The Fiction of a Homogeneous National Culture

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According to the Anna Lindh/Gallup Poll, Germans showed a particularly high interest in learning more about the 'others', even if a majority did not think that media encouraged more positive images of other country groups. Sabine Schiffer points out a number of limitations of this media format to impact positively on intercultural perceptions, with examples of how stereotypes have been reinforced as opposed to challenged. In this regard, Schiffer underlines a number of good practices which can support an emerging trend for diversity in the media.

The National Integration Plan 2007 of the German government explicitly addresses the media as a factor in supporting the 'integration process' (ALM, 2003). Under 'Section 4.8', which comprises 13 of the 202 pages of the plan, the slogan 'To Benefit from Diversity' exposes the principal idea behind the diversity concept. Its recommendations are "to present cultural diversity as part of normal reality; to encourage more migrants to apply for jobs in the media; to reduce deficiencies in media research and media education for migrants; and to offer special programmes to migrants in order to attract their attention".

In addition to the fact that the proposals are not binding, the lack of understanding concerning the concept of diversity mainstreaming appears to be the first obstacle towards achieving improvement. The focus on immigration is also too limited to lead to representations of diversity, which also covers gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, etc. (European Commission, 2009; Paulus, 2007), and, indeed, the marking of culture and migration already carries the risk of reinforcing the idea of the 'other'.

A Comparative Perspective

Compared with the United Stated, Canada and the United Kingdom, ambitions in Germany are lagging behind (Geißler, 2007; DLM, 2003). The fact that there have been efforts to improve cultural diversity in German Media shows that formulating principles is not enough (Zambonini, 2007; Maier-Braun, 2007; WDR, 2007; Medien Monitor, 2007): "not even 3% of the media staff have a migration background, although immigrants represent almost one fifth of German society" (Oulios, 2007; Böhmer, 2007). At least more vocational training is being offered for 'new Germans' (Linder, 2007). However, the German Journalist Union states that immigrants are very often freelancers and not part of the media corporation (Nghi Ha, 2007, see also CEDAR). In addition, their pigeon-holding in niches is apparent and the growing request for marginal minority members, who fulfil a certain role in the discourse of the majority part of the society (e.g. Ayaan Hirsi Ali/Magan), is extremely counterproductive to social cohesion (ibid.). This shows that educating the decision-makers (BAMF) is more important than those who try to get access.

Comparison with the stagnating development concerning the rate of women engagement (Gallagher, 2006) shows that there is a disconnection between declarations, on the one hand, and the willingness to accept change and lack of awareness of structural limitations, on the 'other'. Both have to be addressed (Röben, 2007 and 2008; Iglesias, 2005; Berliner Beiträge, 2006; Hartmann, 2002). The 'systematic bias' concerning the personnel seems to have been understood earlier by private television broadcasters. Facing competition from 'ethno-media', the public service broadcasters were late in recognising the advantage of including coloured people in their staff, including visibly on screen – to attract these groups in society too (Zambonini and Simon, 2008). Fear of a segregational effect of the 'ethno-media', on the other hand, proved baseless (Weber-Menges, 2007; Windgasse, 2007).

But, combating discrimination is a big and very often an underestimated issue. While, during the 1980s, the focus on foreigners' delinquency was prevalent, in recent years migrants are increasingly being portrayed in the framework of so-called 'islamist terror' and cultural difference (Ruhrmann, 2007; Jäger and Halm, 2007; van Dijk, 2006; Hafez and Richter, 2007). The 'foreigners' seem to have become 'Muslims' and islamophobia has become an important factor acting against integration (Schiffer, 2005; Jäger and Halm, 2007).

The fiction of a homogeneous national culture is being perpetuated. Hence, mainstream coverage supports the political agenda instead of acting as a check on it (van Rossum, 2007; Becker and Flatz, 2005; Trebbe, 2009). Several analyses of news coverage come to the conclusion that immigrants are the object of less interest and very often portrayed in a negative way although with some improvement over the

past few years (Ruhrmann, 2006; Müller, 2005). In coverage of local events in newspapers, a positive tendency can be noted (Fick, 2006; compare Pollak, 2010). The potential for integration seems to be found more in the TV entertainment formats, where more sensitiveness towards the fate of refugees etc. can be discerned (Thiele, 2005). Television, in particular,has proven to be a leading medium, reaching very different people (Oehmichen, 2007). Every day about 80% of Germans and migrants living in Germany watch television. In 98% of households with an ethnic background, there is at least one television set. In fact immigrants are also exposed to the German broadcasters as the ARD/ZDF study 'Media and Migrants' (2007) reveals.

