

One France Against the Other?

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In Christophe Guilluy's view, there are two Frances: the urban France of towns and cities, where opportunities are considerable, and the peripheral France of villages, where populations feel ignored and abandoned by public policy. This contrast has caused a lot of ink to flow but is highly debatable and no doubt more ideological than scientific.

Reviewed: Christophe Guilluy, *La France périphérique. Comment on a sacrifié les classes populaires*, Paris, Flammarion, 2014, 192 p., 18 €.

Christophe Guilluy's book, *La France Périphérique* [Peripheral France] has garnered substantial media attention.¹ Before the book had even come out, it made the headline of the weekly news magazine *Marianne*: 'The Real Divides in France'.² A few days later, the daily newspaper *Libération* devoted four pages to the book, as well as its biggest headline: 'Working Classes: The Book that Accuses the Left'. Laurent Joffrin's editorial began with the following words: 'This is a book that the whole left wing should read as a matter of urgency'.³ It has to be said that Christophe Guilluy is no novice in the matter. In 2010, he had already made his mark with *Fractures Françaises* [French Divides], a book that caused quite a stir during the 2012 presidential election campaign. Among other things, it was apparently read by François Hollande's advisors and resulted in two exchanges between the author and Nicolas Sarkozy.⁴

This attention was by no means unwarranted. Christophe Guilluy is a genuinely talented essayist and polemicist and he offers clear and stimulating presentations of developments that are often misunderstood or unknown. Researchers have already identified many of these developments. Unfortunately this knowledge remains confined to the academic sphere, whereas Christophe Guilluy's books foster much broader debate. Obviously, when the author translates the research he draws upon for a wider audience, he simplifies it leading to many approximations and oversimplifications.⁵ However, this is the nature of the genre. The real question to be addressed is the meaning and relevance of these oversimplifications.

¹ I would like to thank the editorial team of *La Vie des idées* as well as Dominique Lorrain for their observations on an initial version of this text. I would also like to thank Gilles Jeannot and Julian Mishi for a discussion that enabled me to consolidate the argument outlined here.

² *Marianne*, 11 September 2014.

³ *Libération*, 17 September 2014. For an overview of media coverage of the book and the reactions it generated (in French), see the ENS Lyon's website Géoconfluences: <http://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/actualites/veille/la-france-peripherique-debat-autour-d2019un-livre>

⁴ *Libération* (Grégoire Biseau), 'Le livre de gauche qui inspire la droite', 30 March 2012.

⁵ In the special report that *Libération* devoted to the book on 17 September 2014, Violaine Girard and Jean Ricière wrote: 'We are struck by two limitations to this book. First, it is based on very rough sociological and geographical categories. Second, its empirical foundations seem very weak'.

Are the Lower-Class *Banlieues* Not That Badly Off After All?

The book discusses the geographical dimension of social divisions. Far from the usual views on the *banlieues* [underprivileged urban suburbs] as ghettos and the segregation suffered by their inhabitants, Christophe Guilluy insists on the advantages of these neighbourhoods. He underscores the fact that they are located in dynamic urban centres with numerous job opportunities and also reminds us that they are subject to considerable residential mobility.⁶ The latter can be partly, but not entirely, explained by the high proportion of young people. While these neighbourhoods accommodate households in difficulty, they are also the starting point for upwardly mobile households. To take up an old expression coined by Michel Wieviorka, the lower-class *banlieue* neighbourhoods are not just bottleneck traps (*nasses*), they are also gateways (*sas*).⁷ The emphasis Christophe Guilluy places on the advantages of these lower-class neighbourhoods makes a welcome change. However, it is a shame that he gets so carried away in his endeavour to overturn received ideas that he minimises the difficulties they face, which are just as real as their advantages. And when he uses the substantial residential mobility observed in these neighbourhoods to argue the success of urban policies (p. 44), he flies in the face of all recent research on the topic.⁸

But this is not the crux of the matter. For Christophe Guilluy, the central issue is that the difficulties of the *banlieues* obfuscate others, in spaces located far from urban areas, the spaces of ‘peripheral France’. The author had already substantially developed this argument in *Fractures françaises*, where he drew in particular on an article by Dominique Lorrain comparing the situation of people living in a deprived *banlieue* of Paris and that of people living in a small country town neighbourhood.⁹ These reflexions contributed to changing urban policy. Until recently, the latter focused its resources on the *banlieues* of large urban centres. At François Lamy’s behest, the criteria for allocating resources were changed in order to bring many sectors of small and medium-sized towns within the remit of urban policy. Christophe Guilluy applauds this development on several occasions.

