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*The Challenge of Diversity in the French Mediascape*

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**Abstract**

This paper intends to emphasise the importance of media in terms of social cohesion at the time of institutional recognition of diversity. Criticised in the past decades, the French Jacobin centralist system is now the subject of fierce debate, and the policies relating to the integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants have been accused to be diversity blinded (Blanchard, Bancel, Lemaire 2005 ; Noiriel 2001 ; Simon 1999). In both old and new immigration countries, the fate of migrants became a question of political and social justice that challenged the legitimacy of national principles. This was probably more the case for the universal French citizenship model than elsewhere. However, the politics of diversity appeared in France a few years ago, and the term of « diversity » is now become a central category of public debate. Such a point that in a statement made in January 2008, President Nicolas Sarkozy sought to make this word a legal category and place it in the preamble to the Constitution. At the economic level, a label « diversity » was introduced in September 2008 to reward companies that clearly and effectively engage in action against discrimination.

Above all, the notion of « diversity » has become essential in the whole French mediascape, whether in mainstream media as in the ethnic minority media. Debates on diversity and/in the media are particularly worth studying knowing that media are major actors when dealing with identity construction, social and national cohesion as well as citizenship. Historians have shown the role of media in developing the national narrative and the perpetuation of national identity (Gellner 1983, Noiriel 2007). We now know the way in which mass media have played a major role in imagining (national) community/ies (Hobsbawm 1990, Anderson 1991, Appadurai 1997). While standardising popular ideologies, media helped in nationalising culture as it was contextualised in the frame of the emerging nation-state. Political scientists and sociologists seek to emphasise the importance of media in terms of social cohesion at the time of institutional recognition of diversity and discrimination (Wieviorka 2008). Specialists in international communications have unravelled processes of identity construction throughout media production as well as media consumption and communication technologies' appropriation in everyday life (Tittley 2008 ; Georgiou, Guedes-Bailey, Harindranath 2007 ; Georgiou 2006). We propose in this paper to present the mobilisations in favour of a recognition of ethnic minorities and immigrants in the mainstream media which led to the in-process politics of diversity. We wish also to present the initiatives of ethnic minority media and analyse their relation to diversity.

## Introduction

In France as in other European countries, the diversity issue is emerging at the turn of the two millennia. Not that diversity did not exist before in the (post-)colonial and (post-)migratory world, but it is now named and the term has acquired a socio-political legitimacy. Though heir of a hexagonal discourse on the concepts of interculturalism and cultural cross-fertilisation (*métissage*), diversity and its promotion is an important ideological shift in a France dominated by the philosophies of Jacobinism and republican universalism. First built on the denial of minority/regional identities, the centralising Jacobean state continued its task of national unification at the time of emergence of the immigration issue and the settlement of foreign populations in the country. While the great thinkers of the eighteenth century, the ideologues of the Revolution and the French romantic supporters have defended the Republic and its vocation to the Universal, it has almost always operated as an instrument of enslavement and negation of the Other. Indeed, the Republic is between on the one hand, a humanism proclaimed from its founding fathers, and on the other hand, the negation of the Other and the idea of difference. For over a century, the policies relating to the integration of minorities - national minorities as well as immigrants - work as a tool of assimilation, an instrument whose function would be to merge the indigeneous diversity, and then the one given by international migration, in the famous French cup (« *creuset français* », Noiriel 1992). In a context of growing identity tension since the 80's, the discourse on cultural diversity seems to be a historic mistake. Gradually, however, the (mainly cultural, but also linguistic and religious) diversity issue takes on an increasingly central significance in the public discourses. This paper will first analyse the conditions for the emergence of such a speech on diversity by reminding both the conceptual, the political and the communication frameworks. We will then present the consequences of promoting diversity in the French mediascape, by focusing on the policies implemented by/in the mainstream media and then on the phenomenon of ethnic media also called « diversity media ».