Qualitative research into one of the most favoured crime series (ARD, Tatort), shows that the roles portrayed still do not invite certain groups to watch (Ortner, 2007). Although some improvements can be observed, the proposals from the EUMC conference about 'Racism, Xenophobia and the Media' in 2006 are still relevant: "better presentation through better representation of minorities, more diversity in mainstream non-fictionals, intercultural knowledge as part of regular education, motivation through best practice, more dialogue between ethnic, religious and cultural different groups, better self-control and at least a forum for discussions about racism." Following the Canadian model, the EBU or Eurovision Intercultural and Diversity Group recommended accompanying all efforts with research, because only "what gets measured gets done" (Linder, 2007a; Screening Gender, 1998). This addresses the fact that German broadcasting companies and newspapers refuse an "ethnic body count" and any discussion about a quota (Linder, 2007b).

Some non-governmental organisations try to support diversity mainstreaming by campaigning for 'More Colour in the Media' (Adolf Grimme Institute), by hosting symposiums like 'Media and Diversity' (Loccum Academy) or by establishing scholarships 'Young Migrants into Journalism' (Heinrich Böll Foundation). The Media are creating programmes like the talent workshop 'WDR grenzenlos', which often provides access to niches like Cosmo TV'

Funkhaus Europa, DW-World and its partner qantara.de as well as offering access for other formats and topics. The qantara/bridge website enables visitors to encounter the Islamic World outside the usual frameworks of daily news coverage. To provide something like the Christian (ARD) and Jewish formats (RBB), ZDF and SWR started initiatives in online programmes by and for Muslims, where different protagonists and point of views are shown (SWR Islamisches Wort, ZDF Forum am Freitag).

Other examples are the intercultural magazine of Eleni Iliadou broadcasted by BR5; the new TV format Puzzle, produced by Özlem Sarikaya; and the IZI research by Elke Schlote and its printed TeleVIZIon. Although the concept of the 'other' is still emphasised here, these initiatives can be considered important steps.

On the other hand, there are also backlashes like the closing down of Radio Multi-Kulti in Berlin (replaced by Funkhaus Europa). Even worse are seminars about the purported 'Islamisation of Europe' by, for example, the Axel-Springer School of Journalism (Nghi Ha, 2007). As regards impressions of Islam, the coverage of foreign affairs is crucial (Hafez, 2002).

Due to the fact that many members of marked groups do not feel well represented, they start their own media: open channels (www.bok.de), blogs (e.g. www.theinder.net), printed magazines like Migazin, Gazelle, newspapers in Russian like Jewropazentr, Russkij Berlin, Nowaja Berlinskaja Gazeta or even film festivals like the annual Turkish-German event in Nuremberg (www.fftd.net).

Depicting the 'Other'

Media watch is predominantly based on self-control in Germany, but diversity is not a subject of any special interest (e.g. Presse Council, FSF/TV). The same applies to media watch blogs like bildblog.de or nachdenkseiten.de. Almost once every two years the WDR conducts self-appraisal and cabaret artists, like Hagen Rether, have become a sort of a media watchdog by upbraiding different magazines for their Islam-bashing (e.g. ARD Scheibenwischer 29.12.1007).

The following examples may provide an idea of the problems we are still facing: An analysis of television documentaries shows their prevalent perspective, which presupposes one particular audience as their addressee, while excluding another. Titles like 'Foreign Neighbours: Muslims between Integration and Isolation' (Chiara Sambucci, 2004) or 'The Turks: Why Faruk Drives a Green Mercedes' (Rita Knobel-Ulrich, 2000) reveal that Turks/Muslims are perceived as not being part of German society, which is presupposed as a Christian or a Christian secular majority (Paulus, 2007).

A certain practice in illustration compounds the impression that – in this case – Muslim women are oppressed, a symbol of a dangerous Islam or the prototype of a foreigner. Moreover, the vociferously praised soap 'Turkish for beginners' reinforced stereotypes enormously (Henning et.al., 2007) while the ZDF - one-week-special - programme on 'Migration' did not receive the attention its makers had wished for (Schiffer, 2008, see also: Yildis, 2006).

