

The Discursive Constitution of a World-Spanning Region and the Role of Empty Signifiers: The Case of Francophonie

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The cultural turn in political science, history, and political geography has opened new perspectives on the division of the world into geographic entities. Nation-states, regions, districts, etc., are no longer qualified as quasi-natural objects based upon intrinsic qualities but, rather, as contingent results of social or accordingly discursive processes.

The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) defines Francophonie as an “geocultural space” (espace géoculturel) and an international community of more than 50 states. In this contribution, the concept of political communities as “imagined communities” and the advancements of discourse theory by Laclau and Mouffe are used in order to conceptualise and analyse the discursive constitution of this world-spanning region. The findings show that Francophonie has been constituted during the process of decolonisation as a community bound together by the idea of a shared language – largely by reproducing patterns of a superiority of French language and culture. Critique against a neo-colonial character of Francophonie and the changing contexts of international relations led to breaks and shifts of the discourse. Thus, since the end of the 1990s, the OIF delimits Francophonie as the space of cultural diversity against the cultural homogenisation of an “Anglo-Saxon dominated globalisation”.

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INTRODUCTION: FRANCOFONIA – A WORLD-SPANNING
REGION CREATED BY SHARED VALUES
AND A SHARED LANGUAGE?

On 28 November 2004, the vice president of Vietnam, Madam Truong My Hoa, inaugurated a “Maison de TV5” in the provincial town of Boulmiougou in Burkina Faso.¹ The “Maisons de TV5” in Western Africa are bars where people of a neighbourhood are offered the possibility to watch the program of the French-speaking international broadcast station TV5 via satellite. Why does a poor Asian country finance such a “Maison” in a poor West African country? What affiliates Vietnam and Burkina-Faso? It is the idea of Francophonie. But what is Francophonie? How can the existence of an international community of countries such as Vietnam, Burkina Faso, Albania, Togo, Luxembourg and Djibouti be explained?

The *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF) defines itself as a world-spanning “geocultural space” (*espace géoculturel*) and an international organisation with 55 nation-states and governments as full members and 13 states with the status of observer or associate member. The OIF cooperates with other international organisations, e.g., in diplomatic missions. Furthermore, the OIF organises multilateral development aid and promotes the usage of the French language. Last but not least, the OIF fights under the label of “cultural diversity” against “the cultural homogenisation” of the world. Following the OIF, Francophonie is “based upon shared values and a shared language” as well as a “common history”.² The general secretary of the OIF regularly legitimises the action in favour of the cultural diversity with the roots of Francophonie: “From its beginnings, Francophonie has been built on the foundation of cultural diversity”.³

The first non-governmental organisations describing themselves as “francophone” were set up in the late 1950s, whereby the first inter-governmental organisation was established in 1969/1970 with twenty-one members – mostly former French and Belgian colonies in Africa. Since 1986, the heads of state of the member countries met every two years for a summit of Francophonie – for example, summits were held in 2004 in Burkina Faso and in 2006 in Rumania. In 1997, the position of the general secretary was created and assigned to Boutros Boutros Ghali who introduced the notion of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* in order to create an organisational centre of the institutionalised Francophonie.⁴ In the perspective of the OIF and many publications on Francophonie,⁵ the shared language, the shared values, and the common history have created a world-spanning geocultural region: “Francophonie”. Thus, the OIF and other organisations were nothing else than the expression and institutionalisation of that world-spanning region.

In traditional geography, the segmentation of the world into geographic entities has been explained by supposedly intrinsic and essential

differences. The geodeterminism of the nineteenth century called on the natural differences to account for the delimitation of geographic entities. Later on, people sought for the basis of geographic entities in the characteristics of their inhabitants – such characteristics were often conceptualised as their specific culture, which would allow to delimit specific cultural areas. Therefore, traditional geography might have accepted the auto-representation of Francophonía.

However, the idea that regions are the stringent and logical consequence of a specific history and are derived from essential characteristics of “their community” has been challenged with the conceptional impulses from the constructionist turn in the research on nations as well as from the critical geopolitics-approaches. Bernhard Giesen has shown that the constructionist skepticism concerning the “realness” of communities is not a new phenomenon: since the eighteenth century, communities have been interpreted as the result of a “false consciousness”, which is invented by social elites, motivated by interests of career and leadership (sometimes labeled as “Priestertrug” – priestly deception). The problem with such a perspective is that it introduces from the outside a distinction between right and wrong communities and a moralistic differentiation between wrongdoers and victims. Other constructionist approaches consider communities as the result of the rational choice of individuals. However, if one agrees that identities define interests, such an approach is based upon a circular argument, as identities are explained by interests and interests by identities.⁶

The current debate in political science, history, and geography stresses the importance of symbols and emblems, which represent the “imagined communities”. Nation-states, regions, districts, etc., are conceptualised as contingent results of socially or accordingly discursive processes. Based on the understanding of “nations as imagined communities” and by translating the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantalle Mouffe into political geography, I will develop the idea that political communities and their boundaries can be read as the always contingent and temporary results of discursive constitutions. The discussion on an appropriate operationalisation of the discourse theory is just in its beginnings. In this paper it is argued that a triangulation of two linguistic methods is appropriate to reveal temporary fixations: by means of corpus driven lexicometric procedures as well as by the analysis of narrative patterns I will analyse the discursive constitution of Francophonía in different periods.⁷

THEORETICAL FRAMING: THE DISCURSIVE CONSTITUTION OF POLITICAL COMMUNITIES

With the groundbreaking work of the Suisse linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, linguistics has rejected the idea that signs simply represent the world as it is – signs do not have intrinsic values. Rather, the meaning of signs originates

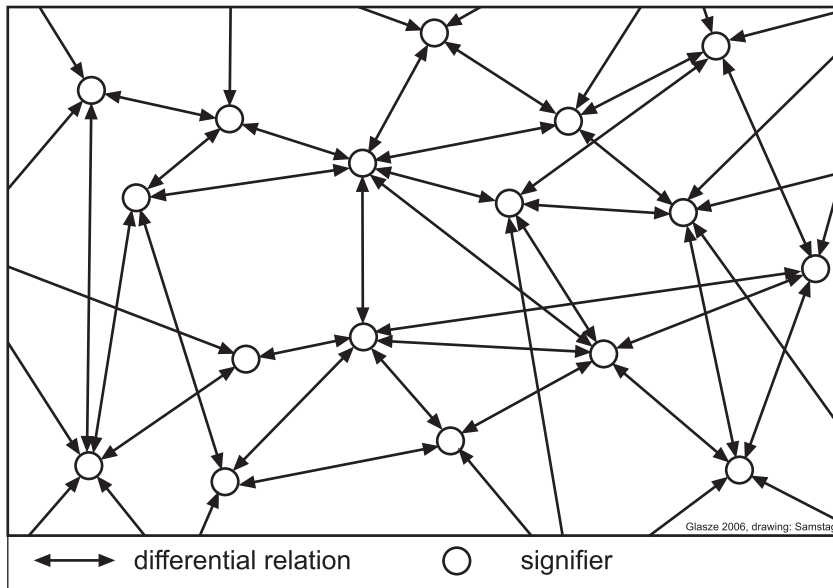


FIGURE 1 The relation of signifiers in the perspective of structuralism “inert fixation”.

from relational and differential delineation within the linguistic structure. Language is thought of as a fish-net-structure in which each sign has a fixed position as the knots in the fishing net do (Figure 1).⁸

The works of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and others have advanced the Saussurean linguistics by stressing the arbitrary character of the link between sign and signified and questioning the stability of the differential relations between signifiers – leading to a thinking often described as post-structural. Poststructuralism retains the idea that signs are ascribed meaning through the relations within the network of signs, but it discards the idea of language as a fixed and unchangeable structure. Structures do exist, but always in a fragile, temporary, and not necessarily consistent state (Figure 2).⁹

Michel Foucault developed the concept of discourse as a system of statements. Statements have to follow specific rules if they want to find acceptance as meaningful and true. However, statements are also characterised by their singularity. Thus, discourse has to be interpreted as a relational ensemble of signs, which temporarily fixes meaning and not as an inert and stable structure.

