

THE REPRODUCTION OF QUEBEC NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE POST- REFERENDUM CONTEXT

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INTRODUCTION

The construction of a specific collectivity's identity and a sense of belonging to it, and the inscription of this construction in the movement of history, are in no way connected to a necessary and irreversible linear process. To the contrary, these elements issue from two processes: on the one hand, a movement of structuration, a construction arising from an alternation between moments of establishing structures which become the objective conditions of social action, moments which draw upon an acute social awareness of identity, of an 'us'; and, on the other, from moments of slow reproduction, occurring at the rate of daily life, moments which do not draw upon this acute awareness of belonging but upon already existing institutions, and which give the 'daily' its aura of familiar normality. This is because social actors have integrated these social conditions of social action, this 'normality', into their behaviour. The latter moments are functionally related to a sort of continual socio-temporal flow which is both conditioned by existing structures and reproduces them each and every day. The former moments, on the other hand, constitute what might be called the 'bottlenecks' of the history of societies in which social action establishes structures, institutions, and regulatory frameworks. From these moments of structuration

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there results an extended reproduction of existing structures and the social dynamic specific to a given society or a reorientation to a different, even opposed, direction relative to the dominant 'trend' of the socio-historical movement up until that time.

The objective of this paper is to discuss the socio-historico-political stakes of the 1995 referendum and post-referendum context in Quebec. It seeks to show that this context represents a point of rupture between past history and history to be made. In effect, I wish to demonstrate that this conjuncture, like other similar moments in the history of Québécois society, forms an ambivalent socio-historical 'instant' between the extended reproduction of Québécois civil society as a specific society and the institutional contraction or deconstruction of its specificity. The magnitude and rate of both the extended reproduction and the institutional contraction-deconstruction depend upon this society's ability either to set in place the first alternative or to slow the second.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY IN THE REPRODUCTION OF QUEBEC FRANCOPHONE IDENTITY AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF CANADA

Culture gives meaning to social action and identity because it is the basic instrument of a sense of worth and the production of meaning. It is in this latter regard that ideology is linked to it.

As a mode of imagining identity within a collectivity (be it global, part of a continent, a people, a nation, a region, a city, a town, or a socio-professional group), the ideological is simultaneously a witness to and an 'instrument' of the expression of what members of a collectivity are, as specific and similar products of the socio-historical movement and, above all, what they want to be as actors carrying a social meaning. Historically, ideology has had an emancipatory function. This was the case for 'les Canadiens' under the French colonial regime, in which it entrenched itself, grew, and was transmitted via the networks of specific institutions which the French Canadians of Lower Canada created. The Québécois people under the federalist regime continued to create these institutions, and, since the Quiet revolution, Québécois Francophones have expressed an increasing desire to do the same.

In this light, the specificity of Québécois Francophone culture - until now - and Quebec civil society on the one side, and Québécois Francophone

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nationalist ideology on the other, must be viewed as two mutually constitutive realities. The latter derives its objective being and legitimacy from the existence of the former, which is objectified or concretely reproduced through, among other things, social action oriented by the collective subjectivity of the Québécois (largely Francophone) people or by the repression of this subjectivity. Some have termed this dialectic 'the Québécois people's national question', and others 'Quebec's national question.'

SOCIAL BLOCS, CULTURAL HEGEMONY, AND THE STRUCTURAL FRAGMENTATION TREND OF 'CANADIAN UNITY'

Many researchers who study the state agree on the fact that social structure - that is, the articulation of the institutions of socialization, social organization, and social control within an organized whole - is related to a form of political power and nation-state which issues from the process of their construction and attendant social consensus, a construction and consensus in which cultural hegemony plays a central role (Bucci-Glicksmann 1975).

