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IDENTITIES ON THE MOVE

Identities. An interdisciplinary approach to the roots of present
Identités. Une approche interdisciplinaire aux racines du présent
Identidades. Una aproximación interdisciplinar a las raíces del presente

Identities on the move

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Identity has become a leading subject of research in the humanities and social sciences, thus moving the epicentre of scientific interest to the catalyzing term of the axes that articulate social cohesion and, at the same time, the relation with otherness. Identity is individual and collective, momentary and secular, apparently contradictory term that can only coexist and fructify if they entail a constant adaptation. So, identity claims to strengthen cohesion through appealing to permanence and the continuity, even though these are only upheld by adaptation and renovation. In short, identities on the move.

1. The mirage of national identity

The *déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du citoyen* from the 26th of August 1789 begins as a declaration by *les représentants du Peuple français, contitués en Assemblée nationale*.[1] Similarly, in 1776, the representatives of the thirteen United States of America based their declaration of independence from the Crown of Great Britain on the "Right of the People".[2] These expressions of a sovereign collective will were taken as a true turning point from earlier times when the inhabitants assumed their role as mere subjects of the sovereign.

In fact, immediately the collective identity, under the national expression, was nothing more than an attempt to strengthen itself by adopting the appropriate symbology. If the first clause of the 1791 French

1   Ferdinand Mélin-Soucramanien, *Les Constitutions de la France de la Révolution à la IV République* (Paris: Éditions Dalloz, 2009), p. 1.
2   < http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document.>.

constitution indicated that *il sera établi des fêtes nationales pour con-
server le souvenir de la Révolution française, entretenir la fraternité
entre les citoyens, et les attacher à la Constitution, à la patrie et aux
lois*,[3] all the 19th century was a succession in search of elements of
memory to preserve the common identity.[4] The national pantheons,[5]
the national museums,[6] the national archives[7] or the national symbology
expressed by the building of numerous monuments embedded in the
landscape,[8] were no less than an attempt to articulate and maintain a
story of national identity, with specific attention to the shared imagi-
nary,[9] an identity that was born in the distant past and became progres-
sively strongers. Therefore, surrounded by paintings in the staterooms
in the Historic Museum of Versailles in 1835, Victor Schoelcher could
exclaim, *l'Histoire est la chose importante, l'occupation du siècle*.[10]

In fact, since Herder it has been assumed that the collective iden-
tity extends through time, thanks to a specific force that vivifies a soul
strongly defined by language and humanistic creation, to such an ex-
tent that there is no citizenship without this previous national identity.[11]
As a historic route, the collective identity can enjoy not only a begin-

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3   Ferdinand Mélin-Soucramanien, *Les Constitutions de la France de la Révolution*…,
     p. 7.
4   See, as an example, the Spanish case: Inman Fox, *La invención de España* (Madrid:
     Cátedra, 1997); Juan Pedro Quiñonero, *De la inexistencia de España* (Madrid: Edi-
     torial Tecnos, 1998); José Álvarez, *Mater Dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo
     XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001).
5   Pierre Chevalier, Daniel Rabreau, *Le Panthéon, symbole des revolutions* (Paris: Caisse
     Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites, 1989); José María Rodríguez,
     "El sueño del Panteón Nacional", *Historia de Iberia Vieja*, 39 (2008), pp. 66–75.
6   Pierre Géal, *La naissance des musées d'art en Espagne (XVIIIᵉ–XIXᵉ siècles)*
     (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2005).
7   Flocel Sabaté, "Documentation médiévale et archives en Catalogne après les
     bouleversements du 21ᵉ siècle", *Revolution and Archives* (Moscow: Moscow State
     University, forthcoming).
8   Jean Reynal, *Les symboles de les République en Pays catalan* (Perpignan: Éditions
     Trabucaire, 2007), pp. 10–77.
9   Béatrice Fontanel, Daniel Wolfromm, *Quand les artistes peignaient l'Histoire de
     France* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002).
10   Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, "Peintre et Histoire dans les années 1820–1830",
     L'Histoire au musée, (Arles: Actes Sud, 2004), p. 127.
11   Adriana Rodríguez, *Identidad lingüística y nación cultural* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva
     – Ediciones de la Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2008).

ning but a clear teleology, as it is experienced by an America sure of sharing a Manifest Destiny.[12] The cohesive traits and arguments invoked [13] will vary depending on the area,[14] but in all cases they move towards the cohesion of collective identities under the invocation of the nation.[15] All individuals take part in an ideal identity shared and backed up by the historical memory which, in order to strengthen the indelibly shared traits, incorporates an alleged common tradition[16] and a heroic memory, concordant with the aspired popular affiliation, that often more than kings and noble, recalls bourgeois and the simple people who shared these common ideals in the past.[17]

Therefore, in all the cases, the individual is included in a national identity which not only deserves, but also can demand all the respects, including the supreme sacrifice of one's own life. The Horatian maxim *dulce et decorum pro patria mori*[18] becomes the supreme currency of cohesion. The landscapes is filled with monuments that strengthen the common unit by remembering those who died for the ideal of the nation, as in the United States immediately after the Civil War,[19] in France during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century following the growing remembrance of the Franco-Prussian War, and in Great Britain with the roles of honour erected in memory of those fallen in the Boer War.

12 William H. Goetzmann, *New lands, new men. America and the second great age of Discovery* (New York: Viking, 1986), pp. 298–342.

