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Geo-moods

The geopolitics of daily life:
Accounting for social and cultural practices as political codes

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How do administrative and political rules affect users' space on a daily basis? Though it would be impossible to list all existing practices throughout the world, the themes discussed here are fundamental, even if the examples are necessarily random. The following exploration is the continuation of previous research on diverse "regions" in the world[1].

Geopolitics of legal time

Among the tools used to maintain national cohesion, the management of legal time affects the daily life of all citizens. "Social" time has long been controlled by religious authorities, set by the minaret, the bell tower, or other sanctuary. This social time is established locally and is approximately based on the sun. The implementation of legal time at the national level began with the creation of railroad networks in the middle of the 19th century. In the 1930s, the telephone (the talking clock) and the radio gave the exact time in Western countries. Though debate over daylight saving began as early as the 18th century, it was applied for the first time in Europe in 1916 to help the war effort. It was simultaneously implemented in Germany, England, and France within a few short weeks. It was then forgotten in many countries for over half a century and only became generalized after the first oil crisis in 1974. All of Europe unified the date of its time changes in 1980 in a demonstration of widespread collaboration designed to facilitate European air traffic (Élias, 1996).

The inter-tropical regions rightly considered themselves unconcerned unless their priority was to remain connected with first world countries. Latin America, Mexico, Brazil except for the North and North-East sectors, Paraguay and Uruguay (annexes of Brazil) all follow daylight savings time, as do Southern Europe, Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco. To manifest their freedom from the "world", China abandoned daylight savings

1. http://alger-mexico-tunis.fr/?p=1481

in 1992 and Russia in 2011. Another possibility is that the decision was based on the fact that swathes of the population in these countries did not comply with the time changes.

European scholars adopted the international 24-hour time-zone system in the mid 19th century. British naval networks won out over politicians and the "first" meridian was established at Greenwich, instead of Rome or Paris; though the actual difference was barely noticeable. Starting from there, most countries simply adopted the hour corresponding to the position in which the majority of their territory fell. The European community shares a common time zone positioned around a "central" Europe. There are however certain exceptions such as the United Kingdom and Portugal, which keeps British time, as well as an eastern strip flowing from Finland to Greece by way of the Baltic countries.

To simplify, in sparsely populated Siberia, Russia divided most time zones in half. In contrast, China sprawls across three time zones but lives according to the single time zone of Beijing and Manchuria. This is most certainly to consolidate territorial cohesion, including Tibet. Britain's former Indian empire, from Iran to Burma, stretches across four time zones; however each lags thirty minutes behind Greenwich's universal time. A single legal time for India was established in New Delhi in 1906… but was not applied to Bombay and Calcutta until after 1940. We should also note that in this system of global time management, the biblical week of seven days was universally adopted even though Sunday, the Christian day of rest, has two competitors: a Jewish one and a Muslim one. While Christian, the annual solar calendar, with its months rooted in Ancient Rome, has also been universally adopted; even though religious lunar calendars are still used in daily life. Thus, time management is the most uniformizing factor of global space for all populations.

Geopolitics of spoken and written languages

Roughly five thousand living languages exist (as with biological species, more and more are dying off every year) compared to about 190 "national" states. States lacking linguistic diversity are clearly the exceptions.

The map of the world's written languages is much simpler than the one of spoken languages; yet, it is the written language that is the base for complex scholarly and technical studies. Currently, email addresses (including for those countries that use Chinese, Cyrillic, or Arabic writing systems) use the Latin alphabet, as do boarding passes in international airports, where information boards alternate between local and English versions. Thus the Latin "alphabet" is used worldwide. English is the only language that uses the Latin writing system with no accents or other modifiers of sound for any letter. It is one of the few languages whose spelling – which fluctuates and evolves greatly – does little to reflect the great diversity of pronunciations. The same laxity between written and oral systems exists in Chinese. Elsewhere, the relationship between the two systems are arguments in a generally complicated debate over identity.

