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**Working Paper**

## Municipal Reform on the Island of Montreal: Tensions Between Two Majority Groups in a Multicultural City

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# **Municipal Reform of the Island of Montreal: Tensions Between Two Majority Groups in a Multicultural City**

## **Summary**

For several years now, many cities across the world have undergone, for administrative and political reasons, mergers that have considerably reduced the number of municipalities on a given territory. This tendency affects various urban contexts, as evidenced by recent mergers in Toronto, Ottawa and Halifax (Canada), Baltimore (United States), and in other countries such as Scotland, Australia and England. Quebec has not escaped this trend, and since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2002, six major urban areas were created. While mergers now constitute a familiar occurrence, the processes they entail differ considerably from site to site, questioning existing power structures, administrative procedures, and modes of belonging. In Quebec, the case of Montreal stands out, because of its strategic economic position, and also because of the historical and often conflictual relations between its diverse ethnic and linguistic collectivities. This paper examines how the merger of twenty-nine municipalities on the island of Montreal into a single city now composed of twenty-seven boroughs, modifies the relations between the two dominant majorities and, more specifically, the capacity of English Canadians to control their institutions and daily affairs. Does this transformation, which involves the disappearance of municipalities, some of which were governed by English Canadians and other Anglophones, follow the trend observed in Quebec since the sixties, involving a loss in the latter's institutional completeness, organizational capacity, and spheres of autonomy?

**Keywords:** Municipal Reform, Conflict, Tension, Multiculturalism

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## INTRODUCTION

For several years now, many cities across the world have undergone, for administrative and political reasons, mergers that have considerably reduced the number of municipalities on a given territory. This tendency affects various urban contexts, as evidenced by recent mergers in Toronto, Ottawa and Halifax (Canada), Baltimore (United States), and in other countries such as Scotland, Australia and England.<sup>1</sup> Quebec has not escaped this trend, and since January 1<sup>st</sup> 2002, six major urban areas were created.<sup>2</sup> While mergers now constitute a familiar occurrence, the processes they entail differ considerably from site to site, questioning existing power structures, administrative procedures, and modes of belonging. In Quebec, the case of Montreal stands out, because of its strategic economic position, and also because of the historical and often conflictual relations between its diverse ethnic and linguistic collectivities.

This paper examines how the merger of twenty-nine municipalities<sup>3</sup> on the island of Montreal into a single city now composed of twenty-seven boroughs, modifies the relations between the two dominant majorities<sup>4</sup> and, more specifically,

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on mergers in various contexts, see Andrew Sancton's *La frénésie des fusions: une attaque à la démocratie locale* (Montreal : McGill-Queen's, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> These six areas are: Montreal, Quebec, Trois-Rivières, Sherbrooke, Outaouais, Chicoutimi-Jonquière. Other amalgamations are also occurring in smaller areas. For more details, see *La réorganisation municipale: changer les façons de faire, pour mieux servir les citoyens* (Gouvernement du Québec : Bibliothèque nationale, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> We are including here *Ile-Dorval* in spite of its slightly different status.

<sup>4</sup> These relations are dominated by two sociological majorities, as mentioned by Pierre Anctil in "Double majorité et multiplicité interculturelle à Montréal", *Recherches Sociographiques* 25 (3), 1984 :

the capacity of English Canadians to control their institutions and daily affairs. Does this transformation, which involves the disappearance of municipalities, some of which were governed by English Canadians and other Anglophones, follow the trend observed in Quebec since the sixties, involving a loss in the latter's institutional completeness, organizational capacity, and spheres of autonomy?<sup>5</sup>

Our analysis will thus highlight the ethnic and linguistic stakes of the merger, which have somehow been left aside in recent studies.<sup>6</sup> We will first present the historical framework at the heart of which are inscribed the municipal mergers on the island of Montreal, indicating how the Quiet Revolution impacted on the complex relations between French Canadians, English Canadians, and other ethnic groups which have often been, voluntarily or not, involved in conflicts opposing the two dominant majorities. We will then examine different aspects of municipal governance, comparing them before and after the merger that took place in January 2002. This will allow us to assess its impact on ethno-national relations, as it

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441-456. For Montreal, see Marc Levine, *The Reconquest of Montreal : language, policy and social change in a bilingual city* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990); for a broader historical perspective, Paul-André Linteau, *Histoire de Montréal depuis la Confédération* (Montréal: Boréal, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> While institutional completeness defines the institutional perimeter of an ethnic community, its organizational capacity refers to its capacity to define issues and mobilize resources to attain its goals. See Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of immigrants" *American Journal of Sociology* 70, 1964: 193-205, and Raymond Breton, "Types of Ethnic Diversity in Canadian Society" paper presented at the VIIIth World Congress of the International Sociological Association, Toronto, 1974.

