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THE HIDDEN FACES OF THE CITY

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Today's city is exposed to interpretation from every angle: its morphology, its structures, its practices, its representations. At each of these levels, the city can be unveiled as a synthesis of symbolical worlds. The hidden faces of the city, therefore, pose pertinent questions and invite one to reinterpret from the inside, the referential totality which gives the city meaning, whatever vast or polymorphous it may be. As such, a hermeneutic type of reflection leads one to:

1. pose the problem of its latent dimensions, such as identity. If "identity" is considered an algorithm, it designs and structures representations, thus further formulating not only methodological but ontological and political problems, particularly when the question of identity is taken over by urban marketing,
2. call to mind the problem, at this hour when the "territorial city" or *hyperville* is emerging, of the possibility of reading and analysing a "metropolis" which would be to "metropolisation" what urbanity did not sufficiently be to urbanisation.

Using examples from Quebec and the Suisse Romand part of Switzerland, the author wishes to begin by investigating, through discourse and through a play on the links between the continuous and the discontinuous, how a sense of identity is constructed or deconstructed with different end results, and to conclude by pointing out the dangers of confusing between the natural object and the object of discourse. Here lies the entire problem of the discursive construction of the geographic object.

"The nature of the scientific object is what is hidden", as Gaston Bachelard liked to say. The search for what is hidden is one of the main preoccupations of contemporary urban geography; and not only of geography, but also of urban development, of the history of urban development, of urban anthropology or urban politics, of sociology or socio- and even semio-linguistics; and most of all of territorial marketing. In Switzerland in any case, in the past few years, it has been thought necessary to be interested in all of these disciplines, in the hidden faces of the city, in order to be able to answer the key question, which arises out of scientific discourse as well as from common sense: "Does a city have a soul?".

Reading the visible and invisible in urban dynamics

Why this question? BASSAND, Sociologist and Director of the "Institut de recherches sur l'environnement construit" at the EPFL proposes a preliminary answer in his book which carries the results of a seminar entitled "The hidden faces of the city". He believes that today's city lends itself to interpretation from every possible angle, its morphology, its structures, its practices, its representations and also because the city can be revealed / exposed at each of these levels as a synthesis of symbolical worlds. In BASSAND's own words *"the hidden faces of the city raise so many pertinent questions and invite one to reinterpret from the inside, the total set of references which gives the city meaning, whatever, vast or polymorphous it may be"*.

The epistemological background of the subject is clear. Sometimes implicitly, but more and more explicitly he adheres to a hermeneutics, which having tested the limits of a logico-formal and empirico-formal approach near to neo positivists who dominated the social sciences during the thirty glorious years from 1945-75, finally concentrates at the end of the seventies on questions of meaning and intention. The visible effects of the city are considered as a text to be deciphered, which constantly refer to a hidden discourse, which in fact is only a coded transposition of the "text" that is visible. Interpretation will depend then on the very theoretical possibility, of postulating certain non discernible entities, of conferring certain attributes upon them and of describing the mechanisms by which the observed effects are generated, from processes situated within these same entities. The main point is to be found however in the key to reading, still to be discovered. J. LADRIÈRE (1989) cleverly resumes the validating conditions of this type of interpretation. They are to be found in *"the degree of saturation of the proposed interpretation, in other words, to the extent to which this interpretation succeeds in integrating in a coherent whole, the set of texts considered in detail, including those which are apparently insignificant"*. The validity of this schema of understanding resides obviously in its ability to seize the articulation hidden behind appearances of real-life experience and to efficiently guide the course of action.