Traditional systems of writing – often mixed with essentially Anglophone, Latin characters – are used in the bilingual street signs in the streets of China, Mongolia, the Indian sub-continent, and countries using the Cyrillic alphabet. At school, a writing system other than the Latin alphabet is learned (alongside the latter for English, which children sometimes begin learning as early as grade school) in Arab

speaking countries (including Iran and Afghanistan) and in Cyrillic countries (former Soviet space with the addition of Mongolia and several countries in Eastern Europe including Bulgaria, Serbia, and half of former Yugoslavia). Other writing systems also exist in Israel and Greece (the homeland for today's alphabetical transcriptions). The same holds true in China – including Taiwan –, in (both) Koreas, Japan, Cambodia and Laos, Thailand, Burma, and the Indian sub-continent.

Does learning two or more writing systems help or hinder learning? The process also includes the direction in which texts are read, generally left to right; but also top to bottom (Chinese), right to left (Arabic and Hebrew). A large percentage of language zones de facto match up with large political areas. Certain countries have undergone changes to their writing systems with major political implications. One example is "sovereign" (or outer) Mongolia that adopted the Cyrillic alphabet instead of the former "religious", syllabic system in 1936-1945. In Viet Nam, the Jesuits devised a Latin transcription that replaced the former Chinese ideograms (Alexandre de Rhodes, 17th century). The new system was adopted in 1945 by the Communist revolutionary movement.

Though the use of written systems is constitutive of daily life, it seems more obvious that for the "educated" (at the global scale, dare we say "literate"), the daily use of several languages is just as important. We don't always pray in our local language for example. In Catholic countries, prayers were said in Latin; today, in Orthodox Christian countries, it is common to use ancient liturgical languages. Mongolia offers a similar situation with prayers in Tibetan even though Buddhist texts were translated into Sanskrit and Mongolian as early as the 17th century.

Multilingualism is common in Arabic speaking countries. For the most part, it is based on the evolution of highly diversified, colloquial speech. While accents and vocabulary differ from country to country, the diversification is most notable in each city and province. However, these variations are not consolidated through writing. In contrast, the single sacred language – while used orally in prayer – is mainly used in writing by all Muslims and has only been partially modernized (especially in Egypt and the Middle East) for the government, in literature, and the press. Radio and television languages are situated at the crossroads of the modernized written language and urban speech patterns with political discourse being a prime example. To the mix can be added English and French. Both languages are taught independently in schools, are used in a wide variety of situations depending on the country and the social class (as early as kindergarten or with the nanny amongst the Moroccan upper classes), and also as words (or segments in longer sentences) inserted within "local" speech patterns when private or personal topics are abandoned for discussions on more "modern" themes. For slightly less than half of all Algerians and over half of all Moroccans, oral speech in a family or local setting also includes the different Berber dialects (collectively designated in Berber as Tamazight). Though the very existence of a "national" language is fragile in Arabic speaking countries, the use of a spoken, family or local language other than the one used in public life or at school is common for the majority of Italians (unless they are Tuscan) and Germans (unless they are Rhenish). However, in large cities, the oral use of the national language is growing. In Spain, dialects other than Castilian have long been written, even if, for nearly three decades, the Francoist government tried to impose Castilian as part of its efforts to unify Spain linguistically.

Bilingualism between domestic or local space and school or public space is thus the rule for populations whose primary language is little if ever written, with an infinite variety of intermediary situations where the use of the written form of the domestic language does not develop because it is socially devalued.

Creolisation, *bilinguism* and *diglossia*. Romain Cruse (*La Colonisation du Nouveau Monde*, 2015) discusses a key point: there is no Hispanic (or Portuguese) creolisation – beyond minor exceptions. Castilian and Portuguese, with local variations of accents and vocabulary, remained two distinct languages in the Americas, certainly due to the fact that black slavery generally dissolved into a mass of mixed races early on. Creole languages were at the start "pidgin" languages that allowed for basic communication between masters and slaves. The latter appropriated the language when they formed large, sufficiently isolated communities (plantations). Creole languages tend to fade in small communities. They have however developed within two main zones: the 11 million "Francophone" Haitians and the 3 million "Anglophone" Jamaicans who emigrated to North America and Europe with their Creole. In their home countries, a portion of their schooling is in Creole until the university level.