<sup>6</sup> Including Sancton's book mentioned above, most studies on the merger putted emphasis on the economic dimensions of the amalgamation, and its organizational ones. See for instance *Borough model, municipal restructuring for Ottawa* (Centre d'études en gouvernance, Université d'Ottawa, 1999); Linda Cardinal and Caroline Andrew (ed.), *La démocratie à l'épreuve de la gouvernance* (Ottawa : Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2001); Poitras, L.A. *La défusion municipale au Québec*, non-published report presented to anti-fusion organizations, 2003, DémocraCité Web site, [www.democracite.org](http://www.democracite.org); *Démocratie*

pertains to changing sites and forms of power, local democracy and citizen participation in Montreal.<sup>7</sup>

#### ANCHORING MONTREAL'S MUNICIPAL MERGER IN THE QUIET REVOLUTION: ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC DIMENSIONS

Quebec's entrance into modernity generally carries the label of the Quiet Revolution, a period that begins with the sixties and spans the seventies. As indicated by the qualifier "Quiet," this "Revolution" actually reflects a series of reforms involving the creation and modernization of organizational structures (Pelletier, 1992). One of the central elements of the Quiet Revolution resides in the secularization of the society, as power shifted from clerical to political, administrative, intellectual, and labour elites, all of which led to the construction of a strong state, *l'État du Québec*. Also important are the measures implemented so as to

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*municipale à Montréal : des clefs pour analyser l'enjeu de la réforme*, Réseau inter-universitaire d'études urbaines et régionales, Web site [www.vrm.ca/politique.asp](http://www.vrm.ca/politique.asp)

<sup>7</sup> The evolution of ethnic social relations between Quebec's two majority groups is not addressed as the result of intentional decisions taken by social actors alone, but rather as part and parcel of diachronic and synchronic processes that included the (re)construction of ethnic boundaries and identities. Furthermore, the city will be addressed in terms of politics and identity. These aspects allow individuals and communities to enunciate their collectivities identities and to define an ethnic and essentially political, community (Breton, 1991). The city, as a setting for socialization and the construction and reconstruction of social links, is, as puts Grafmeyer, the site of mobility: "migrations, residential mobility, daily movements compelled by spatial specialization [...] which are at the same time mediums and symptoms of more of less successful adaptation to the requirements of urban condition" (1994: 89).

decrease the dependency of Quebec's economy on the rest of Canada and the United States, such as the nationalization of electricity and the creation of financial institutions favoring investments, and to expand and democratize services in education and health (Juteau, 1993).

### **Changing power relations and institutional decline**

The political mobility of the *Québécois* of French-Canadian ethnicity<sup>8</sup> “completely upset the social and economical hierarchy” (Levine, 1997: 351). The increased power of the *Québécois* of French-Canadian ethnicity, the redefinition of ethnic boundaries in linguistic terms, and the enhanced visibility of other ethnic groups on the municipal and provincial scene, stand out. This period witnessed a loss of economic power by English Canadians, with the emergence of a *Québécois* bourgeoisie and the expansion of the middle classes. When the state of Quebec legislated in linguistic matter, the usage of English, notably in the educational domain and in the work sphere, was narrowed.

According to the *Quebec's Charter of French Language*, commonly known as Bill 101, only children whose father or mother had received their primary education in

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<sup>8</sup> When French Canadians became *Québécois* in the early sixties, the term *Québécois* did not include all residents of the province. The gradual redefinition and extension of the boundaries of the national community requires that the French Canadians who became *Québécois* now redefines their specificity within the greater whole. We suggest calling them *Québécois* of French-Canadian ethnicity to



English schools in Quebec could enroll in English speaking schools (Gouv. du Québec, 1996: 34; Chevrier, 1997:9).<sup>9</sup> The Charter had a tremendous impact, both at the individual and institutional levels. In twenty years, that is between 1976-77 and 1997-98, enrollment in English speaking schools in Quebec decreased by 52%, as compared to 13% for French ones (ACSAQ, 2001: 4). During the 1976-77 school year, students frequenting an Anglophone school represented 16,6% of the total school population, comprising elementary and secondary schools; since 1989-90, they represent 10% of the whole (MEQ, 1991).<sup>10</sup>

While some demographic factors such as migrations outside the province (MEQ, 1999: 1; ACSAQ, 2001: 4) partially explain the decline of English Canadians and Anglophones within the educational system, the latter is mainly due to Bill 101

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distinguish them from other groups. See Danielle Juteau, "The Citizen Makes an Entrée: Redefining the National Community in Quebec", *Citizenship Studies* 6 (4), 2002: 441-458.

<sup>9</sup> There was some exceptions for children who were already in English school when the law was adopted and for their younger siblings, and for those whose mother or father, living in Quebec when the law was adopted, had received their primary education in English elsewhere in Canada. Otherwise, some modifications, most of which easing restrictive measures, have been made to the *Charter of French Language* in the last decades. Specifically, criteria regulating the access to English speaking public schools are as follows : barring exceptional situations related to social or academic development of the child or to the specific employment status of the parents (working on temporary permit in a Canadian or foreign firm), only children whose at least one parent (which in some case, should be a Canadian citizen) has fulfilled major part of his or her primary school education in English in Quebec or in rest of Canada, or children whose at least one brother or sister has been enrolled in Quebec's English speaking primary school institutions are eligible for education in English. Since the passing of Bill 104 (in 2002), which modifies article 73 of the Charter, children whose parent or sibling attended such private institution are no longer eligible to continue their education in Quebec's English speaking public school system.

<sup>10</sup> For more details on these statistics see Ministère de l'Éducation. « La situation linguistique dans le secteur de l'éducation en 1997-1998 », *Bulletin statistique de l'éducation N° 10*, Québec, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation, Direction des statistiques et des études quantitatives, mars 1999.

