

*The Building of a New Political Party in a Context of Disenchantment: The Example of
Québec Solidaire—How and Why?*

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For the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association

York University - Toronto

June 2006

The Building of a New Political Party in a Context of Disenchantment: The Example of Québec Solidaire—How and Why?

Summary: In the first part of this paper we reconstruct the history of Québec Solidaire, the new provincial political party born in Montreal in February 2006. In the second part of the paper we propose an analysis of this process using a “stag beetle” model of political representation. With this model we are able to disconnect the places from the actors of political representation and therefore understand how the division of tasks between social and political actors has been challenged. This model also proposes a series of specific explanations of current political changes in Québec society.

Résumé : Après avoir proposé une reconstruction de l’histoire de la création de Québec Solidaire (première partie), le nouveau parti politique québécois qui a vu le jour en février 2006, nous proposons une analyse de ce phénomène pour le moins surprenant, à partir d’une modélisation « en cerf-volant » du champ de la représentation politique (deuxième partie). Cette modélisation nous permet de déconnecter les lieux et les acteurs de la représentation politique et d’envisager la possibilité d’une redéfinition du partage des tâches entre les acteurs impliqués (comment). Elle propose également une série d’explications spécifiques (pourquoi) des transformations observées au Québec.

Recent literature on political representation highlights two main trends regarding citizens' relationships to politics in Northern democracies: 1) Political parties are in crises and/or a large number of their militants and electorates are disaffected by them (Perrineau, 2003; Manin, 2000; Norris, 1999); 2) At the same time, political protest actions appear to have gained in popularity (Norris, 1999; Ion, 1997; Péchu and Filleule, 1993).

In this context, the creation of a new openly left-wing political party (neither anti-party nor anti-system) that is partially rooted in social movement organizations, could be considered out of place at the very least. This is precisely what happened in Québec on February 4 and 5, 2006, with the birth of Québec Solidaire (QS) as a brand new provincial political party.

The aim of this paper is to make sense of the situation. The first part recounts QS history as a political party and political movement. The second part of the paper, which is more theoretical, proposes a conceptualization of the political representation field as a “stag beetle” model. This analytical grid allows us to consider the growing fluidity between the boundaries defining the places and actors involved in political representation.

Our research is based on interviews with key actors (Amir Khadir and Molly Alexander for *Union des Forces Progressistes* (UFP); Françoise David, Lorraine Guay and Manon Massé for *D'abord solidaires* (DS) and *Option Citoyenne* (OC); and militants from the two branches of QS); a systematic press review (*La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, *Le Soleil*) since 2000; direct observation of key events in QS history; the production of short documentaries during various OC conventions¹; and written documentation obtained for the most part from the Internet².

¹ The *Centre de recherche sur les politiques et le développement social* (CPDS) financed the production in full.

² In order to validate factual information, we used the “triangulation method,” which consists of verifying a piece of information against two other sources.

**From *Rassemblement pour l'alternative politique* to *D'abord Solidaires* to *Québec Solidaire*:
From Movement to Party?**

The birth of QS is the result of two parallel processes that merged in February 2006. Each process was marked by key events comprising the “political memory” of the organizations and militants. Here we reconstruct the history of QS from interviews with major actors, documents of various organizations and press reviews.

The Story of the Rassemblement pour l'Alternative Politique (RAP) and the Union des Forces Progressistes (UFP)

The birth of the UFP in 2002 was the result of the union of three partisan organizations (the *Parti de la démocratie socialiste* (PDS), the *Parti Communiste Québécois* (PCQ) and the *Rassemblement pour une alternative politique* (RAP)) and the involvement of independent militants in a specific political project (Interview with Amir Khadir, March 2006).

Left political history has always been tumultuous in Québec. Left politics was first linked with the Canadian left and the transformations of the *Cooperative Commonwealth Federation* (CCF), the left political party in Canada. The Québec left strove to be autonomous from the federal political scene but was also strongly divided due to ideological differences. In 1989, the Québec New Democratic Party severed its ties with its federal counterpart and became independent. Just after the general elections of 1994, the QNDP transformed itself into the *Parti de la démocratie socialiste* (PDS). The Communist Party of Québec (PCQ), which was affiliated with the Communist Party of Canada but with specific status, was founded in 1921 (Lemieux,

2005). While the PCQ did not have any electoral success (the PCQ obtains between 0.1 and 0.5% of the vote during general elections), leaders from the party played an active role in the birth of the RAP (Directeur général des élections, Québec, 2006).

