Regimen projet - Presentation

This project stems from dissatisfaction and an intuition, and invites to join a process

Aims of the network

1° We are not satisfied with the gradual exhaustion of the cognitive efficiency of analytic frameworks on the "act to govern" (sovereignty, power, …)and on institutions or regimes which are organising them: (State, government, …) As most of those references arose since the 15th century or acquired their contemporary meaning since that time, they appear inadequate for the understanding of what we are living today.

This inadequacy generates two contrary - but possibly simultaneous - effects : to hide or, on the contrary, to overestimate nowadays transformations which seem to affect the "arts to govern" (Senellart). To hide because the categories we use, often in absence of better alternatives, such as the State, civil society, government, domination, power, are more likely to hinder than to help us to understand today's world.

One of the best examples of this problem lies in the concept of the State: we are able to perceive its present limits to discern institutional forms of power, but we are unable to define new ones. The blossoming of new concepts such as "globalization", "networks", "empire" supposed to provide a better tool for comprehension, in fact presents the scope of a debate rather than real analytic categories. On the other hand, our way of thinking can also lead us to overestimate these new concepts. We are getting used to thinking through "ideal-type" with a more and more precise content (which is indeed contrary to the notion of "ideal-type"), and any inappropriateness with what we are witnessing lead us to the conclusion of its obsolescence. This explains the increasing use of words such as "transformation", "crisis", "end", ...

If we refer to the concept of the State, we notice the exhaustion of its classic model; but can the State be reduced to it? The doxa becomes the one of transformation, of crisis or decline of "traditional" forms of power, the first of which is the State. Without denying on principle those transformations, it is worth questioning the real extend of their significance, their meaning and their reality. If the State is facing transformations, is everything inside subject to transformation? Do these mutations affect the aims, the organizations, the discourses or the practices? All or some of them? For all States or only a few of them?

Our intuition

Our intuitionlies in the fact that we feel as inappropriate to treat separately these analytic categories, but rather to apprehend them under the form of a "configuration" whose components interact with one another, all of them representing the various ways to govern, their institutions and their discourses. For this purpose, it is necessary to cross over the limits of scientific disciplines, boundaries which are at the same time generators and results of these analytic categories. It is also useful to avoid a focus on one of them, the State for instance, but rather to widen our investigative perspective, the various modes of the act to govern, to understand it in its historicity rather than in its so-called "naturality".

We do not believe that a "real State" exists, a State reaching its maturity in the 20th century then declining; we are more convinced by forms of State whose modes of legitimacy, finalities and structures are continually evolving throughout history. We do not believe in a concept of power valid for all times and all places; we are

more convinced by powers whose horizon of signification does not exclusively merge with domination, powers useful for different aims.

A process

Our network proposes three tasks on the ways to govern.

1. an epistemological and critical task: to deconstruct present analysis forms, not in order to replace them by other, but to demonstrate their plasticity, their relativity, the functions they performed at a time and their continuous evolution;
2. a comparative task between disciplines and countries. Even if, because of practical reasons, our network mainly looks European, our purpose implies a real international dimension;
3. a task of "reconstruction" based on a wide theme: what are the aims of powers today? Who exercises them? Which forms have the States? Is it possible to make use of the same notion to define so different realities throughout the world? Is sovereignty an operating concept?

KeyWords

- Globalization
- Governance
- Agents
- State
- Area
    - South-East Europe
    - European Union
    - China
- Conceptual
    - Souveignty
    - Nation - State
    - Nation