It must also be noted that despite the existence of a large number of urban theories, most of them appear however to hold back important dimensions of urban dynamics. This could very well be the result of compartmentalised disciplines which, while enlightening certain aspects of urban development, necessarily obscure others. Thus, there are theories that consider the city, like other social realities, as a set of in-depth structures, arranged in a hierarchy according to their more or less concrete and directly visible characteristics. More or less concrete and more or less observable and open to analysis and therefore more and more observed and analysed, even if the importance of what deserves to be observed in order to justify the experience is post-rationalised afterwards: the morphology, yes, practices and representations, non, or less. Thus, there are structuro-functional theories which favour economic and political dimensions while relegating or shifting social, cultural and transformational aspects towards the hidden realms of the city. Thus again, more theories which represent the city first as a group of actors arranged according to a hierarchy in terms of power, but who leave certain active minorities completely in the dark. Thus, there are other historical theories which block creative futuristic dimensions. Therefore, here and there, a number of urban characteristics stay hidden, such as social and spatial segregation. A reason perhaps for the emergence of new metropolitan forms which radically question our representations of the city. I am sure that each one of us could add other elements or even other dimensions to the list.

With the intention of fighting against this concealment of certain aspects of urban dynamics, the team that originally developed the study strived to reveal these hidden aspects as well as those that have not been given due attention, specially those

aspects which have engendered transformations in contemporary urban dynamics. The team identifies three research orientations: urban identities on the one hand, neighbourhoods on the other hand and sound culture. These three orientations, in fact, had been developed beforehand within a Swiss national research programme called "Ville et Transport (The City and Transportation)", a programme which we already had the pleasure of presenting with this same committee in 1989 (RACINE and CUNHA 1991). The authors must be given credit for the fact that, compared to research programmes that sought to reveal the hidden faces of the city that did not, a priori at least, have any obvious interconnections, they succeeded in distinguishing a common interpretation, through the set of themes concerning the hidden faces of the city which enabled them to give a common perspective while at the same time maximizing their respective results.

In actual fact, as J. Ph. LERESCHE points out, the set of identification problems gives precedence to the more secretive or vague zones of urban dynamics, just as much as it is aware of the changes mainly due to contemporary urban development. An enigma to be solved, not in order to discover a mystery rising from the inexpressible and the imperceptible, but within the context of transformations of urban space from the point of view of an explosion. With regard to this, is there one identity or several urban identities? How can spatial identity and political identity be expressed? Are local identities compatible with a metropolitan identity? Is it really the city that motivates or is it rather the "differential" identity of social groups? What is the effect of urbanisation on identity formation? How can one seize and put to use the important difference, or rift, that exists between urban developments and their comprehension (perception, understanding) by local authorities (GALLAND et al. 1994) or inhabitants (LEVY 1994)? So at a time when scientists are enthusiastically trying to prove its existence through functional readings of action space and lived space, does something exist in represented, managed and measured space, which corresponds, in the Swiss Romand part of Switzerland for example, to a clearly defined and asserted "Iemanic" metropolitan identity, and in France to a Francilian identity (of the Ile-de-France around Paris)?

In a certain way, the difficulty of the hidden faces of the city conceptually refers to the research which nourished a part of urban geography for years, in other words to a search, in social urban space, for latent dimensions through the techniques of factorial analysis. The question is to find out if we have really defined "identities" when data analysis and a hierarchical ascending classification allows us to say, for example, that apart from the Belsunce neighbourhood which constitutes a category in itself, Marseilles "appears to be a very diversified city, with multiple contrasts", that Bordeaux "possesses a very firm commercial character" whereas Lyon "is a more middle class city" (MANSUY and MARPSAT 1991). Three "identities" or three converging forms of statistical data? The idea of a mosaic is it of the same nature as that of a "middle class"? We hesitate between denotation and connotation, all the more because between the 1960s where factorial analysis was more generalised, and the 1980s when this methodology was used again after it had been shelved, it

has shown, almost all over the western world, a rising differentiation and therefore the infinitely more complex nature of the intra-urban structure. Between the centre and the outskirts on the one hand, within these two kinds of areas on the other hand, more specialised new dimensions appear with time, which, like the results published from data collected from 1960 or 1961 onwards, cannot be considered to be part of such general constructs as ethnic groups, family types and revenue levels.

