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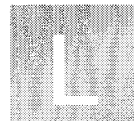
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## "Providing Emotions since 1534": The Politics of Visibility in Québec's Tourism Brand

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### *Introduction*

In the spring of 2006, the Québec Ministry of Tourism launched a \$5.3 million international advertising campaign (Varin). In most respects the campaign was unexceptional. In its various iterations, from brochures to radio and television commercials to outdoor billboards, its colorful images and hyper-promotional texts paraded the activities and events one sees in most tourism campaigns for the vast majority of places throughout the world. Shopping, fine dining, heritage sites, festivals, resorts, outdoor adventures: these are the categories that extensive market research has indicated international visitors are likely to want to spend their time and tourism dollars on, and which form the backbone of most countries' tourism revenue.<sup>2</sup> Only one aspect of this particular campaign set it apart. Amid the images of snow-capped mountains, the Château Frontenac, and couples sipping wine in trendy Montreal restaurants was the trademarked tagline, "Providing Emotions since 1534" ("Fournisseur d'émotions depuis 1534").<sup>3</sup>

Historical dates, and the events they index, are never neutral markers of a linear historical narrative but contests over various kinds of legitimacy, subject to the dynamics of the context in which they are articulated. The year 1534 which graced the 2006 advertising campaign is no exception. Though official lore locates the founding of Québec in 1608, with the arrival of the French explorer Samuel de Champlain on the shores of the eventual provincial capital, 1534 refers to Jacques Cartier's first voyage to the Gaspé Peninsula, when he claimed the land for King Francis I. The territory would become the first colony of New France. For some, this date marks not only the birth of Québec but also the *de facto* founding of Canada. For others, however, particularly those whose historical memory stretches back to the eighteenth-century conquest of New France by the British, Quebecers are the only ones in Canada who can legitimately cite the date as a point of origin. To claim 1534 is to claim the historical heft of two hundred years before the unfortunate battle on the Plains of Abraham, along with a sense of cultural and territorial entitlement.

To express the tension over these two dates, we can look to two different commemorative events in Québec City. In 2008, Québec City duly celebrated its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary with much pomp and circumstance; but in 1984, the city celebrated the year 1534 with a festival of even greater proportions. Called Québec 84, the sixty-three-day festival was launched to observe the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jacques Cartier's arrival. The highlight of the festival was the voyage of eighty-five massive sailboats ("tall ships") from Québec City to France, following, in reverse course, the route that Jacques Cartier had taken centuries before. According to newspaper re-

ports of the time, the festival was not considered a financial success. But its symbolic implications were clear. An irate letter to the editors at the Canadian national newspaper *The Globe and Mail* summarized the general feeling of Canadians: "It is said that more than \$100 million of federal, provincial and municipal tax money (plus a multimillion-dollar outpouring of individual and corporate funds) has been spent to promote Québec 84. *The Globe and Mail* may wish to clarify whether Parti Québécois separatism or Canadian unity is the intended beneficiary of this premature celebration" (Ker). The year 1534 is inscribed with the ongoing identity politics between Québec and Canada, whether in its claims for political sovereignty or as an autonomous nation within the Canadian federation.

But if this advertising campaign is meant as part of an ongoing battle over autonomy, we must now contend with a curious fact: the advertising campaign was designed primarily for an international audience. Sixty-five percent of the budget for the campaign was devoted to promoting Québec in the U.S. market; just under twenty percent was for promotions in France; and close to ten percent was for internet advertising. Only two percent of the budget was earmarked for promotion within Québec (Varin). Aside from the Ministry of Tourism and the advertising agency responsible for the campaign's design, then, few people within Québec were expected to view the ad. Why did the reception of this contentious message take place in settings where there was no contention?

This article offers a possible explanation. It suggests that the campaign and its particular slogan are rooted in the province's ongoing efforts, since the 1960s, to craft and maintain a distinctive political and cultural identity within Canada through the use of strategic appeals to an international audience. As such, the discussion in this article is meant to highlight two important dimensions of the practice of collective identity. First, the "banal nationalism" (Billig) of promotional communication such as tourism advertising is part of the arsenal of tactics involved in the assertion and maintenance of cultural self-determination. Second, the *international* projection of national imagery, tropes, and values — what we might call, extending Billig's term, "banal globalism" — can serve a recursive function of *national* legitimacy. As such, this article contributes to the literature on national identity that demonstrates how the patterns of recognition of collective identity are not contained in a determinate space; nor are they limited to the "official" discourses of state-to-state relations.

