IDENTITY: MYTHS ABOUT PRESERVING OUR COMMON VALUES AND PROTECTING THE COMMON LANGUAGE IN QUEBEC

DO IMMIGRANTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECLINE OF FRENCH IN QUEBEC AND POSE A THREAT TO OUR VALUES?

THE MYTH OF THE INVASION

The myth of migration invasion might be expressed as follows: international migration is reaching unprecedented proportions. This myth is based on the idea that developed or northern countries are invaded by "hordes" of migrants. This notion is closely associated with the fear of a threat, whether at the level of identity or the economy. Yet the figures far from support this perception.

The United Nations Population Division regularly publishes statistics on persons registered in a country other than their country of birth. The notion of migrant implies not only the crossing of an international border, but also settlement in another country. According to data provided by the United Nations, the proportion of people living outside their place of birth was just over 3% in 2015: 97% of the world's population lives "at home". So, we're a long way from an invasion.

Another facet of this myth is that international migration has increased considerably in recent years. However, according to the same data, since the 1990s, the proportion of migrants (people born in another country) has remained relatively stable, still around 3%. For developed countries, this proportion increased from 7% to 11% between 1990 and 2015. This is a relatively small increase, which shows that nearly 90% of people in developed countries are "native". That's not my definition of an invasion.

If we consider the case of Europe, where anti-immigration ideologies are rampant, especially, but not only, by far-right parties, we might expect to find that there has indeed been massive migration. However, it can be seen that since the 1990s, the evolution of the proportion of "foreigners" in Europe has been comparable to that of all developed countries. In France, where the misconception of mass migration was at the heart of the National Front's political arguments during the last presidential campaign, figures indicate that those who are French by birth were still at the 90% mark in 2011, a proportion that has remained almost unchanged since the 1920s.

The highest increase was in North America, from 10% to 15% between 1990 and 2015. Admittedly, even if 15% (in 2015) still remains a relatively small proportion, one might think that it was this increase that put immigration at the heart of the last American presidential campaign. In fact, it is Mexicans who have been singled out most often, even though the net migration (inflows minus outflows) between the United States and Mexico has reversed in recent years: more Mexicans are currently leaving the United States than are entering it.

One might think that the concern of governments and public opinion is rather centred on the idea of an invasion of irregular migrants. However, here again, many studies show that the notion of invasion does not correspond to statistical reality. Irregular

migrants constitute a very small proportion of the population despite a discourse that constantly refers to the need to address this category of migrants. In addition, it should be mentioned that the vast majority of irregular migrants have entered countries with a regular status. In this context, it is difficult to see how the construction of walls, real or virtual, and the investment of billions of dollars in border control technology to address a phenomenon that is "internal" to countries can be justified.

Finally, with regard to refugees, the figures here too are sobering. The common perception is that the world is facing a rising tide of people fleeing countries at war and that the situation can potentially become out of control. Yet, figures show that refugees constitute a small proportion of the world's population (0.3%) and only 10% of international migration. That doesn't mean there's no problem. This means that the refugee issue is not a statistical problem in itself, but rather a matter of little respect for the Geneva Convention on Refugees and the refusal of countries to accept these populations in distress.

In short, the idea of invasion must be placed in the category of statistics bred by fear that are too often exploited by certain movements and political parties.

DIVERSITY: A FAIT ACCOMPLI EVEN WITHOUT IMMIGRATION

Diversity is now an indisputable reality and can only increase **even if all immigration were to be stopped today**. Quebec is already a resolutely pluralistic society.

Last year (2017), Statistics Canada published population projections based on various diversity indicators from 2011 to 2036. For the purposes of this discussion, we will examine the "zero immigration" scenario, that is, if between 2011 and 2036 Canada and Quebec were not to accept any immigrants. Already, it can be said that such a scenario is not realistic since, on the one hand, several thousand immigrants have already entered since 2011 and, on the other hand, it is clear that immigration levels will remain high for a few more years.