(Gouv. du Québec, 1996: 134-135; MEQ, 1999:3) <sup>11</sup>, which has reversed the former trend of allophone students to enroll in Anglophone schools (Mc Andrew, 2002: 70).<sup>12</sup> In about twenty years the percentage of allophones students enrolled in French schools increased from 20% (1976-77) to 80% (1997-98) (MEQ, 1999: 2). Conversely, the proportion of allophones students enrolled in English schools decreased from 80% (1976-77) to 20% (1997-98) (Gouv. du Québec, 1996: 134-135). The Charter's effects are particularly apparent on the island of Montreal where the percentage of allophones students enrolled at French schools in 1976-1977 was only 15%, this percentage increased at 79% in 1997-1998 (MEQ, 1999: 3; ACSAQ, 2001: 5). These transfers towards francophone schools have considerably weakened the relative size of the English speaking and English Canadian school systems; while the latter comprised 41,5% of students on the island of Montreal in 1977-1978, it comprised 25,7% in 1994-1995, a considerable drop indeed (Levine, 1997: 228). The loss of the Allophone *clientèle* impacts upon the institutional "development" of the school network of Anglophones (ACSAQ, 2001: 8).

The English speaking educational network now comprises nine school boards distributed across the province. These nine English speaking school boards include 340 primary and secondary schools (ACSAQ, 2002: 3), 41% of which depend on the

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<sup>11</sup> The Inter-ministerial Committee on the situation of French language largely attributes to the *Charter of French Language* the fact that the network of English speaking schools in Quebec has registered a decline in their enrollment between 1976-77 and 1994-95

<sup>12</sup> See also Association des commissions scolaires anglophones du Québec. *Mémoire présenté aux États généraux sur la situation de la langue française au Québec*, mars 2001, p. 5.

two schools boards located on the island of Montreal. This institutional contraction affects budgets, personnel, and other resources (Mc Andrew, 2002: 72).

The Charter also had significant consequences on municipalities since it stipulated that French must be used and spoken at that level of government. The passing of the Bill 57 in 1983, which modifies the Charter (Gouv. du Québec, 1996: 39), granted to municipalities comprising by a non-francophone majority (50% +) a “bilingual status”, allowing them for example the right to provide services in English, to use that language in their internal communications and to require the knowledge of English for hiring municipal employees. As we will see, the municipal restructuring on the island of Montreal, and the creation of “the largest French city in North America” will modify this situation (Gouv. du Québec, 2000).

The *francisation* of the public sphere, which remains one of the driving forces of ethnic social relations in Quebec, has also contributed to the redefinition of ethnic boundaries in linguistic terms. Francophones and Anglophones made their appearance, sometimes respectively designating French and English Canadians, sometimes including other ethnic groups, which would also be involved in language conflicts, such as the Italians during the “St-Leonard crisis” in 1968.<sup>13</sup> *Francisation*

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<sup>13</sup> The “St-Leonard crisis” refers to a crisis affecting a small and quiet autonomous municipality located on the island of Montreal. St-Leonard became at the end of the sixties more diverse and in 1968, 60% of the population was French Canadian, 30% of Italian origin and 10% of other origins. In order to reflect the new situation of St-Leonard, the Catholic local School board decided to create bilingual schools. As a result, many children of Italian origin and of other minorities were

tends to weaken the capacity of the Anglophone community to maintain itself demographically, to define its institutions, and to modify its modes of belonging.<sup>14</sup> These power struggles, which will be accentuated by the merger, also entail the incorporation of immigrants and other ethnic groups.

Like many other urban centres, Montreal receives the vast majority of immigrants settling in Quebec, and a large proportion of those landing in Canada.<sup>15</sup> Far from being a new phenomenon, the greater Montreal's multiculturalism dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when large numbers of immigrants arrived from Europe, especially from Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup> Before the Quiet Revolution, and Bill 101, minority ethnic groups gravitated mainly towards the English Canadian community, for economic, political, and cultural reasons. The English Canadian community was more heterogeneous from the start, comprising English, Scottish, Welsh, and Irish, and it developed a certain "praxis" of ethnic diversity. Conversely, the French Canadian community defined its boundaries in more homogeneous terms and used ancestry as a criterion for inclusion, thus restricting the insertion of minorities. This

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incorporated into the Anglophone community. This situation led to important tensions between Francophones, specially new movements such as *Mouvement pour l'intégration scolaire* which promoted unilingual (French) schools, and the Anglophones and Allophones of St-Leonard. As Levine pointed out, the St-Leonard crisis demonstrated that relations between collectivities could no longer be managed by the former approach, i.e. by the linguistic *cloisonnement* used before this crisis. See Marc Levine. *The Reconquest of Montreal : language, policy and social change in a bilingual city* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990: 117-132).

<sup>14</sup> Like French Canadians, English Canadians will also redefine modes of belonging. Their use of English, as the use of French for French Canadians, will gradually replace national and/or ethnic belongingness, at least in public discourse.

<sup>15</sup> According to the 2001 census, Montreal receives over 80% of immigrants to Quebec and 20% of immigrants to Canada. Source: Statistics Canada website, [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

<sup>16</sup> It is less the number of immigrants than its new forms of diversification that changed.

attitude is partially linked to the experience of colonialism which followed the Conquest of the New France by the British in 1759 and its impact on the definition of boundaries. And, as it has often been pointed out, English was the language of socio-economic mobility in Quebec and in Canada.

The Quiet Revolution profoundly modified the former ethnic arrangements and existing order. It transformed English Canadians and Anglophones into a minority, a status they now recognize (Stein, 1982).<sup>17</sup> As mentioned previously, Bill 101 contributed to the *francisation* of the public sphere and rendered the use of English less prominent in certain sectors such as in the work force, and reduced the size and importance of the Protestant, and now, the Anglophone educational domains. As a result, the role of municipalities in the life of English Canadians was accrued. Managing one's own municipality carries greater symbolic and material import, at a time when their spheres of influence are reduced. It is in this socio-historical context that the project of making Montreal "the largest French city in North America"<sup>18</sup> must be located.

## MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING ON THE ISLAND OF MONTREAL

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<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it is interesting to note that during the court disputes concerning the legality of the municipal merger, bilingual-status municipalities evoked respect for minority rights as an attempt to annihilate the merger.

<sup>18</sup> This expression "the largest French city in North America" was first coined by the minister then responsible for the metropolis, and was used in the preliminary project on municipal restructuring April 2001.

In Canada, municipalities are dependent on provincial governments which can, depending on their current disposition and prevailing obligations, dismantle, merge, or even create new municipalities. These prerogatives, inscribed in the British North America Act of 1867, were used on many occasions in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada.<sup>19</sup>

Before the municipal merger in January 2002, the island of Montreal comprised twenty-nine municipalities including the city of Montreal, of which fifteen had a bilingual status, granted by the *Charter of French Language*. These municipalities constituted distinct organisations which, to varying degrees, ran their respective affairs. They differed considerably in terms of linguistic and ethnic composition, as well as in economic status. This was reflected in their organizational practices, their daily activities, and their collective identities. Encounters between these distinct organisations were sporadic, occurring mainly at the metropolitan level, the Montreal Urban Community (MUC). Although certain municipalities were advantaged within the MUC, allowing them to influence the future of the Greater Montreal, each municipality benefited from a large of degree of independence. This situation would considerably change with municipal restructuring.

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<sup>19</sup> As we will see, the powers bestowed upon the provinces of the Canadian federation were reaffirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada in a ruling dealing with the constitutional validity of the 2002 municipal restructuring.

The Quebec government justified the municipal merger mainly in terms of economic rationality.<sup>20</sup> It argued that in view of Quebec's total population, the number of municipalities on the territory of Quebec was too high. It pointed out the limits of voluntary collaboration: past experiences have demonstrated that inter-municipal solidarity and collaboration have not brought about the expected results. Furthermore, the pooling of certain interests has been short-lived, as municipalities do not have a strong propensity to share equitably management costs. This difficulty in dividing costs fosters important gaps between municipalities, as some of them must defray expenses for services used by others. Montreal has additional problems, such as the spread of urbanization and the decrease of its population in favor of suburbia. This leads to considerable expenses for Montreal in managing services, such as aid to the homeless, the integration of immigrants, and social housing.

Therefore, the arguments invoked by the government of Quebec deal essentially with economics and organizational rationality. The latter legitimizes the municipal merger in terms of a national and international context, "mergers are inevitable, if we are to remain competitive", a process that reinforces tensions between the former municipalities and a centralizing provincial government. Nowhere do its advocates mention the ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous character of the population living on the island of Montreal, and the possible consequences of the merger on its dynamics. Our analysis will take these issues into

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<sup>20</sup> The following arguments are taken from the *Livre Blanc* on municipal restructuring, published by the Minister of Municipal and Metropolis Affairs in April 2000.

consideration, indicating how a process of economic and organizational centralization inevitably affects power relations between ethnic, linguistic, and national groups.

As such, it is not surprising that the municipal merger was contested by certain municipalities, the majority of which had bilingual status, and that it is still perceived by these municipalities as a direct attack on the rights of Anglophone communities of the island of Montreal. They lost what they consider to be a crucial site for the direct exercise of power.

### **Municipal power structures**

The political and administrative aspects of the municipal merger on the island of Montreal are central in shaping the exercise of power and cohabitation. The merger fosters the uniformization of organizations and institutional practices that were previously distinct while introducing a hierarchical structure between the new municipality, its boroughs and their elected officials. While it is far from being as centralizing as anticipated by its opponents,<sup>21</sup> the increased distance between elected

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<sup>21</sup> The Transition Committee, formed at the initiative of the provincial government to ease the amalgamation of all 29 municipalities into one city, played an important role in the adoption of Bill 29 in June 2001 which decentralized the initial project by according greater autonomy to the boroughs. At the same time, the Montreal island anti-merger cities (18) were at the Provincial Court House trying to stop the merger process. Even though their attempts were rejected by both the Provincial and the Supreme Courts (Federal), it may be possible that some of their claims influenced the decentralization process and the elaboration of Bill 29.



officials and new sites of decision-making diminish the power of the borough's elected officials. The representatives of the former municipalities now constitute minorities within the new municipal structures. In Westmount for example, the Municipal Council comprised a mayor and eight elected officials; in the new city which comprises seventy-three counsellors in addition to the mayor, Westmount has one representative, which considerably decreases its decision-making power. The two borough counsellors do not sit on the Municipal Council. The former municipality of Côte-St-Luc had a mayor and eight counsellors. The ratio of counsellors to citizens was one to 3 713. It has been incorporated into a borough which also includes the former municipalities of Hampstead and Montreal-Ouest. The new borough has two counsellors in the new city, which means the ratio is now one counsellor for 41 605 citizens.

For all municipalities the restructuration implies a loss in their capacity to settle conflicts and reach consensus between "themselves," opening up the possibility that elected officials from other boroughs, and the new Executive Council, interfere with their own priorities and policies. We will look more closely at changes affecting organizational structures and the distribution of power.