The article is divided into three sections. I begin by outlining the conditions of emergence of Québec's international initiatives beginning in the 1960s, to show how these initiatives have long been part of the climate of identity politics in Québec. Tourism was an integral part of these initiatives, and its development closely parallels that of other efforts in Québec to assert cultural distinction. The second section explores the persistence of particular tropes in the promotion of the province as a tourist destination in the context of domestic institutional and political-economic change. In the third section, drawing on interviews with Québec's Ministry of Tourism representatives and advertising agency executives, I offer an analysis of the

“Providing Emotions” campaign, and suggest what some of the implications might be for collective identity in Québec.

### *Setting the (International) Stage*

On 1 April 1961, the Québec government passed a law authorizing the creation of an independent tourism office for the province, with the mandate both to conduct research and create place-based advertising campaigns to attract visitors (*Histoire d'une industrie* 1992).<sup>4</sup> It was not an arbitrary date. Québec's Department of Cultural Affairs was launched on the same day, with its own mandate to promote the province's distinct cultural heritage. As the department's founding minister, Georges-Émile Lapalme, explained,

It will not be a ministry of subventions.... It is not that we want to eliminate subventions from cultural affairs ... but it is impossible to promote a culture with money alone. What needs to be created is a cultural climate. (Gelly et al. 104)

The “cultural climate” to which Lapalme referred was the basis of Québec's Quiet Revolution, a period of emancipation and modernization that began in 1959 (but whose terrain, as historians note, had been prepared for decades). The Quiet Revolution is widely recognized as both the originary moment of Québec's entry into modernity and as the impetus for a modern collective consciousness. According to the political scientist Louis Balthazar, this collective consciousness came about not only because of changes taking place at home but also — perhaps especially — because of changes abroad, as postwar decolonization, mass industrialization, economic globalization, and crucially, the democratization of access to new networks of transportation and communication worldwide dramatically transformed the international landscape (Hamelin; Balthazar 1991, 1999). It was in the context of these wide-ranging transformations on the international stage that Québec found motivation for its own initiatives toward self-determination at home (Balthazar 1991,12).

Underpinning Québec's desire to forge an international network, according to Balthazar, was the province's misrecognition within the Canadian frame. “Internationalized Québécois could not find themselves in the Canadian image projected by the country's official policies. They had met representatives of the country who did not speak their language or who were ignorant of the entire Québécois reality” (Balthazar 1991, 12-13). The quest for international recognition, then, was bound up with the struggle for a national identity. If the sense of self could not be found at home, it would be obtained abroad. Indeed, some define Québec's international politics as at their core “an effort to define the external contours of a distinct Québec national identity” (Bélanger 3).<sup>5</sup>

The desire for international recognition was bolstered by a series of timely events. On 27 February 1965, Québec's Minister of Education, Paul Gérin-Lajoie, signed an agreement with French officials in Paris to foster educational exchanges between France and Québec, marking the first time



Québec had negotiated and signed any agreement with a foreign minister without the authority of the Canadian federation. On 13 November 1962, the International Bureau of Exhibitions selected Montreal as the site for the 1967 Expo World's Fair days after Moscow's sudden retraction (Brunet), an event that by all accounts launched the region onto the international stage. On 14 April 1967, a Québec Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs was created, the predecessor of the Québec Ministry of International Relations (Hamelin 21), giving an institutional basis of legitimacy to Québec's international self-image.

This new basis of official international recognition remained mired in domestic issues, however. From the outset of the creation of Québec's Ministry of International Relations until the early 1980s, the minister responsible for foreign affairs was also in charge of the dossier of constitutional (federal—provincial) affairs. For two decades, then, Québec's international engagements were undertaken by the same institutional forces seeking to define the province's position within Canada. This meant that a key set of "international" relations to which Québec needed to tend was with the federal state. The combining of international relations and federal—provincial affairs within the purview of a single ministry was not merely an institutional arrangement but also a heavily symbolic one. Québec's strivings for international visibility were a sore topic in the realm of federal—provincial relations. Again, the substantive issue was one of identity. As Ben Rowswell has argued, the real friction in Canada's intergovernmental (federal—provincial) relations in terms of international projection was not over "competitive federalism" (the struggle between actors over policy control in overlapping jurisdictions), nor the authority to manage the interests of the electorate; the issue was, and remains, Québec's desire for cultural self-determination.

