

Addressing Migration in the Media Landscape

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Spain is a country which continues today to welcome important migrant communities from across the Mediterranean region and wider world. According to Laura Navarro, the Spanish mainstream media rarely speak about the 'different' communities but rather about 'migrants' in general. In this context, the author underlines the importance of new legislation at the national level concerning diversity and migration issues in the media, as well as positive practices and civil society-led initiatives which reflect a wider social concern for migrants.

At present, no legislation in Spain exists which gathers forms of positive discrimination or quotas allocated to ethnic minorities in the media. Even at the national level, no institution is known to be in charge of evaluating and monitoring the representation and social presence of ethnic minorities in the media. Only some regions such as Catalonia, Navarra and Andalusia have regional audiovisual councils, which have elaborated recommendations on how best to process immigration information in the media. In this context, it is noteworthy to mention in particular the Audiovisual Council of Catalonia – launched in 2000 – which has published several studies on this issue and which promotes cultural diversity in the media through the 'Mesa per a la Diversitat en l'Audiovisual'. Another pioneer in this field has been the 'Catalan Public Television' (TV3), since this TV has led to the launch of the 'Commission for Diversity' in 2006, a Commission which promotes programmes on diversity, encourages research among journalists and presenters from these minorities and provides training courses for TV professionals.

Some local initiatives also reflect a social concern on this issue. For example, the Observatorio de la Diversidad was launched in 2000 in the Basque Country and focuses on promoting good practices. An example of such good practice has been the creation of the 'Diversity Agenda', which gives journalists direct contact with experts and with sources of information from the immigrant community. Similarly, the 'Mediterranean Observatory for Communication' was launched in 2004 in Barcelona by an interdisciplinary network of people and institutions from both Mediterranean shores working in information and communication in the Region. Its main focus is centered on favoring dialogue, human development and respect of human rights.

Cultural Diversity in the Media, Values and Access

Most Spanish researches on cultural diversity in the media have focused on analyzing various representations of 'migrants' and 'immigration'. Most of these works

demonstrate the reproduction of a negative vision of migrants and presentation of immigration as a problem occupies a central space over the analysis of the reasons for migratory movements and their contribution to the Spanish society.

Some researches have also focused on the image of Arabs and Muslims in the Spanish media and some specific Arab countries, such as Algeria, Palestine and Morocco. Most researches reveal a trend to reduce Arabs and Muslims to stereotypes and generalizations which picture Islam as monolithic, a threat and danger for the West, and a violent and irrational religion. One of the gaps in the studies about the media treatment of migration is that they focus on the general representation of migrants and not often on particular national communities such as the Pakistanis, the Chinese or the Senegalese. Another aspect of the relation between migration and media that has been little explored in Spain is the production of media led by migrants (Retis, 2008; Gómez-Escalonilla, 2008; Navarro, 2008). Concerning research about media treatment of Islam and the Arab world in particular, we can also identify two gaps which are common to most of the research.

On the one hand the main focus is on the study printed press leaving aside radio and television programmes; on the other hand, the space that research devotes to the female other, since almost all of the studies focus on the image of the male Arab/Muslim and set aside the specificities of the representation of the Arab/Muslim women. Among the few studies published about these women in the media field we can find the study of Gema Martín Muñoz (2005). Concerning the media representation of female migrants the works of Estela Rodríguez (2005), Faviola Calvo (2001), Clara Pérez (2003), Erika Masanet Ripoll and Carolina Ripoll Arcacia (2008) and Asunción Bernárdez Rodal (2007) can be mentioned.

The first General Audiovisual Law adopted in Spain in March 2010 led to the creation of the 'State Council of Audiovisual

Media', a public body which guarantees the implementation of rights set by this law, especially "the right for cultural and linguistic diversity". However, this diversity makes no reference to ethnic diversity in general. Instead, it calls for "promoting audiovisual European production" and the use of the "official languages spoken in Spain" and does not include any action towards a fairer representation of ethnic minorities in the media.