Geopolitical handling of the dead

The pure and simple doing away with the bodies of the dead is actually quite rare: the cannibalism of the Guayaki is a distant memory (Clastres, 1972). However, more and more people are opting for cremation and the "dispersion" of ashes (in cemeteries, in the sea, or another location favored by the defunct). This is true in Japan (*Le Monde*, January 7, 2016, p. 16), where funerary ceremonies in cemeteries are encouraging people to settle for the dispersion of ashes. Though, more often than not, the ashes are kept. In France, the urn can remain at home, either on the mantel or in the garden. It can also be kept in the columbarium or in the family vault. Even though cremation is growing in popularity, burying the body remains the more common solution across the globe, generally in a coffin, which in turn is generally placed in a tomb. Today, burial sites are generally chosen according to the defunct's favorite locations, far from his home or family roots.

Cemeteries are subject to urban planning and the real estate market. In France, cemetery grounds have been under municipal control since the French Revolution. Currently, the concessions in most French cemeteries are offered for a relatively short time (ten, twenty, or thirty years), though they can be renewed. Tombs that are not maintained are considered abandoned and if not claimed, they are freed and reattributed. This reduces neglected mortuary zones that result from abandoned cemeteries. Apparently, in Alsace, there are particularly high numbers of "perpetual" concessions, which has led to a large number of nearly abandoned cemeteries, particularly for the Jewish populations buried in the 18th and 19th centuries in rural areas that were then abandoned by families who emigrated to cities; this does not include the victims of the Shoah. Paris is a large city where free land has long been a rare commodity. The city has thus acquired land in neighboring cities where Parisians can bury their dead. The price of "good" cemeteries within the city, such as Montparnasse, Montmartre, or Le Père Lachaise remain low, which goes to show that that political will can rein in real estate speculation. In many countries, cemeteries are left in the hands of religious authorities. In Japan, many small rural temples are disappearing because they are losing their only revenue, the upkeep of tombs.

French cemeteries are controlled by municipal law but religious symbols are allowed: burials are in a grey zone between public (the land) and private (the tomb) spaces. The latter can legitimately defend the writing, the language, or the religion (or other beliefs) of the defunct. These community cemeteries can have a non-Christian "square" (since the majority of French, even the non-baptized, defend their Christianity at the moment of their death). These "squares" can be Buddhist, should the mayor decide so, certainly Muslim, and formerly Jewish. Before the separation of Church and State, the division of the local cemetery into religious sectors was the norm if non-Catholics lived in the commune. The "eternal" nature of the tomb is not guaranteed in France. This is the reason given by French Jews and Muslims when choosing to be buried in Israel or Muslim countries. Until recently, the Algerian State refused this right to "alleged Harkis".

Geopolitics of land planning

Marcel Hénaff (2014) describes the social mechanisms of corruption and its distribution across the globe, which allows us to see that it develops better in "traditional societies" as well as in what was the Soviet world. It is thanks to corruption that rules are more readily identifiable on the day to day level. In terms of the circulation of people or land possession, citizens live these practices of corruption daily. These practices are not necessarily violations of national law; concerning the use of collective spaces (land, water), a national law may simply be absent.

Non-private lands, or collective land rights, are a large field of study in today's societies where we mistakenly believe that private property reigns alone. Hunting rights, grazing rights, the right to cut wood in French communes, are some of the many exceptions found internationally; as are vast tracts of non-private lands in the United States, Canada, as well as Latin America. The former Soviet Union also expanded and consolidated its non-private lands with agrarian reforms during the 20th century. Opaque, collective land rights in the Middle East, northern Africa, and throughout the African continent can also be added to the list[2].

