

The Voices of Minorities and Migrants

ISABELLE RIGONI

The place of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the French media is still perceived as a rarely treated topic according to the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll. Isabelle Rigoni draws on national and international research carried out over the last decade to put in perspective the evolution of how issues of cultural diversity have been covered in the media. With emerging good practices in minority media, Rigoni points out a number of urgent issues which need to be addressed at the level of mainstream media in order to promote a diversity of voices.

The place of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the media is the subject of much debate in France as in other European countries. This question, that has become during a few years unavoidable – in political, voluntary, academic as well as media spheres – is to be placed in the context of the broader discourse in favor of 'cultural diversity'. As that applied to the whole society and to other activity sectors, political discourse in favor of diversity in the media dates back to the early 2000s (Dagnaud, 2000) and has grown more vigorous with the crystallisation of identity-based categories. The report commissioned in 2004 by the Fonds d'Action Sociale (FAS) on the representation and the representativeness of immigrants in the media (Frachon and Sassoon, 2009), traces the genesis of this issue in contemporary France. It sets out in particular to show that the role of public bodies concerning the representation and presence of immigrants and minorities in the media has been shaped by the priorities of successive governments, but also by the demands and pressures of civil society. Interventionist policies aimed at giving more recognition to such groups in the media have been pursued in France for more than 30 years. Initially, they were proposed by the FAS (then FASILD and ACSE) that has undeniably been a leader in transforming the depiction of immigrants and minorities in the media. Other public bodies such as the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) and the Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (HCI) have also become active in the field, often after having been subjected to pressure by civil society organisations.

Facing Stereotypes and Discrimination

Since 1999 civil society organisations have been crucial to the engagement of certain institutions and they were instrumental, for example, in raising consciousness well beyond FAS and propelling the debate on minority representation into the public sphere and among new concerned actors. In addition to the issue of the degree of visibility of diversity in French society and the emergence or persistence of stereotypes, other themes have been taken

up, such as discrimination, slavery and the role played by colonisation in the representation of certain minorities in present-day France. In terms of the policy of discrimination, the CSA remains hostile to quotas, however it works together with the 'Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité' (HALDE) that deals with matters such as personnel management and access to the screen, while CSA handles complaints about on-screen matters such as incitement to racial hatred. On 7 September 2007, Louis Schweitzer, HALDE's President declared that HALDE had never, up to that point, found a media organisation guilty of discriminatory practices, nor investigated possible discrimination in the media. These types of investigations were difficult to organise, and costly. HALDE encouraged audiovisual bodies to practise self-testing. In addition, the CSA cooperates with other public organisations, such as the HCI. On 24 April 2004, CSA and HCI organised a symposium entitled 'Pale Screens? Cultural Diversity and Common Culture in Broadcasting' involving the presidents of TV channels, audiovisual professionals and associations that brought for the first time the issue of representation of diversity in the media on the public place. A year later, the HCI gave the Prime Minister a notice entitled 'Cultural Diversity and Common Culture in Broadcasting' (HCI, 2005), which acknowledged real changes but at an insufficient level due to the fact that the measures failed to address the backlog of France compared to other European countries. A few months later, in October/November 2005, the widely spread and highly worldwide media covered urban riots in French deprived areas which profoundly marked the issue of representation of otherness and the participation of visible minorities in the media. They led to even greater involvement of political power with a particularly strong commitment of the President of the Republic Jacques Chirac who convoked for the first time together at the Elysée the eleven presidents of the main TV channels and audiovisual groups, and members of HCI, CSA or Club Aéro. The Head of State announced various measures, including some resulting in the so-called Law for Equal Opportunities, adopted on 9 March 2006. This

initiative led to immediate and concrete repercussions with the arrival of newsreaders from the visible minorities in a few public and private channels. Although other examples could be cited, it is worth mentioning the symbolic and highly profiled figure Harry Roselmack, journalist of Martinican origin, appointed as the newsreader of the evening bulletin of the main private TV channel to replace the very famous Patrick Poivre d'Arvor. In addition, on 24 January 2007, Rachid Arhab, a French journalist of Kabyle origin, former newsreader of the mid-day bulletin on the main public TV channel, was appointed member of the CSA by the President of the National Assembly Jean-Louis Debré, and president of the new working group on 'diversity'.