In effect, this is the constitution of a dominant, unitary, and hegemonic way of thinking (Gramsci 1975, pp.147-150) which alone can organize the active consent of individuals in a collectivity and ensure their adherence to a conception of the world, of the universal, that defines what they have in common above and beyond their differences and particularities. In other words, it defines collective identity. It is this cultural hegemony that gives social action, even within the political field, a unified direction, a shared and valued meaning, and allows for the construction of the social blocks responsible for making the histories of peoples and nations. There are three reasons why there is not a unified hegemony in Canada:

Firstly, under the French colonial regime there had already begun a process of social specification which gave rise to a distinct feeling of belonging among the settlers born in the colony (les Canadiens), as well as a particular way of life in which they were confined by the social, cultural, economic, and political organization of New France.

Secondly, following the Conquest in 1763, British colonization was confronted with an already established, specific civil society consisting of a sizeable population - indeed, its numbers were much greater than those of the

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new colonizers - the demographic growth rate of which was very high. This played a fundamental role in the subsequent socio-political structuration of the relations between this society and the new colonizer. Moreover, French-Canadian civil society had already been organized and structured by a set of specific institutions (among others, the family, religion, and schools) providing it with a self-sufficient, internal socio-cultural force. Having already taken root, its cultural hegemony was strong enough to resist assimilation and impose and reproduce its specificity in the political field. It is important to note that in the structuration of social relations of the period, there was a dialectical interaction between the result of the institutional socialization - that is, the production of culturally specific individuals and, therefore, the extended socio-cultural reproduction of a distinct Canadian civil society - and the constitution, which had its effect by way of the cultural hegemony of a unitary socio-political force able to establish its own institutions or to assure their maintenance by the creation of social blocs in order to impose, as much by negotiation as by confrontation, its identificatory will in the political field.

The historical consequences of this structuring interaction can be illustrated if we recall that the 1763 Royal Proclamation by the new metropolis of London foresaw a radical transformation of the institutional system framing French-Canadian society. Among other things, the Royal Proclamation abolished the seigneurial system left over from the French colonization, imposed the application of English laws, required the submission of the Catholic church in Canada to the British royalty, required renunciation of Catholic faith as a condition of entering public service, and made English the official language.

The Royal Proclamation gave rise to a series of struggles which led the British colonizer to realize that conciliation with the conquered population and its ruling class was an objective condition of the exercise of its power (Bourque and Legaré 1979, pp.34-43). The Quebec Act of 1774 institutionally recognized this state of affairs: it reinstated the place of the French civil code and the seigneurial system in French-Canadian society, lifted the coercive measures levied against the Catholic church, abolished the required renunciation of Catholic faith as a condition to entering the public service, etc. In this way, the internal cohesion, social consensus, and unification into a socio-cultural bloc permitted this civil society to preserve the institutions of its extended reproduction as a specific society. This had a major structuring impact on subsequent history.

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These historical facts reveal that it is the force of identity and socio-culture unity which prepares the subjective decision to struggle and massively resist as a bloc. In turn, these struggles and resistances ensure that the objective conditions (the particular social structure and its constitutive institutions) persist through moments of crisis, rupture, and the 'bottlenecks' of history. In this way, the institutions reproducing and producing the dominant trend in the socio-historical movement which specifies French-Canadian civil society are preserved, reproduced, and constructed.

The history of this society is marked by several other moments of rupture-continuity, such as the forced union of Upper and Lower Canada (1840) which led to the federal pact of 1867 by which Quebec Francophone civil society was guaranteed constitutional jurisdiction over a certain number of areas and, therefore, 'parts' of statehood by the same centralizing process that created Canada (1867) in the form it still has today, namely Confederation. Though less than a full, independent state, these parts were at least enough to inscribe in Quebec the unity of the distinct civil society and its identificatory consciousness in the political arena. The question of the impact of the complete or incomplete form of the state was abundantly studied during the 1970s using, among others, the concept of the truncated state.

Thirdly, there was no cultural hegemony over Francophones because the Québécois state (and the civil society inhabiting it) under the federal regime preserved and even extended the specificity and articulation of its institutional system of social reproduction by 'snatching' spaces of autonomy and powers, setting up new institutions, or imposing the sharing of powers and jurisdictions (that is, by the fragmentation of the Canadian state).

