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Abstract

In December 2015, Prime Minister Trudeau claimed in *The New York Times Magazine* that Canada was ‘the first postnational state’, adding that there was ‘no core identity, no mainstream in Canada’. What does this notion of ‘postnationalism’ exactly encompass? And why did Justin Trudeau choose to use it instead of the more traditional term ‘multiculturalism’?

This article contends that the notion of postnationalism is a rhetorical fallacy that conceals the rich distinctiveness of the Canadian identity, while denying the multiple and fierce claims for sovereignty that are observable nationwide. Beyond the merely anecdotal character of Trudeau’s assertion, this postnational claim should be contextualized within a rich field of enquiry concerned with transnational social relations, and the impact that these new cultural practices and social relationships have on forms of belonging and governance. This article argues that ‘postnational’ does not seem to be the right terminology to designate Canada’s contemporary ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. Beyond the dated mosaic label, and the chimeric postnational one, the inclusive terms ‘plurinationalism’, which continues to emphasize diversity along the vector of the nation, and ‘multiversality’, which underscore the diversity of vectors of difference, would arguably constitute more pertinent descriptions takes.

Keywords: postnationalism, multiculturalism, discourse, diversity, nationalism, identity politics, immigration

Introduction

In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), Edward Said argues that the ‘whole concept of national identity has to be revised and, in most places ... is in the process of being revised’.¹ The reconfiguration of the national identity discourse is indeed observable in many European countries, and of course in the United States since the election of Donald Trump. In these countries, nationalist and populist rhetoric abound, in a context of socio-economic insecurities and identity anxieties. These latter torments are often attributed to the political adjustments supposedly inherent to the globalized era we are living in, and they express the angst of a citizenry that often feels overwhelmed by the transnationalization of the social – whether under economic, cultural, financial or religious terms. In Canada, however, this conceptual and discursive revision adopts another tone, one that is at odds with the traditional ‘us-versus-them’ rhetoric that we encounter on the right side of the political spectrum in Europe and in the United States. Indeed, in December 2015, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed in *The New York Times Magazine* that Canada was ‘the first postnational state’, adding that there was ‘no core identity, no mainstream in Canada’.²

What does this notion of ‘postnationalism’ exactly encompass? And why did Justin Trudeau choose to use it instead of the more traditional term ‘multiculturalism’? This article will question this discursive novelty by drawing on the historical development of Canada, and by delivering a careful analysis of a rich strand of literature concerned with new transnational webs of connection that are thought to challenge the legitimacy of the national framework in a globalized world. Indeed, it is recurrently argued that nation states are being eclipsed by the permanent renegotiation of identities, cultural practices and social relationships that occur alongside the movements of peoples across national borders.

This article, however, will contend that the notion of postnationalism is a rhetorical fallacy that conceals the rich distinctiveness of the Canadian identity, while denying the multiple and fierce claims for increased sovereignty that are observable nationwide. Furthermore, I urge scepticism in the face of this daring new concept of postnationalism: distinctiveness through diversity does not entail overcoming the national. Indeed, despite Trudeau’s claims to the contrary, a strong sense of nationhood and a vigorously *dirigiste* form of governance are still required to hold together Canada’s unique – though increasingly

contested – multicultural policies. Today, the Canadian government is still committed to making Canada ‘the most inclusive country in the world, where opportunity is shared among all Canadians’.³ Far from being effaced, the Canadian national ethos is therefore a vivid and inspiring one, notably because of the contrast its apparent inclusivity sets with other forms of nationalism and nationhood amongst liberal democracies.

Throughout this article, I try to demonstrate the interplay between the multinational, the transnational and the postnational, and develop some hypotheses that could justify the use of this postnational label in the Canadian context. First, I show that Canada’s peculiar identity, and Trudeau’s postnational claim, have to be understood in the light of the state’s allegiance to neoliberalism and multiculturalism, following its integration into global capitalism and the vigorous efforts of Pierre Trudeau to overcome the Francophone vs Anglophone divide. As will be seen, this adherence to a neoliberal form of multiculturalism, which has been erected as governmentality since the 1970s, is becoming increasingly challenged for its instrumental and managerial purposes. After reviewing this history and demonstrating that the ‘mosaic’ has become a clearly outdated model, I will turn to the liberal theory of multiculturalism in order to grapple with this idea of postnationalism. In the second part, I examine Trudeau’s postnational claim in the light of Will Kymlicka’s theories of multiculturalism. More specifically, I ask whether postnationalism could be interpreted as the result of an equation between two distinct notions developed by Kymlicka in *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995): the concept of multination, on the one hand, and the concept of polyethnicity, on the other. As will be demonstrated, Kymlicka himself reflected on what he calls ‘the postnational approach’ in an article he wrote 15 years later, his core concern being the potential transformative effect of a postnational form of citizenship on mitigating the cleavages between French and English Canadians.

