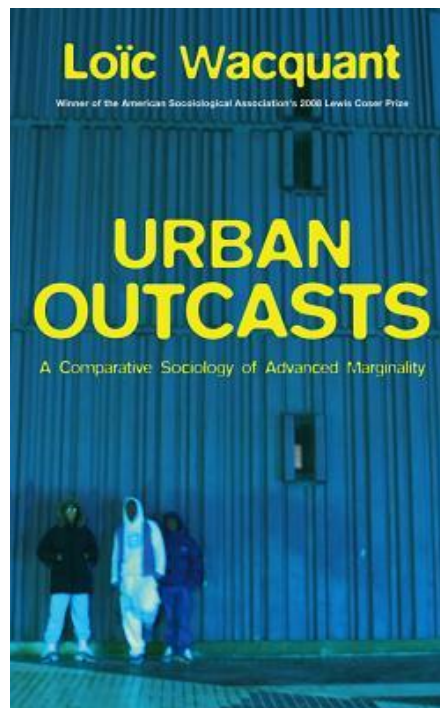




# Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality

*Loïc Wacquant , John Howe*

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Breaking with the exoticizing cast of public discourse and conventional research, *Urban Outcasts* takes the reader inside the black ghetto of Chicago and the deindustrializing banlieue of Paris to discover that urban marginality is not everywhere the same. Drawing on a wealth of original field, survey and historical data, Loïc Wacquant shows that the involution of America's urban core after the 1960s is due not to the emergence of an 'underclass', but to the joint withdrawal of market and state fostered by public policies of racial separation and urban abandonment. In European cities, by contrast, the spread of districts of 'exclusion' does not herald the formation of ghettos. It stems from the decomposition of working-class territories under the press of mass unemployment, the casualization of work and the ethnic mixing of populations hitherto segregated, spawning urban formations akin to 'anti-ghettos'. Comparing the US 'Black Belt' with the French 'Red Belt' demonstrates that state structures and policies play a decisive role in the articulation of class, race and place on both sides of the Atlantic. It also reveals the crystallization of a new regime of marginality fuelled by the fragmentation of wage labour, the retrenchment of the social state and the concentration of dispossessed categories in stigmatized areas bereft of a collective idiom of identity and claims-making. These defamed districts are not just the residual 'sinkholes' of a bygone economic era, but also the incubators of the precarious proletariat emerging under neoliberal capitalism.

*Urban Outcasts* sheds new light on the explosive mix of mounting misery, stupendous affluence and festering street violence resurging in the big cities of the First World. By specifying the different causal paths and experiential forms assumed by relegation in the American and the French metropolis, this book offers indispensable tools for rethinking urban marginality and for reinvigorating the public debate over social inequality and citizenship at century's dawn.

## Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality Details

Date : Published November 12th 2007 by Polity Press (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9780745631240

Author : Loïc Wacquant , John Howe

Format : Hardcover 360 pages

Genre : Cities, Urban Studies, Sociology, Politics, Nonfiction, Urban, Geography, Academic, Philosophy, Theory



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**Loïc Wacquant , John Howe**



# From Reader Review Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality for online ebook

## Heather Meiers says

A comparison of the "ghettos" of Paris and South Side Chicago. There's some great stuff denouncing the supposed ghettoization of France, and some wonderful critiques of the idea of the underclass. The last part sets out his ideas on advanced marginality, which are helpful in understanding the interactions of race and class in both countries.

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## Jill says

In *Urban Outcasts*, Wacquant discusses the emergence of what he terms "advanced marginality" and how it is manifested in urban space in the US as the "hyperghetto". He argues that the urban marginality we see today in the US is fundamentally different from urban poverty in the 1960s and 70s. A kind of marginality that is more entrenched, spatially concentrated and isolating than that in previous decades, Wacquant argues that advanced marginality is first and foremost the product of racial discrimination, modulated by class position and exacerbated by "public policies of urban triage and neglect". Noting that the media, policymakers and academics have sometimes tried to compare the French banlieues to the American ghetto, Wacquant argues that the two are fundamentally different creatures, even though they may share similar traits/challenges such as economic deprivation, high concentration of minorities and populations dominated by young people and seniors.

