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«Plus ça change, moins ça change»

Demonstrations in France
During the Nineteen-Eighties

OLIVIER FILLIEULE

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

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During the Nineteen-Eighties**

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, quantitative studies have become increasingly important in the works of historians and political scientists as a systematic source of historical data. Most of the empirical studies in the field analyse conflict events collected within spatial and temporal units and attempt to isolate longitudinal trends of data, using newspaper accounts as sources¹.

At the same time, however, critical studies have begun to appear to demonstrate bias in such sources, and most scholars recognize that newspapers neither fully catalogue nor accurately describe conflict events (Dantzger, 1975; Snyder & Kelly, 1977; Glasgow Media Group, 1976, 1980; Kielbowicz & Scherer, 1986; Fransozi, 1987; Rucht & Ohlemacher, 1992). To date, the extent and exact nature of inaccuracies in newspapers remains largely unknown.

One way to avoid these inaccuracies is to rely on more exhaustive sources. In this respect, in France the archives of the national police contain useful material on protest events². This material serves as the basis for my research on changes in forms of political engagement in France during the eighties. From these archives, I have compiled a database of almost 5,000 protest events occurring between 1979 and 1989 in the cities of Marseille, Nantes, and Paris (Fillieule 1993, 1996; Favre and Fillieule 1994). This number, while considerable, does not represent all the protest events which took place in France in this period. Based on various press and police sources, I estimate that in this period, for cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants, a total average of 10,500 protest events took place per year. In the city of Nantes, for example, there were 1,766 events between 1979 and 1991, which means an average of one event every three and a half days. In Paris, over the same period, there were nearly 1,000 protest events a year, which means an average of three events per day. This trend has been on the increase since the end of the seventies. In other words, the construction of a truly comprehensive database on protest events has only just begun³. Nevertheless, the 5,000 incidents recorded so far permit us to draw certain tentative conclusions.

In this contribution, I hope to demonstrate the usefulness of databases built on police archives and offer certain insights into the question of the changing forms of protest in contemporary France. I begin with a brief discussion of some methodological advantages of police archives over press data, before dealing with the morphological characteristics and political evolution of protest in France. In that discussion, I will focus on the hypotheses raised by NSM's theorists about the supposed changes in contemporary political participation.

I - Police Records, Press Data and Methodological Problems

In France, protest events⁴ are registered copiously in many different police archives⁵. In order to select the most appropriate one, a comparative test was conducted on all but one of these records over two three month periods (January-March and June-July 1991) to determine which were the best for my purposes. I conducted a further test by recording events from the most important of the non-national French newspapers, *Ouest-France*, which covers Brittany and the Loire region. I draw two conclusions from these empirical surveys: first, in cases where events are tracked by the police, both the dates and the location of the event are accurately noted⁶; second, by far the most complete sources are the archives of each local subdivision of the urban police command and, for Paris, those of the Police Department⁷. In Nantes, for example, of the 147 events listed in 1991, 50 are listed in no other source. Hence, I decided to concentrate on these archives which normally exist for most cities with more than 200,000 inhabitants (although there are some exceptions).

The Ministry of the Interior has actually set guidelines detailing the kind of information about events it would like to see recorded in the main *courantes*. Hence, each main *courante* contains the same type of information with respect to each event: date, location, and duration of the event; modes of action; description of the event as it unfolds (these descriptions always include the route taken, the mention of any granting of interviews to some protestors with the public authorities (*délégations*), and the public appearance and actions of any public officials); the nature of demands made; the identification of organizing groups; the identification of the people taking part in the event (mostly in terms of their occupation); and finally any possible intervention by the police (arrests, court trials, etc.). This last category of information is particularly important since it allows us to know, in most cases, under what conditions violence erupts, and whether it is initiated by protestors or the police⁸.

Compared to press data, the main advantage of the main *courante* is that the information reported does not vary, no matter how unimportant the event might be politically and no matter how few the participants. This allows for a systematic study of small events and means that it is not necessary to exclude a whole category of events due to insufficient information.

In a systematic comparison, I have compared the data derived from a sub-sample of my database with data pooled from our surveys of articles in two newspapers, *Le Monde* and *Libération*, for the sixth-month period between January and June 1989 (Fillieule, 1995). The results of this comparison are striking: First, newspaper accounts report on a very small number of the protest events

documented in police sources. *Libération* and *Le Monde* reports on only 2% of events, and even if we combine the data from the two papers, the total arrived at is only 3% of events;

Second, "hard" news is not so well reported, especially as concerns the number of participants and information related to violence (e.g., description of the violent incident, number of people injured or arrested, whether charges were filed, whether protestors were brought to trial, etc.). What is noteworthy here is not so much the differences between police records and press records but rather the total lack of systematicity in it, both between papers and within a single paper;

Third, two features of events explain the bias of the majority of press accounts: location (Paris/provinces) and number of participants. *Le Monde* and *Libération*, report on 6.2% and 11.2% of events occurring in Paris, respectively, but both report on only 1% of those occurring in Marseille and on 0% of those occurring in Nantes. This almost total neglect of events outside Paris may be an artifact of the extreme centralization of the French State. Such centralization means that a large majority of state agencies to which movement actors address their demands are located in Paris, which is the reason why protest organizers from outside Paris try to organise demonstrations in Paris whenever possible. Nevertheless we should remember that the most determinant variable is the number of participants, and the average size of events covered by the Press is much greater than the average size of all events documented in police records. Fourth, media sensitivity to political issues is an equally important factor in determining the likelihood of an event being covered by the Press. It is necessary to distinguish between two cases. First, when an event involves a theme which is, at that moment, already the focus of media attention, its chances for receiving coverage increases. Second, when political events of great importance (such as elections or international events like the Gulf War) occur, there is a reduction in the number of events covered by the press. This dynamic is visible for example during the local elections at the end of March 1989 and during the elections for the European Parliament in mid-June 1989. It is tempting to simply conclude that protest events receive less coverage when certain national or international events come to the forefront of the political scene. Things, however, are not quite that simple. I have in fact shown elsewhere that during certain elections or international events, the actual number of protest events which take place diminishes (Favre and Fillieule 1994; Fillieule 1996).

