

Québec, its Cultural Policies and the Handing Down of Culture in a Time of Globalization

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Québec society is living a paradox common to other “smaller societies,” which are numerically and linguistically in a minority: on the one hand, they aspire to the economic advantages globalization might bring; on the other hand, they need to protect their culture, the core of their identity and its specificity, in order to hand their culture down to future generations. For forty years, governments in Québec have played a decisive role in the development and protection of the arts and culture of Québec. They have created institutions, improved infrastructure and helped support the creation of professional organizations.

The central question raised by the theme of this colloquium, but also by the mandate given to us by its organizers is the following one: in the context of globalization, whose principal characteristic is a struggle to be free of government controls, do Québec’s cultural policies offer a sufficient number of guarantees which at the same time ensure access to the world, strengthen Québec culture, and ensure its handing down to the next generations? I shall try to answer that question in two steps.

The first one is meant essentially to briefly recall the role played by the government of Québec in recent

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decades. It established a powerful link between Québec identity and the handing down of its culture. The second step brings us to the idea of “thinking globally, acting locally.” In that sense, I shall talk briefly about municipal cultural policies, one of the channels for the handing down of culture. But before that, let’s have a look at the origins of the notion of “cultural policy.”

During recent decades, several international authorities and organizations have tried to define cultural policies, to map them out them, and to give them new orientations. Literature on the subject has proliferated, concerned not just with the notion of “cultural policy” but with themes closely related to it, such as “cultural needs,” “cultural rights,” “cultural development,” “the democratization of culture,” “cultural democracy” and, more recently, themes of “cultural exception” and “cultural diversity.” Like other Western countries, the cultural operations of the Québec government have been influenced by international policies and organizations. Let us look briefly at the evolution of public interventions in that area in recent decades, where several of these central themes can be found.

In Québec, during the 1960s and 1970s, public interventions in the field of culture contributed to the development and of a consciousness of identity as a Québec nation, mostly francophone, and the heir of a rich heritage. Cultural policies and public programmes allowed for the emergence, the building up and the assertion of a new collective consciousness. Cultural institutions, along with cultural production in the literary and artistic realms, heavily supported by the State, are all excellent instruments not only for the handing down of culture, but powerful instruments for solidarity and cohesion through which every citizen of Québec can build up identities, both individually and collectively. The emergence and the development of a Québec identity — no longer simply French Canadian — have outstripped Québec’s politicians with respect to the federal Government.

One of the first developments in that direction was the creation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961: Québec’s government asserted its role and responsibilities for the flourishing of the arts, but also for the protection and dissemination of a cultural identity based mainly on francophone language and culture.

Some years later, in a vast survey which ended up with the *White Paper on Culture* (1965), the Liberal minister, Pierre Laporte, proposed a “cultural action plan,” whose foundation was “cultural identity.” In fact, Laporte tried to expand the scope of his ministry, which had been created four years earlier, over the

entire domain of the arts, including cinema, arts and crafts, cultural commodities, sciences, etc.

Even if the *White Paper* had not formally been made public, provincial elections having led to a change of government, it must be emphasized that the 1960s were characterized by the creation of a number of institutions, with nationalist connotations, and bold for that time: *L'Office de la langue française* in 1961, *Délégation générale du Québec* in Paris in 1962, *Service du Canada français d'outre-frontières* in 1963, *Direction générale de l'Immigration* in 1966, *Radio-Québec* in 1968, among others. At the same time, the Ministry of Education was an important contributor to the changes taking place in Québec society. Other ministries, which also had cultural dimensions, were created: Immigration in 1968, and Communications in 1969.

A decade after the White Paper of Pierre Laporte, the “Green Paper” *Pour l'évolution de la politique culturelle du Québec* (1976) of Liberal minister Jean-Paul L'Allier was brought before the National Assembly. In it, since priority was given to active support of cultural activities, to their dissemination and to accessibility, the policy suggested among other things “a transfer from different sectors of the public service to para-public bodies,” like the *Régie du Patrimoine*, the *Société de gestion du patrimoine immobilier*, the *Commission de la bibliothèque et des archives nationales*, the *Commission des musées*, etc. But, as with the *White Paper* of 1965, L'Allier's proposal coincided with a new political reality: the election of a new government in November 1976.

In fact, in response to a “federal cultural offensive,” the PQ government decided to create a superministry which included Cultural Affairs, Education, Communications, and Leisure and Immigration, all the ministries having to do with culture. Implemented with a view to competing with the resources of the federal government, the actions of that superministry seemed to bog down, until it was phased out in 1982. Certain decisions the Ministry of Cultural Affairs could have taken were lost in the shuffle (Fortier and Schafer, 1989: 45). One thing is obvious. In his *White Paper*, Laurin argues that the anthropological notion of culture — and the underlying question of the handing down of culture — becomes totally meaningful when it becomes the “core of life” where “the whole of existence is about the production of culture” (Québec, *White Paper*, 1978: 9).