Discourse analytical approaches share the idea that our access to reality is always in and through language. Therefore, the “purpose of research is not to get ‘behind’ the discourse, to find what people really mean . . . or to discover the reality behind discourse. The starting point is that reality can never be reached outside discourses and so it is discourse itself that has become the object of analysis.”¹⁰

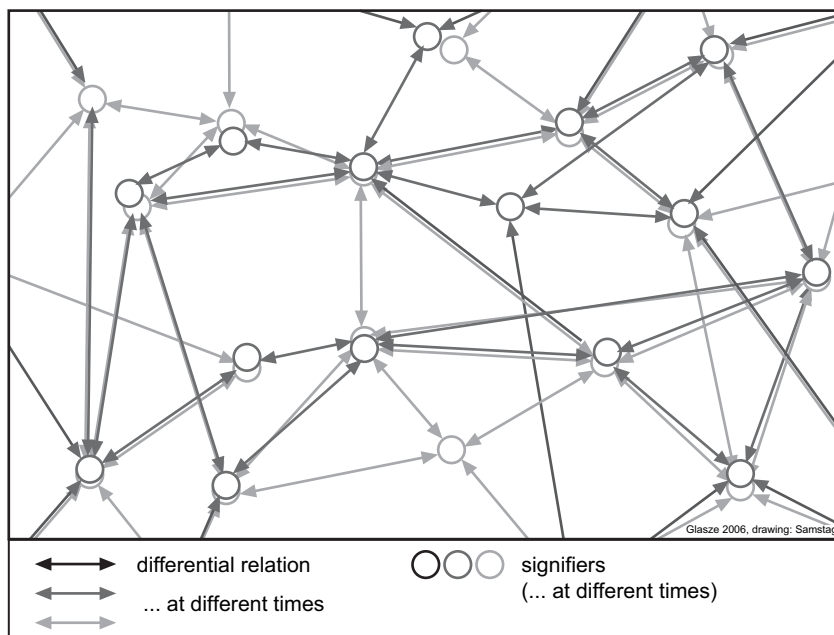


FIGURE 2 The relation of signifiers in the perspective of poststructuralism “fragile fixation”.

Laclau and Mouffe are developing a discourse theory, which builds upon the Foucauldian concept of discourse as well as on the concepts of poststructuralism. They expand these concepts beyond language – forcefully and more consistently than, for example, Foucault has done. For the two political scientists, there is no such thing as a non-discursive sphere: all social phenomena are never ultimately fixed, but are always fragile and the temporary results of discursive struggles about identities.¹¹ A discourse assures a temporary fixation of meaning and, therefore, a contingent fixation of identities within a particular domain. Laclau and Mouffe define key terms of their discourse theory like this: “We will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast, we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated.”¹²

This expansion of discourse theory from language to a proper social theory is brought together with the notion of hegemony. Antonio Gramsci introduced this notion in the ‘30s of the twentieth century, and thus challenged the determinism of vulgar Marxism. He developed the concept of hegemony in order to conceptualise the processes in the “superstructure” that play a part in the creation of people’s consciousness. Laclau and Mouffe

radicalise Gramsci's concept of hegemony by discarding the remnants of class determinism. They define hegemony as an expansion of a discourse into a dominant horizon of social orientation that partially and temporarily fixes the meaning of discursive elements around nodal points. They stress that there are no determining laws, which divide society into particular groups, rather, groups are constituted in discursive processes. Even if we act as if identities are real and objectively given facts, this objectivity has to be read as the historical outcome of political processes – “sedimented discourses”. The development from discursive struggle to objectivity is realised in hegemonic interventions whereby alternative understandings of the world are suppressed, leading to the naturalisation of one single perspective.¹³ In his latest writings Laclau has emphasised the impossibility of a structural determination as well as the fragility and the non-closing of every discourse. He introduces the notion of “dislocation” in order to denominate the destabilisation of a discourse, provoked and enabled by the emergence of events, which cannot not be symbolised and integrated in the existing discourse. Laclau calls myths the attempts to overcome the dislocation and to constitute a new structure, a new “objectivity” and thus new identities by means of the rearticulation of the dislocated elements. Thereby, the fascination of a myth, e. g., the “promised country” or the “ideal society”, stems directly from the “perception or intuition of a fullness that cannot be granted by the reality of the present”.¹⁴

The discourse theory, as conceptualised by Laclau and Mouffe, is especially fruitful for conceiving the constitution of identities. From Althusser, they adopt the idea of “subject positions”. Althusser proposed the concept of “interpellation” for an alternative to the idea of an autonomous and self-conscious subject. In this perspective, individuals are interpellated or placed in specific positions by ideology via institutions like the media, the education system, or the family. These institutions construct the belief that the individuals are self-conscious by defining and thus “teaching” what a worker, a factory owner, or a schoolboy is. Laclau and Mouffe take this idea of the subject as non-autonomous. However, they release the deterministic components by taking the theory of the subject, which was conceived by Jacques Lacan and Slavoi Žižek into consideration. They describe the subject as perpetually incomplete and fragmented, constantly striving to become a whole. Thus, the subject is not positioned in one specific way, but is, rather, ascribed by many different, contingent, and temporary positions within different discourses and is never complete. “The idea of the true, and whole self is a fiction The wholeness is imaginary but it is a necessary horizon within both the self and the social is created.”¹⁵ Identity is the identification with a subject position, and this position is conceived within the concept of Lacan as “master signifier” and, within the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, as “nodal point”. Identity is established relationally by linking together “chains of equivalences”.

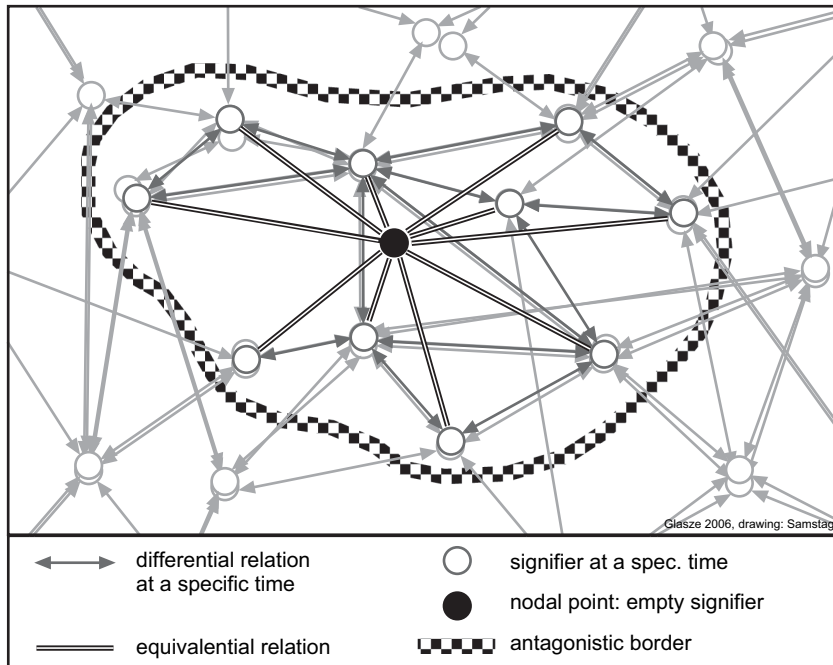


FIGURE 3 The relation of signifiers in the perspective of the discourse theory “temporal fixation”.

Following Laclau,¹⁶ groups are constituted through a double process, which establishes a chain of equivalences that obliterates the differences within, and an antagonistic boundary defining their limits. This constitution is contingent and, therefore, political. In a paradoxical way, the chain of equivalences, as well as the antagonistic boundary of the group, are signified by a specific nodal point: an empty signifier. The empty signifier enables the establishment of a chain of equivalences as it breaks the logic of difference and enables the logic of equivalence: “The differential character of social identities collapses as they become inscribed in chains of equivalence that construct them in terms of a certain ‘sameness’”¹⁷ (Figure 3).

Laclau and Mouffe are building a social theory, which is sometimes labelled as “post-foundational”¹⁸ because it does not suppose a pre-discursive basis of social organisation as, for example, traditional Marxist theories do with the idea of an economic basis, or as some culturalist theories do by assuming pre-discursive cultural differences. In this perspective, a political community is not constituted around a “heart” or a shared essential quality, but, instead, around an empty signifier, which represents the pure and perfect but impossible identity of the community, and defines an antagonistic boundary defining their limits – i.e., excluding the fundamentally different “other”.

This concept of group formation helps to re-conceptualise the idea of nations and political communities, in general, as “imagined communities”:¹⁹ the commemoration of historic conflicts, the tomb of the unknown soldier, or simply the idea of a shared colour of the skin or a shared language function as empty signifiers and constitute political communities.²⁰ I will use the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe in order to analyse around which empty signifiers the community of Francophonía has been and is constituted by in different periods.

