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The Riots Explained

– Research and Media Explanations of the Riots in Paris 2005,
London 2011 and Stockholm 2013

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Foreword

Putting the last word to this thesis means putting the last word on a long process of hard work. Moments of difficulties have walked hand in hand with productivity and determination. In this journey I have not been alone, but there are a number of people to whom I would like to send my deepest appreciation, for helping me to make this work possible.

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Abstract

The riots of Paris 2005, London 2011 and Stockholm 2013 all share a number of similarities. They started from similar triggering points, in poor areas and spread to the rest of the capitals and then to other cities of the countries. In this thesis work we study how the riots have been explained by two influential actors; research and media. They both provide us with a writing of an event, on which others describe them, later on. By using the concepts of structure and agency, as well as the combinations made between them, we have found that research has a stronger focus on a number of central actors and that structural aspects receive more attention than in the media. However, the media provides a larger amount of perspectives on the riots, making their analysis less focused, but it has the advantage of finding more possible explanations. We could also identify how the less politically conservative media, that has been studied in this work, tended to stand closer to researchers in their explanations and the conservative ones were more liable to turn to agency explanations than to structural ones. The development of each of the riots affected the explanations of them, but previous writings about riots, both in media and academic research also played a part in how the actors chose to write about them. Poverty, and the ways of understanding poverty, is central in explaining why the explanations differ between cases and explanatory sources and the ways that we look at this term might need to be reconsidered.

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1. Introduction

Scenes of rioting youth in the Stockholm high rise suburbs of Husby in May 2013 were broadcast around the world. The events came as a shock for a world that had learnt to consider Sweden as a country of equal living conditions, and low political tension. The New York Times (2013) stressed that it shook the Swedish identity and Stephen Evans of the BBC argued that it forced us to reconsider the image of Sweden. He stated that “[i]t is not any more the Sweden we all thought we knew” (BBC 2013). However, expressions of collective violence in Western European capitals was far from a new phenomenon. Rather, the riots of Stockholm could be placed in a list of similar events, which have been spoken of as riots in post-war Western countries (Wacquant 2008, pp. 20-25; Björk 2013, p. 30; Body-Gendrot 2012, p. 7), making it a new case of comparison within that category. The riots of Paris 2005 and London 2011 are two of the other cases, and they can both provide an understanding of the Stockholm riots and be seen in a new light when compared to the riots of Stockholm.

1.1 Background

In Stockholm, the triggering point of the riots was the unfortunate police action of shooting Lenine Relvas-Martins, a 69 year-old man in his apartment in Husby on the 14th of May 2013 after having threatened private security guards with a knife. The initial information provided by the police stated that Lenine Relvas-Martins had been taken to the hospital after the shooting. At the same time that this information found it's way to the medias TV- and online publications, local inhabitants could witness how an already dead man was transported away from his apartment in a hearse (*Uppdrag Granskning* 2014-02-11). The shooting was followed by five days during which local groups protested against the faulty information of the shooting, and of the man who was shot. As protests remained unheard, by the police, the media and the politicians, the protesting eventually transformed into violent expressions.

The riots of Paris 2005 and London 2011 have many similarities with the Swedish case. The triggering point has in both cases been argued to be actions of excessive police violence, resulting in the death of inhabitants coming from poor areas. In the Parisian banlieues (suburbs) of Clichy-sous-Bois, two young boys of immigrant descent, Zyed and Bouna, were electrocuted in an electric station after being chased by the police in order to conduct an identity check. The time between the deaths and the break-out of the violent uprisings was much shorter than in Stockholm. The same evening of the deaths the uprising started, following on a protest that had, similarly to Stockholm, not been acknowledged by the police, politicians or media.

In London, it was Mark Duggan, a 29-year-old black man who was shot by the police. The

shooting took place in the poor area of Tottenham, where Mark Duggan lived. He was stopped by a police unit having him under surveillance at the time, and after having received indications that he was “planning to take possession of a firearm”, the police decided to try to arrest him (Metropolitan Police Service 2012). What then happened remains partially unclear, but the initial information given by the police, that there had been a shoot-out between the police and Mark Duggan, later proved to be incorrect. The IPCC (The Independent Police Complaints Commission) is still investigating the shooting and has not left any final report on the matter. The time that elapsed between the shooting and the start of the riots was more than two full days, placing London between Paris and Stockholm.

The suburban areas where the uprisings started, and where the excessive police violence took place, were all poor areas. In Stockholm, Husby is part of the poorest district of the city (Nilsson & Melldahl 2012, p. 25), and has a large proportion of immigrants, or children of immigrants. Furthermore, the unemployment rate had increased in the area for the last years prior to the riots and Sweden had, since a while, been the country of the OECD-members where inequality was growing at the highest speed (OECD 2011, pp. 22-25). Paris and London both saw similar backgrounds of poverty in the areas where the riots started. In Clichy-sous-Bois more than 30 percent of the population was unemployed in 1999, and had increased by 2009 (INSEE 2012). The conditions of the Tottenham area not better. Being part of the deprived areas of Haringey, the Tottenham area is among the most poverty struck and deprived of the entire nation (Haringey Council 2011, p. 3). Both Clichy-sous-Bois and Tottenham inhabitants were to a large proportion immigrants, or of immigrant descent, once again showing similarities with the Swedish case.

It is important to note that the three cases are not identical. We will see that the development of the riots took different paths and that the groups participating in them were not the same. The historical context of each city in which the riots took place is another dimension on which they differ. Furthermore, there are other cases, such as the riots in Athens 2008, that could have been interesting to study¹. However, despite differences between them, we have considered that the relatively strong similarities between the riots of Paris, London and Stockholm make them better objects of comparison in this study than other cases of Western European riots.

1.2 Purpose, aim and research question

The cases of Paris, London and Stockholm are all cases of Western European riots and took place within a time period of less than a decade. They all erupted after acts of excessive police violence in socio-economically deprived urban areas. They can, thus, be considered as cases of the same form of riots. Numerous studies have been conducted of the events in London and Paris,

1 See ex. Vradis, Antonis (2009)

whereas the more recent riots of Stockholm have been subject of fewer studies. In order to make possible a qualitative approach of the research on the Stockholm riots, there is a need to look into what the cases of Paris and London have taught us. However, the initial studies of the Stockholm riots are also interesting in terms of how well the research made corresponds to the findings of Paris and London.

An important actor who has been providing information to the researchers is the media. In the case of the London riots, cooperation between media and academic research, in the *Reading the riots*-project, also show the two actor's important positions in the production of understanding of such events. The influence of the media on the writing of the riots has thus been important. As a highly influential actor, it is also needed to look further into the explanations provided by the media. The media agents can choose who will get the opportunity to be quoted in the press, or interviewed on TV. Moreover, they can choose how to present background facts, reasons and theories concerning such events. Studying the media presentations of the riots might, thus, bring new understanding to the events themselves, but also provide a more profound understanding of the media role in society. It is therefore useful to examine how the media has reported about the riots and how their reporting corresponds to the research conducted on the same events.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to analyse and compare the explanations of the riots provided by the media and by research. In order to successfully reach this purpose, four research questions are needed. They are:

- How has the research explained the riots?
- How has the media explained the riots?
- What differences are there between the research explanations and the media explanations in the three cases?
- How can these differences be explained?

Before starting our presentation of the results, we need to take a look at the disposition and the conditions of our work.

1.3 Disposition

In the next chapter we will outline the methodological foundations and choices for this study. The third chapter will treat theoretical concepts on which we will base our analysis. In order not to ignore, or miss, the influence of each case on the writings, we will present each riot as a separate chapter, in which academic research and media will both be presented. Hence, chapter four will be dedicated to Paris, chapter five to London and chapter six to Stockholm. The final chapter

will be one of discussion and conclusions, and build on the continuous analysis that follows through the chapters of each case of the riots.

2. Research methods and previous studies

Both research and the media hold influential positions in writing the history, or the description, of an event. The time frame, the methods and the readers differ in the two forms of produced text, among other differences. In this study, however, we place them on the same discourse analytical platform. Discourse analysis concerns how we speak of and use language to describe a social phenomenon (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2000, p. 7; Bergström & Boréus 2012, p. 354), and how this, in turn, creates our understanding and ways of looking at a social phenomenon (Bryman 2008, p. 500). It thus corresponds to our purpose, aim and research questions and is a suitable approach when answering to them. The concern with the explanations of the riots is also the point on which research and media relate to each other.

Structure and agency are two central concepts in sociology, from which a view on a phenomenon, or a theory, can be seen. In this study the concepts provide the possibility of ascribing specific positions taken in an explanation of an event. Naturally, a stronger emphasis of structural reasons give smaller importance to individual decisions and actions, and the other way around. As shown in the introduction, a number of points by the time of the eruption of the riots are similar between our three cases.

2.1 Discourse comparisons of research and media

There are different degrees of structural or agency explanations, and whereas 'stigmatisation' is a strong term that is likely to figure in structural explanations, 'criminality' might indicate structural or agency explanations depending on the context in which it is used. In turn, agency can be read in the notion of individual influence of the riots, but this might be an expression of a structural role that the individual holds. It is, thus, important to read the full meaning of a media article, a book or a paragraph of a research writing and not to limit ourselves to single words. Finding entirely homogeneous explanations with research or media is unlikely in any of the cases. Instead, it is the diversity within each of the research or media sources that forms the point of comparison between the explanations.

This study is by no means the first to compare research and media. In some aspects, all research studying media derives from a previous knowledge of research. The comparison of research and media on the same level, however, is slightly more rare. It is important to remember that any scientific work has a special relation to the scientific context, and this study is no exception. There is a scientific frame to it. However, by studying research and media writings through discourse and comparative units, none of them is given greater importance than the other and the explanations provided are not considered as more or less correct for any of the two sources.

The methods used here need, however, to be motivated. This calls for a need of outlining how the relationship between research and media writings have previously been studied.

By studying a number of different situations of research and media explanations to equity and quality of mathematics education, Forgasz and Leder (2011) have found that the media tends to make simple generalisations of complex situations. Forgetting, ignoring or not mentioning a parameter such as the quality of education gives a complete different impression of equity and, for instance, a faulty idea of differences between girls and boys may be presented (p. 218). The need for an analysis also of research is shown in Danner and Carmody's (2001) study of school shootings in the United States, in which they compare the media coverage and the academic position to the shootings. The academic positions vary, they argue, according to the disciplines to which the scientists belong, even though the common point is that there is a larger interest for background explanations among researchers than what is the case for the media explanations.

Donner and Carmody further identify how the media is more likely to ask professionals and experts than neighbours, family members of the criminals or other people who might have known the offender. However, they systematically turn to “criminal justice professionals first, and to academics last” (Danner & Carmody 2001, p. 107). Both academic and media writings may choose an angle from which they tell their story. In cases of large scale protesting, media coverage may help protesters to achieve their goals, which has been observed by Thörn (2006, pp. 17-18, 196-198) in the case of the South African struggle with apartheid. The use of violence in protests has, however, often received negative attention.

The 'Protest paradigm' has been used as a label for the criticising news coverage of protests and protesters have been “portrayed as odd-looking deviant lawbreakers who stir up trouble for no discernible reason” (McCluskey et al 2009, p. 354). Furthermore, the relation between the protesters and the police is often highlighted, rather than the relation between the protesters and the target of their protests, and the pluralism of a society plays a major role in the news reports of the protesters and their chances of making their voice heard, through quotations for instance, in the reports (McCluskey et al. 2009, pp. 356, 366-368). Danner and Carmody (2001, pp. 108-110) also note that the background of those committing a crime is an important factor of how big attention they receive in the media reports, showing that other aspects than mere facts about events can have influence in how the media reports about them.