It was obvious, during the 1960s that the family status began to differ according to the age continuum and due to the progressive participation of women in the work force. The census data of 1970 showed the family to be a more and more complex organisation, and this continued during the 1970s with the emergence of new *hidden faces of the city*, for example, where the role of single-parent families or of *sequential monogamy* seems to play an increasingly important role in the structuring of social space: an open license to acknowledge, amongst other things, the gendered nature of our cities. A facet that has been hidden for much too long!

Urban Ontology and Marketing: Do Cities have a Soul?

Was it possible to do any better and go any further, even from a point way above all urban experience, in questioning the "existence or being" of cities? This interrogation can proceed from very different approaches and finalities, according to whether they nourish a sort of "critical regionalism (TZONIS and LEFAIRRE 1981; FRAMPTON 1987) or by making it (as it is the fashion today), "the" driving force of territorial development by integrating it in the subtle dialectic of the image and the message (RACINE 1989) or by searching for a soul to set in motion. At this moment, when we are faced with the rise of "non-cities" within our cities, of counter urban societies characterised by segregation and exclusion, violence and Mafia economics (TOURAINÉ 1992), I lent a sympathetic ear to the anxious concerns put forward by R. BRUNET (1992) from Montpellier, *"la surdouée"*, who knows perfectly well what territorial marketing means, in his study on the pertinence of a drift towards the "humanistic", where he says that it is an "overvaluation of places instead of people". Doesn't this drift purposely lead, I quote him "to mysticism, to a subject that is buried behind and under a *"Being-in-place: Exactly what humanism in the strict sense of the word fought against"*?

The stakes of the identity problem of cities were numerous, certainly of a practical nature but equally of a methodological nature and most of all of an epistemological nature. It can be proved first of all by putting into perspective a critique of geographical developments and mutations in search of the city. One of the essential contributions of geographers who claim to be phenomenologists is that they have helped to reorient us towards questions of sense and intention, by considering object and subject in a lived unity of naive experience whose different fields could be the subject of and the main preoccupation of man's phenomenology. In other words, it was advisable to look for the hidden face of the city in a direction other than the one

proposed by spatial economy. This course / direction leads us to a sort of a game, achieved through universal categories of economics, the axiomatic price, within the framework of an abstract formalism which may well eject the very essence of phenomena observed in the scientific world.

The critical analysis of certain adjacent parts of *identity marketing* provided the opportunity to look elsewhere and differently. I simply wish to say with BASSAND (1988) that "if culture is an important mediation" in the sense that it helps to manage the tension between a will for cosmopolitanism on the one hand and a will for regional and local identification and belonging on the other hand, this identity only rarely achieves unanimity. What is emblematical for some is stigmatising for others. For whom? The question may arise for territories just as much for their inhabitants and I don't think it is necessary here to talk again of the dangers of *ipseity* (ethnic purification, for example) and of the personalisation of cities and their territories, already widely denounced, under different epistemological pretexts and practises (BRUNET 1990). The fact is that not only is the marketing of cities a subject quite different from classical marketing, but furthermore, even for people like Nicolas Hayeck with his Swiss Swatch, who propose products which are said to be emotional, "it is not market study that counts but the product and the manner in which it is communicated". And even then! Again at this level, in terms of strategic priorities he insists: "1. the product, 2. the product 3. the product". Just like those who say "location, location, location" when they are trying to sell a place to investors, whether its advertisements of Ontario for Americans, or of St. John, New Brunswick for whosoever may wish to venture there. When reconstructing a new image, doesn't one create a gulf between reality and representation? This phenomenon has been studied in relation to the now famous *Glasgows Miles's Better* (PADDISON 1993). Having destroyed the negative image of the city in order to replace it with another, by using as it is the negative economic dynamism of the city in order to simply promote dynamism, by showing that like all social melting-pots, Glasgow was on the move. Instead of a negative image, an image inherited from industry was used to target Glasgow as a city of Art and culture, miling better, that is to say much more advanced in comparison with its image of industrial ghetto, having largely surpassed the image of a post-industrial city, with Glasgow finally ending up with the designation of "European Cultural Capital".