It's a fascinating argument and for the most part, a convincing one. But there are a couple of things one needs to push past though. First, the repetitiveness of Wacquant's arguments and the tedium (ok ok, I get it!) associated with the repetition. Wacquant notes in the postscript that this text is "a revised and enlarged version of a collection of articles originally prepared at the behest of South American colleagues". Understanding the book as a collection of separate articles stitched together, rather than a single book written from scratch explained why the text kept reiterating, ad nauseum, Wacquant's thesis on the origins of the hyperghetto and how it fundamentally differs from the banlieue. Its 287 pages could have been trimmed by 30 percent without affecting the substantive content of the book.

Second, Wacquant's intellectual arrogance. It is not enough for him to methodically pick apart what he considers to be illogical or intellectually shaky analyses such as the link some academics try to draw between marginalised populations in the US and in Europe. He is openly disdainful, dismissive and even contemptuous in tone with such snide descriptions as "semi-scholarly tale of the 'underclass'". What Wacquant doesn't seem to realise is that these snide comments don't do him any favours. It makes him look cheap rather than amusing, more petty than impressive.

The third issue is more an observation than a criticism. Although the book was published in 2008, the original fieldwork on which this book is based was conducted from 1987-91 in Chicago's South Side, and from 1989-91 in France's La Corneuve. That's a 20 year hiatus. Although Wacquant would have us believe that his theoretical arguments based on his two decades old research still holds, one wonders, reading this book in 2008, whether the banlieue and the 'hyperghetto' of today is the same creature that Wacquant saw 20 years ago (my friends who have worked in such neighbourhoods suggest this is not the case) and how far Wacquant's theories go towards explaining the evolution of these two entities to where they are today.

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## Marie-aimée says

Une lecture très intéressante qui éclaire la formation et le fonctionnement structurel des ghettos américains et des banlieues françaises. L'auteur compare en fait les deux systèmes qui, malgré des similitudes, sont assez différents. C'est à partir de là que l'on dépasse la vision des médias. Parler de ghettoisation concernant les banlieues françaises relève non seulement d'une méconnaissance de l'histoire du ghetto noir américain mais aussi de son fonctionnement et ses relations avec le reste du monde américain. L'auteur analyse aussi bien le discours sociologique que les implications spatiales, qu'elles soient physiques ou mentales. Là est tout l'intérêt. Avec quelques exemples repris au fur et à mesure des chapitres, Loïc Wacquant réussit à dresser un tableau sociologique, géographique particulièrement éclairant. L'Etat est remis à sa juste place, il est autant cause, à l'origine de la genèse de ces enclaves spatiales et sociales, en raison de son rôle de décideur économique, social, culturel et de l'aménagement de l'espace, que de potentiel "solutionneur" des marginalités. Une double facette que l'on a trop tendance à oublier. Une lecture conseillée à tous ceux qui veulent comprendre les structures mêmes de ces espaces marginaux, américains ou français, bien au-delà du débat public actuel.

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## Andrea says

Solid on issues of both race and economics, this is a great book to take you outside the American experience and look back in. It is the American experience I am focusing on for my own research, so this review is one sided even though I fully accept Wacquant's critique of such a focus. I felt less bad about it, as in my own opinion, the comparison of American ghettos and the French *banlieux* reveals there is no real comparison, interesting as the two are. What it does support is Wacquant's key argument, that the ghetto is almost entirely a product of the State, and requires State intervention. He claims the issue as one of political sociology, not one of postindustrial economics, racial demography or urban geography. I'm not sure I buy that entirely, but I do think these are some key insights on America from an author writing in the tradition of Weber and Bourdieu, one who refreshingly accepts none of the prevailing American orthodoxies.

That said, I found it quite hard going. There is an overuse of italics (which as an editor I hate), unless you're much smarter than me you'll have to learn words like *fissiparous* (which I confess I love), and you'll have to work your way through sentences like "The first premiss is that elucidation of the objective conditions under which a collectivity comes to be constructed and identity asserted in the metropolitan core constitutes a sociological prerequisite to the analysis of the *Lebenswelt* of the ghetto and the forms of practice and signification embedded in it." Each chapter also feels as though it were written to stand alone, making it feel redundant in places, and a little stuck together rather than an integrated whole.