This is not only because the expression of culture was the most prominent marker of Québec's self-determination; it was also because the cultural realm was one of the few in which Québec could legally exercise its authority. Then and now, Québec's constitutional status is such that its breadth of international relations is limited. It cannot act or be represented in most supranational political decisions, nor in military arenas. In its continued pursuit of international recognition, Québec must therefore try to ensure distinctiveness by "taking advantage of all the room to maneuver provided by the Canadian constitution and using its political leverage inside the federation" (Bélanger 2). Its authority is centered in the cultural sphere.<sup>6</sup> Québec's international relations are by definition a form of soft power.<sup>7</sup> Paradoxically, this is one of the keys to the continued strength of its international presence, since if the province cannot hold sway in major multilateral decisions, neither is it held accountable for them. Québec's image is not tainted by any of the unfavorable "hard power" aspects of international diplomacy. While national governments worldwide suffer the slings and arrows of criticism from their multilateral partners and all levels of civil society, Québec expands its international representation,<sup>8</sup> celebrates its new seat at the table at UNESCO,<sup>9</sup> and fosters a distinctive international tourism campaign.

### *Strategic Essentialism*

Since the 1960s, the tensions between Canada and Québec over foreign policy have often been referred to as “flag wars” (*guerre des drapeaux*) in the media and elsewhere (Leduc et al. 4; Rowswell).<sup>10</sup> The expression is meant to underline the emphasis on matters of symbol, form, and protocol — to the detriment of their content — that characterizes these provincial-federal debates. Yet it would be a mistake to minimize the importance of these debates for the formation of national identity by inferring that they center “merely” on questions of form rather than on “weightier” matters of content. As contemporary theorists of national (or other territorial) identities have shown, collective identity is not constituted by the sum of particular political, material, or cultural factors, but rather by the “discursive formation” of nationalism — that is, by the various claims and concepts which establish the nation as a central and legitimate form of identity and organization (Calhoun 1; see also Bhabha; Brennan; Verdery). Indeed, “the key [to understanding nationalism] is to focus on nation as a ‘form,’ and not merely on the ‘content’ of various national identities” (Calhoun 11). Recognizing that the nation-form is constituted in and by discourse reorients our understanding toward the use of rhetoric, symbol, image, and ritual as themselves constitutive of identity.

The rhetorics, symbols, and images employed in the case of Québec’s tourism branding are part of a larger process of “strategic essentialism” (Hall). Hall uses this term to reinforce the notion that identity is not a unified and stable category but a fragmented and layered process, in which received notions of stability and “settledness” are subject to ongoing questioning. “Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond,” Hall writes, “actually identities are about using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’ so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how we might represent ourselves” (4). In Québec, the primary identity narrative is one in which the province is continually represented to international audiences as a site of difference and distinction from its Canadian frame. This narrative suffuses Québec’s international discourse in both cultural and political spheres. In Québec’s 2000 international tourism advertising campaign, for example, the ad agency responsible for the campaign was exhorted to use the words “land,” “territory,” or “nation” to designate Québec instead of “province,” while the word “Canada” could not be used in any of the communications.<sup>11</sup> In another setting, Bélanger has described the signatory conditions the province imposes on specific international agreements. One of the unofficial “rules of the game” of Québec’s international commitments is that it will only enter into agreements if these “conceal the Québec instrument’s relation of dependence with respect to the Canadian instrument” (Bélanger 6). In other words, the agreements must appear to have been negotiated by two sovereign contracting parties.

It is interesting to note that tourism has remained a pillar of identity politics in Québec’s international relations even as both the industry and the political landscape have shifted over the last twenty-five years. In the

province's first official statement on the objectives of international policy, *Le Québec dans le monde* (1985), then-minister of international relations Bernard Landry underscored the "international vocation" of Québec's tourism ministry as part of the "growing importance of international relations for the development of Québec society" (6). The document also reported that tourism promotion representatives had been hired as staff in some of the permanent missions abroad (6). Over the next five years, these tourism representatives initiated a host of public relations activities. In addition to creating and distributing conventional advertising materials such as brochures and guidebooks, the representatives actively sought relationships with foreign journalists and travel writers, sending them to Québec for "familiarization tours" in order to benefit from the "free publicity" garnered when they wrote favorable press pieces (*MRI Rapport annuel 1984-85*, 50-51). A central motivation for these international activities, as Landry explained, was "the necessity to put an image of Québec into place that corresponds to its economic, cultural and political realities" (*Québec dans le monde* 6).

