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What Role Should Territories Play in Public Education Policies?

1.1. Summary

The project of making individuals living in the same society aware of the ties that bind them together seems today to be thwarted by the relationship between the construction of individual identity and the belonging of each person to collective identities registered in territories of students' life or origin. In France, education, in its school form, places the "emancipation" process at the center of its socialization mission: educating means stepping away from your condition, withdrawing from your condition to become yourself and a member of a larger community, in a movement of universalization whose term must be specified: how is it constructed and under what universalizing banner (religion, political principles, values, circulation of objects, devices)? Becoming a citizen requires more than ever a school concerned with universal values, but it must not deny the existence of identities and the interests of the inhabitants of a territory.

1.2. Introduction

Before the school can form, in the individual being, a social being, the territory of origin or the individual's residence has already forged cultural references that structure their identity. School must deal with this process undertaken outside of it. Several authors have studied it, showing the diversity of territorial levels to which individuals can refer to in order to find invariant characters, the founder of their own identity [SOU 81, TIE 11]. There are subnational territories, such as districts,

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villages, regions, or foreign national territories (especially for people of immigrant origin), or supranational territories (for example religious territories, such as Islam which is a religion with universalist vocation), not to mention non-territorialized identities.

How can the challenge of identity and/or community claims related to the territories of origin or residence of inhabitants be responded to, while the mission of the French school system was established around the project to emancipate individuals from all the particular groups that act upon them (family, social class, various affiliations, especially religious)?

1.3. Can the policy of recognition be established in France?

The influence of territories of life on the construction of collective identities is not new, and the French school of thought has long based its mission of socialization on the integration of local identities in the national whole, with the help of republican values that claim to be universal. But what makes this integration particularly complicated today is that the solidarity of the local in the national, through universally shared values, is no longer obvious. The abstraction of local identities in the national whole can lead to tension between the demand for values and interests specific to the human communities that live on the territories of the Republic. These communities have become aware of the specificity of the identities they represent and demand "recognition" for them. This new dimension of identity emerged during the struggles in the United States in the years 1950–1960 led by black minorities or minority cultural groups. Charles Taylor strived to theorize this identity claim. He began by arguing that "identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others" [TAY 94, p. 41]. The devastating effect of the lack of recognition comes, he said, from the internalization of this identity in the form of self-depreciation. Charles Taylor then attempts to define a "policy of difference", which opposes the policy of universal equality insofar as it allows "reverse discrimination" in favor of ill-considered minorities. Henceforth, a liberal society "distinguishes itself as such in the way it treats its minorities, including those who do not share the public definitions of good, and above all the rights it grants to all its members" [TAY 94, p. 81].

But this North American approach, generally accepted in so-called "communitarian" English-speaking societies, is criticized in "holistic" societies, such as France. For Paul Ricœur, the reverse discrimination advocated by Taylor poses a threat to the existence of a social space that is blind to differences. The liberal conception of dignity refers to the idea of a universal human potential shared by all: it is this potential that has allowed the widening of the sphere of individuals with

recognized rights. On the contrary, "in the case of the policy of difference, it is from the differentiated cultural fund that the demand for universal recognition proceeds, the assertion of a supposed universal human potential being itself considered for the simple expression of a hegemonic culture, that of the white man, male, at his peak in the Age of Enlightenment" [RIC 04 p. 334]. Paul Ricœur criticizes Taylor for condemning the search for a universal human identity, accused of being discriminatory, a particularism disguising itself as a universal principle. Henceforth, it is the general will dear to Rousseau that is accused of homogenizing tyranny. These debates have taken root in France [LEP 95, MES 99, REN 99, TOU 97, WIE 96]. Proponents of the universal and relativists clash, and the debate is enriching many works (see [MAA 01, p. 40].

These debates are being updated nowadays. On the whole, the recognition of differences does not cross the barrier of the granting of specific rights with regard to education. Each time a minister seems to be moving in this direction, their projects give rise to criticism made in the name of multiculturalism contrary to the tradition of the Republican school system. One of the manifestations of this opposition was the ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages signed on May 7, 1999 by France. The political significance of this decision had been announced shortly before by Lionel Jospin, the then Prime Minister:

> "The government's approach has a strong symbolic dimension. Indeed, it shows that the time when national unity and the plurality of regional cultures appeared to be antagonistic is over. The Government's approach is inspired by the desire to enhance, in its richness and diversity, the entire national cultural heritage" [ALE 02, p. 25].

