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Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities

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Proposal for the Panel **'Identity in the Visual' / *Treatment of minorities in media – visualizing the Other***

Title : Analysing the 'diversity' visual discourse built up to communicate about minorities inclusion in the French context

Abstract : This contribution aims to discuss the political uses of the 'diversity's rhetoric' in the French communication and media industry. It points out what kind of visual representation of "minorities" is given questioning which idea of otherness is conveyed in that specific visual discourse ? Minorities' struggle for visibility (Voirol Olivier) takes place in the media and communication scope because it is the most important providing source of visibility and a political hegemonic support. Visibility and visuality (Mirzoeff Nicholas) are highly at stake in the minorities' representation issue. I will investigate the way the 'diversity' discourse (Sénac Réjane, 2012) is textually formulated and visually designed and what it stands for in the French media and political sphere. Indeed, many publicized documents focus on 'promoting diversity' to say that nobody is discriminated and otherness respected. They are part of communication strategies and deliver a positive discourse about how enlightening it is to collect many different people with various identities. It argues that 'diversity' is accomplished whenever all the components of the population are represented or 'made more visible'. Plus, the social injunction : "visible minorities have to be made more visible", sounds as a paradox. That double bind allows visual representation to underline the most visible aspect : multicolour becomes a significant for 'multiracial society', in a way that is euphemistic and depoliticized. Then, the visual representation of 'diversity' strengthens a colourful idea of 'diversity', dealing with an emphatic representation of 'race'. It also seems to be considered as a communication tool to avoid the contentious political question of social injustice and hegemonic domination. So, questioning that visual material intending to represent 'diversity' is leading us to re-investigate the tension between the French republican model and the multicultural society designed by globalisation dynamics. We will argue that 'diversity' is a depoliticized visual concept.

Key words : Diversity, otherness, representation, visuality, communication

Introduction

The dynamic of minorities' inclusion is a political issue particularly at stake nowadays. European "refugies crisis" is making me more and more paying attention to the social mechanism that are creating otherness figures, in the media scope in particular. This current crisis is also making pretty much relevant a research focusing on what is said when talking about "diversity" as a wealthy social value. In France in particular, in order to speak about people who are considered belonging to a "minority" that can be "ethnic", geographic, religious, cultural, sexual, etc., we are more and more talking about "diversity", about people "coming from the diversity" and about "promoting diversity" in our society. In that draft paper I am going to try to put forward how "diversity's rhetoric" is used and visually designed in the French context. As an academic Ph.D candidate researching in the field of information and communication sciences in France, I will refer to the epistemological background of that discipline which is made of media sociology, semiotic, and encourage a political approach of public issues. My methodological approach is to focus on how signs are building meaningful and understandable discourse (and visual discourse in particular), in a semiotic way. It consists in observing which kind of framework is designed. So, this contribution aims to discuss the common uses of

the “diversity’s rhetoric” in the French communication and media context with the prism of the political inclusion of minorities issue.

For that purpose, I will try to point out what kind of visual representation of “minorities” is given that way, questioning which idea of otherness is conveyed in that specific visual discourse. In France as elsewhere, the minorities’ struggle for visibility (Voirol, 2005)ⁱ is taking place in the communication field because it is the most important providing source of visibility and because it is a political hegemonic (Tosel, 2005)ⁱⁱ support (or tool). So, I will argue that representation as a social and political issue is also to be questioned from a visual - and more generally media - point of view. Indeed, visual culture as a powerful process of designing identity (Mirzoeff, 1998) is highly at stake when studying minorities’ contemporary representation. So, I question: what kind of semiotic forms (signs) is made up in different media document in order to give a vision of what is “diversity”? Which kind of political discourse is provided by showing the collective into a multi-coloured representation of people or things (metaphorically representing people) ? Indeed, the minorities’ struggle for public visibility has to be interpreted from the existing visual forms that are trying to provide a better representation of them, into a generalized “diversity public rhetoric”. In that presentation, first of all, I will come back to the political emergence of the “diversity” concept in the French public sphere in order to underline the way it had reach such a hegemonic use. It is now mainly used in order not to talk about negative discrimination or to substitute itself to “affirmative action” considered in France as “positive discrimination”. In that first part I will demonstrate that the “diversity rhetoric” is a depoliticizing and standardizing procedure. Then I will focus on the visual modalities through which this concept is providing racialized, enchanted and euphemistic figures of otherness. Indeed, I will try to put forward what specific visuality is offered by these figures (which are putting forward a conspicuous, standardized and reduced image of minorities) is a standardized, euphoric and euphemistic way to set it up a collective positive identity, all of it in a stereotypical manner. Plus, I will argue that “diversity” rhetorical and significance system is leading us far from recovering the equality meaning of what is a “Republic”, that means a real fair political and social organisation of free citizens.