Another, perhaps more obvious reason for this ongoing interest in tourism as part of an international image strategy is that tourism is a very lucrative industry. Starting in the 1980s, as the tools, techniques, and managerial styles of the private sector increasingly structured state initiatives in Québec, the "new" national consciousness became increasingly tied up with the values of private enterprise (Balthazar 1991, 16), especially in terms of entrepreneurial and profit-oriented initiatives.<sup>12</sup> In 2000, the Québec government advocated a series of managerial reforms designed to implement private sector ideologies<sup>13</sup>: emphasis on results (commonly called "results-based management," or RPM); greater transparency and accountability by the public service; and quantitative over qualitative measurements of performance. Anticipating, and eventually as part of these reforms, the government created a series of "autonomous service units" (*unités autonomes de service*), small agencies operating under the auspices of the government, but with fewer administrative responsibilities and greater discretion over the distribution of their financial resources.<sup>14</sup> From April 1996 until April 2004, Tourisme Québec was one such unit. Under the protective wing of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Science and Technology,<sup>15</sup> the department's *raison d'être* was to promote partnerships with the private sector in an effort to expand its international reach in the context of an increasingly global industry.<sup>16</sup> Industry partnerships are not a new feature of Québec's tourism initiatives; indeed, a tourism policy statement dating from 1992 characterizes public-private partnerships as "the driving force of the tourism industry" (*Seasons and People*). What has changed is the scale and scope of such partnerships. Consider, for example, the Chair in Tourism, an organization housed at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)'s School of Management. Launched in 1992 via an agreement between Tourisme Québec and UQAM, the organization is currently financed by a number of corporate sponsors, including American Express (Canada), Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, IBM Canada, and Air Canada.<sup>17</sup> Along with its board of governors, made up of representatives from industry and the academy, the chair oversees the organization of conferences

and colloquia, influences the direction of research in the field, and “updates and supplements the content of university courses” (Chair in Tourism 2009). Such fluid intersections between government, ICT, higher education, and corporate interests are symptomatic of the larger shift in RBM initiatives.

When, on 1 April 2004, an actual Québec Ministry of Tourism was created through an Act passed into law,<sup>18</sup> its stated mission was extended to include job creation, economic prosperity, and sustainable development (Clause 2, Québec 2006: RSQ ch M-31.2). In a carefully worded section of the Act, the government added an additional function of the ministry:

To participate with the government departments concerned and within the scope of the policy on Canadian intergovernmental affairs and the policy on international affairs, in establishing relations and implementing cooperation agreements and programs with parties outside Québec, in sectors in which exchanges encourage the export of Québec’s tourism expertise and the development of its tourism industry. (Clause 4.8, Québec 2006: RSQ ch M-31.2)

Further, the authority of the ministry was extended, “subject to the applicable legislative provisions, [to] enter into agreements with a government other than the Gouvernement du Québec, with a department or body of that government, or with an international organization or one of its agencies” (Clause 5.3). Finally, in yet another strategic move, “the government maintains the bureau of tourism that it opened in Washington, D.C. in 1978 which it uses to circumvent federal government rules aiming to prevent its provincial government representatives from residing permanently or regularly in the U.S. capital” (Bélanger 8). In this way, tourism could remain part of Québec’s channels of international representation.

#### *“Providing Emotions since 1534”*

Most if not all national tourism advertising and branding campaigns can be seen as a kind of “banal nationalism” (Billig). Billig’s conception of banal nationalism refers to the various habitual and collective acts that index the nation, such as singing the national anthem, which effectively reinforce a sense of national belonging through their daily and unexceptional repetition. Extending Billig’s term, here I want to suggest that Québec’s tourism ad campaign represents an instance of *banal globalism*, in which the *global* projection of national imagery serves a recursive function of *national* legitimacy.<sup>19</sup> I also use the term banal globalism to refer to tourism as the “banal” vernacular through which to express Québec’s collective identity abroad.

A further interpretation of banal globalism can be made by looking at the specific content of tourism narratives, which are often predicated on the mutually constitutive tropes of heritage and modernity. John Corner and Sylvia Harvey offer a provocative explanation of how these two terms have become “semantically recharged” (45) in recent decades in relation to the nation-state. For Corner and Harvey, the concepts of heritage and moder-

nity are responses to the threat of decline of national culture in the context of global change. They are conceptual bookends on a temporal continuum: "heritage" offers reassurance of the integrity of the national past, while "enterprise" provides a solid vision of the economic (and political and cultural) viability of the nation-state in the future. As Corner and Harvey point out, these terms are not neutral indices of actual realities but rather "devices of ideological mediation ... in a political project which needs not only to redesign the dominant versions of 'tradition' and 'modernity' but to readjust the relationship between them." As such they are less methods of progressive action than they are forms of *compensation*, stopgaps for the national fear and anxiety that contemporary global processes entail. "Heritage," for example, promotes a sense of inheritance, rhetorically projected as "common" but actually referring to particular class, race, and gender characteristics, and as such is notoriously exclusionary; while "enterprise" has, in the context of neoliberal shifts in Western economies since the 1980s, functioned as a euphemism for unpopular reform. Interestingly, Corner and Harvey note that the adoption of heritage and enterprise as national tropes in the UK was accompanied by the increased use of "images, advertising and story-telling" to communicate the changes these terms accompanied (46-68). The discourses produced and circulated following the UK's government-led cutbacks and reforms in the 1980s leaned heavily on television and print advertising as well as promotional brochures to communicate these initiatives to the public.