Finally, this article contends that the aspiration to postnationalism should be analysed as a reflection of a certain ethos of universality that Trudeau aims to promote internally (in a post-Stephen Harper era), internationally (in an epoch of growing right-wing populism) but more crucially in a context of the increasing contestation of multicultural policies. Beyond the merely anecdotal character of Trudeau’s assertion, this postnational claim should be contextualized within a rich field of enquiry concerned with transnational social relations, and the impact that these new cultural practices and social relationships have on forms

of belongings and governance. For the purposes of this last section, I therefore engage with the arguments developed by Robert Latham and Augie Fleras regarding the obsolescence of the mosaic model. This allows me to discuss the different alternatives to governing ethnic and cultural diversity that these scholars have developed – in particular, Robert Latham’s notion of ‘multiversality’. This article ultimately argues that Justin Trudeau’s postnational promise constitutes a rhetorical smokescreen, and that this adjective does not seem to be the right term for Canada’s contemporary ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity. Beyond the dated mosaic label, and the chimeric postnational one, the inclusive terms ‘multiversality’ or ‘plurinationalism’ would arguably constitute a more pertinent description take.

The Canadian Mosaic: Embracing Neoliberalism and Multiculturalism as Governmentalities

If we look at recent history, it could be argued that Canada has chosen to tackle its colonial legacy and its history of jingoism by incrementally erecting both neoliberalism and multiculturalism as governmentalities. Indeed, the logic of a mosaic multiculturalism in Canada was clearly aimed at actively renouncing the country’s exclusionary past, mitigating the tensions between the Francophones and the Anglophones, and ensuring social cohesion in a time of demographic mutations. Thus, Canada’s current cosmopolitan reputation and Justin Trudeau’s aspiration to ‘postnationalism’ cannot be understood without their wider neoliberal and global implications. However, it appears that the logic of a multicultural ‘mosaic’, initiated in the 1970s, no longer suffices to maintain Canada’s social cohesion in a time of changing dynamics and mutating demands from increasingly transnational communities within. This is the context in which we should comprehend the invention of this new (post)national myth.

But let us go back to Trudeau *père* before trying to understand the dialectical logics of the son. Behind Pierre Trudeau’s commitment to implementing multiculturalism and making it one of the most celebrated features of the Canadian social contract was an endeavour to strip Canada of French and English nationalism, so as to pacify the tensions existing between the Québécois minority and the Anglophone majority. But it was also aimed at managing new waves of immigration

that would progressively remodel the demographics of Canada. It is in response to these challenges that the concepts of neoliberalism and multiculturalism – the foundational and intrinsically linked principles of the mosaic model – have been embraced and erected as governmentalities by the Canadian state. Indeed, they truly constitute the foundational principles of the mosaic model, as we can find at the heart of both these logics the illusion of a level-playing field for all individuals regardless of race, gender, class or minority status. I understand governmentality here in the Foucauldian sense. As Wendy Brown points out, governmentality is a very rich term, defined by Michel Foucault as ‘the conduct of conduct’. For the purpose of this article, I borrow Brown’s account of governmentality as a signifier of ‘the modern importance of governing over ruling, and of the critical role of *mentality* in governing, as opposed to the notion that power and ideas are separate phenomena’. She further argues that ‘governmentality features state formation of subjects rather than state control of subjects; put slightly differently, it features control achieved through formation rather than repression or punishment.’⁴

Historically, one should not forget that Canada had a ‘white’ immigration policy steeped in racism and xenophobia for decades: the Chinese Immigration Acts of 1885 and 1923, and the War Measures Act are amongst the most emblematic of this exclusionary legislation. When it comes to the historical treatment of Indigenous peoples, it is now common knowledge that, prior to 1969, Canada’s federal Indian policy was unapologetically and brutally assimilationist.⁵ But Canada’s integration into global capitalism incited the state to open its borders and, in so doing, to increase its cultural and ethnic diversity. In 1967, Canada thus removed the legal exclusions against the immigration of various negatively racialized groups. The Eurocentric nationalist policies that characterized the country until that historical juncture were progressively abandoned in order to embrace a certain form of capitalist cosmopolitanism. It is because Canada eventually pursued this policy of openness and integration that it has become the multicultural setting we are today acquainted with. We can find evidence of this mutation within Canadian provincial dynamics themselves. Let us think of the shift that occurred in the 1970s between Montreal and Toronto. Concomitantly with the displacement of the economic and financial activities from Montreal to Toronto, this latter city started to embrace multiculturalism in a burst of openness that clearly contrasts with the more restricted intercultural Quebec, whose leaders decided to envision a much more tangible and narrower vision of identity. As a

result, Toronto has become the most diverse city in the world, with more than half the people living in the Greater Toronto Area born outside of Canada.⁶ Furthermore, it is also concomitantly with Canada's full inclusion into global markets that a Ministry of Multiculturalism was created in 1973, in order to manage the arrival of foreign workers and to facilitate their economic integration. Simultaneously, on a juridical level, non-discrimination legislation began to be signed in the 1970s to further protect the newcomers. These were consecrated in 1982 by Article 27 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which stipulates that the document 'shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians'.⁷ In fact, it is justified to refer to the commitment to multiculturalism as a genuine innovation in state-society relations. A post-Westphalian multicultural governance had emerged, an order that significantly 'challenged conventional notions of belonging and identity, especially those dismissive of minorities and migrants as second-class citizens'.⁸

Because Canada's economic development was reliant on immigrant workers, the state had to make sure to create a safe and protective environment if it desired to preserve its growing attraction to workers on a global scale. As Nandita Sharma puts it, 'the representation of the polity as "multicultural" provides elites with a form of cultural capital that gives them an advantage in a world defined by increasing flows of capital, goods, and people.' She further contends that 'opening up sites for new capitalist investments was accompanied by the multiculturalist rhetoric of an opening up of whites to the presence of non-whites in their (national) midst'.⁹ Thus, on purely economic terms, it was agreed that diversity fuelled prosperity. Canada was ready to embrace 'the benefits of difference',¹⁰ as the Minister of State for Multiculturalism James Fleming unapologetically put it in a 1981 speech.

