

METHODOLOGY,
PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES
IN QUÉBEC STUDIES

Defining forms and contexts of its specificity; familiarizing the world with this stable or changing specificity : efforts of any culture explicitly or implicitly strive to realize these two objectives¹.

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The motivations, as well as the scientific and diplomatic objectives which determine the development and future of Québec studies throughout the world, are just beginning to be the object of study for scholars. This is

1. Our translation.

occurring at the very moment when the constitution of Québec as an object of knowledge and study is becoming institutionalized almost everywhere in the world. This greatly surprises many Québécois. They find it difficult to understand the interest in their society and culture, which they still consider to be fragile, although this does not prevent them from drawing an ambiguous pride from the attention. Enhancing the value of difference, as enunciated in programmatic announcements,² brings forth both universal anxieties and unanticipated comparisons. It may also possibly bring a better knowledge of cultures which are plural, dependant and at the same time particular. These latter characteristics often define small nations endowed with poorly traced historical boundaries, and with jealous and often injured identities. This is at least what the mythic image of national

2. "Universalize specificity" [*universaliser la spécificité*], mentions the slogan used by the *Association internationale des études québécoises*.

construction proposes, but foreign perceptions have slowly called this image into question. These constructions are continually rebuilt and remodelled by each one of the perspectives which are now being cast on Québec, and which in turn create new imaginary intellectual constructions : “we must not hide it,” writes Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, “our Québec, to us, directors of Québec studies, is also an imaginary Québec. A Québec which authorizes us to imagine ourselves in a way other than that we are.”³

PRE-HISTORY OF QUÉBEC STUDIES

Québec studies, as they are viewed today, developed under the triple effect of the intensification of Québec’s international role, the emergence of Canadian studies, and the liberalization of European university struc-

3. Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, “Des études québécoises en Belgique. Une fidélité plurielle”, *Globe. Revue internationale d’études québécoises*, vol. 4, n° 2, 2001, p. 94 (our translation).