Nevertheless, what would have happened if all immigration had been blocked since 2011? Obviously, under such a scenario, the percentage of the immigrant population would decrease, but very slightly, from 13% in 2011 to 12% in 2036 for all of Quebec. For metropolitan Montreal, it would increase from 23% to 20%. However, all other diversity indicators would continue to increase. For example, if we combine the percentage of 1st and 2nd generation immigrants, numbers increase from 22% to 24% in Quebec and from 38% to 41% in metropolitan Montreal. The same is true for the share of visible minorities in the population of Quebec (from 11 to 16%) and Greater Montreal (from 20% to 27%). Finally, the evolution of religious diversity goes along similar lines, even if the increase in non-Christian groups is small: from 6 to 7% between 2011 and 2036 for Quebec and from 11 to 12% for metropolitan Montreal.

The diversification of Quebec's population is not a recent phenomenon, it has been underway since the 1980s. Nevertheless, what matters today is that diversity is already an integral part of society and is there to last.

Reducing immigration, or even stopping it, would not change the fact that Quebec is no longer what it used to be, that is, homogeneous, and it is no longer possible to go back. All the current discussions on immigration levels overshadow the fact that the focus must now be on integration.

UPDATE: There was a lot of talk during the election campaign about the need to recruit Francophone immigrants. And the CAQ and the PQ want to considerably increase the share of Francophones in immigration to Quebec. One wonders where these immigrants would come from in such a scenario. According to projections made by Richard Marcoux and Laurent Richard of the Observatoire démographique et statistique de l'espace francophone (ODSEF, 2017), the largest pool of Francophones is to be found in Africa, especially in West and Central Africa. This scenario would further contribute to the diversification of Quebec's population. The projections are not intended to be frightening, but to acknowledge and prepare for the future with integration programmes that take into account current and future diversity.

(On Marcoux and Richard's projections, see: https://www.odsef.fss.ulaval.ca/sites/odsef.fss.ulaval.ca/files/rapport_cic_1_tendances_demographiques)

THE QUEBEC VALUES TEST: WHICH VALUES?

The October 2018 provincial election campaign raised the issue of Quebec values that immigrants should respect. In addition to the impression that immigrants already admitted would not respect these values, the debates also suggest that they would resist being subject to these values.

However, no one mentions the fact that since March 2015, immigrants have had to sign a declaration on the common values of Quebec society. What are these common values?

- Quebec is a free and democratic society.
- Political and religious powers in Quebec are separate.
- Quebec is a pluralistic society.
- Quebec society is based on the rule of law.
- Women and men have the same rights.
- The exercise of human rights and freedoms must respect those of others and the general welfare of all.
- Quebec society is also governed by the Charter of the French Language, which makes French the official language of Quebec. Consequently, French is the normal and customary language of work, education, communications, commerce and business.

Declaration:

> "Understanding the scope and meaning of the foregoing and agreeing to respect the common values of Quebec society, I declare that I want to live in Quebec in accordance with and respect for its common values and I want to learn French, if I do not already speak it."

Who says better? The common values mentioned in the declaration constitute a set of values on which there is broad consensus. Can we go beyond that statement? Perhaps, if there were other values in Quebec that would rally everyone. NO, if we are in the presence of a plurality of values.

To date, when it comes to Quebec values, no one I know has been able to establish a list of them that can be agreed upon beyond what is presented above. Even the notion of "majority culture", at the heart of the notion of interculturalism, remains vague. I raised this question in my review of Gérard Bouchard's book (L'interculturalisme, Boréal, 2012): "The first question raised by interculturalism as proposed by Gérard Bouchard concerns the definition of majority, minority and common cultures. With regard to the latter, it is not clear what it is, apart from the fact that it must be expressed in French. For the rest, the notion remains vague and difficult to identify. Gérard Bouchard acknowledges this when he states (p. 70) that the contents of the common culture "do not lend themselves well to a precise definition of the order of the inventory, except those enshrined in legislation and the charter" (see Cahiers québécois de démographie, 2013).