Based on the accounts of UFP members, the starting point was in 1997, when the left newspaper *L'Aut'journal* published a text by Paul Cliche that called for the creation of a political alternative. This call was followed by the first gathering to promote a political alternative on November 29 and 30, 1997 in Montreal. Five hundred people attended the event, and several well-known left persons were involved. In addition to Paul Cliche, Michel Chartrand and Pierre Dubuc attended the gathering.

On November 7 and 8, 1998, the RAP movement was formed and the manifesto "*Pour que renaisse l'espoir*" was adopted. Paul Cliche was the first RAP spokesperson. During the general elections of the November 30, the RAP presented 7 candidates, and the PDS presented 97. Left candidates received 35,000 votes, which was a record for militants (Directeur Général des élections, Québec, 2006).

From the outset, RAP's ultimate goal was to create a political citizens' movement dedicated to the birth of a progressive political party (Interview with Molly Alexander, 2003). This result could not be achieved without a constant effort at openness towards other left political and social forces in Québec. RAP builders were also motivated by the necessary unity, or at least convergence, of interests. In May 2000, the RAP invited the PCQ, the PDS and all other progressive forces to participate in a conference on left unity. Six hundred and fifty persons were in attendance. This event marked the first time RAP militants met militants who were more involved in social action movements. At the end of the conference, the RAP, the PCQ, the Bloc Pot and the Québec section of the Green Party of Canada formed a joint committee. The objective

of the committee was to bring the positions of the various organizations, which held distinct public positions and embarked upon distinct course of action, closer together.

On the weekend of November 24-26, 2000, the RAP movement transformed itself into a political party. The *Rassemblement pour une alternative politique* became the *Rassemblement pour l'alternative progressiste*. Suzanne Lachance was the first party spokesperson, followed by Pierre Dostie, who held the position from December 2001 until the foundation of the *Union des forces progressistes* (UFP) in June 2002. The creation of the UFP was accelerated by another key event: the by-election of April 9, 2001 in the Montreal riding of Mercier. Strengthened by their new unity, the three main left political parties organized a common front and received 24.6% of the vote. Candidate Paul Cliche finished ahead of the *Action Démocratique du Québec* (ADQ) candidate (Directeur général des élections, 2006). Finally, the RAP, the PDS, the PCQ and the *Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain* (a CSN union) negotiated an agreement at the end of May that was adopted by each organization in June. Under this agreement, a coalition was formed called the *Union des forces progressistes* (UFP), for an undetermined term.

During the RAP convention of December 8, 2001, the following proposal was adopted, receiving 55% of votes:

Que le RAP, réuni en Congrès spécial ce 8 décembre 2001, se prononce en faveur de la création d'un Parti fédéré de gauche dans les meilleurs délais et si possible avant les prochaines élections générales. (Rioux and Bouchard, 2003).

This decision led to the resignation of Suzanne Lachance (spokesperson) as well as other members of the National Coordination Committee (Dostie, on-line).

The UFP was officially founded on June 15 and 16, 2002 in Montreal and was composed of the RAP, the PDS, the PCQ and independent militants identifying with the UFP coalition.

François Cyr was elected President, Pierre Dostie and Molly Alexander as spokespersons and Monique Moisan as Secretary General of the Party.

Le congrès (de fondation de l'UFP) a adopté l'essentiel de sa plate-forme électorale en opposition à la mondialisation néolibérale, pour la lutte à la pauvreté et à l'exclusion, l'instauration d'une véritable démocratie participative - incluant la réforme du mode de scrutin et diverses mesures axées sur la justice sociale et la protection de l'environnement. La question nationale, qui a occupé une bonne place dans les débats, a été traitée en relation étroite avec les projets de société progressiste de l'UFP. (*La Gauche*, June 16, 2002, on-line).

During the second UFP convention, which was held on February 1 and 2, 2003, key elements of the electoral platform were adopted: the UFP is a left party; in favour of Québec sovereignty; closely related to social movements taking place on a global scale; with an internal decision-making process that encourages direct member participation; and acknowledgement of specific streams within the coalition. The new party had a very high proportion of young members: 56% of members were under the age of 35, and 29% were under the age of 29 (Interview with Amir Khadir, March 2006, citing an internal UFP study). For half of the members, the UFP was their first partisan affiliation. The minority presence of Anglophones and/or Montreal cultural communities was also noteworthy. It appears that the first UFP audience was formed more from disappointed electors who no longer voted in general elections than from PQ voters (Interview with Amir Khadir, March 2006).