In short, if Canada had been more suspicious in the face of the neoliberal logic, in other words less eager to fully embrace global markets, the state would certainly had been less active in promoting this peaceful and protective image of tolerance. These narratives were built up for a reason, even though the economic interests they supported were rarely clearly stated in the mythology of multiculturalism. As Kogila Moodley asserted in 1983, 'nowhere is the confusion between myth and reality more evident than in the meaning of the Canadian policy of multiculturalism'.¹¹ Accordingly, this myth of inclusivity carefully conceals the utterly opportunistic aspect of multiculturalism. Indeed, beyond the apparent benevolence of these policies, one needs not forget

that they were first and foremost powerful management tools enabling the state to efficiently integrate this newly arrived workforce. As Eva Mackey puts it, 'the project of Canadian nation-building has not been based on the erasure of difference but on controlling and managing it.'¹² Thus, mosaic multiculturalism was conceived as a managerial strategy and practice, positing a collection of decontextualized cultural fragments that existed around a cultural core – a core comprised of white Canadian culture.¹³

Therefore, behind the logic of recognition dear to Charles Taylor,¹⁴ mosaic multiculturalism can also be seen as a 'key process by which the state manages difference by maintaining control over the power to name and annex "the other"'.¹⁵ The flaws of this mosaic model have been extensively scrutinized over the last two decades. As Robert Latham reminds us, the consequences are 'the ghettoization of new immigrants; the solidification of Anglo-Canadian culture as a norm; the establishment of a culture hierarchy; the commodification of – and fixation on – culture; the papering over of crucial class and general differences and inequalities; and the pursuit of a false unity and common Canadian identity'.¹⁶ However, one should still acknowledge that this skilful management process, despite its imperfections, was part of the institutionalization of diversity, which was – and still is – an essential dimension for the success of Canada's ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural cohesion. I would argue that what differentiates Canadian multiculturalism from other forms of multiculturalism is its profound institutionalization. Beyond its ideological and rhetorical facets, Canadian multiculturalism is also a unique set of policies, with special administrative structures to manage them at the federal and provincial level.¹⁷ This legislative and bureaucratic institutionalization, aimed at protecting *and* managing minorities, has thus been driven by none other than the nation state, and in an active manner. It was really 'a political act to achieve political goals (related to national unity and identity) in a politically expedient manner'.¹⁸ In that sense, it is hard to qualify this sophisticated political project – whose foundations underlie Justin Trudeau's own model of governance – as exactly postnational, considering that it was driven by a robust state in an efficient and *dirigiste* fashion.

To go back to the discursive aspect of Justin Trudeau's claim, and to fulfil a comparison between Canada and France that he initiated in the same interview regarding integration (this will be further evoked in the last part of this article), I would like to highlight that multiculturalism is strongly present in European countries as well. It

is simply – with the exception of the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, Germany and Sweden – not officially recognized as such, not fully consciously embraced. One will find no neighbourhood labelled ‘Little Jamaica’ or ‘Little Portugal’ in Paris, but one will find streets and shops in the neighbourhoods of La Goutte d’Or or Château Rouge where the large majority of the inhabitants and clients will be of Francophone African origin. Even though the percentage of immigrants from the same geographic area in these neighbourhoods is certainly close to the percentage of Jamaican immigrants in Toronto’s ‘Little Jamaica’ for instance, they will not be labelled and acknowledged as diasporic neighbourhoods (even less so as ethnic enclaves), mostly for ‘republican’ reasons. Indeed, ‘the Republic is one and indivisible’, as the first article of the French Constitution states. For this reason, there is a taboo surrounding the existence of ethnic enclaves. There is no room for communitarianism – the term *communautariste* is actually an insult, one abundantly mobilized within French right-wing political discourse. Following this logic, formal equality is at the basis of the French social contract. For the same republican reasons, ethnic statistics are forbidden in France – a ban that would be unthinkable in the Canadian context. It would therefore be impossible to prove factually that France is as polyethnic as Canada. Thus, because multiculturalism is not as institutionalized as it is in Canada, this postnational inclusivity argument will be less susceptible to mobilization in the political discourse. The reason why I am making this comparison is to show the fundamentally discursive aspect of Canadian multiculturalism, a dimension that is epitomized by Justin Trudeau’s postnational claim and one that will be further analysed in the last part of this article.

In sum, although the multicultural mosaic model has demonstrated its worth as a political project in contributing to the renouncing of Canada’s exclusionary past, it has also failed to envision the changing dynamics of the country. Because Canada is more diverse than it was in the past, and because the mosaic model has tended to consider identity as a fixed essence, it has logically failed to grasp the increasing fluidity of a constellation of identities moving through a complexifying web of cultures, networks and residencies.¹⁹ For Fleras, the framing of differences along mosaic lines creates a tendency to apply simple – even simplistic – responses and solutions to complex realities, because Canada is much more than a juxtaposition of immutable ethnocultural groups, the demographic representation initially implied by the mosaic metaphor.²⁰ Before expanding on how the postnational claim breaks with the multicultural mosaic logic, let us look at Will Kymlicka’s liberal

understanding of multiculturalism, which further reveals what this somewhat vague term could entail in the Canadian context. As will be seen, the Canadian scholar provides key arguments regarding the post-national hypothesis as well.