In a similar vein, some have argued that when a protest campaign becomes exceptionally large, the press appears to report almost exclusively on protest events organized by this movement⁹. Yet again, what is actually happening is that the overall number of protest events taking place diminishes. This finding is

extremely important because it shows that the variation in the number of protest events revealed by the data drawn from newspapers sources are perhaps not so much determined by changes in the actual number of events as they are by the shifting focus of newspapers, e.g., on X or Y protest campaign. The problem here is that this type of bias has no systematicity rather it varies according to the public events of the moment. One conclusion to draw from this is that any medium, or long-term "trends" in number of events that might appear in newspaper data may in reality be simple artifacts of media inattention during certain periods. In this respect, our evidence seems to indicate that the temporal and spatial patterns of newspaper reporting do not correspond to real-life patterns. The problems this poses for research are even more serious when the research in question involves cross-national comparisons, since political life (e.g. election cycles) vary from country to country.

It is in part to avoid such bias that for some years now attempts have been made to build up databanks drawn from administrative sources¹⁰. In this paper, I hope to show that this type of data produces a fairly complete and accurate picture of French demonstrations in the 80s. I will first determine the *rhythmology*¹¹ of the phenomenon in order to then move on to analyse the range of morphological characteristics (types of participants, of organisers and the nature of their claims) which will allow me to consider the question of the transformation of the forms of non-conventional political participation in contemporary France.

II - Rhythmology of demonstrations

The "time of the protest" is the first of the morphological determinants requiring analysis. It can be understood according to two modalities: the development of the demonstration in time, that is to say, first of all, the temporal evolution of a social practice; followed by the actual time of the demonstration, in other words the periodisation produced by the phenomenon itself. In effect there exists a socially constructed time for protest in the same way as for work, family and leisure, a time marked by the existence of protest seasons according to each social group and by significant and stable weekly variations.

Since our data covers a decade, it is possible to determine the evolution of recourse to protest action from the beginning of the 1980s in Nantes and in Marseille; we will compare our data with that collected by Duyvendak (1994) by means of a survey of the Monday edition of *le Monde* between 1975 and 1989 (graph 1).

{see Graph 1}

The first thing that strikes one on looking at this graph is the trough during 1981, particularly noticeable in Nantes. In subsequent years, the number of demonstrations grows: in Nantes, the rise continues from 1982 to 1985, before stabilising at a high level. In Marseille, the increase is more or less strong but steady from 1983 to 1989, seeing a small drop in 1991 then resuming its upward growth up until 1993. Our sources thus confirm an increase in the number of demonstrations during the 1980s. By contrast, the figures collected by Duyvendak indicate a consistent decrease in the number of protests after 1981 (notwithstanding a slight rise in 1982) until 1985 when the number of events stabilised at just around a hundred per year. Duyvendak concluded from this that there was a strong demobilisation after the socialist victory in 1981, especially when compared with the levels seen between 1975 and 1980, which have not since been matched. This difference in result would seem to stem from the bias which press sources introduce into the analysis. In particular it under-estimates "micro-mobilisation" which brings together small numbers of demonstrators, but which clearly *Le Monde* never mentions, especially when they take place in the provinces.

If one compares the evolution of a number demonstrations in Marseille and in Nantes with the total number of persons marching on the streets, one sees (Graph 2) that the average number of demonstrators decreased after 1981, rising again with the occasional blip, first in Nantes during the medical students' mobilisation against the government's reform programme, then, in both towns, during the student demonstrations of 1986 alongside the SNCF employees. The size of protest actions have therefore tended to diminish, which would go some way in explaining the divergence in results: if the number of demonstrations indeed rose during the 1980s, they would nevertheless fail to match the levels reached in the 1960s.

{see Graph 2}

If the time of the protest can be understood through its development along a chronological axis, it is still necessary to look at the actual timing of the protest, that is to say at the rhythm and the periodisation produced by the phenomenon itself. Graph 3 demonstrates the existence of protest seasons:

{see Graph 3}

One can see three fairly distinct seasons: from January to March the number of events is high and goes on rising; then, after a trough in April, the number of protests rises again over the spring before dropping sharply from June to August so as to all but disappear; finally, from September to December, street protests

rise again to a very high level to October before slowly diminishing towards January. In the capital, the situation differs little, if one looks at the data for the year 1991, except that the April peak in the provinces shifts to February in Paris. Notice that these seasonal variations correspond to those of strike action.

If one looks at some of the available works on urban uprisings or strikes, these seasonal rhythms have not always been the same. Michèle Perrot (1973), demonstrated that between 1871 and 1890, strikes went up in springtime, and were scarce between November and February. Winter saw a rise in the cost of living (due to the cold) and factories produced less. Thus people were less able or willing to be militant about their claims. A clear persistence of social rhythms from the countryside could also be seen, given the rural origins of most urban workers of the period. For farmers, winter was traditionally a period of withdrawal into oneself, whereas spring saw a blossoming explosion of demands. But above all, May was a month of respite in the calendar from work in the fields after the toil of sowing time and before the haymaking in early summer.

By the beginning of the 20th century, this seasonal pattern of protest had changed. The spring peak had become more and more pronounced. From 1919 to 1935, the number of disputes was at its highest in March and April, whilst February and March were the peak times for strikes. But it was the advent of paid holidays in 1936 that overturned the seasonal patterns of protest. August became the least active month after a "hot spring", as our own work on protests continues to reveal. The summer break was followed by a "rentrée sociale" in autumn. This three-period model determines the current pattern of industrial strike action as well as that of protest demonstrations.

Moreover, if one compares the number of demonstrations to the number of demonstrators so as to measure the seasonal variations working within the size of demonstrations, the three protest seasons can be observed in the same way. On average, large demonstrations begin to appear from September, rising through October and November, declining steadily in December-January, picking up again from March to May and finally falling away until the end of August:

{see Graph 4}

The cycles determined here apply generally to all social categories. However, it is possible to say of certain protest groups that they have their own preferred time for action. The discrepancies between graphs 3 and 4 can be explained in this way. For example, if in graph 3 the number of demonstrations rises considerably from September whereas in graph 4 large-scale mobilisation only really begins from October, it is essentially because the calendar of the "rentrée

sociale" varies from group to group. Organised demonstrations by the "educational community" (teachers, parents, students) follow exactly the cycles of the school year with the "low-water mark" during the summer months, and a strong September mobilisation at the time of the new school year for primary and secondary establishments and the last enrollments for university. So, protest action in these categories is generally routine and bring together few people, (except in time of crisis such as the demonstrations of 1983, 1986 and 1990).