**Table 1: Organizational structure and executive power, before and after the merger<sup>22</sup>**

Before the merger	After the merger	
Former municipalities (except former city of Montreal)	New boroughs stemming from former municipalities	New city of Montreal
<p><b>Structure and executive power</b></p> <p><u>Municipal Council:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Function:</u> represents the city and manages municipal matters;</li> <li>- <u>Decisional power:</u> Decisions made by a single majority (50% plus) within the limits of the <i>Charter of Cities and municipalities</i> – in certain cases Mayor has the power to decide unilaterally;</li> <li>- <u>Mayor</u> elected by all voters of the city;</li> <li>- <u>City councillors</u> elected by voters of the district they represent;</li> <li>- Each electoral district is represented by at least one councillor;</li> <li>- Number of City councillors differs from one city to another (usually no more than ten to twelve);</li> <li>- Municipal Council generally meets once a month.</li> </ul> <p><u>Executive Committee:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generally there is no Executive Committee due to the small size of the city – Municipal Council acts like an Executive Council.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Structure and executive power</b></p> <p><u>Borough Council:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Function:</u> represents the borough at the local level, provides activities and services of proximity, manages internal matters within its sphere of competence – also plays a consultative role on different issues (budget, urban planning, etc.) which are within the jurisdiction of City Council;</li> <li>- Must include at least three members;</li> <li>- Includes City counsellor(s) and Borough counsellor(s) if applicable;</li> <li>- <u>City councillors</u> elected by voters of the district they represent within the borough (if there is only one City counsellor representing the borough, he or she is elected by all voters of the borough); City counsellors are on City Council of the City of Montreal;</li> <li>- <u>Borough counsellor(s)</u> elected by voters of the district they represent (actually their number varies from zero to six). Although they sit on Borough Council, they may become members of one of seven City Commission;</li> <li>- Borough Council must choose a president among its members. If there is only one City Counsellor within the borough, he or she becomes automatically chairman of the Council;</li> <li>- In nine boroughs having more than 60000 voters there is no Borough counsellor but those boroughs are represented by</li> </ul>	<p><b>Structure and executive power</b></p> <p><u>City Council:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Function:</u> represents the city and manage municipal matters on the entire territory;</li> <li>- <u>Principal decision-making authority</u> of the City, it includes the Mayor and 73 City counsellors coming from all boroughs among whom 33 are from former municipalities;</li> <li>- <u>Mayor</u> elected by voters from all the boroughs;</li> <li>- <u>City counsellors</u> represent their borough within the City Council – they are elected by voters of the district of the borough they represent (if there is only one City counsellor to represent the borough, he or she is elected by all the voters of the borough);</li> <li>- Number of City counsellors prescribed by <i>Charter of Cities and municipalities</i> (ann. 1-B) – vary from 1 to 6;</li> <li>- City Council meets 10 times a year.</li> </ul> <p><u>Executive Committee:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Depends directly upon City Council; the Executive Committee has specific decision-making powers and is responsible for issues pertaining to the entire city – such as budgets, urban planning, municipal legislation – which must be later submitted to City Council;</li> <li>- Includes Mayor and City counsellors chosen by him (seven to eleven); Mayor name the president and the vice-</li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> All the information in the tables comes from the Transition Committee, Web site [www.transitionmontreal.org](http://www.transitionmontreal.org); the City of Montreal Web site, [www.ville.montreal.qc.ca](http://www.ville.montreal.qc.ca) and J. Héту and Duplessis, Y. (dir.). *Législation relative à la réorganisation municipale*, Brossard, Publications CCH Lté., 2001.

	<p>more City counsellors; -Borough Council holds monthly meetings.</p>	<p>president and can replace at anytime any member of Executive Committee; actually eleven City counsellors sit on Executive Committee;</p> <p>- Among actual members of Executive Committee, five are from the former municipalities; Executive Committee holds weekly meetings.</p>
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Table 1 compares the former municipalities as they functioned before the merger, to the newly created boroughs and city, which represent two distinct levels of municipal governance. Organizational structures have become more complex: the municipality now comprises twenty-seven boroughs, each one with a Borough Council, which adds a level of governance. In most boroughs, there are two types of elected officials, city counsellors and borough counsellors. There is a substantial increase in the size of the Municipal Council which as mentioned now comprises seventy-three counsellors in addition to the mayor. This contrasts with the former situation where there rarely was more than ten to twelve elected officials.

Beyond the unification of executive power structures, there is a redistribution of power between actors whose interests may be divergent and conflicting. Clearly, having to receive approval of colleagues on an Executive Committee and on a Municipal Council whose composition is larger and more heterogeneous than previously, necessitates compromises and negotiations not needed beforehand. Although the new structures can in some cases foster a greater democratization of the decision-making process on the island of Montreal, local communities such as Outremont, Anjou, St-Laurent, etc, definitely experience a loss of power which has repercussions on the management of each borough's current affairs. However, this new and hierarchical distribution of power between the new municipality and its

boroughs will impact differently on boroughs that are ethnically and/or linguistically different from the new municipality, which can now be controlled by members of the ethnic and/or linguistic majority who do not necessarily always share the interests of English Canadians and Anglophones who are ethnically and/or linguistically minoritized in the new enlarged structure.

Furthermore, appointment to the Executive Committee is left to the mayor’s discretion, and is thus subjected to political, cultural, and economic pressures. The number proportion of English Canadians and/or Anglophones appointed to the Executive Committee depends on the orientation of the newly elected mayor, who decides which of these counsellors will play a front-line role in the new city of Montreal. The concentration of executive power within the new Municipal Council modifies the power of the local officers in the boroughs and reduces the latter’s areas of jurisdiction.

