

Arnoldshain Conference, Germany

“ Migration and Media “ 22-23 January 2010

Claire FRACHON, Journalist and European Media consultant,

**Editor “ Media and Cultural Diversity in Europe and North America” published
by Editions Karthala, Paris, November 2009**

How the media contribute to the integration of immigrants

Overview of the situation in France

1. **Immigrants/migrants as subject of media coverage. How are migrants represented in the dominant media**

France is an old immigration, one wave of immigration followed the other. Today, it's also a post-colonial country, a multicultural one, even if many people don't recognize it easily !

It's difficult to really compare policies in countries which have such a different colonial history, like France or the UK, or policies concerning migration like France with its “ Republican model of Equality and Integration” and Germany, even if today the policies seem to become closer (Jus solis versus Jus sanguis).

Media policies and practices vary significantly between those countries but they have all a major responsibility concerning social cohesion and they play a great role to shape a “better sense of living together”

I will try to give some insights on the situation in France.

First of all: Compared with the British colleagues, radio and television have been very, very slow in France to portray the ethnic diversity of our society and to be aware of it. It's clear that the media don't reflect properly until today the diversity of our society even if some progress has been done in the last years, but more in terms of visibility of ethnic faces that in the content of programmes or the diversity of the people who commission and produce mainstream media output.

A clarification is needed concerning terminology: The word “Diversity” has today replaced “ migration”, “assimilation” or “integration” . But diversity remains vague

and sometimes close to political correctness and marketing. It should be linked to social and spatial equality.

Policies of diversity, all sort of diversities or discrimination: handicap, gender, social, sexuality, etc...replaced in the media since 4 or 5 years the specific policies concerning migration or integration . But in the media, most of the time, talking about diversity means ethnic diversity.

France is de facto a multicultural society. Young people from migrant origin, the second or the third generation, born in France, don't consider themselves as "migrants" or belonging to "ethnic minorities". They are part of the French society...even if it's not recognized. This social exclusion leads to the riots we got in November 2005 in the "banlieues" or "quartiers", the disadvantaged districts, where a majority of them is living.

It will therefore be difficult to give insights specifically concerning the representation of migrants in the dominant media. But talking of ethno-racial diversity, how to fight discrimination, stereotypes and clichés, includes also the representation of migrants and their constant stigmatization

There is clearly an improvement in the awareness of the audiovisual media in France, to portray the ethnic diversity, but only since less than ten years. Up to the beginning of 2000, French TV didn't have any regular policy despite the country' long tradition of immigration. This question was totally invisible and ignored by the top management.

Like in Germany or in the Netherlands, public television in France has since 1976 broadcast weekly magazines specifically dedicated to immigrants in their different languages of origin. '*Mosaïque*' was broadcast for more than ten years on France 3 Sunday morning. A poll conducted in 1986 suggested that although the programme met a strong need expressed by immigrant groups, its audience was shrinking, in particular because of the "over-representation" of certain communities, to the detriment of others. Criticism focused increasingly on complaints that the programme, which had given a prominent role to the North Africans, was not enough open to the newer immigrant groups, with particular under representation of sub Saharan Africans and a more or less total absence of East European and Asians. Furthermore the need of the new generations" were not properly taken into account; Different programmes, like "*Ensemble aujourd'hui*" or "*Rencontres*," replaced "*Mosaïque*" which remained anyhow the most emblematic and symbolic programme concerning immigrants, even till today.

The specificity of France was that the Public service never financed directly the production of those different programmes . They were financed by the FAS (Fonds d'Action Sociale), a public body to help immigrant workers, which even hired out the transmission.

In 1991, change in the policy : For the first time, the public service produced indoors a weekly magazine "*SagaCités*", a programme, aimed for a general audience, focusing on young people in the Banlieues, portraying them in a way that diverged totally from their bleak image. It has regularly been cited as a success story, but was moved round several times in France 3's schedules and ended up losing its visibility in 2002. *SagaCités* was the last TV magazine programme, up to now, to deal specifically with the Banlieues, immigration, integration and related notions of social cohesion and living together. Its disappearance was deplored by the professionals and the civil society, notably at the time of the riots in 2005, when alternative images of the Banlieues were sorely lacking.

From 2002, the decision of the Public service was to replace a specific programme by a policy of diversification in the different strands and in its different channels. But the under representation remained obvious!.