On the other hand, demonstrations by blue and white-collar workers in industry follow a similar patterns to those of demonstrations in general: a first cycle from January to March, from the start of the calender year, a second cycle in springtime and a third - the most marked - at the beginning of autumn. Differences with the global curve of demonstrations are all but non-existent, as far as Marseille or Nantes are concerned¹². Taking account of the high number of people seeking employment, and in particular job losses, one may ask whether there is any corellation with seasonal variations in unemployment rates. In effect, the total number of unemployed is highest from October to January and lowest in the month of June. Of course fluctuations occur according to the age of the unemployed population, the youngest being controlled by the influx at the end of the school year (with an autumn boom), 25-49 year-olds having more chance of finding themselves out of work in January, but having the lowest risk of losing their work at the height of summer. Finally, job losses are usually on the increase from November to January peaking in December, because of the business cycle leads to a general drop in orders at that time. Now, it is in this same month of December that job offers are scarcest, which explains the high unemployment rate found in January. Seasonal variations in worker demonstrations are thus explained, given the nature of the demands, by fluctuations in the job market.

In the agricultural sector, one can distinguish two protest seasons, with strong activity at the start of the calender year which then steadily decreases over the summer months. Activity then resumes, though weakly, in November-December. One can assume that these variations very much depend on the nature of the region under consideration. Patrice Mann (1991) demonstrated that the seasonal distribution in the wine-producing south allowed one to distinguish the February-March peak from that of June-July, the fallow season corresponding to the months of September and October. However, variations in the degree of social unrest amonst farm-workers has not always been linked to the work cycles. Yves-Marie Bercé (1974 ; 1976) surveyed peasant revolts in the seventeenth century for the south-western quarter of France. The biggest protest movements there always developed in the spring, only to die out in summer, in time for the harvest. Bercé explains the concentration of disturbances during the months of May and June by the difficulties associated with the gap between two harvests (period

when the price of grain rises the most), but also by the passage of armies on the march having left behind their winter billets. Nowadays, the seasonal variation seems to correspond quite simply to the months in which professional activity is at its weakest.

If I emphasize this point it is because an understanding of these seasonal cycles is vital if one seeks to measure the variations in activism observable when collected data are plotted longitudinally. This was well demonstrated by Briët, Klandermans et Kroon (1987) in their study on variations in militant activism within the Dutch feminist movement.

Not only are there seasonal variations, but also very distinct weekly variations. In contrast to the seasons, the week is a purely conventional and cultural division of time, but its cycle takes general effect. Tartakowsky (1994) notes that between 1919 and 1934, 17% of union demonstrations and demands from union members (totalling 464 events) took place on a Sunday. Those using this day of rest most often to take to the streets are civil servants (who organised 113 of their 206 marches on this day) bearing in mind that they have no right to strike. But more than two-thirds of street demonstrations take place during the week, with a equal spread between Monday and Saturday. On the other hand, politically-inspired demonstrations make up 50% of those taking place on Sundays over the same period (totalling 853), with 72 events being held on a Saturday and 13 on a public holiday.

In the eighties, protest events are clearly not distributed equally over the week. Graphs 5 and 6 show that there is a larger number of events during the working week. Beginning on Monday, the number of events steadily rises until Thursday before declining steadily from Friday through to Sunday. The pattern, however, differs when we compare Paris with the provinces. A greater proportion of Paris-based events occur on Friday and Sunday than is the case for Marseille and Nantes. In contrast, the number of participants of the weekend events is considerably higher in all three cities than on other days (graph 6). How can we explain that situation ?

{see Graphs 5 and 6}

Table I below seems to show that events which take place on Sundays are different from those during the rest of the week, involving mainly, as in previous periods, demands which are tied more closely to "generalist" issues than with "corporatists" problems (unemployment, wages, etc.). In short, there would seem to be some link between the day on which an event occurs and the type of demand made during the event or the type of group organising it. As shown in

Table I, the majority of events which occur between Monday and Friday (69%) are organised by unions, and revolve around generally "corporatists" themes (wages, layoffs), whereas on Saturday and Sunday, the type of event which dominates involves more "political" themes (anti-racism, diplomacy, etc.). This can be clearly seen through the type of organisers involved in protest events held on Saturdays and Sundays.

TABLE I

Paris Jan. to June 1989

Police Records (N = 499)

Weekend			Rest of the Week		
International Groups	33	43%	Unions	287	68%
Political Parties	14	18%	International Groups	66	16%
Unions	11	14%	Political Parties	24	6%
Religious Groups	5	7%	Anti-racist Groups	10	2%
Anti-racist Groups	4	5%	Religious Groups	8	2%
Other Groups	9	8%	Other Groups	28	7%
Total	76	100%	Total	423	100%

Table I also helps in building sampling strategies: by focusing on weekend events it is reasonable to assume that one is capturing the most part of the so-called new social movement events. This approach allows one to explore a particular category of events and movements, but it prevents one from comparing, say, the rate or pace of this type of movement with other movements like the labor movement. In addition, when one's research involves cross-national comparisons, since the "week" is a culturally constructed category, one should inquire into the cultural meaning of the week end into the different countries under research.

III - Evolution of forms taken by non-conventional action:

Stability and identity

I would like now to test the widely held belief about new social movements (NSM) theories according to which protest actions underwent a profound mutation over a decade with the disappearance of traditional activities in favour of new actors, of "new social movements". This for example is what N. Mayer and P. Perrineau (1992) suggest when they put forward the idea that, in France, protest action would henceforth be a privileged medium for the salaried and especially the urban middle classes (see also Jennings and Van Deth, 1990, p. 37), at the same time that partisan and union mediation would become increasingly disparate; "in these new forms of action, a civil society seems to

have resurged with its own capacity to regulate and organize itself"(1992). Finally for twenty years, the nature of demands would be strongly influenced by the defence of post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1990). I intend to show here that on the contrary France in the 1980s was characterised by a great stability of actors in demonstrations (as far as participants or organisers are concerned), and their claims.

