INVOLUNTARY MINORITIES AMONG FRANCOPHONE MANITOBANS: RESISTANCE, RESILIENCE AND REVIVAL

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Using ethnographic accounts, this paper offers a reflection on the difficulties, aspirations and strategies that francophone refugees face as they try to integrate into a cultural and linguistic landscape dominated by English. Given migration movements and identity shifts that affect Francophone communities in Western Canada, our discussion relies on concepts of 'deterritorialization/reterritorialization' (Deleuze & Guattari) as well as on the notion of 'minority within a minority' (Maddibo), with special attention to the issue of social, linguistic and identity dispossession.

As involuntary minorities, francophone refugees encounter difficulties in integration that are far from negligible. Living within a social context marked by the predominance of the English language and of values tainted by European colonial movements, refugees from French-speaking backgrounds often find themselves cast as minorities, and, de facto, treated as the Other on two levels: because of language and because of their ethnicity. In this article, we propose to bring to light the factors of adversity and those that support the integration of these minorities in an urban context.

In this reflection on refugees, we use the anthropological approach to minority status developed by Ogbu and Simon (1988), which includes the following four categories: autonomous, voluntary or immigrant, and involuntary or non-immigrant. Ogbu and Simon define involuntary minorities as people who have been conquered, colonized or enslaved (1988, p. 165). Refugees are classified as a separate category, but it has been suggested that they too, by default, belong to the category of involuntary minorities: "Refugees who were forced to come to the United States because of civil war or other crises in their places of origin are not immigrants or voluntary minorities. They did not freely choose or plan to come to settle in the United States to improve their status." (Ogbu & Simon, 1988, p. 164) Hence, we propose to operationalize the concept of involuntary minority in the following way: individuals who have not freely chosen their destiny because of colonialism, physical violence or any other factor of oppression that has driven them to the margins of society or forced them into exile.

Our reflection examines the processes for the resistance, the resilience, and the renaissance of refugees from Francophone African countries, people who may nevertheless have transited through refugee camps in English-speaking countries. Taking into account the migratory movements and the changes in identity that affect these pockets of French-speakers in Western Canada, our reflection draws upon the concepts of deterritorialization/reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972 and 1991) and of minority within a minority (Maddibo, 2008), with emphasis on the issues of social, linguistic and identity-related dispossession of involuntary minorities.

Refugees in Manitoba come primarily from "humanitarian" immigration, one of the three immigration categories identified by the Government of Canada: humanitarian, economic and social (Becklumb, 2008). The immigration referred to as humanitarian, which is the subject of this reflection, stems from a concern for human rights, and its goal is to "to offer safe haven to persons with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, as well as those at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment (Department of Justice, Canada, 2012).

As migrants out of necessity, often forced into exile because of war, social and political instability, famine or other forms of violence that violate human rights and human dignity, refugees have for several decades made up a sizeable proportion of Manitoba immigrants, a minority of which are of French-speaking origins (Piquemal and Bolivar, 2009). Dispossessed of their property, their homes and their loved ones, of their land and the sense of belonging that goes with it, and often even their social status, refugees generally suffer from an initial form of deterritorialization when they leave home to seek refuge, sometimes temporary, sometimes nearly permanent, in a refugee camp (Piquemal, Bahi, and Bolivar, 2010). Refugee camps can lead to a process of territorialization, in that "the societies that occupy them take possession of and organize the space there" [our translation] (Dedenis, 2007, p. 2). This initial reterritorialization does not take place without friction, because it is clear that exile is harmful to one's sense of identity and sense of belonging socially, especially "when exile is due to conflicts where the ethnic or identity factor is put forward by the enemy" [our translation] (*Ibid*., p. 3). Certain people, even whole societies, can become settled into refugee camps, having been there for many years, or even generations. Others manage to get involved in a process of migration that will allow them to settle into a permanent territory, for example in Canada. A second stage of reterritorialization, involving identity, the social and the political, then comes into play. During this reterritorialization, a process of reconstruction, of rebirth of identity and social position takes place, and this process follows three distinct emotional stages: *attachment-detachment-reattachment* to the host country (Piquemal and Bolivar, 2009). Research has shown that the resilience of refugees is a key phenomenon in intergenerational opportunities for social mobility (Bahi and Piquemal, 2013).