I) The emerging concept of “diversity” in the French context

1.1) “Diversity”: an emerging concept in France from the 2000’s

From 2004, in France, « diversity » has become a social value, circulating and manipulated in different communication fields (corporate communication, institutional communication, advertising, or political communication, etc.). It occurs on the public sphere in a moment in which France was facing a crispaton on social inequalities that are frustrating and discriminating immigrant descendants. In that context, emerged a new label “La Charte de la diversité” build up by organisations from civil society. “IMS Entreprendre pour la Cité”, “Face foundation” and other stakeholders determined that public official document (“la Charte de la diversité”) signed up at first time by over 500 French companies (included media companies) at the end of 2004. This emerging willingness to promote “diversity” appears event more relevant when suburbs riots invaded the media cover following Zayed and Bouna’s deaths (or “murders” because of the police, some said). These riots pointed out how much a large part of French society is not “integrated” and mostly excluded from employment and social insertion, particularly the descendants of immigrants from North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, the ones called in France the group of “Black and the Arabic people” (“les noirs et les arabes”) referring to immigrants descendants, from ancient French colonies. From that moment, the concept of “diversity” spreads around in several fields of social activity such as press (news making and media), political sphere, firms (corporate social responsibility), associations, etc. From 2005, it begins to be used to widely referring to immigrants and their descendants first. Nevertheless, when coming to the “label diversity” (“la Charte de la diversité” is a document signed up by many organisations), it seems to have been extended to take into account any type of “minority” recognised by different criteria (gender, sexual orientation, disability, geographical origin, race).

My specific scientific approach, which is semiotic (I am going to develop that point later on), drives me to focus on the concept of “diversity” not as it is properly referring to a “real” idea of what is human plurality but as a sign, as an organisational complex sign designed to talk about differences (in a politically correct manner). I am using coma to employ the word “diversity” in order to show that we are taking some distance from it. The socio-political value of the concept of “diversity” lies in the fact that it is sustaining an ideological purpose, purpose to be deconstructed. “Promoting diversity” concerns, at first step, a fight against discriminations and specifically racial discriminations. Then, it extends its meaning to signify any type of discrimination, which means that it finishes including many different social problematics within the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR). That extension of “diversity” meaning scope seems to be disconcerting. That is why I decided to take it into account as a discursive object full of ethical rhetorical potential.

My research problem can be formulated from two main questions which are: How mediatizing “diversity” practices are a politically correct way to visualize the other, and to give an irenic view on otherness ? How visual representation is trying to make people identify themselves to these figures ? Globally, I am trying to point out the conditions enabling to take into account “diversity” as a communicational problem. That double question is coming from my critical approach of communication forms produced in order to make visible the population supposed to be belonging to the “diversity”. This way, I would like to restore the political problem that governs its emerging.