The main *courantes* pose the difficult problem of the accuracy of "soft" data. Some types of information on the main *courantes* may not be accurate - in particular, information pertaining to "organizing groups," "participants" and "demands". The police officers who fill out the information on "organization groups" and "participants" get this information from several sources: banners (from which information about participants can often be gleaned, for example about their jobs, the groups they belong to¹³); flyers collected throughout the course of the event (which may list the precise demands). For small events, the police may get the relevant information by simply meeting with the organizers since the police in most cases know the leaders of the protest event (except in Paris). As a consequence, the information given in the main *courantes* about organizers, participants and demands is not a reflection of categories established by the police, but is rather a reflection of the self-definitions of the groups involved in the event.

I am aware of the limits inherent in any attempt to create categories and topologies, given that both individuals and collective actors may claim many identities simultaneously. These dynamics are even more acute during events which constitute the platform for the expression of a political opinion, because in such cases individuals and collective actors attempt to represent the interests of larger categories. Moreover, the demands made at an event do not correspond to the full range of goals held by organizations and participants¹⁴. There are many possible interpretations to a single action, the reality of which cannot be captured by a longitudinal study, as it would require an in-depth, even ethnographic study of each event. Direct action can be a means of challenging the "State" in order to gain recognition and/or concessions of some kind. It can also be a means of offering participants the image of a unified group, to increase the legitimacy of the leaders (hence the need to turn out in large numbers); a means of appealing to various members of the public, spectators, media, commentators and...why not?...sociologists. Yet, if all the goals of the 5,000 events cannot be identified on the basis of police records, then, they can still be identified by the demands made by the SMOs themselves - as communicated during the event (e.g., via flyers, banners, etc.). And this, regardless of whether protest events of the 1980s in France embodied materialist or non-materialist values, radical or more limited "corporatist" demands, etc.

Two preliminary remarks should be made concerning the information collected on the participants. First, in almost all cases, the identities of the demonstrators are expressed in terms of professional status and/or profession, except for categories such as "pupil's parents", "anti-racists", "women" and "foreigners/immigrant workers". One can deduce from this since protest action essentially makes reference to professional occupations. Moreover, the categories of identified demonstrators cover almost all socio-professional categories of the INSEE. It is clear that the classification of the professions and socio-professional categories is far from being sufficiently detailed to allow us to affirm that all categories of French people have recourse to demonstrating. It is known for example that airline pilots, air traffic controllers, prison officers, university professors, customs officers, notaries, professional athletes - the list is by no means exhaustive - rarely if ever resort to street demonstrations to defend their professional status¹⁵. There are many reasons for this - social and political means are more effective, class ethos, etc. However, one can legitimately conclude from our results that the end of a long process of growing accustomed to street demonstration has been reached, even if certain forms of action remain little used by most groups (occupation of buildings, obstruction of the public highway, and, especially, sequestration)¹⁶.

Workers represent the category of persons that have most often taken to the streets, with 11% of protests in Marseille and 15% of those in Nantes. Next come teachers (with 9% of Marseille demonstrations and 12% in Nantes), followed by students (7% in Marseille, 8% in Nantes) and parents of students (5% in Nantes, 7% in Marseille). These results clearly indicate that the educational community has a highly developed "protest culture" which does not only manifest itself in time of crisis, but also at the most conventional occasions. In fact, their level of mobilisation remains consistently high throughout the period, and according to our records they do not correspond with the peaks of 1983 and 1986. By contrast, for all other groups, a divergence of attendance is not so noticeable: farmers, white-collar workers, civil servants and public employees within state-owned industries, craftsmen and shop-keepers, the liberal professions, retired folk, are hardly less well represented at demonstrations.

One can therefore estimate that the salaried middle classes effectively constituted the great battalions in demonstrations during the 1980s, which can indeed be explained by their sheer numbers in France. However, two facts counter the hypotheses about new social movements: workers are those that most often take to the streets and the acknowledged identities of protestors are almost always professional, corporatist, and thus linked to earnings, and to the type of work?

According to the thesis of changed modes of political engagement, participation in protest activity is increasingly characterised by an extreme fluidity, whereby individuals are engaged and disengaged according to circumstances and, above all, outside traditional movements. Our data radically contradicts this vision and leaves no doubt that the street was dominated during the 1980s by the traditional organisations: more than 90% of demonstrations were called by one or more organisations, whereas less than 7% were spontaneous demonstrations. Spontaneous expressions of protest are not only channelled through demonstrations that were not formally organised, but also those where no organisation is prepared to acknowledge having called them.

The organisations that most often have recourse to strategies of street demonstrations are the unions. These were present at 77% of demonstrations in Nantes, 70% in Marseille and 43% in Paris during 1991. More precisely, the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT, of communist persuasion) seemed to be by far the most active organisation in calling demonstrations, since it is involved in far more than half of the union calls for protest in Nantes and Marseille, and a quarter of those in Paris.

In contrast to the unions, political parties very rarely call for demonstrations, with the notable exception of Marseille where the Communist Party is strong (6% of calls, 8% if one takes into account satellite organisations). From this point of view, a change can be noted with respect to previous decades, especially since the post-war period which saw the streets dominated by left-wing parties (mainly the Communist Party). As for the right-wing parties - whether mainstream or extreme - they resort much less to street protests than their left-wing counterparts. Amongst these, the Communist Party turnout surpasses most other groups, and especially the Socialist Party which only attended 1% of demonstrations over a ten year period.

Associations played an equally important role in calling protests during the 1980s. However, only certain sectors resorted extensively to protest action. These primarily include, though according to a hierarchy which differs somewhat in the towns considered, parent associations, anti-racist movements, associations in support of international causes (groups against such and such a problem abroad: commemorating the Armenian genocide, supporting the PLO, the students of Tien-an-mihn, etc.).