The role of Civil society organization has been crucial to fight this under representation. The "*Collectif Egalité*", funded by the writer Calixte Beyala in 1999, whose members are mainly artists and intellectuals from African and Caribbean origin, contributed to force the regulator, the CSA, to change the guidelines of the commercial channels Canal + and TF1 and then the Public Service. The "*Club Averroes*," created in 1997 which is made up of journalists and media researchers is today a major actor. It publishes a yearly report on "Media and Diversity". Thanks to this club, commercial channels like TF1 engaged a more active strategy. Averroes claims to be responsible for the nomination three years ago of the Martinican Journalist Harry Roselmack, who became the first black to anchor, but during the summer only, the main evening news of TF1, the leading commercial channel, three years ago. A recent poll, last autumn, indicated that Roselmack was the favorite journalist for French people, this shows the frilosity of the TV managers, who until some years ,repeated that French audience was not ready to have a Black anchorman!

If In terms of visibility of minority faces on screen, some progress has been made, both in commercial (Canal + before all, with excellent humorists and actors) and in the public service, there is still very little increase in diversity of content in the programmes. Concerning the human resources, more diversity is needed in the people who commission or produce in the different genres: in documentaries, drama, sitcoms, children programmes, current affairs , but also in the

administration, marketing, and before all at the executive level and direction where the mentalities need to change.

As a matter of fact, the real awareness came after the urban violence of November 2005 in the French Banlieues and their representation in the media. It forced the authorities to become more involved to look at the role played, first of all, by the television. President Chirac for the first time hosted the Presidents of the TV channels but also the regulator and the Club Averroes, and stated that more diversity was needed in the audiovisual sector...and more money should be put for a better representation.

This allowed the creation, nearly three years ago of a specific financial support Fund, given to documentaries and feature films to promote diversity .The “Images de la Diversité’ Fund, managed jointly by the Centre National du Cinéma (The CNC) and the National Agency for Social Cohesion (Acsé), -the public body which replaced the FAS, helped in two years 281 projects for ten million Euros in two years.

In March 2006 a law concerning Equal Opportunity was passed that specifically discussed diversity in French media. It stipulated that the Broadcasting regulator, the CSA, should contribute more actively to the social cohesion and antidiscrimination. The law gave the regulator more authority to monitor diversity in broadcasting media and ban any discrimination.

In 2007, the CSA set up diversity working group to talk with broadcasters. .The Group’s work led to 16 of the most watched Television channel to adopt specific policies to promote diversity and fight discrimination. It also led to the creation of an Observatory which commissioned a quantitative study to look at how the issue of Diversity is covered by national broadcasters. Rachid Arhab, who managed the Observatory, a famous ex-journalist on Public cTV and since 2007 one of the nine CSA members, was really “ the right man at the right place The study which took a “snapshot” of a week’s programmes across 16 TV concluded one year ago that representation of diversity had scarcely increased since 1999. It founded a significant underrepresentation not only on ethnic minorities but also concerning the working class and the women. The President of the CSA, Michel Boyon, declared it “not acceptable” and decided to engage series of twice yearly reports on diversity policies in the different television. And, pushed by the civil society organizations, he threatens more “binding arrangements” or indeed sanctions, if the situation is not changing significantly.

Since less than two years, as a matter of facts, there is in France a real inflation of commissions, symposiums and observatories, which are launched, many having only a symbolic value. They are initiated either by the government: after the

declaration of President Sarkozy in December 2009 that “ diversity is a priority”, a special Delegate to Diversity, M. Yazid Sabeg, an entrepreneur from Algerian origin, was appointed who set up a commission on media (conclusions to be given in February).

The television themselves launched new initiatives : The “Fondation TF1” created in 2007 with the aim of bringing young people from the banlieues into the group,. The “Fondation France Television” gives support to young filmmakers also from the Banlieues and pushed them to make shortfilms. In June 2009, France Television launched also a permanent committee on diversity under the presidency of Hervé Bourges, the former President of the different Public service channels and of the CSA, and above all one of the more active personalities since decades concerning diversity. Bourges diagnosed : “ our screen is white, sometimes black, rarely north African and never Asian”. A report is announced in February 2010...and some specific actions should be taken on screens and in human resources before all for feature and drama. The objective is to open more widely to more diverse authors ,casting, thema, production and to allow diversity to be a real symbol of modernization for France Television”

Today on screen, stereotypes are still prevalent in the news, current affairs and drama. Immigration is seen as a problem, associated with poverty or criminality. The Banlieues are too often considered as a spatial concentration of problems resulting from immigration. This has led some journalists to try to correct that imbalance by making reports on “success” stories” and positive examples. This was the World Cup effect “Black, Blanc, Beur” with successful immigrants... but restricted to the world of sport, music and show business. What is still lacking is an authentic representation of ethnic minorities which reflects their daily life experience, their views and their interests, and also their presence on screen as guests, experts, and witness in the news, debates, and entertainment.