Should one come to the conclusion then that the hidden faces of the city are first and foremost linked to the rhetorical qualities of advertising systems? What was the real challenge facing Glasgow's town councilors? To use culture more as a means of promoting the economy than as a subject in itself in order to make Glasgow a city of culture, even though it would have been necessary in the 1980s to project an attractive tourist image, but only partially and solely concentrating on the inner-city, leaving aside the numerous underprivileged areas, or were they more interested in trying to reduce the social divisions that exist within the city which project an image of an well-to-do middle-class and thus ignoring certain embarrassing realities. The same question arises for Los Angeles: doesn't its official motto "It all comes together

in Los Angeles" strive to destroy the inefficient connective fabric which links its ill-matched fragments?

This summarises the problem of the manipulation of meaning, to which other types of dangers linked to the dynamics of change can be associated, in the object itself and its representations. That is why it is necessary to evoke other possible readings or interpretations, for that is what it means, which are constantly searching for the hidden faces of the city, readings which are less shamanistic in their orientation and conclusions and scientifically more constructed, leading to a genetic and regional interpretation of urban identities. Some of them can perhaps be connected to "forms-places" that K. FRAMPTON (1987) refers to, forms which would consubstantiate places and regionally converge in order to define identity characteristics of a lesser metaphysical nature. The others would depend on the cultural roles of the cities, heterogenetic for some orthogenetic for other; cultural roles that refer to very different types of territorial dynamics, which undoubtedly and necessarily interact in the cities but which sometimes play a dominant role, or at least is perceived as such.

It is for this reason that in our joint study on Canada (RACINE and VILLENEUVE 1992) my colleague P. VILLENEUVE defined the city of Québec as a place of continuities, capable of self-preservation in times of change, being the place where the live culture of Quebec, specially on the East side, is codified and formalised, where there are still "Canadians" to be found, where as on the contrary there is Montreal which by definition would be a "heterogenetic" city, responsible for bringing in external influences into the cultural sphere of Quebec. This may be one of the reasons why the cultural revolution of Quebec, begun in the heterogenetic environment of Montreal during the 1940s and 1950s became "*peaceful, quiet, tranquil*" when it came in contact with the orthogenetic environment of Quebec after 1960. Isn't this a new hidden face of the city, to be able to legitimately qualify the "tranquil revolution" as a form of social change, partially resulting from the accelerated spatial interaction between the region of Montreal, victims of change in discontinuity and that of Quebec where changes take place in continuity? A global cultural revolution, open to the world, but of an increasingly nationalist nature, took place in Montreal during the period between 1940 to 1950. Doesn't making a geographical study of the "tranquil revolution" mean identifying the geographical foundations of a linguistic paradox, by discovering how a spatial implosion can create a paradoxical social dynamism, which rises more from a dialectic that a compromise, between Montreal, a scene of revolt and Quebec a scene of tranquillity?

Symbolical Values and Identity Distinctions

The great achievement of the paradoxical expression "tranquil revolution" suggests in fact that it has acquired a symbolic value. Symbols can be considered then as codes which are part of the human action context. In the imaginary world of the residents of Quebec, different places can mean different logical forms of social and

cultural change. Montreal would represent change in discontinuity and strain where as Quebec would embody change in continuity and harmony. An interactive type of interpretation, obviously based on the recognition of the key role played by social and cognitive representations together with morphological and socio-professional dimensions, of urban dynamics. But these are just postulations that we will discover elsewhere to be without a genetic foundation, capable if necessary of a virtually materialistic interpretation of their reciprocal future. However what is strange and paradoxical is that the origins of the distinction between the two cities are to be found in their common roots in far off colonial beginnings, almost as if Montreal had immediately espoused her savage "American nature" where as Quebec had remained the city, which had seemed to Pehr Kalm, a Swedish botanist who had visited the colonies in 1749, to be on the wrong continent (VILLENEUVE 1981).