13 Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

14 Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales. Europe XVIIIᵉ–XIXᵉ siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001).

15 Timothy Baycroft, Mark Hewitson, eds., *What is a nation? Europe 1789–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

16 Llorenç Prats, *El mite de la tradició popular* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1988).

17 In Portugal, for example, "A madeira de Aljubarrota" will be promoted: Maria Cristina Gomes Pimenta, *A Madeira de Aljubarrota, entre ontem e hoje* (Aljubarrota: Fundaçao Batalhoa de Aljubarrota, 2007), pp. 42–43.

18 Q. Horatii Flacii, *Opera ad Fidem optimorum exemplarium castigata* (London: Whitaket et soc., 1830), p. 56.

19 Willliam C. "Jack" Davis, *Civil War Parks. The story behind the scenary* (Wickenburg: Kc Publications, 2011), p. 8. Although the Northamerican case has specific connotations because it will not be immediately remembered as a confrontation between two nations but rather as a Civil War that requires reconciliation: David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion. The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge – London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

The tensions in the first half of the 20th century consolidated the invocations of the national cohesion. The new order established after the First World War was even presented as a liberation of the nations[20] such as the ones in Central European.[21] However, at this stage one can imagine other transversal vectors with which to try and rally society.

This is the challenge that the more utopian approaches channeled, presented not as an escape route but rather as a real place in which to organize harmonious societies,[22] just as had been claimed for when new lands (and peoples) appeared.[23] Very significantly, the utopian roots in the late-medieval proposals[24] and in the Renaissance expressions[25] about ideal cities[26], not by chance, but rather because the city was then envisaged as the social structure *par excellence*.[27] With full continuity, the 19th century's challenges made it easier to rewrite the utopia to provide new vectors with which to articulate the social identity.[28] The ideal of cohesion had to be centred on the society. This is the reason why it was so easy for a utopian proposal to adapt specific socialist proposals for cohesion.[29]

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20   Elizabeth Wiskemann, *La Europa de los dictadores 1919–1945* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno editores, 1984), pp. 12–22.

21   The memories of the contemporaries such as Soma Morgenstern commented with naturality that, under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, *en Austria había un total de once naciones*, regretting that the Jewish was not stated between them [Soma Morgenstern, *En otro tiempo. Años de juventud en Galitzia oriental* (Barcelona: Editorial Minúscula, 2005)], p. 388.

22   Flocel Sabaté, "Utopies i alternatives de vida a l'edat mitjana", *Utopies i alternatives de vida a l'edat mitjana*, Flocel Sabaté, ed. (Lleida: Pagès Editors, 2009), pp. 9–31.

23   Flocel Sabaté, *Fin del mundo y Nuevo mundo* (Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2011).

24   Antonio Antelo, "La ciudad ideal según fray Francesc Eiximenis y Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo", *La ciudad hispánica durante los siglos XIII al XVI* (Madrid: Editorial de la Universidad Complutense, 1985), pp. 19–50.

25   Patrick Boucheron, "De la ville idéale à l'utopie urbaine: Filarete et l'urbanisme à Milan au temps des Sforza", *Les Cahiers de Fontenay*, 69–70 (1993), pp. 53–80.

26   Francisco Fernández, *Utopías e ilusiones naturales* (Barcelona: El Viejo Topo, 2007), pp. 21–120.

27   François Choay, *L'urbanisme, utopies et réalités. Une anthologie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1965).

28   José María Carandell, *Las utopías* (Barcelona: Salvat editores, 1974), pp. 81–122.

29   Fernando Ainsa, *La reconstrucción de la utopía* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Sol, 1999), pp. 49–68.

The socialist approaches formally renewed the vector of cohesion, which was not orientated towards preserving and perpetuating the perennial national identity, but rather towards the solidarity of social class.[30] Although, in the places where real socialism has been put into practice, actually, the social and political structures have not respected this vector of cohesion.[31] Invocations of the national have even been grafted onto this, as a sort of "national-communism".[32] This evolution could have been facilitated by the identification between nation and state and by the temptation to the usurp the use of this, as Benedict Anderson comments, precisely due to the contradiction which the ideal socialist societies fall into,

> […] *le modèle du nationalisme officiel n'est jamais plus pertinent qu'au moment où les révolutionnaires parviennent à s'emparer de l'État, et où, pour la première fois, ils sont en position d'user de ses pouvoirs au service de leurs visions*.[33]

Assuming this validity and permanence of national identity, Caspar Hirschi recently has asked himself about the roots, especially in the German case. His conclusions do not point to the formulations in the 18th and 19th centuries but rather to other deeper ones, situated between Ancient Rome and the end of the Modern Era, used precisely as a legacy brought down to the contemporary centuries. Hence, he can conclude that, "Nationalism […] was created and cherished by major and minor political thinkers who lived in Western European countries between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries".[34]

The question that arises is clear: maybe the subjects of the Ancient Regime were not mere subjects, was there not a series of shared identities in each territory, which they felt part of?

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30   Régis Meyran, *Le mythe de l'identité nacionale* (Paris: Berg International Éditeurs, 2009), pp. 107–129.

31   Francisco Arbell, *Los colosos socialistas* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta – Editora Nacional, 1976), p. 91.

32   Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités…*, pp. 277–284.

33   Benedict Anderson, *L'imagine sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalism* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002), p. 163.

34   Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism. An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 219.