2.2 The selection of material

The selection of research publications of the three riots needs to be motivated. Few publications have been made about the Stockholm riots, so far, providing us with a limited number of sources. Therefore the selection of material of these riots was simple. We will use all the

published sources there are. In the cases of Paris and London the situation is the opposite to that of Stockholm. A large number of works have been published. The selection process of scientific material has followed a number of strategic stages. Initially, we located articles and books concerning the riots of Paris and London and excluded the publications that did not hold the riots as the primary subject. Furthermore, we specifically located influential sources, to which other researchers referred. As a final step we have chosen researchers from different academic fields, in order to see if explanations depend on the academic field, or if explanations share a strong similarity. The number of sources in each case has varied. For the London riots we have used a number of articles written by researchers as a part of the “Reading the riots”-project, but as these sources were not published in a purely scientific context, we have chosen to use a larger number of material in this case than for the others. Equally, an anthology or a book counts for a more complete source than an article, why the number of sources of the riots in Paris are slightly fewer. The sources used have been:

	Articles
Paris	Dikec 2006; Mucchielli & Aït-Omar 2009; Schneider 2008; Mucchielli and Delon 2006; Mansouri 2013; Yazbeck Haddad and Balz 2006; Demiati 2009; Ocqueteau 2007; Le Goaziou & Mucchielli 2007
London	Aiello & Pariante 2013; Bridges 2012; Cavanagh & Dennis 2012; Newburn 2012; Phillips, Frost and Singleton 2013; Lewis et al. 2011; Henri 2011; Bramwell 2011; Conroy 2011; Baudains, Braithwaite and Johnson 2013; Rashid 2011; James 2011; Simsek 2011; Till 2012; Bauman 2012; Banyon 2012; Body-Gendrot 2012
Stockholm	Schierup, Åhlund & Kings 2014, Sernhede 2014, Thörn 2013, de los Reyes et al. 2014

Figure 1. Selection of sources of academic research

Media does not consist of only one type of sources, but can span from printed news journals or tabloids to social media or information and communication technologies (McCurdy 2013, p. 59; Ericsson, Molina & Ristilammi 2000, p. 31). Despite the growing influence of social media, news papers still hold a position of trustworthiness and, hence, a strong position when it comes to complex phenomena such as rioting (McCurdy 2013, pp. 59-60). As people do not rely on one media actor only (Nygren 2005, p. 26) and one single newspaper would not answer to the diversity asked for in this study, we have chosen to study two newspapers in each country of interest. Starting with the first day of reporting on the riots, the newspapers of between six and seven consecutive days have been studied. We have followed a natural time period, meaning that the last day of reporting in Paris and London have been a Saturday, as Sundays are newspaper free days, although the Saturday was the seventh day in Paris and the sixth in London. In Stockholm the natural end to the reporting was a Sunday, as it marked the end of the weeks reporting of the riots.

Newspapers are produced by a number of different writers. It would be wrong to argue that each writer has the same opinion. However, we are looking for the major explanations in each of them, rather than internal differences. Doing so means it would not be useful to divide each paper in editorials, articles, columns or other categories. Hence, all published writings of each newspaper are considered to represent the newspaper's explanations of the riots.

As one of the parameters of this study is the comparison between countries, our selection of newspapers has aimed to represent actors of large influence on the national debate, and thus the national discourse. In doing so we have identified two of the major newspapers of the countries. As we have aimed at diversity in the reporting we have selected newspapers of different political stance, and as we have looked out for trustworthy, influential actors. The newspapers chosen are:

	Newspapers	Political stance
Paris	Le Monde	Liberal
	Le Figaro	Conservative
London	The Guardian	Liberal
	The Daily Telegraph	Conservative
Stockholm	Dagens Nyheter	Liberal
	Svenska Dagbladet	Conservative

Figure 2. Selection of newspapers

As we can see from the selection, we are looking for a representative image of research and media of the three different cases. However, we will not conduct two isolated studies, but an essential aspect is the comparative approach. The explanations of the riots, in each of the sources, will be presented from their emphasis of structure, agency or a combination of the two.

2.3 Ethical considerations

We can see that structural and agency explanations lean on, and overlap, each other during riots. Studying research and media explanations to riots initially calls for the ability to present them in a correct way. Furthermore, both research and media use other sources, interviews with people and references to other sources. These all need to be considered as we study the publications. However, as all publications are accessible for any reader, no difficulties appear in speaking of them or analysing them. Anyone who wishes to contest the results found in this study may search for the original source and see for themselves whether they agree or not with my interpretation of the meaning.

Interpretation is, as we shall see, an important aspect of this thesis. Working with material in three different languages implies a gap between exact words and ways of expressing, putting a demand on the researcher to understand the context and the meaning of the writings. This is a

further argument for the importance of searching for meanings rather than choices of words. The times that quotations of French or Swedish writings have been used, I have interpreted them as close to their original meaning as I have been able to. As any interpreter knows, however, two language never correspond exactly and we need to keep in mind that this issue cannot completely be erased from this kind of work.

3. Theoretical concepts

In order to follow the theoretical concepts in the research explanations of the riots, we will here outline concepts forwarded in previous research on riots, related to the explanations provided in our study. We have divided the concepts in 'structure', 'agency' and 'combinations of structure and agency' as this division will be used in the presentation of our collected data.

3.1 Structural concepts

The city has long been a space of large gaps between the rich and the poor. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, Engels identified differences in the living conditions of social groups in English cities. He stated that “[w]hat is true of London, is true also of all the great towns, such as Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds. Everywhere one finds on the one hand the most barbarous indifference and selfish egotism and on the other the most distressing scenes of misery and poverty. Signs of social conflict are to be found everywhere” (Engels 1971 [1845] p. 31). Yet, it has been argued that the difference, or the feelings of difference, between rich and poor areas in the Western European city are even larger today than before (ex. Johansson 2003, p. 29; Dikec 2006, p. 160; Peterson 2003, p. 71; Wright & Gamble 2011, pp. 495-496 Sernhede 2003, p. 109; Anderson 2010, p. 2). The term 'social exclusion' shows how segregation blocks people from certain spheres, and that there can be several faces of poverty, such as exclusion from political, economic or cultural systems (Byrne 2005, pp. 2-3).

The eruption of the riots in Paris, London and Stockholm took place in socio-economically deprived areas, leaving them on the margins of society. In many cases the areas have contained a large proportion of immigrants, and the proportions of rioters with an immigrant background, or descent, has, thus, been large as well. Marginals are, according to Young (2009, p. 63) people unwanted by the system of labour, either because the system cannot, or does not want to use them. In a similar way, segregation is a form of marginalisation, or exclusion, of the liveable space. Wacquant (2007, p. 2) describes this exclusion as a socio-spatial relegation, locking people out from social or economic opportunities because of their membership of a certain social group. This marginalisation he names 'advanced marginality', stating that “[r]ather than being disseminated throughout working-class areas, advanced marginality tends to be concentrated in isolated and bounded territories increasingly perceived by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, leprous badlands at the heart of the postindustrial metropolis where only the refuse of society would agree to dwell” (Wacquant 2007, p. 237).

The inhabitants of the segregated areas become mere parts of the marginalised groups (Wacquant 2007, p. 174), and although social actors attempt to break out of their state of

deprivation, these structures are often consistent over long periods of time (Sernhede 2003, p. 125; Young 2009, p. 56; Tilly 1998, pp. 6-8). The structures are reproduced not only by groups holding superior social positions, but also by the deprived groups themselves, through socialisation of group behaviour (Young 2009, p. 59; Hylland Eriksen 1995, p. 95). An issue of long term marginalisation is that negative stereotypes are likely to be attributed to disadvantaged groups, which leads to stigmatisation (Anderson 2010, p. 46), and Wacquant (2007) argues that the close relation between poverty and riots should prove that it is not immigration that causes riots, but rather how immigrants are placed on the margins of society, with small chances of making their ways out of this exclusion (pp. 20-23).

A stigma is, according to Goffman (1986 [1963], pp. 2-3), the ascription of attributes to a person that reduces them from whole and usual, to tainted and discounted. Those attributes mark the difference between the person's virtual and actual social identity. When a gathering of social groups on the margin of society occurs, Wacquant (2007) describes them as cases of 'territorial stigmatisation' (p. 5-7). The concentration of immigrants in the poor, rioting areas can be related to this concept.

3.2 Agency concepts

Just like structural approaches to certain actions do not dismiss the participation of individuals in them, agency approaches do not deny that there is an influence of social structures on specific events. The emphasise on structural or agency factors do, however, distinguish one explanation from another. The influence ascribed to individual, or collective, actors, such as a police unit or a group of rioters, must be considered in this study. A major argument of more agency oriented researchers has been that explanation of a social phenomenon in generalising terms, ignores the diversity of the agents taking part of it. Reicher (2004) states that “[t]o talk of 'conflict' or 'aggression' or 'violence' leads us to ignore what people actually do in any given situation. It leads us to reduce the rich diversity of human action to an abstract uniformity and, by ignoring the specifics of action, it renders such actions refractory to explanation” (p. 924). For instance, aggression may explain the background to why an actor hits another actor, but the decision of actually hitting is not merely a result of a background feeling or event.

We may also divide agents into several different groups. Immigrants are not only “immigrants”, but could as well be divided into their origins of a certain continent, a specific country or even a region. Cultural differences provide us with a set of tools, from which we can choose when it comes to properly handling a situation (Small, Harding & Lamont 2010, pp. 9-10). Furthermore, actions relate to images of how others expect us to act. For instance, Sernhede (2003, p. 116) notes that the media image of immigrants as dangerous is often used by the immigrants in

order to gain power in a society that has learnt to reject them that. However, this momentary influence leaves a bitter-sweet taste, as fear makes people stay away from those who have had violent reactions previously. The media image of suburban areas as violent, is also most often strongly exaggerated (Wacquant 2007, pp. 156-158), and tends to focus on small crimes on the border of the legal. Wacquant (ibid.) states that the fear of Western European suburban areas are “fed mostly by the sense of seclusion of its residents, the degraded ecology of the neighbourhood, and the nagging petty delinquency that makes youths the scapegoats of all the ills of the city. Armed robberies are rare [...] and the most serious crimes result in death only extraordinarily” (p. 157).

The importance of actions in specific situations offers an important contribution to understanding events, and according to Collins (2009) a situational approach must be taken into account when attempting to explain acts of violence. By studying images of people's faces during violent events, Collins has found that aggression, anger and similar emotions are not the most common expression. Instead, he names that expression *confrontational tension/fear* (p. 567). In situations of rioting violence between two groups, such as rioters and police officers, is avoided as long as the groups are gathered and none of them is dominant, Collins argues (p. 570). A micro-sociological advantage needs to take place in order for violent actions to happen.

From an agency perspective the spreading of actions such as those in a riot start with a connection between individuals. Collins (2014) argues that emotions get stronger when shared with others, and that emotions transform when groups of people are gathered. As people are gathered, with their attention directed at the same object and with a shared emotion, Collins names this an “interaction ritual” (pp. 299-300). In his analysis of the urban unrest in Gothenburg in 2009, Björk (2013) uses both the cultural mechanisms and the interaction rituals of the rioters to describe the riots. Many people of the groups otherwise identified as rioters, did not take part in the violence, which Björk means is a part of their cultural convictions that such tools are not acceptable to use in social situations (pp. 30-31). The transformation of emotions in the interaction ritual from the more negative frustration, or anger, of daily life relations with, for example the police, to a sensation of fun and joy is, on the other hand, an explanation to why actors took part in the riots (p. 33). The reasons for rioting may, thus, vary and it is important to notice also the roles of individuals, during riots and expressions of collective violence.