### **The conceptual framework. The late emergence of post-colonial studies and cultural studies in France and its consequences.**

Until the early 90's, the dominant republican discourse has attempted to « normalise » the process of openness and cultural mix resulting from the installation in France of immigrant populations from former colonies. The crisis of the « French model of integration » and the widening of « visible minorities » in public spaces create a new situation, forcing the media and policymakers to take into account the multicultural dimension of French society. This change of outlook on the status of otherness (Cossée, Lada, Rigoni 2004) has been accelerated by the « return of colonial memories ». Conversely, the rise of the memories are built by questioning the model of integration. Discrimination against immigrants from the empire and their descendants have greatly contributed to this review. The « return of memories » is seen on the confrontational mode, as illustrated by the emblematic case of the « Algerian memories », where French citizens from Algerian descent, *pieds-noirs* (French colonial born in Algeria), *harkis* (Algerians embedded in the auxiliary forces) and former French conscripts are somehow in competition to recognise their version of the war in Algeria as an integral part of the national history. The law of 23 February 2005 which recognises « the suffering and the sacrifices of the rapatriates », as the law Taubira (2001) which recognises the slave trade as a crime against humanity, or the adoption of the May 10 as a day commemorating the abolition of slavery in France (2006) show how the state is, for these intermediate groups, the end point of any strategy for recognition. The « memory laws » as it was quickly qualify, reflect the willingness to care, by state institutions, the requirement of

recognition by some categories of French too long relegated, physically and symbolically, to the margin of society.

Faced with memorial claims, academia has often adopted a defensive posture and expressed concern about the translation of historical or sociological questions as a platform for political mobilisation. With a significant delay, the French social sciences eventually move into new problematics, and are interested in the debates promoted by both « postcolonial studies », « cultural studies » and « subaltern studies » opened since almost thirty years in the English-speaking world, particularly in Britain, the United States and India. That this literature was liable for major French-speaking precursors (Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Edouard Glissant, Leïla Sebbar or Maryse Condé), that there was also in France a few isolated figures engaged in a comparable approach (Abdelmalek Sayad), do not see that this thought process was still, until very recently, on the margins of the academic field. However, the importance of the theme of « postcolonial » or « cultural » in recent publications, including peer-reviews, illustrates a phenomenon, if not legitimacy, at least to implementation of theories and concepts. Sign of the times, the work of authors such as Stuart Hall (Alizart, Hall, Macé, Maigret 2007; Hall 2007) and Paul Gilroy (2003) have finally been translated into French.

But this movement has encountered strong resistance in the political, media and academic spheres. The opposition front to postcolonial studies is far from homogeneous. Rather, it brings together actors with very different, or even contradictory, interests and backgrounds. The classic anathema of « communitarianism » is making a strong come back into the public arena. According to its detractors, multiculturalism as a sociopolitical system would promote « the multiplication of communities on an ethnic, linguistic or religious basis, with other or even incommensurable and mutually incompatible values and norms » (Taguieff 2005). These republicanist tensions tend to confuse community and communitarianism and see an expression of communitarianism in any assertion of identity (Sainsaulieu, Salzbrunn 2007). Without any question here of any direct link between the two patterns of thought, these tensions are part of a the global context of the fear of a so-called « clash of civilisations » prophesied by Samuel Huntington. On another note, during the urban riots of October-November 2005, intellectuals, politicians and journalists have abused the opposition between « social question » and « race », as if these two dimensions were not interrelated. At the same time, these debates and controversies have been the opportunity to question subjects deemed sensitive, even outrageous, particularly the concept of « race », the relationship between immigration and racialisation, the notion of « hybridity » of identities, or the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity, race and class (Dorlin 2008).