Stereotypes should more than ever be fought along with the fear of an ethnically divided society, leading to “communautarism”, opposed to the Republican model of the nation. Islam is among the subjects that have generated most comments in the media. It is presented as a threat, a source of subversion but rarely as a legitimate form of private belief.

The debate today on national identity organized by the government, is not acceptable as it is. Talk about national identity evokes also what is not conform to that national identity, in the aim to create a category which should exclude. This dynamic should belong to the civil society.

There is a real demand for audiovisual debates like “ Toutes les France” , on the mainstream channels. But this excellent daily programme, anchored by Ahmed El

Keiy, is broadcast every evening on France 0, O like overseas, which is part of France Television, but can be seen up to now in the metropol only in the Parisian region...

It should be added that action in the field of general interest programming should not necessarily exclude targeted programmes dealing with diversity and immigration. There is a constant need of information concerning migration, not only in France or Europe but all over the world. A monthly programme could be very useful. Some projects are still waiting agreement to be launched in the public service.

2-

Broadcast stations and TV channels as employers. What practices do exist with regard to the training and education of journalists from immigrant families

There is a greater awareness since three years that more efforts have to be done to open the schools of journalists to a more diverse, socially and ethnically, audience. Special training is offered free by some major figures of journalism to prepare to the exam of entry of the most prestigious one. Partnerships are also made between the prestigious and bourgeois school of Sciences Politiques and France Television to open this school to young people from the banlieues.

Starting in 2004 with courses, grants, training contracts and work experience, France Television opened also its doors to more than one hundred young people, and more than 40 were offered jobs. TF1 took on young journalists in sport and news, some visible on screen (Harry Roselmack!) some not while LCI(its cable and satellite news channel) editorial staff tested and selected young talented professionals, who for some of them went on to work on TF1the first commercial channel .

Radio France, the public service, thanks to its delegate for Diversity Jean-Luc Aplogan, makes special efforts to welcome young journalists from immigrant background as apprentices and to train them. On the contrary commercial radio really make no effort at all up to now to include more diversity in their programmes or in human resources.

There needs to be a real and sincere commitment to diversity at every level of broadcasting. French audience is ready to have more diverse and talented professionals journalists, the Martinican Harry Roselmack is their favorite journalist, and the young Sport Minister originated from Senegal, Rama Yade their favorite politician. The frilosity of the top managers is still very important. The

ceiling glass prevents to have career development and the economic and social crisis doesn't help!

There should be an obligation of more transparency to publish ads for recruitments proposals.

1.

The usage of media by immigrants/ Ethnic Media

The frustration that national mainstream broadcasters have failed to implement better employment or editorial practices has led a lot of immigrants and professional of ethnic minority background to create their own media, radio, print and now digital. More than 50 media are part of the Directory " Presse et Cités" in print media, internet, radio and web tv. But up to now, and despite some attempts, a "real professional television des quartiers" doesn't exist.

It's a fragile sector, which, apart from the real and existing talent, knowledge and creativity, needs also professionalization, training and funds. This sector is anyhow gaining audience and influence as complementary media.

The Bondy Blog, created by L'Hebdo de Lausanne, (a Swiss weekly print magazine) with young people from Bondy in this urban area near Paris during the riots in 2005, is the symbol and the reference of this new generation of medias. Its website is a real success, with an ever wider audience and not only among the people from the Banlieues. The young professionals are now invited to deliver lectures at the very bourgeois Political School of Journalism in Paris. Those media respond to a legitimate need of recognition.

A new school of Preparation to journalism schools was launched in Bondy in September 2009 in partnership with the Ecole Supérieure de Journalisme (ESJ), the prestigious school of Journalism at Lille.

Concerning the usage of media by immigrants, there is a real lack of audience research in France. Data collection is limited by basic law of the Republic which prohibits the use of certain survey methods, particularly ethnic statistics, on the grounds that these infringe on the idea of equality among citizens. There is a real need for more studies of minority audience.

A recent poll, in October 2009, indicated that France 3 was the best channel to reflect diversity : 67% satisfaction , for 59% for Arte, the private sector was far behind. 56% of the interviewees considered that the representation was balanced on the different channels of the Public service.

This poll needs to be moderated as it was commissioned by France Television itself! Audience research would certainly suggest that people from ethnic diversity still feel disappointed with what is offered by the traditional broadcasters and are more likely to seek out, as complementary sources, minority media satellite and digital channels.

A very brief conclusion : The coming year will be crucial to look at the implementation of the recommendations and proposals made by the different initiatives and committees. How will they be fulfilled concretely by the media? It's takes time to make good and balanced dramas and comedies.

More diversity in the media and in the public sphere is a major challenge and legitimate aspiration for millions of people.

Thank you for your attention.

Claire FRACHON

Journalist and European Media consultant

clairefrachon@free.fr