3.3 Concepts combining structure and agency

It is in the combination of structure and agency that explanations of an event meet. Identical explanations are rare, in social life as well as in research or media. Riots are violent, by nature. Hence, interference by someone into the sphere of someone else takes place during a riot (Krug et al 2002, pp. 6-7; Bufacchi 2007, p. 90). In the meeting of rioters and police, we can see societal

structures, but also of agents belonging to two opposite sides taking part in collective actions. In contrast to Wacquant, who claimed that the dangerousness of the suburbs has been highly exaggerated, Yazbeck Haddad and Balz (2006, p. 25) claim that violence is as much a problem of the areas as racism, poor housing and education or crime. Bound by structural ties, the young of the suburban areas may argue that violence is one of few ways they have to express themselves. However, the use of violence responds to an action. According to Mansouri (2013, p. 111) it is a common reaction, to meet violence with violence, and political oppression may be considered as a form of violence. We could argue that the police is also responding to the rioter's violence, but Schneider (2008, p. 138) argues that police brutality, that was part of why all three of the riots studied here erupted, is a reflection of unequal societies and Waddington (2007 pp. 203-209) stresses that the police, especially, has a choice to make when it comes to the way violence should be met. Hence, actions lead to reactions, and individual actors are not entirely bound by rules of action, but may adapt to situations.

The relation of structure and agency can be seen in Wacquant's (2007) notion that large scale urban unrest such as a riot, derives from people of the stigmatised area experiencing “an incident opposing them to agents of law enforcement” (p. 32). Such an incident implies a crack in the structure, in which agency takes the role of creating a situation. In an overview of theories of riots, Waddington (2007, p. 58), finds that a common point is the importance of the sort of triggering point mentioned by Wacquant, but that this is not enough to start a riot or explain what then happens (p. 59). Instead, he presents Spiegel's (1969) theory of the rioting process, as a more complete description of it. The theory contains four steps: 1) the precipitating incident, 2) the street confrontation, 3) the Roman holiday, and 4) the siege².

After the precipitating incident, or the triggering point, the street confrontations start with a big gathering of people in the place where the precipitating incident happened. What then follows can be seen as the opening of two paths. Actors, which Spiegel names 'riot promoters', start promoting violent ideas and actions whereas others plead for reflection, for tempers to cool down, and for consideration. What path the conflict then takes depends largely on the actions taken by politicians and administrative representatives of the institutional system. In the events of the riots we can see the interplay between structural and agency aspects and although it is possible to create a model of this sort, showing that there is a structure of riots as well, individual actions and collective actions may influence the turns of a riot.

The social groups living in the stigmatised urban areas have increasingly come to be immigrants or members of religious minorities (Sassen 2006, p. 292; Anderson 2010, p. 7). In the choice of where to live, we can see how structure and agency are intertwined. Not only is it easier

2 We have attempted to consult the primary source of Spiegel, but not managed to gain access to it. Hence, we have been obliged to access to it only through Waddington's description of it.

for immigrants to find housing in stigmatised areas, due to the cheaper rents and smaller demand for living there, but it is also easier for them to enter in social networks (Peterson 2003, pp. 70-71; Wacquant 2007, pp. 27-28). The difficulties to leave a poor, stigmatised area may also derive from the dual sense of identity that many of those with immigrant descent feel. Keaton (2005) shows that it may be difficult, especially for younger people, to act in a way that suits both the cultural values of the culture of their immigrant parents and the culture of the country in which they live (p. 412). Social conditions and individual choice, thus, work together.

4. Paris

The riots of Paris followed rather well on Spiegel's stages of the rioting process. Furthermore, they stayed in, and spread to, suburban areas with a majority of the population being immigrants. The police and politicians also played important roles during the riots. These are the main units of the riots and they match between the explanations of the academic research and the media. However, the influence ascribed to each unit and the relation between them are far from identical. Instead, we can find patterns in the different explanations which show that the reasons for the riots are not as simple as a first look at them could lead us to think.

4.1 Research

A rather big part of the studies is concerned with the death of the two teenage boys, Zyed and Bouna, and it is noted that politicians in most cases chose to side with the police. Throughout the riots, they tended to put the blame on 'violent individuals' or 'violent groups' (Dikeç 2006, p. 159; Mucchielli & Ait-Omar 2009, p. 15-17; Schneider 2008, p. 138). This position is given large importance in explaining the opposing sides of the riots, and although criminality among the youth is not absent in the research, there is a clear emphasis on structural patterns laying behind the riots.

4.1.1 Structural explanations

The French riots have been described as non-organised ones, and although this might give the impression of strongly pointing to agency explanations, Dikeç (2006) holds this for a structural explanation. It is not the isolated event of the deaths of Zyed and Bouna, alone, that gave rise to the riots. The feelings, he argues, were already there, and “revealed once again the geographical dimension of inequalities, discrimination, and police violence, but also the contemporary transformations of the French state along increasingly authoritarian and exclusionary lines” (Dikeç 2006, p. 159). Mucchielli and Delon (2006, pp. 6-7) support this analysis, showing that among 81 individuals, none was a girl and the most significant common social situation among the rioters was that only 4 out of 81 had two parents who were working. Therefore, a large majority of them lived in precarious home conditions. Furthermore, a majority of the rioters were immigrants, or of immigrant descent. This has greatly attracted the interest of researchers, resulting in rather opposing ideas. Dikeç's explanation is, once again, structural, as he argues that if there was a larger part of the rioters with what he calls ‘a darker complexion’, the analysis has to go further than merely concluding that these groups were more active rioters, and that they were so because of race or ethnicity. He stresses that the social reasons why these people are there and how they are treated, needs to be at the core of this discussion (Dikeç 2006, p. 162).

The French history of colonialism is another influential explanation that needs to be taken into account in this analysis, and a large proportion of the immigrants in the banlieues came from social groups of previous colonized areas. In Malika Mansouri's (2013) award-winning PhD thesis "Révoltes postcoloniales au coeur de l'Hexagone" [Post-colonial riots in the heart of the Hexagon, my translation], she has interviewed fifteen teenage boys and young men of Algerian roots, living in the banlieues of Paris, concerning their social situations and their views on the riots of 2005. She argues that the French political system is based on colonial values, that remain in the relation with the young people of immigrant descent, dwelling in the poor, suburban areas (pp. 50-51). Yazbeck Haddad and Balz (2006) are of the same opinion, arguing that although the French political discourse is no longer about civilizing the savages of African colonies, "the idea that French culture is inherently superior to the culture of immigrants remains a key element in French policy" (p. 25).

That this is a wide-spread problem in the suburban areas is shown by Mansouri (2013) as she quotes a Moroccan man who came to see her during her research in the suburban areas. Although her thesis concerned Algerian boys or young men only, Mansouri notes that this man expressed what many others also felt in the suburbs. He said: "Madam, please tell them, tell them that we are not delinquents, tell them that, well it is true that we do stupid things, I myself did stupid things when I was younger, but now that I have a job I no longer need to do stupid things, I take care of my family and that's enough... Please, tell them, and the day that you want to speak to Moroccan people, no problem, I will speak to you [my translation]" (pp. 75-76). We can thus identify a rioting area where a majority of the inhabitants were poor immigrants, with roots in previously colonial areas, and a strong emphasis among certain researchers that these factors were central.

4.1.2 Agency explanations

Compared to London and Stockholm, the riots of Paris also saw a large focus on one politician. An entire chapter of Le Goaziou and Mucchielli's (2009) book *Quand les banlieues brûlent...* [When the suburbs burn, my translation] is dedicated to the minister of the interior of the time, Nicolas Sarkozy, indicating that his role during the riots was important. The chapter, written by Nasser Demiati, describes how, after several acts of violence in the banlieues, where people died, the newly installed minister of the interior promised to clean the streets from 'the violent scum' by using a 'Kärcher' [pressure washer, my note]. In strongly directing these words at a young, immigrant, population, Demiati (2009, pp. 67-68) outlines how the tensions between the minister and the young of the banlieues was building up from the moment Nicolas Sarkozy made that promise. Thus, the hard rhetoric of Nicolas Sarkozy is one explanation that strongly emphasises the importance of one single actor. In contrast to this analysis, Kokoreff (2006) argues that the rhetoric

becomes harsh because it is based on a distortion of the imaginary and the real. With the imaginary he means a belief that we live in a world of equality of rights and democratic dialogue and the real implies discrimination in all domains of social life, such as school, housing, work or health (pp. 524-525). Although this may seem to be an agency explanation, what is important is the choices we make based on our understanding of other's situations, as well as our own. It is easier to criticise rioters for individual actions if we consider them to have equal rights and harder if we consider them to be victims of systematic discrimination.

The hard rhetoric of Nicolas Sarkozy may also be regarded as a continuation of colonial treatments of specific ethnic groups and the cultural values of the two sides may differ largely. Furthermore, the young rioter's relation to the police is described as a central topic of the banlieue everyday life, by Malika Mansouri (2013). She presents an image where the young speak of a lack of respect for them among the police. For instance, the police officers address them by saying the familiar pronoun 'tu' rather than the polite form 'vous'. The young interviewees also speak of how the police inspire fear, instead of offering security. One of Mansouri's interviewees said that his mother did not want him to go out at the time of the riots. It was not, however, the riots and the violence in themselves that scared her, but the risk of being arrested by the police (pp. 73-74).

Schneider shares Mansouri's image of how fear holds the older generation in its hands, whereas the young are starting to break with the traditional reaction of passivity to that fear. A woman of the banlieues, interviewed by Mansouri, declared that “[t]he police chase kids like they are animals, and it becomes a game to them. But it robs them of their dignity. The kids come to see it as heroic to confront the police and escape” (Schneider 2008, p. 144). The young inhabitants of the banlieue are starting to react, and act, against oppression, although they may be as scared of the police as older generations. The collective actions, however, are not necessarily a result of a collective goal, because although there might be a collective drive to integrate society, the individual will to get a job, finding an own identity, is as important. This is constructed of collective aspiration for something else. The break with parental hold of passivity also leads to questions of societal development and the role of the youth of the banlieues in the future.

4.1.3 Combinations of structure and agency

According to Ocqueteau (2007, p. 533) two phenomena were behind the uprising in Paris. First, the increasing unemployment rate and a majority of young people lacking professional qualities. The creation of jobs and the possibility of commuting to jobs were low, as the lack of skills did not attract employers. Then, as a result of this, the social setting had a lack of professional examples and career examples were rather marked by the growing drug market. Criminality as an influential force of the areas underlines the individual actions of crime, but also the decline of

structures and the isolation from the rest of society. Thus, the explanation here is a challenge of social structures by criminality. Yazbeck Haddad and Balz (2006, pp. 29-30) add that the young people of these areas cannot have much hope of leaving the banlieues either. Such a situation, as stressed by Le Goaziou and Mucchielli (2007) can only create passive and desperate feelings in the young, which the authors argue is a direct reason for the uprisings of 2005. With no other way to access influential positions or spaces where they could express their situation, violence became their voice. Thus, Le Goaziou and Mucchielli stress that the violence should be understood as a protest rather than a criminal action (pp. 163-167), and this combination of explanations points to hopelessness as the common theme.

Relating to both structure and agency, Schneider (2008) points out how it has been common with the police to keep good arrest records by arresting the same individuals repeatedly. These individual actions may not be to blame for structural categorisation of social groups, but Schneider contends that it reproduces and reinforces existing ones. This pattern is, furthermore one that she links to the Western European specificity of post-war rioting (p. 139). Remaining quiet, such actions towards the youth of the banlieues would not be subjects of debate, and Mansouri (2013) states that “[t]heir revolt forces us to look at what society has tried to soften, banalise or erase, closing in a certain part of their youth in categories such as 'child of immigrants', 'youth of the banlieue' etc. [my translation]” (p. 182). The political denials of discrimination, segregation and perhaps most of all, responsibility, is according to Mansouri the core of the problem causing the riots, and a serious problem for the future, as the political discourse did not change towards the end, or after the riots (Mansouri 2013, pp. 57-58). Her explanation holds more of a structural position of why the riots could happen, but that they did happen because of individuals who had had enough.