1.2) A research project that analyses “diversity” from its representation in communication industry

1.2.1 Questioning “diversity”’s representation from information and communication sciences paradigm

My way of looking to “diversity” is situated at the crossroads of the general theoretical approach of information and communication sciences (the way it is developed in France) and a specific semiotic approach of representation productions. So, I am observing “diversity” as a socio-symbolic artefact and I am trying to see how it has been given the status of social phenomena, reality or cause to be promoted and how it has been charged of political and ethical values. The scientific paradigm of complexityⁱⁱⁱ (Morin, 1990) from which I am working in information and communication sciences drives me to consider “diversity” as the result of much different mediation (social, political, ethical, visual, symbolic, etc.). So, I am investigating social discourses which allow it to exist and offer it certain durability, specifically in organisational discourses. I argue that taking into account the visual representation of “diversity” in the French communication industry is allowing me to identify which social imagery is linked to that concept and conveyed by it. I am based on the notion that “diversity” is, in itself, belonging to axiological neutrality. I decided to pay attention to its social enunciation and formulation modalities that are making it politically relevant in order to demonstrate how this formula^{iv} (Krieg-Planque, 2010), fulfilled of significance, has become a discourse value. So, I argue that it is only when using it in social discourses that “diversity” can be explored as conveying values. That is why I decided to examine from a semiotic point of view contemporary visual objects such as images of “diversity” produced by French communication industry.

Thus, I am specifically interested in the different ways “diversity” is depicted and figured, that means shaped to become the limelight of that documents in order to make it visible and readable, in other words in order to make it *re-presented*. In my semiotic approach of « representation », social psychology is evicted in order to focus on another way to think what is at stake in representation forms. For example, we will refer to the French philosopher Louis Marin’s work on the concept of representation. He said that “representation” have a double meaning. Firstly, it is a way to be present instead of the absent, it has a substitutive and vicarious meaning. Secondly, to represent is to make another time present. So representation has also a redundant and intensified meaning rooted in the “re” of “representation”. Louis Marin describes that intensification of the presence by representation as what is instituting the one who watch as a watching participant, as an active viewer. “*The strength of the image is here (...) energy of self-introduction: make recognizable the death in the demonstration, evidence (energy) of the image, it is showing oneself representing the death, it constitutes the subject looking as an effect of the act of presentation, set it up exactly as a pure watching activity*” (Marin, 1989, p.12)^v.

Louis Marin also proposes to consider representation from two fundamental dimensions : “*One among the operating model built to explore the functioning of modern representation - whether language or Visual - is the one who proposed consideration of the double dimension of his device: dimension "transitive" or transparent statement, any representation represents something. "reflexive" dimension or formulating opacity, any representation is presented as representing something.*”(Marin, 1989)^{vi}. Based on this assumption, the value of this approach is to show how some images, some photographs in particular, represent the human figure and present themselves as representing "diversity". I would like to underline not only the terms according to which the human figure is given to see in the studied images, but also how these images present themselves as “effects” of representation : “*Powers of the image between the possibilities of its appearance and the effects of its manifestation? Question theoretically this interval and the movements that traverse it in history and cultures, opportunities for appearance of the image hold very precisely on the conditions of visibility [...], than of his vision.*” (Marin, 1989)^{vii}. The double meaning and the double mode of operation that Louis Marin assigns to the representation, allow me to think different mediations of the idea of “diversity” from documents considered together. Indeed, the images reinvest and convey the cultural and social imaginary through a special process of figuration. Documents and images examined are considered both “publicised” and “publicising” objects. Then it is possible to analyse these objects within all their anthropological, social, technical and symbolic dimensions according to a strict communicational look.

