QUEBEC IMMIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND INTERCULTURALISM POLICY: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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QUEBEC'S INVOLVEMENT IN IMMIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The motivation of modern Quebec to control its immigration, and especially to ensure the integration of immigrants to a societal project reflective of its trajectories and values, where both the French language and interculturalism are central, is the result of a number of factors, some of which will seem more obvious than others to an Indian public. To begin, it should be noted that the *Québécois* identity, and the accompanying territorial nationalism, is a relatively recent concept (Juteau, 2000). From the British conquest in 1759 up until the so-called *Quiet Revolution* of the sixties, French-Canadians across Canada, and even the North-American Diaspora, viewed themselves as a single minority people, based on ethnic nationalism. In contrast, in the collective consciousness, the other components of the Quebec society (*i.e.* Anglophones and Allophones, each accounting for approximately 8% of the province's population) were clearly part of another group – called the *English*, *English-Canadians*, or *Others*, as the case may be. The question of "French-Canadians" still elicits vigorous debate in Quebec to this day. While for some this categorization appears antiquated, and based on ethnic relations wherein Francophones in Quebec were economically dominated, for others the category of French-Canadians instead permits us to define a culturally and historically specific community. For the latter group, this notion of "French-Canadians" allows us to distinguish it from the broader, more inclusive term "Quebecer." Indeed, the government of Quebec officially uses the term "Quebecer" to define all people living within the province. It is not surprising, therefore, that an immigrant selection carried out exclusively by the Federal Government, then massively Anglophone, and the fact that immigrants blended almost exclusively into the Anglophone community, were not viewed as a social problem before the end of the sixties.

The increased importance of immigration as an issue of public debate was also intimately linked to the demo-linguistic issue. Given the low fertility rate of the Francophone community, as is the case in most Western societies, the integration of immigrants into one community or the other may well determine the linguistic future of Montreal. Although Montreal is the second largest French-speaking city in the world, Francophones (individuals having French as a mother tongue) only account for a little less than 60% of the population (whereas they make up 80% of the province's total population) (Statistics Canada, 2012a). It is worth noting that, like the notion of French-Canadians, the term Francophone is also subject to interpretation. For the purposes of this article, we will use the notion of "First Official Language Spoken" and consider that the term Francophone refers to people who learned French as their first language and continue to understand and use it (Statistics Canada, 2012b). According to Statistics Canada's latest census, the percentage of Quebec's population that claims French as the language most often spoken at home decreased from 82.7% in 2006 to 82.5% in 2011.

As for Quebecers who speak exclusively French at home, the percentage decreased from 75.1% in 2006 to 72.8% in 2011. In Montreal, where lives the majority of people who do not have French as a mother tongue, 16.5% claim to usually speak a language other than French or English at home. It also bears mentioning that in the Quebec context, these Allophones, as they are termed, are more likely to speak French at home than in the two previous censuses (24% in 2011 versus 23% in 2006, and 21% in 2011) (Statistics Canada, 2012a).

With respect to this last challenge, the decision to open up, rather than to react with a defensive reflex, seems influenced by the specificity of the Canadian and North-American contexts (Mc Andrew & Trinh, 2005). Indeed, even though our societies are not free from intolerance or racist lapses, the conviction that immigration represents a key economic, cultural and social contribution to the development of any society marks the public discourse and the collective consciousness. What is more, the governments of Quebec and Canada have chosen an approach based on the professional skills of prospective immigrants. In the Quebec context, however, the selection of skilled immigrants – approximately 75% of all immigration for 2012 (MICC, 2012) – also includes an evaluation of their knowledge of French that does not automatically lead to the rejection of a candidate if he/she can accumulate points with regard to other criteria comprised in the selection grid.

Overall, immigration and integration have represented over the last twenty years an area of peaceful collaboration between the Federal and Provincial governments, even when a sovereignist party was in power in Quebec. In contrast, for example, with the question of international representation of Quebec, that has fuelled more controversy (Balthazar, 2004). Multiculturalism and interculturalism, *i.e.*, what happens, in the long run, with Canadian/Quebec identities when newcomers influence and change the social fabric, has proved more contentious. However, as we will see later, although differences exist in this regard, tensions there reflect mainly competing nation building processes or, at least, a fight for primary/secondary allegiance among newcomers. Before delving into this issue, it is useful to review the main characteristics of the immigration, integration, and interculturalism approaches developed in Quebec over the last thirty years.

THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE SELECTION AND INTEGRATION POLICY

Although the Quebec Government has been active in these fields since the seventies, it is only with the Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration, *Let's Build Quebec Together* of 1990 (MCCI, 1990), that it clearly set out its main normative framework, goals and action perspectives in this regard. More specifically, the Selection Policy is based on two major objectives:

- A selection of immigrants that contributes to the development of a Francophone society and a thriving economy, in keeping with Quebec's values of family reunification and international solidarity.
- A gradual increase in immigration levels according to the needs of the host society.