Nicolas Sarkozy was not only an actor during the riots, but he represented the political power of France, and Schneider (2008) speaks of *Sarkozy* like a symbol of the stigmatising state, in the eyes of the young. For instance, although there was no evidence of them having committed criminal acts, Zyed and Bouna were spoken of by the police and Nicolas Sarkozy as suspected criminals. It later proved that the boys had been innocent, but the position of Sarkozy and the police showed the young immigrants of the banlieue how they were seen as criminals just by their backgrounds and “that their lives have no value in France” (Schneider 2008, p. 140). A further evidence for this is that the intensity of the riots reached their peaks just after a speech by Nicolas Sarkozy in the middle of the riots, in which he strongly criticised the rioters and took a position in support of the police (Mucchielli & Aït-Omar 2007, pp. 17-19). Demiati (2009, p. 75) argues that the uprisings were caused by the social conditions, but that Sarkozy played an influential role in lighting the flame and intensifying the uprisings, once they had started. The explanation of one politician promoting ideas that can be seen as representative of the government, or the political

leadership of the nation, is thus another combination of structure and agency explanations.

4.2 Media

In the academic research on the riots in Paris, politicians and political power received a large share of attention in explaining them. The newspapers follow on this line, but as we shall see, the two newspapers in our study, *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, differ in their view of the riots themselves and they agree with different politicians. They also address the rioters in a slightly different manner in their articles, and we can see that the targeted readers for the newspapers are not the same.

4.2.1 Structural explanations

The newspapers speak of the rioting areas as places with problems of many sorts. The image shown is that of an area that the inhabitants can hardly get out of and where fear is omnipresent. Numerous articles focus on the non-rioting inhabitants, who are the victims of car burnings and destruction. Schools, mayors and religious leaders of the area are heard, at an early stage, claiming that the areas usually are calm, but that the main problem is poverty and poor chances to gain a good position in society. As they outline the profiles of the rioters, there is a discussion about the social factors behind, and the difficult situations of the inhabitants of the area are outlined. The explanation of difficult social conditions of the rioting areas is common between the newspapers.

Compared to the academic research on the case of Paris, the focus is not as strongly directed to one politician. In the newspapers, an opponent to Nicolas Sarkozy is found in the Minister of Promotion of Equal Rights, Azouz Begag. Depending on their political stance, the newspapers support different candidates in this debate. Whereas *Le Monde* describes Nicolas Sarkozy's approach to the banlieues as “semi-military” and with fighting instructions to the police (*Le Monde* 2005-11-01), *Le Figaro* focuses on the banlieues as areas so violent that people risk being attacked unprovoked, and that “fingerprints of free barbarism and savagery” (*Le Figaro* 2005-10-31) are leaving their marks in French banlieues. A banlieue forsaken by the State and under attack, or a banlieue of criminality are the two sides that we can see in these perspectives, supporting explanations of structural issues or criminality in large scale.

Mayors and local police express the need for more neighbourhood police and dialogue between the police and the local inhabitants in *Le Monde* (2005-11-05) and politicians express the need for more police officers and a larger presence of the law in the areas in *Le Figaro* (2005-11-04). We will see later on that *Le Monde* stands closer to the research explanations of the riots and that *Le Figaro* stands closer to the conservative politicians in power at the time. An interesting notion is also that both newspapers frequently speak of 'the rioters' as 'the youth', which raises the question of the image that they give of the rioters. Young can easily be combined with 'rioter', 'man'

and 'immigrant', when the articles are tied together. Still, the media's role in constructing such images is not mentioned at any point and the explanations are written as though they were facts rather than speculations or opinions.

4.2.2 Agency explanations

The media frequently speaks through actors. In giving a voice to their opinions, they put together the statements of actors who said what the newspapers want to report. For instance, at several occasions, both *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* have interviewed local political leaders. Whereas the ones in *Le Monde* more often support Azouz Begag or Left-wing solutions, *Le Figaro* is liable to turn to actors expressing support of Nicolas Sarkozy or stronger conservative explanations. As an example, which clearly marks their different stands, we can see how Azouz Begag is treated in the different newspapers on the 2nd of November. In *Le Monde* he is quoted saying “I use the term 'cleaning' rather for cleaning my shoes, or my car. I do not clean neighbourhoods [my translation]” (*Le Monde* 2005-11-02) as a reaction to Sarkozy's statement that he wanted to clean the neighbourhood of criminals. *Le Figaro* it is his political opponents who are given most space blaming Begag for supporting delinquents and thugs, declaring that he does not take his responsibility as a minister. He should take sides with the government, as “[i]n such circumstances, solidarity with the government is the least one could expect [my translation]” (*Le Figaro* 2005-11-02).

Political actors are numerous in the writings. Nicolas Sarkozy receives much attention, and as for the research on the riots his hard rhetoric is discussed. By using mayors, political commentators, rioters and non-rioting inhabitants of the banlieues *Le Monde* shows that Sarkozy's rhetoric is too hard. One of the mayors states that although the role of the Minister of the Interior requires him to condemn the riots, “it is by diplomacy and mediation that spirits are calmed down [my translation]” (*Le Monde* 2005-11-03). Another one states that “repression is needed, certainly, but these young people primarily need to be offered a future [my translation]” (*Le Monde* 2005-11-03). Here we can see that there is a common idea that something needs to be done, also between Sarkozy and *Le Monde*. However, cultural values of how to achieve a change and who should do it, differ. The individuals are important and in reaching them there is a need for understanding their situation and where they come from, if we listen to the explanations of *Le Monde*, whereas culture is banalised and ignored by Sarkozy who treats the rioters rather as mere criminals. The background in cultures is an important aspect of *Le Monde's* explanations of the riots.

Actors that did not take much space in the research on the subject of the riots were the members of the Muslim communities. During the riots, an attack of a mosque resulted in an angry reaction among the large Muslim population of Clichy-sous-Bois and the neighbouring suburban

areas. The reporting of *Le Figaro* mainly speaks of the influence of Muslim communities as a problem when attempting to solve segregation problems, *Le Monde* focuses, for several days, on how elderly Muslim leaders put themselves between the rioters and the police after that incident, in order to calm things down. In *Le Monde* we can hear them calling out “Go back home [my translation]” (*Le Monde* 2011-05-02) to the rioters. In contrast to this, *Le Figaro* gives space to political leaders. The Left-wing remains quiet, they state, but the newspaper quotes both the previous Minister of the Interior, who asks for President Jacques Chirac to “stand up in the front line of his country” and the leader of extreme right-wing party Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who contends that “France itself is attacked by hordes of foreigners” (*Le Figaro* 2005-11-04). Although the newspaper does not express its support for Le Pen, it is clear that they present the rioters as the problem, and society as the victim in the riots.

4.2.3 *Combinations of structure and agency*

Although more positive to their role in the riots than *Le Figaro*, the importance of the Muslim community is also presented as a potential source of problems by *Le Monde*. They argue how state representatives have difficulties to access the youth, and the Muslim influence on them is larger than the one from the State. After several nights of rioting, the hopelessness among some police officers in reaching the young rioters is caught in the quotation of one of them: “maybe we will have to send the army. The situation is becoming impossible” (2005-11-03). The relation between structure and culture is, hence, a complex one in which both solutions and issues are embedded.

The political debate between, primarily, Nicolas Sarkozy and Azouz Begag is used by *Le Monde* to show a problem within the government itself and link this to societal issues. An explanation of the riots made by Begag, that the newspaper follows, is that meeting social issues with hard actions does not work. Mediation needs to be used and ways of getting closer to the inhabitants prioritised. The evidence of this need is, according to *Le Monde*, that the increasing focus on arrest rates and harder actions against crime from the police and the government has led to that young people gather, trying to resist and fight this massive control. It is not just by chance, *Le Monde* states, but a logical effect of “the increase of illegitimate police violence claims by 18,5%. That is for the seventh year of increase in such claims, in a row [my translation]” (*Le Monde* 2005-11-01).

Instead of focusing on the societal issue *Le Figaro*, once again, targets individual actions and questions the cultural influence of collective reactions. Shortly after the death of Zyed and Bouna, a man who was out in a suburban area close to Clichy-sous-Bois to take pictures was robbed and brutally beaten to death by a few young men. It is to this event that the newspaper turns when

showing their standing point during the riots, asking “[w]as this man honored with a silent march and flowers, from 'dying for nothing' but the theft of his camera? [my translation]” (Le Figaro 2005-10-31). The cultural reactions of the police, the people and the politicians are argued to be different according to who has died, and who has caused this death. *Le Figaro* rather stands behind the harder actions against violence from the government and the police, the very same actions that *Le Monde* claims to be counterproductive.

The relation between the rioters and the politicians is an explanation behind the riots. After a couple of days of reporting, *Le Monde* starts to publish interviews with rioters, and although there are not many interviews that are published, the report centres around them. The standing point of the rioters is obvious, and the relation to Nicolas Sarkozy is all but warm. One young rioter expresses that maybe the riots “will make the people of the government understand”, and his friend adds that “this is just the beginning, we will continue until Sarkozy resigns” (*Le Monde* 2005-11-04). Hence, we can see that Nicolas Sarkozy, indeed, has become the symbol of what the rioters are fighting against. *Le Figaro* does not publish any interviews with rioters, but focuses on the victims of the riots. In focusing on victims, the rioters become offenders in the reporting. The agency-centred explanations of the riots that have been important throughout the reporting of *Le Figaro* are underlined by this choice.

4.3 Conclusions

The research and the media explanations differ. The academic research explanations are structural to a larger extent than in the media. Furthermore, the newspaper's tend to choose political sides rather than to follow research explanations of previous riots. A larger variety of voices are heard in the newspapers, but the expressions do not necessarily contribute to a wider understanding of the riots. Rather, this difference appears to aim for a more reader friendly description of the riots and speaks to the readers imagination. *Le Monde* stands closer to the research explanations than *Le Figaro*, but still *Le Monde* has a stronger focus on individual influence than what is the case for the explanations found in the academic research.

5. London

In contrast to the riots in Paris, the London riots did not follow Spiegel's four stages of the rioting process. The spreading did not follow a clear pattern, the ethnic groups taking part of the riots were heterogeneous and the targets of the riots also varied. As we shall see, the explanations also differed more in the London riots than for the ones in Paris.

5.1 Research

Contrary to the riots in Paris, the research on the London riots does not have the same common conclusion that structural factors, such as stigmatisation of suburban areas, were the reasons behind the riots. The importance of such factors is not by any means ignored, but they are not emphasised as the most influential ones. Rather, as attention is largely directed towards the massive looting, there is a twofold reading of the riots. The two main explanations in the research can be argued to focus on, first, an increasingly greedy society, and, second, frustration over a social exclusion and deprivation of marginalised areas (Aiello and Pariante 2013, pp. 75-76). We will start by looking at the second of these two.

5.1.1 *Structural explanations*

When the riots started in Tottenham, it was not the first time that the area had witnessed such violent reactions. In 1985 the Broadwater Farm riots started, once again after a violent police action, leading to the death of a Black woman. The frustration in the Tottenham area had also increased prior to the shooting, and some researchers are surprised that the police seemed completely unprepared for a violent reaction to erupt there (Bridges 2012, p. 2; Cavanagh & Dennis 2012, pp. 379-380). Already at the time of the Broadwater Farm riots, the area suffered from socio-economic deprivation. Linking the riots to them, explanations of marginalised citizens trying to protest against their situation exist. And the constitution of the area supports this explanation. For instance, Newburn (2012, p. 332) shows that close to two thirds of the young rioters came from the twenty percent most deprived areas in the country.

Phillips, Frost and Singleton (2013, pp. 4-5) argue that the initial diagnosis of the riots, made by politicians, must not be simply dismissed but rather interrogated. There might be truth behind David Cameron's description of a 'broken' and 'sick' society, or Tony Blair's blame on socially excluded children not wanting to follow mainstream values. Old values and explanations, the authors argue, could not fill the place that needed to contain the voices of the rioters of the new riots. Implying that the 'broken' or 'sick' society was a result of individuals gone out of control, David Cameron's view is contested by many researchers. Cavanagh and Dennis (2012) argue that

the treatment of the marginalised social groups has become harder over the years and that “striking changes in attitudes toward youth, race, poverty, the police, and the nature of deprived urban areas” (p. 376) can be seen in the newspapers. The criminalisation of violent reactions is but one of these hardened tones. Reacting against this condemnation of them, this is also an explanation to the riots, and the intensity with which, specifically, young people responded to the riots. Most explanations of the London riots, however, have had an agency approach, or a combined approach of structure and agency.

