

12-1-2007

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James Archibald  
*McGill University*

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### Recommended Citation

Archibald, James (2007) "Protection by (Dis)association," *Global Business Languages*: Vol. 9 , Article 3.  
Available at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol9/iss1/3>

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James Archibald  
McGill University

## PROTECTION BY (DIS)ASSOCIATION

In discussing issues of cultural and language policy within the context of French-speaking polities, there may be many areas of disagreement; however, there is consensus on the political nature of both culture and language. French researcher Claude Hagège has remarked that *le français est une affaire éminemment politique* [French is a highly political business]. He goes on to argue that political support for the French language and culture in these polities is vital in that it is through political action that governments are able to preserve, protect and promote French as a language and as a vehicle of culture. Hence, through defensive measures in culturally sensitive areas, *le français défend sa vie* [French defends its life] (Hagège 366). Survival is at stake. This explains why many states within La Francophonie adopt policies rooted in the concept of *l'exception culturelle*.<sup>1</sup> This position allows governments to favor—out of a deep-seated fear of identity loss—extremely francocentric policies, often to the detriment of other languages sharing the same space. Given that the language in question is most usually one of the World Englishes,<sup>2</sup> this collective attitude has been referred to as

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<sup>1</sup>*L'exception culturelle* [cultural exception] is a language and cultural policy whereby the State takes certain measures domestically and internationally to protect the French language and culture and national cultural artifacts. This policy must be understood in the context of international negotiations whose objective it is to preserve cultural specificity and diversity in a globalized economy. Originally attributed to the French government in its efforts to seek exemptions for the French language and cultural outputs in the context of international trade agreements (Uruguay Round, GATT), this doctrine has also been applied by other French-speaking polities in similar contexts. (See the Québec position on the FTAA in Archibald, 2002.) International organizations such as UNESCO have also linked this doctrine to that of cultural diversity. (See Renard, 1999.)

<sup>2</sup>In this article, we have opted for the term *World Englishes* since it properly denotes the ungoverned and fractured nature of the different varieties of English used throughout the world. From the Middle Ages to the present day, the English language has established itself in a wide variety of geopolitical contexts. More recently, as a result of colonization, decolonization, demography, migrations and international politics, there is no longer one hegemonic English. Some hold that this

“anglophobic,” an inwardly-focused perspective on things that sees the “other” as a threat to one’s very existence. However, a more tempered view is shared by language and cultural pluralists who accept the coexistence of French with one or more other languages and who see this pluralism as a source of variety and cultural wealth to be shared, albeit on the condition that French occupy a position of *primus inter pares*. This guarded, outwardly-focused attitude does not preclude defensive postures, but it does recognize that alliances with other language groups may, in fact, provide collective assurance of language and cultural perennality with respect to the ubiquitous nature of Anglo-American culture and the growing family of Englishes in the world. Protection by alliance entails the association of French-speaking polities with other bodies and eventually the relinquishment of a certain degree of autonomy to other bodies including supranational organizations with delegated powers of regulation.

In his recent study of globalization, J. Habermas<sup>3</sup> underscores a number of advantages which one might use in favor of this form of protection through association.

By recognizing what one has in common with other groups, governments are able to build common cultures. These common cultures may be based on economic interests, as in the case of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), geopolitical interests, as in the case of the European Community or language and cultural interests, as in the case of *La Francophonie*.<sup>4</sup> These interests are not, however, mutually exclusive, as one can judge from the last *Francophonie* summit in Beyrouth, where a number of geopolitical and economic concerns began to influence the “cultural” agenda. In all cases, the success of these alliances depends greatly on

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unbridled diversity may, in fact, cause the downfall of a completely intercomprehensible, universally spoken English. The English language’s success may lead to its eventual demise.

<sup>3</sup>See Habermas, J. *The Postnational Constellation*.