The level and makeup of the migratory movement which, since 2005, has reached an average of approximately 49,000 individuals a year (for a total population of 8,054,756 in 2012) (MICC, 2012), are defined following a public consultation process, through a balancing of demographic, economic, linguistic and humanitarian objectives. It should be noted, in this regard, that, although prior knowledge of French increases the chances of selection, this criterion is not eliminatory, in recognition of the fact that many Allophone and even Anglophone immigrants are likely, over the longer term, to contribute to the vitality and the Francophone character of Quebec. Nonetheless, knowledge of French, or the prospective immigrant's potential to learn the language, remains an important element in the selection policy for skilled immigrants. As a result, today the top five countries of origin for immigrants to Quebec are, in order, France (9.5% of total immigration), China (9.1%), Haiti (8.7%), Morocco (7.1%) and Algeria (6.5%). These five countries account for a total of 31.7% of immigrants who arrived in 2012 and all except Chinese are Francophones or at least francotropes (MICC, 2012).

Today, the Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities pursues a wide variety of objectives, both through programs managed directly by the Department as well as in collaboration with community organizations active in Quebec, and as such it is impossible to provide the reader with a full assessment of these initiatives. It would be naïve, however, to present the actions of the Quebec Government as a panacea. Even though Quebec society has now clearly moved beyond the obstacles related to its specificity, the problems experienced today are more in line with those arising elsewhere in Canada or in other immigration countries. This is specifically true with regard to the economic performance indicators for the immigrant population (Picot & Hou, 2003) and with problems related to religious diversity (Bouchard & Taylor 2008). Here, the so-called reasonable accommodation crisis of 2006, and the creation of the "Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles" which followed, is a good example of how, to this day, religious diversity may give rise to vigorous debate and create divisions among the population of Quebec. In this regard, the evolution of debates within Quebec society over the last thirty years is largely in line with international trends, although these debates sometimes appear quite specific in the Canadian context, as we will see in the next part of this article.

INTERCULTURALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM: COMMON TRENDS AND DIFFERENCES

Despite a dichotomous opposition between multiculturalism and interculturalism, when one focuses on actual programs and practices instead of political rhetoric, it is clear that Canadian multiculturalism and Quebec interculturalism have much in common (Juteau *et al.*, 1998). They share a high commitment to diversity, considered a major feature of collective identity, as well as a definition of equality that goes further than the formal definition, to include equity (both governments recognize systemic or indirect discrimination and have adopted compensatory and equalization programs). Both policies also clearly value the Human Rights perspective (whether the *Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*) as the main framework for managing diversity.

Nevertheless, two relatively important differences are worth mentioning, even if they may be more questions of stress than radical opposition. On the one hand, it is clear that in Quebec there has been a stronger preoccupation with the balancing of rights, especially when they are potentially conflictual, such as equality between men and women and religious liberty, both at the level of policy documents and of public debate. This tendency has meant, paradoxically, that interculturalism has overall been a more liberal and less communitarian policy, especially in its application, than its Canadian multicultural counterpart. Obviously, this does not mean that the rest of Canada is indifferent to the issue of the potential danger of cultural relativism, nor that Canadian multiculturalism does not have any legal or normative limits. But clearly, it is not an issue that figures very highly either in official statements or in political discourse there. This difference may also explain why the Quebec policy has been credited, especially by some critics of multiculturalism (Bissoondath, 1994), with fostering a better sense of security among the majority, or, at least, has not been criticized as much as multiculturalism for its potential negative impact on social cohesion. On the other hand, because it has been so focused until very recently on linguistic and cultural issues, Quebec interculturalism has given a weaker recognition to the persistence of interethnic inequalities and to the role of racism in this regard, both at the level of political rhetoric and of actions initiated or supported by the Government. It is difficult, however, to state whether this trend results from the limits of the normative conception put forward or from the reality of ethnic relations in Quebec, where, until relatively recently, Francophones were still among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Whatever their real or putative differences, multiculturalism and interculturalism share common weaknesses and have faced some similar criticisms. Among these weaknesses, they share the incapacity to reduce the deep, entrenched reality of interethnic inequalities, especially among visible minorities or immigrants from developing countries. And by recognizing diversity within the paradigm of democratic values, they both are actually promoting *soft assimilationism* much more than *radical pluralism* (Juteau *et al.*, 1998). This characteristic may explain why religious diversity in both contexts, but especially in Quebec, where the stress on democratic limits to diversity has been more pronounced, has raised so many visible and vocal controversies.