5.1.2 Agency explanations

Phillips, Frost and Singleton (2013, p. 5) argue that much of the discussions concerning the riots have remained focused on speaking about politicians and victims, hearing their stories, whereas the rioters have taken part only through their criminal actions. In order to obtain the image of rioters and non-rioting inhabitants of the rioting areas, the *Guardian* and the *London School of Economics* started a common project, called *Reading the Riots*. During the project, hundreds of interviews were conducted, and the explanations that researchers presented partly related to agency explanations.

The major points are presented in one article. One explanation that stands out is that many rioters considered the riots as a chance to get 'free stuff', and to them, the looting had nothing to do with the initial protests of the shooting of Mark Duggan (Lewis et al. 2011). For instance, based on their interviews, Henri (2011) and Bramwell (2011) explained the riots as a space for opportunistic rioters to take what they wanted in the stores. An interesting remark made by Amanda Conroy (2011) that the young spoke of the riots as a uniting event, bringing groups of young together, although these groups were often involved in fights against one another. She found that “[d]espite their territorial differences, when news of the ‘success’ of looting in other parts of the city reached young people, they identified themselves as part of the same collective, with the same interests and the same enemies” (Conroy 2011). This collective action fuelled the riots, and is an important explanation to how they could spread, and why so many people joined in them. The rioter's relation with the police is also part of this explanation as the police was the force having kept them away from the opportunities created during the riots.

Individual feelings of injustice was another explanation, that the researchers located among the rioters. That is injustice that related to specific situations of individuals rather than to stigmatisation of the groups that they belonged to. The individual side of the riots is also highlighted as an explanation for the looting. Baudains, Braithwaite and Johnson (2013, p. 274) argue that the looting is an evidence that structural explanations of deprivation are not the right explanations for the riots. Instead, they argue that individual responsibility and choice must be

considered in the explanations of the riots, as target selection in the looting was too similar to the target selection observed in other urban criminal activity (p. 258). Although agency explanations did occur, the main stand in the research was a close combination of structural and agency explanations.

5.1.3 Combinations of structure and agency

The second main explanation, apart from marginalisation and social exclusion, was that of a society increasingly craving consumer goods. The distinction between the rioters and the society that they were attacking was, in some cases presented by the researchers conducting interviews in the Reading the Riots-project, as a conflict between the haves and the have-nots (Rashid 2011; James 2011; Simsek 2011). The relative deprivation of the looters was a common theme also in other research and has been forwarded as a common theme, rather than social deprivation, as the spreading of the riots did not remain in poor areas only and also people from higher social positions took part in the riots. An explanation to this phenomenon, and to how the riots could spread between different zones of rich and poor areas is provided by Till (2012), who states that “[t]he London map of social deprivation reads as a restless patchwork rather than as a set of neat zones” (p. 73). Most acts of rioting also took place on the border between rich and poor areas, underlining the substance of this explanation.

In his analysis of the riots, Zygmunt Bauman (2012), combines the structural issues, such as social inequalities, with the relative deprivation and individual cravings for consumer goods. Bauman's analysis has been highly influential among other researchers and attracted many supporters. Bauman describes the strong structural foundation of the London riots by calling the city a ‘social minefield’ on which an explosion was bound to happen. The creation of this minefield had, he stresses, been created “by the combination of consumerism with rising inequality” (p. 11). We may also see poverty, in this case, as a form of extension in the consumer society, where poverty closely relates to lack of consumer goods. The uprising of the poor, on this consumer society scale should not be regarded with surprise, and indeed, many of the targets of looting during the riots were “stores of mass produced consumer goods (trainers, flat screen televisions) and distraction (alcohol, computer games)” (Till 2012, p. 74). Neither in the riots of Paris or Stockholm could we witness this widespread looting. The nature of the London riots, which took place to a larger extent in the centre and in rich areas than in the cases of Paris and Stockholm, may be part of the explanation to this difference between the riots. According to Bauman (2012), consumerism was the main explanation to why the riots happened, as deprivation was a powerful combination of social marginalisation and individual cravings for consumer goods. A proof of this is that the rioters did not react against the consumer society, but rather attempted to be a part of it, only “for a fleeting

moment” (p. 12).

In a comparison of the riots in Paris 2005 and London 2011, Body-Gendrot (2012) draws an interesting conclusions which, in part, can be linked to that of Bauman. She argues that the common point between the two riots, which is new in comparison to previous riots in the Western European context is the attention seeking. Body-Gendrot states that “[d]eprived of official channels of communication and of political representation, mobilised young people utter a cry and draw attention on their fate. They do not want a revolution, they require attention. Youths whose culture has been moulded by television are eager to be seen” (p. 19).

Both Body-Gendrot and Bauman are interested in the global influence on rioting, and especially for the London riots the global receives attention. The modern attraction with consumer goods overthrows national structures and challenges the political systems of nation states. Banyon (2012), notes that anger towards the financial systems and banks was another explanation to the riots (p. 14), which confirms the image of the rioters as a global phenomenon rather than a national one. Although this is a structural explanation, we also need to see that this is a structure of the modern world that diminishes large structures and forwards individual choice. Here, structure and agency meet, explaining the riots as constructed on structural issues, such as poor areas and deprivation, combined with individual greed and feelings of relative deprivation.

5.2 Media

The strong relation to historical riots in the United Kingdom that we could find in the academic research is clear already at an early stage, also for the media reporting. Similarly to the research the structural explanations were rather few, and the influence of agency explanations stronger. When compared to the French newspapers, which contained a large proportion of political debates and voices, the first days of the reporting of the London riots rather saw the opposite of this. Not only were the political leaders on holidays when the riots erupted, but they did not come back to London until a couple of days after. The absence of leading politicians is, thus, one interesting point, made by the British newspapers, and an explanation to why the riots could break out. Although the importance of this varies, the importance of political leadership appears to have been considered less important, or at least less potent, than was the case in France.

5.2.1 *Structural explanations*

Structural explanations to rioting might be social exclusion such as deprivation and marginalisation or oppression and it relates to the attack *of* someone *against* someone. In the British reporting it is rather the structures of larger systems that are discussed, such as the financial system of the entire nation or the morality of the modern world. Placing Britain in an international context,

The Guardian stresses that "[t]he irony of all this is that outside Britain, Europe and the US, the great story of 2011 has been the Arab spring, as the people of Syria, Yemen and beyond have taken to the streets. It seems that just as those nations demand the tools of democracy, we are finding them rusting and blunt in our hands" (*The Guardian* 2011-09-10). *The Daily Telegraph* further states that all levels of society are concerned, and involved, with this degradation of society, "[t]he culture of greed and impunity we are witnessing on our TV screens stretches right up into corporate boardrooms and the Cabinet. It embraces the police and large parts of our media. It is not just its damaged youth, but Britain itself that needs a moral reformation" (*The Daily Telegraph* 2011-08-12). An explanation on the structural level is, hence, *Britain's fading welfare state* and the increasing influence of other structures than that of the nation-state.

We can see a division of the two newspapers at an early stage. Although both of them hold large structures as part of the explanation to the riots, they ascribe different importance to structure and agency throughout the reporting. Both of them were very quick to establish a 'war zone' and to draw a link with previous riots, such as that of Brixton in 1981 or the Broadwater Farm riots of 1985. The alarming situation is also shown by both of them through the reminder of the last riots, of the Broadwater Farm, during which a police officer died. What we can identify in, especially, the articles of the first days is that *The Guardian* holds a more structural approach in explaining the riots. Although they, like *The Daily Telegraph*, argue that violence is not the right way to make one's voice heard, they state that there was an initial act of protesting, to which the police did not respond (2011-08-08), implying that the riots broke out partially because of the lack of police response to the protests. Furthermore, *The Guardian* pleads for a long-term solution on how to make people able to support themselves. The 'understanding of criminality' is but one of the understandings that need to be taken into account, in such a construction (*The Guardian* 2011-08-13). Although speaking of criminality and rioters as criminals, *The Guardian* holds the discussion on a macro level. It is rather groups of criminals that are addressed and systems of criminality fall under social exclusion to a higher degree than is the case in *The Daily Telegraph*.

5.2.2 Agency explanations

To explain the riots, *The Daily Telegraph* relies to a larger extent on individual actions and influence than *The Guardian*. Whereas *The Guardian* stressed that initial protests had been unheard, the early image of the rioters, drawn by *The Daily Telegraph*, comes with harder rhetoric. Indeed, they describe rioters as "balaclava-clad youth" or "troublemakers" who reacted to the shooting of a "known gangster" who "lived by gun" (*The Daily Telegraph* 2011-08-08). The strong division between the newspapers could be read as a sign of their political stance, but their support of specific political leaders was not very strong.

The Guardian initially was rather careful in describing the rioters in this way, but as the days pass, 'protesters' or simply 'rioters', turn to 'morons', 'cretins', 'thugs' or 'idiots' (2011-08-11). This highly offensive and vulgar vocabulary used in the newspapers, and the strong condemnations of the rioters show a clear explanation of the riots based on the influence, and criminalisation, of individual actions. In comparison to the French newspapers, this is going further, even compared to *Le Figaro*, despite the newspaper's more conservative stance than *The Guardian's*. However, there is one point on which *The Daily Telegraph* stands out, also from *The Guardian*, on terms of agency influence. In frequently naming rioters and drawing a picture of them as criminals, trouble makers or uncontrollable, *The Daily Telegraph* presents the rioters as being responsible for the riots. A strong interest is drawn to the involvement of girls and women in the riots, which is different from the examples of Paris and Stockholm. This phenomenon of women participating in the riots is used to show the extent to which society is breaking down and individuals are running wild.

The case of Shereka Leigh clearly shows this hard condemnation of female participation. Indeed, during several days *The Daily Telegraph* follows the case of young single mother Shereka Leigh, who has been caught on a store surveillance camera for looting. Her background is outlined in the newspaper on moral grounds. She does not have any contact with her mother and the father of her child has left. Her irresponsible character is made clear by the statement that “[h]er four-year-old son had to be looked after by a friend while her mother was taken to a police station” (*The Daily Telegraph* 2011-08-12). This story implies that there is a significant lack of moral values and that individual greed was an explanation for the riots.

5.2.3 Combinations of structure and agency

We can see that the structural and the agency explanations are, in part, the same ones. This shows well that the newspapers were uncertain about how to handle the riots and that they were not consistent in explaining the events through agency or structural factors. The most influential of all explanations, however, is the discussion about absence of political leadership. This leads us to put an emphasis on the combinations of structure and agency in the riots of London, as structures appear to be missing in British society, but its importance is still considered to be big.

Both newspapers give a rather equal space to the Prime Minister, David Cameron, and the Labour leader Ed Miliband, to express themselves. Contrasting with the French riots, however, political debate and effects of speech by politicians are not very present. Instead, it is the absence of political leadership that may be seen as the main explanation of actor influence. The political structures are described as unable and unworthy in the comparison to what a British political leadership should be. Much of the discussion starts with the fact that several of the leading politicians were on holidays as the riots erupted, and David Cameron did not return to Britain until

several days after the first sparks of violence, presenting a lack of interest in the well-being of the British people.

The Guardian is harder in its criticism of David Cameron taking his time to get back to Britain from his holidays in Italy, than *The Daily Telegraph*. Once back from his holidays, however, the Prime Minister makes his opinion clear about the acts of violence, and he states that the rioting “is criminality, pure and simple, and it has to be confronted and defeated [...] I have this very clear message to those people who are responsible for this wrongdoing and criminality: you will feel the full force of the law and if you are old enough to commit these crimes you are old enough to face the punishment” (*The Guardian* 2011-08-10). And although *The Guardian* argued that in times of serious social issues, there is a need to stand up in support of the police, they argue that the problem is more complex than the criminal acts of a number of individuals.