During the 2003 general elections, the UFP presented 73 candidates, the Green Party presented 36 candidates, and 5 candidates ran as independents. The left received 56,000 votes. The UFP received only 1% of votes in Québec as a whole and 2% (average) in ridings where it presented candidates. In the Montreal riding of Mercier, Amir Khadir obtained 17.92% of the vote (ahead of the ADQ candidate), Jill Hanley received 6.86% in Sainte-Marie-Saint-Jacques, and Gaétan Breton received 6.48% (Directeur Général des Élections, Québec, 2006). The UFP

considered the 2003 campaign as a positive experience, because it had reached its goals (i.e., to increase its popularity, raise the number of members, influence the debates and gain media visibility) (Interview with Molly Alexander, 2003).

The general elections of 2003 were marked by the increasing popularity of Mario Dumont's right-wing party, the *Action Démocratique du Québec* (ADQ). In polls conducted a few months before the elections, 32% of voter intention was in favour of the ADQ (see polls published in *Le Devoir* and the *Globe and Mail*, May 31, 2002). The creation of the non-partisan collective *D'abord Solidaires* (DS) was a direct response to this right-wing increase within the electorate (Interview with Lorraine Guay, 2004). Its first mandate was to propose a detailed analysis of all electoral platforms in order to heighten people's awareness of the social risks inherent in some of the parties' proposals. Even if the *D'abord Solidaires* and UFP positions were very similar, the collective did not pronounce itself in favour of a specific party because the group was divided on the issue of the "useful vote." Some of the DS militants felt it necessary to vote against the ADQ and for the PQ in order to prevent a strong division of votes, while other militants preferred voting for the UFP to send a message to the right-wing PQ temptation (Interview with Lorraine Guay, 2004).

After the elections and the foundation of the political movement *Option Citoyenne* (OC) (see following section for details), the UFP presented itself to a greater extent as a party/process working to unite all progressive forces in Québec society.

At the same time another group was formed: *Syndicalistes et Progressistes pour un Québec Libre* (SPQ Libre). In June 2005, it became a political club within the PQ. SPQ Libre was founded by Pierre Dubuc and by other union members such as Monique Richard (current President of the PQ). On several occasions SPQ Libre asked members of the UFP to join them inside the PQ, but to no avail.

On November 5, 2005, during a special UFP convention, a resolution to merge with OC was unanimously adopted. The UFP and OC were laid to rest in February 2006 and were reborn as a bigger political entity, *Québec Solidaire*.

The OC Story

Closely linked to the history of the community movement and the women's movement in particular, the story of the OC begins somewhere in the 1960s. In this section we reconstruct an abridged history of OC originating in the 1990s.

The existence of OC is linked to the post-referendum context of 1995, when the issue of sovereignty disappeared after the referendum. Sovereignty “partners” who had mobilized to a large extent during the referendum campaign went back to their day-to-day militant work, often with the poorest members of society, but their dreams had been broken. The arrival of the Bouchard government in January 1996 clearly showed that the political context had changed and that a new period had begun: one of financial austerity. The new Premier looked for large consensus-building in order to validate his main objective of a “zero deficit” in 2000. He convened two major socio-economic conferences in October and November of 1996³. During the November summit, the government recognized groups from the community sector as “real” partners (Québec, 1996), but refused to agree on group demands concerning a “zero impoverishment clause,” a proposal formulated primarily by women's groups and anti-poverty groups in order to challenge the government's “zero deficit” proposal⁴. This refusal was the

³Initiated by the Premier, they were composed of social and economic partners representing Québec and invited by the government. The youth, through the *Conseil permanent de la jeunesse*, organized a parallel summit because they were not invited to the *Chantier de l'économie et de l'emploi*. See “Le sommet sur l'économie et l'emploi,” *Forces*, 114 (Fall 1996): 41.

⁴ The proposal was to adopt a law that would prohibit the deepening of poverty among most vulnerable members of the society, regardless of their status (workers, unemployed, students). See Vivian Labrie, “La

breaking point of the summit: the President of the *Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)*, Françoise David, left the negotiation table, as did the spokespersons of the National Coalition of Women against Poverty and François Saillant from *Solidarité Populaire Québec* (Pichette, 1996: A8). Beyond being a failure, this event constituted a major challenge to the more consensual history of relationships between the PQ and leaders of community movements.

This falling-out with the PQ was exacerbated during the Québec mobilizations of the World March of Women in 2000. Encouraged by the success of the 1995 march *Du pain et des roses*, Québec feminist militants, who had worked for three years in the organization of a world march uniting 159 countries and 5000 women's groups, were expecting positive a response by the government to their demands. The Bouchard government's refusal to address almost all of the 10 issues raised by the march in Québec was a bitter disappointment (David, 2001). The principal concession of the government was to raise the minimum wage by 10 cents. This was received as "a slap in the face" according to Françoise David. From this point onward, a number of feminist leaders and militants began to look for the possibility of collective action in the field of partisan politics⁵.