**Table 2: Areas of jurisdiction, before and after the merger.**

Before the merger	After the merger	
Former municipalities (excluding former city of Montreal)	New boroughs stemming from former municipalities	New city of Montreal
Its areas of jurisdiction (competences) are mainly local: <u>Local</u> competences : - Finances: taxation, budget, choice of priorities; - Municipal services and emergency measures: choice and organisation; - Public security (municipal police);	Its specific competences are determined by Law and relate to <u>local level</u> , such as: -Urban planning (within the limits of the urban plan adopted by new City); -Waste and other (residues) collections; -Culture and recreation (organization and management, financial support);	-Its competences are the <u>same as those of the former municipalities</u> , notably: finances (taxation, budget, etc.), municipal services and emergency measures, public security, human resources, municipal legislation, material resources and municipal infrastructures, social, economic and community development, etc.; -Also has <u>specific competences and obligations</u> determined by Law in

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Human resources: hiring and supervision of municipal employees;</li> <li>- Culture and recreation: libraries, exhibitions, sports and other leisure activities, etc.;</li> <li>- Municipal legislation: adoption and enforcement of municipal regulations, Municipal Court;</li> <li>- Communication: choice of work and language of communication;</li> <li>- Urban planning and development, housing, protection of cultural heritage;</li> <li>- Material resources and municipal infrastructures;</li> <li>- Economic, social and community development;</li> <li>- Municipal census, referenda;</li> <li>- <u>Broader area of competences:</u></li> <li>- Inter-municipal agreements: member of supra-municipal organisations (MUC, RCM, etc.);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Local economic, social and community development (financial support to community organizations);</li> <li>-Borough parks (management);</li> <li>-Public works (management);</li> <li>-Housing (can give exemption permits for dwelling conversion- ex: condominiums);</li> <li>-Fire prevention measures (recommendations and application);</li> <li>-Fixing non-fiscal local fees;</li> <li>-Local human resources;</li> <li>-Local financial management.</li> <li>-Can also give opinions and recommendations concerning different subjects (urban planning, budget, etc.) or any other subject submitted by City Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>various sectors (urban planning and territorial development, social, economic and community development, municipal police, social housing, etc.);</li> <li>-In case of conflict city regulations prevail on boroughs’;</li> <li>-Supervision, normalization and approval of certain decisions made by Borough Councils;</li> <li>-Other spheres of competence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Agreements with provincial and federal governments;</li> <li>-Programs for financing real estate renovation;</li> <li>-Three years immobilizations program;</li> <li>-Environment</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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What clearly emerges from Table 2 is the reduction of the spheres of competence attributed to the boroughs. Most important, the former municipalities lose the power of taxation and their budgetary autonomy. They also lose control over urban planning that is to be adopted by the new city. Rulings adopted by the

new City Council will have precedence over the boroughs; and finally, their areas of jurisdiction are now limited to local issues. These losses have strong implications<sup>23</sup>.

It is important to observe that the present situation differs from the original plan. The boroughs have received 60% of the budget and their power has been increased in areas such as urban planning. Furthermore, each borough has a register service, planning counsellors, a service area at the municipal court. There is therefore a certain amount of decentralization at the level of services, but there is no doubt that their areas of autonomy and jurisdiction have been curtailed as some of their decisions must be approved by the new Municipal Council.

In principle, Borough Councils constitute the “heart of the new city,” as put by the Transition Committee. Nonetheless, used to negotiating directly with the executive power and putting forward to their mayor and counsellors their grievances and claims, the citizens of the new boroughs will henceforth deal with elected officials who are somewhat removed from central structures. Borough Councils possess notable powers as long as these do not encroach upon the city’s powers, and more specifically, upon those of the Executive Committee. The loss of executive power for the new boroughs alone could represent a large democratic deficit at the local level, affecting each community’s capacity to fully control its development.

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<sup>23</sup> In comparison with the former municipalities, boroughs experience a loss of autonomy and spheres of jurisdiction. While the municipalities possessed full powers in all areas granted by diverse municipal laws, the role of the borough is defined by the charter of the City of Montreal, which restricts their administrative power to issues of local concern and to a consultative role on certain issues.

## Democratic life

The objective of greater citizen participation in the decision-making process has been used to legitimize the merger, and it is often utilized by those advocating the merger, such as the provincial government. Table 3 allows us to further examine this issue.

**Table 3: Public consultation processes, before and after the merger.**

Before the merger	After the merger	
Former municipalities (excluding former city of Montreal)	New boroughs stemming from former municipalities	New city of Montreal
<p><b>Public consultation processes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No permanent public consultation office;</li> <li>- Generally no District Council but Municipal Councils hold public consultation when needed based on rules which vary according to the municipalities;</li> <li>- Some municipalities (ex. Westmount) had specific commissions or committees for urban planning, emergency measures, etc.;</li> <li>- Due to the small size of Municipal Councils and proximity of the Mayor or City counsellors, citizens were able to express their opinions at the Municipal Council meetings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Public consultation processes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Right to public speech: Citizens can express their opinions during borough council meetings;</li> <li>- Right to ask for a referendum following the announcement of a modification of zoning regulation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Public consultation processes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Permanent public consultation office whose president is nominated by Municipal Council; cannot be a municipal deputy or employee.</li> <li>- Office should propose rules for framing public consultation, proceed to these consultations, hold public hearings whenever mandated by the Council or the Executive Committee, and to account for its activities once a year.</li> <li>- Right to speaking publicly: In order to express their opinions during a Municipal Council meeting, citizens should register themselves 30 minutes before the beginning of the meeting;</li> <li>- Ombudsman: Works independently and helps citizens to have their rights respected.</li> </ul>

Previously, each city organized public consultations according to its own volition, and permanent municipal commissions were exceptions to the rule (former city of Montreal and the city of Westmount).<sup>24</sup> There is now a permanent consultation office, presided by an appointed official that cannot be a municipal officer or clerk. His or her role is to: propose guidelines for public consultations and hold such consultations; hold public hearing; and, finally, account to the Executive Committee, all of which is said to democratize decision-making. But the small size of certain municipalities and the ensuing proximity between elected officials and voters meant that the consultation was also carried out, either during Municipal Council assemblies, or in a more informal manner.

