

## Muslims Youths, Transgression and the Global City in an Era of ‘War on Terror’

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In May 2015, a group of youths was arrested at the Montreal airport for allegedly trying to fly to Syria as they attempted to follow another group of young Montrealers who had left months earlier. Their departure followed the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and Ottawa attacks in October 2014 and pushed the government of Quebec and the city of Montreal to develop a deradicalization action plan and open a prevention center. These events are related to the situation in Europe<sup>1</sup> and the different attacks and bombings in global cities since New York in 2001. Yet, they also raise questions on the relationship between youth and violence and the emergence of *homegrown terrorism* (Roy 2008; Crone and Harrow 2011).

In the transition from the 1980s Cold War era to the contemporary ‘*economic war*’, the dawn of the 21st century has arguably been defined by the ‘*War on terror*’ (Reid 2005). Post-9/11 dominant social discourses and strategic programs emphasize danger, risk and security, but also identity and immigration, with racialized youth -- predominantly from Arab and Muslim communities -- framed as potential threats to national order (Kundnani 2009; Lindekilde 2012). The concept of radicalization emerged as a tool to theoretically and analytically consolidate and anchor these discourses and programs (Sedgwick 2010; Kundnani 2012).

Meanwhile on a global scale, we must also consider the implications and transformations brought on by the demonstrations and protests involving youth worldwide. Riots in Paris and London, the *#BlackLivesMatter* or *Nuit Debout* movements, the *Arab Springs* and the *Maple spring*, remind us that contemporary youth experience intricate and complex sociocultural logics, leading scholars to call for the study of their broader social conditions: exclusion, racism, violence, injustices, inequalities, etc.

We can therefore ask how these radicalization prevention programs and dominant social discourses will make the distinction between transgressive actions with social transformation potentials and illegitimate violent actions aimed at individuals and institutions. How do the discourse production and the different measures impact youth’s everyday life? What is their place in these discourses and programs?

Drawing from fieldwork as a researcher and practitioner in different cities in France and more recently in Quebec, I explore the everyday life of racialized youth in urban plural contexts. Through these explorations, I compare and contrast the tools and strategies racialized youth mobilize to make their path in the global city and claim their ‘*Right to the city*’ (Lefebvre 1968). This paper is an illustration of my thesis project reflecting on my professional experience as a social worker in the French ‘*banlieues*’, and research experiences in the fields of Youth Studies and social intervention methodology. I supervised young French Muslims and Muslim immigrants, mostly from Maghreb countries, in different activities and community centres. Now, I intend to link this experience with

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<sup>1</sup> On April 1<sup>st</sup>, the International Center for Counter-Terrorism estimated the number of foreign fighters from the European Union Member States in Syria and Iraq between 3,922 and 4,294.

Muslim youth from Saint-Michel, and youth from the Black community of Little Burgundy, both low-income and immigrant neighbourhoods in Montreal.

This paper will attempt to question, in a comparative perspective from France and Quebec, the tensions, strategies, tactics, and contradictions, Muslim youths employ to navigate their everyday life in the global city, and then enlighten the obstacles, resources and limits they face and encounter through their journey. My hypothesis is that their urbanity, defined as “a historically situated and geographically unevenly distributed condition, characterized by interdependencies, unpredictability, mobility, differences, speed, and intense affects that are shaping sociopolitical relations and everyday life” (Boudreau 2010) is rarely taken in account in the dominant social discourses, youth policies or prevention strategies.

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