

Call for papers

Populating : The elusive category of urban policies ?

**International symposium organised by the laboratories
CERAPS (CNRS UMR 8026), EVS (CNRS UMR 5600), TRIANGLE (CNRS UMR 5206)**

Venue: Université Jean Monnet de Saint-Etienne and TRIANGLE-ENS Lyon

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The term populating is traditionally defined in two main ways ; it can refer to a state (i.e. the spatial distribution of populations on a territory or in housing stock), or an action (intending to modify or maintain this distribution). Here we shall define it with the second meaning, that is to say *as a more or less deliberate and formalised action which consists of intervening in the spatial distribution of populations according to certain of their social, ethnic, religious, sexual or other characteristics, real or supposed.*

Thus understood, populating appears as a salient issue, all the more so as it eludes present or older urban policies. Salient from the viewpoint of the intensity of the reflections and mobilisations it arouses, both in the actors of these public policies and in the researchers who study them. Knowledge, socio-spatial control and modelling of populations are at the heart of the “will to know” and “governmentality systems” (Foucault, 1973) of modern States. Elusive, populating is nonetheless because of the difficulties that researchers come up against when seeking to objectivize this dimension of public action, in particular in the Western “pacified” democracies where it often takes on unofficial forms, gives rise to discreet categorizations and modes of action. We can put forward the hypothesis that if the “populating policies” here are sometimes suspect or illegitimate, to the point of having to be kept silent or even denied, this is because the notion is more easily associated with historical experience of extreme domination and violence, such as civil war and “ethnic cleansing” policies, the construction of ghettos (ARSS, 2005), *apartheid* policies (Houssay, 1999 ; Massey and Denton, 1993 ; Morange, 2006), colonization, building nation States and transfer of populations from which it is anxious to be distinguished.

Since the first pioneer surveys of the Chicago School, many research programmes have looked at the process of socio-spatial segregation, at the effect of urban policies on the composition of neighbourhoods and gentrification, and also on the forms and determinants of residential and geographical mobility. In this symposium, we would like to concentrate not so

much on the question of the effects of urban policies on populating as that of *intentions, choices and political strategies* in this field, and on the *social representations and categorizations* which direct these choices. A comparative approach to this question appears necessary insofar as national contexts (in terms of the history of building the State and the nation, of the concept of citizenship and ethnicity, history and characteristics of housing policies, of the forms of urban segregation, etc.) have a strong influence on these populating policies and also on their more or less taboo nature. Thus in the context of the “French republican model”, taking ethnic criteria into account when drawing up and implementing populating is largely concealed. In other contexts, these intentions, choices and populating strategies are on the contrary more asserted and politically assumed, particularly in the wake of housing policy reforms which have occurred further to the deterioration of the financial situation of public housing landlords over the last few decades (Baillergeau, Duyvendack, Van der Graaf, 2008).

The objective of this symposium is to appraise international knowledge on the subject, to identify the areas of research in progress and to come, in order to analyse the way in which populating is seen as an objective and stake of urban policies in distinct social, historic and political contexts, whether openly conflictual or apparently pacified, whether they refer to democratic political and ideological models or not, inegalitarian or egalitarian. In other words, populating should be apprehended both as policy/ies and as category/ies of public action, by confronting from this viewpoint studies that are not usually compared, either because they concern distant fields and times, or because they come from different disciplines (sociology, history, geography, politics).

In order to make progress in this direction, several lines of reflection are envisaged, which may be able to inspire the proposals for papers.

1. Populating as a subject for research : the theoretical and methodological challenges

The first question for debate is the construction of populating as a subject for research. In this perspective, three types of questions will be considered.

Firstly, how can populating be seen as a protean issue of public, official or unofficial action? What angle can be used to interpret it? How can theoretical perspectives of urban policies and their transformation, but also of renewed forms of social control and government of societies explain this? It is also necessary to encourage the plurality of disciplinary approaches and to transpose the systems of interpretation and concepts from a host of fields, not just limited to the French situation and the contemporary period. In this way, proposals for studies which consider populating policies in situations of conflict, in colonial areas or in “transitional” political contexts are highly desirable. We would also like to look at the differences, but also possible points of convergence, between populating policies in wartime and in peacetime, in a democracy or an authoritarian regime, etc.

