

## THE CHALLENGE OF MULTIDISCIPLINARITY

In his book, *Taking Stock: Canadian Studies in the Nineties*, David Cameron defines the disciplinary boundaries of Canadian studies<sup>88</sup> using a series of exclusions which provide the limits of a project which, at least in principle, seeks to account for all of the aspects one can consider as belonging to *area studies* methodology. Canadian Studies have the advantage of being undertaken in the *lingua franca* of today's scholars and of being accessible to all disciplines. The case of Québec is more complex. Of course, in most cases, its cultural and political constitution are taken into account in English-language works dealing with Canada as a whole, but often in a way that clashes with research carried out in

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88. David Cameron, *Taking Stock: Canadian Studies in the Nineties*, Montreal, Association for Canadian Studies, 1996, p. 1-2.

French. Few works published in French are translated. In addition, researchers interested in Québec must without exception read (and often write) in French. Among them we count several humanities specialists, some happy cultured individuals, those born francophone, as well as professors of French and francophone language and literatures.

This situation explains (or excuses) the more literary and less interdisciplinary character of Québec Studies.<sup>89</sup> In most countries, literary studies account for half of Québec Studies as a whole. The linguistic question has a direct influence on this proportion. In effect, one observes the same situation for Canadian Studies in countries where the language of

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89. It is "the dominant character of literary preoccupations that everywhere characterizes the Centres for Québec Studies and which differentiates them from Canadian Studies Centres which, like René Hardy noted at the 1993 colloquium, seem to have affirmed their multidisciplinarydisciplinary vocation more greatly." (Jean Marie Klinkenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 88 [Our translation]).

scientific communication is not English, such as in Germany.<sup>90</sup>

One of the contemporary premises of all social sciences is that they display an interdisciplinary character which touches on all aspects of knowledge. Literature, history, geography and sociology thus all claim that their critical perspective considers a vast spectrum of disciplines. Therefore, Québec Studies, dominated by literary scholars and sociologists, would be defined in terms of an interdisciplinary character inherent to these disciplines. However, even if this enlargement indeed engages with the preoccupations of

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90. Ursula Mathis-Moser cites the study by Rainer-Olaf Schultze and Maria Frühwald, *Canadian Studies in the German-speaking Countries*, which confirms the importance of the humanities, namely of literature: "the large interest and the high membership figures in the Humanities, especially English literature/linguistics, and in Geography" and "the relatively small interest in Economics, History or Political Science." *Canadian Studies in the German-speaking Countries: The State of the Art*, Bochum, Brockmeyer, 1992, p. 33.

other disciplines, it does not mobilize the consensus of the other disciplines thereby convoked.

In practice, few cases confirm the possibility of uniting numerous disciplines in a scientific project on Québec.<sup>91</sup> Two exceptions nevertheless emerge. First, in the Netherlands, the University of Groningen's Centre for Canadian Studies brings together around twenty professors from the faculties of Arts, Law, Geography and Management.<sup>92</sup> Second, in Germany, "the exception to retain is the new Interdisciplinary Centre for Franco-Canadian/Québec-Saxony research (CIFRAQS) in Dresden, directed by a civilizationist (historian and political scientist), a linguist and a literary scholar."<sup>93</sup>

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91. Let us observe that this is the project advanced by the *Revue internationale d'études québécoises, Globe*, founded in 1998, which seeks to bring diverse disciplines together within a single space of publication and scientific diffusion.

92. See Jaap Lintvelt, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

93. Peter Klaus and Ingo Kolboom, *op. cit.*, p. 262 (our translation).

As for publishing in journals, the general impression is that “learned journals associated with disciplines are more prestigious” than multidisciplinary journals. Jane Moss thus observes that in the United States, professors (other than literary scholars) “prefer to submit their articles to journals like the *Journal of Politics*, *The American Journal of Sociology*, *Policy Studies Journal*, *Comparative Politics*, etc. [...] rather than publishing in the *American Review of Canadian Studies* or in *Québec Studies*.”<sup>94</sup> To this problem one can add the fact evoked above that certain social science specialists do not identify themselves as “*québécois*” and only participate tangentially in the elaboration of the underlying interdisciplinary project.

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94. Jane Moss, *op. cit.*, p. 383 (our translation).