During the fall of 2002, Research Chair Léo-Paul Lauzon (who was also present during the first RAP meeting in 1997) organized a conference entitled "Social Movements and Political Action: Which Left Are We Talking About?". During the conference, Françoise David launched the idea of a popular movement to fight the right-wing ideas that were growing in public opinion polls (*Le Devoir*, May 31, 2002). After the conference, several personalities from the community movement, in particular several former members of the FFQ who had been leading the 2000 mobilizations as well as a number of artists, launched the "*Appel pour un Québec D'abord*

clause d'appauvrissement zéro. Une jeune idée qui demande à mûrir," *Le Devoir*, November 11, 1996, p. A7.

⁵ Françoise David launched the idea of a feminist political party as early as 2000. David, 2001.

Solidaires,” published in *Le Devoir* on January 28, 2003. One thousand four hundred people signed in support of the *Appel* (D’abord Solidaires, on-line). DS quickly became a citizens’ movement and launched a popular education campaign on the issue of the elections announced for the spring of 2003. DS developed as a non-partisan actor whose main task consisted of presenting the major political parties’ programs from the point of view of the common good. During the campaign, the DS website compared the parties’ programs, allowing citizens to be informed and to understand the differences between the parties.

In the fall of 2003, the DS citizens’ movement drew up its post-election balance sheet. Three tendencies were emerging from within the movement. Some of the militants wanted to form a political party that would become a “left, feminist, alter/globalization, and ecologist party”; others preferred to remain a citizens’ movement for popular education; lastly, another group of militants wanted to contribute to the emergence of a libertarian movement focussed on local networking and more direct actions (Interview with Lorraine Guay, 2005). At the November meeting, the three options were proposed, and all three were adopted. DS would continue as a non-partisan movement, *Option Citoyenne* would be created around Françoise David and François Saillant, and the libertarian option would develop in Montreal and in the regions to create a network of libertarian self-managed collectives.

In the spring of 2004, Françoise David and her collaborators published a small book entitled *Bien commun recherché: une option citoyenne*, in which the possibilities of social change are explored. As the author states, it was neither a program nor an election platform. The book outlines the values driving the members of OC regarding democracy, culture, sovereignty, economy, distribution of wealth and state and public services. This book is viewed as a tool for dialog between OC and the population of Québec. It served as a basis for a tour of the Québec regions during the summer of 2004. The first national meeting of OC took place in Québec City

on November 12, 13 and 14 in 2004. Four themes were on the agenda: 1) a responsible economy; 2) a party for the common good; 3) a sovereign Québec; 4) a pluralist and democratic party (Option Citoyenne, on-line). Fundamental decisions regarding the movement's vision were taken during this first meeting of 300 delegates: OC is a feminist political party and a left party. Nevertheless, no consensus was possible regarding the issue of Québec's political status, but formal negotiations were commenced with the UFP in order to proceed with the merger of the two political entities in the short term.

In one year, OC grew from 300 to 2000 members. The second national meeting, which was held in April 2005 in Montreal, centred on the party's fundamental vision and relationships with aboriginal peoples. Much of the time was monopolized by debates regarding the sovereignty issue. Is OC a sovereignist movement? If so, what is the status of sovereignty: a major objective or an instrument serving the common good? How is it possible to reconcile the OC and UFP positions, which are openly in favour of sovereignty? It was during the third national meeting, in October 2005, that OC delegates adopted a proposal in favour of Québec sovereignty. However, they insisted that sovereignty remain a secondary objective and that the pursuit of the common good would continue to be the main focal point (Robitaille, 2005). At this third meeting, OC formally adopted the proposal to merge the movement with the UFP as well as the terms and conditions of this merger.

Québec Solidaire's founding convention took place in February 2006, with 1000 militants in attendance. They elected two spokespersons, Françoise David and Amir Khadir, and a national coordination committee composed of nine women and seven men.

The histories of OC and the UFP are written in the same national and international political contexts but differ with regards to their militant's foundations and trajectories.

For Amir Khadir, UFP spokesperson from 2003 to 2006, the birth of the UFP is inextricably linked with the Bouchard government's post-referendum period, following the 1995 loss (Interview with Amir Khadir, 2006). Several sovereigntist militants, who were very active during the referendum campaign, were against the "zero deficit" policy proposed by Bouchard. From this perspective, the emergence of the UFP is a clear break from the PQ, which had monopolized the political landscape with the sovereignty issue and social democracy. The same is true for OC, as one of its public aims was to enable and make viable a left political option independent of the issue of Québec's political status. Later, the growth of the ADQ and its program, largely inspired by British neo-conservatives, galvanized progressive militants and convinced some community leaders that central issues were at stake on the electoral scene. The feeling that it had become increasingly necessary to politically represent the Québec left independently from the PQ gradually transformed into a duty.