CONCLUSION

As can be seen from this brief overview, over the last thirty years, Quebec has developed its own approach in matters of immigration, integration and intercultural relations. Although not always different from their Canadian counterparts, the actions carried within this framework have a distinct character, both in their conception and in their strengths and weaknesses. The question we wish to raise in our concluding remarks, which should be relevant to the Indian debate in the area of pluralism, is that of the role that complementary, and sometimes contradictory policies of diversity management, coexisting within the same territory, can play in insuring that specific challenges experienced by non-dominant national minorities may be accommodated. Indeed, it is clear that, in this regard, the Canadian Government has been rather daring, at least when assessed from an international perspective. It did actively support the involvement of Quebec in immigration and integration and cooperated with it heartily in these domains, while allowing, or at least not actively fighting, Quebec's initiative to develop its own model of multiculturalism, *i.e.* interculturalism.

What impact has this relative openness had on Canadian society?

1) First, it is clear that over the last thirty years diversity, especially ethno-cultural diversity originating from migration, which used to be considered with fear, and the survival of a redefined minority Francophone culture in Canada, have come to be considered as complementary and not antithetical. Although pockets of resistance to the pluralistic transformation of the province still exist in Quebec, overall the analysis of both public policy and opinion polls clearly shows that this has been a success, or at least that the reality is now not very different in Quebec than in simpler majority-dominated immigration societies.
2) Although not fully founded as we have shown above, the myth of Quebec having a specific approach in terms

of integration and inter-culturalism has probably contributed to that feeling of cultural security. There is now a sense among Quebecers that they own the diversity management policy: they love to believe that their model is better than the one of English Canada (Mc Andrew, 1996). Whether this is true or not, it has certainly contributed to bringing them much closer to the rest of Canada through a pluralistic identity redefinition. Some could argue that cultural security is not yet dominant in Quebec, but our analysis of the mutation of public debate over twenty years seems to, at least, indicate that the traditional cultural insecurity, based on a *besieged ethnic group mentality* is slowly, for better or worse, being replaced by an insertion into the matrix of post-modern cultural insecurity, shared with many other nations across the world.

3) The fact that Quebec has been relatively successful in integrating newcomers in a common Francophone but pluralistic culture also means that it has come closer to the identity model prevailing in the rest of Canada. There is now, especially in Montreal, a greater degree of distinction between sharing a language and sharing a culture, as well as a more instrumental relation with the French language, as a tool for civic participation, at least among minority groups.
4) However, before Indian policy-makers infer from these conclusions any indication regarding the positive impact of a decentralization of policies on regional conflicts, it is important to keep in mind that this coming closer of cultures, has not meant that *Québécois* feel any more or any less Canadian. The level of support for autonomist movements has not widely changed these last thirty years, and, while first generation immigrants tended to have a stronger Canadian national identity and commitment, there are some indications that, due to political socialization within the school system, their offspring are evenly split, as are *"old stock"* Francophone Quebecers, on the political future of the Province. Thus, as often exemplified by international studies on the construction of ethnic relations (Schermerhorn, 1970), greater similarity of cultural markers has not meant lesser salience of ethnic boundaries, at least in the short run. But neither does this constitute compelling evidence for the reverse argument *i.e.* that insuring more sensitivity to the specific challenges experienced by the Francophone minority in the area of immigration, integration and diversity management has, in any way, contributed to centrifugal tendencies in Canada.

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LA POLITIQUE QUÉBÉCOISE D'IMMIGRATION, D'INTÉGRATION ET D'INTERCULTURALISME: UN BILAN CRITIQUE

La seule lecture du titre de cet article devrait piquer la curiosité du lecteur. Considérant que d'ordinaire ce sont les États souverains qui décident des politiques d'immigration et orientent les programmes qui en découlent, il peut sembler en effet particulier de faire mention d'un quelconque rôle du gouvernement du Québec, un gouvernement provincial faut-il le rappeler, dans l'élaboration et la gestion de politiques migratoires et d'intégration des immigrants. Toutefois, le titre de cet article prend tout son sens si on considère la nature même de la fédération canadienne. Outre les considérations d'ordre constitutionnel, il faut également revoir ce qui, historiquement, a permis aux différents gouvernements du Québec qui se sont succédé depuis les années 1970 d'accroître leur mainmise sur la gestion de l'immigration et des domaines afférents. Influencés par le désir d'assurer la pérennité du fait français au Québec, les divers efforts de la part des gouvernements québécois pour accroître leur pouvoir en matière de sélection et d'intégration des immigrants ont, pour ainsi dire, porté fruits depuis les 40 dernières années. C'est en effet depuis la Révolution tranquille de 1960-1970, qui initie notamment des débats au niveau des référents identitaires au Québec, que l'idée que cette province obtienne plus de contrôle sur son immigration a fait son chemin.