Tourism narratives rely not only on the symbolic spectrum of tradition and modernity but also on appeals to cosmopolitanism and mobility to attract a global audience. Zygmunt Bauman has written that the tourist is a metaphor "for the postmodern strategy [of identity] moved by the horror of being bound and fixed" (26). Tourism fosters an experience in which "the strange is tame, domesticated, and no longer frightens" (30). To promote tourism, to attract international visitors, is thus a way to assert your oneness with the world. We may speak another language, but we understand yours; we are far away and different, but not so much so that you will fail to find us, and especially to recognize yourself. Marguerite Shaffer calls the spaces of tourism a "liminal environment," since tourists travel "beyond both the physical and imaginary boundaries of home and work that shape and define their everyday identities. They enter a realm of fantasy, they commune with strangers, they witness the foreign..." (243).

All of these transformative and definitive aspects of tourism in relation to the formation of identities must also be seen in the context of the industry's infrastructural transformations. For example, Patricia Goldstone provides an excellent account of the tourism industry in the United States over the twentieth century. As Goldstone explains, the emergence of the tourism industry occurred in tandem with two crucial transformations in twentieth-century infrastructure: the rise of the American Express Corporation and the development economics of post-World War II reconstruction. Both of these served to "democratize" tourism while ensuring

American ownership of the infrastructures that allowed it: transport routes; cultural, natural and historic sites; and access ways for international diplomacy. Québec's tourism campaigns embrace to a certain extent all of these facets — both the categories of selfhood and those of material change. Québec's narratives are entwined equally with the promotion of enterprise and heritage. The question at hand now is whether the work of strategic essentialism complicates or reinforces the narrative. Let us look at certain dimensions of the campaign here; then I will discuss some of its implications.

Québec's 2005 tourism policy is subtitled "A new industry-government partnership," squaring the policy with the most recent government mandates to focus on private contributions to public sector initiatives to stimulate economic growth. On the first page of the policy document, however, a "Message from the Premier," Jean Charest, tells the reader:

The introduction of the new Tourism Policy of Québec is an important event. In renewing our approach to tourism, we're renewing our image; we're redefining the way we present ourselves to others and reaffirming our identity as Québeckers. (1)

The indeterminacy of this message provides the key to understanding it. Are the "renewal" and "redefinition" intended to index enterprise, heritage, or something else altogether? The connotative fields of reference are left open. As we shall see, this indeterminacy of political position was put to considerable use in the tourism campaign itself.

The Government of Québec's most recent tourism advertising tagline, which was shown to me in various iterations by the tourism officials I interviewed, is "Providing Emotions since 1534" — a subtitle which, the clunkiness of the phrase notwithstanding, would still be fairly enigmatic to an international audience. Yet to tourism officials, the statement was enormously effective, since it accomplished the goals of its tourism "brand": inherently distinctive, programmatically unique, and a key point of differentiation from its Canadian counterpart:

Respondent 1: We are the only ones in North America who can say that we provide emotions since 1534. We are the only ones who can make that statement.

Respondent 2: Even the minister... [he pauses and rephrases] Jamestown happened almost a century later, in 1607. So tough luck, but that's how it is. The other element [suggested by the tagline] is culture. We are eighty-five percent francophone in Québec. And no one else in North America can say that either. The style we use in our campaign is unique. (personal interviews, February 2008)

québec

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PROVIDING EMOTIONS SINCE 1534

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Québec



Sent in search of gold by the king of France,  
Jacques Cartier set foot in Québec in 1534  
and discovered so much more:

Stretching more than 1,600,000 km<sup>2</sup> (640,000 square miles) across northeastern North America, Québec invites you to feast on its playful energy and the breathtaking diversity of its wide-open spaces. Its Native, French and English heritage grooves to the continent's cosmopolitan beat while keeping time to a multitude of international rhythms.