On the whole, these changes seem to favor citizens' participation in decision-making. But, the current model can be criticized for distancing voters from their elected officials, and for creating a system of communication where bureaucracy and standardization render participation more formal and less attractive. This is of



particular concern for suburban municipalities, since the former city of Montreal was already well organized, as indicated by the existence of Neighborhood Councils.<sup>25</sup>

As we have seen, the passage from independent municipality to borough, and the “minoritization” of their elected officials within the new mega-structure impacts the capacity of English Canadians and Anglophones to control the affairs of their community, with regard to an ethnic and linguistic matters. In order to maintain a voice in decision-making at the municipal level, the latter will need to elect politicians who recognize their specificity and their interests. If the results of the first municipal election in the new city of Montreal demonstrated their capacity to mobilize and exercise power, the latter remains precarious in view of their diminishing demographic weight and minority status.

#### THE LINGUISTIC ISSUE

In wanting to make Montreal the “largest French city in North America,” the provincial government encourage the usage of French rather than English within the central municipal administration. This means that the new city of Montreal is considered as a French speaking city although this is not officially recognized so far

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<sup>24</sup> Note that Westmount, symbol *par excellence* of the presence of English Canadians on the island of Montreal, possessed permanent commissions.

<sup>25</sup> In “Luttes urbaines et pouvoir politique” (1973), Manuel Castells already addressed this phenomenon by demonstrating Montreal’s peculiar situation at the level of public consultation and citizen participation. There is also the specific question of Neighborhood Councils’ existence since the

because the Municipal Council did not take position in that matter yet. One of the things we have to consider is that debates and written communications are, in a large proportion, in French at the level of the Municipal Council and the Executive Committee. Regarding relations between the City and the citizens, the latter still can choose to receive the tax bill in either language but the City of Montreal's Web site is still not translated in English. These few examples demonstrate that the City Council and the Executive Committee are not that hurry to legislate in linguistic issues except for the fact that some City Councillors mentioned in the medias that the new linguistic policy will give more attention to multilingualism instead of bilingualism. This represents quite a change indeed, from a previous situation where most business in Westmount and Baie d'Urfé for example were conducted in English.

The composition of the City Council and of the Executive Committee will have great influence on the way linguistic policy will be elaborated. In that respect, the thirteen city councillors (on seventy-three) including the two members of the Executive Committee (on eleven) who are representing boroughs with bilingual status do not seem to be sufficiently numerous to influence the definition of the new linguistic policy<sup>26</sup>. On the opposite, the current municipal government is mainly composed of former elected officials from the suburbs, who probably are not that eager to apply a linguistic policy that totally restricts the usage of English. However, one aspect of the merger could have a significant effect, namely changes in the criterion defining the bilingual status of boroughs.

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early 1960s; these councils were strongly politicized at the time, and were opposed to the executive power.

**Table 4: Linguistic status, before and after the merger.**

Before the merger	After the merger	
Former municipalities (excluding former city of Montreal)	New boroughs stemming from former municipalities	New city of Montreal
<p><b>Linguistic status:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Among the 27 former municipalities, <u>15</u> were officially recognized as <u>bilingual cities</u>;</li> <li>-Requirement for a city to obtain bilingual status: <u>50% of its residents should be non francophone.</u></li> </ul>	<p><b>Linguistic status:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Among the new boroughs, <u>nine</u> are officially recognized as <u>bilingual</u> (these boroughs stem from the merger of 15 former municipalities that were officially recognized as bilingual cities) – as written in the <i>Charter of the City of Montréal</i>, their bilingual status can be abolished only upon the explicit request made by those boroughs;</li> <li>-Requirement for a city/ borough to obtain bilingual status: <u>50% of its residents should have English as their mother tongue.</u></li> </ul>	<p><b>Linguistic status:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-As stipulated by the <i>Charter of the City of Montréal</i>, Montreal is a French speaking city;</li> <li>-Language of communication: documents available both in French and in English.</li> </ul>

Table 4 indicates that laws concerning the allocation of bilingual status for boroughs have been considerably tightened since January 2002. Since the amendment of the *Charter of French Language* (1983), and until the merger, a bilingual status was granted to certain municipalities on the island of Montreal: any municipality comprising 50% or more non Francophone residents was accorded a bilingual status upon request. The 50% figure included those for whom English is a language of use, making no distinction between English Canadians and other ethnic groups. A fair number of

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<sup>26</sup> For the composition of City government, see the Web site of Montreal : [www.ville.montreal.qc.ca](http://www.ville.montreal.qc.ca)

immigrants and members of non French and non British descent settled in one of the fifteen municipalities with a bilingual status, and could, therefore, obtain services in English and live their daily lives in that linguistic environment. Bill 171, which was adopted in 2000 in the context of the merger, modified this situation by according bilingual status only to those cities where 50% or more of citizens speak English as their mother tongue. This excludes *de facto* those for whom English is not a mother tongue, in other words, descendants of immigrants who have incorporated within the Anglophone community. While fifteen municipalities were previously accorded this status, in the new city, only nine boroughs possess it.

