

Claiming space to claim for justice: the Indigenous peoples' geographical agenda

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Indigenous peoples and spatial justice

The notion of "Indigenous peoples" is a recent one that originates in the Americas' First Nations efforts of the 1970s to raise national and international awareness regarding their plight. The critical issues pertained to political and cultural oppression, social discrimination, and the process of loss of land and territory, all stemming from European colonization. These struggles marked indigenous issues' entry on the international scene.

Today still, within the States in which they live, Indigenous people's claims are for the granting of collective and cultural rights that reach beyond individual citizenship alone. At stake is their recognition as political subjects. The 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (resolution 61/295) consecrated the term and notion "Indigenous peoples". It also provided a welcome support to the struggles of those who, around the world, recognize themselves as "Indigenous peoples" according to the guidelines given by the UN Declaration. By relating "indigeneity" with the notion of "peoples," the Declaration refers to a collective while underscoring their historicity and their genesis in various forms of despoliation, most often violent.

The notion of "Indigeneity" is intimately linked with that of justice since it is born from acts of destructive injustice. As a result, the Indigenous peoples of Oceania and the Americas, the first to voice their claim for justice at both the National and the International level (along with the Sami - Fennoscandia), insist on some form of reparation or at least on an official recognition of the injustices endured for several centuries under colonial domination - injustices to which the subsequent Independence of the Nation States that rule them did not put an end. Elsewhere, Indigenous peoples endure other forms of colonial domination that differ from the European model and are in some cases quite recent (in Indonesia's Papua for example).

All these calls for justice imply some form of « spatial justice" as they invariably entail claims for the return of land properties and administrative authority over traditional lands as well as, in many cases, some political autonomy and/or a possibility for self-determination. They also usually demand the recognition of spatial prerogatives for indigenous inhabitants equal to those granted to other citizens, in particular in regards to land-use, planning and natural resources.

At a symbolic level these claims over land and territorial issues also constitute a struggle over the decolonization of knowledge and the recognition of various ways of being-in-the-world (ontologies). They question the modern State's territorial preconceptions and advocate for the acceptance of alternative knowledge, practices and representations of the land and of spaces, places and the environment.

Expectations

In this issue of *Justice spatiale/Spatial Justice* we want to explore how Indigenous peoples' claims for spatial justice can provide a means to obtain justice, period. Rather than discussing the notion of "indigeneity" and "indigenous" identities (whether real, perceived or claimed) we invite authors to examine on-going identification processes and strategies and underlying cultural, political and territorial issues. Our interest is in "indigeneity" as a political and legal category framed in the late 20th century in relation to grass-roots movements demanding the right to self-determination within Nation States.

We welcome papers that will go beyond an exposition of claim types, an analysis of ongoing struggles or a case-study and open onto broader theoretical discussions. We encourage texts that will contribute to discussions on one or several of the following issues:

1. *Understanding contemporary indigenous territorialities. Who are the peoples who identify themselves as "Indigenous" nowadays? How do they relate to their territories, their spaces, places and identities, and their spatial practices?*

Papers might discuss issues such as: In a given country, what are the implications of the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants upon land ownership and land-use issues? Also, what are the power relations and which strategies do they imply, from both parts? What does "spatial justice" mean in this context? Who defines "spatial justice" and according to which criteria, cultural and ontological conceptions? Moreover, how does "spatial justice" determine what is "acceptable" and/or "legitimate" in terms of land claims?

The spatial justice angle invites a wide range of questions, for example:

- ✓ The notion of « anteriority », called upon by numerous Indigenous peoples and now recognized by international law and case-laws in several countries.
- ✓ The acceptability of land-claims over territories where Indigenous peoples are a demographic minority in the present: in such circumstances, what forms might social *and* spatial justice take for Indigenous peoples other than attributions that will exclude the other inhabitants, long-established in some cases?

