhabitants (Rigouste 2004). It appears as if discriminations against women and provocations against the ideals and the values of the Republic only existed in a few enclaves of lingering resistance, the *banlieues*. Therefore, the rest of the French population is supposedly exempt from it. This process amounts to the erection of state-sanctioned "green-light districts"[23], the color green being a symbol of Islam.

The French society doubly distances itself from patriarchy: literally, by keeping it away from the center of cities, and figuratively, by deeming the *banlieues* foreign territories: "We realized that the *banlieues* had become for us foreign territories, that there was a part of the French territory whose language, geography and sociology we didn't understand anymore…", extract from a statement made in 2008 by one of the chief editors of national TV channel France 2's news broadcast (Berthaut 2013). This correlatively leads to euphemizing, negating and even completely invisibilizing the existence of gendered domination mechanisms in the rest of France, including in the center of cities. Young men living in the suburbs, just like veiled Muslim women, are therefore perceived as responsible for sexism and homophobia, which are in turn perceived as existing mostly, or even exclusively, in those neighborhoods. The stigmas of the "barbaric", "violent", "savage", "backwards", "fascist", "terrorist" or "delinquent" are spatially assigned to all the inhabitants of these *banlieues*, to characterize them as inferior. These stigmas become literally embodied by the "urban youth" category, the scapegoat used by society to evacuate its own impurity.

The Muslim becomes the new "other", the avatar onto which society projects all of its negative representations. He is the personification of evil. His voice is absent from the media, he is never given an opportunity to speak. He is always represented as "the foreigner within" (Rigouste 2011; Missaoui 1997), and associated with the enemies from outside. He is assumed to be unlike "us", suspected not to share the common values that define "us" and exclude others. This presumption of guilt is only lifted if the believer demonstrates that his allegiance to France as a citizenship prevails over his religious belief by renouncing the right to publicly exert his religious freedom (Baubérot and Milot 2011). All kinds of fantasmatic representations are projected onto him, including sexual representations.

How sexual representations contribute to the strategies that build a hierarchy of civilizations

A neo-orientalist staging of sexuality: Arab women as "beurettes", and young men from the banlieue as "perverts"

Just like orientalism used to depict the Moors sexuality as lewd and licentious, the stereotype of the "urban youth" male living in the *banlieue* is also associated with unbridled sexuality. The media constantly circulates stories coming from the suburbs involving cases of polygamy, of gang rapes (known as "tournantes"), of the control of women's virginity… This participates in developing the notion that women and men in the banlieues have a "deviant" and violent sexuality. Several French mainstream feminist movements understood and instrumentalized those collective rapes and violent episodes in the *banlieues* as formal evidences that Arab males in banlieues are barbaric (Charpenel 2012). The pornographic representations of people of color also participate in constructing this stereotypical imagery. Pornography is the orientalism of the century: it stages the alleged sexual practices of a certain category of people, thus highlighting situations of social domination and power dynamics. Elsa Dorlin (Dorlin 2009)argues that analyzing the representations of sexuality is necessary to establish a heuristic "colonial and sexual genealogy"as Michel Foucault did before(Foucault 1978). Similarly, Pascale Molinier writes that "understanding the fact that sexuality is political implies acknowledging that domination takes roots in our very fantasies […], and confronting sexual issues without looking away"(Molinier 2009, 254). The figure of the "beurette"[24] is crucial in the scenography of

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23. I coined this expression as a reference to the zones of "tolerance" of prostitution, called "red-light districts" in Amsterdam and other cities.