In these debates, the misunderstanding is ubiquitous and polemics are sometimes violent. One reason is undoubtedly the question of the use of research knowledge in the public sphere. What is the legitimate area of the « scientific » debate? How, and under what conditions, is it permissible to raise historical knowledge to build political arguments? These issues arise with acuity in a healthy confrontation of the Republic to its colonial past, and in the timeliness of racial discrimination. The dramatic revival of national pride during the presidential campaign in 2007 and its variation around the « national identity » (Noiriel 2007) erected in governmental fetish show the tension caused by the recent reappraisals. The French debates on post-colonial studies (Smouts 2007) and cultural studies (Glévarec, Macé, Maigret 2008) come from a specifically French difficulty to revisit the fundamentals of the Republic and to confront them with its own historicity.

However, if postcolonial theories unite critics, however, they do not embody any political or ideological orientation – on the contrary of political discourse on diversity. If the postcolonial turn means the opening of an area of critical debate about the nature of social ties and power today, the thought is not self-sufficient (*Mouvements* 2007). The postcolonial approach seeks to reveal a radical unthought buried in social relations, masked by the dominant representations. It is to reveal the significance of the colonial legacy on the nature of the world system. If postcolonialism is first, in the literal sense, what comes « after colonialism », the first virtue of this word is to express a paradox: « after colonialism » at the time of migration marking « the explosion of the imperial world outside its borders » (Stuart Hall), there may be a « post-colonialism », a « *postcolonie* » (Mbembe 2005), which survives to colonialism, and perpetuates it under renewed forms (Smouts 2007). Understanding these processes is still very difficult. On the one hand, it is not easy to determine what belongs, in the contemporary era, to the colonial regarding social relations. On the other hand, the current postcolonial thinking is not unified and is difficult to summarise. However, its common point is probably to serve as a toolbox to counter the rigid views of identity boundaries, the selection mechanisms that condemn people to stay outside (abroad), or to suffer the effects of categories and (class, race, gender) discrimination that are partly related to a colonial legacy, social hierarchies and old representations. The postcolonial studies also inaugurate, in connection with a burning political agenda, new epistemological positions, in an academic and social antagonistic context, where the question of « who speaks? » - on behalf of whom or what, according to what symbolic resources - remains highly relevant.

### **The political framework. From « cultural exception » to « cultural diversity ».**

It is therefore in a context marked by debates on the emerging postcolonial and cultural studies but also by the public discourses on (national) identity that the diversity issue appeared. By the 2000's, the term « diversity » became a central category of public debate, with far more positive connotations than ever. This political, philosophical and epistemological evolution takes its source in the work of major international organisations (UNESCO, Council of Europe, European Union, International Organisation of *Francophonie*) which, between 1991 and 2001, moved from the concept of « cultural exception » to that of « cultural diversity ». « Cultural exception » is a concept developed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From the mid-80s, and especially during the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) Renegotiation in 1993, France has introduced a film and more broadly an audiovisual protectionist policy at the European level. It states that cultural exports should be treated differently than other goods in trade negotiations because national cultures should be protected. It allowed France to use tariffs and quotas to protect its cultural market from other cultural products, most notably American films and television. This policy, which became a symbol of resistance of all cultural activities to the market laws, experienced an extreme mediatisation under the name of « cultural exception », a term invented in the entourage of the Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, before being taken over by Jacques Rigaud in his essay (1995). France's defense of cultural exception is sometimes considered as an uneasy fig leaf for a privileged status either for homegrown cultural production (the so-called 'French exception') or for cultural goods (the so-called 'cultural exception') (Benhamou 2004). As cultural exception has been constantly questioned since its adoption, other critics are asking whether this concept become an illusion, a « rear-guard struggle which France is doomed to fight alone » (Farchy 1999). However, in October 2005, UNESCO's *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, sponsored by France and Canada, enshrined cultural exception as a method of protecting local cultures.