Another related issue is the possibility of considering social *and* spatial justice separately from claims over traditional lands, and thus to consider justice forms in other living environments, such as urban and/or diasporic ones.

- ✓ Returning to the notion and term "indigeneity" and its open-endedness, considered as problematic by many researchers, papers could also address how (and to what extent), Indigenous peoples' claim for spatial justice contributes to a sharper definition of the notion itself.

2. *Social sciences and law: creative encounters*

For most of the 20th century, anthropologists were the only academically recognized experts of Indigenous peoples' matters. Since the 1970s, however, other social scientists have taken a growing interest in these peoples, in particular geographers, sociologists and political scientists. In the field of geography, this has led to the publication of numerous special issues in scholarly journals, first in English and more recently in French (*Espace Populations Sociétés* and *Les Cahiers de géographie du Québec* in 2012 alone). Law specialists have been interested in Indigenous studies for quite some

time, but most often in relation to National or International law. Recently, anthropology of law has been developing at the crossroads of land-claims and claims for justice in Indigenous contexts (Schulte-Tenkhoff, 1998).

Although some researchers have already looked into how land-claims and Indigenous' rights are tied together, we believe it would be fruitful to push further interdisciplinary dialogue around this topic as it could lead to a better understanding of what is at stake for Indigenous peoples when they demand spatial justice. We see this issue of the journal as an opportunity to illustrate the heuristic potential of collaborations between the social sciences and law.

3. *Between science and political action: where do researchers stand?*

What stance should social scientists conducting research in Indigenous contexts take, in regards to Indigenous peoples' political struggles? Whether they like it or not, researchers often must respond to demands from the Indigenous communities and the organizations they work with to become socially and politically engaged in their causes. Researchers might be asked, if not to fully embrace particular struggles, to at least conduct research that is likely to yield scientific support for Indigenous communities' cases. Geographers, for example, are often asked to produce cartographies of claimed lands.

From an epistemological perspective, what is the consequence of such engagement on the knowledge produced as well as on the definition of « scientific » knowledge and the researcher's work? Also, what are the ethical implications of conducting research in a context of struggle and political engagement, or when the researcher is hired by an Indigenous organization rather than by the State which dominates them (see for example *Etudes Inuit Studies* 2011)? How do these conditions affect fieldwork, feedback and the dissemination of results?

Another interesting issue to look at would be the political and scientific consequences of the encounter between Indigenous activists fighting for justice, and researchers who wish to reformulate the latter in terms of a fight for spatial justice.

References :

- *Cahiers de géographie du Québec*. 2012. Numéro thématique « *Géographies autochtones: développement et confluence des territorialités* », vol. 56 (159).
- *Espace Populations Sociétés*. 2012. Numéro thématique « Les peuples autochtones. Une approche géographique des autochtonies ? », 1.
- *Etudes Inuit Studies*. 2011. Numéro thématique « Propriété intellectuelle et éthique / Intellectual property and ethics », vol. 35 (1-2). (<http://www.erudit.org/revue/etudinit/2011/v35/n1-2/index.html>)
- Lacasse, Jean-Paul. 2004. *Les Innus et le territoire : Innu tipenitamun*. Sillery: Septentrion.
- Schulte-Tenkhoff, Isabelle. 1998. « Reassessing the Paradigm of Domestication: The Problematic of Indigenous Treaties ». *Review of Constitutional Studies*, 4 (2): 239-89.

Expected papers

Papers dealing with any self-identifying Indigenous people, from any part of the world, will be taken into consideration for this issue.

Papers can either rely on a case-study or be organized around a theoretical discussion, but they must consider at least one of the key-points presented above.

Contributions from non-academic authors are also welcome, as long as their arguments are scientifically acceptable. All papers will be peer-reviewed, according to the Journal's standard.

The journal is bilingual and papers can be submitted in French or English.

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Please read, and follow, the journal's template:

<http://www.jssj.org/recommandations-aux-auteurs>

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