



EA 1341
Études
germaniques

International and Interdisciplinary Conference on

(IN)VISIBLE COLONIAL CITIES

**Domination and Resistance Strategies
from the end of the XIXth century until today**

March, 29th and 30th 2012

This conference is organized as a part of the MISHA programme « Invisible Cities and Writing Modernity : Towards a New Geography of Identity », in partnership with the Architecture Department of the INSA Strasbourg, the Research Center « Cultures et Sociétés en Europe » (FRE 3229) and the Research Team « German Studies » (EA 1341) of Strasbourg University.

Call for papers

The symposium aims at spotlighting the relationships between colonization and urbanization processes through the concepts of visibility/invisibility. Colonization systematically brings into play struggles for power and substitution of one order by another in a more or less violent or radical way. Studies will not only look into city planning practices, which are characterized by a form of domination, blindness and incomprehension of the urban territory, but also into the resistance against this domination and its cultural (habits, events) as well as concrete expressions (spatial and architectural).

1. (Multi)layered cities: spatial and temporal superpositions

The visible city is seen as a surface resting on diverse temporal layers or strata. It is never one at any moment, “synchronous with itself” (Marcel Roncayolo, *La Ville et ses territoires*, 1990), because the space becomes vertical with time. The urban place being a “Layered History” (Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace*, Paris, 1974), the identity of a city resides in the diachronic depth which expresses itself in the real, imaginary or symbolic historic strata grounding the place. Colonization processes, however, deny the presence of invisible layers below or within the visible city: the colonial city is built in or near a place which was previously occupied, thus denying it any historic depth and social diversity.

2. The colonial mimicry issue

The construction of the colonial city often aims at reproducing, duplicating the metropolitan city, thus unleashing a “mimicry” phenomenon (Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994) elevated to the urban plane. The colonization of urban development raises the issue of reproduction, itself anchored in the ideas of model and replica, authenticity and pastiche. Its ambivalence will be explored by questioning the limits of any architectural re-production. The invisibility is then to be found within a “third-space”, in the more or less distinguishable gap between the replica and the original.

3. Think tanks for new ideas and utopian projections

The colonial city can also be seen as a utopian projection, which is entwined in the dream of the ideal city; urban space representations then overlap with the experimentation of social models. Hence, the “pioneer fronts”, understood as the colonization movement of a society within its own political frontiers, imply the conquest of space held as new and “virgin”, denying any pre-existent culture. These lands, which are up for grabs, are used as a space to project imagined/imaginary cities, whose emergence will erase any previous reality. The invisibility of a lost space is covered by the invisibility of the city in the making, sometimes only built in the pioneers’ dreams. Not all these cities in the making will meet the bright future that their builders expect for them. While some manage to be structured and to last, others stagnate or tend to become “ghost cities” as in the American West.

4. Resistance strategies

In all cases, to comply with the colonists’ order, colonization seeks to transform, to embrace and to reconstruct what exists. It generates invisibility within the city by melting or concealing or even camouflaging native populations. Domination and resistance relationships between colonists and natives will be addressed, as well as the latter’s role within the physical, geographical and social space, whether at the outskirts, in the gaps, or beyond city limits. Questions will also pertain to resistance strategies against colonial patterns, as well as their diverse ways and schemes.

Expected contributions for this multidisciplinary symposium can embrace literature, sociology, anthropology, geography, urban-planning, etc. and deal with various media (architecture, painting, cinema, novels, comics...).

Scientific committee:

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Registration fees: 50 euros (normal price) or 20 euros (PhD students)

Contribution titles and 1,500-word summaries, as well as your contacts and title are to be sent to the following e-mail address before **March 31st, 2011**:

citescoloniales@misha.fr

Papers with a maximum of 40,000 characters, in compliance with the norms published on the site <http://villesinvisibles.misha.fr>, under “Publications”, are to be sent by mail before **April 30th, 2012**, to:

Aurélie Choné - Programme « Villes invisibles »

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Symposium languages: German, English, French, with a preference for French, including for written contributions.