This specification process and tendency toward extended reproduction of the particularity and distinctiveness of Québécois civil society, its social structure, institutional system, and therefore the fragmentation of Canada, marks the entire history of the federal regime. In effect, the confrontations between Quebec and Canada over a series of issues (language, education, income tax, conscription during the two world wars, radio and television broadcasting, cable, post-secondary education, manpower training, immigration, the environment, relations among peoples and aboriginal nations, etc) are too numerous and too recurrent for one to think that they are anything but the expression of a structural trend in the relations between Quebec's distinct civil society and Canada.

FRAGMENTATION OF THE ARTICULATION OF THE INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM

Recent actions by the Quebec government with respect to the creation of information highways in Quebec - by, among other things, the creation of an Information Highway Fund, support for the growth of Quebec content on these electronic highways, efforts to foster the use of French in the domains of informatics and computerized telecommunications, etc - are good indicators of the structuring tendencies of social reproduction in Canada and Quebec. Fragmentation has once again been invested by a process of reorganizing public space and the cultural sphere in the wake of technological, economic, and social innovations.

Indeed, the Canadian-Québécois history of the press, cinema, radio, television, cable systems, and telecommunications reveals that each instance of the introduction and spread of new mass media or the reorganization of the articulation of the cultural sphere and the institutional framework of social reproduction has sooner or later been shaped by the structuring tendency characteristic of the history of the Canadian state, namely, fragmentation. The cases of radio and television broadcasting are particularly revealing in this regard.

The effect of this structural fragmentation tendency has been such that each moment of institutionalization has reproduced the question of the specificity of a distinct Quebec civil society by transposing it onto other levels, especially those at which the establishment of institutions apt to reorganize the sphere of social reproduction is problematic. While history has much to do with Canada's regional makeup, particularly with respect to Quebec, that makeup is due above all to its constant actualization via the transformations which have marked the development of socio-cultural institutions. The specificity of Québécois society was thus constructed over time for two reasons; firstly, because of the reproduction of the particularity of the organization of socialization institutions into an institutional system of social reproduction; and secondly because this institutional system still functions to reproduce not only Québécois Francophone language but also its culture, both of which contribute to reproducing the distinct form of their collective social experience, particularly their socio-cultural way of life.

The process of fragmenting the Canadian state is thus not only due to the existence of the Québécois state. It also stems from the structuring weight that Quebec's distinct civil society has on Canada-Quebec relations. The fact

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that radio and television broadcasting, which were originally meant to be centralized, currently form a double system (the one English, the other French) is a very good illustration of this point. There is a counter-fragmentation tendency, Canadian centralization and institutions working to concretize Canada: for example, the Supreme Court of Canada rulings favourable to the federal government in the areas of radio broadcasting on the 1930s, cable in the 1960s, and telecommunications in the early 1970s, and the CRTC, which, since the late 1960s, has been charged with regulating the development of communications in Canada. This counter-tendency, however, is confronted by a specific way of life and particular socio-cultural practices compelling 'federalizing' institutions to recognize the difference of Francophone culture by a number of institutionalizing decisions: specific French-language content quotas and specific licences for Francophone stations and networks in Quebec (the creation of Télévison Quatre Saisons, Super-Écran, Réseau des Sports, etc). Among other things, this allowed the specific institutional organization of Québécois society to reproduce its particularity despite centralizing tendencies and even notwithstanding the action of institutions charged with 'federalizing' Canada.

As such, Canada's 'regional' particularities were to be reproduced by institutions organized into systems in the various provincial spaces, especially in Quebec, rather than melted down and homogenized by a single unified institutional system, an overarching cultural and linguistic domination. This process explains why individuals in Quebec cannot be produced as subjects carrying a distinct and specific socio-cultural meaning within Canadian 'unity.' This at least is especially true for Québécois Francophones. It is thus by means of institutions - the role of which is to elaborate and transmit culture and identity, to socialize within a given habitus (Bourdieu 1979, pp.111-2 and 122; Goldman 1977; Lacroix 1992, pp.47-57 and 77-123) and to shape individual consciousness, thereby constituting them as specific social subjects belonging to a particular way of life and singular identity - that the Québécois people, especially Francophones, are produced as different and distinct even within the Canadian federation. The historical role of institutions, particularly those responsible for socialization, has thus been to ensure and reinsure the reproduction of Quebec's specific civil society in the ebb and flow of socio-historical movement, this from one moment of rupture to the next, and from one long period of slow social action to the next.