This distribution of the most active protest organisations corresponds broadly to their respective weight amongst the associations sector, as Héran suggests: "participation levels amongst parents associations, on the one hand, and single professional unions, on the other, remain particularly high. This is because, in both cases it is a question of defending interests linked to one's personal situation,

or to that of people close to you, and not of embracing a general cause which, belonging to everyone, at the same time risks being unpersonal. On quantitative level at least, forms of so-called new associations are far from posing a threat to traditional organs" (1988, p. 21).

If one is to believe the NSM authors, the "old" movements mobilise themselves for long-established objectives (class struggle, religious differences, the rift between the centre and the periphery, etc.), whereas the "new" movements tend to become active on behalf of causes founded on new cleavages. Once again, data shows that, in the case of France, it is a question of a received idea.

The first thing to note concerning the analysis of demands during the 1980s is the high concentration on a small number of themes since two thirds of events in Marseille and Nantes revolve around 9 demands. Moreover, there is an astonishing homogeneity amongst the most recurring demands from one town to another. Opposing job losses was the focus of around 14% of demonstrations. More generally, between 18 and 19% of events targetted the problem of employment (if one includes action against unemployment, for jobs and opposition to redundancies). Mention must be made of the considerable importance of demands linked to earnings, which precipitated 23% of demands in Nantes, 19% in Paris and 16% in Marseille (if one includes claims linked to consumer interests, rises in salaries, to price increases, pensions and retirement and agricultural matters, almost all of which have a direct bearing on farm revenues, disputes about pricing or the policies of Brussels). Problems linked to schooling (more than 15%) and to international affairs, which come first in Paris (23%), third in Marseille (12%) and sixth in Nantes (6%) are of considerable importance. The respective places taken by demands of an international nature could be explained here by the presence of easy targets - embassies, consulates - and by the population structure of the cities (implantation of communities of overseas origin).

The division of causes in our three cities does not serve to corroborate the hypothesis that there has been a modification in those values defended by protest action. "Materialist" causes in effect remain to a very large extent dominant, with jobs, earnings and standards of living, problems linked to schooling (stemming from underfunding during the 1980s in school buildings and teaching posts, and from universities selection procedures). The so-called post-materialist causes, including actions linked to moral issues, the environment, the right to abortion, anti-militarists or even politics in general, do not really come into play. Amongst the causes which might be labelled more or less post-materialist, international issues in particular anti-racist/anti-fascist groups stands alone. The latter make up 4% of protests in Marseille, 3% of those in Paris and 2% of those in Nantes.

The ideas developed by Ronald Inglehart with regard to the radical novelty of protest movements in the 1980s must now be qualified¹⁷. As far as protest action in France is concerned, our results clearly contradict his submission from 1979-1989. One of the possible reasons for this is that the Eurobarometer surveys measure the propensity to mobilise and not effective actions. From this point of view, our results confirm the claim that the propensity to participate in collective action does not produce the same results as effective participation itself. The latter alone permits the identification of protest groups at a given moment as well as their motives.

The works of Inglehart also cover the 1970s and 1980s whereas our research only covers the last decade. One might therefore conclude that the worsening of the economic crisis, with rising unemployment, the drop in salaried earnings and deflation, would have had the effect of durably braking the growth of post-materialist values in our society in favour of a return to the problems of jobs and wages. However, the latest results advanced by Inglehart suggest that the backlash of the crisis was felt but was ephemeral. According to a collection of survey by Eurobarometer undertaken in six European countries between 1970 and 1988, the author shows that the indices of post-materialism steadily increase when one passes from the oldest to the youngest members, each new member being a little more post-materialist than his predecessor. According to that analysis, the two oil crises of 1973 and 1979 were accompanied by a drop in the indicators of post-materialism, but from the beginning of the 1980s, the growth in these indicators took hold again steadily throughout the membership. Is this type of development over time confirmed by a similar development of the most important types of demands made at demonstrations during the 1980s? To answer this question, we have surveyed the causes which people protested about in Marseille and Nantes in a number of broad categories: those linked to unemployment (those against redundancies, those for the creation of jobs and those against unemployment); wages (wage reviews, consumer power, retirement and pensions, price rises, drops in farm prices) for materialist causes; those linked to anti-racism/anti-fascism, regionalism, morals (abortion, violence against women and moral issues in general), certain international political issues (world peace, disarmament, third world aid, etc.), and to anti-militarism for post-materialist values:

{Graphs 7 and 8}

In these two graphs, the similarity between the evolution of the two curves is remarkable which tends to show that our data cannot be simply reduced to a regional specificity. If one examines the evolution of materialist demonstrations, one notices in one case or another three stages: their relative weakness at first

until 1983, their falling away until 1986 in Marseille and 1985 in Nantes, then their very noticable growth from 1986 in Nantes and 1987 in Marseille. It is noteworthy that the two periods of growth in demonstrations for materialist causes correspond with two important changes in political orientation during the decade: the radical conversion to liberalism of the socialist government in 1983, with the dismissal of the communist ministers from the government and the return to protest activities by the CGT from the end of 1984¹⁸; then the change in political leadership in 1986, with the return of power of the right in the general elections. If the cohabitation did not result in any change in terms of economic policy (other than symbolically in the debate over denationalisation), nevertheless a strong union remobilisation, notably with the continuous presence of the FEN in the streets, took place. Furthermore - and this is not to be anodine - FO held its first interprofessional demonstration since its creation on the 3rd October 1987 in Paris. If one now considers post-materialist causes, one is struck by the great stability of the period. One might even say, although at this stage our data is not conclusive, that there was a certain decline after the elections of 1981 which brought the left into power. In order to fill the gap in the oldest data, one might turn once again to the results found by Duyvendak (1994) over the period 1975-1989 which seems to show that post-materialist demonstrations effectively experienced a sharp drop after 1980 never to return to the levels reached in the 1970s. This seems to have subsided before the presidential victory of Mitterrand, which suggests that the link between the change in government and the drop in new social movements might not have been as direct as was previously thought. Finally, it seems that materialist activism is far more susceptible to being influenced by a change in political climate - in other words, to electoral cycles - than is post-materialist activism. This was clear in 1981 and 1986.