Let us summarize the Québec government's initiatives since the beginning of the 1990s, a period which corresponds to the publication of the *Politique culturelle du Québec*, brought before the Québec National

Assembly in June 1992 (Saint-Pierre, 2001a). If we include the statements mentioned earlier (White Papers and Green Paper), eleven successive documents have been brought down or debated between 1964 and 1992 (see table); as for the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, it has seen more than fifteen titulars, each trying to leave their mark. In trying to offer a broad perspective on the main initiatives of the Québec Government during the past 40 years, one could say that the 1960s were characterized by the creation of important national institutions, the 1970s by measures for protecting the French language, the 1980s by an increase in the number of cultural bodies and, in the 1990s, by the change of scale mentioned earlier: municipalities take charge of the cultural development of local and regional communities, and the *Conseil des arts et des lettres* takes charge of other cultural institutions and areas.

In fact, if the sometimes sweeping central statements of the cultural policies of Laporte, L'Allier and Laurin were like the ideas found in documents dealing with “projects of societies,” it must be said that during the 1980s, the content, if not the tone of the papers, changed dramatically.¹ Caught up in the problem of funding artists, producers and cultural industries, the minister of Cultural Affairs of Québec, Liza Frulla-Hébert released, in June 1992, a document entitled *La politique culturelle du Québec*. This new statement was an important change compared to the “traditional” role of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. Its mandate was widened and gave it a new “horizontal” role — prompting other ministries (about twenty of them plus government corporations), municipalities and other partners to include culture in their own responsibilities — while putting forward new concerns, including ensuring a “wider opening to cultures of the world,” and putting more emphasis on the regional and international dimensions of culture (Québec, *La politique culturelle du Québec. Notre culture, notre avenir*, 1992: 15). The new Ministry of Culture was also given the mandate of harmonizing and coordinating regional ministerial activities, through global agreements with municipalities and the MRC, while maintaining exclusive control in specific fields: heritage, cultural technology, museums, libraries, historic sites, professional training and cultural industries.

Not only did this policy place emphasis on the horizontal dimensions for coordinating government activity, it has also led to two important pieces of legislation, the first modifying the *Loi sur le ministère des Affaires culturelles* (new functions and orientations), the second creating the *Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec*, which had been called for by artists since the 1960s.

¹ See the Action Plan of the minister Clément Richard in 1983, or the *Bilan – actions – avenir* of the minister Lise Bacon in 1988.

The last part of this presentation is meant to echo one of the elements of the 1992 cultural policy, which was intended to establish a new partnership with the municipalities in Québec. It is also meant to be an echo of a recent reform, because during the last two years, the Québec government has made known its intention to reorganize municipalities (L.R.Q., 2000) and to modify certain pieces of legislation (*idem*, 2001). We already know that this municipal reorganization will have important repercussions on the cultural and artistic development of cities in Québec.

If the municipalities of Québec, saw their responsibilities in the domain of culture confined to public libraries and sometimes to heritage in the 1960s and early 1970s, it can be said that this realm has been significantly broadened since then. At the same time, the “cultural decentralization,” which began in Québec in the 1970s with the first regional bureaus of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the first Regional Councils on Culture, was accelerated in the 1980s, and was soon reinforced with a new way of managing local “cultural affairs.”

It must be said that during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, as mentioned earlier, discussions about culture changed in nature, caught up in a new game that can be called: the new ideology of the liberal state. Based on a serious questioning of the capabilities and responsibilities of the state, the economic realities and social demands of the public, that ideology relies on a foundation which is free of government control: globalization of the economy, free markets, and the advent of new technologies.

During the same period, it is interesting to observe that several Western countries sought to overcome their fears of cultural globalization by re-discovering local and regional cultures, which had been greatly neglected and even forgotten. What seemed then to characterize the phenomenon of globalization, implying the handing down of national cultures, was a change of scale: a move toward the cultural realities of a “smaller society.” In fact, the more one thinks globally, the more different governments, either national, local or municipal become conscious they have to act locally (Saint-Pierre, 2001b). This phenomenon can be found not just in “smaller societies.” Even France, the world leader among Francophone countries, has taken steps in that direction.

Through the implementation of municipal cultural policies since the beginning of the 1990s, the government of Québec seems to have placed itself in a “new” stream, whose purpose is to make the municipal partnership a privileged level of development and, of course, of the handing down of culture. In the

context of shared responsibilities, the municipality establishes a cultural policy, chooses its priorities and makes clear the kinds of services it intends to offer its citizens, with the help of an action plan for ensuring cultural development. Among several objectives, municipal cultural policies aim at defining more clearly the cultural identities of the residents of local and regional communities, but also at becoming more aware of the expectations and needs of their populations, their artists and their cultural institutions.

To sum up, during the last decade, Québec's municipalities have gradually taken over fields formerly the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture; it remains to be seen what sorts of fruit such initiatives will bear. During the last ten years, several Québec municipalities have created their own cultural policies whose aims, generally speaking, are to strengthen and develop the domains of arts and letters, heritage, museology and popular events (Dalphond, 2000). In February 2001, according to data gathered by the Ministry of Culture and Communications of Québec, 73 municipalities and 12 regional county municipalities had adopted cultural policies.