What was said earlier about the dialectic between the objective conditions created by the institutional system and the subjective conditions in moments

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of rupture (in the 'bottlenecks' of history) entails that collectivities (nations) are, and remain, alive and contribute to making the history (their own and humanity's) of the world. To be sure, they do so not only by way of their institutions which reproduce themselves day after day, but also, and above all, by their struggles, their unity, and, more precisely, their ability to form social and cultural blocs (consensus) at certain historical moments, which alone have the ability to establish these institutions and construct the state's social structure. Whether these collective subjectivities are victorious or not is not the most important aspect of the socio-historical movement. What matters is whether they lead to the creation of institutions that, sooner or later, enrich and re-enforce the specificity of the institutional system framing civil society, the collectivity's social way of being, and, therefore, whether they reproduce the specificity of civil society.

FRAGMENTATION IN AND BY THE FEDERALIZING INSTITUTIONALIZATION, INCLUDING ACTION IN THE POLITICAL FIELD

The creation of autonomist political parties in Quebec also significantly contributed to the fragmentation of Canadian 'unity,' particularly during moments of rupture. From time to time, these political parties have been quite productive and have resulted in the creation of major institutions which have altered the equilibrium of slow reproduction, and which have extended the distinctiveness and specificity of Quebec civil society within Canadian 'unity.' Examples of such institutions include the Charte de la langue française (Parti Québécois), the Caisse de dépôt et de placement, Quebec consulates (*délégations générales*) in foreign countries, the repatriation of income tax points (Jean Lesage's Liberals), Quebec income tax, and Radio-Québec.

These autonomist or sovereignist political enterprises have occurred so often throughout history that there seems little doubt that they stem from something of a structural or objective nature. This observation is confirmed when we consider that at certain moments the fragmentation tendency also traverses, in a more or less pronounced way, other political parties, be they federal or provincial.

In this regard, Brian Mulroney's Conservative party, the election of which was due largely to support from Québécois sovereignists, and which attempted a reconciliation between Canada and Quebec that ended with the

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failure of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Agreements, was dramatically confronted with this fragmentation. This initially resulted in the creation of the Bloc Québécois by Lucien Bouchard, which attracted some dissident members of Quebec's federal Liberal Party. Subsequently, the massive electoral support of Quebec Francophone voters for the Bloc Québécois allowed it to form the official opposition in Ottawa, which placed the fragmentation tendency into the very heart of the central state.

Quebec's provincial political parties have also been significantly marked by this fragmentation. Under the leadership of René Lévesque, the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association (MSA) issued from the ranks of Jean Lesage's Liberal Party. It later gave rise to the Parti Québécois which took power in 1976, lost it in 1985, and regained it in 1994.

And, only a few years ago, Robert Bourassa's Liberal Party found itself caught between its pro-federalist vision and a nationalist fervour which resulted in the rejection of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Agreements by the rest of the Canadian population. Bourassa was forced to promise to hold a referendum on the question of sovereignty. Notwithstanding the unanimous adoption of a Bill to this effect by the Quebec national Assembly, Bourassa temporized. He created the Bélanger-Campeau Commission to study the powers required by Quebec. Within the Party itself, a committee was set up to propose a position in this regard, which yielded the Allaire Report. The ensuing confrontation between Quebec Liberal Party federalists and 'nationalists' led to the expulsion of Mario Dumont, president of the party's youth wing. It also led to the creation, by Dumont and Jean Allaire (author of the Allaire Report) of the Action Démocratique du Québec, a new political party. This latter played a significant role in the 1994 electoral defeat of Daniel Johnson, Bourassa's successor.

