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IS TERRITORIAL SENSITIVITIES METHOD ACCEPTABLE IN THE TERRITORIAL INTELLIGENCE APPROACHES?

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Summary : The territorial sensitivities method was proposed as a tool to collect senses of places and meanings of landscape features. It was presented as an alternative of the traditional participation process to take into account the inhabitants' meanings in physical planning projects. The method is based on the comparison of an "objective" inventory of localisable changes and those collected in the speech of the inhabitants. Analysing which changes are mentioned but also which ones are absent contributes to grasp the places appropriation. After a short presentation of the method, the paper asks about the acceptability of this one in the context of the territorial intelligence. Is it suitable to join non participative empathic methods in the set of tools of the territorial intelligence?

Territorial sensitivity, Life world, Territorial intelligence, Participation, Planning, Ethic

Résumé La méthode des sensibilités territoriales a été proposée en tant qu'outil pour appréhender le sens des lieux et les significations accordées aux éléments du paysage. Il fut présenté comme une alternative aux processus de participation traditionnels qui permettent de prendre en compte l'avis de la population dans les projets d'aménagement de l'espace. La méthodologie se base sur la comparaison d'un inventaire « objectif » de changements localisables et d'inventaires de changements recueillis dans le discours des habitants. Analyser quels sont les changements mentionnés mais également ceux qui sont absent permet d'appréhender l'appropriation des lieux. Après une courte présentation de la méthode, la communication s'interroge sur l'acceptabilité de celle-ci dans le contexte de l'intelligence territoriale. Est-il convenable d'adjoindre des méthodes empathiques mais non participatives à la boîte à outils de l'intelligence territoriale ?

Sensibilité territoriale, Espace vécu, Intelligence territoriale, Participation, Aménagement de l'espace, Ethique

a) Backgrounds

The territorial sensitivities method was proposed as an empathic tool to collect senses of places (Tuan, 2001) and meanings of landscape features. It was presented as an alternative of the traditional participation processes to take into account the inhabitants' meanings in physical planning projects (Schmitz, 1998). A study of practices in Walloon region showed the weak success of participation processes. Walloon people were not enthusiast to participate in public inquiries. They are not well informed about it, and they have a lack of training in physical planning, environmental concerns, and the society where they live. The fact that some people never take part in this kind of process because of cultural barriers (to write a letter, to express an opinion) is an other problem. The local and regional authorities regarded participation as an obligation that consumes time and that generates problems. In their opinion, participation is not a way to get a better decision. In fact, participation in Walloon Region was more an information process than an opportunity to work together on the best solution. The worse thing is that participation processes are often a way for a small, well organized, group to frost some important works. When I studied the public inquiry on the LGV in 1998 (Schmitz, 1998), I remarked that numerous protests are less connected with real impacts than with the social network of an active protester. In these cases, it appears that participation processes could lead to a misappropriation of democratic practices.

b) The territorial sensitivities method

The territorial sensitivities methodology suggests to start with interviews of inhabitants or questionnaires before any planning project in order to get information about the way they appropriate the different places. The idea is to take into account these appropriations in planning and territorial development projects. These interviews focus on reactions, sensitivities, to locatable changes. The method is based on the comparison of an "objective" inventory of locatable changes and those collected in the speech of the inhabitants. The questionnaire proposes different places to the inhabitants or users and asks for each location: which changes occurred in the last years? Analysing which changes are mentioned but also which ones are absent contributes to grasp the places appropriation. It permits to underline high and less sensitive places and to cluster inhabitants around specific places appropriation. More than a test about the change perceptions, it deals with the normality and the sense of place (Schmitz, 2001).

The interview or questionnaire ends with the test on changing places. The test proposes twenty too thirty-five places where changes happened in the last years. These changes are chosen because of their localisation and their diversity. For instance, it could be building of houses along the main road, planting of trees changing the face of landscape, opening of a museum or operating of industrial plant. The results of the test are analysed in two steps: 1) score (number of mentions in the sample) of each changes, 2) cluster analysis of the sensitivity register of each respondent.

The score analysis allows (if the sampling is acceptable) the development of a synthesis on the interest and the meaningfulness of places of the local society. The cluster analysis underlines the diversity of life worlds and senses of place but also regroups inhabitants on the point of view of the environmental expectations.

c) Discussion

The territorial sensitivities methodology suggests anticipating the debate about the land-use through a questionnaire and an analysis free of the stress of any factual projects (Tricot, 1994). It collects information from the inhabitants and is adapted to who do not participate in the usual participative processes. However, this method is far away from a participative process because inhabitants do not participate in the decision process. The method is just a way of collecting information about the meanings of places in order to take appropriate decisions. It is an empathic technocratic tool. People do not know how the results of the questionnaire will be used. Moreover, the analysis of the result is based on a hermeneutic work. Is it suitable to join non-participative empathic tool in the set of tools of the territorial intelligence? One of the main principles of the territorial intelligence is the participation of the actors in the different steps of the process. Nevertheless, it does not mean that technocratic tools could not be used in the context of the territorial intelligence. The condition is that the tools are understood by the actors. In the stage of development of the territorial sensitivities method, it does not respect this condition but a revision of the protocol would permit to meet this condition in the future.

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