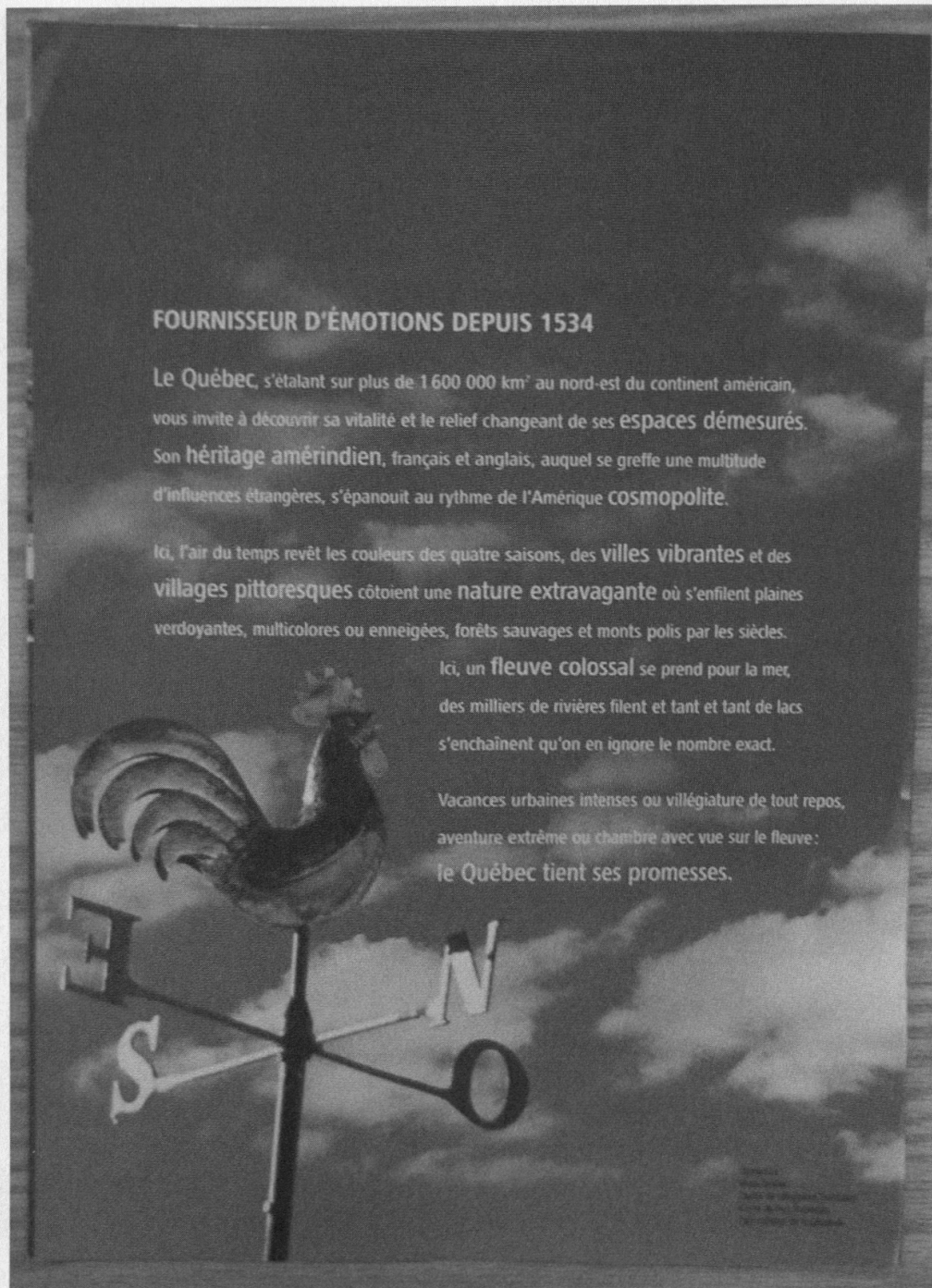
Here, time dresses up in a colorful four-season wardrobe, vibrant cities and picturesque villages envelop themselves in nature's extravaganza—fertile valleys draped in autumn hues or winter white, untouched forests, craggy mountains bearing the signature of the millennia. Here, thousands of winding rivers and countless pristine lakes interlace and delight. Here, one of the world's most magnificent rivers dons the airs of an ocean.

Bold and creative, passionate yet peaceful, Québec's cities entice with their seamless blend of North American drive and European sophistication. Dynamic and welcoming, Montréal, Québec City and Gatineau embody Quebecers' love affair with fun, their contagious *joie de vivre*. Surrender to this unique urban dance, discover its spellbinding contrasts and bewitching charm—each moment, **intensely urban!**



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**FOURNISSEUR D'ÉMOTIONS DEPUIS 1534**

Le Québec, s'étalant sur plus de 1 600 000 km<sup>2</sup> au nord-est du continent américain, vous invite à découvrir sa vitalité et le relief changeant de ses **espaces démesurés**. Son **héritage amérindien**, français et anglais, auquel se greffe une multitude d'influences étrangères, s'épanouit au rythme de l'Amérique **cosmopolite**.

Ici, l'air du temps revêt les couleurs des quatre saisons, des **villes vibrantes** et des **villages pittoresques** côtoient une **nature extravagante** où s'enfilent plaines verdoyantes, multicolores ou enneigées, forêts sauvages et monts polis par les siècles.