The Daily Telegraph continues on this line, explaining the risk of collective violent reactions as a result of the lack of social structures, and the discredit brought upon David Cameron, or Ed Miliband is even more clearly emphasised by *The Daily Telegraph* than by *The Guardian*. They highly doubt Cameron's and his opponent's capacity to deal with large scale social issues and compare them to former leaders such as Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher. They state that “[p]ut simply, our political leaders, whether Left or Right, just don't seem up to the job. Were the riots really motivated by criminality, as Cameron claimed, or by failure of parenting, as Ed Miliband thought? Was that the best the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition could do?” (*The Daily Telegraph* 2011-08-11). It is not satisfactory for the newspapers to hear the simplified analyses of the leading politicians, especially when they are directed towards the individuals who are taking part in the riots. Although they strongly criticise individual actions, the political leaders need to be strong and visionary in hard times. The absence of political leadership provided the rioters with an open door, and the decline of political power was an important explanation to the riots.

The many aspects and the apparently unstructured descriptions of the London riots, by both newspapers and academic research, indicate that the riots themselves followed different logics. As we have seen in the research, looting, stealing and destruction were not necessarily related to the protest of the shooting of Mark Duggan. This variation of logics and reasons for different rioters is one explanation to the riots, and a reason why the newspaper's appear confused at times, during the reporting. There are social issues, but the newspapers fail to recognise more than but a few and do not show strong interest in identifying nor taking responsibility of any of them.

5.3 Conclusions

The writings of the London riots remind us about the description of its geographical areas as a 'restless patchwork', as the explanations of the riots vary over time and show hesitation to whether agency or structure explanations should be emphasised. In both the media and the academic research we find that large structures such as a financial banking system or a consumer society are important, but mainly through its individualisation of the world and greed, or cravings for consumer goods, has brought new hierarchies of poverty and wealth. The absence of political leadership is a major point in the newspapers, that needs to be added here. Cracking structures and an increasingly individualised world may be considered as the two major forces acting on the border of structure and agency.

6. Stockholm

The most recent riots of the three cases studied here has already been linked to previous riots of the Western World, such as the riots in Paris and London. The riots remained in socio-economically weak suburban areas, showing the close relation to the riots in Paris. However, both the media and the research emphasised structural explanations to a larger extent than during the Paris riots.

6.1 Research

The much smaller amount of published work on the Stockholm riots leaves us with four sources that share a strong structural approach in their explanations. Despite the structural emphasis we also need to note that collective action was a major theme in the academic research. Social movement, and organised communities, received a rather big interest and shows an aspect of rioting that was absent in the French and British riots.

6.1.1 *Structural explanations*

As for London, there is a link made with the global context in the Stockholm riots. Sernhede (2014, pp. 82-83), states that Europe has witnessed a growing problem of young people loosing their foothold in society, and he argues that the “high rate of unemployment is conditioned entirely by structural causes, not by business cycles” (p. 83), and Sweden has the fastest growing inequality of the continent (ibid, p. 84). For a country that has until a couple of decades ago been known for its well-functioning welfare system and successful integration this is a major change of direction. Although the 'business cycles' do not explain unemployment, according to Sernhede, we can still see that it is a part of a society in which neoliberal values have gained a stronger influence. Thörn (2013) argues that this is a development that has been going on for a couple of decades and resulted in a weaker welfare system.

Schierup, Åhlund and Kings (2014, p. 9) note that the working inhabitants of Husby mainly hold low-income positions and that twice as many young in Husby are unemployed as the national average. Moreover, they call their situation a 'permanent condition' (ibid, p. 7). Both Sernhede (2014, p. 84) and Thörn (2013) agree on this image of the rioting area, and link Swedish suburban areas to Wacquant's term 'territorial stigmatisation', implying that these structures are firmly established in society. A major explanation to the riots is thus the stigmatisation of suburban areas.

According to Catharina Thörn (2013) the Husby riots expressed a democratic problem with a dimension of stigmatising actions directed towards immigrants and citizens of immigrant descent. She mentions the REVA project as one clear example, in which people who 'looked foreign' were

stopped by the police for identity checks. The aim of the project was to deport illegal immigrants, but checking people on no other grounds than their looks could only make those who had been checked, and the social group that they belonged to, feel anything but trust towards the police. (Schierup, Ålund & Kings 2014, p. 3). Furthermore, the police have little understanding for their own role in creating the riots, according to Schierup, Ålund and Kings (2014, p. 7), as they see Husby like a place where the next police murder could take place, rather than the place where they shot an old man. The relation to the police is, hence, also forwarded as an important explanation.

6.1.2 Agency explanations

Collective agency is an important term in the academic research publications studied here. Neither in the writings of Paris, nor in those on London, have there been much notice given to organised activity, other than the occasional accusations towards gangs and criminal networks. An explanation to the riots in Stockholm, according to Schierup, Ålund and Kings (2014), is the mobilisation of 'trans-ethnic suburban youth' against the oppression that they feel, and the authors argue that “[m]ovements of young suburbanites spell out, in word and deed, their anger over their ghettoisation, their concerns about social inequality, racism and the need for justice” (p. 11). The organisation *The Megaphone (Megafonen)* started in Husby and this together with a number of statements along the riots, put a strong attention on them. The organisation also “demonstrates basic elements in the making of a social movement” (Schierup, Ålund & Kings 2014, p. 15) and “has inspired people all over Sweden to mobilize against the privatization of housing, increasing rents and the replacement of welfare with surveillance” (Thörn 2013).

The many ethnic backgrounds of the suburban inhabitants is also noted by Sernhede (2014, p. 87), who argues that this stands out for Stockholm, when compared to Paris or London. The ways that suburban youth has engaged in hip hop has also been one of the major foundations on which a stronger organisation among the suburban youth has happened. Sernhede states that in hip hop communities that have been funded by public study-circles “they have learned about their own history, and hence how to understand their own position in Swedish society. Moreover they have learned how to get organised and develop strategies against discrimination and lack of citizenship rights” (p. 88). We can also see that the cultural perspective is important here, as it expresses a view on the home sphere that might differ to traditionally Swedish ones. In a recent study, in which about thirty people who live, study or work in Husby have been interviewed, the access to the street, for instance, is described as a right, and as an extension of the inhabitant's homes. The author's argue that “[s]taying on the streets meant claiming the right of a home that was part of the public space, marking a difference between Husby citizens who belonged and foreign police officers who did not [my translation]” (de los Reyes et al 2014, p. 26). Rioters claiming the right of their own home

space was thus an explanation found in their study.

During the first days of rioting *the Megaphone* provided a version of the events from within, making a link with their previous struggle to attract political attention to the area (Schierup, Åhlund & Kings 2014, pp. 15-16). It also is an extension of wanting a home space that was theirs. The explanation that we can extract from this is that a need for a political voice was felt by the suburban population, and this could be regarded as a challenge to politicians, media and other actors who usually describe their situations to the larger population of the nation. The political voices presented and discussed in the research is that of Prime Minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt and opposition leader Stefan Löfvén. As in the other cases of Paris and London, we will focus on the politician representing the government in our future discussions.

6.1.3 Combinations of structure and agency

In comparison with Nicolas Sarkozy's statements of cleaning the streets by the use of pressure washer, the Swedish Prime Minister could nearly be considered to have a soft approach to the riots. Still, when *the Megaphone* spoke about the violence, the insults and the racism that they faced from the police, in everyday life as well as during the riots, Fredrik Reinfeldt stated that the rioters were 'angry young men' who tried to solve conflicts with violence. He argued that they needed to learn to respect 'Swedish law' and 'Swedish police' (Schierup, Åhlund & Kings 2014, p. 6; Thörn 2013). Furthermore, he argued that the inhabitants in Husby should solve the problem. As Thörn argues: “[t]he thinly-veiled implication was that the residents of Husby are not Swedish and their problems are not Sweden's” (Thörn 2013). The explanation of political oppression and ignorance must, thus, be considered also in the riots of Stockholm.

In their study, de los Reyes et al. (2014) identify five major points that their interviewees speak of, as reasons for the riots (pp. 18-19): 1) A deficiency of democratic values, 2) space, community and resistance, 3) the role of the police, 4) belongingness and rights, 5) violence and media image. A couple of structural factors and a couple of agency factors are highlighted here. An exclusion from the political system, racism, and a stigmatising image of violent youth are more structural explanation intertwined with explanations of an oppressive and aggressive police, as well as a will to own the space that they consider to be their home. We can see how these reasons are very close to those forwarded by *the Megaphone*. The authors also argue that we need to see the riots of Stockholm not as isolated events, but rather as expressions of a contemporary society full of tensions. Especially tensions in local spaces (p. 70). Schierup, Åhlund and Kings (2014) come to very much the same conclusion, as they state that “the root causes of rebellion lie not in city districts like Husby or in the fact of segregation [...] but in social polarisation – where conflicts over space, race, income and power intersect. There is a need now to contextualise community

activism and relate it to the social forces in which it is embedded” (p. 17). The connection between individual actions to structural shortcomings is thus a clear in the research on the riots in Stockholm.

6.2 Media

Although there were less sources of research on Stockholm than Paris or London, we extracted a number of major points from them. Perhaps most interestingly, the emphasis on social structures as the major reason for the riots was stronger than for any of the two other riots studied in this thesis. We shall see that the newspapers' observations of the Stockholm riots are similar to that made by academic researchers, with a few exceptions.

6.2.1 Structural explanations

There is a strong awareness of the specificities of the rioting areas. At an early stage the segregation of Stockholm is linked to the eruption of the riots. The foundation of the riots is established as being built on structural grounds. The close relation to the riots of Paris, where the riots remained in suburban areas and did not contain looting contrary to London, can be seen also in the news reports. Unemployment rates and lack of prospects for the future are themes that are common with the French media and research explanations, emphasised also by Swedish researchers.

The Swedish newspapers argue that the fuel of the riots consists of “a real exclusion, from which youth with weak relations to working life and the schooling system more easily can be struck by hopelessness for the future. A spark can be enough to result in destructive outcomes that mainly affect people in the vicinity [my translation]” (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-22). This hopelessness is a theme that we can also find in *Svenska Dagbladet*, stating that although there might be many reasons for young men to throw stones and set cars on fire, “it is hard to close your eyes for the fact that these events are taking place in some of the most segregated areas of Stockholm [my translation]” (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2013-05-23). The structural position is, thus, central to the newspaper reporting and the explanations, but this does not mean that individual actions are ignored.

6.2.2 Agency explanations

Despite an acceptance of calling the shooting of Lenine Relvas-Martins the beginning of the riots, the shooting as an isolated event receives little attention in the Swedish media. In comparison to the deaths unleashing the riots in Paris and London, the subject is almost absent in the Swedish discussion. The fact that none of the two newspapers name the shot 69-year-old during the entire

week is also notable, making Sweden an exception in this study.

The perspective of individual or collective actors can show what was wrong in the first place, and this technique is frequently applied by the Swedish newspapers. In Paris we have seen that the influence of Muslim communities was spoken of as a pacifying force, but also as a proof of the difficulties for public institutions to gain the same contact with the suburban youth as religious leaders have acquired. In Husby, a strong focus was put on the local inhabitants that did not participate in the riots. Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt argued that the inhabitants of Husby were those who would show the rioters, best of all, that they were not wanted in their neighbourhoods (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-22), and leaving a big responsibility of restoring the calm to the inhabitants was a remarkable suggestion that has not been seen in Paris nor in London. The explanation that grows out of this lack of political responsibility taking appears to be a cultural one. Communication issues like these show that individual actions risk to meet strong reactions from the opposing group. The continuation of Fredrik Reinfeldt's position also met varying reactions from the newspapers. *Svenska Dagbladet* followed up Reinfeldt's focus on the local inhabitants by more strongly emphasising the part played by these actors in their reporting. Demonstrators against the riots and activists calling for calm were interviewed and focused on, showing that individuals can make a change (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2013-05-23). *Dagens Nyheter* chose to oppose this focus on individuals and local issues by giving a temporarily larger space to the leader of the Social Democratic party, Stefan Löfvén, who stressed that the Prime Minister was putting the responsibility of stopping the riots in the hands of the victims (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-23).