<sup>4</sup>*La Francophonie* [Francophony] brings together in an international organization peoples of many origins who share the French language, similar cultural values and a geopolitical will to defend and promote the French language and culture. See *La Francophonie*: [http://www.france.diplomatie.fr/Thema/dossier.asp? DOS=FRANCOPHONIE](http://www.france.diplomatie.fr/Thema/dossier.asp?DOS=FRANCOPHONIE)

See also *L’Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie*: <http://agence.francophonie.org/>

the ability of partners to develop action plans which reflect the shared values and beliefs of member states. These may not always be shared in their entirety; however, there is sufficient common ground for members to be able to envisage effective common action. When this common action is adopted so as to protect a particular member's interests or to provide an extra measure of protection against "outsiders," this is clearly to the benefit of members collectively and individually.

As these common economic and political cultures take shape, a sense of collective membership emerges and the alliances serve not only to regulate action but also to define strategies which serve both specific and general purposes. One clear example of this is the growing international consensus on cultural and linguistic diversity. As these policies take shape, it is obvious that they serve both to protect and to promote, in a spirit of pluralism which is sensitive to the need for national groups to maintain a sense of collective identity. In other words, the right to remain "Other" is legitimized and validated through collective association, and this openness becomes an effective means to protect one's own "national" language and culture.

Underlying the internationalist strategy is the acceptance of the principle of language and cultural change. Languages and cultures evolve ineluctably over time. Some may even become extinct. Notwithstanding this unsettling reality, protection through association is seen as one of the means which polities may use to manage the process and to limit the negative effects. This means, however, that new "collective identities" will emerge, often at the apparent expense of the "old cultures," but—as often as not—to their benefit as well. Survival through change and adaptation is not only a generally accepted law of nature; it is also a law which may be applied in the area of language and culture. Some have opined that Latin was able to survive to this day only through intricate processes of language change. Rome is not dead. Rome survives through its cultural and linguistic descendants. New cultures and languages may emerge from modern-day globalization, and not even the most clairvoyant of futurologists can predict the dominant cultures and languages in the world which will follow upon the empires of the twenty-first century. At issue in the present context is the management of cultural and language change through processes that Western democracies began to define in the late nineteenth century, processes which are still in flux and may someday receive general acceptance in international fora.

These alliances will lead to negotiated agreements to share a new common socio-economic and cultural life, the definition of which will surely affect our future understanding of both language and culture. (See Habermas 7, 18–19.) Yet, within the context of French-speaking countries where the benefits of protection through association are more generally accepted, most policies still reflect the need to protect the “national” language and culture through what is ubiquitously termed *l’exception culturelle*. In other words, most French-speaking polities are not ready to relinquish legislative and regulatory authority in matters of language and culture to federative or supranational organizations. There is, nonetheless, a greater willingness to work toward a common good and to align oneself with other language groups in order to achieve common goals. The current discourse on “cultural and linguistic diversity” within the context of the World Summit on the Information Society serves as a useful example.

In addition to the examples cited above, a number of international fora have emerged in recent years where one is able to see the effects of this shift in mentality from old-style cultural protection to internationalized collective action. The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the United Nations (UN) and its affiliated organizations are but some examples of organizations where linguistically and culturally diverse nations, strategically aligned, have developed or are in the process of developing a common agenda with respect to language and culture. It is certainly worthwhile to monitor shifts in policy at this level and to witness the degree to which national governments are prepared to relinquish some degree of cultural and/or linguistic sovereignty to federative or supranational organizations either extant or in gestation.

It is in part because of these contextual changes that the Québec government laid the groundwork in November 2002, leading to the establishment of an organization to monitor changes in this area. We refer to the *Observatoire québécois de la mondialisation* (OQM), which will be discussed in greater length below. According to the OQM’s mandate, its members will strive to explain every aspect of globalization and provide citizens with reliable information on a phenomenon which increasingly affects peoples’ lives. Through the involvement of civil society, the OQM should, in the government’s view, strive to promote a balanced form of globalization which demonstrates inherent respect for human rights and freedoms.

For the purposes of this paper, we will limit our discussion to two examples which serve to illustrate the dynamic described above: the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and OQM.