Ici, un **fleuve colossal** se prend pour la mer, des milliers de rivières filent et tant et tant de lacs s'enchaînent qu'on en ignore le nombre exact.

Vacances urbaines intenses ou villégiature de tout repos, aventure extrême ou chambre avec vue sur le fleuve: le Québec tient ses promesses.

Examples of the "Providing Emotions" campaign. In the image above, in keeping with its principles, the copy does not reference Canada, pointing instead to Québec's "Amerindian heritage" and North American cosmopolitanism.

To further demonstrate the brand positioning of the campaign, the tourism officials showed me a video that had been assembled for the purposes of marketing research. It combined footage of tourist experiences in Québec with a rhythmic soundtrack, accompanied by a somber male voiceover:

Québec is a land that continues its legacy of action, innovation, self-affirmation. It is a land with vast human spaces, where people seeking fulfilled lives come together. Born of a loving mother and a proud father, Québec is a land raised in North America. A land with unyielding determination that has asserted its unique identity throughout history. Québec is a land that is first and foremost multicultural and bilingual. A hospitable land where everyone is welcome, where everyone can find his or her place. Québec is a land of culture, Aboriginal as well as American and European. Amazing influences continue to enrich daily lives. Inspiring a new art of living. Québec is a land of pride, pride in its distinct identity, an identity unlike any other in North America. Québec is a land of modern world-class cities that remain human, passionate and fascinating. Québec is an infinite ocean of majestic rivers, lakes, streams, forests, mountains. Québec is a multifaceted land that exudes intensity everywhere you look. It is regions, each with something special to discover. Québec is four seasons that are as separate and distinct as its people. It is quiet, white winters, fuzzy spring times, festive summers, magical autumns. It is a land of words and of silence. A land where the effervescence of its cities and the splendour of its nation coexist in harmony. It is a land where modernity is built on a daily basis. Where even the most dazzling successes are achieved without compromising authenticity and simplicity. Québec is a land devoted to better living, a fertile land, rich in its own history as well as in the contribution made by newcomers. Québec, where civilized nations converge and are able to flourish in this incredible soil and cultivate its individuality in order to ensure its future.

This video was shown to focus groups throughout the northeastern United States. It, too, was considered remarkably effective by the tourism officials, who called it a "definition of Québec," and a "brand essence" which showed Québec's true "personality" to its viewers. As with the tourism advertising campaign in 2000, and in keeping with the province's legacy of strategic essentialism, Québec is either referred to as a "land" or as a natural entity (e.g. "Québec is four seasons" or "Québec is an ocean") with no mention whatsoever of Canada. One official summed up the impact of the campaign among the focus group participants by relating an anecdote:

No matter which market we showed this in, the general perception was, "If that place exists, I want to live there." Not, "I want to go on vacation there." Some people actually said to me, "Are you trying to create an immigration campaign?" That's how powerful it was. (personal interviews, February 2008)

We could add to this analysis by pointing to the polysemy of the different appeals. The call for authenticity, for example, a standard trope in tourism

ads, takes on an entirely different meaning when used in the specifically political context at stake here. The same is true of “pride,” “individuality,” “future,” and “distinction.” The ambiguity of the premier’s call for a “new image” had been exploited to its fullest in terms of promoting Québec’s distinct identity. Here the uses of heritage promote, not a backward glance at the past, but a commitment to a very specific future. All of these discursive strategies — appeals to identity, to location, to memory — serve to produce a particular version of national knowledge. That this version is formed in an international setting speaks in part to the particular frame of contention within which Québec asserts itself as a distinct society. It also maintains and perpetuates the vision of Québec that prevails among many of the province’s elites. Here, we can see that the production of legitimacy is as much a project of pushing the inside out as it is bringing the outside in. “Nothing is more surrealist than tourism,” observed the art critic Lucy Lippard (34), referring to the shocks and disorientations in the intersections of known and unknown. Here the discursive and practical strategies of tourism are put into the service of reinforcing the terms of a national culture, creating shocks and disorientations of their own.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Will Straw, Erin Hurley, and the anonymous reviewers of this journal for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. In online sources, page references refer to the online version. Documents listed in French were consulted in French. All translations in this article are my own.

<sup>2</sup> The revenue is substantial. In 2006, international tourism receipts in Canada totaled \$14.6 billion, of which \$2.6 billion was spent in Québec. The economic impact of tourist consumption in Québec in the same year was \$7.2 billion, or 2.7 percent of Québec’s GDP. See “Tourism Figures, 2007 edition.” Tourism Québec. ISSN: 1913-2891, April 2008.