Conclusion

To conclude I would say that police sources have made it possible to evaluate more precisely the hypotheses of the theories on NSMs applicable to the French situation. It is undoubtedly the case contrary to widely held beliefs that traditional channels of representation remain acceptable to the people as far as organising protest action is concerned. A decline in union and party militancy has all too readily been used to promote the idea that these organisations no longer play their role as social movement activists. Such an inference is wrong, as shown by the crucial role of the pre-existence of one or more organisations structured for mobilisation activity.

Two further points remain for consideration: can one first of all say that recourse to protest action applies to all social classes? What can one then conclude from recent developments in protest action?

1) The extent of protest action and its presence across almost all social categories seems to indicate the completion of a process of institutionalisation, and acceptance of demonstration, as a natural form of behaviour. Thus, in addition to the strong mobilisation of workers and those involved in schooling (teachers, parents and students), demonstrations touch equally upon all social categories.

Three remarks stem from this notion of 'naturalisation' of demonstrations: first, if in the number of demonstrations, one effectively notes equal recourse to protest of numerous socio-professional groups, this is not altogether the case when one takes the total number of people who protest in the streets, especially taking account of the figures relating to the part taken by each group within society. Next, certain categories never, or very rarely, have recourse to protest, whether they possess limited resources, or have none at all. Finally, this naturalisation of protest is perhaps not such a recent phenomenon. It is true that since the Second World War and up to the end of the 1960s, taking to the street was reserved to the "working classes", notably under the wing of the Communist Party. However, the conflicts at the start of the century - a period of unparalleled protest activity - united men and women of all backgrounds and professions on the streets in actions such as the 1st of May march for an 8 hour day, or the marches to bring General Boulanger to power, to support or barrack Captain Dreyfus, to defend religious congregations or oppose church property nationalisations. One encounters here an epistemological constraint: the chosen time scale is essential to understanding any phenomenon and it is retrospective projection that permits the voluntary reconstruction of the object of analysis.

2) The analysis of the mains *courantes* answers in part the questions concerning the social and political determinants of protest, thanks to the disposition of a

homogenous and complete series over more than ten years. It is fairly rare that one should stop there. In most instances, statistical data without chronological and homogenous breaks goes no further than a few years and the sociologist is forced to reconstitute the data on the basis of exogenous information. The retrospective projection thus gives some breathing space to develop the phenomenon being studied, but the sense given here depends essentially upon the intentions of the researcher. These cannot be addressed here.

However, one must be attentive to the fact that the developments brought to light in this work stem from our corpus. To be in a position today - which was never possible before - to assess in a more or less exhaustive way the state of protest in certain French towns automatically leads one to reveal a new image of protest action, since one is in a position to take into account hundreds of events which were previously known only to a few people (other than the (often few) demonstrators themselves, and one or two onlookers).

But, above all, the epistemological problem of the time-scale used is raised again. In effect, a research object takes on particular temporal characteristics depending upon the scope of the study. "One can by analogy take a familiar example, that of sealing wax, of which the physical properties modify themselves without the need for a great change in timescale; observed over a minute, the sealing wax obeys the laws of distortion of brittle solids with a breaking- or shearing-point, which is easy to measure numerically. But, observed over the space of a month or a year, this same wax is a viscous fluid subject to plastic distortion under the sole action of its own weight"¹⁹. The scale is therefore decisive in drawing conclusions on the pace of change or absence of change: in the long-term, there is no demonstrable reason why a strong observable increase or decrease should not be a simple accident. An aberrant point in an otherwise gentle curve, or even moments in a cycle of which the statistician rids himself by paring.

In the light of these epistemological precautions the question of a change in the nature of political participation must be considered in order that one might measure it in particular by replacing the materialist values by post-materialist values and by modifying the sociology of the groups organising protest actions (disappearance of parties and unions in favour of *ad hoc* associations).

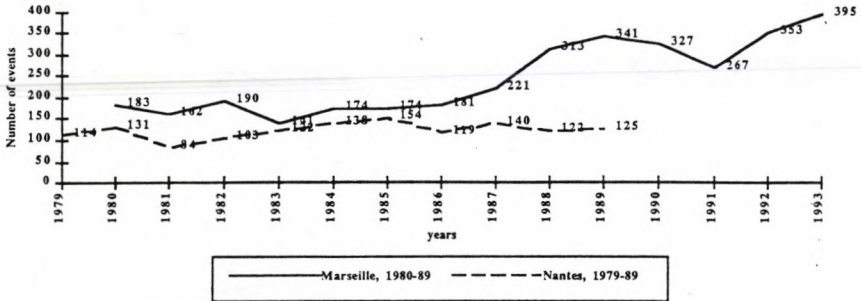
Should one therefore assume from our results that the work of Inglehart should be rejected? One might in fact put forward the hypothesis that materialist values grew strongly during the 1970s (especially in comparison to the 1950s-60s) only to decrease once again under the effect of the recession, and, in such a case, nothing in our ten-year survey permits us to conclude that there has been a long-lasting abandonment of post-materialist values or anything other than a simple "blip" in the long-term trend²⁰. However, given the impossibility of our being able

in any way establish a homogenous and complete series over a long period, this limitation does not undermine the usefulness of our results, given that in years to come, it will be possible to continue the process of establishing a series, derived from the same sources.

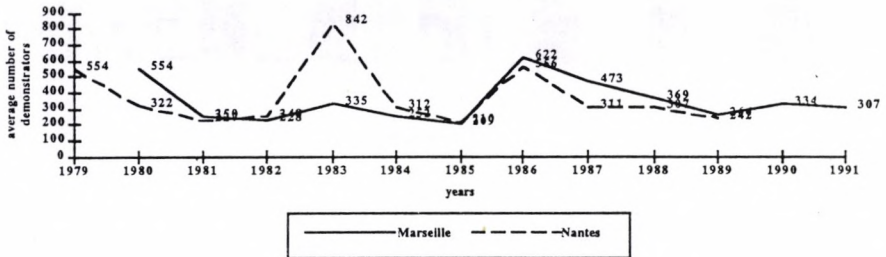
The analysis of organising groups, on the other hand, does not present the same problems, insofar as one knows better at what point political and union organisations have been involved in the preceding decades in putting together protest actions. In recent years, the feeling has spread in the media and informed discourse that political parties and unions no longer play as great a role as before in advancing certain interests. Our results largely deny this analysis as far as the union presence especially is concerned, and to a lesser extent, for political parties.