The law also jeopardizes the Third Sector of communication (which includes media which are neither commercial nor public), though it is considered by many to "promote social cohesion and intercultural dialogue" (ref. declaration of the European Council on the role of community media). In fact, although this law acknowledges for the first time the existence of "non-profit community media" (ref. Article 32), it does not call for any measure to safeguard their existence and even sets economic limitations on their development.

The Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll in Spain reveals that as many as 77.4% of respondents "do not remember having watched, read or heard anything in the media that would change or positively boost their opinion on people from the South or East Mediterranean." Though high, this percentage is slightly inferior to the mean (79%) encountered in the 8 countries of the Poll. Nevertheless, The results in Spain are still alarming since they bring into question the role of the media in promoting an intercultural society and, in particular, counteracting islamophobia.

The Poll also indicates that 19.4% of Spanish respondents were positively influenced by the media. This response brings forward a second question: What were the sources of these more 'positive' images? Data collected are very interesting: Most (57.2%) – nearly the same percentage as the mean of the 8 countries studied – mentioned TV news, documentaries (26.6%), the written press (25.2%) and books (17.2%). Less popular sources were the Internet (6.7%), cinema (4.3%) and the radio (1.8%).

These figures also lead to a number of questions. Why is TV news, so criticized in studies on the media and racism,

mentioned in the first place? Is it because TV is still the most popular form of media? Were respondents referring to TV news or to in depth reports broadcast in weekly news programmes (in which journalists usually have more time for critical analysis and reflection)? Is it the result – in part – of good practices on public channels? In any case, several studies have shown the importance of the internet and cinema in building pluralistic and hybrid cultural identities, yet these sources are rarely mentioned by respondents. Are there obstacles too in terms of the distribution of these 'alternative' cinematographic productions? Are the great tools offered by the Internet well-used?

No large differences were reported in the social profile of Poll respondents, though the largest difference was registered in the variable of 'religion'. A very high percentage (81.4% versus a mean of 19.4%) of Muslim respondents declared being positively influenced by the media. At first sight, this might seem contradictory, since the predominantly negative image of Muslims in the media would bring us to think that they would be particularly critical towards mass media. However, many factors could help explain this apparent contradiction. For example, the same TV discussion may be interpreted differently according to the line of thinking, imagination and expectations of viewers, displaying negative stereotypes in some and perceived as neutral (or even positive) by others. The results may also highlight differences in the type of media watched by respondents, since the Muslim population would also watch different television channels – as the Arabic channel of Al Jazeera – usually neglected by other respondents.

Conditions for Cultural Diversity

Over the last years, Spanish public radio and TV have strived to include specific content on immigration and promoting cultural diversity, such as "A World" on TV3 (Catalonia), 'Bienvenidos' on Canal Sur Radio (Andalusia) and 'Telenoticias sin fronteras on TeleMadrid' (Madrid). These programmes offer useful information and cultural content for migrant workers to extend communication and empathy bridges between local and migrant populations. In such

Image of the Arab and Muslim World

Published in 2010, the report 'The Image of the Arab and Muslim World on the Spanish Media' reveals the image transmitted by the Spanish general press of the Arabic region. Being aware of the great Media influence on the formation of public opinion and its role in the process of intercultural dialogue, the Fundación Tres Culturas del Mediterráneo published this report, based on quantitative and qualitative analysis, including more than 2,100 newspapers and nearly 10,000 articles published in six Spanish newspapers (El País, El Mundo, La Razón, ABC, La Vanguardia and El Periódico de Cataluña). It focuses on issues of the utmost importance for the formation of the Spanish public opinion on this topic: the relations between Spain and Morocco, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the journalistic approach of terrorism, the cultural clash and the building of bridges between the West and Arab And Muslim World. In this regard, the research is unique in the national sphere and at the same level with the best international investigations on the same topic. developments.

www.tresculturas.org

programmes, it is possible to find presenters from ethnic minorities, though such minorities were absent from the production and management levels of these programmes. Arabic and Spanish subtitling of some programmes is a new initiative of the public Catalan Television (TV3) which is exclusively programmed in Catalan) to attract new immigrants to its programmes.