The importance, which grants the discourse theory the “constitutive outside” and the impossibility of a perfect “internal” identity, at the same time enables the discourse theory to be linked with newer writings in human geography, which discuss the social meaning of spatiality.²¹ Thus, the production of communities often falls back to regionalisations and demarcations and, thus, to the differentiation between a homogeneous inside and a radically different outside. Thereby, the spatial arrangements (as communication and as materiality) support specific constructions of identity as these constructions are “objectified” and given reliability.²²

RESEARCH DESIGN: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Empirical studies, which build on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe are faced with the problem that the authors have not been interested very much in the operationalisation of their concepts.²³ Thus, the discussion on the appropriate operationalisation is only in its beginning. Keller, for example, has blamed studies which try to operationalise the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe of often being one-sidedly deductive by applying interpretative approaches, which remain rather vague and not well-defined.²⁴ In the following, I will argue that a triangulation of two linguistic methods is appropriate to reveal temporary fixations: corpus driven lexicometric procedures and the analysis of narrative patterns.²⁵

Lexicometric approaches seek to analyse the relations between lexical elements quantitatively. The most important methods within lexicometric approaches are frequency analysis, analysis of specificities, and the analysis of co-occurrences. Frequency analysis counts how often a particular form occurs within a defined segment of a certain corpus of texts. Analysis of specificities show which forms occur, with a certain specificity, more often in a certain segment of the corpus. The analysis of co-occurrences indicate which forms occur, specifically, more often in the environment of a particular notion in comparison to the whole corpus. Thus, one is able to find out for example which forms occur with a high specificity in the context of “francophonie” within a corpus of all press articles published by a particular newspaper.²⁶ Specificities are improbabilities for a certain repartition and are calculated by lexicometric software as the negative exponent of the decimal power.

Thus, lexicometric approaches help to realise three basic principles of discourse theory:

- The research focus lies on the factually given discourse – not on any supposed intentions behind discourse.
- Meaning is seen as being formed by the relation between lexical elements. Thus, the supposed fixation of signs within a relational net can be analysed by lexicometric analysis.
- The temporality of any fixation may be analysed by comparing corpora of different contexts, e.g., over time.

Furthermore, the French discourse analyst Pêcheux has emphasised that corpus driven methods help to control the risk of circular arguments. Circular arguments are produced if the researcher only takes the texts into consideration, which fit his prejudices. Corpus driven approaches at least assure that the criteria for the compilation of the corpus are transparent and comprehensible, and that all texts within the corpus are to be analysed.

However, the lexicometric methods are not able to analyse the different qualities of relations (e. g., relations of temporality, opposition, equivalence). Therefore, the lexicometric methods have been complemented with an analysis of narrative patterns.²⁷ Furthermore, the concentration on homogeneous and closed corpora risks limiting the analysis on the hegemonial discourses and blocking from view subaltern and marginal voices. Thus, the analysis runs the risk that taboos, things which are taken-for-granted, and things which are not said and can't be said remain outside of the field of vision. Therefore, besides the closed corpora of the lexicometric analysis several texts have been integrated into the analysis of narrative patterns, which helped to contextualise the findings of the lexicometric analysis.²⁸

CASE STUDY: THE DISCURSIVE CONSTITUTION OF FRANCOPHONIA

Following Laclau and Mouffe, a community is not built around a shared quality of the members. Rather, it is an empty signifier, which allows the different elements of the community to associate in a relation of equivalence. Thus, the empty signifier represents the pure but ultimately impossible identity of the community. Several authors have stressed that, in empirical studies, one never finds signifiers which are 100% empty but, rather, signifiers that tend to be empty. These signifiers are emptied in order to fulfil the described role of empty signifiers, but this state always remains instable. The question of which signifiers fulfil the role of empty signifiers at a certain time and how these signifiers are refilled with meaning by establishing specific chains of equivalence is a question of political struggle and hegemony.²⁹

The study of the discursive constitution of Francophonie aimed at analysing the following points in a diachronic perspective (focussing on the period from 1969 to 2004):

- Around which (tendentally) empty signifiers has Francophonie been constituted?
- Which breaks and shifts can be identified in diachronic comparison? How can these shifts be explained?
- How is Francophonie delimited from a constitutive outside?

Whereas the lexicometric corpus driven analysis aims primarily at identifying the characteristics and shifts of the discourse, the analysis of narrative patterns aims primarily at analysing whether the words and word sequences, which prove to be characteristic of certain periods, serve as nodal points and thus establish relations of equivalence and define a constitutive outside. Moreover, the results of the lexicometric analysis are contextualised by the analysis of narrative patterns: the analysis revealed the events that led to the dislocation of the discourse in each case and the myths that enabled a renewed ordering and stabilisation.

For the lexicometric analysis, I have established two corpora of texts produced within the organisations of Francophonie:

- The discussions at the general conferences of the *Agence de coopération culturelle et technique* (ACCT) – the precursor of the *Agence de la Francophonie*, which was integrated into the OIF in November 2005 (1969–1996).
- The speeches of inauguration and closure of the ten summits of Francophonie (1986–2004).

In order to analyse the discourse of Francophonie within the discourses of political life in France and the wider French-speaking public, I am working with two additional corpora: a corpus with the speeches of the French presidents (1975–2005),³⁰ and a press corpus with the texts published by the most important French speaking newspaper, *Le Monde* (1986–2004). For the analysis of narrative patterns the closed corpora of the corpus driven lexicometric analysis were complemented by several further texts, which helped to contextualise the results of the corpus driven analysis and helped to get non hegemonic discourses into the field of vision.³¹

First of all, I have analysed, which words coin the discourse of the francophone organisations in different times. This analysis reveals that the segment “*langue française*” was repeated at a relatively high frequency at the first three conferences of the ACCT in the early days of institutionalised Francophonie (in 1969, 1970 and 1971) in comparison to the other conferences until 1996 (with a specificity of 10 to the power of –12). Apart from words related to the organisation of these first conferences (e.g., “office”, “committee”,

“meeting”), this is one of the highest specificities. Furthermore, it can be shown that the notion “we” (“*nous*”) is regularly linked to “*langue française*” at this period.

If one analyses the narrative patterns by which “*langue française*” is embedded in relations of a certain quality it becomes evident that “*langue française*” is regularly described as the link that joins a number of disparate elements. Thus, one reads in the speech delivered by the President of Niger at the 1969 founding conference of the ACCT that the French language is the glue, which “binds us together despite our diversity”. The President of Senegal, L.-S. Senghor, characterises the French language as “that what unites us” and as an “instrument of equilibrium, of harmony and progress serving the people who are made to understand themselves, beyond any consideration of race, belief or ideology”. Similarly, for his Tunisian counterpart, the French language is an “instrument of cohesion within a group of different men, races, colours and lifestyles” and he continues to state that the French language carries “a common vision”, is “an opening to the world” and a “miracle of clarity and precision”.³²

A comparison of these narrative patterns with texts, which constituted the colonial discourse of the French Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century reveals that patterns of a community built around the French language have already been a central part of the colonial doctrine. Thus, the colonial geographer Onésime Reclus, who was the first to employ the notion of Francophonie in 1886, has sketched out the expansion of France to Africa and the assimilation of the Africans by means of the French language as the future of a “bigger France”. For Reclus, Francophonie is the space of all those who speak French as well as of those who are supposed to speak French in the future.³³

After the end of the First World War, in the 1930s, more and more anti-colonial voices were to be heard in Paris and in some of the centres of the French colonial empire. Several intellectuals who originally came from the colonies and who had passed the French educational system formed an anti-colonial milieu. The notion *négritude* became the focal point of a group of black intellectuals from the French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean and expressed the idea of an independent black culture and the critique at the policy of assimilation like a buzzword.³⁴

After the decolonisation, in the 1960s, these topoi of difference and independence were linked within the Francophonie discourse with the topoi of clarity, precision and universality of the French language, which can already be found in texts produced during the *ancien régime*, the French Revolution as well as in the colonial discourse.³⁵ In a rather paradox way, Francophonie was constituted in the 1960s and 1970s in continuation of and in differentiation from the colonial discourse. Under the umbrella of a therewith redefined notion of Francophonie became linked narrative patterns of the critique of colonialism and narrative patterns, which were

typical of the colonial discourse. In addition, more extensive narrative patterns were taken up. In 1969, the French Minister of culture compared the consequences of the French colonial empire with the aftermath of the Roman Empire: “We witness a powerful Afro-Latin symbiosis. With the political independence, I believe it is viable, for the same reasons, which make viable the Gallo-Roman symbiosis.” At the same conference the President of Niger conferred the French Empire in Africa to the cultural impact of Roman and Greek culture in Europe: “It is an evidence that the expansion of Francophonía, which begins in the Middle Ages, is directly related to the French expansion. We do not feel humiliated, not more than the European world feels ashamed of a Graeco-Latin culture imposed initially by conquest.”³⁶ The legitimisation of the colonial expansion referring to the Roman Empire has been a central pattern of the colonial discourse. Thus, the colonial geographer Onésime Reclus has justified the French Empire by referring to the Roman Empire and has demanded to “imitate Rome” and “to do in Africa what Rome has done in the ancient world”.³⁷ Thus a basic narration of the colonial discourse is being “updated” and reproduced within the discourse of Francophonía in the 1960s and 1970s.