From Diversity in the Media to Diverse Media

Despite political measures taken, the effects on media content still seem quite low. This is because most actions whether at the initiative of civil society organisations, public institutions or political power, mainly focus on the audiovisual sector and have little impact on the press and especially given the defense of cultural diversity in the media is a recent phenomena in France. Studies by sociologists and historians have described the salient issues related to immigration and, more generally, to 'otherness', covered by mainstream media in France (Rigoni, 2007) as well as the difficulties that the media still faces in the implementation of the 'diversity' policy (for a detailed analysis of the academic research from the mid-1980s up to 2006, see Rigoni's contribution to Frachon and Sassoon, 2009). The analysis of the results of the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll carried out in France on the values conveyed by the media concerning cultural diversity and intercultural relations shows that the place of immigrants and ethnic minorities in French media is still perceived as a rarely treated topic. Data has been collected among 1001 people living in France, among them 520 female (52%) and 481 male (48%). One third are between 30-49 years old (33.7%) while 23.9% are between 15-29, 22.7% between 50-64 and 19.6% over 65. Most of them (90%) are French natives from French native parents, while 4.5% have parents from abroad, 3.2% are born abroad as well as their parents, and 1.92% are born abroad. Among the immigration countries of the respondents, the

most represented are Germany, Belgium, Italy – but 65.4% refused to answer this question. In the same way, 81.6% did not accept to answer about their religion. In doing so, we presuppose that most of the respondents wish to avoid any stigmatisation. Regarding their economic situation, most of them consider they have an average family's standard of living – probably because more than half are living in a rural area or a village (36.9%) and in a small or middle-sized town (36.1%). Very interestingly, the Poll shows that only 12.7% of the respondents do recall hearing, reading or watching recently anything in the media that has changed or reinforced their views of people from the Mediterranean area into a more positive direction. Among them, only 5.5% could mention a film that carried this positive impression, 6.6% a book, 11.4% a radio programme, 12.5% any Internet sources except blogs, 15.5% a documentary film, 29.8% a print media, and 49.1% a news on TV. Two distinct reasons can be put forward for this disparity between social reality of a cosmopolitan France and the perception of its media representation: on the one hand the marginal space reserved for major reports and documentaries in programme schedules, and on the other hand the ubiquity of pre-established representations of immigrant groups (Mills-Affif, 2004).

Some studies show that this is in a context of negative-representation and over-stigmatisation that many people living in a situation of minority turn to media that they consider different or at least where they can make their voices heard. In their search for self-representation, different populations of immigrant origin have turned, in France as elsewhere, towards the media produced and broadcasted from their country of origin, particularly with regard to the online and offline press and satellite television, in the hope of collecting information and entertain. Since the mid-1990s, research has mainly focused on the phenomenon of satellite television and the concomitant increase of parables in the French suburbs (Mattelart, 2007 and 2002; Guaybess, 2005).

Alongside the mainstream media and media produced in countries of origin, coexist a multitude of cultural productions led by ethnic or religious groups which, both in their existence and by their positions, contribute to the

Media and Diversity Prize

The 'Médias des diversités' prize, created by IPP, and awarded at Radio France on 31 January 2007, highlighted the contribution of minority ethnic media (médias des diversités) to the French media landscape. This visibility was strengthened during the summer of 2007 with an initiative aimed at setting up pairings between journalists from minority and mainstream media respectively. All of Radio France's stations took part, along with RFI, RFO, Radio Orient, Radio Rencontre, Beur FM, Radio Hauts de Rouen, Radio Mangembo, Africa No. 1, Radio Campus Dijon, Fréquences Paris Pluriel and EPRA. The objective was to produce, distribute and jointly publish written articles and radio reports. In 2008, this initiative was selected by the European Union and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) as one of Europe's foremost initiatives on the theme of 'Media and Diversity'. As a follow-up to the initiative, the organisers have facilitated ongoing collaborations between journalists.