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To conclude this presentation, I am going to place the emphasis on two particular suggestions.

In the first place, I believe it is now time to consider and analyze the different kinds of cultural policies one finds in Canada. The Council of Europe has done similar studies, as part of a vast programme of cooperation.² In my opinion the same thing has to be done here, since culture has traditionally been shared among the three levels of government. This sharing of jurisdiction is a reality which for decades has shaped government interventions, federal as well as those of Québec.

Among Canadian provinces and levels of government, it seems that cultural policies are more or less centralized, more or less rooted in the past or oriented toward contemporary creation, more or less dependent upon public funds, regardless of whether they are English Canadian, French Canadian or Québécois.

It is clear that globalization leaves all governments, federal, provincial and municipal, facing similar problems. I believe there is ground for transverse studies and comparisons which may allow us to ask precise questions about common problems, and to examine, appraise and make public the different political

² The studies of the cooperation programme of the Council of Europe are about two precise topics: "national cultural institutions in transition" and "cultural policies and diversity" (see the following Internet Site: <http://www.culture.coe.fr/clt/fcuexam>).

answers that are being and will continue to be brought forward. Such a project could have a number of benefits, one of them being the establishment of cooperative relationships in the sharing of knowledge and expertise in this field, but access to such comparative studies could also be useful in developing common and shared political strategies in the face of the rapid evolution of the world's economic and social contexts.

My other suggestion is more closely linked with the theme of this colloquium, because when talking about the handing down of culture, one talks of meaning, about the proper and common values of societies. Confronted with “new” actors in the field of culture, who, as underlined by Vincent Lemieux (1996: 195-196), speak “a discourse which can be called collectivizing, as it valorizes collective identities, at whatever level,” these actors being agents defining and handing down collective values (members of municipal councils, public administrators, faculty members, pressure groups, Canadian and Québec coalitions, non-governmental organizations), I think it is time that researchers and analysts investigate the role and impact of those actors, and the values and beliefs they represent and hand down.

I do not think it is necessary to point out that governing, nowadays, is becoming a more and more complex activity which goes beyond the traditional institutional framework. What has happened in recent years, especially with the negotiations of the World Trade Organization (GATT prior to 1995) — the failure of the Seattle Conference in December 1999, or the demonstrations at Davos (Switzerland) and at Porto Alegre (Brazil) — or the recent Third Summit of the Americas, held in Québec City in April 2001 in the framework of the negotiations of the Free Trade Zone of the Americas, show us with certainty that the zone of influence of political institutions, as well as the influence of their leaders, is changing rapidly.

In spite of the size of the phenomenon, pressure groups and coalitions in the world of culture, along with other social stakeholders, have not been paid sufficient attention by researchers and analysts. It's about time we put them under our lenses.

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Table:
Ministerial and/or Government Documents (White or Green Papers, Action Plans)
Concerning Culture and Related Matters, 1964-1992*

Year	Title	Targeted Sector
1965	(1) <i>Livre blanc de la culture</i> (Ministry of Cultural Affairs; entitled “White Paper”)	Culture
1971	(2) <i>Pour une politique québécoise des communications: document de travail</i> (Ministry of Communications; entitled later as “Green Paper”)	Communications
1976	(3) <i>Pour l'évolution de la politique culturelle</i> (Ministry of Cultural Affairs; called “Green Paper”)	Culture
1977	(4) <i>La politique québécoise de la langue française</i> (State Ministry of Cultural Development)	Culture (<i>Language</i>)
1977	(5) <i>La politique québécoise du développement culturel</i> (State Ministry of Cultural Development; called “White Paper”)	Culture (<i>Development</i>)
1979	(6) <i>Pour une politique québécoise de la recherche scientifique</i> (State Ministry of Cultural Development; document presented as a “political statement”; called “White Paper” (<i>Le Soleil</i> , December 3, 1980: E9)	Culture (<i>Science</i>)
1980	(7) <i>La juste part des créateurs. Pour une amélioration du statut socio-économique des créateurs québécois</i> (State Ministry of Cultural Development; document presented as a “political statement”, called also “White Paper” (<i>Le Soleil</i> , December 3, 1980: E9)	Culture
1981	(8) <i>Autant de façons d'être Québécois. Plan d'action du gouvernement du Québec à l'intention des communautés culturelles</i> (State Ministry of Cultural and Scientific Development; document presented as an action plan)	Cultural communities
1988	(9) <i>Bilan-actions-avenir</i> (Ministry of Cultural Affairs; operation launched in 1988 and whose purpose is to make on evaluation, and to identify priorities for the future)	Culture
1992	(10) <i>La politique culturelle du Québec. Notre culture, notre avenir</i> (Ministry of Cultural Affairs; mentioned as the “first government cultural policy”)	Culture (<i>Government institutions, municipalities, etc.</i>)

* For the years 1964-1984, see: Gaston Deschênes, Coll. Madeleine Albert, *Livres blancs et livres verts au Québec, 1964-1984*, Québec, Library of the National Assembly, 1986.