Especially intellectual and political elites of the newly independent former colonies linked the anti-colonial discourse of “otherness” and “heterogeneity”³⁸ with elements of the traditional imperial discourse of “assimilation with the superior French culture and language”.³⁹ Regarded from the perspective of the discourse theory, the institutionalising of a community, which is created by the ligation of the French language can be interpreted as a myth, which overcame the dislocation of the colonial discourse and enabled a new ordering.

These findings fit well into a deductive argumentation: in 1983, Anderson had shown the function of the idea of a “shared language” for the creation of an imagined community – the shared language can be read as a nodal point, which is able to join rather different members into a political community and to establish a boundary delimiting the community. Consequently, one might argue that Francophonía was constituted in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the space of the French language – largely by reproducing narrative patterns of the colonial discourse.

However, a frequency analysis shows that the relative frequency of “*langue française*” has declined steadily since the early 1970s. An analysis of the words which coined the discourse of the ACCT in the three conferences in 1991, 1993 and 1996 sheds some light on this development. It shows that it is the word “*francophonie*” itself which appears specifically more often during the 1990s compared to all the conference texts from 1969 to 1996. The same tendency is found in the corpus of the speeches at the summits of Francophonía: “*langue française*” declines and “*francophonie*” gains importance between 1986 and 2004. From this analysis, one might derive the hypothesis that “*langue française*” has been gradually

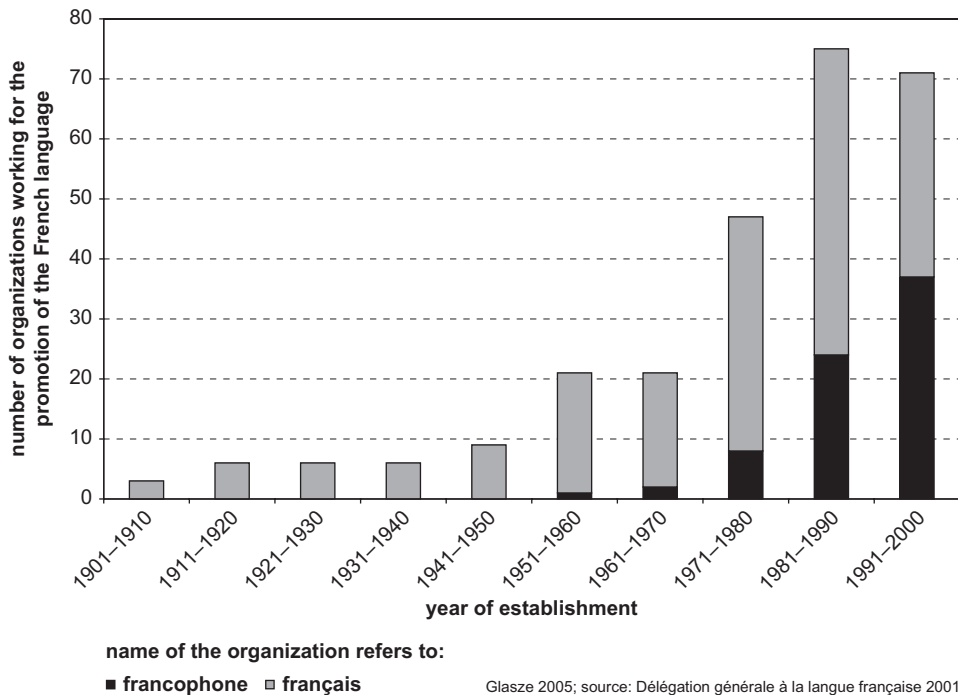


FIGURE 4 Establishment of non-governmental organisations “working for the French language and Francophonía” in France.

complemented and supplemented by the signifier “*francophonie*”. The idea of this shift from “*langue française*” to “*francophonie*” is further legitimised by an analysis of the names of the non-governmental organisations, which are working “*pour la langue française et la francophonie*” in France: it is not before the 1980s that a growing part of newly established organisations refer to “*francophonie*” and not to “*langue française*” (FIGURE 4).⁴⁰ Furthermore, the founding document of the first organisation of Francophonía, the “*convention relative à l’Agence de coopération culturelle et technique*”, did not speak about “*francophonie*” at all, while there were five occurrences of “*langue française*”. The ACCT did not even carry “*francophonie*” in its name. It was not before 1995 that the ACCT was re-baptised in *Agence (intergouvernementale) de la Francophonie*.

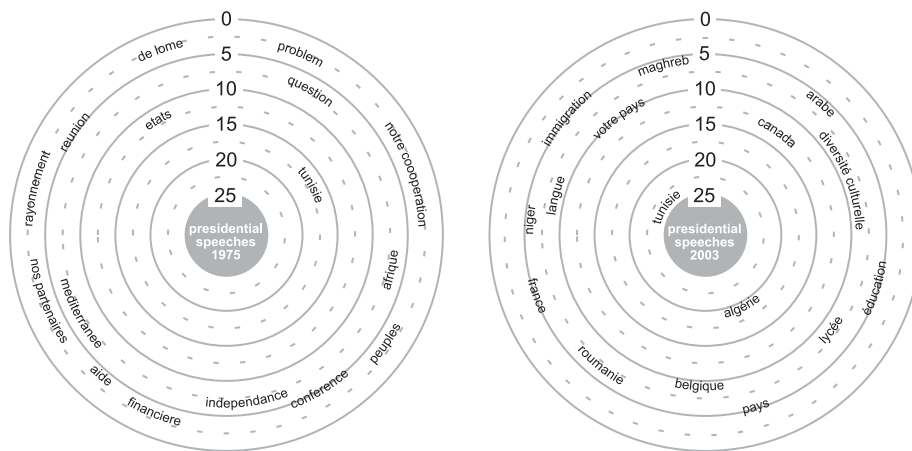
How is this shift to be explained? The reason might be that “*langue française*” is hardly able to serve as a largely empty signifier. The adjective “*française*” is used to signify the national French identity, and thus refers directly to France. In contrast, “*francophonie*” does not directly refer to France. As a consequence, the notion “*francophonie*” is able to associate new members who dismissed the idea of a community of the French language, blaming this project as a specifically French, centralistic, and neo-imperialistic project. Thus, countries like Switzerland, which had not joined

the ACCT in 1970, referring to this critique, finally joined the organisations of Francophonie in the 1980s.⁴¹

Notions like “francophone countries” or “francophone states”, as well as the abundance of world maps which colour francophone territories, spatialise Francophonie and thus “objectify” the community. However, especially since the early 1990s, the spatialisation of Francophonie triggered a lot of critique. The problem is that the notion “francophone” is also regularly used to describe the quality of texts being written or spoken in French or of people being able to write and speak in French. The concept of a “francophone space” portrays territories as francophone where most often only a minority of the people speak French. Furthermore, most of these people speak other languages besides of French too. Publications by French political essayists and French-speaking African authors accused French foreign policy of being obsessed by the idea of a francophone space. It is argued that spatialised notions of Francophonie would reproduce imperialistic patterns of French dominance, which go along with rather clientelistic entwinements with dictatorial and corrupt, but French-speaking regimes. Newspapers, like *Le Monde*, have asked, in early 1994, if the military engagement of France in Ruanda was not just motivated by the idea of “saving the francophone space from Anglophone expansionism”.⁴² And the West African writer Guy Ossito Midiohouan qualifies Francophonie in 1994 as nothing else than the “facade of neo-colonialism”.⁴³

This debate and the changing context of international relations in the 1990s seem to have provoked a new dislocation of the discourse: if one analyses which words and repeated segments (collocations) have coined the discourse of the Francophone organisations since the end of 1990, it appears that the notion “*diversité culturelle*” has gained importance. Comparing the last francophone summits (1999, 2002 and 2004) with all the summits since 1986, it can be shown that, alongside “*developpement durable*” (sustainable development), the most specific repeated segment is “*diversité culturelle*”. This is followed, with a slightly smaller specificity, by “*mondialisation*” and “*dialogue des cultures*”. These findings coincide with the results of lexicometric analysis of the articles published in the most important French newspaper, *Le Monde*, and the presidential speeches in 2003. In each case, “*diversité culturelle*” is specifically more frequent in the articles and accordingly speeches with occurrences of “*francophonie*” compared to the complete corpora of all articles and accordingly speeches in 2003, while this co-occurrence is not found before the end of 1990 (FIGURE 5). Thus, Francophonie is currently strongly related with “*diversité culturelle*” in the texts produced within the organisations of Francophonie as well as in the wider political discussions in France.