Institutional dynamics behind the creation of new administrative base entities are another indicator of the relationship between citizens and territories. Redrawing boundaries can be top-down initiatives, such as continental France's current iteration of its regions.[3] At the "communal" level, such decisions are also often "vertical" in Latin America. The only country in the region that appears to handle these issues "democratically" is Brazil where the creation of new municipes are based on local referendums. Such local referendum procedures are known as "incorporations" in the United States and Canada, in both urban and rural regions (Paul Claval recounts a billboard he saw in northern Quebec: "Non-incorporated Rivière éternité"). Inversely, Europe has regrouped towns issued from parishes, which have sometimes lost most of their population. In Germany, the process began in the 1960s. France is currently in the midst of its territorial reform; only leaving small towns for memorial reasons but removing all active administrative content.

Toponyms also unveil the often subtle balance between religion and politics at the local and regional levels. In Russia, the town of Ekaterinburg has reclaimed its name but not its province (which remains Sverdlovsk, a Soviet hero). The same holds true for Saint-Petersburg, which uses its former "Germanophone" name instead of

2. My thanks to Paul Claval for his insight on the subject.

3. See Roger Brunet, 2015. The preference for "natural" as opposed to "historical" toponyms is evident during periods where new territories are created ex nihilo. Two examples are the departments of the French Republic from 1790-1795 and the States created during the conquest of he West in the U.S.A.; which generally chose the name of rivers.

Petrograd, whereas the corresponding province still goes by the name of Leningrad, like the Leningrad station in Moscow. Overall in Latin America, three levels of toponyms exist. The indigenous "immemorial" name (more or less latinized phonetically), the medieval name imposed since the 16th century (either Spanish or Portuguese) using the names of male or female Catholic saints, and finally the patriotic names given in the 19th or 20th century. These toponyms are often twinned (San Andrés Tuxtla or Toluca de Lerdo), however local usage does not necessarily coincide with the official denomination.

Geopolitics of national hymns

National anthems do not always name their "country". The *Marseillaise* celebrates an abstract country. The British anthem is about the King or Queen and only after about the protection the sovereign offers the British. The anthem of the United States describes the star spangled banner (with the stars representing the federated States), invokes God and ignores the territory, which it fails to name. Spain has an "ancient", royalist anthem that describes the flag but does not mention Spain once; a Francoist version that incessantly repeats the word Spain and its glorification; and a *lighter*, post 2000 version glorifying a pacified Spain. In fact, the anthem is played and not sung officially. The more "fragile" and uncertain a country, the more identification to a territory and its physical attributes (fertile rivers or those that indicate borders, etc) is important. The Soviet anthem, used almost in its entirety by today's Russia, celebrates the incorporation of the empire into the country: "Unbreakable Union of freeborn Republics, Great Russia has welded forever to stand, created in struggle by will of the people, United and mighty, our Soviet land!" (the version taught at school after 1945).

The aural space in the center of a French suburban town offers a synthetic perception of public life. The faraway rumble of the rare, passing train can only be heard at night. Three days a week, before 6 a.m., garbage trucks drive down the street. The other days, there are very few cars before 7 a.m. Towards 6 a.m., airplanes start to take off at the airport only to cease around 11 p.m. From 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. (but not at night), the church bells chime the hours, as well as the three daily prayers of the Angelus, along with masses (that only begin to accumulate on Saturdays for weddings).There are also the funeral chimes that for obvious reasons are not predictable. Every month, on the first Wednesday of the month at noon, the alarm siren is tested. Its has not changed since the Second World War. Thus civil and religious spaces are conjointly perceived along with areas of circulation.

These observations confirm the hypothesis that – at the level we are interested in, that of the daily life of citizens - disentangling a political geography from a cultural and religious one makes no sense. It is through daily experiences that human geography, concerned with social and political issues, can find much of its raw material.

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