The division of society and the issue of taking care of the young inhabitants shows a complex problem, that individual influence on the areas is large and that the political presence is poor. A parallel is made, showing how situations of urban unrest have been dealt with in Malmö, Sweden's third city. It is stated that a community that involves both the youth and the parents is essential, and so is the political involvement in making such relations happen. (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-26). Another explanation can be seen in the newspaper's remarks on Fredrik Reinfeldt's difficult position to speak of the riots.

The sensitivity of political issues related to suburban areas, perhaps with racial dimensions, are subjects that politicians do not dare to face in Sweden, and this may be considered an explanation by the newspapers, expressed in equally vague terms. An example that illustrates this problem can be seen in Reinfeldt's harsh, and immediate, position against hooliganism, when his favourite football club suffered from an act forcing the manager of the team to leave his job, only weeks before the eruption of the riots in Husby. Reinfeldt's reaction in this situation could be compared to his reaction to the riots (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-21). The long waiting before he commented the riots could be judged as an hesitation regarding the appropriate way to approach the

events, and the subject of the riots was much more intricate than the question of hooliganism, that few linked to politics (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2013-05-22).

6.2.3 *Combinations of structure and agency*

Just like in the academic research writings of the Stockholm riots, it is in the combinations of structure and agency that we can see the structural explanations most clearly. As for the research writings on the Stockholm riots *Megafonen* receives quite much space in the newspapers, but contrary to the researchers, the newspapers do not seem to know how to handle the community. They underline the importance of a local voice to describe the riots, and the lack thereof in the stories of the suburban areas, but they do not know if The Megaphone agrees with the violence of the rioters or not, causing them to both condemn and listen to their voice. The rather large involvement of the Husby inhabitants in communities is also noted, explaining that there are attempts of gaining stronger positions in society by working together. The rioters may not be part of the communities, but the idea of reaching outside their neighbourhoods may have influenced the rioters.

The media role in writing about the riots is subject to debate within the newspapers, showing a reflective side that has been absent in the media reporting of both Paris and London. The difficulty to report the news in a correct way, without producing or reproducing unjustified negative images implies that a stigmatising image of suburban inhabitants exists and has partly been used by the media. Talking about the job of reporting about events in society, *Dagens Nyheter* states that “We will tell. The question is how [my translation]” (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-23; *Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-21).

The question of individual responsibility derives from the reflective creation, or reproduction of stereotypes. Although there is a risk of doing so, a stand must be taken in the reporting, as being neutral is impossible. *Svenska Dagbladet* argues that “one needs to take a clear stand against violence – always. That does not, of course, mean that one should ignore problems in society, but that one should not place violence on a pedestal [my translation]” (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2013-05-25). Social problems are there, but cannot explain why people turn to violence in order to protest. The explanation here is rather that violence is the solution of individuals not wanting to use the conventional social communications. As a contrast, *Dagens Nyheter* argues that “[o]ne has the right to ask of people to take responsibility for their lives. But there has to be a society behind, catching those who cannot, temporarily or permanently, make it on their own [my translation]” (*Dagens Nyheter* 2013-05-22). *Svenska Dagbladets* explanation of individual actions compared to that of *Dagens Nyheter*, where structural reasons are most important, provide an image of how the newspapers' slight differences in expressions may still result in explanations that show opposite

focus. Despite the acknowledgement of social background factors by both newspapers, *Svenska Dagbladet* tends to explain the riots as the result of individual actors trying to make their voices heard through violence, rather than playing roles of social victims attempting to fight back, which is what we find in *Dagens Nyheter's* reporting.

6.3 Conclusions

The social conditions and segregation of the liveable space are at the centre of the writings of the Stockholm riots. There is, however, a diversity in opinions whether the individual influence was large or not, and why individuals acted. The academic research and the media hold different positions in how they were supposed to treat *the Megaphone*. The continuation of this shows that they have different understandings of communication and how communication happens in the public sphere. Hence, the media and the research stand relatively close, in pointing out structural factors as the main explanations for the riots, but whereas *Dagens Nyheter* and the research look more at collective agency in explanations of why the riots started, *Svenska Dagbladet* focuses more on individual influence.

7. Discussion and conclusions

This study has largely taken a descriptive approach, as we have pointed out explanations provided by academic research and media, to the riots in Paris 2005, London 2011 and Stockholm 2013. In order to clearly show our findings we have placed them in a table under the categories 'structure', 'agency' and 'combinations of structure and agency'.

	Structure	Agency	Combination of structure & agency
Research Paris	Inequalities, police violence, socio-economic deprivation & colonial structures in society	The hard rhetorics of Nicolas Sarkozy & the rejection of police oppression by the youth of the banlieue	Rising criminality, hopelessness among the rioters, political denial of social issues & Sarkozy as a symbol of political power and a stigmatising state
Media Paris	Difficult social conditions & wide-spread criminality	Nicolas Sarkozy's hard rhetorics, agency driven criminal actions, cultural values and the concern of such values & Muslim communities	The difference in influence between state institutions and Muslim communities, the lack of unity within the government, meeting social issues with hard actions & the relation between rioters and politicians
Research London	Socio-economic marginalisation & a harder tone against marginalised groups and violent reactions	A chance of looting, an opportunity to unite against one common enemy, the relation between rioters and the police, individual feelings of injustice & criminal targeting	A society with cravings for consumer goods/ consumerism, relative deprivation, rising inequality, attention seeking & the financial system
Media London	Britain's fading welfare state, a social greed, lack of moral & a system of criminality	Criminal individuals, women rioters, greedy individuals & lack of moral values	Absence of political leadership, lack of social structures & varying logics and reasons among rioters
Research Stockholm	Stigmatisation, shortcomings of the democratic system, a weakening welfare system & the relation between inhabitants of suburban areas and the police.	Mobilisation of suburban youth, the right to a home space & the need for a voice of the inhabitants of the suburban areas	Political oppression and ignorance, exclusion from the political system, a stigmatising image of violent youth, an oppressive and aggressive police, racism, rioter's will to own their home territory & a contemporary society full of tensions.
Media Stockholm	Segregation, unemployment & poor prospects for the future	Communication issues, an issue of taking care of younger inhabitants living in suburban areas & sensitivity of political issues	The need for a suburban voice in the public debate, the problematic production of images of suburban spaces, individual actors trying to make their voices heard through violence & victims of poor social conditions fighting back.

Figure 3. The explanations of rioting in Paris, London and Stockholm.

Throughout the previous three chapters we have discussed the differences between the riots and the explanations to them. In this chapter we will go one step further, and answer the last of our research questions, concerning how we can explain the differences in the riot explanations. We will then finish the chapter by concluding the entire thesis work.

7.1 Explaining the explanations

For each of the three categories - 'structure', 'agency' and 'combinations of structure and agency' - used in this study, we can see that some aspects are used more often than others. The structural explanations are liable to point to democratic values and relate to political leadership and the welfare state, and especially so in the cases of Paris and Stockholm. Cultural factors and individual or collective actions are also important when explaining why the riots have been accounted for in different ways in the three cases. In combining structure and agency, we have seen that the contribution of both structural and agency factors provide a number of points on which we can compare and understand the riots from a larger perspective and in relation to each other.

The cultural aspect that has been used as a tool to understand the explanations provided by academic research and media can also be directed towards them, in order to understand why they explain the riots in the way that they do. All actors act according to the set of tools that their cultures have provided them with (Small, Harding and Lamont 2010, pp. 9-10). During the London riots the research related the riots to previous riots, such as those of the Broadwater Farm estate in 1985. So did the media, but whereas researchers referred to research on the Broadwater Farm riots, the media referred to media publications, or in some cases police reports. Similarly, cultures can differ between the countries when it comes to different media actors or researchers. For instance, naming rioters, or victims of the riots, was frequent in London, rare in Paris and almost absent in Stockholm. Body-Gendrot (2012) states that “[i]t would be unthinkable in France to publicly incite citizens to denounce troublemakers and have their pictures published on the newspapers' front pages” (p. 22), and it appears that the British culture is more allowing on this than the French and the Swedish ones. By naming actors, or in other ways describing them, the media influence on the understandings of riots may be extensive, even if their ambition may sometimes merely be to describe and not to explain events (de los Reyes 2014, p. 56; Wacquant 2007, pp. 156-158). The simplification of processes, actions and events is part of the media format, but also in academic theories simplifications are necessary if we want to achieve a comprehensive format. The shared feelings of confrontational tension and fear (Collins 2009, p. 567), as well as the emotional energy gained from taking part in the same actions (Collins 2014, pp. 299-300; Björk 2013, p. 33) are perhaps too complex for being used in most explanations. They do, however, point to the need to understand the relative aspects of actions.

The relation between riots and poverty is strong (Wacquant 2007, pp. 20-23), and as Wilson (2010, p. 205) notes, there is a strong history of seeing poverty as a structural problem in Europe. Poverty in Western Europe is not, though, an absolute term and most people are wealthy enough to sleep inside and to eat something every day. Instead, poverty is a relative term, and a term that develops with changes in political systems and decisions, as well as under the influence of an increasingly global system. It is not only possible that “[r]iots occur when the rate of improvement slows, creating a discrepancy between expectations and reality” (Tyler et al. 1997, p. 16), but we should take one step further and argue that explanations of riots depend on how we look at poverty. If poverty is getting more related to explanations of individual shortcomings than to marginalisation, stigmatisation or other social structures, which is already the case in the United States (Wilson 2010, p. 205), the London riots show the start of a change in the Western European riot. Individual responsibility and fading political influence may come to replace the more structural explanations in the long term. We can see also in the riots of Stockholm that despite an emphasis on structures, the financial system and the decline of the welfare state are explanations forwarded especially by the academic research.

7.2 Conclusion

Kokoreff (2006) argues that “riots follow their own logic [my translation]” (p. 523), but we have seen in this study that they follow certain common stages and that the difference is rather a question of context in which they take place and what explanations are used to describe them. By looking at explanations under the categories of 'structure', 'agency' and 'combinations of structure and agency' we have identified explanations of the riots that link the events to their factors. Cultural factors, specific actors and political decisions have been put forward as important reasons why the riots took place. The explanations of the riots in Paris and Stockholm show strong similarities and structural factors are most important here, whereas the London riots are explained more from agency perspectives. The academic research and the media follow the modes of expression and reference of the cultures they belong to. The media presents more different voices and focuses more on individuals or groups, whereas the research points to structural factors to a larger extent. The descriptions also show that the historical and political contexts are important for the understanding of the explanations provided. The central term when trying to understand the explanations of the riots is, however, poverty. Poverty relates to marginalisation or stigmatisation as well as to emotions or relative deprivation. It has for long been closely related to riots, and if poverty is becoming a more relative term based on individual relations to a consumer society, then we might need to reconsider the Western European riots. We might, thus, witness the first steps towards more individualised explanations comparable to what has previously been seen in the United States.