If one analyses, into which narrative patterns “*diversité culturelle*” is merged, it shows up for example that many of the new members that have joined the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* in 2002 and 2004



Glasze 2006; source: corpus "discours présidentiels"; 1975 & 2003 (Documentation française)

FIGURE 5 Forms and repeated segments (collocations) which occurred specifically more frequently in presidential speeches containing the term “francophonie” compared to all the presidential speeches in 1975 and 2003 (the circles represent a certain specificity of 10^{-x} , the lowest specificity being represented is 10^{-4}).

justify their entry in developing a narration, which qualifies cultural diversity as a characteristic of their country. Thus the Macedonian representative has declared in his entry speech, “that Macedonia in his entire history engaged itself strongly for the promotion of cultural diversity, in the own country as well as within a global framework”.⁴⁴ The representative of Croatia has justified the entry of his country by referring to the quality of the country “as a key country situated, where the Mediterranean and Central Europe step into exchange, at the border to the Orient”. He has announced that Croatia would like to make its “contribution to the cultural diversity of humankind” and would like to bring in “his experience as a country in a hinge position” (pays charnière).⁴⁵ And the Austrian foreign ministry qualifies the joining of Francophonía (as an observer) as a “commitment to cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue”.⁴⁶

Thus, a change of the community is part of the change of discourse. In the 1990’s, Francophonía expanded to Asia by accommodating, for example, Cambodia, as well as to Central and Eastern Europe by accommodating, for example, Bulgaria and Macedonia as full members (as well as, for example, Poland and Slovakia as observers (Figure 6)). In many of these countries, the French language has neither an official status nor plays an important role in everyday life.

The enrichment of the nodal point by “*diversité culturelle*” constitutes the identity of Francophonía as the space of cultural diversity, which is separated from the homogenised world. Francophonía becomes constituted as a kind of protective barrier against homogenisation. Two citations illustrate

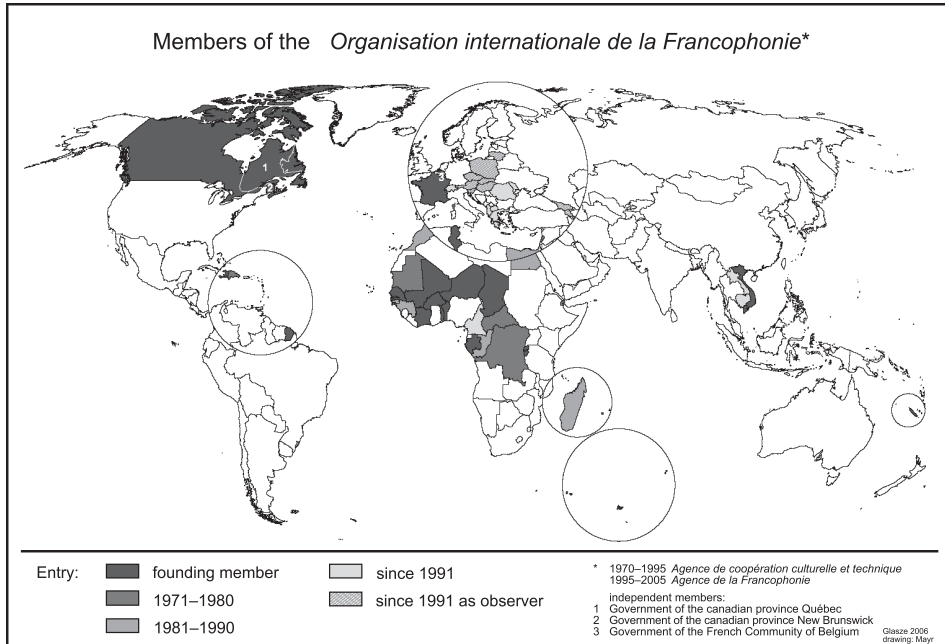


FIGURE 6 The development of entries in the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*.

this shift of the identity of Francophonie. Thus, Jacques Chirac describes Francophonie in 1997 as follows: “Francophonie has a vocation to invite all the other languages of the world to reunite so that the cultural diversity, which results from linguistic diversity that this diversity is protected. Beyond French, beyond the Francophonie, it is necessary for us to be the militants of the multiculturalism in the world to fight against the smothering, by a single language, of various cultures, which make the richness and the dignity of humanity.”⁴⁷ The same idea of Francophonie as a community of cultural diversity is found in a text of the Egyptian filmmaker Youssef Chahine, who is a member of the “*Haut Conseil de la Francophonie*” – the official “think tank” of Francophonie: “Francophonie enables us to organize ourselves, Arabs, Africans and other identities threatened by the road roller of American cultural industries because, alone, we would not be strong enough to defend ourselves. . . .”⁴⁸

The new nodal point allows Francophonie to constitute new alliances, for example, with “Lusophonie” and “Hispanophonie”. Thus, the OIF has successfully collaborated with the community of Portuguese speaking countries, the union of Romance languages and the Organisation of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture⁴⁹ in order to achieve an international convention aiming at a protection of “cultural diversity” within the framework of UNESCO.⁵⁰ On 20 October 2005, the UNESCO General Conference

approved the “Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions” with a huge majority of 148 states. The United States has been rather isolated: only the delegate of Israel joined the US for a no-vote.⁵¹ In the political conflict on the liberalisation of cultural goods and services that started in the early 1990s within the WTO negotiations, “*diversité culturelle*” has served as a largely empty signifier to build a huge political alliance including not only an enlarged Francophonia, but also almost all the UNESCO member states – apart from the centre of “anglo-saxony”, the United States.

In the context of the end of the Cold War and a growing culturalisation of international relations since the 1990s the nodal point “*diversité culturelle*” strengthened the identity of Francophonia by serving as an empty signifier, which establishes relations of equivalence and which defines a constitutive outside – the world homogenised by an “Anglo-Saxon globalisation”. Furthermore, against this background, the example of Francophonia has served as a model for the establishment of a “lusophone” community in 1996 (*Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa*, CPLP) as well as a growing consolidation and politicisation of the ibero-american community (*Comunidad Iberoamericana de Naciones*), which established a general secretariat in Madrid in 2005.⁵²

CONCLUSION: SUPPLEMENTING AND COMPLEMENTING NODAL POINTS – CHANGING COMMUNITY

The OIF and many publications present the organisations of Francophonia as the expression and institutionalisation of a world-spanning geocultural region, which has been created by a shared language, shared values, and a common history of the members. While traditional geographical thinking might have accepted such an essentialist and determinist perspective, the cultural turn in political science, history, and political geography has opened new perspectives on the segmentation of the world in geographic entities.

In this paper, I have discussed the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe as a new perspective on the constitution of communities and “their” regions. Following Laclau and Mouffe, a community is constituted by a specific nodal point, an empty signifier, which allows different elements to associate in a relation of equivalence. This association is contingent – always temporary and more or less fragile. Therefore, my research aimed at uncovering which signifiers have functioned and function as nodal points of Francophonia within different periods since the establishment of the first international organisations of Francophonia at the end of the 1960s.

The findings show a supplementation and complementation of different signifiers as largely empty nodal points of Francophonia and, therefore, allow me to present the discursive constitution of Francophonia as

follows (Figure 7): for the period of the creation of the first organisation of Francophonía at the end of the 1960s, “Francophonía” was the myth that enabled the dislocated structure of the colonial discourse to be sutured. The signifier “*langue française*” allowed for the unification of members such as France, Canada, Belgium and former colonies like Senegal and Côte d’Ivoire. Thus, “*langue française*” constituted the identity of this community.

However, “*langue française*” is hardly able to serve as an empty signifier. The adjective “*française*” refers directly to France and therefore risks representing a colonial relation of centre and periphery. This problem can be seen in the refusal of countries like Switzerland to join the ACCT during the 1970s and 1980s⁵³ and the ongoing description of Francophonía as a neo-colonial instrument by the Algerian government and others.⁵⁴ The complementation and partial substitution of “*langue française*” by “*francophonie*”, at least partially, avoids this privileged reference to France and thus has enabled elements, such as Switzerland, to join the community.

Since the 1990s, the notion of “cultural diversity” has allowed Francophonía to establish new chains of equivalence – to establish new coalitions with new members, with other countries and international communities, and even with the anti-globalisation movement by linking the battle for cultural diversity to the battle for “an other globalisation”.⁵⁵ In the context of a growing culturalisation of international relations the nodal point “*diversité culturelle*” enabled the strengthening of Francophonía by constituting Francophonía as the community of cultural diversity – demarcated from a homogenised outside.