This policy shift is remarkable in a Europe – and particularly in a France – where culture was traditionally generated by cultural elites, aimed at them, and transmitted to larger shifts of the population only progressively and after some time has elapsed. This originally elitist cultural heritage constitutes the backbone of the European cultural tradition, even in such domains as religion, folklore, music, eating habits, manners – and more generally daily life. On their side, until recently, the linguistic or ethnic markets for culture were small, the consumers few, the means of cultural communication limited. However, the widespread use of new technologies of information and communication has introduced 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. Digital media and the advent of Web 2.0 have particularly amplified the expression of cultural and religious actors in the sense that they have introduced new facilities and new tools. The year 2005 is emblematic of this *e-revolution*, with the birth of thousands of blogs and forums dedicated to cultural and religious matters. Minorities are particularly implicated in the use of Web 2.0 thanks to simple, democratic and open conditions of the flow of information. Cyberminorities, cyberdiasporas and cybermigrants, stakeholders of the Web 2.0, are experiencing ‘cultural extraversion’. By its extreme flexibility and adaptability, the Web 2.0 became the ‘resistance identity’ of minorities. The Internet is, for all minorities, a way to intervene in public debate, sometimes using anonymity as a resource for speaking up in the public arena.

Among international organisations, UNESCO has, the first and with greater force, chosen to make the diversity a major issue. It is now spearheading an action against economic globalisation in which it denounces the standardisation of national cultures. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001 is regarded as a normative instrument acknowledging, for the first time, cultural diversity as « common heritage of humanity » and considering its preservation as a concrete and ethical imperative inseparable from respect for human dignity. This Declaration<sup>1</sup> was an opportunity for the States to « *reaffirm their conviction that intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of peace and to reject outright the theory of the inevitable clash of cultures and civilizations* ». The Declaration intends in particular to « *prevent segregation and fundamentalism which, in the name of cultural differences, would sanctify those differences and so counter the message of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration makes it clear that each individual must acknowledge not only otherness in all its forms but also the plurality of his or her own identity, within societies that are themselves plural. Only in this way can cultural diversity be preserved as an adaptive process and as a capacity for expression, creation and innovation* » (UNESCO 2002). The notion of cultural diversity has also been included in the Declaration of Montreal adopted in 2007 by the International Committee of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, is employed by the European Union (i.e. the program EQUAL, whose mission was to « promote a better model for working life by fighting discrimination and exclusion on the basis of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation ») and by the Council of Europe (including any positions related to linguistic diversity; and also the Campaign Speak out against discrimination that « supports the media sector’s own efforts to play a constructive role in an increasingly multicultural environment »). These institutions have played a major incentive role for both States and firms.

In France, cultural diversity has emerged as a new paradigm of French cultural policy under

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<sup>1</sup> In 2007, 54 States from all continents had ratified the Declaration.

the presidency of Jacques Chirac. In some ministries, politicians have contributed to the rise of the theme of diversity, as Azouz Begag, Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister from 2005 to 2007, responsible for the promotion of equal opportunities. Institutions such as the National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equal Opportunities (Acsé) or the High Authority for the Fight against Discrimination and for Equality (HALDE) also played a significant role. In a declaration on 8 January 2008, Nicolas Sarkozy has even asked to make the word « diversity » a legal category and place it in the preamble to the Constitution. On 5 February 2008, Valérie Pécresse, Minister of Higher Education and Research, sponsored a report to the sociologist Michel Wieviorka about diversity (Wieviorka 2008). While on the domestic front, the French policy has been, since the Third Republic, to abolish cultural diversity in the name of a vision of Republican universalism, it is now a principle defended by France at the international level. At the economic level, the recent opening of large enterprises, including those of public service, to « diversity » is based on a displayed modernisation, with the idea that modern management should recognise the differences, enhance them, and that the communication of the firms can and should do the same with marketing and advertising. These efforts are undertaken in a context where they are encouraged, recognised, fueled by institutions more or less close to employers. Institutions are engaging in lobbying in favor of the diversity issue, such as the Montaigne Institute, a private think tank created in 2000 by Claude Bébéar, which brings together business leaders, senior officials and academics. In 2004, the Montaigne Institute offers a Charter for diversity, that 1 700 companies have signed in 2008 (Bébéar 2004). For its part, the main employers' organisation, the MEDEF, have desiganted its spokesperson « diversity ». At government level, a label « diversity » has been set up at the end of 2008 at the initiative of President Nicolas Sarkozy. On 10 April 2009, 7 private firms received for the first time this label rewarding best practices in diversity and fight against discrimination. Eric Besson, Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Solidarity Development, Fadela Amara, Secretary of State in charge of urban policy and Yazid Sabeg, Commissioner to the Diversity and the Equal Opportunities, presented the first labels in the presence of Brice Hortefeux, Minister of Labor, Social Affairs, Family, Solidarity and the City. Last but not least, the notion of « diversity » has become inevitable in the entire media field, whether in the mainstream media as in the media of ethnic minorities.