Alors que la notion même de « Québécois » était utilisée de manière très ponctuelle avant les années 1960, celle de Canadien-français était communément utilisée et servait à décrire une communauté d'histoire et de culture pan canadienne. Ce n'est qu'à partir des années 1960 que la catégorie « Québécois » s'est imposée et que la question migratoire est devenue un réel enjeu de société. Qui plus est, il faudra attendre à la fin des années 1960 pour que la communauté anglophone et les allophones du Québec ne deviennent ce que l'on pourrait considérer comme un « problème social ». Il faut dire également que l'inscription de la nouvelle dynamique ethnique entre les Québécois, les anglophones et les allophones est largement influencée par les débats démo-linguistiques. Ainsi, et en considérant le bas taux de fertilité qui caractérise le Québec post-révolution tranquille, l'intégration des immigrants au sein de la communauté québécoise francophone ou de la communauté anglophone dans la région montréalaise, où plus de 80% des nouveaux arrivants s'installent, va structurer cette nouvelle dynamique ethnique. De cette dynamique naît la conviction que les immigrants contribuent au développement économique, culturel et social du Québec.

Aujourd'hui, tant le gouvernement du Québec que celui du Canada orientent leurs efforts de recrutement vers les immigrants qualifiés, ceux qui possèdent des compétences professionnelles en lien avec les demandes du marché du travail et qui, pour le contexte québécois, possèdent également des compétences suffisantes en français. Ces deux aspects, compétences professionnelles et compétences linguistiques, vont peu à peu avoir des effets structurants sur les flux migratoires. À un point tel qu'en 2012, quatre des principaux pays d'origine des immigrants s'installant au Québec appartiennent soit à la francophonie (France) ou à des régions du monde où l'utilisation du français demeure importante (Maghreb, Haïti).

Les acquis en matière de sélection et d'intégration des immigrants a permis au Gouvernement du Québec de se doter de compétences et d'une expertise comme on en retrouve peu de la part d'un gouvernement provincial. Toutefois, cela ne garantit pas que ces compétences et cette expertise soient la panacée à tous les problèmes vécus par les immigrants. Le Québec n'échappe pas aux problèmes liés à l'intégration socio-économique des immigrants et des minorités ethniques de manière générale, comme nous le rappelle les problèmes d'insertion au marché de l'emploi, saillant chez les membres des minorités visibles, ou les problèmes entourant l'acceptation de la diversité religieuse illustrés par la Commission de consultation sur les pratiques d'accommodement reliées aux différences culturelles en 2006.

En matière de politique d'immigration et d'intégration, les débats sont nombreux et portent pour beaucoup sur la comparaison entre le multiculturalisme canadien et l'interculturalisme québécois. Dans ce débat, où il est parfois difficile de faire la distinction entre la rhétorique et les contenus des programmes et pratiques, le multiculturalisme et l'interculturalisme ont beaucoup en commun. Ils sont tous deux dédiés à la diversité et à la notion d'égalité et ils reconnaissent l'existence et la persistance de la discrimination directe et indirecte. Qui plus est, tous deux valorisent pleinement les droits de la personne à travers deux Chartes, l'une québécoise et l'autre canadienne. Toutefois, on ne saurait passer sous silence deux différences importantes entre le multiculturalisme et l'interculturalisme. Dans un premier temps, il existe au Québec des préoccupations évidentes quant à l'équilibre des droits, spécialement

ceux qui ont trait à l'égalité des femmes et aux libertés religieuses. Cela témoigne, paradoxalement, que l'interculturalisme est une politique, dans l'ensemble, plus libérale que communautarienne, surtout si on la compare avec le multiculturalisme canadien. Dans un deuxième temps, parce que jusqu'à récemment il mettait l'accent sur les enjeux linguistiques et culturels, l'interculturalisme est plus réticent à reconnaître la persistance des inégalités inter ethniques et le rôle du racisme à cet égard. Il est difficile d'évaluer si cette tendance au sein de l'interculturalisme québécois témoigne des limites normatives de cette politique ou si cela résulte de conditions historiques spécifiques au sein desquelles les Québécois francophones ont été, pendant des siècles, l'un des groupes les plus défavorisés au niveau social et surtout économique. Cet article montre comment et dans quelles conditions le Québec a, depuis plus de 40 ans, développé une approche qui lui est propre en matière d'immigration, d'intégration et de relations interculturelles. En guise de conclusion, nous aimerions insister sur un aspect pertinent pour les débats qui ont cours dans le contexte indien. Cela a trait à l'importance du rôle que des politiques de gestion de la diversité, coexistant sur un même territoire et pouvant être parfois complémentaires et d'autres fois contradictoires, ont dans l'assurance que les défis vécus par les minorités nationales non-dominantes peuvent être accommodées.