Furthermore, the enrichment of the nodal point by “*diversité culturelle*” can be read as the successful integration of a topos which has been an element of the anti-colonial critique of French dominance.⁵⁶ However, the meaning of “cultural diversity” is still a matter of discursive struggle and hegemony. The notion is not only linked to the critique of homogenisation and cultural dominance “outside” of Francophonía but also to the critique of homogenisation and French cultural dominance “within” Francophonía. Thus, several patterns of French domination have been challenged during the last years by referring to the label of cultural diversity. As a consequence, the OIF has started to talk about “partner languages within Francophonía” and has, for example, established programs to promote education in African languages. A big culture festival of Francophonía in France in 2006 has been named in the plural form “francoffonies” and aims at presenting “francophone diversity” to the French public: “It’s a matter of showing that France is also francophone, in the weavings of its identity, by inviting the hexagon to confront itself with the cultural singularities and to share, without fear, all the cousinhood, which opens it to another vision of globalisation, creative and happy.”⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the speeches and publications out of the context of the organisations of Francophonía are still

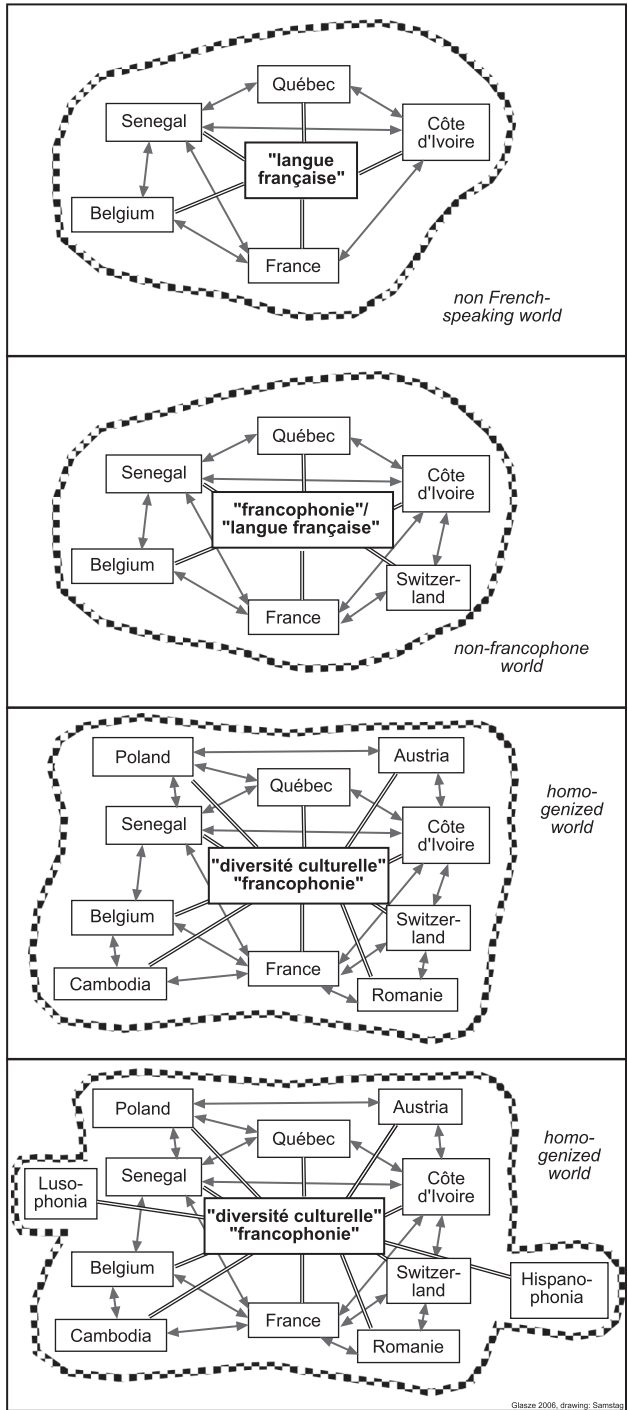


FIGURE 7 The changing empty signifiers and the changing community of Francophonie.

coined by many narrative patterns, which reproduce ideas of a superiority of French language and culture. Thus, quite often, the battle for cultural diversity is linked in a rather paradox way to the idea of the radiation of the French language: “We will fight together . . . for the defence and the radiation (*rayonnement*) of the French language . . . [and] for the linguistic and cultural diversity . . .”.⁵⁸

To conclude, one might maintain that the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe and its operationalisation offers new perspectives on the discursive constitution of communities and “their” region. The concept of group formation helps to re-conceptualise the idea of political communities as “imagined communities”: the idea of a shared language and the idea of “cultural diversity” function as largely empty signifiers and constitute a political community, as well as “their” region. The combination of a lexicometric analysis and an analysis of narrative patterns enables the identification of continuities as reproductions of notions and narrative patterns. It sharpens the view for the dislocations of the discourse, the breaks and shifts, and, thus, the changing identities and limits of communities and “their” regions. Furthermore, it helps in the understanding of discursive struggles – as for example the struggle over the meaning of “cultural diversity”.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTES

1. Ben Alex Beobo, ‘Une “Maison TV5” à Boulmiougou – le Viêtnam signale’, *L’Opinion* (Ougadougou) 375 (7 Jan. 2004).

2. “. . . le partage de la langue française et de valeurs universelles” (<www.francophonie.org>, accessed 19 Dec. 2005). By the end of 2006 the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* had 55 members (mostly nation-states but the Canadian provinces Quebec and New Brunswick as well as the Belgian French-speaking region are full members beside Belgium and Canada), and 13 members with a status as observers.

3. “*La francophonie s’est bâtie sur le socle de la diversité culturelle dès ses origines.*” Speech of the general secretary Abdou Diouf, 9 April 2003.

4. From 1997 to 2005 the juridical position of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* was not based on a treaty or any other juridical instrument. It was not before November 2005 that a ministers conference adopted a modified Charta of the Francophonía (*charte de la Francophonie*), which renamed the *Agence de la Francophonie* in *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*.

5. There are several descriptive and rather apologetic publications on the history of Francophonía, often written by authors with personal links to the organisations of Francophonía: Xavier Deniau, *La francophonie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1992); Michel Guillou, *La Francophonie: nouvel enjeu mondial* (Paris: Hatier 1993); Michel Tétu, *Qu’est-ce que la francophonie?* (Paris: Hachette, EDICEF 2000). Jacques Barrat & Claudia Moisei, *Géopolitique de la francophonie: un nouveau*

souffle? (Paris: Presses Univ. de France 2004); Alfred Gilder and Albert Salon, *Alerte francophone* (Paris: Franel 2004).

6. Bernhard Giesen, *Kollektive Identität* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1999).

7. While there is a well-established discussion on francophilia (sometimes differentiated through the use of a miniscule) as the ensemble of cultural production in French language outside of France (especially in literature studies) and a huge number of rather descriptive and often apologetic publications on the organisations of Francophilia, there is a lack of publications which focus in a critical perspective on the interplay between the political and the cultural. It is not until very recently that some authors have started to analyse the construction of Francophilia. Thus, Janos Riesz has written several essays on the “invention” of Francophilia and especially the role of L. S. Senghor (János Riesz, “Frankophonie” – Überlegungen zur Geschichte ihrer Anfänge und der Narration ihrer frühen Entwicklung’, *Grenzgänge* 19/(2003) pp. 100–129; János Riesz, ‘Die Erfindung der “Frankophonie”. Koloniales Erbe und globale Perspektiven im Widerstreit’, in Richard Faber (ed.), *Imperialismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann 2005) pp. 223–240). Mathias Middell has suggested to view Francophilia as a “post territorial” world region, which is not based on geographical proximity but on “stabilising narratives” and common “lieux de mémoire” (Matthias Middell, ‘Francophilia as a World Region?’ *European Review of History - Revue européenne d’Histoire* 10/2 (2003) pp. 203–220). Ingo Kolboom sees the current development of Francophilia as a response to globalisation – a “cultural macro region”, which represents a new form of international governance between the nation-state and the global organisations (Ingo Kolboom, ‘Internationale Frankophonie – eine Brücke in der Globalisierung’, *Dokumente* 60/1 (2004) pp. 15–31). Furthermore, several authors have stressed the continuity of the Francophilia discourse for example with the discourse of colonialism and the discourse of the enlightenment (Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, ‘L’espace francophone, un objet de discours’, in János Riesz and Véronique Porra (eds.), *Enseigner la Francophonie* (Bremen: Palabres Editions 2000) pp. 27–39; Margaret A. Majumdar, ‘La Francophonie’, in Christopher John Murray (ed.), *Encyclopedia of modern French thought* (New York, NY: Dearborn 2004) pp. 231–234; Gabrielle Parker, ‘Francophonie et universalité: évolution de deux idées jumelles’, in Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel (eds.), *Culture post-coloniale 1961–2006. Traces et mémoires coloniales en France* (Paris: autrement 2005) pp. 228–242; Jürgen Erfurt, *Frankophonie. Sprache - Diskurs - Politik* (Tübingen and Basel: A. Francke 2005)).