Compared with *Fractures françaises*, one of the contributions of Christophe Guilluy’s latest opus is that it provides a better definition of peripheral France and makes it clearly visible with colour-coded maps inserted in the middle of the book. In *Fractures françaises*, the definition of peripheral France had remained fairly vague. Now we know that it is made up of the areas located outside the zone of influence of the 25 biggest cities and towns in France (the ‘zone of influence’ being defined roughly as urban zones minus the most socially fragile parts of their periurban ring). This definition is based on the construction of a ‘fragility index’ combining data on rate of unemployment, rate of precarious employment, proportion of manual and non-manual workers, etc. (p. 29). The comparison between the map showing

⁶ On this topic, Christophe Guilluy quotes figures from the ONZUS. For a more precise and detailed analysis, see Jean-Louis Pan Ké Son’s works: ‘Ségrégation ethnique et ségrégation sociale en quartiers sensibles,’ *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. 50, n° 3 (2009): p. 451-487.

⁷ Michel Wieviorka, ‘Le sas et la nasse’, in Joël Roman (ed.), *Ville, Exclusion, Citoyenneté* (Entretiens de la ville II) (Paris: Ed. Esprit, 1993), p. 191-203.

⁸ The least critical observers refer to mixed results. See, for example, Renaud Epstein ‘La nouvelle politique de la ville au prisme des évaluations du passé’, in Thomas Kirzbaum (ed.), *En finir avec les banlieues ?* (Avignon: L’Aube, 2015) (text available on the HAL SHS website). In their recent report on urban policy, Marie-Hélène Bacqué and Mohammed Mechmache are highly critical: ‘Pour une réforme radicale de la politique de la ville. Ça ne se fera pas sans nous. Citoyenneté et pouvoir d’agir dans les quartiers populaires’ (report submitted to the Minister of Urban Affairs, July 2013). See also Michel Kokoreff and Didier Lapeyronnie, *Refaire la cité: l’avenir des banlieues* (Paris: Seuil, 2013).

⁹ Dominique Lorrain, ‘La dérive des instruments’, *Revue française de science politique*, Vol. 56, N° 3 (2006), p. 429-455.

the urban areas and the map showing the fragile areas is definitely striking. The latter is almost the exact opposite of the former. These maps show the extent to which the *banlieues* are not alone in having social problems.

Is Peripheral France a Trap?

Christophe Guilluy offers a timely overview of the specific, often unknown, features of social problems outside urban centres. The first, and no doubt the most important, is the greater difficulty in adapting to losing one's job. The inhabitants of peripheral France do not enjoy the same density of employment as large urban centres. A redundancy scheme in a factory does not have the same impact there as it does in a *banlieue* of Paris or Lille. In order to find a job again, people have to cast their net much further afield, often too far afield: too far, because travel is costly, particularly when the car is the only option.¹⁰ Moving house remains a solution, but this is not necessarily easy. Drawing on work by Jean-Noël Retière,¹¹ among others, Christophe Guilluy shows just how important local sociability is for the lower classes. Moving house often means losing the support of family, friends, and associations. In order to work, you have to find childcare, and when you don't earn very much, having grandparents close by is essential. Moreover, when you live in an area hard hit by the crisis and deindustrialisation, it is difficult to sell your house and buy another one in a better-off area where house prices are necessarily higher. Changing homes when you live in council housing is no easier. In short, in a zone with low employment, the place where you live can soon become a trap. The ghettos are not necessarily where we think they are. On this point, Christophe Guilluy agrees with researchers such as Laurent Davezies¹² and highlights that not all areas can take advantage of globalisation. Specialists in macroeconomics are certainly right when they show that, overall, the French economy gains in some fields what it loses in others. However, those who live in the wrong economic sectors in the wrong places (in peripheral France) have difficulty benefiting from the rewards reaped by those who live in the right sectors in the right places (in urban centres).

The opposition that Guilluy draws between two Frances is therefore partly justified. At the same time, it is also oversimplified.¹³ It would be rash to give the impression that poor immigrants are only concentrated in the *banlieues* of large urban centres. Christophe Guilluy does not mention Didier Lapeyronnie's *Ghetto urbain*.¹⁴ And yet this book, which is a major reference in recent literature on large housing developments in the *banlieues*, is based on the study of a medium-sized town, which, according to Christophe Guilluy's criteria, is part of peripheral France.¹⁵ This single example shows just how rash it would be to oppose the image of large council estates in urban centres to residential neighbourhoods in peripheral France. Christophe Guilluy does not draw this opposition himself, and would certainly refute the idea

¹⁰ This issue is beautifully illustrated in a book that paints a balanced and enlightening picture of peripheral France: Florence Aubenas, *Le Quai de Ouistreham* (Paris: Éditions de l'Olivier, 2010).