But the *Conseil constitutionnel* (French Constitutional Council) opposed the ratification of the text on the basis of the first paragraph of Article 2 of the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, according to which "the language of the Republic is French", on grounds that certain clauses of the Charter tended to "recognize the right to practice a language other than French not only in 'private life' but also in 'public life', to which the Charter associates justice and administrative authorities as well as public services" [COU 99, p. 11]. That is why the historical reconciliation between national unity and the plurality of regional cultures was nipped in the bud. It may be concluded that France and its schools will never recognize that there are "minorities" on the soil of the Republic, that is not only groups within a numerically larger community, but groups of citizens united by the demand for the recognition of their rights [LE 04, SIM 99].

Yet, the French nation was not first defined in 1789 based upon an identity or on a culture common to the citizens, but on the refusal of the old regime and feudalism. The Constitution of 1793 thus placed less emphasis on nationality than on citizenship. It is in this sense that Jean Leca wrote that "France is first a political community before being a cultural community" [LEC 85]. France is not a cultural community formed around a people center that has spread its culture to others. It is rather a political community built around a state. French citizenship should therefore have remained independent of the community to which its citizens belong [GAR 12].

In addition, even if a French tradition of citizenship (rather from the founders of the Third Republic than from the Revolution of 1789) opposes resistance to the recognition of rights attached to the nation's subgroups, the visibility of a multicultural society becomes more significant every day, at a time when the management methods of the educational institution give an increasingly important place to the local system. In this context, the perfect equality of the provision of education throughout the territory of a Republic indifferent to differences remains only dependent on its founding principles, and little by little, it is being replaced by equity, giving right to new forms of the recognition of identities [MAR 96, pp. 65–66].

1.4. Globalization and national identity

But the construction of national identity must not only confront the threats of territorialized collective identities. An inverse phenomenon, called globalization, which can be described as a process of deterritorialization of human identity, is a threat to relativism and obsolescence, as well as the construction of national identity and the link between the nation and universal values that France claims to embody.

Even before identifying globalization as such, the ability of the national territory to establish the collective identity of its inhabitants has been discussed and even disputed. Criticizing Littré's definition of the nation, Renan said: "The existence of a nation is (forgive me this metaphor) a daily plebiscite, as the existence of the individual is a perpetual affirmation of life" [REN 82, p. 32]. A century later, Eric Hobsbawm was hardly affirmative: "There were no satisfactory criteria for deciding which of the multiple human communities could carry the title of nation" [HOB 90, p. 18]. This explains why national identities are in reality processes that must be constantly supported, notably by schools. History is thus more often mobilized to achieve national identity than geography, as evidenced by the doubts of Vidal de La Blache: "Is France a geographical being?" [VID 03, p. 19] and as Fernand Braudel explained: "The decisive element is not land, nature or environment, it is history, man, in short prisoner of himself/herself, for he/she is heir to those who preceded him/her on

his/her own land and shaped its landscape, committing him/her in advance to a series of retrospective determinisms" [BRA 86, p. 202].

Yet, precisely the historical connections of man to the national territory tend to give way today in view of the opening of borders to the world. Marshall McLuhan was the first to use the expression "global village" to describe the deterritorialization of human culture [MCL 62, p. 31]. Furthermore, in the field of teaching history, it can now be argued that it is the history of humanity that makes it possible to think of the globality of today's world in the complexity of the connections between territories and peoples. The emergence of global history, or connected history, has started being included in school curricula at the expense of a currently unfinished didactization effort [MAU 13]. Connected history leads one to think that all identity is the result of a series of influences of "accompanying" cultures that are incorporated into one another. The idea that there exist collective identities arising from fixed systems and pure territories is, at best, an absurdity, at worst, a mortifying fantasy that nourishes totalitarian ideologies [LAP 93, p. 25].

Thus, modern man would be led to relativize any form of identity salience and would also find himself possessing resistance ability and personal freedom, the fruit of the new education in the world, all these being the characteristics that define them, according to Alain Touraine, as a "subject" [TOU 92]. The modern individual would move from their territory of life, from their community of origin, to more inclusive territories and communities, networks to the entire planet, the homeland which is gradually accessing universal consciousness [MOR 93]. Still within the perspective of a globalization of citizenship, many authors from the field of political science, history, sociology and anthropology have questioned the emergence of a "nationalization of the world" or that of a transformation of international cultural identities into political identities [BAY 96, CAH 99, DEL 99, POU 95, REV 99].