### **The communication framework. Implementation and promotion of the diversity issue in the French mediascape.**

The place of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the media is the subject of much debate in France as in other European countries (Rigoni 2007a). This question, that became unavoidable in a few years – both in political, voluntary, academic and media spheres – is to be placed in the context of the broader discourse in favor of « cultural diversity » that we have evoked. As that applied to the whole society, political discourse in favor of « diversity » in the media is new and it was not until the early 2000s that political power is involved and decide on the issue of representation of all the components of the French society in the media (Dagnaud 2000). The report commissioned in 2004 by the FASILD/Acsé on the representation and the representativeness of immigrants in the media, completed in 2006 and published later in book version (Frachon, Sassoon 2008), traces the genesis of this issue in contemporary France. It intends in particular to show that, despite the existence for some thirty years of policies aimed at taking a better account of the immigrant populations in the media in France<sup>2</sup>, the visibility of people of immigrant origin would not have occurred

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<sup>2</sup> This is the era of « specific broadcasts » (*émissions spécifiques*), initiatives not coming from « diversity » but aimed to promote it. In 1975, the FAS (actual Acsé) supports - and participates in – specific TV magazines

without the involvement of actors first came from civil society, then from several public institutions.

It is from 1999 that several civil society organisations greatly contribute to bringing the debate on the representation of immigration, and more generally of « visible minorities », in the media in the political arena<sup>3</sup>. Although the emergence of voluntary organisations specifically dedicated to the recognition of ethnic minorities in the media is recent in France, their role is crucial. Among the first actions taken was the press conference, held in September 1999 by the *Collectif Egalité* founded by the writer originating from Cameroon Calixthe Beyala. Appointing minorities by their skin color and demanding quotas to address the under-representation of blacks on television, like what is practiced in the United States, the *Collectif* creates the event by multiplying spectacular media actions. Alongside the *Collectif Egalité*, and then relaying it, other groups and demands are created for a better representation of minorities in the media. The *Club Averroès* will play, with an entirely different approach, a priority role for the representation of minorities on the air (Club Averroès 2006). Founded in 1997 and chaired by Amirouche Laïdi, it brings together media professionals from all backgrounds but also elected officials and business leaders. The Club meets senior leaders of the channels, launches proposals for another representation of the diverse French society in front of and behind the screen. Contacts are also made with press leaders to encourage them to engage a reflexion on their own policy regarding visible minorities. Other movements (the *Collectif des Antillais* created by Patrick Karam in 2003, the *Cercle d'Action pour la Promotion et la Diversité en France* founded by Patrick Lozes in 2003, the *Club du XXIe siècle* established in 2004 by Hakim El-Karoui and Rachida Dati) are also calling for a social and media recognition of minorities in society. Highly politicised, these movements address the issues of ethnic discrimination, the impact of slavery and colonisation in the representation of some minorities, the black question... Finally, beyond the sphere of associations, the communication agency SOPI, founded in 2003 by Jean-Christophe Despres, is elaborating together with Médiamétrie a barometer of diversity in the media. A question unthinkable a few years ago, in a France suffering from recurring debate on the creation and use of ethnic statistics (CAS 2006) to which the Constitutional Council is opposed.