But I did immensely appreciate beginning to wrap my head around how post-fordist restructuring of work, segregation, and the cutting of what little support systems and government institutions we had have articulated to produce something new and terrible in American cities. I also loved his statement that the "vague and morally pernicious neologism of 'underclass' and its behavioural-cum-cultural slant mask a phenomenon pertaining to the macrostructural order..." I particularly liked the 'vague and morally pernicious' part, but you may already know how I feel about the term 'underclass'.

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## Chanda Burrage says

In this semi-ethnographic study, Loic Wacquant compares the black ghetto of Chicago and the deindustrializing banlieue of Paris and argues that urban marginality is not the same everywhere. The hyperghettos of Chicago are isolated, containers for poor blacks, which have been abandoned by the market and state. In contrast, the anti-ghettos of Paris are ethnic, heterogeneous industrial locales.

In this book, Wacquant argues that researchers and policymakers have completely ignored the role of race and the state in creating the ghetto. With this, there are six properties of the increasing regime of marginality. First, wage labor for individuals in marginalized communities is a vector of social instability and life insecurity due to its heterogeneity of wage work. Such heterogeneity is characterized by proliferation of part-time, flexible work, reduced social and medical coverage, reduction of average job tenure, the spread of subcontracting, the resurgence of sweatshops, development of telework and fading labor laws.

Second, there has been a functional disconnection from macroeconomic trends. With the significant rise in youth unemployment in French banlieues and Chicago ghettos, "it would take miraculous rates of economic expansion to hope to absorb back into the employment pool those who have been durably expelled from it". Benefits from national economic policies will 'trickle down' to the new urban outcasts last (p. 237).

Third, Wacquant discusses territorial fixation and stigmatization. "In area metropolis of the First World, one or more towns, districts or clumps of public housing are publicly known and recognized as those urban hellholes in which violence, vice and dereliction are the order of things" (p. 238). I thought it was interesting in the chapter on stigmatization that Wacquant points out that numerous individuals living in the Chicago ghetto had never seen a white person in their daily lives, except for on TV. I had grown up hearing about several whites in rural areas of, for example, West Virginia, who had never seen a black person in their daily lives, except for on TV. This suggests to me that discourses via the TV and other media outlets play a major role in how we see and understand race. This is played out in the urban and industrial communities of both Chicago and France.

Fourth, urban ghettos are spatially alienated and dissolved of 'place'. Urban communities for African Americans are no longer a place, as during the Black Power Movement, that offered a shared resource for people to mobilize and deploy shelter from white domination. Nor is it a place where they can find collective support for their strategies of mobility. On the contrary, this locale has become "a vector of intra-communal division and an instrument for the virtual imprisonment of the black urban subproletariat...".

Fifth, there is a loss of hinterland in marginalized communities. Today, individuals excluded from paid employment in neighborhoods of relegation cannot readily rely on collective informal support while they wait for new work which may never come. To survive, they must rely on 'hustling'.

Finally, Wacquant explains that advanced marginalization develops in a larger context of class decomposition and deproletarianization rather than toward proletarian unification and homogenization. Industrial laborers are made expendable by technological innovations. In addition, labels such as 'new poor', 'underclass' and 'banlieues youth', etc. have been used to designate and disperse disparate populations.

Two primary solutions that he offers are (1) re-establish and/or expand state services to guarantee equitable provision of basic public resources across all urban areas and (2) stop assuming that a large majority of the

adults of advanced society can or will see their basic needs met by lifelong formal employment. In this section and the following on structural logics that fuel the new urban poverty, it was difficult for me to determine when he was referring to Chicago or Paris. Do these policy critiques apply to one or both? How do they differ in each context?

However, the topic that really grabbed me was the relationship between poverty and the penal system. How does the State cope with advanced marginality? The state handles this through the punitive containment of the poor in the increasingly isolated and stigmatized neighborhoods in which they are confined, on one hand, and in jails and prisons, on the other. This is a good lead into another book that I am reading, 'The New Jim Crow', by Michelle Alexander.