¹¹ Jean-Noël Retière, 'Autour de l'autochtonie. Réflexions sur la notion de capital social populaire', *Politix*, vol. 16, n° 63 (2003) p. 121-143.

¹² Laurent Davezies, *La Crise qui vient. Nouvelle fracture territoriale* (Paris: Seuil, La République des idées, 2012).

¹³ To take this subject further and gain a more balanced view of the different zones of peripheral France, see Laurent Davezies' work, *op. cit.*, or those by the former DATAR [Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale/ Interministerial Delegation for Territorial Development and Regional Attractiveness] in particular the following report: 'Mohamed Hilal *et al.*, Typologie des campagnes françaises et des espaces à enjeux spécifiques (littoral, montagne et DOM)', *Travaux en ligne*, n°12, DATAR, 2012.

¹⁴ Didier Lapeyronnie, *Ghetto urbain, Ségrégation, violence, pauvreté en France aujourd'hui* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2008).

¹⁵ Dider Lapeyronnie does not give the precise location of the different places where he conducted his fieldwork, but a motivated reader could easily identify the main one.

if asked, however his work remains sufficiently ambiguous that it allows the press to use it to draw this sort of conclusion.

Many other similar reservations could be expressed. For example, the town of Douai belongs to the zone of urban centres as defined by Christophe Guilluy. In demographic terms, it even lies at the heart of the fifteenth largest urban centre in France. However, it is difficult to consider this small northern town as belonging to the same category as Paris, the first of these zones. Another example can be seen with the Drôme and the Meuse *départements*, which are very different. According to Christophe Guilluy, the Drôme is part of peripheral France but, unlike the Meuse, it is a *département* that enjoys substantial tourism, attracts *néo-ruraux* [city dwellers turned country dwellers],¹⁶ is developing a dynamic agriculture targeting promising growth sectors,¹⁷ and is politically innovative, as illustrated by the recent municipal election in Saillans. It is difficult to say that the Drôme is an unfortunate area suffering from its isolation from large urban centres.

This remark illustrates an important limitation to the binary opposition that Christophe Guilluy puts forward. This opposition goes hand-in-hand with an excessively defensive and pessimistic view about peripheral France. Without denying the difficulties they face, the areas located far from urban centres are not all abandoned to the same extent. Moreover, while urban centres do have resources at their fingertips that are not available to peripheral France, the latter does also have advantages that urban centres do not: housing is less expensive, it is closer to nature and to wider agriculture, etc. In short, there is a life outside urban centres and this life can be a happy one. The future of peripheral France is not completely grim; various positive developments can also be stressed to consider it in a different light.

To summarise, there are strong elements allowing an opposition to be drawn between peripheral France and the France of urban centres, at a certain level of generalisation. However, it is important to remain aware of the limitations of this opposition, and Christophe Guilluy might have done well to warn his readers of this. It is a shame that he only did so when pushed by questions in certain radio or press interviews.

From Geographical to Cultural Divides

Nothing discussed above is news as such. It has long been common knowledge that wealth and well-off populations are concentrated in urban centres, that the lower classes are overrepresented on the outskirts of urban centres and in rural spaces, and that they have particularly suffered from the effects of the crisis and the economic restructuring brought about by globalisation. Christophe Guilluy himself has been developing his arguments for the past fifteen years, in particular since the first edition of his *Atlas des fractures françaises* came out in 2000.¹⁸

In reality, this opposition between the France of urban centres and peripheral France is of secondary importance when it comes to the interest shown in Christophe Guilluy's arguments. More generally, the idea that grabs people's attention is the fact that this opposition will structure France's political future. More specifically, the response evoked by Christophe Guilluy's arguments lies in his vision of peripheral France as a hotbed of anger that finds an outlet in the far-right political party, the Front National.

Christophe Guilluy's analysis garners all the more interest that he takes an openly left-wing stance, positioning himself as speaking out for the lower classes while also considering

¹⁶ Yannick Sencébé, 'Être ici, être d'ici', *Ethnologie française*, Vol. 34, n° 1 (2004), p. 23-29.

¹⁷ See the big 'Biovallée' project around the Drôme valley.