There would only be a step to take - or maybe a leap - in order to extend this type of analysis to Swiss cities and discover that Geneva is a heterogenetic city, even though this is not entirely true when applied to its industrial development, though relatively modest, developed in an autonomous and autogenous manner. Even though the consistency with which the external world intervenes may finally be considered as an orthogenetic factor, genres do mix. Lausanne on the other hand is the ideal counter example, dominating some well defined parts of the city but soon loosing its influence beyond those areas. But isn't this yet again a representation which badly resists historical analysis? It shows in fact that if Lausanne is deeply rooted in a large area of land, the canton of Vaud, it is somehow independently, almost involuntarily or even against it that Lausanne developed as its capital city. This is one of the reasons that Lausanne is still battling to change its image of "la belle paysanne qui a fait ses humanités" (Gilles, Vaudois poet) "gardant la terre à ses souliers". In Switzerland the expression has been a hit with the pretext that twice a week Lausanne offers the scene of the open local market where, according to C. F. Ramuz, "all the country folk flock together, arranging on the steep side-walks their pretty cane baskets, full of vegetables, fruits and flowers". Nothing is more irritating for certain residents of Lausanne amongst them Y. Jaggi the current leader of the city, who do not recognise nor the city nor its history, in this kind of description.

Likewise, isn't there a similar affinity between historically constructed representations and therefore between respective but alleged identities of the Geneva of Ruth Dreifuss, Minister of Federal Internal Affairs, - "That is Geneva, a rainbow of people from all over the world, who feel at home there" - and of Lausanne and its inhabitants who would prefer to identify themselves in the History of the canton than with the History of the city? The problem is to know, as it is between Montreal and Quebec, how to play on differences that unite.

To play on differences which unite, in other words by inventing a metro-lemanic identity, is it a way of surpassing contradictions by situating the problem at another level? The problem is, and it is far from being secondary on the level of significations, that this second image which has "caught on" like embers in a fire, has no other reality other than being a purely discursive product, like so many others. These two

themes, each one in its own way rises out of the problematic of the hidden faces of the city and I would like to develop briefly as being one and the same thing with the whole problem of interpreting space.

We must be grateful to one of the IREC teams (GALLAND et al. 1993; GALLAND et al. 1994) for having simultaneously worked on the identities of Geneva and Lausanne and on the eventual emergence of a metropolitan identity. They do so by postulating the idea that "urban identity" becomes operational from the moment that one considers an urban collectivity as a social actor. They define it as "an algorithm or a software that constructs and structures representations that the different internal and external social groups of a city project for it, for its past, its present and its future, and this at a given moment in history". With J.W. LAPIERRE (1984) they specify that this collective identity refers to a *"collective memory by which the present group acknowledges a common past, recall it, commemorate it, interpret and reinterpret it"*. The IREC research team is careful, knowing very well that together with the "hard core" of this identity - a sort of group intersection - there may exist corresponding specific identifications and identities which belong to certain social categories or groups. They clearly state however, that authorities must seriously start taking into account the identity factor, if they intend to develop any long term projects. This way of taking action by authorities - by becoming aware and taking into consideration the different sensibilities or representations - they call it *"mental ecology"*.