The overriding WSIS objective is to devise a means to bridge the digital divide separating the “haves” from the “have-nots,” the North from the South, the developed nations from those under development, the (un)wired from those who are not yet connected, those with the right to communicate digitally from those currently deprived of this right. The summit process will lead to the definition of basic themes and principles and eventually by 2005 to specific action plans which may be implemented under the aegis of international organizations such as the UN and the ITU. This being essentially an intergovernmental process, the major players will be UN member governments in consultation with UN Organizations, the private sector and a wide range of civil society groups. The process is consultative, and the decision-making will be intergovernmental. The outcome will hopefully be an effective policy statement on the development of a world-wide information society, or more closely defined information societies, through action plans resulting from an international consensus on growth in this sector. Clearly, linguistic and cultural diversity is now, and will continue to be, a core issue as the summit process evolves. Languages and cultures outside the Anglo-American sphere will indeed seek comfort and protection through the principles and actions which will be agreed upon by the culmination of the summit in 2005.<sup>5</sup>

The OQM is a new organization recently created by the Québec government through an extensive consultative process. This organization is in essence a watchdog agency put in place to track developments in globalization which may affect areas of particular interest to the government. Given the culturally and linguistically sensitive issues at play, the Québec government saw a need to adopt such a formalized mechanism with a view to protecting its cultural and linguistic interests in areas of both exclusive and shared jurisdiction, whether at the level of international agreements or effective policy within the Canadian federation.

In devising the policy and developing the enabling legislation itself, the government also involved a number of players including the Loyal

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<sup>5</sup>Comprehensive information on WSIS is available in English, French and Spanish on the WSIS WEB site: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>

Opposition, the public administration and members of civil society. The consultative process followed the publication of a policy paper for discussion purposes, formal consultation through a parliamentary commission, the tabling of draft legislation, debate in the National Assembly, the adoption of a law creating the OQM and the subsequent implementation of the legislation supported by the appropriate administrative and regulatory processes.<sup>6</sup> This example is interesting in comparison with the WSIS process in that both are particularly concerned with issues of cultural and linguistic diversity and the international positioning of cultures and languages which operate outside the realm or on the margins of the dominant Anglo-American transnational culture. From the outset, both processes involved meeting objectives which, despite their respective international and domestic foci, have much in common.

WSIS's initial objective was to harmonize international policy with respect to the development and expansion of the information society with special emphasis on bridging the digital divide. It was the pluralistic intention of the framers of the WSIS process to be sensitive to the language and cultural issues at play since common ground had to be found. The objective may then be summarized as follows: *L'élaboration d'une optique et d'une interprétation communes de la société de l'information et l'adoption d'une déclaration et d'un plan d'action qui seraient appliqués par les gouvernements, les institutions internationales et tous les secteurs de la société civile.* (SMSI 5–7) [To develop a common vision and understanding of the information society and the adoption of a declaration and plan of action for implementation by Governments, international institutions and all sectors of civil society.]<sup>7</sup>

At a different level, OQM's objective is to ensure that the globalization process is balanced and mindful of human rights issues through the establishment of an independent organization which will monitor globalization, try to understand it, analyze its implications and predict its possible effects. In this way, the Québec government has put in place a mechanism which

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<sup>6</sup>The complete text of the law which created the OQM may be found on the Québec government's WEB site: <http://www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=5&file=2002C41F.PDF>

<sup>7</sup>WSIS. *Proposed themes for the Summit and possible outcomes.* Document WSIS/PC-1/DOC/4-E. [http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc\\_single\\_bynum.asp?lang=en&num=WSIS/PC-1/DOC/0004](http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_single_bynum.asp?lang=en&num=WSIS/PC-1/DOC/0004)

will observe international initiatives which may have some effect on those issues of immediate concern to a government charged with the responsibility of protecting, among other things, the linguistic and cultural interests of its citizens. There is obviously an underlying fear that globalization initiatives may jeopardize the status of the French language and culture which has traditionally been protected by Québec government action.

