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Aurore Lecomte

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Title: What contributions of the geography course to reduce antigypsyism: the example of the spatial assignment of Travellers in France

Author : Lecomte Aurore, PHD, UPC LDAR ED623

Mail : aurore.lecomte@u-pec.fr

Abstract

What approaches to reduce anti-Gypsy stereotypes in schools? This is the question we propose to answer by presenting the results of a research in geography.

The production of the city and the status of Travellers in France is the result of a historical construction of otherness and a policy of control (About, 2020; Cossée, 2016; Filhol, 2013; Meints, 2008). We wish, with students, to question the contemporary logics that lead to consider that these populations are subject to spatial injustice and an absence of right to the city (Lefebvre, 1968; Spire, 2017). The term "right to the city" is understood as an absence of decision-making power and participation in the process of constructing space.

If the study of students' spatial representations has been the subject of scientific literature, (André, 1998; Audigier, 1994; Barthes et al., 2016): the way they seize issues of spatial justice can, be a point of support for this proposal. The research methodology leads us to consider the students' social representations (Moscovici, 2004) and the origin of knowledge.

We seek to measure the evolution of these representations through an experiential didactic situation (Leininger-Frézal, 2019). The research therefore involves two vocational high schools: one of them is located opposite a field designated for Travellers, which leads to an ambiguity: the students do not distinguish their "Traveller" neighbors among the inhabitants of the district; but they have representations about them; influenced by sources outside the school. For example, the caravan is a core of these representations. This is why, in this high school, the students were brought to meet the inhabitants of the « field », and then in class to map it taking into account the possibilities of justice in the space (Barthes et al., 2016; Fournand, 2003; Warming, 2022).

We will comment on the results of the experiments. The relationship with the Other affects the representations of space: thus, by mapping a space designated as "ideal", the students define the Other on the basis of a sedentary belonging, and the spaces represented on the paper are designed in support of this logic: individual housing, functional discourse on the city. By meeting the Other, they grasp the issues of justice that emerge from their observations.

The comparison with other courses aimed at reducing anti-Gypsy stereotypes can be discussed as an extension of this paper.

Biography :

Aurore Lecomte, Phd in geography, teacher trainer. I am working on opportunities to integrate issues of Roma spatial segregation into school curricula. My dissertation is an action research in partnership with vocational school teachers and constitutes a proposal of geographical counter-narrative and visibilities of Roma in school. Different teaching approaches have been tested: field trips and meetings with the people concerned and debate-type simulations. The results of the experiments show a better consideration of the issues of spatial justice and discrimination. The courses are designed to promote the fight against racist prejudice in schools and lead to citizenship in action.

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