Then, how can the methodological challenge of a survey of populating be met? Investigating this subject poses a whole series of problems which can be difficult to overcome. Amongst these difficulties, we can mention the fact that these policies can be concealed, all the more so when they are illegal (we can think for example of the ethnic categorization of public housing tenants in France). Analysing populating policies supposes reconstituting intentions or chains of intentions, which is all the more difficult as sources or

testimonies to supply proof are lacking. Furthermore, in a certain number of cases, the effects of a public policy on populating are an indirect effect (the gentrification process further to urban renewal operation, for example) or an unsought for result (reinforcement of social segregation in an area following policies applied in the name of “social mix”). From what point can we speak of a populating “policy”? When populating policies are observed in an “extraordinary” context (war or armed conflict), these methodological difficulties are intensified. In the context of the construction of nation states, a frequent will to make populating policies disappear *a posteriori* can be seen. Revealing them amounts to going against the “national novel” (Thiesse, 2001) and the fictions it conveys (spontaneous unity, lack of phenomena of domination, etc.). In the case of surveys of contemporary urban policies, with the findings of surveys which can go counter to the objectives announced by the local actors or completely demolish certain well-rooted myths of public action (for example in the French case, on the positive effects of “social mix”), the question of the reception of these findings is posed differently.

A third series of questions concerns the very objectivation of populating, i.e. the production of knowledge linked to it. How do public policy actors (and researchers) go about categorizing a given population into sub-categories, identifying its members, localizing them and acting on their spatial distribution? How do they manage to analyse the flows, networks, mobility and circulation? What instruments are mobilized in order to do this, what are the learned or lay knowledge forms on the questions and their reciprocal influences? We will seek for example to elucidate the place of explicit or implicit ethnic categorizations, and their interlinking with classist categories (Fassin, Fassin, ed., 2006). The populating policies led in the name of social mixing may have contributed, for example, to the latent and unaccepted ethnicization of certain public policies (GELD, 2001 ; Tanter and Toubon, 1999).

2. Populating as an objective for urban policies

Socio-historic work is also expected in order to trace back to the beginning and development of policies with the objective –explicit or implicit- of acting on populating, in different spatial and temporal contexts up to the contemporary “post-Fordist” or “entrepreneurial” city (Jessop, 1997 ; Brenner, Theodore, ed., 2002). It can concern questioning the decline/variations in this objective in different types of public policies (housing, urban renewal, management of migrants and minorities, education, etc.).

In this perspective, we can wonder about the evolution of representations of urban policies actors concerning social groups in cities, their place and their boundaries, the “balance” to establish or maintain possible or impossible cohabitation, desired or not (de Rudder, 1980 ; *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 2005). In the same way, how have the representations of the role of urban policies and more widely of politics in city populating evolved? Has what certain authors have called the “neoliberal turning-point” of urban policies (Brenner, Theodore, ed., 2002) influenced these representations? To what extent have the context of increased competition between areas to attract various mobile resources (including populations) and the rise in power of the watchwords “attraction” and “image” influenced standards in questions of populating and their implementation? Is gentrification the new generalised model of urban policies (*Sociétés contemporaines*, 2006 ; Smith, 1996)? Integrating certain social groups seems to have become a priority objective of the “urban regeneration” campaigns, whilst other populations seem to be excluded from the “right to the city” (Lefebvre, 1968), or enjoined to hide (the homeless, migrant camps, campsites for “travellers” (Bernardot, 2008)). Populating policies thus intend to act on the spatial distribution of populations, but can also concern all the policies which seek to act on space

with a view to influencing the relations between groups, either to build barriers or obstacles or to encourage meetings and cohabitation.

