

International symposium

Societies, mobilities, displacements : waiting territories from yesterday to today (the case of American worlds, 19th to 20th centuries)

University of La Rochelle, 9th-11th December 2014

Call for papers

The phenomena of mobility and displacement are major characteristics of our contemporary societies. Far from being fluid, homogenous or linear, these displacements are punctuated with waiting time, which may be long or short. Whether these waiting moments are due to technical, administrative or political causes, they often are translated spatially : these newly formed waiting societies are assigned to territories.

This symposium which closes the ANR TERRIAT project (Societies, movements, displacements : waiting territories from yesterday to today, 2011-2014), will examine these waiting territories and the manifold forms they take, their dimensions, it will try to understand their legal status, the way in which they interact with the space around them, their temporal specificities, as well as the variety of related economic and social issues.

American worlds, engendered by the displacement (whether voluntary or forced) of populations of diverse origins which have stamped their mark on the territories they have appropriated, present a particularly apt field of study for this enquiry. The American continent, which for many years was a haven for victims of persecution of all religions, then an Eldorado dreamed of by millions of immigrants, is still today a land in which many human movements are played out : migrants leaving (or fleeing) the countryside for tentacular towns, illegal immigrants who cross the walls of fear, climate refugees piled into drought camps or temporary facilities (post-Katrina for example). These displacements, whatever their origin, have engendered waiting times, which have then given birth to specific places or unexpected territories (immigrant hotels, ship decks, arrival ports in the New World, landless camps or drought settlements, favelas...).

Nowadays, the American continent, like many other regions of the world, is faced with new phenomena of mobility and dispoacement, which lead to other waiting territories, which also need to be taken into account and defined. Near the borders, where *devices* prevent clandestines from crossing (walls, barbed wire, waiting territories in airports), in the enormous metropolitan areas spawned by enormous new waves of urban migration, imposing new spacial forms of waiting, like gridlocked urban motorways, in which a veritable economy of waiting arises (street sellers who offer drinks and food to traffic-jam drivers)...

Studies inspired by the « Mobilities turn » do not always take into account the extent to which waiting may be part of « a state of mobility ». By relying on the « normal exceptional » approach, tried out by *micro-history*, that is that exceptions inform us about the norm, our declared ambition is to study movement through an analysis of waiting. Our study would however be incomplete if this question of waiting within mobility did not also imply putting into perspective the relationship between waiting and territory. Indeed the choice of this terminolgy is justified, although it may also be necessary to define « territory » and « waiting territory ». Although « waiting places » may easily be identified, as architectural devices conceived for the temporary holding of people who are on the move (refugee or migrant camps, holding centres, lazarets...), it is more complex to highlight « waiting territories », as it is necessary to read the way in which a space is transformed and shaped, temporarily, to accomodate or regulate a waiting situation, although this situation may not have been grasped by its actors. It is in the light of this ubiquity that the term « territory » acquires its full meaning. Waiting also becomes a prism through which the territory may be questioned and tried out, and vice versa.

This international symposium aims to further the work undertaken for the past four years in the context of the TERRIAT project (funded by the French *Agence Nationale de la Recherche* : <http://terriat.hypotheses.org/>) and intends to further develop the work undertaken by researchers in the project, by welcoming researchers and academics, doctors and doctoral students who are interested in the following themes :

1. Waiting and waiting territories : definitions and interactions.

Between the waiting noted by the researcher and the waiting experienced by the actors, how may waiting or waitings may be studied ? How is the singularity of the

spatio-temporal composition of waiting experienced by the actors ? Do they name these moments ? If so, how ? On the other hand, if they do not name them, may we observe a social and spacial behaviour different from usual ? The issue is to understand the passage from one level to another, from the noted waiting to the lived waiting (and sometimes not necessarily perceived as such), and to question their interaction with space to give form to waiting territories.

2. Social practices and spacial play at the heart of waiting territories

We will question the impact on everyday life in a waiting territory : what social or economical activities arise from these confined spaces in which the experience of « elastic time » is felt ? From prostitution and street selling, we must describe and understand spacial forms of « getting by ». The extent of social inactivity must also be measured. How is this inactivity lived and managed administratively ? What are the technical devices and rules which enable or structure waiting in these territories ?

3. Social and cultural identities in the context of waiting territories

An important area of study deals with the social and cultural transformations at work in these waiting territories ? Even if a feeling of uncertainty prevails, new identities may be formed in these territories, and this calls into question a too rapid comparison with « non-places ». These identities do not necessarily replace previous ones, but they are, on the contrary, an additional resource which individuals may use as necessary and social strategies which they define to face uncertain times. The aim is to describe the variety of identities which arise in the sharing of a confined place, by individuals who do not necessarily know each other, but are suddenly linked by a common destiny.

4. Memory, heritage and museum interpretation of waiting territories

These waiting territories often lead to a reformulation of the individual and social relationship to time, and also to new identity definitions. The question of the sense that should be attributed to individual and social memory of waiting places and territories arises. How may these memories be integrated into museum projects, as, for example for hostels and guesthouses for immigrants ? On the other hand, how may the transformation into museum or heritage serve the construction of personal and collective identities ?

Proposals for papers (2 pages maximum) should be sent before the **15th May 2014**. They may be written in French, English, Spanish or Portuguese. The authors should also send a CV (1 page maximum) with a short presentation of their research.

The Scientific Council will meet at the beginning of June to examine them (replies sent out for the **15th June 2014**).

Authors selected to give a paper will be asked to send their paper by the **30th October 2014**.

Proposals for papers should be sent to the following addresses :

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