These different positions and advocacy activities have impacted sometimes almost immediately the political sphere... in default of the media one. One of the most notable effects is the press conference organised by the *Collectif Egalité* in September 1999: the following month, the *Collectif* is heard in the plenary session of the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* (CSA), an independant authority to protect audiovisual communication freedom. For Hervé Bourges, President of CSA, this first meeting constitutes what he calls a « true consciousness » after which he writes to every president of TV channel and to the Minister of Culture and Communication Catherine Trautmann, requesting a change in the TV channels reglementation to encourage the taking into account of the multiethnic and multicultural reality of French society. He also orders a study on the presence and representation of visible minorities on French television (Malonga 2000) – which will be followed by another on the

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dedicated to immigrants, aired on the public channel France 3 (ex-FR3): *Immigrés parmi nous* ; *Mosaïque* whose success is immediate (its audience is estimated at between 4.5 and 6 million people); *Ensemble aujourd'hui* ; *Rencontres*; *Racines*; *Relais*; *Premier Service*; and finally *Saga-Cités*, broadcasted from 1991 to 2002, noted for its counter-current approach of catastrophic images typically displayed on the suburbs and other deprived areas. Meanwhile, FAS is also active in the radio sector, contributing as a first step to financing programs produced and broadcasted by Radio France International (RFI) in foreign languages.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine Humblot has particularly well highlighted the role of some civil society organisations in this area (Frachon, Sassoon 2008).

representation of diverse backgrounds and cultures on television and radio (CSA 2006). Finally, the activity report of the CSA of 2000 introduces, for the first time, a section entitled « Representation of minorities ». If the CSA takes relatively late the issue of representation of minorities in television, it plays however its regulatory role by asking repeatedly adapting the rules governing the regulation of the French audiovisual sphere. These requests are translated at the political level by the adoption in 2001 of a decree calling on the public channels to promote the values of integration, solidarity and citizenship and that their « program offer demonstrates the richness and the diversity of cultures that make up French society ». In addition, the CSA endorses alliances with other public organisations, as the High Council for Integration (HCI)<sup>4</sup>. On 24 April 2004, CSA and HCI organise a symposium entitled « Pale Screens? Cultural diversity and common culture in broadcasting ». Hosted at the Institute of the Arab World in Paris and with the support of FASILD, the symposium is bringing for the first time the issue of representation of diversity in the media on the public place. By inviting the presidents of TV channels, audiovisual professionals and associations to confront their points of view, this event involved the construction of a dialogue between these actors. A year later, the HCI gives to the Prime Minister a notice entitled « Cultural diversity and common culture in broadcasting » (HCI 2005), which acknowledges real but insufficient changes in that they failed to catch up the backlog of France on the other European countries.

A few months later, decisive events will profoundly mark the course of discourse and action on the issue of representation of otherness and the participation of visible minorities in the media. Between 27 October and 18 November 2005, many of the deprived urban areas located in the suburbs of the medium and large cities, have three weeks of urban violence that, despite their predictability, seem to have surprised the public opinion and the authorities by their intensity and duration. Triggered by the death by electrocution of two teenagers in the enclosure of a power source in Clichy-sous-Bois while being pursued by police, these three weeks of urban riots have been completed by the introduction of a State of Emergency issued by the government which exhumed a law dating from... the Algerian war of decolonisation. The media have widely reported, more or less skillfully, the events that have were showed to the world through screens interposed. Seen from abroad, these events have often been related to the urban riots which spread in most major urban centers of the post-colonial world. They are described as factors threatening social and national cohesion. However, seen from France, the urban violence of October-November 2005 marked a turning point in the representation of the Other in the media. They lead to even greater involvement of political power, symbolised by a particularly strong commitment of the President of the Republic.