The referendum alliance of the Bloc Québécois, the Parti Québécois, and the Action Démocratique du Québec with respect to a common sovereigntist-associationist (with Canada) platform reveals that the ambivalence between Canada and Quebec remains an objective condition of subjective action in the Quebec political arena. It also reveals that the search for socio-culturo-political unity, such as I defined these moments of unity above, is equally an objective condition of Québécois political action, especially for Québécois Francophones. If one evaluates this alliance in the light of history, it suggests that the real 'question' raised by the 1995 referendum conjuncture concerns the ability of Québécois civil society to generate a social bloc or at least a

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unitary identity strong and large enough to impose a vision of the Quebec population's history and collective destiny.

HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE STRUCTURING WEIGHT OF THE QUÉBÉCOIS FRANCOPHONE COLLECTIVITY

In order to understand the influence of Québécois civil society's structuring weight on the form of power in Canada, it is necessary simultaneously to take into account the three above-mentioned reasons explaining why there is not a unified hegemony in Canada, at least as far as Québécois Francophones are concerned. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the socio-historical succession of interactions between the objective conditions of social action - the institutional framework and historical depth of the Québécois Francophone way of life - and the periodic outgrowth of collective subjectivities tending to reproduce in an extended way the specificity of the objective conditions of social action.

It is also important to remember just what the culture of a collectivity is: a set of elements unifying those individuals who share it, which reminds them of what they are as a collectivity with a history, gives meaning to their socio-cultural and geographic situation, fosters the sharing of a way of imagining how things could be better, the emancipation of these individuals, and their integration or participation in social progress. This implies that while a Canadian cultural hegemony has not taken hold over Québécois Francophones, such moments of socio-cultural unity have taken place in Quebec. It must be pointed out, however, that in Quebec these socio-cultural units have never, on a massive scale, included the Allophone and Anglophone communities, nor for that matter most of the aboriginal peoples. This constitutes an objective hurdle to the broadening of any future autonomist social bloc in Quebec civil society (bearing not only on the Allophone and Anglophone communities, but also on many social groups with very difficult living conditions: for example, a good percentage of women and youths significantly affected by poverty and a lack of recognition and legitimacy). It also raises the issue of inclusion in identificatory reality, in the definition of a universal which transcends differences, and in the conception of a collective actor demanding social progress. Lastly, it is also directly related to the form of Québécois Francophone nationalism, with the ethno-social definition of the collective subject who is as much the author as the 'beneficiary' of the social project and an imagined, formulated, and demanded progress.

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The problematic of the relations between Quebec's Francophone population and its Anglophone and Allophone populations is not limited to relations between a majority population and other cultures. It also involves relations among the socio-cultural groups of a civil society in which there is currently a refusal, a rejection, and a systemic cultural blockage of the vitality of the institutions framing the socio-cultural life of the Québécois Francophone majority (contrary to what certain authors such as Mordecai Richler would have us believe (Richler 1992: for this debate, see: Larose 1987, 1994; Déglise 1992; Khouri 1995; Agenot 1992, 1996; Beauchemin 1995)). It seems clear that this situation has a dualizing effect on Quebec's institutional system and civil society. This refusal to become an integrated part of the identificatory reality of Québécois Francophones has crystallized into a structural counter-tendency. To the extent that it challenges the latter group's ability to broaden the social pressure block, this situation not only threatens the Québécois Francophone collectivity's ability to ensure its extended reproduction rather than merely its 'vegetative' reproduction, but it also condemns the two camps to historical immobility, as well as slowing, if not blocking, the broadening of the social blocs making demands for socio-economic progress, the democratization of its consequences, and the extension of democracy itself.

It is important to mention that the delicate issue of inclusion and the desire for inclusion in the conception and reality of identity concerns not only the Québécois majority collectivity vis-a-vis Allophone and Anglophone minorities. It also concerns the latter groups. Present and past non-integration is not the result of a unilateral desire on the part of the Francophone majority. Rather, the socio-cultural-political relation in which the refusal of the Anglophone and Allophone communities to recognize the socio-historical legitimacy of the Quebec Francophone collectivity and to include themselves in and identify with this reality is much more systemic and widespread than the refusal of Québécois Francophones to include the presence and contribution of the Anglophone and Allophone communities in their identificatory reality.