¹⁸ Christophe Guilluy, *Atlas des fractures françaises. Les fractures françaises dans la recomposition sociale et territoriale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).

legitimate certain views that could be ascribed to the Front National. For example, he writes in clear and unambiguous terms that what he views as the insufficient regulation of immigration is the main source of the anger springing up in what he calls peripheral France (p. 162). In Christophe Guilluy's view, the left wing has to change its position on questions relating to immigration. In the face of a left wing lecturing workers about racism, in the face of a socialist party serving up pro-globalisation and multicultural discourses aimed at the urban intellectual bourgeoisie and households of immigrant background, Christophe Guilluy considers it necessary to also hear what the lower-class categories of the population have to say. And according to him, what we will hear is their identity-related malaise, a feeling of no longer being at home in their own country in the face of immigrants with a different culture. Immigration is nothing new, of course, but in Christophe Guilluy's view its nature has changed, first due to a supposedly greater cultural gap, second due to changes in attitudes. According to him, the culture of immigrants can now be displayed in the public space much more easily because today cultural difference is perceived more as a source of enrichment than as a threat to national unity. In this way, immigrants that inhabit the *banlieues* of urban centres do not only capture the resources of redistribution; they can also express their ethnic particularisms and cultural differences without shame in the public space.

In this context, the people whom Christophe Guilluy refers to as 'natives', following Michèle Tribalat's lead,¹⁹ and who inhabit peripheral France can only feel an unpleasant sense of domination. According to the author, they lose out on both the economic and cultural fronts, given that they cannot experience the pleasures of diversity in their neighbourhoods. This geographical divide is enhanced by a cultural divide that opposes cosmopolitan urban centres, with populations of very diverse origin, to peripheral France, where according to Christophe Guilluy the ideal world is the 'village' in its metaphorical sense of a social group united by a shared culture (p. 129-173).

It's All Because of Immigration! Really?

Let us be clear about this, these arguments are highly debatable. At any rate, they contradict the empirical surveys available, and the author cites almost none of these to support his views on this identity crisis.²⁰ And yet a substantial body of investigations conducted in lower-class areas of the rural or periurban world is developing.²¹ Studies all converge to show that these areas are marked by very diverse political and social dynamics, about which it is difficult to make any generalisations.²² They also converge to show that the motivations of Front National voters are highly varied, with very strong differences between the south and north of France, in particular, but also with variations that can be quite substantial from one district [*canton*] to the next. Above and beyond these variations, if we want to explain this vote, we should look to the profound transformation of work relations, to rising inequalities, and to the breakdown of workers' organisations (at work, in association activities, and in

¹⁹ This demographer's arguments on immigration are similar to Christophe Guilluy's. Michèle Tribalat, *Assimilation. La fin du modèle français* (Paris: Editions du Toucan, 2013).

²⁰ References are provided, of course, but only to essays or press articles as opposed to empirical research.

²¹ Julian Mishi, 'Les territoires ruraux, des espaces ouvriers en mutation', *Métropolitiques* (2013); Violaine Girard, 'Sur la politisation des classes populaires périurbaines. Trajectoires de promotion, recompositions des appartenances sociales et distance(s) vis-à-vis de la gauche', *Politix*, n° 101 (2013), p. 183-215; Julian Mishi and Nicolas Renahy, 'Pour une sociologie politiques des mondes ruraux', *Politix*, n° 83 (2008), p. 9-21. Emmanuel Négrier, 'Le Pen et le peuple. Géopolitique du vote FN en Languedoc-Roussillon', *Pôle Sud*, n°37 (2012), p. 153-166.

²² An interesting discussion can be heard between Christophe Guilluy and Violaine Girard in the last part of Radio France Culture's programme 'Planète Terre' on the topic 'Que se passe-t-il dans la France périurbaine?' [What is happening in periurban France?], 6 June 2012 (programme hosted by Sylvain Kahn).

municipal life). The question is therefore first and foremost economic and social. However, and Christophe Guilluy is right to underline this, it is also geographical, with the problems created by the restructuring of the geography of employment and the concentration of property development in urban centres.²³ The questions of culture and identity foregrounded by Christophe Guilluy merely supplement these factors. Of course, there are people who deplore the immigrant invasion, and Islamophobia is no doubt on the rise, but the main motivations of Front National voters are not always to be found in these issues!²⁴ To summarise the situation in a nutshell, the main problem is not immigration but rather lack of jobs and deteriorating working conditions (including the breakdown of workers' organisations and the fact that job prospects are located further and further away).