24. A Google search of the word "beurette" found more than 5 million occurrences, almost all of them from pornographic websites. See

French porn. "Beurette" is the feminine version of the word "beur", which comes from the "verlan", slang version of the word "Arab". "Beur" refers to young descendents of North African immigrants and was made popular in 1983 during the historic "march for equality and against racism", renamed "march of the *Beurs*" by the media. This term has a racist connotation, since it distinguishes white French people from those descending from North African immigration. Furthermore, its feminine version, the neologism "beurette", became a sexual "niche", a pornographic trope, reminiscent of the naked Arab women in the orientalist artistic and literary salons such as described by Edward Saïd (Said 2003). The term depicts "the young women assigned to a cultural and familial background stigmatized as backwards and sexist, from which they are to be rescued"[25], as Nacira Guénif Souilamas puts it. The *beurette* is the "white pornographic fantasy" (Fassin and Trachman 2013)of veiled Arab women, oppressed by the indigenous patriarchy of their brothers, their fathers, the young men of their neighborhoods, living in segregated territories (the *banlieues*), and whose social status is low (little education and economic resources). The emancipation of these racialized women from the submission of religious norms and Arab patriarchal domination is paradoxically attained through the acceptance of another domination: white supremacy. Having sex with white men of a superior social class and living outside of the banlieue, in the city centers, subjects them to their sexual, racial, economic and territorial power, which is paradoxically supposed to liberate them from the indigenous and Islamic patriarchy of their neighborhoods. The colonization of our imaginations is as crucial as the colonization of land. Achille Mbembe evidences the importance of dreams and oneiric territories as spaces of resistance to colonization (Mbembe 2000). Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical works(Freud 2011) demonstrated the central place of the "It" and of sexual fantasies in the understanding of a person's psyche. Drawing a parallel with social psychology, we could say that France symbolically reconquers the so-called "lost territories of the Republic" through its pornographic sexual fan-

tasies, by representing, incorporating and embodying these territories within the figure of the "veiled and submissive *beurette*". She is being transferred from one patriarchy to another, from one domination to another, from one territory to the other, from a repressed forbidden sexuality to a liberated pleasurable sexuality. This transfer manifests a war for territorial conquest in which the bodies and vaginas of Muslim women become simultaneously the object, the place and the stake of the symbolic struggle. Through metonymy, Muslim women's bodies are conflated with the "*banlieues*". The desire to conquer them is a sign of the frustration and the nostalgia of the loss of colonial lands of yesteryear.

The *beurette*'s sexuality with racialized men is represented as violent, while her sexuality with white partners, no less brutal, is depicted in porn scenarios as a condition to her emancipation. Thus, many scripted porn scenes tell the story of white men thwarting the authority and vigilance of "oriental" women's brothers or fathers in order to get them naked. The obsession is to remove the Muslim woman's veil, which hides her from the male gaze. Some porn actresses keep their headscarf (or sometimes even a niqab) during the sex, which feeds into the fantasmatic imagery of the veil, often combined with the orientalist folklore of bellydancing. Many scripted porn films play into the stereotypical notion that the *banlieues* are a territory of increased sexism, with scenarios staging a young woman whose brother doesn't let her go out. All these clichés highlight the spatialization (the *cité*, the *banlieue*) of the intersection between Islam (the veil), ethnicity (oriental women) and gender (submissive and oppressed). Racial stereotypes reach their maximum visibility in sexual representations, in which they are obvious and pervasive. The idea that Muslims, and even more so young men from the *banlieues*, have a deviant sexuality, allows society to project onto them its repressed fantasies and to present them as incompatible with the values of civilization. Here we are applying the concept of the "return of the repressed" in Freudian psychoanalysis, and acknowledging the importance of the "It" in understanding our collective unconscious(Freud and Robertson 2008)[26].

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25. Nacira Guénif in BOINET C., «Pourquoi la "Beurette" dérange-t-elle ? »[archive], lesinrocks.com, on March, 2016

26. However, the works of Freud remain questionable on several points, especially the promotion and reproduction of sexist stereotypes.

Is gender the new frontline of the clash of civilizations?