By the same token OQM will combat the *democratic deficit* through action which will parallel measures adopted under Law 52,<sup>8</sup> which was unanimously adopted by the National Assembly on May 9, 2002. This law established *un mécanisme d'approbation par l'Assemblée nationale de tout engagement international important qu'entend prendre le gouvernement, soit à l'égard d'une entente internationale, soit à l'égard d'un accord international portant sur une matière ressortissant à la compétence constitutionnelle du Québec* [a mechanism enabling the National Assembly to approve any important international commitment the Government intends to make either in respect of a Québec international agreement or an international accord pertaining to a matter within the constitutional jurisdiction of Québec]. Consequently, international agreements entered into by the Government of Canada which affect areas of exclusive or shared jurisdiction, must receive the support of the National Assembly before they can be implemented within the jurisdictional boundaries of Québec. Therefore, under the combined effects of Law 52 and Law 109, the Québec legislator is in a position not only to monitor international agreements but also to protect Québec's cultural and linguistic interests within the context of the Canadian federation. Law 52 describes very clearly the dynamic relationship between the two levels of government.

*Le ministre [des Relations internationales] veille aux intérêts du Québec lors de la négociation de tout accord international, quelle que soit sa dénomination particulière, entre le gouvernement du Canada et un gouvernement étranger ou une organisation internationale et portant sur une matière ressortissant à la compétence constitutionnelle du Québec. Il assure et coordonne la mise en œuvre au Québec d'un tel accord. [The*

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<sup>8</sup>*Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Relations internationales et d'autres dispositions législatives.* (2002, chapitre 8) [An Act to amend the Act respecting the Ministère des Relations internationales and other legislative provisions. (2002, chapter 8)]

Minister (of International Relations) shall see to the interests of Québec during the negotiation of any international accord, whatever its particular designation, between the Government of Canada and a foreign government or an international organization, which pertains to any matter within the constitutional jurisdiction of Québec. The Minister shall ensure and coordinate the implementation of any such accord in Québec.]

*Le ministre peut donner son agrément à ce que le Canada signe un tel accord.* [The Minister may agree to the signing of such an accord by Canada.]

*Le gouvernement doit, pour être lié par un accord international ressortissant à la compétence constitutionnelle du Québec...prendre un décret à cet effet. Il en est de même à l'égard de la fin d'un tel accord.* [The Government must, in order to be bound by an international accord pertaining to any matter within the constitutional jurisdiction of Québec... give its assent. The same applies in respect of the termination of such an accord.]

*Le ministre peut assujettir son agrément et le gouvernement son assentiment à ce que le Canada formule, lorsqu'il exprime son consentement à être lié, les réserves exprimées par le Québec.* [The Minister and the Government may subject their respective agreement and assent to the formulation by Canada, when it expresses its consent to be bound, of the reservations expressed by Québec.] (Loi 52, Article 6)

In this context, one must remember that culture and language are areas where Québec claims jurisdictional rights within the Canadian federation. Consequently, any agreement which is the result of federal negotiations at the level of WSIS will be subject not only to review by the Québec government, but also to the assent of Québec legislators.

One readily understands why the only province to take a visibly active role in the Canadian delegation to WSIS from the outset has been Québec. The link between the two processes becomes even more clear under the combined effects of Laws 52 and 109. Ultimately, these two laws will ostensibly serve to protect Québec citizenry against any perceived *democratic deficit* in the preservation and protection of cultural and linguistic rights.

Both WSIS and OQM have instituted processes whose objectives are to protect cultural interests and rights as well as to maintain cultural and linguistic diversity. The WSIS process recognizes cultural and linguistic diversity as a hallmark of the information society. By virtue of adhering to

this principle, the WSIS process should then foster intellectual and artistic creativity through the creation, processing, dissemination and conservation of local content, as a carrier of that same diversity. Member states and civil society have reached a consensual view that true diversity can best be stimulated and supported through an adequate balance between the rights and needs of the users of information. Hence, the creation of protected local WEB content and wide-spread usage would contribute to a better flow of information among countries and regions while at the same time providing a platform for the expression of distinct linguistic and cultural identities. In the long term, these information flows and ranges of diversity will have to be guaranteed by international agreements reached through the WSIS process by 2005 (Samassékou 3). At the other end of the spectrum, emergent agreements would at that time be monitored by organizations such as OQM and once formalized, agreed to by national and regional governments under processes similar to those outlined in Law 52 as explained above.