#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS: REINTRODUCING ETHNIC RELATIONS**

Our discussion started off with the following question: would the municipal merger attenuate the capacity of English Canadians and Anglophones to maintain and reproduce their ethnic and linguistic boundaries? At this stage, we may tentatively conclude that the merger has weakened their power on the island of Montreal and in their former municipalities which are now boroughs or part of. While English continues to be used as a second language in Quebec, because it is one of Canada's two official languages and because of the overall North American environment, and while some individuals continue to speak English and use it amongst themselves, it seems as though this language is increasingly pushed aside at the political and administrative levels. Although the municipal merger is not explicitly about linguistic practices, it does affect them, constituting a measure that

could well weaken the Anglophones' and more specifically the English Canadians' ability to make up a dynamic, and institutionally well-organized community.

For the time being, however, the latter did influence the process leading to the merger and to the law on municipal restructuring effective in January 2002, as significant changes were made to the project initially submitted by the government of Quebec in 2000. The pressures exercised by English Canadian elites led to greater decentralization, and their representatives are integrated within the new structures of power and decision-making.

Furthermore, the Quebec Liberal Party was elected on April 14, 2003. The Liberals partially owe their victory to their promise to give all Quebec citizens, and not only those from formerly bilingual municipalities, the opportunity to return to the situation which prevailed before the merger. With the aim of thwarting this possibility, the officials of the new city promised to accelerate the decentralization process which, they believe, will help counter a move towards de-fusion.

A final point must be made. The municipal merger has been presented by its proponents, such as the *Parti Québécois* who then held power in Quebec, as a purely administrative issue. Most studies also focus on this dimension. Yet, this process also affects ethnic and linguistic relations in Quebec, a fact that seems to be overlooked in most studies, academic and otherwise. As is usually the case when

dominant majorities legislate, the ethnic component disappears, — as does gender — becoming invisible and absent. The blind spot, we suggest, is not fortuitous. Yet, it is central. As pointed out quite facetiously by *La Presse* columnist Lysiane Gagnon (2003), the language used and measures proposed by the English Canadian and Anglophone partisans of the de-fusion, resemble very closely those made by *Québécois* “separatists.” This is not surprising, for in both cases, the issue is about a minority controlling its organizational boundaries within a setting where it can act as a majority.

The phenomenon examined here is about ethnic relations, those constituting French and English Canadians. What seemed a declining conflict has been restructured around an issue, the survival of the municipality, which has become the symbol and site of the presence of English Canadians on the island of Montreal. On a wider scale, the on-going transformation of this conflict seems to clearly establish the capacity of a minority group, albeit one with a specific status, to use institutions that define its material and symbolic interests and identities.

The long term consequences, negative or positive, of the municipal merger on English Canadian and Anglophone institutional completeness still have to be assessed. But one thing is certain: the merger will have favored the collective mobilization of English Canadians, and a reinscription of this collective consciousness on the provincial scene.

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- (l) This paper was presented at the Workshop “Growth, Environmental Policies and Sustainability” organised by the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, Venice, June 1, 2001
- (li) This paper was presented at the Fourth Toulouse Conference on Environment and Resource Economics on “Property Rights, Institutions and Management of Environmental and Natural Resources”, organised by Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, IDEI and INRA and sponsored by MATE, Toulouse, May 3-4, 2001
- (lii) This paper was presented at the International Conference on “Economic Valuation of Environmental Goods”, organised by Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei in cooperation with CORILA, Venice, May 11, 2001
- (liii) This paper was circulated at the International Conference on “Climate Policy – Do We Need a New Approach?”, jointly organised by Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, Stanford University and Venice International University, Isola di San Servolo, Venice, September 6-8, 2001
- (liv) This paper was presented at the Seventh Meeting of the Coalition Theory Network organised by the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei and the CORE, Université Catholique de Louvain, Venice, Italy, January 11-12, 2002
- (lv) This paper was presented at the First Workshop of the Concerted Action on Tradable Emission Permits (CATEP) organised by the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, Venice, Italy, December 3-4, 2001
- (lvi) This paper was presented at the ESF EURESCO Conference on Environmental Policy in a Global Economy “The International Dimension of Environmental Policy”, organised with the collaboration of the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, Acquafredda di Maratea, October 6-11, 2001
- (lvii) This paper was presented at the First Workshop of “CFEWE – Carbon Flows between Eastern and Western Europe”, organised by the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei and Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung (ZEI), Milan, July 5-6, 2001
- (lviii) This paper was presented at the Workshop on “Game Practice and the Environment”, jointly organised by Università del Piemonte Orientale and Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, Alessandria, April 12-13, 2002
- (lix) This paper was presented at the ENGIME Workshop on “Mapping Diversity”, Leuven, May 16-17, 2002
- (lx) This paper was presented at the EuroConference on “Auctions and Market Design: Theory, Evidence and Applications”, organised by the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, Milan, September 26-28, 2002
- (lxi) This paper was presented at the Eighth Meeting of the Coalition Theory Network organised by the GREQAM, Aix-en-Provence, France, January 24-25, 2003
- (lxii) This paper was presented at the ENGIME Workshop on “Communication across Cultures in Multicultural Cities”, The Hague, November 7-8, 2002
- (lxiii) This paper was presented at the ENGIME Workshop on “Social dynamics and conflicts in multicultural cities”, Milan, March 20-21, 2003



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