Of course immigration is not disconnected from employment. And while it is possible to demonstrate that immigration has benefits for the national economy and a limited impact on the salaries of manual and non-manual workers,²⁵ in certain sectors, the local experience may nonetheless be more of losing out.²⁶ In construction, agriculture, cleaning or freight certain manual and non-manual workers have every reason to see competition in foreigners ready to accept lower wages and deteriorated working conditions. However, the situation is complicated. First, this competition seems to be limited to certain economic sectors. Second, and this is a key point, this competition plays out essentially among immigrants. Third, the immigration in question is increasingly European; in many cases, the competition comes from workers from Eastern Europe who are paid as they would be in their home countries.²⁷ In short, where employment is concerned, it is difficult to find any justification for the divide that Christophe Guilluy claims is taking shape between 'natives' and recent immigrants in the lower classes.

That said, Christophe Guilluy does not burden himself with economics. Quoting Alain Finkielkraut²⁸ in his conclusion, he frames identity as the key to reading the political and social problems of contemporary France. In his view, one of the most striking illustrations of the current malaise is the presence of Algerian flags in the streets after the Algerian football team wins a match. According to him, this presence gives 'natives' the feeling that they are no longer at home in their own country. Let us assume for a moment that this feeling does exist, perhaps even that it is widely shared. How and why should it be seen as the key to understanding the economic and social problems rocking France? How and why is this feeling legitimate? Should we not rather denounce its dangers and underline the fact that it is an illusion? In the face of such questions, Christophe Guilluy would no doubt reply that this is the view taken by inhabitants of urban centres in favour of multiculturalism, who do not experience cultural diversity on a daily basis unlike their lower-class counterparts. On this

²³ Eric Charmes, 'La vie périurbaine favorise-t-elle le vote Front national?', *Etudes foncières*, n° 156 (2012), p. 8-10.

²⁴ Sylvain Barone and Emmanuel Négrier, 'Le nouveau désordre frontiste. Voter Le Pen en milieu rural', paper given at the Congrès de l'association française de science politique (ST 27) [Congress of the French Political Science Association] July 2013, online: <http://www.congres-afsp.fr/st/st27/st27baronenegrier.pdf>

²⁵ In certain situations, this impact is sometimes even positive. See for example Hillel Rapoport (ed.), 'L'impact de l'immigration sur l'économie des territoires : le local, le national et le global', note de la Chaire TDTE (transitions démographiques, transitions économiques), 2013.

²⁶ See in particular Jérôme Héricourt & Gilles Spielvogel, 'Perception publique de l'immigration et discours médiatique', *La Vie des idées*, 18 December 2012.

²⁷ See Alain Morice and Swanie Potot (eds), *De l'ouvrier immigré au travailleur sans-papiers: les migrants dans la 'modernisation du salariat'* (Paris: Karthala, 2010). See in particular the contributions by Nicolas Jounin, p. 69-91 and Swanie Potot, p. 201-224.

²⁸ Alain Finkielkraut, *L'Identité malheureuse* (Paris: Stock, 2013). The similarities between Alain Finkielkraut and Christophe Guilluy's ideas appear very clearly in the *Répliques* radio programme devoted to the topic of 'La crise du vivre ensemble' [The crisis of how we 'live together'] on 12 March 2011.

point, he uses a few well-chosen words to oppose ‘the dominant classes who experience multiculturalism with 5000 euros per month’ to ‘the lower classes who experience multiculturalism with 1000 euros per month’ (p. 152). However, it is important not to confuse the errors of political discourses about social mix – which indeed provide a way of easing one’s conscience at very little real cost²⁹ – with the moral necessity to recognise the legitimacy of others to exist in all their specificity, in particular when the others in question were colonised or ‘invited’ to France to keep its factories running. In any case, regulating immigration would change nothing whatsoever where Algerian flags in the streets are concerned. The people flying them are mainly of French nationality. The issue is therefore purely French in nature.

An Essay or a Manifesto?

Let us conclude by looking at the central problem posed by Christophe Guilluy’s book, namely that there is actually a manifesto hiding behind the essay.³⁰ This camouflage is made easier by a common misuse of reason in geography. And of course, Christophe Guilluy is a geographer – indeed, part of the originality and interest of what he has to say comes from his original discipline. However, by making the characteristics of space one of the keys to explaining social questions, the geographical approach risks the temptation to confuse correlation and cause; making the location of a social category into a cause rather than the category itself. This misuse of reason is clearly in play in Christophe Guilluy’s work. First he draws an accurate and relevant distinction between peripheral France and the France of metropolitan areas. He then makes the equally accurate and relevant observation that peripheral France faces particular problems, that, in other words, the peripheral location is in itself an element of difficulty for the more fragile populations living there. However, this reasoning becomes problematic when the author goes on to frame peripheral France as an operator of social change and a political force favourable to the Front National.