The question of gender equality has become central in public discourse. According to Eric Fassin, the increasing rhetoric on women's rights is not a sign of a sincere concern for their condition or a real intention to improve it. Instead, it evidences a process of politicization and deprivatization of sexuality, which he calls "sexual democratization". The sexual is visibilized in order to "appropriate freedom and equality of gender and sexuality in a postcolonial context", to make them "hallmarks of modernity"(Fassin 2006). The treatment of women and sexual minorities therefore becomes a criterion to establish a hierarchy between cultures and religions. If we transpose this scale of civilizations within the national territory, the scarecrow figure of the "young Arab man" is placed at the bottom of the ranking (Guénif Souilamas and Macé 2004). The local figure of the "urban youth" overlaps with the distant figure of the Taliban – they are conflated with each other, linked by Islam and sexism. The stereotype of the "young Arab man"'s misogyny is strengthened by artistic and media representations of sexism in the *banlieues*. The successful TV series "Aïcha", directed by Yasmina Benguigui and aired between 2008 and 2011, is a typical example. It tells the story of Aïcha, a young woman living in a "cité", who tries to get away from the pressure that her Arab Muslim community imposes on her. Her emancipation is symbolized by the moment when she leaves the *banlieue,* crossing to the other side to meet her beloved, an atheist white man. To escape alienation, she has to go downtown, to get out of the territory of the suburbs, alleged to be sexist and intolerant. A similar script can be found in the movie "All that glitters", released in 2009, for which actress Leïla Bekhti won two awards at the Cesars ceremony. She also became the new ambassador for L'Oréal, which recalls the "fashion and beauty industrial complex" described by Mona Chollet (Chollet 2012). The excessive media coverage of tragic but isolated incidents of forced marriages, "honor killings", "stonings", or cases of young women who were burned alive, contributes to producing an image of the "sexist barbarity of the *banlieues*". These words were used in a TV documentary entitled "La Cité du Mâle", directed by Cathy Sanchez in 2010. The title is a play on word between the word "mâle", which means "male" but is generally used for animals more than for humans, and the word "mal" which means "evil"[27]diabolical. This documentary resorts to the semantic field of the clash of civilization, using words such as "barbarity" and "fascism". These terms reactivate the idea that there is a geographical frontier which serves as a frontline in the war opposing downtown city center and *banlieue*, modernity and backwardness, emancipation of women and Islam, progress and Arabness, West and East.

Conclusion

In order to establish a territorial cartography of racial and religious discriminations, this article has examined the gendered, ethnic, social, economic, cultural and architectural partitioning of French public space. The intent was to demonstrate that the visibility of Muslim religiosity in the spaces of social relegation known as *banlieues*, insidiously bolsters the radical otherization of the immigrant populations living in these neighborhoods. In that respect, the concentration in these territories of what is depicted as "deviant" by the media and the institutions, contributes to the designation and evacuation of what we call "the impurity of the system". In other words, racialized populations become scapegoats that are blamed for all the social problems (delinquency, violence, homophobia, antisemitism, people depending on state handouts, etc). Pretending that the scarecrow figure of the "young Arab man from the *banlieue*" is the only agent of patriarchy proceeds to invisibilize the gendered oppression and segregation that exists everywhere else in France and exempts its perpetrators from their responsibility.

To grasp the complexity of the domination of Muslim and racialized men and women living in the *banlieue*, one needs to understand the concept of intersectionality as the articulation ofvarious identities, among which race and religion are simultaneously or

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27. Etymologically, "diabolical" means "that which divides". Stéphane Dufoix analyzed the way some communities are disqualified, stigmatized and even demonized.

successively used as markers of the assumed inferiority of a civilization.

The question of the treatment of women, pervasive in political discourse, has become one of the main criterions used to distinguish, in the Bourdieusian sense, and to operate hierarchies between civilizations. The alleged subjugation of Muslim women, epitomized by the veil, becomes an indicator of the barbarity of racialized populations: hence justifying their surveillance and their exclusion, both geographical and symbolic.

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