I.2.2 Media representation and political issues: how « diversity » is used as a rhetorical tool through different public discourses

My corpus is made of many different documents that I qualified as “media” (Rueda, 2010)^{viii} because they are, even in a restricted area, making public, talking about and publicising “diversity” issues, whether it is or not properly belonging to what is usually called “the media scope”. As my field of research is information and communication sciences, I am interested in having access to printed documentary archives and online document from any organisation talking about “diversity” in order to be able to point out similarities and divergences. For that symposium, I am presenting only a part of the corpus I have built for my Ph. D research: on the one hand I will present online documents produced by different institutional organisations such as the website of the “diversity” label, websites of recruitment agencies specializing in “diversity” service delivery (for example “Mosaïk RH”). On the other hand, I will analyse some advertisement for professional high education fairs in France and pre-recruitment advertising addressed to future students by some high education establishments. My choice to present today these documents is justified by the fact they are all publicising the concept of “diversity” accompanying it with visual discourse, with visual figures encapsulated in material documents. I had chosen to look at all these documents in order to understand how “diversity” mythology is built up in French society. I am choosing these distinguished fields in order to point out how circulating social imaginaries of “diversity” through French visual culture.

For this purpose, I firstly mobilize various works in human and social sciences, which focused on the issue of “diversity” in organization and in the social sphere in general. For example, Réjane Sénac’s work in political sciences deconstruct the socio-political theme of “diversity” as well as some ideological presuppositions which surround it and make out its depoliticizing character in regards to the problem of discrimination. Indeed, according to Réjane Sénac, the contemporary French uses of “diversity” rely on a depoliticizing dynamic because they reject discrimination out of the proper political conflictual space in operating as a neutralization of its dystopic dimension (Sénac, 2010). Furthermore, Milena Doychteva shows that “promoting diversity” in organization is mainly concerning elaboration of communication documents and labelling procedures (in particular in order to make signed up the “Charte de la diversité” by an increasing number of entities). Welcomed with open arms into communication strategies, the theme of “diversity” seems to have been an especially instrumental opportunity for organizations. Analysing how the “diversity’s areas of competence” were set up in different organizations helps Milena Doychteva to highlight the highly communicative orientation that has taken the task of “diversity management” in organization. Her work also underlines the instrumental character use of the “diversity” rhetoric in Human resources field, while taking a heuristic critical distance for analysis (Doychteva, 2010)^{ix}.

Moreover, some work in management sciences emphasize the exploited dimension of “diversity” by pointing out the levers of legitimation and good reputation for the organization but cannot really grasp what is causing problem in that term. Other works in management sciences are focusing on operational solutions that could be found in order to solve problems of “diversity” management in organizations. Their purpose lies in a quest for efficiency and a perspective of profitability. Many investigation reports on that topic mention the “benefits” offered by the “diversity”, without ever specifying what this theme (used as a potpourri) covers very concretely like many political issues. Indeed, no critical distance is considered: on the term or what it conveys as ideological presuppositions on what would be the “differences”. We are also perfectly blind to the hegemonic dimension from which the theme “diversity” was built and because of which it makes sense contrasting to the norm of the white man, young, valid, heterosexual, without religion. Efficiency objectives and the idea that “differences” can increase performance or be profitable is a part the managerial instrumentation of “diversity” rhetoric. It is never questioned. Exploitation is also palpable at the level of the common detour by requalifying (strictly political) issues of discrimination in issues of “intercultural management” (which is rather special modalities of interaction in a situation). Taking for granted the idea that the notion of ‘diversity’ convene interpersonal differentiation and a well-targeted special dissimilarities (and therefore does not refer to everyone but only to individuals potentially enable to be stigmatized or discriminated). Thus, management sciences categorize widely perceptible “differences” at the intersubjective level in groups “differences” specific and identifiable (skin color, sexual orientation, religion geographical origin, gender, age, etc.).

In their document of communication organizations recover the idea of “promotion of diversity” both to signify their attempt to “fight against discrimination” and their internal processes of “intercultural management” in a common confusion between what is politically at stake and what can be done by the management on a daily basis. However, this ordinary reduction of social complexity is due to misappropriating concepts and issues it is conveying. In the organizations perspective, it seems that my analytical and critical perspective it is just not possible to be heard. That is why it might be necessary to take a step back towards the managerial approaches (or towards marketing ones) in order to take into account their employment and exploitation of the idea of “diversity” and its development as a collective fantasy, including speeches with the purpose of the order of performance. It might also be interesting to decipher how organizations try to promote “diversity” as the same time they are promoting themselves as socially responsible entities. That is also what Marie-Cecile Naves put forward relevantly in her article titled “*How the political and advertising marketing built the mythology of diversity*” and which we can extend the approach to the study of all