OQM will play a complementary role in the implementation of this law since it will *faire en sorte que tous les traités d'importance, qui touchent les compétences du Québec, doivent dorénavant venir devant notre Assemblée nationale* [require that all important treaties relative to Québec jurisdiction must henceforth come before our National Assembly]. (Journal 8) In the view of the Minister of International Relations at the time, this process will foster civic involvement in globalization at the local, regional and national levels by allowing for societal debate on issues of collective concern. This is what she referred to at the time as an *appropriation citoyenne de la mondialisation* [a civic appropriation of globalization]. (Journal 28) OQM will then ostensibly serve all citizens as a public forum for informed debate, a *carrefour des points de vue* [cross-roads of opinions]. By implementing such a process, the government wished to develop from a non-partisan perspective a *societal consensus* on the effects of globalization. (Journal 46) By doing so, this would of course pave the way to denying assent to international agreements whose effects could be judged as negative in cultural and linguistic terms, to asserting Québec's constitutional rights in specific areas of jurisdiction and to obliging the federal government to recognize positions on international issues which have the support of the National Assembly. One could then surmise that international agreements which would support cultural and linguistic diversity in such a way as not to pose a threat to the French language and culture would be supported while those

which might put the language and culture in harm's way would not receive the support of Québec society following informed debate nor that of the National Assembly insofar as that body is able to reflect the public will. It must be said that this is a most effective use of the Westminster Model<sup>9</sup> to protect linguistic and cultural interests through both association and disassociation. Both WSIS and OQM should specify possible action in order to implement policy initiatives.

The WSIS process is committed to the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, local content and media development. Cultural diversity is seen as a prerequisite for sustainable development. In terms of linguistic diversity, there is agreement on the fact that local content in a variety of languages disseminated through the media is indispensable in achieving sustainable development in the information society as it progressively takes on global proportions. More specifically, WSIS will act in a number of key areas having a direct relationship with issues of language and culture by:

- 1 promoting cultural and linguistic diversity in the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) throughout the world;
- 2 encouraging, promoting and maintaining cultural and linguistic diversity over communication networks, in particular the Internet and through the promotion of broadband networks;
- 3 ensuring the creation, diffusion and preservation of substantive material in various languages presently in use;
- 4 preserving cultural heritage;
- 5 developing capacity for creative quality content;
- 6 ensuring the development of substantive content in communication networks relevant to local needs and user requirements;
- 7 ensuring the preservation and use of traditional and indigenous knowledge;
- 8 promoting the exchange of local content for better understanding;

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<sup>9</sup>Within the context of the British parliamentary tradition the Westminster model is a form of government based on the accountability of a collective, *i. e.* the cabinet comprised of elected members of the legislature [the National Assembly], to another collective body, the legislature or National Assembly, in the name of yet another collective, those having the legal right to vote in a given jurisdiction. Notwithstanding certain constitutional constraints, parliament or the National Assembly in the case of Québec is supreme. (Stanbury, 3-4)

- 9 promoting the innovative integration of different media for the delivery of information services, including interactive modes of communication; and
- 10 working with the media in order to popularize the use of ICTs.  
(Samassékou 4–5)

OQM's monitoring role will allow the agency to collect and analyze information on the effects of globalization in both cultural and linguistic areas; however, it will be particularly attentive to the *dynamique des langues* [language dynamics], cultural diversity and national identities given the recognized dependency of the latter on the former two. This will be done through the monitoring of bilateral and multilateral negotiations of direct interest to Québec, whether at international or regional levels. OQM's research findings will be disseminated through educational activities throughout Québec in order to heighten awareness among its citizens of globalization and its effects. In addition to this type of public information agenda, OQM will publish an annual review in which it will analyze the impact of globalization on issues within its purview, including, of course, language and culture. Given the seemingly overwhelming scope of the task at hand, OQM may enter into collaborative associations with other organizations interested in globalization phenomena, such as universities and research centers at home or abroad. (Loi 109, Article 4.1–4.5) This opens the door to a vast array of possible collaborative research projects in globalization with a clear focus on culture and language. This serves once again to underscore the pervasive *modus operandi* of protection through association.