Postnationalism as a Citizenship Model: Will Kymlicka's Equation

In his seminal book *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995), Will Kymlicka exposes a perspective on cultural pluralism that profoundly echoes the characteristics of the so-called Canadian 'mosaic'.²¹ The two concepts he develops – those of the 'multinational' state and the 'polyethnic' state – are enlightening in the Canadian context. Although I am not an unbridled partisan for the use of quantitative methods within the social sciences, it could be argued that a very simple equation can be deduced from Kymlicka's insights. I will first explain the distinction between the multinational state and the polyethnic state, and then elaborate on what these two approaches can teach us when it comes to the postnational assumption, before describing how Kymlicka himself understands this notion.

For Kymlicka, there are two main models of cultural pluralism. The multinational state is the first category he defines. This model relies on the incorporation of previously self-governing cultures within a majority culture. Typically, this is characteristic of the Canadian state, where First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples share the same territory, along with the descents of French and English settlers. In Kymlicka's understanding, First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Québécois peoples are therefore 'national minorities', because they constitute distinct and potentially self-governing societies incorporated within the larger state that is Canada and, most importantly, within a majority culture that is English. Kymlicka does not consider them as racial or descent groups, but as cultural groups.²² Thus, it could be legitimately argued that Canada is a multinational state. However, because of immigration, Canada is also polyethnic. Polyethnicity encompasses another dimension of pluralism. It refers to the ethnic diversity resulting from the settlement of immigrants who have left their national community to integrate into another society. These immigrants from various ethnic origins have brought their own cultural, linguistic, religious and sociological particularisms, on top of an already complex multinational framework compounded of Indigenous peoples and French

and English settlers. Canada's situation fits perfectly within these two paradigms.

As Kymlicka puts it, 'a single country may be both multinational (as a result of the colonizing, conquest, or confederation of national communities) and polyethnic (as a result of individual and familial immigration).' Indeed, all of these patterns are present in Canada: 'the Indians were overrun by French settlers, the French were conquered by the English, although their current relationship between the two can be seen as a voluntary federation, and both the English and French have accepted immigrants who are allowed to maintain their ethnic identity.'²³ Undoubtedly, Canada is therefore both multinational and polyethnic. This distinction is particularly meaningful. First, it allows us to deconstruct the umbrella term 'multiculturalism', an ambiguous notion that tends to conflate multinationality and polyethnicity. But this distinction also raises awareness of the complexities of diversity, and the many different forms that diversity can take in any given society. Quoting Gutmann, Kymlicka asserts that 'virtually all liberal democracies are either multinational or polyethnic, or both. The "challenge of multiculturalism" is to accommodate these national and ethnic differences in a stable and morally defensible way.'²⁴ Although this assertion sounds relevant, I would argue that given Canada's exceptional ethnic diversity, there are very few places like it, in which multinationality and polyethnicity overlap with such intensity and salience. This leads us to re-examine the postnational hypothesis. Could we interpret the claim to postnationalism as a means to express the strong interconnectedness between multinationality and polyethnicity in the Canadian context? Could postnationalism be read as a term encompassing this complexity? Could it be analysed as a semantic simplification to refer to Canada's complex cultural assemblage?

Given Kymlicka's insights, one might be tempted to consider postnationalism as the result of the fusion of multinationality and polyethnicity. Thus, considering the prominence of both the multinational and the polyethnic dimensions of Canadian society, one could consider postnationalism as the umbrella term reflecting this complex amalgam on a semantic level. Nevertheless, while the polyethnic character of the country is recognized in Trudeau's argument (even though it could have been made clearer), the very fact of evoking a 'postnational' Canada denies the multinational dimension of the country, as the prefix 'post' implies that there are no more distinctive nations within it. Instead, it explicitly rejects the possibility that there could be plethora of nations within Canada. Thus, understanding

postnationalism as the sum of multinationality and polyethnicity is not that convincing.

In fact, Kymlicka himself uses the term postnational in an article published in 2011.²⁵ The Canadian philosopher seems to understand postnationalism as a form of 'citizenization', that is, a process aimed at building a new form of citizenship contract, a new paradigm of social cohesion within increasingly complex societies. Within Western multinational states, citizenization is therefore 'not about resolving disputes over legitimacy, but about learning to live with their contested character, and building democratic forums for continuing that conversation'.²⁶ Postnationalism is here understood as a call to promote an improved sense of common citizenship in multinational settings. This is a tricky endeavour in Canada because citizenship has already been pluralized to accommodate sub-state national groups (Québécois and Indigenous people). Besides, Kymlicka reminds us that the deepest challenge to social cohesion in many countries comes from their historic national minorities, not their immigrants:

In Canada, identification with Canada amongst first and second generation immigrants, whatever their race or ethnicity, is as high as amongst the majority native-born white English-speaking population. The only two groups that exhibit significant ambivalence about identifying with Canada are the two national minorities – the Québécois and Aborigines.²⁷