This paper focuses on only two of the questions that guided our ethnographic research with refugees. To what extent was the individual or the family able to develop a sense of belonging, even of attachment to the social environment, as well as a sense of achievement? What are the factors that foster, or in other cases hinder, the development of this sense of belonging and of adaptation in an intercultural context?

As to methods, the research team (Piquemal, Bahi, and Bolivar, their research assistant) chose a qualitative and phenomenological approach and carried out semi-structured interviews. Eighteen (18) adolescents from 11 to 17 years of age (who entered Canada as refugees at least four years previously from DRC, Uganda, Tanzania or Djibouti) took part, as did 16 refugee families (DRC, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti). We will look at certain narrative segments on pre- and post-migration experiences and the connection to be made with the social and academic success of the person, beginning with the accounts of students:

> "Sometimes I think of my friends back there. I miss everything, even the earth." - Student (16 years old)

> "The first day of school I was scared; I was scared of the students because I wasn't used to White people. And then I was scared of the languages, French and English; French for the lessons and English because here in the [French-language] high school everyone always talks English." - Student (17 years old)

> "I feel good at school. There are lots of friends to help me. And there is a prof who helped me a lot." - Student (13 years old)

The accounts of parents also bring out the difficulties, but also show hope or resilience:

> "How can it be that when others are killed or raped we can live in peace? Do you think I can live in harmony? No. There is a constant pain. But we push ourselves to keep going, to take what is good here." - Parent (Piquemal, Bahi, and Bolivar, 2010, p. 47)

> "I found a meaning to life, hope for a good life; the possibility of succeeding." - Parent (Piquemal and Bolivar, 2009)

> "Canada showed up like Moses the saviour." - Parent (Piquemal, Bahi, and Bolivar, 2010, p. 45)

> "We do our best, we want to adapt, so we have a motto: We work hard."- Parent (Piquemal, Bahi, and Bolivar, 2010, p. 45)

> "I have to accept that I have entered into a new world, and then that I have created a new world. And this world does not have to be the world I grew up in." - Parent (Piquemal, Bahi, and Bolivar, 2010, p. 47)

This last statement clearly expresses a sense of deterritorialization experienced in the beginning, and then, in keeping with the Deleuze theory, a productive and creative sense of reterritorialization.

THE DETERRITORIALIZATION/RETERRITORIALIZATION OF INVOLUNTARY MINORITIES

Deleuze and Guattari have described the process of deterritorialization in numerous ways, and in their final collaboration called in English *What is Philosophy?* (1991), they explain that deterritorialization can be physical, mental or spiritual. The concept can be seen as a movement that produces change. Imagined as a trajectory, deterritorialization thus contains the creative potential of an amalgamation, and it can mean an emancipation with respect to the fixed relations that characterize a social body while exposing it to a new form of organization. Deterritorialization is always related to a process of reterritorialization, its corollary, which does not mean a return to the original territory, but the manner in which deterritorialized elements recombine and form new relationships (Parr 2010, p. 69 and 73).

A close look at the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1972), which includes a criticism of oedipal psychoanalysis, and later a criticism of capitalism, reveals the process of deterritorialization to be a process of emancipation of the human subject with respect to institutional codes that are often oppressive. The idea of desire is thus central to this philosophy, suggesting that the subject and the ebb and flow of desire are nomadic in nature, in short, unpredictable. In this sense, to be deterritorialized would be a way of escaping from codes, of becoming free of them. The concept of deterritorialization has also been taken up in reflections on globalization by Lafontant (2008), who sees migratory flow and socio-economic exchanges as a source of social and political recombination. In the geo-political context, the concept of deterritorialization refers to loss of territory.

The idea of emancipation seems relevant to us in the case of immigrants who are part of a migration project characterized by choice, freedom and independence. However, our reflection on refugees leads us to posit that the deterritorialization of involuntary minorities is a destructive process in that it is part of a movement of violence that leads to a persistent minority and Other status (colonization, civil wars, etc.). If there is indeed social and political recombination, it occurs less through emancipation than through oppression, even through the destruction of a community and the unilateral imposition of a political and social organization. In other words, *I* become a stranger and part of a minority in *My Own* territory. The refugee has become the Other in the exile that follows conflict, often of an ethnic nature, where deterritorialization took the form of genocide, as in Rwanda, expulsion, or else forced nomadization, as is the case for the Bedouins.