In addition, beginning in 1998, Québec experienced a revival of protest demonstrations against free-trade issues. These protests represented a renewal of militant experiences and greatly influenced the political trajectories of the two movements. In particular, the preparation of the People's Summit held in Quebec City in April 2001, in response to the Summit of the Americas, which brought together 34 Heads of State of the Americas for the negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), directly inspired the slogan of the RAP electoral campaign in Mercier "Another Québec is possible" (Interview with Amir Khadir, 2006).

In the same vein, the election of Brazilian President Lula and the formation of a Workers' Party government in October 2002 would serve as a model and represent a concrete example of the possible renewal of left politics during the 2002 Conference of Progressive Québec Militants. QS was clearly embedded in this global context of social forces searching for better alternatives.

In contrast, the two movements are marked by different militant trajectories. The individuals who founded the RAP shared three characteristics that would hinder the development of the UFP: they were militants from partisan parties or unions, resided in Montreal and were mostly male. Paul Cliche was a political militant and well known by left networks in Montreal (UFP, on-line). He was the founding President of the *Front d'Action politique* (FRAP), the first progressive political party in Montreal, and a candidate in the Rosemont district in 1970 during the elections that took place in the context of the October crisis (a major political crisis between Québec and Ottawa). He was later elected as a municipal councillor (Plateau Mont-Royal) for the *Rassemblement des citoyens et citoyennes* of Montreal (RCM). In 1997, he left municipal politics and became involved at the provincial level. As a candidate for the UFP (which was not yet officially formed) in the Mercier riding in 2001, he received 24.2% of votes. For numerous leftist militants, this became a symbol allowing for the existence and success of a left political party in Québec⁶.

Michel Chartrand, another important personality for the RAP, was also a well-known activist in Québec. A famous union leader, he was involved in provincial politics as early as the mid-1950s as leader of the Social Democratic Party of Québec (the Québec branch of the CCF). He was later the founding member of the Socialist Party of Québec in 1963 and became its first President. He was a candidate in the 1998 provincial elections in the district of Jonquière as the RAP spokesperson against Lucien Bouchard, the future Premier of Québec. He received 15% of votes, also becoming a legend in the eyes of leftists (Chartrand, on-line biography). Lastly, we have Pierre Dubuc, director and editor of the leftist newspaper *L'Aut'journal* since its foundation in 1984. Actively involved with the RAP at the beginning of the movement, he joined the PQ in

⁶ Despite the specific circumstances of these elections: Claudel Toussaint, the PQ candidate, was accused of domestic violence and the PLQ candidate, Nathalie Rochefort, was a newcomer to politics.

2004 and created the political club SPQ Libre with other union personalities. As an SPQ Libre candidate for the PQ leadership campaign in 2005, he obtained only 1.22% of the vote (SPQ Libre, on-line).

Although it might be somewhat of a shortcut to reduce the UFP to the initiative of these three men⁷, they represent the builders of the movement. In contrast, OC was characterized by different militant trajectories. People involved at the beginning of the movement were, for the most part, members of the community movement, and the women's movement in particular. This was the case for Françoise David as well as Manon Massé (the first QS candidate who ran in the April 2006 by-election and received 22% of votes, right behind the PLQ) and Alexa Conradi, both former FFQ workers. François Saillant, who was the spokesperson for OC along with Françoise David, was also the spokesperson for the FRAPRU (*Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain*), a federation of groups dealing with housing issues.

The distinct militant histories of the movements go hand-in-hand with the mode of operation, which is also distinct in the two political organizations. These differences would constitute the main elements of negotiation during the merger process. Both the UFP and OC claimed to represent renewed ways of doing politics. Thus, both movements agreed on the necessity of adopting specific parity measures to guarantee a place for women inside the party (even if OC was a bit sceptical about the true place of women within the UFP, as Françoise David states in her book); both emphasized direct democracy and the decision-making process by consensus; both favoured collective leadership instead of a powerful single leader. Nevertheless, the OC movement refused to give special weight to collective organizations inside the future party, preferring the scenario of one member = one vote and willing to ensure full autonomy of the

⁷ Several women have contributed to the UFP: Suzanne Lachance, Monique Moisan and Molly Alexander. Other militants, such as Amir Khadir, who did not come from parties or unions, were more involved in international solidarity networks.

party (and vice-versa) from all social groups (briefing document for the national meeting, OC, November 2004, on-line).