Considering these existing tensions, immigration represents as much a new set of challenges as a strategic asset. Rather than playing on the anxieties related to social cohesion within an increasingly diverse citizenry, governments could, on the contrary, adopt what Kymlicka calls a 'postnational approach', one that would seek to 'socialize immigrants into a state-level civic identity that stands above the inherited national divisions within a multinational state'.²⁸ In this perspective, preaching postnationalism not only prevents immigrants from falling into the trap of divisive pre-existing internal divisions, it also makes immigration the catalyst for internal pacification by delineating new ways of being Canadian without being English, French or Indigenous. Thus, while transcending the dualism between Francophones and Anglophones, immigrants will forge a new form of civic Canadianness that is post-national.²⁹ Following this logic, socializing immigrants to postnational arguments becomes a method for mitigating the old national cleavages by the back door (Kymlicka is mostly concerned with the tensions

between Québécois and Anglophones, but one could also add the relationship between settlers' descendants and Indigenous peoples). In other words, immigration is conceived as an opportunity to ease pre-existing tensions by advancing a postnational citizenship agenda that immigrants could embrace and diffuse.

If this is Justin Trudeau's strategic goal, it will most likely fail. Indeed, although potentially transformative and a priori progressive, this postnational logic does not really convince Kymlicka. First, it is very hard to integrate newcomers in ways that are neutral amongst the historic national projects, and this is even more the case when the cleavage is defined along linguistic lines: immigrants in Quebec must choose between learning English or learning French, for instance. In most cases, immigrants are in fact integrating into the dominant society: Kymlicka rightfully underlines that immigrants in Canada who describe themselves as neither English nor French but 'Canadians' are overwhelmingly likely to be English-speaking, and to have integrated through Anglophone social and political institutions. Secondly, the postnational approach usually leaves untouched the ethnic definitions of the constituent national groups: there is therefore no pressure on these national groups to redefine their sense of nationhood to be more ethnically inclusive.³⁰ Lastly, the postnational approach will necessarily create a political asymmetry between the dominant national group and the sub-state national groups. Thus, the central (federal) government will most likely promote a postnational form of citizenship, while sub-state (provincial) governments will promote a multinational form of citizenship, telling immigrants that they can become citizens by becoming Québécois. In the end, Kymlicka suggests that postnational Canadians, and those who promote this model, are necessarily Anglophones willing to push their own hegemonic agenda. While debunking the concept of postnationalism as a form of progressivism, Kymlicka's demonstration has the merit of emphasizing the fact that citizenship does not operate as a binary but rather as a dialectic. Therefore, citizenship often shifts and turns, and so occludes the more pervasive social dynamics of exclusion.³¹

Ultimately, I would argue that postnationalism does not refer to the amalgam of multinationality and polyethnicity. Rather, it has to be understood as an affect: when he talks about a postnational Canada, Trudeau seeks to convey an ethos of universality and inclusivity. For this reason, the Canadian model is important to interrogate not simply because of its own significance internally, but also for the contrast that it sets up with other forms of nationalism, in an era of growing right-wing populism.

Postnationalism as a Discourse: A Postmulticultural Ethos of Inclusivity

I would argue that the notion of postnationalism is a purely rhetorical one. By heralding Canada as postnational, Trudeau wishes to present his country as very diverse – which it undeniably is. Following his logic, Canadian identity cannot be encapsulated into a single type of identity. As Trudeau himself puts it in the same *New York Times Magazine* interview: ‘countries with a strong national identity – linguistic, religious or cultural – are finding it a challenge to effectively integrate people from different backgrounds. In France, there is still a typical citizen and an atypical citizen. Canada doesn’t have that dynamic.’³²

So, on the one hand, this notion of postnationalism indeed recognizes the inherent dynamism and the constantly moving dimension of identity. It could be argued that Trudeau does not essentialize what it means to be Canadian. In so doing, he seems to comprehend that identity is a site of constant – and sometimes violent – struggle. On the other hand, behind this idea of postnationalism, there is also an urge to unify; to use a term, a word, to define the multifarious cultural assemblage that is Canadian society. Why this need for labelling, which is reminiscent of former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s ‘Brand Canada’, meant ‘to project a positive international image for the purpose of increasing foreign investment’ in the 1990s?³³ Could we read in this appetite for branding an internalized insecurity complex comparable to the Australian ‘cultural cringe’, the term coined by Arthur Angels Phillips in the 1950s and used in cultural studies?³⁴ As a former settler colony of Britain, Australia has been consistently considered to have some sort of ‘identity crisis’. Processes of identity formation in former colonial contexts are complex, even more so in the case of former settler colonial settings. One can feel when looking at the historical development of Canada – and with Trudeau’s suggestion of adopting the adjective ‘postnational’ – the urgent and almost defensive approach that identity and nation formation can take in postcolonial settler entities such as Canada. However, the situation is not comparable to that of Australia, the context being of course different. Canada was far less isolated from the rest of the world than Australia used to be, and it did not see its intellectuals fleeing the country during the 1960s and 1970s, as Australia did.