On 22 November 2005, while France is just getting out of these three weeks of highly mediated urban violence, the eleven presidents of the main TV channels and audiovisual groups, and members of HCI, CSA or *Club Avernoès*, go to the first time together at the Elysée on the invitation of President Jacques Chirac. The Head of State announces in particular various measures relative to the role and obligations of the CSA, a change in the reglementation of public broadcasters, as well as the creation of a specific fund of 10 million euros from the National Center for Cinematography (CNC) to fund works that contribute to social cohesion. One of the commitments of President Chirac will be translated into law on social cohesion, so-called Law for Equal Opportunities, adopted on 9 March 2006, whose

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<sup>4</sup> Created by decree on 19 December 1989, the High Council for Integration is a forum for reflection and proposals which, at the request of the Prime Minister or the Interministerial Committee, advises on all matters relating to the integration foreign residents or citizens of foreign origin. On 16 February 2004, the Prime Minister instructed the HCI to take up the issue of representation of the diversity of the national community through the media.

Article 47 stipulates that « the CSA contributes to the actions for social cohesion and the fight against discrimination. This includes ensuring that the programming reflects the diversity of French society ». This meeting symbolises the fact that issues relating to « diversity » and representation of minorities in the media have become a political issue clearly affirmed whose urgency is recalled by the various actors. But more than a symbol, the initiative of the Elysée has led to immediate and concrete repercussions. Although the process was very timidly started earlier on some television channels, the arrival of newsreaders from the « visible minorities » in a few public and private channels is one of the most visible effects of this recent policy of diversity. Although other examples could be cited (the West Indians Audrey Pulvar and Christine Kelly), Harry Roselmack, journalist of Martinican origin, constitutes a symbolic and highly mediated figure since his appointment as the newsreader of the evening bulletin of the main private TV channel to replace the very famous Patrick Poivre d'Arvor. Finally, 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, is appointed member of the CSA by the President of the National Assembly Jean-Louis Debré, and president of its new working group on « Diversity ».

### **From diversity in the media to diversity media**

However, although the action of political power towards cultural diversity in the media become sharply apparent from the mid-2000s, it still meets with few echoes in the media sphere itself. On the one hand, most actions and other measures, whether at the initiative of civil society organisations, public institutions or political power, are mainly concerning the audiovisual sector and have little impact in that of the press. On the other hand, the effects on media content still seem quite low, especially given the recent character, in France, of the defense of cultural diversity in the media. Sociologists and historians have described the salient issues related to immigration and, more generally, to otherness, covered by mainstream media in France (Rigoni 2007a & b). These studies highlight the difficulties that still face the media in the implementation of the « diversity » policy, despite efforts increasingly supported. Some studies show that this is in a context of bad-representation and over-stigmatisation that many people living in situation of minorisation 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. Very few are related to the production and reception of ethnic media.

Yet, alongside the mainstream media and the media produced in the 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 redefinition of national identity, identities of minority groups, and individual identities – and, in doing so, address the diversity issue. Among these productions, researches 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, 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 MINORITYMEDIA has contributed to analyse the crucial role of ethnic

minority media in identity production and representation<sup>5</sup>. It helped to understand that the orientation and production of ethnic minority media must ultimately be understood within a transnational field of informational flow, diasporic/identity engagement and self-(re)presentation. Even most 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.

Already existing in the second half of the nineteenth century and now counting several hundred titles in each of the media sectors, the media of ethnic minorities can be understood as one of the consequences of the bad-representation and over-stigmatisation of their audience, and at the same time as a need for information. They represent a place of expression, even pressure, and are thus fully integrated in the process of setting visibility, of 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 refer to recent public concerns on cultural diversity. 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 them, most are recent titles that fall under the influence of urban culture. Thus, the quarterly *Fumigène*, established in 2005, which describes itself as « *the newspaper 'speaker' of diversity. It is our vision of the 'street' that we wanted to put on paper: popular, lively, full of all its differences; paving stones and concrete per kilometer, in blocks, bars, islands of green spaces, polluted puffs of oxygen, sound, scratches, beats, images, scenes, struggles, faced by people of all backgrounds, from all origins and all ages* »<sup>6</sup>. On its side, *Respect Magazine*, founded in 2004, names itself as « *an independent quarterly of society and urban culture. A voice of diversity* ». These examples echo other initiatives, including the one of the Paris Panos Institute, a NGO that coordinated from 2005 to 2008 the European program Mediam'Rad, in the context of its axis on media and international migration. Through various activities of research-action<sup>7</sup>, this program has helped to establish, within the scope of NGOs 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 ».