Civil society has reacted to both processes and its positions are well documented. This input is key to the process as noted above insofar as the outcome of both the OQM and WSIS consultations was and is still intended to produce broad socio-political consensus through the *appropriation citoyenne* of globalization issues. In the case of WSIS, civil society groups have held that the Summit's Declaration and Action Plan must adopt principles that ensure that the information society of the future will be based on social inclusivity, equality of opportunity and cultural diversity. Development must be managed; the future cannot be left simply to market forces. Hence, typical of civil society intervention in such policy areas, the leadership group has identified a number of key issues which will be the subject of discussions with (supra)governments as all parties work toward some

practicable consensus. It is important to situate these issues in relation to the imbedded interest in cultural and linguistic diversity. They are:

- affordable access to ICTs at the community level;
- creation of an enabling environment for literacy development, ethno-cultural diversity and political plurality;
- prioritization of the needs of linguistic and ethnic minorities;
- guarantees of cultural diversity in e-learning contexts;
- freedom of expression;
- promotion of media diversity;
- guarantees of independent and transparent media regulation and the plurality of linguistic and cultural expression;
- <sup>a</sup> protection of cultural identity, linguistic diversity, and local content; and
- media development.<sup>10</sup>

By defining these issues as starting positions in the negotiation process, civil society has declared, without stating its objective explicitly, that bridging the digital divide in a globalized information society requires that polities, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector all work together to reduce the “democratic deficit” that exists in today’s world. Consequently, all of the linguistic and cultural issues linked to the negotiating principles described above are highly political in nature. This only serves to reinforce the position taken by Claude Hagège cited above. As the process evolves, certain polities will come to realize that they will be seen as renegades in the information and communication society of the twenty-first century and beyond if they are not able to guarantee the political rights and freedoms which constitute the very foundation upon which civil society has built its arguments.

In the microcosm of Québec politics, various civil society groups expressed similar positions during the consultations leading up to the creation of OQM. Throughout this process, language and culture remained at the heart of the debate. The similarities with the WSIS process are striking. One of the large labor movements, the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux*

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<sup>10</sup>WSIS, Plan of Action: Civil Society’s Priorities.

(CSN),<sup>11</sup> in its brief to the parliamentary commission studying the government's proposal to create OQM, the CSN put cultural issues at the forefront of its position stating that OQM *devrait... viser d'abord et avant tout les aspects sociaux de la mondialisation au sens large* [should... target first and foremost social aspects of globalization in the broadest sense of the term] and more specifically *les impacts sur ... la culture* [its effects on culture]. In the union's view, OQM should document the more hidden aspects of globalization in order to foster an open societal debate on those aspects of internationalization which may affect areas of exclusive Québec jurisdiction.

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<sup>11</sup>Founded in 1921 as a Catholic workers union, the CSN declared its official support of Québec's political independence in 1990 and has been a partisan of the Parti Québécois's political platform. It acts both regionally and internationally. Its orientation as a political labor movement is evident as witnessed by its own statement of principles: *La Confédération des syndicats nationaux est une organisation syndicale démocratique et libre. Elle est vouée à la défense de ses membres et à la promotion des valeurs qu'elle fait siennes* [The CSN is a free and democratic union organization. It is dedicated to defending its members and promoting the values it endorses.]

- *La CSN est formée de syndicats, de fédérations et de conseils centraux autonomes dans le cadre de leurs compétences respectives et elle regroupe des hommes et des femmes qui s'inspirent, dans leur action et dans leur orientation, de valeurs de liberté, de justice, de responsabilité et de solidarité.* [The CSN is composed of unions, federations and central councils that are autonomous within their respective jurisdictions. It brings together men and women whose actions and positions are inspired by values of freedom, justice, responsibility and solidarity.]
- *Dans la recherche d'une dignité toujours plus grande, ces hommes et ces femmes luttent pour l'amélioration de leurs conditions de travail et de vie. Ils contribuent de la sorte à l'amélioration des conditions d'existence de l'ensemble des travailleuses et des travailleurs.* [In the pursuit of ever-greater dignity, these men and women struggle to improve their working and living conditions. In doing so, they help improve conditions of life for all workers.]
- *Du fait de leur action syndicale, la société dans laquelle ils évoluent s'en trouve transformée.* [Because of their union action, the society in which they live and develop is transformed.]