It is hard to see this presumed cultural insecurity as a foreigner living and working in Canada. On the contrary, I would argue that my friends and students are happy to be Canadians, and reflect with pride

on the excellent global reputation of their country, even though they are also able to identify its flaws and paradoxes (notably when it comes to the social marginalization many Indigenous people continue to face). But if one gives in to widespread clichés and white Anglo-Saxon stereotypes, Canadians are arguably proud of ‘their national symbols and reputation for being kind, outdoorsy non-Americans’,³⁵ and attached to ‘their shared values, entrenched in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, their symbols of ice hockey, beavers and maple syrup, and their reputation of being overtly polite, tolerant and diverse’,³⁶ which are all manifestations of what Claudia Chwalisz refers to as ‘the Liberal patriotism’. I personally prefer the term ‘folklore’.

But folklore is tied to emotion, and this is where Chwalisz somehow hits the right nail on the head. I would indeed argue that what transpires from postnationalism is an affect: it is the fantasy of a ‘universal nation’. By using this term, Trudeau aims at strengthening a peaceful and inclusive ethos, but without deploying the same discursive multicultural tools and practices than before. This was noticeable during the 2015 campaign, the Liberals being able to ‘channel national pride through an inclusive, patriotic narrative, emphasizing the positive aspects of the country’s multicultural policies’.³⁷ This set up a major contrast with Stephen Harper’s divisive rhetoric, which was aimed at galvanizing the conservative base during the same campaign (one might remember his reference to ‘old-stock Canadians’, as opposed to refugees or first-generation descendants of immigrants). Such an exhalation of national pride on the part of Trudeau – however inclusive it may be – and the mobilization of robust patriotic narratives seem to be antithetical to the notion of postnationalism. The nation state is arguably still strongly present in this narrative, even though in some instances it is obscured by the power of symbols.

Moreover, the notion of postnationalism, it could be argued, also denies the very strong sense of nationhood that is required to maintain Canada’s commitment to welcoming foreigners and to integrating them into its socio-economic and political systems. In this era of growing populism and the increasing rejection of the Other, I think that designating Canada as postnational conceals this Canadian exceptionalism. If Canada is so different and so tolerant, it is because it has a strong sense of what its ideals and common values are, something that Trudeau actually emphasizes in the interview when he says that ‘there are shared values – openness, respect, compassion, willingness to work hard, to be there for each other, to search for equality and justice.’³⁸ Arguably, values and ideals – beyond the geographical notions

of territory or border – are also what makes a nation. Labelling Canada as postnational is therefore a euphemism for this benevolent difference, this tolerant exceptionalism.

One might be tempted to believe, in light of all the criticisms of multiculturalism that have been enunciated in this article – notably those focusing on its managerial purposes, its neoliberal opportunism and its inability to mitigate social exclusion – that postnationalism could become the new ideological terminology used by the elites to replace the now contested term of multiculturalism. Because of the racialization of inequalities and considering the widening socio-economic gap between white and non-white Canadians, as well as the multiple criticisms of the mosaic model, the capacity of the Anglo-Francophone majority to dialectically deploy multicultural discourses and practices seems to be under threat in the twenty-first century. This threat is generated notably by new tensions arising from socio-economic pressures and articulated by anti-racist critics of multiculturalism.³⁹ It seems that the concept of multiculturalism is nowadays insufficient to answer the question of ‘what Canadians are’ and that alternate policies and discursive tools should be considered to develop a ‘more accurate understanding of the nature of Canadian society’.⁴⁰ Therefore, the model might need a rebranding, a new discursive articulation in order to be sustained. This is, in my opinion, the lens through which one should analyse the mobilization of the postnational discourse: moving beyond a mere multicultural frame and (superficially) reconsidering the nature of the Canadian social contract, without necessarily changing the nature of the ideology and policies that support it. With the mobilization of this new mythology, one might argue that we have entered an era of ‘postmulticulturalism’.

A desire to go beyond the multicultural mythology is laudable. As Robert Latham reminds us, Canada is much more than just a multicultural social formation. It is multiracial, multiclass, multigendered, multisexual, multilocal, multipolitical, multireligious, multilingual, multihistorical, multigenerational, multistatus and multiscalar.⁴¹ To encompass this addition of ‘multi’, or what Fleurbaey calls the ‘diversification of diversity’,⁴² Latham proposes the inspiring term of ‘multiversality’, which he believes fit to represent ‘a conceptual place-holder for a complex, overlapping, inconsistent social formation that we are otherwise often content to call society or Canada’.⁴³ Multiversality, as a very strong version of pluralism, entails that one should not agree on a hierarchy of pivots for understanding difference in Canada, including nation, culture, race, class, sexuality, religion, rural/urban,

new/old immigrant, language and disability. For Fleras, a commitment to multiversal multiculturalism as an inclusivity governance model is theoretically attuned to the realities of differentiated differences in a diversifying Canada and a globalizing world of transmigration.⁴⁴ Thus multiversality should be able to transcend the flaws of mosaic multiculturalism: instead of *managing* differences, it is *engaging* with the complexification of diversities.

However, Latham emphasizes an important dimension of multiversality: it is a planned political project, which in fact 'reinforces the political robustness of Canada in that the common element that joins the many spheres associated with society is the Canadian state'.⁴⁵ The state should retain its primacy in socio-political life: 'in the Canadian multiverse, the state is more visible as the one set of institutions that is in effect present in every sphere of life.'⁴⁶ Again, a strong state is by definition very much at odds with the idea of postnationalism. As awkward as it might be, Justin Trudeau's postnational aspiration could then be analysed as an attempt – less demanding intellectually than Latham's – to provide a new conceptual frame for individuals and groups to navigate the complexification of Canadian diversity. But since the role of the state is semantically neglected, this rhetorical endeavour undeniably falls short.