However, if the sociological phenomenon of ethnic media is *de facto* part of the issue of cultural diversity, it can not be reduced to a strict product of the voluntarist discourses and policies of different actors who opened the debate on « diversity » and « visible minorities ». The social and political reality is much more complex and the positions of the various media are very diverse in their self-definition. Some of them are defined on the basis of ethnic or

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<sup>5</sup> MINORITYMEDIA (Minority, Media and Representation Across Europe) excellence team has been funded for 4 years (1st March 2006 – 28 February 2010) under the Marie Curie Excellence Grants scheme, 6th PCRD. The host institution is the University of Poitiers (France), and the team leader is Isabelle Rigoni.

<sup>6</sup> Original version in French: « *le journal 'haut parleur' de la diversité. C'est notre vision de 'la rue' que nous voulions poser sur papier : populaire, animée, riche de toutes ses différences ; des pavés et du béton au kilomètre, en blocks, en barres, des îlots d'espaces verts, des bouffées d'oxygène polluées, du son, des scratches, des beats, des images, des scènes, des luttes, vécus par des gens de tous horizons, de toutes origines et de tous âges.* »

<sup>7</sup> Including: organisation of the first prize of « diversity media » in January 2007 at the Maison de la Radio in Paris, in the presence of Azouz Begag (Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister from 2005 to 2007, responsible for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities); meetings between « diversity media » and mainstream media to promote intercultural and intra-professional dialogue; achievement of a directory « diversity media » (Institut Panos Paris 2007); publication of a report on the « diversity media » content in terms of information processing (Blion *et al* 2006).

geographical origin of their audience (eg, *Cité Black* ; *CapMag. Le journal des lusodépendants* ; *Kazel ha Kazel. Bulletin des cercles celtiques* ; *kelma.org. Le site ethnik & gay*) without claiming to address the diverse components of French society. Others, on the contrary, although launched by and aimed at specific audiences, are sometimes closer to a global alternative discourse to a discourse that promotes a cultural identity: this is the case of the « urban media » which anchorage is located in popular areas, the « alternative media » and « citizen media » in the vein of French associative radios, the « generalist media » who refuse any ethnic specificity and wish to compete on equal basis with the mainstream media. In this context, many ethnic media do not feel concerned by the discourse on « visible minorities », not more, to some extent, by the one on « diversity ». Some may even feel excluded, insofar as the concept of « visible minority », such as « diversity », reflect a political discourse that supports only some differences - the more integrated or more acceptable - leaving all others aside.

### **Conclusive considerations. Diversity, a moral injunction?**

Some denounce the word « diversity » as rather dull and flat, with a low moral value. It would permit, « in an euphemistic, dulled, depassionated way to consider the existence of [ethnic] groups [and visible minorities] » (Wieviorka 2008, p.40) - two words that appear far less consensual. For the same author, « the word ‘diversity’ has become something of a moral injunction, operating at the international level, giving the State that employs it a respectability [...]. It is always possible to put forward the ‘diversity’ to eradicate otherness » (Wieviorka 2008, p.68). From an academic point of view, it seems to us that the term « diversity » is not sufficient alone to account for complex sociological phenomena underpinned by relations of domination between majority and minority/ies. In this sense, we prefer the notion of « inter-ethnic relations » that sociology has largely contributed to make intelligible (Bertheleu 2007, Simon 2006, Winter 2004, Juteau 1999, Poutignat and Streiff-Fénart 1999) without being locked in the essentialist principles assigned to it by its detractors. We have also much to learn from postcolonial studies, whose main message is that decolonisation is not achieved. It is urgent to consider this message against the advocates of a « national identity » who want to make it more respectable because supposedly proud of its new « diversity » displayed in the ministries.

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