The methodology used in their study of the identity problem of Geneva and Lausanne - long interviews with persons defined as "makers or translators of identity" having a privileged position in different sectors of urban life - has certainly shown the importance of the almost sacralised role played by territory and the constructed environment in determining urban identity. The results are significant, even though often paradoxical. Geneva shows very strong identity features, the *open* and *closed* theme, which corresponds to the opposition between the economical and cosmopolitan dimensions of Geneva, that one can call the Geneva of its inhabitants and its closed territory, whose representations are all imprinted with ethic and cultural "localisms", while pointing out at the same time that it is not possible to render it discursively objective. Another paradoxical discovery was that Lausanne is not comprised of one but several identities, that it is a profoundly varied heterogeneous city, perhaps because it is actually going through a phase of "identity recomposition" in its search for a new centrality while its political space does not seem adapted. The fact that Lausanne is confronted with mobile and changing identities perhaps explains why questions are being posed about its centrality and political representation. In both cases however, it appears clearly that one of the key dimensions of the identity process refers to the definition of frontiers which allows for self-assertion by indicating a foreigner as necessarily different. In the case of Lausanne and Geneva, two cities which have been turning their backs on each other through the course of History, which have both wrought their own type of "cultural matrix" and who have been able to survive ignoring each other, strangers to one another, the foreigners being the "Genevese" for some and the "Lausannois" for the

others. Neither city denies however the importance there would be of considering a more complementary relationship between the two, specially at a moment when their identities are in crisis, one seeing its cosmopolitan ambitions on the decline, the other sensing the dangers of provincialism.

Will growing conurbanisation, and the necessity for better a collaboration in the development of the "Lemanic arc" (LERESCHE and BASSAND 1991) lead to a marriage of convenience? The question is to find out "if the management and the development of the Lemanic metropolis can be done solely through the technical will of high-ranking officials or authorities concerned about saving money". In other words, to find out if the urban dynamics that preside over the metropolisation of the Lemanic arc is compatible with the absence of a collective identity particular to the set of collectivities concerned. Their conclusion is extremely interesting: it highlights the necessity to "create common practices so that the future may be made up a common experiences. For it is certainly these future, individual of collective experiences, that will most successfully transform images, values, representations, and give birth to new identities and new projects". However, in case a metropolitan system is put in place, the dynamics of economical, technological, financial and cultural exchanges should not wipe out local identities and life-styles which appear simultaneously as an opposition and a necessity in the face of urbanisation and globalisation of exchanges that go together with it. It is even justified to ask if it is not exactly this dynamics of exchanges which exacerbates, in a revived cultural perspective of a symbolically violent nature, the differentiating discourse. And again it is necessary to take note of them in order to use them in a positive sense.

From Urbanity to Metropolis: A New Reality

Let us simply note that this difficulty of metropolisation, in actual fact, is in functional space, which nevertheless corresponds to a "(still) absent metropolis" (CUNHA and CSILLAGHY 1993) in represented space, and is also to be found practically all over the place and can be seen in the emergence of what J. BONNIER and J. P. FERRIER (1994) call «a metropolity which would be to metropolisation what urbanity did not sufficiently be to urbanisation».

This "metropolity" rises from capturing, or disclosing and first of all from the possibility of apprehending a new reality which corresponds to the new stage of territorialisation, of the transformation, literally before our eyes, of territories within the largest urbanised regions. We will progressively find and have already found here and there from the Atlantic and the Pacific, words and concepts which correspond to this new process of "metropolisation" which has taken over from urbanisation. It is the New city of North Americans which defies the ancient monocentred urban models, it is the "Ville-territoriale" or hyperville invoked by the historian of architecture André CORBOZ (1993), it is the Swiss *bandstad* and even more exactly the metropolis of the Swiss gold triangle around Zurich, it is also the