The reterritorialization of involuntary minorities can bear the mark of an oppressive, dictatorial regime, which is destructive, or evolve towards a different but equitable shared space, which is constructive. Reterritorialization as a process of rebirth begins with the resilience and resistance of involuntary minorities and with recognition and reparation of the abuses committed by the majority.

According to the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, reterritorialization is a creative process that allows for movement, for a new incarnation, as is the case for writing, for example. As for the involuntary minorities in Canada, reterritorialization has finally led to a creative process in that, even if there was suffering due to migration, there is a process of occupation and appropriation of space that seeks to be inclusive and equitable, thanks in part to the possibility of having the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982). It is clear that such a process is complex, and that the possibility of enjoying these rights remains a constant concern in the political sphere. Resistance and resilience are characteristics of the transition from deterritorialization to reterritorialization for involuntary minorities, paving the way for a rebirth in which each individual reconstructs a personal identity anchored in their identity of origin, more or less pronounced according to each person's circumstances.

MINORITIES, TRANSFORMATIONS AND BECOMING

According to Kant, a minority is associated with "receiving one's laws or one's determination from another person. In concrete terms, it is the fact of being under someone else's guardianship" [our translation] (Aliana 2010, p. 21). This can also mean the state in which minority groups are plunged when they are subjected to an authoritarian regime, to a full set of measures of domination and normalization. To take another tack, the works of Deleuze and Guattari on the concepts of "minority," "being part of a minority" and "becoming part of a minority" can serve as a point of departure for a reflection on the factors involved in the creation of new sociocultural contexts using terms that accentuate the potential and the plasticity of becoming a minority (Bouaniche 2007, p. 202). From this point of view, one that bears hope for the displaced and for groups reduced to minority status, Deleuze and Guattari have sketched out a policy of *métissage* and transhumance by making deterritorialization more acceptable (Aliana 2010,

p. 19). "Whether physical, psychological or social, deterritorialization is *relative* as long as it relates to the historical connection between the land and the territories drawn upon it, or erased from it […] (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991, p. 85). Human rights were trampled in Canada and elsewhere, notably because they co-exist with many other axioms that allow for the appropriation of lands and resources (*Ibid*., p. 103). In the context of neo-capitalism and globalization, entire populations continue to bear the brunt of this. Forced into a semi-sedentary life in makeshift camps, refugees become strangers to themselves, to their own language and their own nation. Their transplanting to North America and the metamorphosis that accompanies it do not take place without upheaval, but the reterritorialization of these foreigners who are born again among the "*Métis* nation"[1] of Canadians (Saul 2008) should serve as a lesson so that we can better "diagnose our current prospects for the future" and propose new trajectories in the service of life (Deleuze et Guattari, 1991, p.108; see also Nietzsche 1990). It will not be enough to welcome these individuals and wandering groups and to offer them sufficient physical, psychological and social accommodations, it will be important to reinvent with them a reciprocity and new ways of being in our schools and in all sectors of social life (arts, economics, politics, etc.).

Briefly put, minority Francophone identities are enriched and are determined in territories henceforward characterized by movement, nomadism and the circulation of information and values. In our work, which combines research and teaching, our approaches and our attention turn to cultural *métissage*, intercultural relations and education for citizenship, instead of looking only at ethnogenesis or the centuries-old establishment of human communities in their natural environment and their traditions.

In closing, we wish to emphasize the relevance of intercultural dialogue, of ethics and of the awareness-raising efforts deployed to establish connections between groups who have been turned into minorities, and other Canadians with a view to finding territory favourable to reciprocity, to equitable exchanges and to adaptation. We also emphasize the importance of offering young people, the citizens of tomorrow, a better understanding of the issues and the challenges associated with ethnic and cultural diversity.

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1 Aboriginal people have played a determining role in defining Canada and Canadian identities, and every day they continue to influence Canadians' common future. For this reason we have used this author's expression with an emphasis on its identity dimension rather than its geographic one.

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