At this stage in his reasoning, Christophe Guilluy moves away from geographical analysis and enters politics. While this is obviously not a problem in and of itself, the author conceals this shift by maintaining the appearance of what he terms a ‘dispassionate’ and ‘objective’ analysis. And yet his analysis is anything but ‘dispassionate,’ despite the fact he uses a much less virulent and polemical tone in *La France périphérique* than in *Fractures françaises*. And the stance he takes is far from objective too. Christophe Guilluy does not just identify a social force, namely that of peripheral France; he actually creates it, giving it shape and substance. His argument does not describe reality; it contributes to producing reality. From this point of view, the success of his work reveals the performative strength of his arguments.

This then begs the question with which I will conclude this critical review: should we follow Christophe Guilluy in his endeavour to help peripheral France build up an awareness of itself? Answering this question leads us into political waters, where we can question a social construction that tends to oppose the social difficulties of white households to those of households of recent immigrant background. At any rate, this is the impression that arises from reading *Fractures françaises*. In *La France périphérique*, it is true that Christophe Guilluy takes into account the often very virulent criticisms with which he met in the past³¹

²⁹ Eric Charmes, ‘Towards a critical approach to social mix’, *Books and Ideas*, March 2014.

³⁰ On this point, see also Stéphane Cordobès’ analysis on his website ‘Prospective urbaine’: ‘Contre le populisme géographique de Christophe Guilluy dans *La France périphérique*’, 2014.

³¹ See Cette France-là (collectif), *Xénophobie d’en haut. Le choix d’une droite éhontée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2012), particularly chap. 6. See also Cécile Gintrac and Sarah Mekdjian, ‘Le peuple et la ‘France périphérique’’: la géographie au service d’une version culturaliste et essentialisée des classes populaires’, *Espaces et sociétés*, n° 156-157, March 2014, p. 233-240.

and presents a more moderate perspective. In particular, he takes on board the fact that the so-called ‘visible’ minorities, in particular from Turkey or the Maghreb, are very present in peripheral France (p. 164). But the fact remains that, for Christophe Guilluy, peripheral France differs from the *banlieue* due to a stronger presence of ‘poor whites’ (p. 107).³² It is in this context that, for him, immigration and ‘cultural divides’ have become the central questions troubling peripheral France. One might well prefer to emphasise other issues, such as employment or the cost of transport, particularly given that, as we have seen, these issues seem to be a greater concern for the lower-class households of peripheral France than their supposed cultural marginalisation.

At any rate if, as recent research indicates, cultural divides are at best a symptom, then it is difficult to place them at the heart of action to be taken by a ‘lower-class’ left. And this is all the more the case given that the left was built upon creating solidarity between different factions of the lower classes rather than upon emphasising their divisions. The virulent criticisms levied against Christophe Guilluy by many left-wing researchers and intellectuals stem from this. For the latter, the issue at stake for the left wing is not convincing white manual workers in peripheral France that their political adversaries are Sahelian immigrants in the *banlieues* of Paris or Marseille.

This brings us to an important debate: what place should we give to conflicting values and what place should we give to economic issues when it comes to social divides? This discussion is multifaceted. Christophe Guilluy does not embody the only left-wing trend that puts values first. In a sense, his positions are symmetrical to those taken by the think tank *Terra Nova* in a note that gave rise to much debate and suggested that the left wing work on cultural divisions and conflicting values rather than on economic tensions.³³ This debate also has very deep philosophical roots, as illustrated, by the famous exchange between Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth on the compatibility between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition.³⁴ However, it is important that this discussion does not obfuscate Christophe Guilluy’s most interesting contribution, namely the way he reveals the restructuring of different areas under the effects of globalisation and the concentration of wealth in large urban centres.

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³² It is important to note that I am not questioning this reality but rather its interpretation.

³³ Indeed on several occasions Christophe Guilluy opposes the ideas put forward in this note. See: *Gauche: quelle majorité électorale pour 2012?*, (Terra nova, 2011), available on the website: www.tnova.fr

³⁴ Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution Or Recognition? A Political-philosophical Exchange* (London: Verso, 2003).