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Roles and Effects of the Mediation in the Institutionalization of Technical Activities

This paper is concerned with one part of a study in progress which is interested in the roles and effects of diverse mediations in the institutionalization of technical activities. By institutionalization, we mean the translation of the cultural system (values, ideas, symbols) within the social organization by means of norms of action, roles and groups which exercise direct and immediate control upon social action.

The case under study concerns the practices relative to the conception and realization of constructed space in a society which belongs to an oral civilization, the traditional Berber society of Kabylia (Algeria). The approach we advocate is an anthropotechnological one which considers all of the systemic relationships between an individual and his environment in the course of an activity (Wisner, 1997). It considers technical subjects as an entirely social phenomenon in relation to other social phenomena.

Among the mediations (instruments, signs, procedures, machines, methods, laws, organizational forms of work) which comprise an activity, the rules (norms, rules, recognized uses) are the unavoidable mediations which come between the individual and the community (social organization).

Our hypothesis is that these institutions are likely to help understand the system which governs the production of constructed space and of its environment in the traditional society of Kabylia, thus, the representations relative to its conception and its realization, and from that, the conditions and forms of use of diverse tools of media.

The study is based on the study and analysis of the contents of general ethnographical documents (describing or analyzing traditional Kabyle construction) and documents of a legal character (the corpus studied is comprised of sixty or so village or tribal customaries, collected in the 19th century) to understand the system which governs the conception and realization of the constructed setting of traditional Kabyle society.

The results which we will demonstrate in this paper are concerned with representations relative to the appropriation of space, whether or not this appropriation depends on property. The establishment of boundaries, distinction, marking off, identification and the control of space use the tools of mediation, which are specific to the society under consideration. The analysis of these representations shows us, among other things, why a mediator-tool like writing (known by the traditional Kabyle society) has not been more decisive in questions relative to property.