Another civil society group worthy of note should also be mentioned, because its spokesperson was the former Québec Premier, Jacques Parizeau, known to be an unshakeable partisan of Québec sovereignty. Notwithstanding its highly focused interest in the economy and international development, the *Institut de recherche en économie contemporaine* (IRÉC)<sup>12</sup> stated that *la création de l'OQM est une nécessité* [the creation of the OQM is a necessity] (IRÉC), because globalization would inevitably bring about changes to Québec's social and cultural life. In their opinion, cultural products and services which fall under Québec jurisdiction should be excluded from international agreements. One example cited was that of education. IRÉC expressed the fear that the new phenomenon of on-line educa-

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- *C'est dans la lutte, et dans toutes les formes qu'elle emprunte, que la CSN détermine son orientation et son action revendicative.* [It is in the struggle, whatever form it takes, that the CSN decides the direction it wants to head in and the demands and issues it wants to fight for.]
  - *Les membres de la CSN partagent cette conviction qu'il n'est point de gain sans efforts, qu'il n'est point de victoire sans que les conditions qui la rendent possible ne soient mises en place.* [Members of the CSN share the conviction that nothing is gained without effort, that no victory can be won without putting in place the necessary conditions.]
  - *La première de ces conditions est la solidarité: une solidarité concrète, active, constamment nourrie et enrichie.* [The first of these conditions is solidarity: tangible, active solidarity that is constantly nurtured and enriched.]
  - *La CSN croit à la solidarité entre les travailleuses et les travailleurs de tous les pays. Pour donner un sens concret à cette conviction et afin qu'elle se traduise en action, la CSN est affiliée à la Confédération internationale des syndicats libres.* [The CSN believes in solidarity among workers of all countries. To make this conviction a tangible reality and turn it into action, the CSN is affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.]

Source: <http://www.csn.qc.ca/Connaitre/DeclPrincFrSet.html>

<sup>12</sup>IRÉC's stated purpose is to foster socio-economic and policy research with a view to defining the role of various regional and international stakeholders in international development. The economist, Jacques Parizeau, Professor Emeritus at the École des Hautes Études Commerciales (HÉC) is the chair of IRÉC's Research Committee. Source: <http://www.irec.net/>

tion, and even degrees, could in the long run undermine the cultural sovereignty of Québec in this area. OQM would provide a means to track such trends and to warn the government of any external threats or encroachments on exclusive areas of jurisdiction. (IRÉC 19–20) In their view, education remains an exclusive responsibility of the state. Any erosion of this responsibility through the intervention of outside private-sector forces should be identified, studied and guarded against. OQM would be able to fulfill this role according to IRÉC.

Yet, IRÉC recognized that OQM could not act with maximum efficiency alone. Hence, its spokespersons clearly felt that there was an advantage to working with organizations such as *La Francophonie*, which has similar objectives in terms of linguistic and cultural protection. It was even felt advisable to delegate some measure of the state's sovereignty to international organizations such as *La Francophonie* insofar as the objectives of such organizations meshed with those of Québec. Association with a larger body could then provide a greater measure of protection and be an effective tool in the preservation of Québec's specific national identity.

This position was tempered, however, by that of another civil society group, the *Union des producteurs agricoles* (UPA),<sup>13</sup> which conjured up *le spectre de la perte de la souveraineté* [the spectre of the loss of sovereignty]. Given that the agricultural sector has played an all-pervasive role in the development of Québec as a culturally distinct society, the UPA was of the view that OQM should *éviter de dissocier l'économie de la dimension sociale* [avoid disassociating economic from social issues] (UPA 9). The UPA recognizes the critical link between the economy and Québec's linguistic and cultural history in both national and international contexts. Clearly, as a matter of historical imperative, the government should be called upon to strike a balance between unilateral action and action through association.