<sup>3</sup> “Fournisseur d’émotions depuis 1534/Providing Emotions since 1534.” *Trade-marks Journal* 52 (2654), Items 916,683/916,684 (7 September 2005): 232.

<sup>4</sup> Québec’s international tourism advertising initiatives stem from the 1920s, when the Taschereau administration’s Minister of Roads set up a tourism service to create ads that would attract French and American visitors. The foundation for an international tourism infrastructure was laid in 1940, when the province opened a Trade and Tourism Bureau in New York City. The office became a Government House for general international representation in 1943. See “Histoire d’une industrie, Une visite touristique du Québec” and “Québec’s International Initiatives” (3).

<sup>5</sup> Michael Keating (Aldecoa and Keating 1999) uses the term “paradiplomacy” to refer to the participation of regional or subnational governments in the international sphere.

<sup>6</sup> To be specific: Québec has “exclusive jurisdiction” in these domains: private law, natural resource management, health care, education, culture, and municipal institutions; it also has its own fiscal and tax system, and oversees court administration. See Québec International Initiatives 2006: 1.

<sup>7</sup> For a good critical portrayal of soft power and its forms of influence, see De Grazia.

<sup>8</sup> According to Bélanger (3), “Québec is the world’s foremost proponent of subnational government activity in the international sphere. Until 1996 the government of

Québec had more offices opened overseas, more staff devoted to international activities, and more money appropriated for international pursuits than the nine other provinces combined" (my emphasis). As of July 2008, Québec's international network of government representation included seven general delegations (in Brussels, Mexico City, New York City, London, Munich, Paris, and Tokyo), four delegations (Atlanta, Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago), ten bureaus (nine of which are overseas), and four trade branches (*antennes*). See [www.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.gouv.qc.ca).

<sup>9</sup> In 2006, an agreement between Québec and Canada gave the province the right to be represented in UNESCO proceedings, conferences, and meetings as part of the Canadian delegation. In a recent interview, a respondent at Québec's Ministry of International Relations called the agreement "our greatest success for Québec's international diplomacy."

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the "flag war" characterization of Québec and Canada's foreign policy issues extends into current debates. See for example "Drapeau Québécois aux Olympiques — Marois dérange les athlètes, dit l'ADQ." *Le Devoir* 12 August 2008.

<sup>11</sup> From 1998 to 2003 the author worked in the advertising agency responsible for this tourism campaign. For a more detailed discussion of this experience and its implications, see Melissa Aronczyk, "Branding the Nation: Mediating Space, Value and Identity in the Context of Global Culture," doctoral dissertation, New York University, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> This strategy emerged in the 1980s with the concomitant rise of a new class of entrepreneurs and businesspeople and their disenchantment with the methods of the state (this, Balthazar notes, despite the fact that it was state-led initiatives which aided in the ascension of this segment of society).

<sup>13</sup> This style of reform is most commonly referred to as neoliberalism: though in Québec, this might be more appropriately termed "neostatism," because the government is the initiator and primary beneficiary of the reforms (Clark 774).

<sup>14</sup> See Laurin, Quenneville, and Thibodeau for a good overview of the "new public management" (NPM) and "results-based management" (RBM) protocols in Québec.

<sup>15</sup> Tracing the history of government ministries in Québec requires considerable genealogical patience: the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Science and Technology was folded into the Ministry of Economic and Regional Development on April 29, 2003; in 2004 the word "Research" was added to its name. In February 2005, the MDERR was subdivided into three departments, one of which was the Ministry of Tourism. Source: Historical Notes: Développement économique, innovation and exportation Québec ([www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca)). Downloaded March 2, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> See "Un meilleur partenaire."

<sup>17</sup> In October 2006 the Chair was renamed the Transat Tourism Chair, in recognition of the tour operator's contribution of over one million dollars to the chair's endowment fund.

<sup>18</sup> Actually, *re-created*, since as we have seen, various governmental and quasi-governmental incarnations of tourism offices have existed off and on since the early twentieth century. See "Association des hôteliers."

<sup>19</sup> Szerszynski and Urry also adopt this term, building on Billig; but they wield it somewhat differently. Their conception of banal globalism refers to "images of the earth ... images of generic 'global' environments; images of wildlife that index the overall state of the environment; images of the family of man sharing a global product; images of relatively exotic places that suggest the endless possibilities of global mobility; images of global players famous in and through the world's media; images of iconic exemplars who demonstrate global responsibility..." and so on. While my usage parallels theirs in that the imagery is globally mediated through digital com-

munications technology, I am referring here not to actual images of the globe or conceptions and representations of global space but rather to the ways in which national imagery cycles through international networks. See Szerszynski and Urry 2002.

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