We shall thus look at the way in which populating is constructed at once as a problem and a solution by the many stakeholders who “produce” the city, habitat and populating, i.e. local politicians, the civil servants of territorial authorities, the experts- research consultancies and social engineers, urbanism agencies, university academics, etc.–, public housing authorities, private property developers, economic actors (companies have historically played an essential role in populating policies aiming to fix labour), the inhabitants, etc. This construction of populating as a problem and as a solution is today in a context in which attracting the middle and upper social categories is seen as a strong asset for urban development, whilst the objective of social mixing is seen as a key principle in public action concerning habitat and renovation of working-class areas (Kirszbaum, 1999). We can also investigate the influence of certain work on local economic development which has tended over the last ten years or so to make populating or a certain type of populating one of the driving forces of urban growth, from the works of Richard Florida (2005) on the “creative class” to those of Laurent Davezies (2008) on the residential economy in France. These works which seem to be well known in expert networks and to local politicians, have been able to influence the rise in power of the “populating” issue. We shall finally look at the way in which the different stakeholders in “populating”, invent, “fix” and call on different tools and instruments (cognitive, financial, normative, legal, etc.) in order to carry out these populating policies on various levels (building, street, neighbourhood, city, agglomeration, urban area, etc.).

3. Populating : (de)politicization, narratives and controversy

In the last line of research it seems to us necessary to reflect on the many forms of politicization and depoliticization of the issues linked to populating. These processes can be considered in at least two ways.

First comes the question of truly political issues (in the sense of acquiring or maintaining power) and the electoral issues of populating policies. We know that the socio-demographic composition of urban space is often seen as a major issue by elected representatives or their rivals. Historically, in the case of France, urban renovation policies for old city centres and the construction and populating of large complexes on the city outskirts have been hand in glove with strategies to keep or gain electoral strongholds (Groupe de sociologie urbaine de Nanterre, 1970 ; Castells, 1972). What is the situation today? We know for example that clientelism has been transformed and that its decline in public housing has been documented (Mattina, 2003). To what extent does populating today remain at least partially thought (and acted) by the local political elites as an electoral stake and what are the consequences of these anticipations on public action? The local level is not the only one to be considered: work by CSU researchers on the renovation of Paris in the 1960s showed that the project to transform Ile-de-France populating, not without electoral ulterior motives, was supported by the national political elites and largely imposed on local political elites, all the more easily in that the latter, either Gaullist or communist often found it to their advantage (Groupe de sociologie urbaine de Nanterre, 1970).

It is also necessary to analyse the politicization of populating as a process of publicizing and launching the public debate on related questions. We shall study the forms of politicisation both “from the top” and “from the bottom”. “From the top” means analysing the way in which the issues of populating are offered for debate or on the contrary hidden away,

in the parliamentary and partisan arenas, and by local politicians (either on the level of their territory or in the context of local politicians' associations, the latter having played an important role in France in launching the debate on the question of populating since the 1960s). We can also question the influence of political and partisan ideologies on the construction of specific policies. Is it possible, for example, to identify "right-wing" or "left-wing" populating policies? If it is not directly connected to these partisan divisions, is populating nonetheless an ideological product? In this case, what sorts of beliefs or cultures (professional or other) fashion it (*Sciences de la société*, 2005)? "From the bottom", the issue is to report the politicisation processes initiated by the "laymen" (more or less directly concerned inhabitants, activists or members of targeted public action groups) to study the construction of urban mobilisation and struggles against these issues (the fight against gentrification, defending the right to housing, but also mobilisation against installing public housing or campsites for travellers, involvement of the inhabitants and tenants in managing the allocation of public housing, etc.). We can also compile the types of narratives and discourse produced on populating and think about the way in which they can be justified in contexts in which these objectives and the categories they include appear more or less expressible.

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Responses

The proposals for papers (5,000 characters maximum) should be emailed to the three organisers (fabien.desage@univ-lille2.fr, christelle.morel.journal@univ-st-etienne.fr, valerie.sala.pala@univ-st-etienne.fr), by **15/03/2011**. The choice of proposals will be made and the final programme drawn up by the end of April 2011. The papers, in French or in English, 50,000 characters maximum, will be sent out by 50 000 by 15/09/2011. A French/English translation service will be available to symposium participants. A selection of the presented papers will be published in the months following the symposium.

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