Notwithstanding the obvious benefits of internationalization and the inevitable movement toward a globalized economy, states outside the Anglo-American world are rightly concerned with the potential loss of language, culture and identity. This is one of the fundamental reasons for establishing

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<sup>13</sup>Created in 1972, the UPA is the outgrowth of an older agricultural laborers' movement, the *Union catholique des cultivateurs*. The history of this highly nationalistic labor movement is of interest in the context of the sovereignty debate. See the UPA WEB site: *Les ancêtres du syndicalisme agricole* <http://www.upa.qc.ca/histoire.html>

watchdog organizations such as OQM and for insisting on the basic principles of linguistic and cultural diversity in the WSIS process.

Hence, globally speaking, the Anglo-American world represents for many players a real and present danger. The steamroller effect of ubiquitous Anglo-American culture, it is feared, will lead not only to the marginalization of some “international” languages, but also to the progressive disappearance of peripheral and regional languages and dialects and finally to the *perte de la diversité linguistique* [loss of linguistic diversity]. The general thanatophobia of thinkers like Claude Hagège is said by his detractors to border on bold anglophobia and may in fact simply be a thinly veiled version of this pervasive anti-anglo-saxon movement. Louis-Jean Calvet has labeled this fear of a world-wide *monolinguisme anglophone* [English unilingualism] as *irraisonnée* [unreasoned] and *improductive* [unproductive]. (Calvet 115–117)

It does appear, however, that both WSIS and OQM are serious attempts to bring reasoned discourse to the debate on linguistic and cultural diversity. Whether it be at the state level or in international fora, there is a growing recognition of the fact that the protection and preservation of languages and cultures outside the realm of world Englishes may be achieved in two ways which are not mutually exclusive. Both association and disassociation may eventually have similar effects. Yet, in all circumstances states and organizations should strive to allow reason to prevail and to ensure that as a world community we do not fall prey to unreasonable fears.

Managing potential phobias of the like is at the root of the current WSIS process. It is hoped that reasoned discourse will guide Summit participants from all sectors through the regional, national and institutional conferences, the WSIS preparatory committees, the Geneva Summit in 2003, the second preparatory process and finally the 2005 World Summit in Tunis that should yield a well-thought-out action plan to bridge the digital divide. There is no room for unreasoned fear in this process. But there is room for politics to defend their specific interests, to align themselves with others and thereby to afford each other a more effective measure of linguistic and cultural protection in keeping with the generally accepted principle of linguistic and cultural diversity in the post-2005 universe.

Now that OQM is in place, one may expect that this independent, non-governmental agency will promote dialogue and reasoned discourse on the effects of globalization without polarizing the debate on specific issues. Madame Louise Beaudoin, the Parti Québécois’ Minister of International

Relations at the time the law creating OQM was adopted, recognized that there would be a debate on some questions, that there would be a “choc des idées” [clash of ideas]; nevertheless, she expressed the reasonable hope that OQM would serve to bridge the divide between citizens and their government by allowing the former to claim ownership of the debate to some degree. Despite the legislation enabling the government to disassociate itself from measures deemed to weaken its own sovereign jurisdiction, OQM put forward the concept of protection through association and dialogue with a vast network of interested players.

We may conclude with the words of Madame Beaudoin herself, *L'Observatoire constituera le plus intéressant « réseau des réseaux » qui soit*. [The OQM will constitute the most interesting “network of networks” that exists.]<sup>14</sup> Researchers and policy planners should take heed. The need to build workable networks surely outweighs the irrational fear of the “other” which causes its victims to withdraw into themselves and to deprive themselves of the multiple benefits of a pluralistic world.

#### EPILOGUE

Following the 2003 Québec elections, the Québec Liberal Party formed the government. The newly appointed Minister of International Relations, Monique Gagnon-Tremblay, did not provide OQM with an operating budget, and the position of Director General was left vacant. In the end, shortly after its election, the Charest government nipped the project in the bud.

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