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Le Figaro 2005-10-29 – 2005-11-05

The Guardian 2011-08-08 – 2011-08-13

The Daily Telegraph 2011-08-08 – 2011-08-13

Dagens Nyheter 2013-05-21 – 2013-05-26

Svenska Dagbladet 2013-05-21 – 2013-05-26

Appendix: The newspaper articles

The French articles

Le Figaro (2005-10-29) Delphine Chayet: *Détresse et consternation à Clichy-sous-Bois*

Le Figaro (2005-10-31) Delphine Chayet: *Clichy-sous-Bois toujours sous tension*

Le Figaro (2005-10-31) Yves Threadard: *L'éducation ou la sauvagerie*

Le Figaro (2005-11-01) Delphine Chayet: *Clichy-sous-Bois reste une poudrière*

Le Figaro (2005-11-02) Claire Bommelaer: *Les banlieues mettent à mal la solidarité gouvernementale*

Le Figaro (2005-11-02) Claire Bommelaer: *La polémique s'amplifie à droite sur la gestion du dossier des banlieues*

Le Figaro (2005-11-02) Christophe Cornevin: *Violences urbaines: Villepin monte au créneau*

Le Figaro (2005-11-02) Christophe Cornevin: *Quand Clichy s'embrase la nuit*

Le Figaro (2005-11-03) Paul-Henri du Limbert: *Quand la guerre des « quartiers » ravive la guerre des chefs*

Le Figaro (2005-11-03) Christophe Cornevin & Cécilia Gabizon: *En région parisienne, la fièvre des violences urbaines ne retombe pas*

Le Figaro (2005-11-04) Christophe Cornevin, Laurence de Charette & Cécilia Gabizon: *Après une semaine d'émeutes, la violence continue*

Le Figaro (2005-11-04) Cyrille Louis: *La colère gronde chez les sapeurs-pompiers*

Le Figaro (2005-11-04) Angélique Negroni: *Voitures incendiées et dégradations : les habitants des cités s'exaspèrent*

Le Figaro (2005-11-04) Ivan Rioufol: *Cités : les non-dits d'une rébellion*

Le Figaro (2005-11-04) Cécilia Gabizon: *Rentrée scolaire sous tension dans le 9-3*

Le Figaro (2005-11-05) Patrice Burnat & Christophe Cornevin: *Chronique policière d'une nuit d'affrontements*

Le Figaro (2005-11-05) Cécilia Gabizon: *L'islam ne joue pas un rôle déterminant dans la propagation des troubles*

Le Figaro (2005-11-05) Cécilia Gabizon: *Emeutes : des meneurs au profil de récidivistes*

Le Figaro (2005-11-05) Charles Jaigu: *L'UMP organise et relaie les nombreux soutiens à Nicolas Sarkozy*

Le Figaro (2005-11-05) Bruno Jeudy: *La méthode Villepin à l'épreuve de la crise*

Le Figaro (2005-11-05) Jean-Marc Leclerc: *Le défi de la transparence sur les violences urbaines*

Le Monde (2005-10-29) *Nuit d'émeute à Clichy-sous-Bois après la mort de deux adolescents*

Le Monde (2005-10-29) *Les violences urbaines, un phénomène difficile à quantifier*

Le Monde (2005-11-01) *Les limites d'une politique*

Le Monde (2005-11-01) Jean-Baptiste de Montvalon, : *Emeutes de Clichy-sous-Bois: les interventions de Nicolas Sarkozy sont contestées, même à droite*

Le Monde (2005-11-02) Luc Bronner & Piotr Smolar: "Clichy-sous-Bois cristallise les tensions politiques et sociales"

Le Monde (2005-11-02) Raphaëlle Bacqué & Christophe Jakubyszyn: *Azouz Begag, principal opposant à Nicolas Sarkozy*

Le Monde (2005-11-02) Piotr Smolar: *Les familles des deux victimes veulent « s'en remettre à la justice*

Le Monde (2005-11-03) Luc Bronner & Piotr Smolar: *Les violences s'étendent en Seine-Saint-Denis et changent de forme*

Le Monde (2005-11-03) Luc Bronner & Piotr Smolar: *Quand les « frères » musulmans tentent de ramener le calme*

Le Monde (2005-11-03): Christophe Jakubyszyn & Laetitia Van Eeckhout: *Après cinq jours de silence, M. de Villepin reçoit les familles de Clichy-sous-Bois, avec M. Sarkozy*

Le Monde (2005-11-03): Jean-Baptiste de Montvalon & Sylvia Zappi: *Les maires de banlieue critiquent Nicolas Sarkozy*

Le Monde (2005-11-04) Rémi Barroux: *Le Parti socialiste stigmatise l'« impuissance » du gouvernement*

Le Monde (2005-11-04) Rémi Barroux: *Jean-Louis Borloo, ministre de l'emploi et de la cohésion sociale: « Il faut conjuguer social et maintien de l'ordre »*

Le Monde (2005-11-04) Pascal Ceaux: *Un jeune à Aulnay-sous-Bois: « Ce n'est qu'un début, on va continuer jusqu'à ce que Sarkozy démissionne »*

Le Monde (2005-11-04) Piotr Smolar: *Les RG ont recensé 70 000 cas de violences urbaines depuis janvier*

Le Monde (2005-11-04) Editorial: *Dérisoires zizanies*

Le Monde (2005-11-04) *Les divisions du gouvernement sur les banlieues exaspèrent la droite*

Le Monde (2005-11-05) Patrick Roger: *Rappelés à l'ordre par l'Elysée, M. de Villepin et M. Sarkozy s'affichent désormais « unis »*

Le Monde (2005-11-05) Nathalie Guibert: *Les circonstances de la mort des adolescents restent floues*

Le Monde (2005-11-05) Patrick Jarreau: *Un petit Mai-68 des banlieues*

Le Monde (2005-11-05) Luc Bronner: *600 véhicules incendiés, moins d'affrontements directs*

Le Monde (2005-11-05) Luc Bronner: *Les destins fracassés des jeunes gens jugés à Bobigny pour leur participation aux émeutes*

Le Monde (2005-11-05) Pascal Ceaux: « *Plus c'est difficile, plus les CRS sont sereins* »

Le Monde (2005-11-05) *La presse étrangère critique l'attitude de Nicolas Sarkozy*

Le Monde (2005-11-05) Piotr Smolar: *L'orientation répressive de la police est remise en question*

The British articles

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-08) Heidi Blake & Duncan Gardham: *Masked gangs turned the streets into warzone as London burned; Tottenham riot Reconstruction*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-08) Matthew Holehouse & David Millward: *Smartphones fuel the chaos; The planning*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-08) Martin Beckford, Mark Hughes, Duncan Gardham & Tom Whitehead: *Crowds loot stores in daylight and police let them continue; Thieves from orderly queue to steal clothes from sports shop; Second night of mayhem as trouble spreads across London; Rich pickings for gangs in nearby retail districts*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-08) Mark Hughes, Martin Beckford & Duncan Gardham: *Bullet that hit death scene officer 'was police-issue'; Forensic tests*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-08) Andrew Gilligan: *Parallels with the Broadwater Farm riots are flawed, says Andrew Gilligan. Despite the riot, Tottenham has changed dramatically for the better since 1985*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-08) Editorial: *Tottenham riots have posed hard questions*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-08) Tom Whitehead & Duncan Gardham: *Dead man was known gangster who lived by the gun*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-09) Tom Whitehead & Andrew Hough: *BBC describes thugs as 'protesters'; Television coverage*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-09) David Green: *Don't just stand there; The police have become so sensitive to the issue of race that it is impairing their ability to do the job, suggests David Green*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-09) Mark Hughes: *Met and watchdog clash over family's complaints; Fatal shooting*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-09) Mark Hughes: *Rule of the mob; Police lose control of capital; Gangs run riot from east to west Other cities hit by trouble; Cameron ends holiday early; A city out of control*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-09) John-Paul Ford Rojas: *World watches as London slides into chaos; International reaction*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-09) Mary Riddell: *The underclass is lashing out at a Britain that has turned its back; Ignored by Left and Right, the rioters were inevitable products of a crumbling nation*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Rosie Murray-West: *Nights of rioting to cost over £100m*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Harry Wallop: *We weren't protected, say riot-hit retailers; Home Secretary given a grilling at British Retail Consortium meeting*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Graeme Archer: *In Hackney, the knives are being sharpened; We've rubbed along, but the riots are straining tensions within the community to the limit*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Martin Evans & Raf Sanchez: *Daughter filmed 'looting' trainers has shamed us, says mother; A suspect*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Martin Beckford, Mark Hughes, Thomas Harding & Andrew Hough: *Anarchy spreads; Riots and looting in Manchester and Birmingham; Cameron puts 16,000 police on London streets; Cameron warns rioters*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Tim Ross, Heidi Blake, Duncan Gardham and Andrew Hough: *We can't cope, said a riot officer, we have passed breaking point*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Graeme Paton: *In ashes, a firm that survived two wars; Rule of mob Counting the cost*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-10) Bruno Waterfield & Peter Foster: *Enemies gloat over chaos 'caused by racial prejudice and Murdoch scandal'; Foreign propaganda*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-11) Bryony Gordon: *The terrifying night I fell for the bravest man in London; Notebook*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-11) Cristina Odone: *Immigrants love this country more than we do; The Poles, Turks and Somalis have shown up the natives during the riots and their aftermath*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-11) John McTernan: *This crisis is a symptom of a politics stripped of morality; Once, politicians and policemen were prepared to act – now they seem paralysed*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-11) Andrew Porter & James Kirkup: *We will make rioters suffer, say MPs; Emergency debate*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-12) Jeremy Warner: *If only fixing Britain were quite so simple*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-12) Mark Hughes & Martin Evans: *Police catch up with the mother who tried on looted shoes; Tottenham suspect*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-12) *No hard feelings about mugging, says student; Good Samaritan attack*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-12) Peter Osborne: *The moral decay of our society is as bad at the top as the bottom; The rioters are merely following the example set by Britain's senior and respected figures*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-12) *Two students and estate agent caught in looted PC World; The Friends*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-12) Editorial: *The rhetoric collides with judicial reality*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-13) Charles Moore: *We have the chance to recover Britain's streets for civilisation; After the 1981 riots, fiery politicians laid into heavy-handed police. How different today*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-13) Vicki Woods: *Should we blame the parents? I'm not so sure; Whatever way you decide to bring up your children, you've no idea how they'll turn out*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-13) John Swaine & James Kirkup: *Young thugs 'should fear the police', Cameron's US crime adviser Bill Bratton says gangs are emboldened by lenient policies; Offenders should face 'substantial penalties'*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-13) *Miliband links riots to scandals and bank crisis*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-13) *CCTV mother denies burglary*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-13) *Watchdog misled media over shooting*

The Daily Telegraph (2011-09-13) Inspector Winter: *On the front line; Petrol bombs, 20-hour shifts and anarchy on the streets. Police officer Inspector Winter, whose anonymous blog has captivated thousands, tells of his shock, exhaustion and terror after confronting the mob*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Claudia Webbe & Julian Glover: *Did we ever heal Tottenham or just paint over the cracks?: The violence was wrong, but social problems have never been resolved and a deep historical distrust of the police still lingers*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) David Lammy: *Broadwater Farm's lesson: After 1985's riots, people felt abandoned as soon as TV news moved on. That can't happen again*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Sandra Laville: *'Exchange of fire' heard as police shot cab passenger dead*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Editorial: *Tottenham riots: A suburb in flames*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Sandra Laville, Paul Lewis, Vikram Dodd & Caroline Davies: *Police attacked as London burns*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Peter Beaumont: *'The smell of smoke clings to the streets'*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Sandra Laville: *Bereaved and isolated, family of shot man seek answers: Police unable to tell fiancée what happened to Duggan 'Don't let this violence bear on his life,' says brother*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Peter Beaumont: *Eyewitness: It would be easy to say that this is a bad place full of bad people. But it is not*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Maev Kennedy: *Echoes of a history not forgotten as rioting returns on a summer night: The weekend's violence and looting is reminiscent of 1980s inner city unrest*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Andrew Sparrow: *Political reaction: Violence denounced – though a few say coalition cuts had a role*

The Guardian (2011-09-08) Paul Lewis: *Enfield: Trouble spreads to London's outskirts – and this time it was organised*

The Guardian (2011-09-09) Paul Lewis, Sandra Laville & Caroline Davies: *Tottenham riots: Aftermath of shooting: We warned situation could get out of control, say community leaders*

The Guardian (2011-09-09) David Lawrence: *Tottenham's looting makes me embarrassed to live here*

The Guardian (2011-09-09) Vikram Dodd & Caroline Davies: *The battle for London: Full-scale alert as violent riots spread across capital: Disorder breaks out in Birmingham city centre: Mayor and home secretary return, PM still on holiday: Police fight the battle for London*

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