8. Marianne W. Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage Publ. 2002) p. 11.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 21.

11. The idea that every object, every social phenomenon is an object of discourse does not necessarily mean that there is no world external to language and thought. Torfing has explained this idea with the example of a stone, which can be discursively constructed as “a projectile or as an object of aesthetic contemplation, but . . . is still the same physical object.” Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Žižek* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd 1999) p. 94.

12. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London: Verso 1985) p. 105.

13. Jørgensen and Phillips (note 8) p. 36.

14. Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time* (London: Verso 1990) pp. 60.

15. Jørgensen and Phillips (note 8) p. 42.

16. Ernesto Laclau, ‘Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?’ in Ernesto Laclau (ed.), *Emancipation(s)*, (London and New York: Verso 1996) pp. 36–46.

17. Jacob Torfing (note 11) p. 124.

18. Oliver Marchart, ‘Gesellschaft ohne Grund: Laclaus politische Theorie des Post-Fundationalismus’, in Ernesto Laclau (ed.), *Emancipation und Differenz* (Wien: Turia+Kant 2002) pp: 7–18.

19. An idea already conceived by Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackell 1983) and explicitly formulated by Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso 1996).

20. Philipp Sarasin, ‘Die Wirklichkeit der Fiktion. Zum Konzept der “imagined communities”, in Philipp Sarasin (ed.), *Geschichtswissenschaft und Diskursanalyse* (Frankfurt/Main: suhrkamp 2003) pp. 150–176.

21. See also the discussion in: Doreen Massey, ‘Thinking Radical Democracy Spatially’, *Environment and Planning D* 13/3 (1995) pp. 283–288.

22. Following Howarth and Marchart, Laclau conceptualises “space” in an ontological sense as the (impossible) result of a perfect fixation of meaning. However, this extreme case never occurs, because

the constitutive outside of the structure will always leave traces and dislocating turbulences on the inside. On an ontic level, politics are to be equated with spatialisation. Here “spaces” are conceptualised as the results of hegemonic articulations, as sedimentations (David Howarth, ‘Reflections on the Politics of Space and Time’, *Angelaki* 1/1 (1993) pp. 43–55; Oliver Marchart, ‘Kunst, Raum und Öffentlichkeit(en)’, *Transversal* 10 (1998)). Though, from the perspective of the discussion on space and spatiality within geography it seems to be at least questionable whether it is heuristically fruitful to conceptualise “spatialisation” as the only form of politics. In so doing, one would lose the possibility of differentiating between identity constructions, which refer explicitly to territorial notions and operate with a differentiation between “here and there” (e.g., “suburbia” versus “city”, “London” versus “Frankfurt”, “Catalonia” versus “Spain”, “Europe” versus “US-America”; see: M. Redepinning, *Wozu Raum? Systemtheorie, critical geopolitics und raumbezogene Semantiken* (2006) pp. 128) and other identity constructions (e.g., “black” versus “white”, “academic” versus “non-academic”, “men” versus “women”). Then, cross-settings between both categories and thus the specific role of spatiality could hardly be analysed.

23. A range of studies is to be found in: David Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis, *Discourse Theory And Political Analysis. Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2000).

24. Reiner Keller, *Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse: Grundlegung eines Forschungsprogramms* (Wiesbaden: VS, Verl. für Sozialwiss. 2005) p. 162.

25. One might criticise that the relation “among elements such that their identity is modified” as conceived by Laclau and Mouffe encompasses much more than lexical elements – that is to say all social phenomena. As a matter of fact, lexicometric approaches are restrained to the analysis of lexical elements. However, if one agrees that language is an inevitable basis of thinking and that language use is a very important signifying system it seems to be more than justified to apply this set of well-established methods. For a more detailed description of the methodology and the methods of the research project see: Georg Glasze, ‘Vorschläge zur Operationalisierung der Diskurstheorie von Laclau und Mouffe in einer Triangulation von lexikometrischen und interpretativen Methoden’, *FQS - Forum Qualitative Research* 8/2, Art. 14, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/2-07/07-2-14-d.htm>.

26. Pascal Marchand, *L'analyse du discours assistée par ordinateur: Concepts, méthodes, outils* (Paris: Colin 1998). Ludovic Lebart, André Salem and Lisette Berry, *Exploring Textual Data* (Dordrecht et al.: Kluwer 1998).

27. For an overview see: Reiner Keller, ‘Analysing Discourse. An Approach From the Sociology of Knowledge’, *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 6/3 (2005) pp. 33, available at <www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-05/05-3-32-e.htm>; Willy Viehöfer, ‘Diskurse als Narrationen’, in Reiner Keller, Andreas Hirsland and Werner Schneider (ed.), *Handbuch Sozialwissenschaftliche Diskursanalyse. Band 1: Theorien und Methoden* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich 2001) pp. 177–206; Margaret R. Somers, ‘The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach’, *Theory and Society* 23/5 (1994) pp. 605–649; Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck, *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 2005).

28. The lexicometric analysis has been carried out with the software Lexico3 – the analysis of narrative patterns and topoi have been facilitated by the use of the qualitative data analysis software Atlas TI.

29. See for example: Martin Nonhoff, ‘Soziale Marktwirtschaft - ein leerer Signifikant? Überlegungen im Anschluss an die Diskurstheorie Ernesto Laclaus’, in Johannes Angermüller, Katharina Bunzmann and Martin Nonhoff (eds.), *Diskursanalyse: Theorien, Methoden, Anwendungen* (Hamburg: Argument Verlag 2001) pp. 193–208.

30. The “Documentation française” runs a home page with a digital database of presidential speeches from 1973 to the present, available at <<http://discours-publics.vie-publique.fr>>.

31. The following texts were integrated: The speeches of the general secretary of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* (OIF, 1997–2005) (this position was established in 1997 and represents a new place of enunciation within Francophonía: a kind of spokesman of the organisation), the introductions and final chapters of twelve monographs on Francophonía with a high-circulation, several texts, which are presented by the organisations of Francophonía as founding documents (e.g., texts from the colonial geographer Onésime Reclus and texts from the former President of Senegal L.-S. Senghor) as well as texts from authors and organisations which have positioned themselves as critics of Francophonía (e.g., texts from the NGO Survie France and texts from the French-Cameroonian writer Mongo Beti).

32. “. . . la langue française qui nous unit malgré notre diversité.” Speech of the President of Niger Hamani Diori at the 2nd founding conference of ACCT 1970 in Niamey. “Ce qui unit les participants à cette réunion, c’est la langue française. Elle est, entre nous, un magnifique instrument d’équilibre, d’harmonie et

de progrès au service de peuples qui sont faits pour s'entendre, à l'exclusion de toute considération de race, de croyance ou d'idéologie." President L.-S. Senghor (Senegal) at the 1st founding conference of ACCT 1969 in Niamey. "L'usage de la langue française est d'abord, en effet, un instrument de cohésion au sein d'un groupe d'hommes, de races, de couleurs, de modes de vie différents . . . il apporte également une même vision du monde. . . l'usage de la langue française est, ensuite, un moyen d'ouverture sur le monde . . . elle est l'instrument d'analyse par excellence . . . miracle de logique, de clarté et de précision." (Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba at the 1st founding conference of ACCT 1969 in Niamey.)

33. ". . . notre langue . . . amalgame à la longue une vaste nation francisante." Onésime Reclus, *Lâchons l'Asie, prenons l'Afrique. Où renaître? Et comment durer?* (Paris: 1904) p. 151; for a detailed discussion of the concept of Francophonia in the writings of Onésime Reclus see: Georg Glasze, 'Von der Assimilation zur "diversité culturelle" - der Kolonialgeograph Onésime Reclus (1837–1916) als Vordenker der Frankophonie?' in Sebastian Lentz and Ferjan Ormeling (eds.), *Die Verräumlichung des Welt-Bildes. Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen zwischen "explorativer Geographie" und der Vermessenheit europäischer Raumphantasien. Beiträge der Internationalen Konferenz auf Schloss Friedenstein Gotha, 9.-11. Oktober 2005* (Stuttgart: Steiner 2007) in press.