At the national level, Spanish Public Television (TVE) currently broadcasts only one programme with this type of content: 'Babel' on TVE. This channel also broadcasts 'Azahar' – a documentary on sustainable development in several Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. For religious minorities, TVE also broadcasts a programme dedicated to Islam and its followers – 'Today's Islam' – the only programme in the Spanish public medias, directed by a Moroccan journalist.

In the Spanish context, the Journalists' College of Catalonia has been the pioneer in the creation of manuals for journalists. In 1995, it drafted the 'Convention on the Protection of Culture and Image of Ethnic Minorities in the Media'. This Convention was adopted in 1996 by the main Catalan media and it then became the Style Manual on the Treatment of Ethnic Minorities in the Media. The same Journalists' College created in 1995 a commission called 'Journalism Solidarity', through which they try to advance on the multicultural path dealt with in the Style Manual. Later on other associations of journalists, such as the 'Andalusian Federation of Associations of Journalists' and the 'Federation of Journalists from Spain' have also elaborated their own recommendations on the media treatment of migration.

A first step towards fair media appreciation of South and East Mediterranean neighbors is for Spanish journalists and media specialists to follow current media recommendations and ethical codes on dealing with immigration and ethnic minorities. A further step would be to take into account the political, economic and historical dimensions of news in order to avoid falling into the trap of providing cultural explanations to sociological phenomena as Islamisms or Al-Qaeda type of terrorism. In addition, another positive

step would be to demonstrate the huge cultural and social diversity of the Region, by highlighting the latest social changes in intellectual and artistic fields and in human right movements, particularly women rights.

Communication professionals should also seek a balance between western institutional sources (predominant in most information) and non western ones (conflict victims, Arab and Muslim experts, etc). Alternative information agencies such as Inter Press Service, and precious tools such as the Agenda de la diversidad could help them build more critical and pluralist points of view. It would be important to also widen the narrow network of Spanish correspondents working in the South and East Mediterranean and strengthen the network linking Spanish journalists, Moroccan journalists of the independent Moroccan Press (many residing in Spain) and Arab migrants who have created their own media in Spain.

Many factors shape the stigmatizing representations of 'others' in the Spanish mass media. In order to represent cultural diversity in a fair way, one cannot exclusively rely on the will of journalists. In fact, hegemonic journalistic practices and routine – lack of time, prevalence of emotion over explanation, and so on – hamper responsible journalists. Eventually, the aim is not only to change dominant journalistic discourse and practices in hegemonic media, but to also establish conditions for an equivalent presence, in the public sphere, of journalistic discourses coming from other social sectors (citizen in motion and protesters from the North and South Mediterranean). The struggle against hegemony of ethnocentric discourses should also include the effort to balance huge North-South information and communication inequalities.

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Within the media sector, there are several good practices recommended by or for migrants. This recent phenomenon can be explained by several factors, the most important of which is the strong will to offer a pluralistic image and quell the immigration stereotype. Such an example is the launch of a radio programme called 'Sense fronteres', by the Maghrébins sans Frontières association of migrants from the Maghreb Region and Morocco, in particular on Salt Public Radio (Catalonia). This radio programme works on maintaining a close relationship among Moroccans and nurturing the cultural origins of both Catalonia and Morocco. Another important factor underlying the appearance of these new media is the determined will of ethnic and/or religious minorities to share in public life and claim their rights. A good example of this trend is the Attawasul magazine published by the Ibn Batuta sociocultural association. The radio programme of Sin fronteras on Radio Almenara and the www.masvoces.org radio production centre are examples of these initiatives.

www.masvoces.org