Graphs

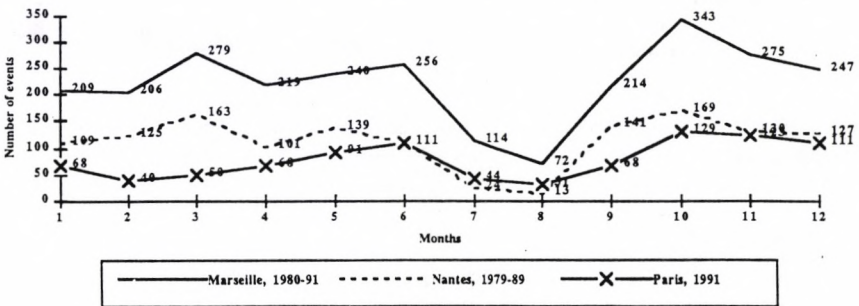
Graph 1: Average number of demonstrators per year, Marseille and Nantes



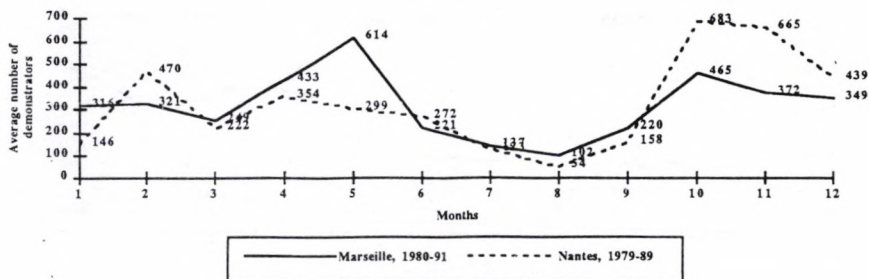
Graph 2: Average number of demonstrators per event and per year, Marseille and Nantes



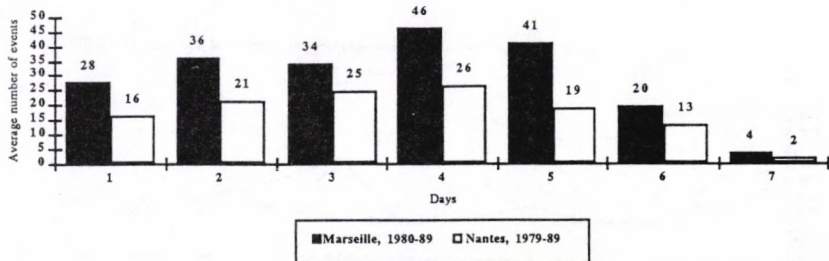
Graph 3: Number of events per month, Marseille, Nantes and Paris



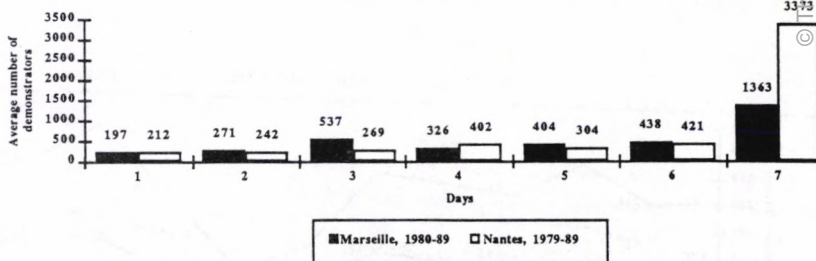
Graph 4: Average number of demonstrators per event and per month, Marseille and Nantes



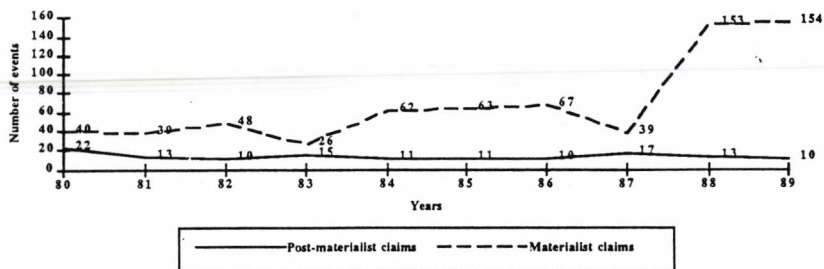
Graph 5: Average number of events per day, Marseille and Nantes



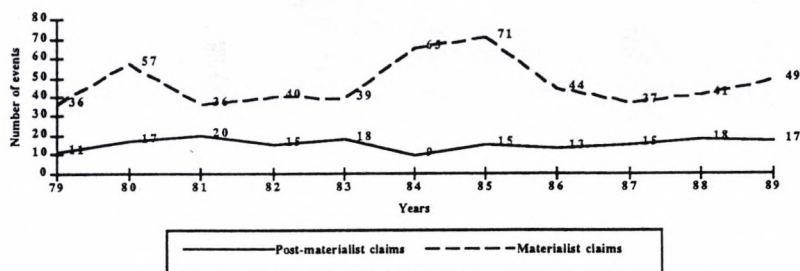
Graph 6: Average number of demonstrators per day, Marseille and Nantes



Graph 7: Materialist and post-materialist claims between 1980 and 1989, Marseille



Graph 8: Post-materialist and materialist claims between 1979 and 1989, Nantes



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Endnotes

¹ - For a critical review on protest event analysis, see Olzak (1989).

² - That does not mean that police archives are not biased but only that they are more accurate, cover much more protests, and document them in a systematic way. However, even if we have never found any evidence of it, one may doubt whether all events are covered by the police.

³ - All protest events which occurred between 1979 and 1989 in Marseille (the second largest city in France) and Nantes have been fully coded and entered into the database. Only a portion of Paris events from this period have been coded and entered.