These examples of alienation or 'othering' quite often seem to be the result of not considering focussing on the 'other' (ZDF Migrationsbroschüre). The results of my analyses of an 'Islam' format (SWR) underlines this and can be summarised in Riepe´s words: "The 'well-meaning' is the opposite of 'good'", the ingrained framing of Islam as 'violent', 'oppressive' and 'backward' were so dominant that the outcome was not only the alienation of our Muslim citizens, but also the deterioration of their image. SWR then launched the monthly online programme 'The Islamic Word' providing inner-Islamic views of relevant topics and marking an important change in the way Islam is presented.

It is of course the programme makers themselves who "emphasise our good things, and their bad things; de-emphasise our bad things, and their good things," – to quote Teun van Dijk about - the European press. Indeed, the press lacks any diversity or integration concepts comparable to those of the broadcasting companies. In the Press Code (Art.12) the German Press Council only declared as a minor part its will not to discriminate against minorities in news coverage. Besides, the monitoring body Presserat takes only action after official complaints and only a very small number are followed up (Desgranges, 2007). Conservative newspapers like Die Welt are on the way to becoming neo-conservative mouthpieces, while Daniel Pipes and others are strenghening islamophobic coverage. However, the journalist Andrea Dernbach (Tagesspiegel) prooves that a 'migration background' is not essential for the coverage of diversity affairs.

Concepts Against Racist Thinking

Setting aside some examples of self-idealisation by media makers,there are some good practices to learn from. Birand Bingül, for example, is one of the commentators of the ARD-tagesthemen news format, Brigitte Pavetc and Pinar Abut

are anchors of a local news format. Till Nassif is taking over the anchor role in the ARD/ZDF-Morgenmagazin current affairs programme. His colleague Dunja Hayali is not only of Arabic origin, but also a Christian – foiling stereotypical expectations. Today, Aiman Abdallah's Galileo on Pro7 is no longer an exception. Yet older women presenters do not exist anywhere, while their male colleagues may be older.

The book market is also becoming more diverse and has long included famous English authors, but only few Turkish names. The Bosch Foundation therefore set up a 'Turkish Library' to enlarge access to translations of Turkish authors. Prices exist and still reward the focussing on migrants and immigration-related topics, integration and aspects of the 'other'. They thus fall short of their real potential and fail to address the whole idea of diversity mainstreaming: e.g. CIVIS Media Price (www.civis.ard.de).

To attain the goal of more diversity, different measures will have to be taken. Supervision methods could be imposed. Good concepts for work against racist thinking are available from, for example, the Information and Documentation Centre on Antiracism (www.idaev.de). More training for decision-makers is provided by the Media Diversity Institute, and diversity and frame-reflection training could be introduced in every school of journalism and made obligatory for every student. Moreover, immigrants must be included in the GfK polling company research so that they appear in the statistics for audience, readership and customers to take into account their wishes .

To stop or at least reduce discrimination, the Press Council must add a passage to the Press Code covering the use of pictures in newspapers and magazines. Based on Article 12.1 of the Press Code, an Article 12.2 has to be included stating that the usage of pictures in news coverage which are not at all relevant to the subject is a matter of concern, such as Jewish attire in coverage of the Lebanon war in 2006, or showing Mosques or prayer in coverage of the London attacks in 2005.

Making more diversity possible has to start with improvements in the German education system, which has tended to exclude this dimension. The importance of this is revealed by a quotation of the young journalist Ferda Ataman (Tagesspiegel): "My being here was not planned – if my mother had followed the recommendations for my school career, I would never have become a journalist."

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Germany - The Soap Opera 'Lindenstrasse'

Long before any integration programmes and diversity mainstreaming concepts were discussed in Germany, the publicly administered television channel WDR implemented the weekly soap opera 'Lindenstrasse' that gained enormous cultural significance as it has been reflecting the social, ethnic and cultural diversity of the German society for over 20 years. This community-based soap, located in a district of Munich, is directly derived from the long-running British soap Coronation Street. The first episode was aired in 1985 and soon became one of the most successful weekly shows on German TV. 'Lindenstrasse' is based on a close neighbourhood of families and associates and offers a wide forum for examining kinship relationships. People of different ethnic backgrounds, such as Greeks and Turks, have been part of this soap since the first episode. And beside the typical storylines like love, marriage and death, the show is known for confronting challenging social themes: AIDS, homosexuality, immigration issues, cancer, xenophobia and domestic violence.

www.lindenstrasse.de