This is borne out by the guerilla tactics adopted by many Anglophone and Allophone organizations and opinion leaders against the legislative initiatives of various Quebec governments since the 1960s with respect to language. Also attesting to this is the unanimity of their vote against the Francophone majority position during elections held in Quebec and Canada over the past twenty-five years (Drouilly 1993). Concerning this issue, on 2 March 1995, Pierre Foglia, a columnist for **La Presse**, wrote:

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But when 97% of this province's non-Francophones unanimously and systematically vote against sovereignty, against the Parti Québécois, against laws intended to protect your language and your culture, it is less clear what meaning we should attach to this vote so completely Rhodesian that it is a joke ... there is something worth our attention in the fact that 97% of non-Francophones voted with the same vigour against Bill 101 [redesignating French as the official language of Quebec], against sovereignty, against anything 'Quebecois'. This is not void of significance ... One is compelled to wonder about this unanimity so typically colonialist. 97% is no longer a vote in any democratic society. It is an act of aggression, a blunt rejection, the excessive focussing of a particular sentiment by a particular community; but isn't this what we typically refer to as 'racism'?

The very sharp divide separating the Francophone majority collectivity and the Allophone and Anglophone communities during the referendum on 30 October 1995 confirms this dualism. Indeed, though the referendum vote was extremely close (49.6% for the Yes side, 50.4% for the No side, a difference of 52,448 votes out of 4,756,326, in a turnout of 93.5%), a detailed analysis of the vote reveals that the sovereignty option was supported by 60% of the Francophone population, while barely 5% of the non-Francophone population voted for this option. This led Drouilly, a specialist in electoral sociology, to remark that 'the almost unanimous minority vote was the inverse of a very clear majority in favour of the Yes on the part of the majority population.' (Drouilly 1995). In his view, the unanimity of non-Francophone voters is the expression of a very clear, systematic refusal of French Quebec contributing to the ethnicization of relations between Francophones and non-Francophones. For other observers, the referendum vote illustrates once again, as if this were needed, the failure to integrate immigrants into Québécois Francophone society (Léger 1995), even though many members of Allophone communities support the sovereignty option and identify with the Francophone majority. For example, one article in **Le Devoir** cited Juan José Fernandez, a spokesperson for the Comité des Latino-Américains pour le Oui, who described the results of the 30 October vote as a 'political victory' and claimed that 'we also closer than ever to attaining the goal'. See also Chau-Tran (1995).

These facts were quite maladroitly raised on the day of the referendum vote by the then-Premier Jacques Parizeau, who attributed the narrow defeat of the sovereigntist camp to financial interests and the obstinacy of the ethnic communities' vote. This declaration provoked a wave of protest, which,

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above all, gave licence to those who associate Québécois, particularly Francophone, demands for the recognition of the Quebec nation with racism and ethnocentricity to read the election result as further justification of this claim and the legitimacy of its condemnation (Décarie 1995).

But this was not the referendum's most important outcome. Above and beyond the very close vote, it was the massive mobilization of Quebec Francophones that merits attention (Serre 1996). All of a sudden the Québécois identificatory will became an unavoidable fact, something which provoked a veritable shock wave in English-Canadian public opinion. There was even some talk of sending in the army if Quebec opted for sovereignty (**Journal de Montréal** 8 December 1995, p.15). More than anything else, however, this shock wave gave rise to a threat to 'partition' Quebec territory (Des Rivières 1996). One of the most radical expressions of this threat was voiced by the editor in chief of the **Financial Post**:

If Bouchard does not back off and act like a good citizen, give them a West Bank, but not Montreal or the other vast portions that want to remain a part of Canada. Done properly, partition could prove to be beneficial. It would give a homeland to ethnocentric Francophones who want a racially pure homeland based on socialist values.
(Francis 1996).