Why are there so many difficulties in defining other common values? Because diversity in terms of values is not only tied to ethnocultural belonging, but also to social class, profession, gender and housing (urban/rural). The most important divide may well be intergenerational in nature. Each generation shapes its memory based on its own historical experiences.

Of course, signing a declaration does not guarantee that the fundamental values included in the declaration will be respected. Failure to respect these values remains unacceptable to everyone, including non-immigrants.

THE MYTH OF THE DECLINE OF FRENCH OR THE CORRECT USE OF LINGUISTIC INDICATORS

Journalist Michel C. Auger's comments on the myth of the decline of French in Quebec received considerable media coverage, including a prominent presence on Radio-Canada's "Tout le monde en parle" programme. Michel C. Auger uses several figures to justify his argument, in particular the figure of 94.5% of people who know enough French to conduct a conversation. Although this indicator can be criticized for its subjective nature, other more reliable indicators prove it right.

For several years, I have argued that the linguistic debate must be based on appropriate indicators. What are they? To assess the state of French in Quebec, there are several indicators and none are superior to another. It all depends on the objectives pursued.

If we want to measure assimilation, the language spoken at home combined with the mother tongue makes it possible to see to what extent there has been a linguistic transfer to French. Thus, people whose mother tongue is not French and who speak French at home have made a transfer to French. These two indicators give an idea of the degree of assimilation into French. This type of approach has been widely used in the past to study the assimilation of French Canadians outside Quebec or to measure the weight of French Canadians from Quebec in Canada as a whole. The mother tongue is closely associated with national origin and makes it possible to monitor the evolution of ethnic groups.

However interesting they may be, these language categories are not appropriate to measure the state of French in Quebec in terms of Quebec's language policy. This policy, established by Bill 101 and the immigration and integration policy, has two basic objectives: to develop a model of pluralist integration (non-assimilationism) and to make French the common public language. (In a way, in terms of language intervention, the choice cannot be limited to the public sphere, because the government cannot legislate to change the mother tongue or force people to speak French at home.)

It is therefore to the linguistic indicators in the public sphere that we should turn. In 1997, the Conseil supérieur de la langue française proposed a new public language indicator based on a series of questions on the use of French in the public sphere. At that time, it was the indicator that gave the highest percentage of Francophones in Quebec (87%).

Despite the new need for linguistic indicators in relation to the political objectives of the 1990s, the Office québécois de la langue française, the institution responsible for monitoring French in Quebec, did not pursue its 1997 recommendation on the need to produce public language indicators. It is only very recently, in 2016, that the Office produced a series of indicators on the use of French at work and at school.

These indicators show that more than 80% of people use French at work. When it comes to schooling, French is used 90% of the time (preschool, primary and secondary levels): a significant increase since 1971, while French was only used at 64%.

We are far from the decline of the French language in Quebec.

UPDATE: See Victor Piché (2011), "Categories ethniques et linguistiques au Québec: quand compter est une question de survie", Cahiers québécois de démographie, 40 (1): 139-154.

FAILURE OF FRANCIZATION OR FAILURE OF FRANCIZATION PROGRAMS?

We have heard a lot about "language" these days. In the media, "there has been talk of the failure of francization" following the report of the Auditor General of Quebec and of the "decline of French at work" revealed by the latest Statistics Canada data. These titles are biased. In some cases, they can even lead to identity-related excesses such as the one proposing to reduce immigration and to focus on the increase in the birth rate to preserve Quebec's identity (see François Legault's comments as reported in *Le Devoir* of November 25, 2017).

Two publications received particular media attention. The first document is the Auditor General's document on the francization of immigrants. Two observations are worth noting: on the one hand, only one-third of immigrants who did not know French on arrival took French courses and, on the other hand, the vast majority of those who took the courses did not reach the threshold of language autonomy. However, can we talk about the failure of the francization of immigrants in Quebec? Shouldn't we rather talk about the failure of the francization programs?