Finally, despite these intentions, one can also analyse the use of the adjective 'postnational' as a form of dialectical neglect in regards to the various claims for sovereignty that the mosaic model has failed to alleviate and that are still vivid and visible in Canada today – one might think of First Nations groups in regards to land claims and treaty rights. This echoes Kymlicka's argument regarding postnationalism as a hegemonic endeavour on the part of the majority culture to marginalize sub-state minorities through the promotion and diffusion of a new citizenship agenda. Yet, in sometimes very loud manners, these groups still remain fiercely determined to gain recognition from both the federal government and the rest of the Canadian population. Determining how these claims should be addressed is beyond the scope of this article. But assuming a discourse of unity and cohesion, as Justin Trudeau does, presenting Canada as an orderly and linear postnational order in such an uncritical manner, while some of these protests are noisier and more determined to be heard than ever (I am notably making reference to First Nation's environmental fights), tend to deny their strength, if not their very existence. And what an awkward choice of words, to say the least. Using the term 'postnational' while Canada has more than 600 First Nations not only makes it seem that these latter belong to

the past – thus denying the multinational dimension of the country – but also pushes them into invisibility and silences their legitimate grievances. This is particularly dramatic, especially when it has been recognized that many Indigenous peoples live ‘in abysmal conditions on traditional territories that are full of valuable and plentiful natural resources’.⁴⁷

In the Canadian context, the meaning of postnationalism could be understood in light of the following questions: how do we nationalize the postcolonial? And how do we reconcile the native with the cosmopolitan? Or, to put it differently and to borrow Kymlicka’s distinction: how do we understand the relationship between the multinational and the polyethnic? Discursive erasure is certainly not the answer to all these questions. Rather than promoting hybridity in a healthy manner, the state’s emphasis on ethnic celebration through postnationalism undermines efforts by Indigenous groups and racialized communities to mobilize politically.⁴⁸ For this reason, amongst others, talking about postnationalism reveals a certain will towards forceful homogenization, as it marginalizes divergent conceptions of identity and sovereignty that are not addressed on the federal level. While it is laudable of Trudeau to signify the value that the Canadian government places on cross-cultural tolerance and cultural pluralism, the postnational discourse also denies all the processes of racialized social exclusion that are at play in contemporary Canada. Beyond the mere celebration of differences, the Canadian state should thus strive to recognize the complexities of contemporary transnationalism, notably the enduring notion that national minorities and immigrants remain implicated in unequal power relations.

Conclusion: After Postmulticulturalism?

As has been seen, the logic underlying mosaic multiculturalism in Canada was clearly to actively renounce the country’s exclusionary past, mitigate the tensions between the Francophones and the Anglophones, and ensure social cohesion in a time of demographic change. Its policies were first and foremost powerful management tools, driven by a vigorous interventionist state, that were aimed at efficiently integrating new immigrants. Because of the primary role the state adopted in this endeavour, this project was not a postnational one. Besides, as has been demonstrated, the transformation of Canadian society over recent decades and the ‘diversification of diversity’ have rendered this

mosaic model obsolete and could explain why it may need a rhetorical rebranding. For that reason, the mobilization of postnationalism reflects the need to invent a new discursive device, the urge to construct a new imaginary to regain the legitimacy and sustain the ideology of multiculturalism, which has suffered continued criticism. Arguably, we have therefore entered an era of dialectical *postmulticulturalism*. Furthermore, if one looks at Kymlicka's liberal theory of multiculturalism, postnationalism can be understood as a hegemonic attempt on the part of the majority culture to marginalize sub-state minorities through the diffusion of a new citizenship agenda. This insight instils doubt in the progressive nature of Justin Trudeau's endeavour.

However, in light of all the arguments developed throughout this article, I would contend that Canada is too rich and diverse to be labelled postnational. Canada constitutes a 'kaleidoscope of differentiated fissions, widening fissures, and hybridized fusions' with the characteristics of a hybrid Métis nation, as famously opined by John Ralston Saul.⁴⁹ Considering its multinationality (Québécois, First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples) and its polyethnicity, it would be far more correct to consider Canada *plurinational* – a term that continues to emphasize diversity along the vector of nation – or, to borrow Robert Latham's notion that underscores the diversity of vectors of difference, *multiversal*.