Overall, I gained a deeper understanding of the geographical differences of urban marginalization while reading *Urban Outcasts* and found the ethnographical analysis to be useful in describing the real issues confronting 'ghetto life'.

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### **Patricia says**

Ik heb het in het Nederlands gelezen: *Paria's van de stad*, het leest heel vlot en slaat de nagel op de kop. Hoe steden hun eigen marginaliteit kweken

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### **Geert says**

<http://www.epo.be/uitgeverij/boekinfo...>

*Paria's van de stad* neemt de lezer mee naar het zwarte getto van Chicago en de banlieues in Frankrijk. Aan de hand van oorspronkelijk veldwerk, statistisch onderzoek en historische gegevens bewijst Loïc Wacquant dat er grote verschillen zijn tussen de stedelijke marginaliteit in Europa en in de VS. Aan weerszijden van de oceaan bepalen vooral het overheidsbeleid en de structuren van de staat hoe klasse, ras en woonplaats elkaar beïnvloeden.

Dit boek werpt een nieuw licht op de explosieve mix van toenemende armoede, onvoorstelbare rijkdom en straatgeweld in de grote steden van de Eerste Wereld. Het reikt onmisbare instrumenten aan om stedelijke marginaliteit te herdefiniëren en het publieke debat over sociale ongelijkheid en burgerschap een nieuwe impuls te geven.

Colofon:

isbn: 9789491297212 · 2012 · paperback (15 x 22,5 cm) - 384p. - oorspr.titel: *Urban Outcasts* - uit het Engels vertaald door Tineke Jager, Dries Rombouts en Geert Verschueren · prijs: € 26.50

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### **Celinakok says**

A well-organised presentation of analysis and findings from his years of ethnographic field work in Chicago and Paris's ghetto.

Worth reading, especially his way of presenting the argument is flawless.

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## Yves Gounin says

On ne peut pas ouvrir sans appréhension le livre d'un sociologue dont Wikipédia annonce sans rire qu'il a jeté «les linéaments d'une épistémologie du sujet objectivant » (sic). Mais, passées les réticences qu'inspire un sabir inutile, le livre de Loïc Wacquant se révèle riche d'enseignements sur les « quartiers » et leurs pathologies.

L'auteur, jeune sociologue français disciple de Pierre Bourdieu, parti à Chicago poursuivre un doctorat sur le système colonial de Nouvelle-Calédonie, témoigne du choc subi à la découverte du ghetto noir américain à la fin des années 80 et de l'urgence ressentie à en faire l'analyse. Depuis lors, Loïc Wacquant a multiplié les articles et les interventions sur la ségrégation urbaine, étudiant, alternativement et comparativement, la Ceinture noire américaine et la Ceinture rouge européenne.

La principale leçon de ces regards croisés est l'irréductible différence des deux phénomènes. La mise au point est d'autant plus utile que le discours médiatique et politique, en France, se plaît à agiter « le spectre de la convergence transatlantique » (p. 280).

Sans doute, des deux côtés de l'Atlantique la relégation urbaine emprunte-t-elle certaines formes similaires. Les ghettos américains et les banlieues françaises sont, les uns comme les autres, frappés par la paupérisation et la dépopulation. Le paysage y est uniformément déprimant et oppressant. La stigmatisation est universelle : confesser, à un recruteur ou même à un ami, une adresse au Bronx ou aux Minguettes constitue un aveu souvent infamant.

Pour autant, Loïc Wacquant démontre avec efficacité que les différences l'emportent sur les similarités. Aux Etats-Unis, le ghetto – ou sa dérive contemporaine que l'auteur qualifie d'hyperghetto (p. 110) – est un univers fermé, hyper-violent, racialement et culturellement homogène. Sous ces trois registres, les « banlieues » françaises se distinguent des ghettos américains. Les « banlieues » vivent au contact des centres urbains et ses habitants peuvent aller y « traîner » pour faire, quelques heures durant, l'expérience de l'inclusion sociale, là où les immenses ghettos fonctionnent en vase clos. Elles ne connaissent pas les mêmes degrés de violence que ceux qui prévalent aux Etats-Unis : si l'insécurité y est rampante, les homicides y restent exceptionnels tandis qu'ils sont monnaie courante outre-Atlantique. Enfin, la banlieue se caractérise par sa mixité ethnique : les « Français de souche » y restent nombreux ; quant aux populations immigrées, elles ne sont jamais mono-ethniques, alors que les ghettos américains sont noirs à 95 % .