Unlike previous contributors, other authors perceive, in the face of globalization, the reaffirmation of national identities [GUE 08]. In view of the weaknesses of the European construction and the difficulty of making a sustainable European identity to emerge through schooling, the affirmation of national identity and its support by the school would constitute the only bulwark against the decay of values in the cauldron of globalization, and, paradoxically, the national territory could become a space for the protection of regional identities, threatened by the steamroller of global culture. Anthony Giddens noted that during the advent of the first modernity, at the time of the 19th Century European industrial revolution and colonial development, Western societies imposed the nation-state model on the world as the most successful form of political sovereignty. Nowadays in crisis, the nation-state is making persistent and considerable efforts to mark its seal on every corner of its territory. Not only did it

impose its language and culture on all, it made its territory the framework for collecting information as well as economic and social statistics, and compelled users of these data to legitimize the validity of the partitioning off of national territories [GID 94, BEC 00]. Nationalism, far from being superseded, is on the contrary full of vigor. The resurgence of the national identities of former colonies shows that the national territory is quick in regaining its identity dimension when this dimension has been deliberately denied. This is illustrated by Algeria since decolonization, despite the considerable efforts previously deployed by the French colonial administration to destroy existing tribal affiliations [KAT 08]. In Europe, nationalist mobilizations in Scotland or Flanders testify to the vitality of national or subnational feeling [DIE 00].

These two *a priori* irreconcilable approaches agree on one fundamental point: the recognition of the diversity of territorial identities (whether or not they have the nation-state as a framework) is a means of training modern man and citizen. This concerns, in short, not confusing unity of the human being, wherever they live, with a uniformity of cultures, which are the salt of humanity. This reflection is based on the assessment of the crisis of identities, according to which the globalized world seems to standardize identities, while everywhere, multiculturalism helps further the affirmation of irreducible but sometimes disordered identities that are incompatible with one another, or even strongly antagonistic and exclusive, and therefore contrary to the movement of the universalization of humanist values [TOU 92, p. 213].

1.5. Territorialization of education policies

The Old Regime was marked by the absence of national unity of education. The schools were attached to the parishes and their territories, which were referred to as "church premises" [SAI 98, p. 35]. Though the idea of an equal education throughout the national territory was born in 1789, Christian Nique showed that the public primary school, as a public service, was built with François Guizot under the July monarchy: the period between 1830 and 1840 witnessed the organization of the elementary school, the division of tasks between the communes, departments, the state and the establishment of an inspection body as well as the unification of programs and methods [NIQ 90]. Secondary education, founded under Napoleon I, was based on the principle of a state monopoly, but in reality the administrative unit of the educational territory concealed a great geographical diversity and marked inequalities of access to schooling throughout the 19th Century [CHA 10]. The French Goblet Law of October 30, 1886 organized primary education based on decentralization, centralization and deconcentration: the three levels of primary school (nursery schools and kindergartens, elementary primary schools, upper primary schools and complementary courses) had the same legal status and the same municipal funding. But the determination of programs was national, and in secondary education the state

had exclusive competence, while local authorities intervened solely in the establishment of institutions [LEL 94, pp. 16–17). In the 20th Century, the issue regarding the organization of the school territory was raised for the first time in the 1930s with the influx of students into secondary education and the need to train a skilled workforce following the 1929 crisis [CHA 87]. But the economic and social planning of education was actually only organized by the state in the 1960s when the problem of equipment, population growth and the need for skilled labor had to be responded to through planning. It historically falls within the Gaullist period [ROB 06]. In 1970, Olivier Guichard's report "Vivre Ensemble" (Living Together) denounced the centralism of national education [GUI 76]. But it is the economic crises due to the oil price shocks of the 1970s that are considered to be the real cause of the decentralization measures, even though they were preceded by the post-May 1968 demands in the same direction. It should be recalled that this trend of the 1980s took two forms: first, decentralization per se, through the transfer of competences from the state to local and regional authorities (in particular, departments for collèges and regions for lycées); second, deconcentration, consisting of a delegation of responsibilities, from the state central administration over the autonomous local public educational institutions (EPLEs), which became secondary and high schools. In the 1990s, this double movement was complemented by the generalization of project policy by objectives, at all levels of the education system, including that of schools [MIN 91].