Lastly, I would say that it is no coincidence that Trudeau chose to employ this term in *The New York Times Magazine*, on the occasion of this ten-page interview that in some ways set the tone for his mandate. Indeed, after lingering in the shadows of the British Empire – culturally speaking until the 1960s and constitutionally speaking until the 1980s – Canadian identity has been, over recent decades, marginalized by American cultural imperialism. In the age of Trump, it has become obvious that this discursive break will constitute, more than ever, a posture vis-à-vis the United States. Indeed, producing this claim of postnationalism explicitly signifies that the tradition of openness that has characterized North America for centuries, although under siege in Uncle Sam's land, remains – at least discursively – vivid a few miles further north. However, if the government of Canada wants to go beyond the largely symbolic and idealistic aspect of ethnic celebration, it should be careful not to use this postnational rhetoric as a means to obscure race, class and gender as key determinants of the marginalization, structural oppression, exploitation and exclusion faced by racialized people in Canada.⁵⁰

Notes

- 1 Edward Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Columbia University Press, 2004), 24.
- 2 Guy Lawson, 'Trudeau's Canada, Again', *New York Times Magazine*, 8 December 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/magazine/trudeaus-canada-again.html?_r=0 (accessed 15 January 2017).
- 3 Canadian Heritage, *Annual Report on the Operation of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1999–2000* (Ottawa: Heritage Canada, 2001).
- 4 Wendy Brown, 'Neo-liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', *Theory and Event* 7.1 (2003): 19. Emphases in original.
- 5 Glen S. Coulthard, 'Subjects of Empire: Indigenous peoples and the "Politics of Recognition" in Canada', in *Home and Native Land. Unsettling Multiculturalism in Canada*, ed. May Chazan et al. (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2011), 32.
- 6 Rachel Surman, 'A Snapshot of Toronto: 51% of Residents Born Outside Canada, Vital Style Report Finds', *National Post*, 7 October 2014, <https://tinyurl.com/y5syv56p> (accessed 23 July 2017).
- 7 Constitution Act, 1982, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Article 27, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html> (accessed 26 July 2017).
- 8 Augie Fleras, 'From Mosaic to Multiversality: Repriming Multicultural Governance in a Postnational Canada', *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 43.1–2 (2011): 22.
- 9 Nandita Sharma, 'Canadian Multiculturalism and its Nationalisms', in *Home and Native Land*, ed. Chazan et al., 91–2.
- 10 James Fleming, 'Multiculturalism: Who's It for?' Speech to the Fourth Canadian Conference on Multiculturalism, Ottawa, October 1981. Cited by Kogila Moodley, 'Canadian Multiculturalism as Ideology,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6.3 (1983): 328.
- 11 Kogila Moodley, 'Canadian Multiculturalism as Ideology', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 6.3 (1983): 320–1.
- 12 Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference. Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2002), 148.
- 13 Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000), 9–10, 94.
- 14 Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: University Press, Princeton, 1994).
- 15 Margaret Walton-Roberts, 'Multiculturalism Already Unbound', in *Home and Native Land*, ed. Chazan et al., 106.
- 16 Robert Latham, 'What Are We? From a Multicultural to a Multiversal Canada', *International Journal* 63.1 (2008): 25.
- 17 Freda Hawkins, 'Canadian Multiculturalism: The Policy Explained', in *Canadian Mosaic. Essays on Multiculturalism*, ed. A. J. Fry and C. Forceville (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988), 11.
- 18 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 23.
- 19 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 30.
- 20 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 33.
- 21 Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
- 22 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 23.
- 23 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 17.
- 24 Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, 26 quoting Amy Gutmann, 'The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22.3 (1993): 171–206.
- 25 Will Kymlicka, 'Multicultural Citizenship within Multination States', *Ethnicities* 11.3 (2011): 281–302.
- 26 Kymlicka, 'Multicultural Citizenship', 288–9.
- 27 Kymlicka, 'Multicultural Citizenship', 284.
- 28 Kymlicka, 'Multicultural Citizenship', 290.
- 29 Kymlicka, 'Multicultural Citizenship', 291.
- 30 Kymlicka, 'Multicultural Citizenship', 293.
- 31 Elena V. Toukan, Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez and Sardar M. Anwaruddin, 'Shifting Borders and Sinking Ships: What (and Who) is Transnationalism "Good" For?' *Curriculum Inquiry* 47.1 (2017): 6.
- 32 Guy Lawson, 'Trudeau's Canada, Again', *New York Times Magazine*, 8 December 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/magazine/trudeaus-canada-again.html?_r=0 (accessed 15 January 2017).

- 33 Cory Bald, *Neoliberalism and National Culture. State-building and Legitimacy in Canada and Québec* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 235.
- 34 A. A. Phillips, 'The Cultural Cringe', *Meanjin*, 9.4 (1950).
- 35 Claudia Chwalisz, 'The World Needs More Canada. Are There Lessons for European Progressives in the Liberal's Comeback?', *Juncture* 23.4 (2017): 258.
- 36 Chwalisz, 'The World', 264.
- 37 Chwalisz, 'The World', 262.
- 38 Lawson, 'Trudeau's Canada, Again'.
- 39 Grace Edward Galabuzi, 'Hegemonies, Continuities, and Discontinuities of Multiculturalism and the Anglo-Franco Conformity Order', in *Home and Native Land*, ed. Chazan et al., 62.
- 40 Latham, 'What Are We?' 24.
- 41 Latham, 'What Are We?' 26.
- 42 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 18.
- 43 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 28.
- 44 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 20.
- 45 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 33.
- 46 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 32.
- 47 United Nations Human Rights Council, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on The Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya. The Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada* (2014), http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/SR/A.HRC.27.52.Add.2-MissionCanada_AUV.pdf (accessed 20 July 2017).
- 48 Galabuzi, 'Hegemonies, Continuities, and Discontinuities', 74.
- 49 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 33.
- 50 Fleras, 'From Mosaic', 75.

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Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests with this work.