We note here that the initial plan of the UFP involved uniting all progressive groups and partisans of these groups, while for OC, the main objective was to create a member party that could serve as a relay for social movements but that was independent from all organizations. The reconstructing of the history of the two movements shows that empirical reality was not quite so simple. For example, DS did play a role on the partisan field, intervening in the electoral campaign of 2002; the UFP was a party and at the same time was acting like a movement in its relationships with other social groups; OC claimed to be a movement before being a party. In order to better grasp this complex history from the point of view of political representation, an analytical grid is necessary in order to:

- 1) disconnect places and actors of representation;
- 2) consider the empirical and theoretical possibility of being in several places at the same time (movement AND party).

In the next section, we propose such a model, with the “stag beetle” model of political representation.

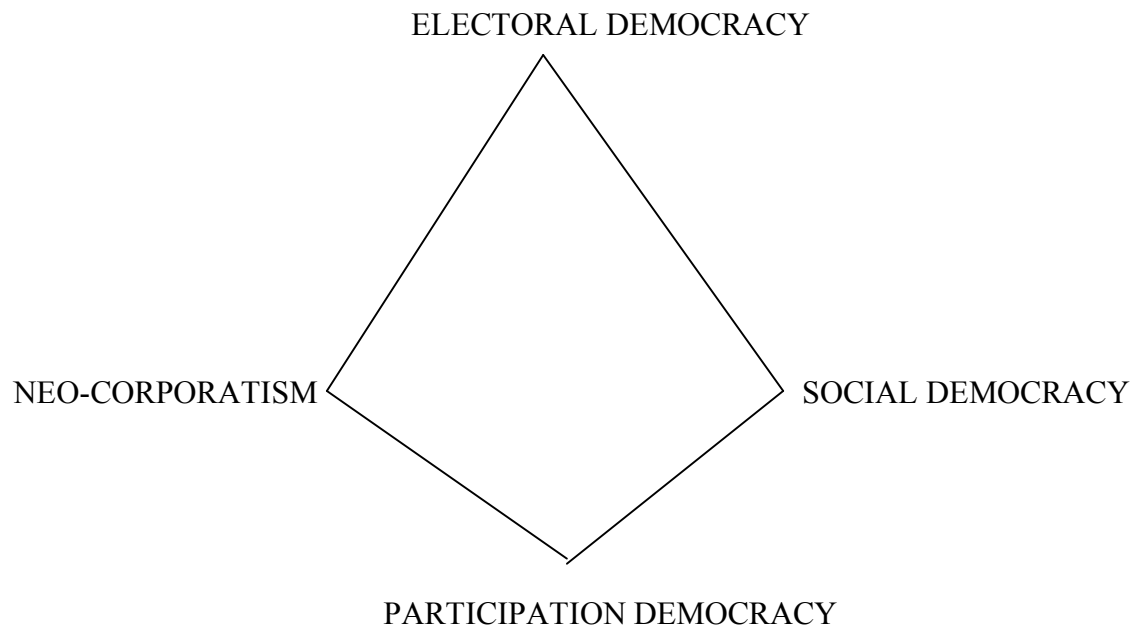
The Stag Beetle Model of Representation

More and more authors agree that the concept of political representation should be expanded beyond the electoral scene, but little research has proposed a formalization or systematization of this concept that could be used in empirical analyses. In fact, the issue of expansion is treated from the point of view of organizations (what is the impact of expansion on social movements or political parties?). In the little research that has considered different types of actors together,

analyses are carried out in terms of competition or complementarity between actors (Della Porta, 2001; Phillips, 1996). What, precisely, is the nature of the relationships between actors in the political representation field? Who does what, where and how? Basic issues have not been addressed directly or studied empirically. Furthermore, the multiplication of places of representation and the overlapping of these places are not concretely considered. An increasing body of research is examining local or global places for governance, and some is focussing on the articulation of multi-level governance. However, the links between the multiplication of places and multiplicity of actors intervening in the political representation field have not been clearly established (Morin et Rochefort, 1998; Klein, 2002). We propose to consider a large framework of analysis organized around poles of representation.

Political representation is considered as the aggregation and conversion of socially built identities and socio-economic interests into political interests⁸. The stag beetle graph describes four poles of representation of interests and identities.

⁸ We used Bruno Théret's definition (1998), in addition to the concept of identity as proposed by Jane Jenson and Susan Phillips (1996).



The original idea of the welfare diamond is based on the notion that responsibility for welfare has always been shared between different sectors of responsibility (public responsibility, family responsibility, community responsibility and merchant responsibility), which are characterized by specific logics of intervention (Evers and Svelick, 1991; Evers, Pijl and Ungerson, 1994).

By transposing this grid to the field of political representation, we demonstrate that the responsibility for political representation of interests and identities has always been shared between different poles of representation as well. Of course, the importance of certain poles with respect to each other depends on the places and times considered.