Fortunately for democracy and social peace, this intransigence has been challenged by many intellectuals and spokespersons for private as well as public Anglophone and Allophone community organizations (see the collective 'Lettre aux francophones du Québec. Les ténors de la partition territoriale ne font qu'attiser l'intolérance linguistique et culturelle', **Le Devoir**, 7 February 1996; also Paquin (1996) and McMillan (1996)). This conciliatory attitude adopted by a part of the Anglophone and Allophone intelligentsia indicates that democratic debate is still possible and no doubt encourages the calm and moderation shown by the Francophone population vis-a-vis this rhetorical violence. Moreover, the seeds are being sown for a debate, based, paradoxically enough, on the referendum vote itself, which could very well see civic nationalism go from a wish to a fact (Micone 1995; Sciortino 1995):

... despite last Monday's vote, sovereignists must set aside their legitimate bitterness and, moreover, reach out to their Anglophone and Allophone fellow citizens, continuing to invite them to share in the building of a country. Without them, Quebec would no longer be what it

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is.
(Drouilly 1995).

THE RE-DEFINITION OF NATIONALISM AND THE 'DE-ETHNICIZATION' OF QUÉBÉCOIS IDENTITY AS AN OBJECTIVE CONDITION OF POLITICAL ACTION

In the wake of the 1995 referendum, it has become more important than ever before to recognize the fact that Quebec civil society, like any society in which there is a large number of immigrants, is an ethno-culturally composite entity. This reality constitutes a whole that is greater than that of the Québécois Francophone collectivity. As such, the composite, diversified nature of Québécois civil society and the socio-historico-political weight of the Francophone majority are the objective conditions of social subjective action in Quebec, including within the political arena, for Francophones and non-Francophones alike.

While strongly marked by the weight of the majority culture and experience through the French language, general social life in this society is also marked by other linguistic codes, particularly in the Montreal area, and by many other elements difficult to identify and define, but which are nonetheless determining elements in belonging to a civil socio-temporal space. Among these elements one can mention ways of life, life styles, living habits, socio-cultural practices, culinary, sartorial and aesthetic tastes and preferences, relationships to time and the rhythm of social life, closing times for certain venues, the quality of certain services, etc. In sum, what at first glance appears to be an undifferentiated mass, nevertheless gives concrete form to what one might refer to as the quality or the 'habits' of the specific daily life of a particular geo-socio-cultural-political living space.

These few remarks should be enough to make us realize that the heritage of Québécois civil society, while it is largely due to the structuring weight of the Francophone collectivity, does not only stem from this collectivity, particularly in the Montreal area, no more than is the collective destiny in the Québécois space reserved for it. This is to say that many other citizens living in this society also identify with the existing quality and style of life. These remarks should also lead us to realize that both progress and the quality of life are increasingly due to a framework of life which has the potential of becoming richer in the wake of the internationalization of the flow of goods and individuals and cultural exchanges and borrowing. This 'works on'

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identificatory realities and objectively conditions subjective action in the arenas of civil society and politics.

There is therefore a need for a redefinition of identity within Québécois civil society, a redefinition based more on a shared, diversified experience than on the majority and minority ethnic groups comprising it; for even in the issue of identity, its ethnic component cannot be denied (Salée 1995; Bouchard 1995). For this to be possible, however, a number of conditions must be brought together. Drawing up the list of these conditions in this article would take up too much space. Let me only mention the most important of these conditions: the mutual recognition of differences and their respective legitimacy, the will to situate the debate with a view to transcending differences and democratically sharing social progress, and the fierce determination to keep this debate in a democratic discussion space. This latter point is a matter of some urgency. Firstly, the referendum results have pushed the Québécois tendency toward affirming identity-belonging, particularly among Francophones, to such a degree that it no longer seems possible to stop it (Resnick 1995; Francoeur 1995; Nadeau et al 1995). And secondly, the vote confirms the refusal of this project by Canada's Anglophone and Allophone communities, that this refusal seems to be taking the form of intransigence, delaying tactics, and panic-driven behaviour, the latter particularly on the part of federalist politicians in Ottawa.

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