The Auditor General's report provides us with other indications that help us to put the magnitude of the situation into perspective and qualify it. For example, following the evolution of a cohort (immigrants who arrived in Quebec in 2013) is very instructive in that it allows us to target those eligible for francization courses. Of the 51,976 immigrants in this cohort, those under 16 years of age (11,030 people) who are not targeted for the courses and those who already know French (25,991) must be excluded. This leaves 14,955 eligible persons, representing 29% of the entire cohort. It can therefore be seen that more than 70% of immigrants are not targeted by this finding of program failure.

Moreover, francization goes well beyond the performance of programs. It is part of the more global framework of Quebec's francization policy. This policy is reflected in the "Statement on Immigration and Integration Policy" adopted in 1990. The objective of the policy is to promote French as the common language of public life. If we want to monitor this policy, we must use indicators of the common public language and not, as is too often the case, of the mother tongue or the language spoken at home.

It is in this context that the latest data provided by Statistics Canada on language of work must be considered. The main conclusion to be drawn from this publication is that French at work has declined by 2.7 points in ten years. This decrease is due to the increased use of English and French at work (bilingualism). It can be hypothesized that this evolution is not related to immigration, but rather to the significant labour market transformations associated with globalization and its effect on the use of English as the language of economic exchange.

A brief aside: without going into detail, the idea of the decline of French is based on a very small number. We are talking about 2.7 points in 10 years. However, from one census to another, the same person may evaluate working time spent in French or English differently. The question suggests four possible answers:

- occasionally (less than 50%);
- regularly (50–89%);
- generally (90–99%); and
- exclusively (100%).

Answers to these types of questions (e. g. time estimation) are subjective and very fluid over time. Therefore, great caution should be exercised in interpreting the differences over a 10-year period.

In addition to the language of work, another important dimension of public language concerns education. Two recent OQLF reports (2017) revealed that the use of French in school reached 90% in 2015 (preschool, elementary and secondary levels combined). The trend was particularly striking on the Island of Montreal, where the use of French in schools increased from 64% in 1971 to 80% in 2015.

In short, we cannot talk about the failure of francization in Quebec. On the other hand, the failure of francization programs remains worrying and calls for a radical revision of the current approach. According to the Auditor General's report, this program failure is due, among other things, to the inadequacy of course offerings, the complexity of the registration process and the lack of an appropriate timetable. There are courses of action here that deserve immediate attention.

IMMIGRATION, LANGUAGE AND RETENTION: THE FACTS

According to Premier, François Legault, the fact that Quebec lost 13,000 immigrants last year would demonstrate the failure of Quebec's immigration policy. That is not what the statistics indicate. A study by the Ministry of Immigration [see "Presence in 2016 of immigrants who landed between 2005–2014"] shows that the proportion of immigrants who arrived between 2005 and 2014 and are still present in 2016 (the so-called retention rate) has increased from 67% in 2005 to 75% in 2014. For metropolitan Montréal, the retention rate is currently 80.5%. So, recent figures show a significant improvement.

This improvement is mainly due to the change in the "linguistic" composition of immigration since the 2000s. According to the same study, between the two periods 1991-95 and 2011–2015, the percentage of immigrants who know French rose from 35 to 60.

What is important here, from the point of view of retention, is to point out that retention rates vary according to immigrants' knowledge of French: the more you know French, the less you leave Quebec. It is difficult with these statistics to talk about the failure of Quebec's immigration policy.

Recent figures, widely reported in the media, suggest that the proportion of immigrants who know French upon arrival is now in the order of 47% for 2016 and 42% for 2017. This decrease in knowledge of French on arrival is mainly explained by the significant increase in refugees during these two years (9% in 2010 compared to 17% in 2015).

The origin of skilled workers has also changed in recent years and could be another explanatory factor. There are more of them from Asian countries (and therefore fewer French-speakers). The Immigration Ministry's latest statistical bulletin mentions that changes were made in March 2017 to the selection grid to give more points to knowledge of French. It is still too early to measure the effects of these changes.

In short, it must be concluded that the last two years are not representative; it would be a mistake to draw political conclusions based on them.

The figures presented here do not allow us to conclude that Quebec's immigration policy has failed. If we want to talk about failure, we must turn to the integration policy, both linguistic and economic.