

Summaries

Abram de Swaan

Desidentification in Expanding Circles. Thoughts about Rwanda

Why do people often have such extreme feelings about foreigners from far away countries, people they have never met and probably never will meet? Such feelings at a distance are a recent phenomenon, they are the emotional counterparts of major social transformations. This article is a sequel to an earlier essay entitled: 'Identification in Expanding Circles' (*Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift* 20.3, 1994). That article contends that identification is a cognitive and affective process in which people come to view others as much 'the same' as themselves. Identification and desidentification are not each others opposites but rather two sides of an emotional triangle with unfamiliarity and indifference at its basis. This article focuses on social exclusion and affective desidentification with the accompanying affect hatred. Factual evidence is derived from three sources: historical and anthropological studies about the relationship between 'Hutus' and 'Tuutsis', from journalistic accounts of the genocide which took place in Rwanda in the spring of 1994, and from documentation about the hate propaganda which was spread prior to the event.

Roy Gigengack

The Symbolic Construction of Street Children.

Boys and girls from Plaza Garibaldi (Mexico City)

This article takes the reader to Plaza Garibaldi, a famous square in Mexico City, where many poor and street poor dwell. The ethnographic material was gathered by extensive field work conducted from 1989 through 1996. It focuses on, and provides a context for, *banda* or street poor youngsters employing 'survival' activities (such as begging, prostitution, petty delinquency and hustling, and also legal pursuits). A highly differentiated reality turns out to lurk behind the concept of 'street children'. On Plaza Garibaldi alone, more than 50 categories of poor children can be distinguished, 15 of which are discussed in more detail. The boundaries between and within the categories are defined by diverging lifesituations and lifestyles, while the (street) poor themselves actively identify and reinforce the differences, expressing them through finely tuned distinctions.

The theoretical insight grasped from the material is that the phenomenon of street children can be understood as 'ordered chaos'. This approach leaves room for power dimensions. Street children as well as many other agents try to impose their order on the youngsters' lifesituations, which may therefore be subject to frequent and rapid changes. Street children also constitute a symbolically constructed bedlam. The meanings of 'street children' are not only shaped by the media or by charity organizati-

ons; neither are they only deconstructed by social scientists. Poor and street poor, adults as well as children, appropriate the concept too, and adhere their own meanings to it. In this orchestrated cacophony, chaotic and paradoxical noise interferes: shifting meanings, blurring and manipulated boundaries, evil that counts as good, and the difference of indifference.

Herman Tak

Antillean Carnival. Modernity, ritual and identity

The history of the Antillean carnival shows that modernisation on the local level is path-dependent and culturally specific. Curacao and Aruba went through a process of industrialisation due to the foundation of oil industries but the development ran a different course on both islands. The difference was directly linked to their starting positions. Curacao was characterized by racial structures that led to the formation of a class structure based on apartheid. The social structure in Aruba was not characterized by apartheid, and on this island a more liberal class structure developed. This resulted in different power chances for people in the lower reaches of society and this in turn was culturally expressed in the rise of street carnival. Aruba followed an extrovert path, public and self-confident. Curacao followed an introvert path, characterized by elitism. Street carnival was introduced during the period of industrialisation but its expansion dates from the times of decolonization and deindustrialisation, transformations which incurred socio-economic problems. Carnival is not only a reaction to these developments but it also tries to regulate them. Carnival became a symbol of national/cultural identity as well as a key ritual in these modern island societies.

Manuela du Bois-Raymond

Dutch Children's Images of Germany and the Germans

A Clingendael-survey shows that Dutch youth predominantly speak critically about Germany and the Germans. The article claims that current attitude research like the Clingendael-survey fails to clarify the motives behind this negative concept. Images about other countries and people are interpreted as social constructs which are negotiated in concrete interaction situations and are therefore not immutable. This epistemological starting-point is converted into several small-scale investigations. Group discussions and other quasi-natural situations among pupils aged 11 to 18 years were organized to find out how they feel about Germany and the Germans. The study confirmed that many negative images circulate among these pupils. At the same time these negative images are modified by ironical commentary or moral statements. Dutch parents, schools and the media are responsible for the existence of this negative attitude towards Germany. They do not provide them with accurate up-to-date information about Germany and the Germans because they allow their feelings about the German occupation during World War II to predominate.