34. János Riesz, 'Négritude, Frankophonie und afrikanische Kultur - Léopold Sédar Senghor als Paradigma', in Ingo Kolboom and Bernd Rill (eds.), *Frankophonie - nationale und internationale Dimensionen* (München: Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung e.V. 2002) pp. 99–108.

35. János Riesz, 'Die Erfindung' (note 7) pp. 223–240.

36. "Nous assistons à une puissante symbiose afro-latine. L'indépendance politique retrouvée, je la crois viable, pour les mêmes raisons qui rendront viable la symbiose gallo-romaine." Speech of the French Minister of Culture André Malraux at the 1st founding conference of ACCT 1969 in Niamey. "C'est une évidence que l'expansion de la francophonie, qui débute au moyen âge, est directement liée à l'expansion française. Nous n'en ressentons aucune humilité, pas plus que le monde européen ne rougit d'une culture gréco-latine imposée d'abord par la conquête." Speech of the Nigerian President Hamani Diori at the 1st founding conference of ACCT 1969 in Niamey.

37. *Imitons Rome!* Onésime Reclus, *Lâchons l'Asie, prenons l'Afrique. Où renaître? Et comment durer?* (Paris: 1904) p. 95. ". . . faire en Afrique ce que Rome a fait dans le monde ancien." Onésime Reclus, *Un grand destin commence* (Paris: La renaissance du Livre 1917) Chapter 19.

38. The Francophonia discourse in the 1960s and 1970s already has linked Francophonia with diversity. However this diversity was related to "races", "religions" and "continents" – not to cultural diversity. Thus, this diversity could be linked easily with patterns of the colonial discourse as the French language is placed in a position to establish a community despite (!) the diversity. Especially in the colonial discourse of the early twentieth century there were already narrative patterns, which described the French language as the binding element of a diversity of continents and races within the empire.

39. Thus, the French educated political and intellectual elites in the newly independent former colonies played a major role in constituting the Francophonia discourse in the 1960s. The founding conference of the ACCT has been prepared by the *Organisation commune africaine et malgache* (OCAM) – an organisation grouping former French and Belgian colonies. Against this background the US-American political scientist Victor T. Levine thinks that "the real French victory in Africa was that it created a self-generating, self-perpetuating cultural myth able to bind the elites of its former colonies with an invisible thread where it could no longer hold them on a colonial leash." (Victor T. Levine, 'Political-Cultural Schizophrenia in Francophone Africa', in Isaac James Mowoe and Richard Bjornson (eds.), *Africa and the West. The Legacies of Empire* (New York: Greenwood Press 1986) p. 171.) Political elites in France like the French president de Gaulle, however, had been rather reluctant concerning the idea of Francophonia – de Gaulle never went to a meeting of an organisation of Francophonia and he hardly ever used the expression. Several monographs aiming at a description of the history of Francophonia have explained this resistance taking into account the possible fear of de Gaulle and French foreign policy of being suspected of establishing a neo-colonial structure. Another explanation might offer the argument that French foreign policy has favoured bilateral relations with rather small independent states over multilateral relations within a community of states.

40. Josseline Bruchet and Délégation Générale à la Langue Française, *Langue française et francophonie. Répertoire des organisations et associations oeuvrant pour la promotion de la langue française et de la francophonie* (Paris: Documentation Française 2001).

41. Morocco joined the ACCT in 1981. Switzerland did participate at all the summits from 1986 on and finally joined the (renamed) *Agence de la Francophonie* in 1996.

42. "'S'agissait-il de préserver l'espace francophone d'un expansionnisme anglophone – le FPR bénéficie du soutien de l'Ouganda?'" [Is it a matter of saving the francophone space against the

Anglophone expansionism – the FPR [rebels] benefit from the support of Uganda?],” *Le Monde* (7 June 1994) p. 1.

43. “Alors, on voit fort mal comment la francophonie peut être autre chose, vue d’Afrique, que la façade culturelle de néo-colonisation.” (Guy Ossito Midiohouan, *Du bon usage de la francophonie. Essai sur l’idéologie francophone* (Porto Novo/Benin: Editions CNPMS 1994) p. 34.)

44. “. . . la Macédoine, tout au long de son histoire, s’est fortement engagée à promouvoir la diversité culturelle, aussi bien dans notre pays que dans un cadre plus global” (Gipfelkonferenz der OIF 2004 [Summit of Francophonía 2004]).

45. “. . . pays carrefour établi là où la Méditerranée et l’Europe centrale se parlent, aux confins de l’Orient (. . .). [La Croatie] souhaite apporter son tribut à la diversité culturelle de l’humanité et son expérience de pays charnière” (Gipfelkonferenz der OIF 2004 [Summit of Francophonía 2004]).

46. “. . . ein Bekenntnis zur kulturellen Vielfalt und zum interkulturellen Dialog.” See <www.aussenministerium.at/view.php3?f_id=7015&LNG=de&version=>, accessed 13 March 2006.

47. “La Francophonie a vocation à appeler toutes les autres langues du monde à se rassembler pour faire en sorte que la diversité culturelle, qui résulte de la diversité linguistique, que cette diversité soit sauvegardée. Au-delà du français, au-delà de la Francophonie, il nous faut être les militants du multiculturalisme dans le monde pour lutter contre l’étouffement, par une langue unique, des diverses cultures qui font la richesse et la dignité de l’humanité.”

48. “La Francophonie nous permet de nous organiser, nous Arabes, Africains et autres identités menacées par le rouleau compresseur des industries culturelles américaines car, seuls, nous ne serions pas assez forts pour nous défendre. . .”. These citations are taken from a Web site of the French foreign ministry, available at <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/actions-france_830/francophonie-langue-francaise_1040/colonne-droite_1679/textes-reference_1986/les-citations_6542.html>, accessed 30 Jan. 2006.

49. The Organisation of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture was founded in 1949. Since 1991 the head of states of Spain, Portugal and Latin America meet for an annual Ibero-American Summit.

50. These organisations have established a common Web site under the title “three linguistic spaces”, available at: <www.3el.org>, accessed 10 Dec. 2005.

51. <portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11281&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html>, accessed 13 Jan. 2006. For a detailed discussion on this convention see: Georg Glasze and Aika Meyer, ‘Das Konzept der “kulturellen Vielfalt” – Protektionismus oder Schutz vor kultureller Homogenisierung?’ in Johannes Kessler and Christian Steiner (eds.), *Facetten der Globalisierung: Zwischen Ökonomie, Politik und Kultur* (Mainz: Geographisches Institut Mainz 2007) p. in press.

52. Yves Léonard, *La lusophonie dans le monde* (Paris: La Documentation Française 1998); Susanne Gratius, ‘Die Institutionalisierung der Iberoamerikanischen Staatengemeinschaft als ein neuer internationaler Akteur unter spanischer Führung?’ *Brennpunkt Lateinamerika* 19/5 (2005).

53. ‘Bollwerk gegen kulturelle Gleichschaltung. Die Schweiz gibt sich “Frankophonie-phil”’, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (8 June 2002) p. 7.

54. See for example: Mongo Beti, *La France contre l’Afrique. Retour au Cameroun* (Paris: La Découverte 1993); Guy Ossito Midiohouan, *Du bon usage de la francophonie. Essai sur l’idéologie francophone* (Porto Novo/Benin: Editions CNPMS 1994); François-Xavier Verschave, *La Françafrique: le plus long scandale de la République* (Paris: Stock 1998).

55. “The political Francophonía is exactly a way to construct another globalisation” [*La francophonie politique c’est précisément une façon de construire l’autre mondialisation*]. (The OIF general secretary Abdou Diouf, 28 May 2004, University of Lyon.)

56. Véronique Porra argues for example that the notion of diversalité has been a “concept of cultural resistance” against French dominance and became integrated and instrumentalised by the organisations of Francophonía. Véronique Porra, ‘La Diversalité à l’épreuve de la pensée Universel – Déviations et instrumentalisation d’un concept de résistance culturelle’, in Lieven d’Hulst and Jean-Marc Moura (eds.), *Caribbean Interfaces Caribéennes* (Amsterdam: Rodopi) in press.

57. “Il s’agit encore de montrer que la France est elle aussi francophone, dans les tissages de son identité, en invitant l’hexagone à se confronter aux singularités culturelles et à partager, sans peur, tous les cousinages qui l’ouvrent à une autre vision de la mondialisation, créative et joyeuse.” (Cultural festival francophonies 2006; see <www.francophonies.org>, accessed 12 May 2006.)

58. “nous nous battons ensemble . . . pour la défense et le rayonnement de la langue française . . . [et] pour la diversité linguistique et culturelle” (Abdou Diouf, general secretary of the OIF, Summit of Francophonía 2002, Beirut).