Through these administrative reforms, the historiography of education has identified a double breakdown in the 1970s and 1980s with regard to the relationship between education policies and territories [ALB 06, PRO 04, TRO 12, VIA 09]. First, schools' political, social and pedagogical model, which followed the logic of equal opportunities in an environment of economic growth and extension of equality of conditions, ended with the economic and social crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. This turning point marked the failure of centralized planning and the "developing state" [CHA 87]. At the same time, schooling was denounced in its involvement in reproducing social inequalities, according to Bourdieu and Passeron [BOU 70], and in its role in reproducing the distribution of individuals between intellectual and manual work for Baudelot and Establet [BAU 79]. A demand for differentiation then appeared in an attempt to counteract the reproduction of inequalities and precariousness during periods of rising unemployment, which gained grounds in 1975–1980 and led to the territorialization of public education policies.

It is differential equality that then appeared as a means of achieving republican equality, through a work of reinterpretation of the equality norm and the singularization of scholastic treatment [COM 95]. What were its forms? It was first political decentralization, which we have mentioned above, which made local

authorities and educational institutions managers of education action in their territories, and then the social definition of territories that were the object of a positive action, that is the ZEPs (priority education zones) and territories of urban policy [DER 93, GLA 91].

Desanctuarized, open to a plural reality that it bracketed in its original conception, schools opened themselves to the difference and pluralisms of society; the new dogmas of education action promoted this openness and diversification as the basis of new public effectiveness. Thus, the neoliberal turnaround of the 1980s led the state to locally delegate educational management [LEC 96, p. 341]. The massification, prioritization and appearance of a territorialized school market as well as the increasing influence of education on access to employment have upset the traditional model of a school preserved from the outside world. The differentiation of decision-making places, actors and modes of intervention of National Education characterized the new governance, which was defined by the "change from tutelage to contract, centralization to decentralization, redistributive state to regulator state, public service management to management in accordance with market principles, public guidance to public and private actors cooperation" [MER 98, p. 63]. This historic rupture promoted the creation of local educational spaces [BOU 94, THO 96], and also the danger of stigmatization of the most neglected territories [ALP 14]. Policies for compensation and modernization, the diversification of means of intervention, the adaptation of schools to their environment and the opening up of schools to the outside world make the educational territory a place of state action coordination [HEN 92, SCH 92].

1.6. Conclusion

There seems no doubt today that French education policies can no longer afford the luxury of indifference to differences in order to establish the social ties. Precisely in order to not renounce the affirmation of its universalist ideals ([PEN 05, p. 157], [ENT 05, p. 31]), schools cannot build paths toward the universal without ignoring a certain exteriority of inception. To integrate is to identify with a group that is not primarily the national community [KRI 04, p. 53]. In this respect, territorial identity (both in French regions and in students' countries of origin) can no longer be ignored [GUI 95]. School must take into consideration "the spirit of place" [DEG 86, p. 291]. The identity of the territories thus enters into the curriculum of the Republican school as cultural knowledge enabling students to orient themselves in a complex world. This is evidenced by the secular teaching of religious fact, integrated into school curricula, which includes shared knowledge of the religions of the students' countries of origin. This is an open pedagogical approach with an integrative

purpose, which must disseminate the knowledge of differences, teach respect for others and a sense of republican principles [CHE 04, p. 36].

To round off this contribution, it seems important to mention the gray areas that persist and to indicate which possibilities research could converge. Efforts are being made in research to identify this issue in all its aspects and to study its consequences for the ethical values attached to the development of democracy. Thus, is research uncertain on a fundamental point: is there any basis for establishing, at the beginning of the 21st Century, a genuine link between identities and territories? [GUÉ 08]. Quite a good number of studies minimize the weight of the territory in the construction of a persons' identity on grounds that mobility tends to become a system of values that is supposed to promote personal fulfillment [RÉM 96]. We must distinguish the space of places, to which certain individuals continue to belong, and the space of flows, in which other individuals evolve, detached from the constraints of belonging [CAS 99], notably by the new uses of digital technologies. Some authors refer to anchoring as a choice, but not all social groups benefit from this broadening of horizons [BOU 96].

More than ever, becoming a citizen requires a school concerned with universal values, but which does not deny the existence of identities and the interests of the inhabitants of a territory.

> "The work of school is to help to teach children to order the dialectic of the universal and the particular: not to renounce what one is without being cut off from any relationship with others. [...] School establishes distance and not confinement in the certainties of my group: it participates in social peace when the policy is fair and equitable" [POU 08, p. 266].

This is the direction that should be followed by public education policies in France, and we hope that researchers from all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences will contribute toward enlightening them in this respect.

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