First, each pole is characterized by an arena. According to Érik Neveu's definition, an arena is an organized system of institutions, procedures and actors in which social forces are able to be heard and use resources to obtain responses to the issues they raise (Neveu, 2006: 16). He draws a distinction between the electoral arena, the media arena and the social conflicts arena. Second, each pole is defined by logics of representation. Is it a form of representation by delegation of power or by direct participation? Does it involve individual representation or collective representation? Does the process of representation emphasize confrontation or collaboration? The crossing of these elements defines one pole from another.

The electoral democracy pole is defined by a place: the electoral arena and the logic of representation are founded on the delegation of the power of citizens to an elected representative. Based on popular sovereignty, this pole favours a representation of interests and ideas by aggregation. This function of representation in institutions such as government and parliament could be removed at the end of each electoral mandate.

In our society, the majority of representatives come from political parties. They are considered distinct from other collective actors because they are the only ones in theory who seek

to gain political power and the control of the institutions that are linked to this power. They are also potentially the sole actors able to govern and ensure direct access to the sovereignty of the State. In this classical perspective, other collective actors seek to influence power but not exercise it. This distinction is becoming increasingly problematic empirically, as non-partisan collectives exercise power at the municipal level, or as election candidates run as independents. Thus, this pole of representation is defined by the form of representation (by delegation of power and aggregation of interests and identities) and not by the medium of representation (political parties).

The neo-corporatism pole proposes a collective representation of interests and identities linked to the place of people in the production sector. The place of representation is the social conflicts arena. The logic of representation is multi-faceted: aggregation of interests, building of collective identities and collective public speeches, confrontation with political power and/or participation in the decision-making process, including the management of certain public services. This specific form of representation focusses on the structuring role of collective actors, which are linked with capitalist production in political processes.

Empirically, some privileged partnerships exist between certain actors – unions and business organizations in general – and the State for specific sectors of public policy. In some cases, institutionalized arrangements between partners and the State organize the relationship; in other cases, it is more a question of political practices or tradition. Nevertheless, this pole of representation is not monopolized by unions or business organizations. Other actors may intervene, such as workers' political parties or parties with a strong business basis, as well as groups defending the rights of the unemployed, situated between the unions and social groups, or economic interests groups that use lobbying to influence political decisions. Here too, it is not the medium of representation that defines its form, but the place and the logic of this form.

The third pole, social democracy, is also situated in the social conflicts arena, but it is not primarily linked with the relationships of actors in the production sector. At this pole, collective political representation is the result of the mobilization of actors. Like the preceding pole, it is based on militant or member participation in collective political action. The representation of interests involves the promotion of collective interests that benefit more than one specific group or specific category of the population. As with the neo-corporatist pole, actors engaged in the mediation process could potentially find themselves in paradoxical relationships of regulation/contestation with other actors, especially State actors. Union actors constitute an excellent good example. Even if the main objective of unions is to defend the cause of its worker members (thus allowing a neo-corporatist form of representation), they are also committed to other fields, such as social inequality, poverty and exclusion, and therefore militate for a fairer share of resources in their societies and between societies. Union claims do not concern solely the production sector, but society as a whole. Furthermore, because they usually enjoy privileged relationships with business organizations and the State, they also occupy a strategic position in politics because they can share their resources with other groups and become an entry point into the political process for more marginal actors. As they take on social regulation and social contestation at the same time, they continue to maintain a central position in political systems. This internal positioning (regulation) and external positioning (contestation) was specific to unions for a long time. It is not the case anymore, especially in Québec where partners of the State are increasingly diverse (White, 1997). In summary, unions and other social actors are able to act within several poles at the same time, and the distinction of poles is not based upon the extra-/intra-institutional distinction. Certain social movement organizations could use social expertise to achieve collective political representation of their interests and identities within the State, while other groups choose the strategy of confrontation with the State. In this social

democracy pole, the logic of representation is plural: aggregation of interests, building of collective identities, partnership and confrontation.

This presentation of the various poles could lead one to believe that social movement organizations are increasingly institutionalized and increasingly linked to long-term organizations that have frequent relationships with institutions (Della Porta, 2001; Rucht and Neidhardt, 2002). This process of institutionalization is true for some groups, which are increasing their partnerships with the State in the name of new governance. But this is not always the case. Some emerging actors have no link with public institutions and are not targeting the State and its decisions; others choose to break links because of new strategies outside the State, lack of resources, lack of opportunity from the State's point of view, or simply because the process of institutionalization is more cyclical than linear (Dobrowolski, 2004; Laforest, 2003). Links between political representation and the institutionalization of the medium of representation are not mechanical. For example, the World March of Women network was very diffuse during the 2000 mobilizations, but it has played a crucial role in representing interests of women from around the world (Giraud, 2001). Like Lilian Mathieu, who defined a space of social movements that is relatively autonomous from the partisan political field, we consider the social democracy pole to be distinct from the electoral democracy pole but not confined to social movement organizations (Mathieu, 2002: 95-100).