Ces différences conduisent à des revendications dissemblables : aux Etats-Unis, tout tourne autour de l'opposition « raciale » entre Noirs et Blancs – sachant que le métissage biologique n'a pas permis l'émergence sociologique d'une catégorie intermédiaire. En France au contraire, l'antagonisme principal n'oppose pas les immigrés aux familles françaises autochtones. Comme l'a puissamment illustré le film "La Haine" (1995) ou les manifestations de fin 2005, le clivage dominant oppose « les jeunes », quelle que soit leur origine, au reste du monde. Cette absence de racisme au cœur des cités mérite d'être souligné, parce qu'il rompt avec les pires clichés sur les « banlieues ». Grâce à l'école, où la force de l'habitude rapproche les enfants de toutes les communautés, les « jeunes » des banlieues ont une tradition de mélange ethno-racial qu'illustre leur très forte exogamie .. Aussi n'est-il guère surprenant que leurs revendications ne soient pas communautaires mais citoyennes : les jeunes revendiquent moins des droits spécifiques que l'accès aux droits de tous .

La principale différence entre le Ghetto noir et la Ceinture rouge réside toutefois dans le rôle qu'y joue ou que n'y joue pas l'Etat. Au modèle états-unien de « rétrécissement planifié » (planned shrinkage), caractérisé par « le retrait et l'effondrement des institutions publiques » (p. 220) l'auteur oppose le volontarisme français. Il a certes la dent dure sur l'efficacité des politiques publiques qui ont été menées depuis la fin des



années 80 depuis la création du RMI jusqu'au Développement social des quartiers, leur reprochant de remédier aux effets de la relégation urbaine plutôt que d'en attaquer les causes ; mais il reconnaît qu'elles auront permis de « tisser un filet de protection vital » (p. 230).

La responsabilité de l'Etat dans l'aggravation de la relégation urbaine est peut-être la principale conclusion des travaux menés par Loïc Wacquant depuis près de vingt ans. D'article en article, il martèle le même message aux antipodes de la théorie anglo-saxonne de l'underclass : « l'isolement social dans le cœur de métropole (...) n'est pas un état déterminé par le comportement individuel ou la constitution morale de ceux qui y sont relégués (...) L'isolement des parias urbains (...) est le produit d'un processus actif de largage institutionnel (...) Ses sources ne sont pas simplement économiques (...) elles sont aussi et surtout proprement politiques, ancrées dans l'abandon du ghetto par l'Etat (...) » (p. 231). Si l'Etat porte une telle responsabilité, alors on peut attendre de lui qu'il résolve certains des problèmes qu'il a créés. Sans surprise, Loïc Wacquant – dont l'autre objet d'étude est le système pénitentiaire – vilipende la criminalisation de la pauvreté qui laisse intacte les causes de cette pauvreté. On l'aurait aimé plus disert sur les innovations radicales qu'il préconise, telles que l'instauration d'une allocation universelle de subsistance, lorsqu'il se borne à renvoyer à l'œuvre de Philippe Van Parijs.

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### **Heather says**

In general, Loic Wacquant is a genius, but this wasn't really his best. The first three chapters were very redundant and not particularly insightful. The bits about France were interesting, though - i'd recommend skipping right to those chapters.

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### **Tara says**

This is a book iam reading. It is a "comparityive sociology of advanced marginality." Loic looks at the hyper ghettoization of the the black urban core in the united states. Loic comapres this to the suburban peripheries of France. Loic's point is to demonstrate the how marginality is differs in both places. Loic wants to maintain the historic and cultural specifities of these two different places, while at the same time, showing how there are external, structural economic factors that shape the developepment and disintegration of these communities.

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