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Cultural identity and territorial belonging
Case: Palimpsests from the Province of Buenos Aires*
Trenque Lauquen, Argentina

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Presentation: Theme 4

This paper deals with the City of Trenque Lauquen (located in the northwest of the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina) as a case study; it attempts to understand processes of territorial transformation experienced since the city was founded in 1876.

The “round lake”, which gives its name to the city in the language of the Mapuche Indians, is surrounded by urbanization and located within the sub-humid Pampa. With a population of 30,764 in 2001, it concentrates the main regional economic activities: agriculture, dairy farming and cattle raising, together with secondary and tertiary activities.

We understand territorial organization as a social process of appropriation of space in time, in which each historical moment expresses the spatial organization mode as the multi-dimensional resultant of social forces, with characteristics that can only be understood through its becoming.

In this document we will consider theoretic-methodological criteria for territorial analysis from the analysis guidelines “**time and space**” and “**systems of objects and systems of actions**” proposed by Milton Santos and implemented for other territorial dimensions by members of the LIA-TAG Team.

The first of the mentioned guidelines refers to “ongoing events, marks, imprints, moments of the territorial organization process, creation, expansion, consolidation, strengthening, stagnation and withdrawal” (Bozzano: 2009,103). In this context “marks” are defined as objects and things and “imprints” as actions and practices, both signified in the past and interpreted and re-signified in a present (Bozzano: 2009, 133).

The second guideline describes the “patterns of occupation and patterns of appropriation for each place” (Bozzano: 2009,103). We are dealing with linked and mutually determinant systems in a particular territory (M. Santos; 2000: 54-55 in Bozzano, 2009:115), and its joint analysis allows to explicitly state their historic reality (Santos; 2000:73 in Bozzano, 2009: 115). The layers or texts revealed by that archeology will result in a map of the evolution and the tensions and solutions tried out, that either worked or not, for that territory; a map that may prove useful for the analysis of historic scenarios and the assessment of policies implemented through its becoming.

We will also work with methods of structural geography (Gagnon, and Charlebois, 2009) to explore three types of territories of belonging: “of **exploitation**” (intensive economic production), “of **consecration**” (creation of symbolic reserves) and “of **cohabitation**” (a combination of production and reserve territories).

The original contribution of this work lies in finding the common ground between both methods for their application in the design of participative workshops and the analysis of their results.

We expect to apply this contribution within the framework of territorial intelligence research-action through the workshops that will take place in 2010 as the initial stage of fieldwork in Trenque Lauquen, to explicitly state in a participative way the vocations of the city and to guide local development towards those of greater consensus and potential, strengthening local governance in the process.

The study will be conducted in three phases: 1) the concept of “city” will be studied from previous research; 2) we will study the urban form and its location (the topology of the place)

according to the aforementioned guidelines and methods; and 3) conclusions will be drawn and made available to the community.

The information generated by the workshops will allow, through new outlooks on the cultural identity and territorial belonging** from its inhabitants, to understand the city’s cultural heritage, culture and possibilities. The proposal aims to simultaneously take advantage from and contribute to advances in territorial intelligence from this perspective.

We aim to work in the local level to create a record and analysis of territorial interventions and their social impacts, thus preserving marks that constitute valuable information for local development.

This study will include the revision of pertinent documentation –historical as well as related to territorial intelligence– and the analysis of spatial reference data from diverse municipal and governmental sources.

The project will continue through deskwork that includes contacts with key informants and actors and potential assistance for future territorial interventions in the city. We expect it to be useful, for example, to anticipate, configure and strengthen a strategic plan that will promote territorial development and governance.

Finally, we expect that ideas and formalizations generated through this research will lead to significant applications for other cities and towns within the municipality and its surroundings in the Pampa region.

* In this work we build on a conceptual proposal by Reboratti (1993:17) that understands palimpsest as a representation of the superimposition that makes the territory, accumulated and modeled by the interaction of consecutive generations and natural causes that had an impact on it.

** The notion of territorial belonging “mainly refers to the identity, the specificity, that a group has or attributes itself within a given space” (Gagnon, and Charlebois, 2009). It is analyzed in three levels: 1. the symbolic in places; 2. governance; and 3. the socioeconomic valorization of territories.