Territorial struggles: spatial issues and social representations

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Territory defined as a portion of space appropriated by a social group to meet its needs (Le Berre, 1995), is very often an object of struggles between actors with divergent or even contradictory interests. The notion of territorial struggle refers to conflicts related to the use of a portion of space (Dechézelles & Olive, 2016). In recent years, considering the multiplication of ecological and environmental crises, this type of phenomenon has taken on increasing importance. Coalitions of different actors, more or less organized, with varying militant skills, actively oppose policies that put at risk their more or less close environment. Each actor involved in a territorial struggle mobilizes images and texts conveying representations congruent with her/his objectives. This thematic issue focuses especially on the creation and characteristics of these conflicting territorial representations.

Geographers, political scientists, sociologists and anthropologists, both in France and abroad, are more and more studying these movements, where the concepts of space, of planning or land management (Vidalou, 2017), of living and of mobilization occupy a central place. Recent special issues on places of conflict (Norois, 2016) and occupations (Politix, 2017) attest to the importance of these objects in contemporary social science research, although some authors (Subra, 2017) have sometimes difficulties to deconstruct certain figures become emblematic in the mass media ("zadiste", "breaker"). Analyses taking into account the scales of engagement (Cox, 1998, Green, 2016) or articulating study of struggles and reflections on political ecology (Chatier & Rodary, 2007, Rangan & Kull, 2009) also remain too rare.

Whether it's the Notre-Dame-des-Landes airport project, the Bure nuclear waste landfill site, the Welzow open pit mine or Standing Rock pipelines (to limit it to a few current emblematic cases), communication, both physical (banners, slogans, demonstrations, etc.) and digital one, is one of the essential aspects related to the involved actors. The new arenas of online expressions (social media, pure players, mailing lists, etc.) make it possible for the opponents of a given project to express themselves out of traditional media and to spread their actions beyond the militant circles, both locally and internationally.

The investigation of newspapers (Comby et al., 2010), of digital traces (sites, blogs, periscope, Facebook pages, see Severo & Romele, 2015) but also of the physical aspects of mobilization (Combes et al., 2016) is likely to provide a very rich material allowing the longitudinal study of the representations related to territorial struggles and generated by the interactions between the concerned actors (Dalibert et al., 2016, Mabi, 2016).

Studies for this issue can take different forms according to the discipline and the researcher’s choices. They can be based on the analysis of corpora collected through interviews and/or archives in order to rebuild the history, the stakes of the conflict, and the individual and collective representations of the concerned actors, or they can focus on field study and participant observation to identify stories and strategies of conflict stakeholders. All these approaches pose both conceptual problems (how to take into account the diversity of expressions, how to manage the relationship between the collective and individual dimension, what ethical positions to adopt when the actors break the law?) and
methodological issues (delimitation and representativeness of the corpus, volume of data, type of analysis), especially when these struggles are still ongoing.

Three main types of papers are expected:

- Fieldwork analyses questioning the methodological and conceptual choices;
- Corpus analyses highlighting the representations related to the struggles, both by the promoters and the opponents of the contested projects;
- Epistemological reflections on the object “territorial struggle” and its militant and media derivatives.

We suggest to send a one-page summary to make sure your project fits into the editorial line of the issue. **Articles are expected in early March 2019.** Please follow the [instructions of the journal](mailto:) and send completely anonymous text (references to previous work, figures, maps, etc.).

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**REFERENCES**