The last pole of representation is referred to as "participative democracy." As for the electoral pole, the electoral arena is the place where the representation process takes place. But instead of being organized around the logic of delegation of power, the participative democracy pole pursues the logic of self-representation of citizens through direct participation in the political process. This pole is distinct from the social democracy pole, firstly because representation is not organized around the common defence of causes but in the name of citizenship in order to modify

the institutionalized forms of liberal democracy or in order to propose different practices of democracy. Secondly, this form of representation is not collective but individual. Actors from this pole find themselves in a paradoxical situation in the case of an electoral victory because they are required to participate in representation institutions that go with delegation, whereas they have been elected on the basis of representation through direct participation. This is the case, for example, of citizens' groups competing at the level of municipal elections. As Ion suggests, the citizens' actions we are referring to are more public actions than collective actions because they search for public recognition on the basis of citizenship claims (Ion, 1997). This pole apprehends the moment of citizens' intervention in the electoral arena.

With this stag beetle model of representation, we can now consider different social forces at different moments and their presence at / absence from certain poles. In applying the stag beetle model to the history of QS, four types of answers to the question of its emergence can be provided.

Conclusions and Synthesis

The emergence of QS is the result of transformations that occurred at the four poles of the stag beetle model.

With respect to the electoral pole, we mentioned the structuring relationship of certain political and social actors (involved in the UFP and in OC) with the PQ since the post-referendum period of 1995. From the same perspective, the electoral campaign of 2002 and the realization of a right-wing political alternative with the ADQ had an impact on the decision of actors to enter the partisan arena and to form a new left-wing political party. The changing balance of power inside the electoral pole explains a part of QS history.

Between 1995 and 2005, at the neo-corporatist pole, relationships with social partners were becoming more and more unequal, with the interests of private actors clearly dominating the political process and the interests of union actors losing ground. This process did not begin with the Bouchard government but became more apparent with the “zero deficit strategy” and would favour the emergence of a new political cleavage in which social issues superseded the national dream of sovereignty for an increasing number of progressive militants. At the same time, unions were shaping their demands to a greater extent to the reasonable governance the PQ wanted to promote. This was the significance of the unions’ positions during the two socio-economic summits of 1996. The change in the balance of power and the main focus of the unions opened a concrete possibility of alliances between some union members who disagreed with their leaders and some militants of the community movement who considered it necessary to occupy the empty space on the left side of the political spectrum. Finally, in order to resist the neo-liberal concept of partnership, the necessity to build a common front of the left forces appeared unavoidable.

At the social democracy pole, transformations within the community sector and the corresponding changing relationships with the State explain another part of QS history. After 1995, the community movement experienced an acceleration of its institutionalization and of its recognition by the State. For example, in 1998, a public policy with regards to daycare (run by community actors) was adopted; the funding of social economy organizations more than doubled in a short period of time; a special fund was dedicated to the fight against poverty, and in 2001, a policy of recognition (and funding) of the community sector was adopted. The community movement was becoming increasingly embedded in the structure of the State. As a result, the capacity for mobilization gradually declined for certain actors, while new areas of mobilization were opened for confrontation involving new social actors or disappointed institutional actors

who decided to radically change their focus and actions. It was in this new space that FTAA mobilizations took place between 1998 and 2001. Some individual militant trajectories also followed this line within OC.

Finally, in the participation democracy pole, we find the transforming demands of citizens towards politics. In particular, the DS initiative came into play at this pole; the main goal of DS was to produce tools for citizens in order to enhance their participation in the political process and to become a place where citizens would be able to re-appropriate politics and political proposals. In the same vein, since the election of the Charest government in 2002, some citizens' networks have emerged (such as the *Vigilance* network) in order to ensure a constant and direct (self-)representation of alternative points of view. The birth of QS is part of this will not to be dependant upon traditional and hierarchical parties for representation but to propose a do-it-yourself kind of politics.

Behind the alarmist claim of a political representation crisis in western democracies we find a small francophone society of *irréductibles Québécois*, in which some citizens continue to believe in the usefulness of political parties. In order to understand this phenomenon, we need to look beyond the organizational form (the party) to consider the entire dynamics crossing the field of political representation. The stag beetle grid does not purport to explain the entire QS mystery, but we believe that it has the merit to deal with the complexity of the underlying processes.

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