www.panosparis.org

redefinition of national identity, identities of minority groups, and individual identities – and, in doing so, address the diversity issue. Among these productions, different areas of research on ethnic minority media have shown their historically rooted characteristics as they are contemporary of the first waves of migration – both internal and external – as well in Europe as in North-America (Park, 1970 and 2008). Nowadays products of global migration and proliferation of minority cultures, analogue and digital ethnic minority media are both producers and containers of identity. The EU Marie Curie excellence project 'Minority Media', funded for four years 2006-2010 and hosted by the University of Poitiers and 'Migrinter', has contributed to analyse the crucial role of ethnic minority media in identity production and representation. It helped to understand that the orientation and making of ethnic minority media must ultimately be understood within a transnational field of informational flow, diasporic/identity engagement and self-(re)presentation. Even more notably, it has also helped to spot new trends regarding cultural communication in the European public sphere. That is to say the emergence, in most of the post-colonial immigration countries, of renewed mediated forms and practices of cultural production addressing both ethnic/religious, cosmopolitan/diversity, and citizenship/anti-discrimination issues. With nearly a thousand titles according to the research programme 'Minority Media', ethnic minority media represents a place of expression, even pressure, and fully contributes to the process of enhancing the visibility and collective self-representation in the public space. In responding to the needs and having a specific editorial position, these media act as a complement to the supply of mainstream media. Some of them deal with current cultural diversity issues of public concerns.

In the audiovisual sector as well as in the press, some are qualifying themselves as 'diversity media' in order not to refer to any ethnicity. Among other initiatives which appeared in the mid-2000s, it is worth mentioning the European programme 'Mediam Rad' coordinated from 2005 to 2008 by the Paris Panos Institute, in the context of its axis on media and international migration. Through various activities of research-action, this programme has helped to establish,

within the scope of non-governmental organisations but also in the whole French mediascape, the label 'diversity' - be it the promotion of diversity in the mainstream media or the creation of 'diversity media'.

It appears that two main actions need urgently to be addressed at the French level. While print media in France has often contributed to the development of the public debate about the representation of immigrants and minorities in the media, its own practices have rarely been analysed and it appear completely exempt from self-criticism. In contrast with the audiovisual sector, print media is not subject to any regulatory framework concerning the representation of minorities. Yet as the print media can often play a strategic role in structuring the news agenda for other media platforms, more research should be conducted into the way minorities are represented in and the way they express themselves through the press. Moreover, the Internet and the wider process of digital convergence must also be studied closely, since they are redefining the rules of the media industry, especially for print media, and are opening up new opportunities for the expression of the minorities. While ethnic minority media has successfully developed in several Western countries, especially in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada and plays a significant role in these national mediascapes, they remain relatively unknown in France, even though they are around a thousand in total according to the research programme 'Minority Media' . These media respond to a legitimate need for recognition and expression on the part of populations that are often stigmatised. We need to pay a better attention to them among different cultures and different peoples.

ISABELLE RIGONI is the team leader of the EU Marie Curie Excellence Team 'Minority Media' hosted at Migrinter, Université de Poitiers.

Belgium - Grant Support For Journalists

Between 2003 and 2008, the King Baudouin Foundation delivered grants to journalists to support the development reports, articles or broadcasts on Islam and Muslim communities in Morocco, Turkey or Europe. The initiative was born out of the recognition that a large proportion of some 400,000 Muslims of Belgium originate from Morocco and Turkey, and yet there is not a great deal of awareness about these communities outside the limited images presented by mainstream media. With the aim of reducing the gap in perceptions between the wider population and migrant communities, a call for proposals was devised and launched, with a final selection granting financial support to 119 journalists. The grants specifically provided support to allow the media practitioners to visit Morocco and Turkey in order to better understand the local society in a way that covering stories of communities in Belgium at a rapid pace of daily work did not allow. Following the first phase of financial awards, the programme is being expanded in 2010 to work around other migrant communities.

www.kbs-frb.be