⁴ I define protest events as follows: *an event in which a non-governmental actor occupies a public space (public buildings, streets) in order to make a political demand, to experience in-process benefits, or to celebrate something, which includes the manifest or latent expression of political opinion.*

⁵ - These are divided among five different archives: 1) The archives of the Office of Public Security cover protest events in Paris (archived at the Prefecture of Police in Paris). 2) Records concerning events occurring in cities of 10,000 plus inhabitants, who are archived at the National Office of City Police and, for each local subdivision, at the direction of urban police. 3) Records concerning events occurring in small towns (less than 10,000 inhabitants), where the soldiers of the police militia (that is *la gendarmerie nationale*) are in charge of public order, are concentrated in Paris. 4) Records concerning events which fall under the jurisdiction of the Republican Security Forces (CRS) are archived at the Central office of the CRS in Paris. Most of the time these documents cover violent protest events. 5) Finally, also at the national level, the archives of the Central direction of the General Intelligence Service of the Ministry of Interior. If we had some access to these sources, we decided not to make use of them because of their lack of reliability (the data we wanted to work on were systematically collected by the police officers themselves, so that it was impossible to check their value).

⁶ - About one hundred events are reported by these different sources. In none of them have we noticed any difference concerning the date, location, and identification of demonstrators.

⁷ - These archives, in Paris as well as in the rest of the country are called the "main *courantes*". The main *courante* is a document where all events termed 'a police intervention' are recorded.

⁸ - In fact, given that these documents were never meant to be opened to the public or to researchers (they are not deposited in the local or national archives), the temptation to paint police activities in an overly-favourable light is not always as great as it might seem at first glance. However, one should note that the police generally tends to downplay their errors and use of violence in general. But, due to the internal war that often oppose the different police corps (CRS/Gendarmes and Urban Police), the main *courante* are full of criticism aimed at gendarme and CRS action in the field. Because we have worked also on the CRS archives of the 1980s, that are very critical to the Urban Police, we have acquired a good understanding of the hidden meaning of the bureaucratic style of the main *courantes*.

⁹ - Unfortunately, it does not mean that big protests campaigns are well reported by the press. On the one hand, the press begins to pay attention to protest campaign as far as these campaigns have already reach a certain degree of mobilization (that is what one call usually the "critical mass effect". On the other hand, when these campaigns last a long time, media attention begins to decrease even if protest remains at a light level of mobilization (that is the "ceiling effect" of Dantziger (1975)).

¹⁰ - See research currently underway by Mc Carthy and Mc Phail (1995) on police permits in Washington D.C., Della Porta on Florence (1993) Wisler on Geneva and Zurich, Hocke (1995) on Freiburg/Breisgau (Germany) and Gentile on Switzerland.

¹¹ We allow ourselves a neologism by which one understands the analysis of the temporal evolution of a practice, at the same time as the rhythms and the periodisations produced by the phenomenon itself.

¹² The similitude of the protest rhythms of workers and employees in Nantes and Marseille is explained by the numerical importance in both cases of salaried staff in the naval workshops.

¹³ - In Marseille, for example, for almost all the big events, records contain a very systematic account of the texts written on the banners and slogans. This constitutes an invaluable source of information because through it one can establish what groups participated in the event. It would, of course, be a mistake to think that these records are exhaustive. The fact that they represent only a partial record became clear during the course of a class Nonna Mayer and I taught at the Institute for Political Studies. One of the class assignments we gave students was to attend an anti-racism march which took place that semester and to note down the kind of information recorded in the main *courantes*. The march was called by more than forty organizations; although the information gathered by the different teams was very similar, it nevertheless differed on some points.

¹⁴ - Who has not, when attending a demonstration, seen a lone individual carrying a sign with which she attempts to attract attention for his/her cause? For a humorous illustration, see Sempé's picture of the protestor brandishing a sign which reads: *Will exchange a charming, 3-room apartment, kitchen, bathroom, for a 5-room apartment Tel. 127.41.23*.

¹⁵ - Which does not mean that these same people do not demonstrate as much as parents or activists for such and such a generalist cause.

¹⁶ - We do not wish to indicate by this that demonstrations are "naturalised" as part of a continuing process. This was what D. Tartakowsky (1994) showed for the period 1918-1968. This explains well that, until 1934, all social groups demonstrated, but with an unequal propensity. In effect, protest is strongly linked then to the practice of striking, the reserve of workers. It is only after the war that the extension of resort to demonstration in new circles seems to have taken root. In the 1950s, the protest became the occasional and possible expression of all social and political components of the country. At the same time, during these years, the independent role of young people and particularly students became a constant in the demonstrations linked to Algeria but equally in numerous rural demonstrations, then during the metalworkers' strikes of 1955 and of November 1956. Finally, the most marked phenomenon of the 1960s from the point of view of the extension of recourse of groups to protest is the entry of the farmers into the protest scene.

¹⁷ - In fact, if Inglehart's first study was published in 1977, a second study on the 1980s was published in 1990 and thus covers the same period as ours (Inglehart, 1977; 1990).

¹⁸ - From 1984, in fact, one witnesses a rebirth of national inter-professional protests. The communists' departure with the nomination of the Fabius government halted the will of the right within the unions and fired up that of the CGT which sought to regain its capacity to mobilise. It mobilized first the civil servants that had not reached any wage package agreement. The 25 of October 1984, the CGT proposed a strike to civil servants of the PTT, EDF, SNCF, RATP. and the 24 October 1985, it organised its first national inter-professional day of action since 1980.

¹⁹ - in F. Meyer : *Problématique de l'évolution*, Paris, PUF, 1954. Cited in Gras (1979, p.24).

²⁰ - One finds a good example of this problem in *Civilisation matérielle et capitalisme* by F. Braudel (1967), according to which there was a long-term progression in cereal yields in Europe (from 60 to 65%) during the years 1200-1820. But, it must be noted, "this progression does not exclude the fairly long-lasting drop in yields between 1300 and 1350, 1400 and 1500 and between 1600 and 1700". Alain Gras, who cites this example in his book adds that "if one

takes into account the fact that there was a drop over 250 years, that is to say over half the period in question, the preceding proposition could be turned on its head (drop with limited increases) but one can take a definitive, though arbitrary, stance on the direction of the longterm trend in recent history" (1979, p.65).



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