lemanic metropolis, it is also, not only the Ile de France, but Massalie, the Mediterranean metropolis which is developing from Montpellier to Toulon. They all have in common the emergence of a phenomenon concerning the spatial organisation of residences and production, especially the highest functions of activity (decision centres, research centres, banking services, higher education) which operates in a non polarised fashion, within very vast areas, which include habitations, secondary and tertiary activities, leisure activities, as well as natural or agricultural spaces. The central characteristic being that the life of the metropolitan inhabitants unfolds in a diffused manner because the circulation of information, of goods and services and of people is more and more numerous. The other reason can be expressed in the following words which seem particularly pertinent to the observer: *"step by step, limits that were significant within the urban system yesterday are being wiped out"*. An archipelago like territory follows it, where fragmented and successive space-time territories are multiplied, which are linked to the double income households, to the increase of university studies, to the continual evolution of the habitat towards property and the individual model. It is supported by an ancient and diversified urban patrimony and creates a space of continual flows in which interaction is extremely intense. A space of flows which changes the terms of the debate of territorial planning, when we manage ever so slightly to become aware of these terms: we are not talking anymore about the 810,550 inhabitants of Marseilles and its outskirts, but of about the few 4 million inhabitants involved in the big modern adventure of southern metropolisation, the active centre of a future area of more than ten million inhabitants (size of the region of the Ile de France), when the TGV will offer an hours ride, from Marseilles to Lyon, to Perpignan or to Nice and will bring about an increase of intercity and regional express trains.

The main problem facing this new reality which is metamorphosing cities and countrysides to create new work and residential areas is the fact that authorities and citizens, though concerned at different levels, are not fully aware of its importance. We have hit on another hidden face of the city, that further to what is represented by the emergence of the "hyperville", thinking habits in traditional territorial settings may have prevented the detection of the unification process and of taking action on a political and statistical level. In actual fact, the lived city does not correspond anymore to the political nor statistical city where as all the census data systems which select information useful for the analysis of this kind of phenomena are built by institutions which have no other projects in mind than self-observation, which is a means, as J. BONNIER (director of studies at the offices of Departmental administration - Provence-Côte d'Azur) says, of self-justification. How can they be made to admit that they are not totalities but relativities? In other words, how can the awareness for the necessity of the tool be constructed?

At a completely different level, we could have pointed out the uncompromising "localisms" which exist within the Swiss bandstad or in its gold or azure triangles, or even within the sub-regions of Lausanne. Isn't it the same discourse that we hear at study committees on intercommunal collaboration? The same reference is made to

the personality of places, to their identity, claimed or created. From what? By listening to the inhabitants, by observing their way of life and representations that surround them and which verify the metropolisation by foreshadowing its metropolity.

The question is to know how these new systems which do not dispose of any intercommunal information and coordination structures are going to carry out their development projects in a controlled manner. The question is to know the role played, in what can already appear as an explicit refusal of any type of collaboration, by the feeling of identity which persists in spite of the evolution of things. The question is to know how, through discourse, this feeling of identity (belonging) is constructed or deconstructed, with its different results at the end of it.

The principal risk run by a certain type of geography of representations, led in an a-critical manner, is to reinforce these images, which catch on like wild fire, - it is an expression used by Russians when they wish to speak of ethnic and territorial identity, as it is produced by God knows what passion or cosmic energy identifying one with the other - but which, like "la belle paysanne qui a fait ses humanités", at close inspection have no other reality than being a pure discursive product, like so many others. The vicissitudes of the idea of nation and people, of race or ethnic origin, of their progressive adherence to the idea of common blood, of territory and of the awareness of a single unity are some of the possible illustrations.

At this hour when so many cities are struggling with problems of partition and segregation, of marginalisation and exclusion, at this hour when mass migration is crowding the cities and the question of birthrights and landrights are being reconsidered, it is more urgent than ever to learn to distinguish the role that historical, sometimes purely ideological, traditions play, in the way in which all minority problems are treated, in order to show that words and "discourse" construct in fact categories which are then thought to be natural, and to which moreover specific territories are added. It is true for nationalities and ethnic groups, for the supposedly national character of languages, it is undoubtedly also true for everything that separates and rises in each case from a different story, indicating here, it is the only invariant, the victory of some and the loss of others.

Doesn't the main problem of studying identities rise, more and more, and without our knowing, from the "order of discourse" reminding us of the last line in Umberto Eco's *In the Name of the Rose*: "*Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus*". The question to find out is if concepts exist as such or if it is their name that gives them existence. The danger lies in *identifying the object of discourse with purely natural objects* and to talk of the latter as if they were only objects of discourse.

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