communications of organization on this topic. In the critical perspective that is ours, the semiotic approach is therefore quite heuristic to think what social ideologies are forms of representation and in return what representations reveal standards in place. Indeed, in order to analyse the effects of these representations, we need to pay attention to forms and formats through which the communication on “diversity” is in organization. To do this, it seems interesting to mobilize Jean-Jacques Boutaud approach on the meeting in semiotics and communication of organizations. Indeed, he says: “*we hesitate to make this clear: any organization is a universe of signs and meaning.*” *No wonder, so, to design logical and therefore relationships epistemological between semiotics and organization inside of SIC and communication*”. It is this attentive observation of the signs that I am try to develop in my semio-political approach of “diversity” visual frameworks.

II) How “diversity” visualizes the “Other”?

II.1) A representational issue : how “diversity” is racializing the issue of visualizing a plural / multi-cultural society in the French context ?

II.1.1 Observing the signs : the paradox of stereotyped communicational forms made up in order to fight against stereotypes

The Organization as it produces sense once that it communicates on itself, and particularly on its activities in the field of social and environmental responsibility, is an interesting source of speech to consider and to analyse. Full of ideologies and of its own interests, each organization will have its original way to produce speeches while registering and appropriating the existing codes in order to match with audience’s aspirations and to target it in its own field of expertise and action. In addition, as pointed out by Jean-Jacques Boutaud, semiotics can grab the communication of organizations as a heuristic purpose to think the movement of ideas and ideologies in relation to formulating forms and formats in which they are framed. From my scientific perspective, it is relevant to propose a reading of visuals encapsulated in media and communicational objects dealing with “diversity”. So, using the tools of semiotics, I had taken into account and analysed all the visuals forms that were chosen to accompany and illustrate the topic in the elected discourse in my corpus. I identify a number of recurrences of visual forms that were involved to illustrate the theme of “diversity” which we here report about in the French context but it can be found the same sort elsewhere. It is the “who's who” format (or mosaic portraits), linked with various more or less figurative multi-coloured forms. Overall, I identified four recurrent semiotic forms in visual discourses that go with the theme of “diversity”. These forms are the group portrait, portraits mosaic (or the Yearbook), the face formed by a patchwork or a puzzle of shades, and finally representations more metaphorical as example (silhouettes or stylized snowmen) multi-coloured anthropomorphic elements, colours pencils, balls of colour, of swatches, etc. In all cases, which is used as meaningful in the image is never the person in its singularity or individuality, but rather a specific figure to represent a type category based on one or another criteria such as phenotype, age, sex, disability, etc. In addition, the visual juxtaposition of several colourful body or any other forms does not really promote the idea of “being together at work” nor the complexity of social relations that can exist, but rather it helps stereotype categories to be presupposed in a “differences” flaunting process relying on colour visualization. This is giving as main referent to talk about “diversity” the plurality of body colours (implicitly or explicitly). And this is making physical attributes the support of specific and major differences between human being.

Taking into account otherness is therefore, in these discourses, manifested by a design and a conception of the Other not only as “different” but as specifically “different” because being coloured. This way of presenting the “diversity” as multi-coloured is partly related to communication constraints linked to a production of images that need to be visually attractive and easily interpreted by the reader. Coloured bodies or coloured objects as main figures in representing “diversity” in these media allow underlining that “diversity” visual discourse is a design of physically visible “differences” that operates as a stereotypical aggregator that can be named a sort of “squared stereotype”. It seems to me that it is this process of figuration that is to be analysed. Thus, from theoretical paradigms in information and communication sciences, a critique of the essentialisation of the figures operating in these documents can be proposed. Indeed, the bodies chosen to be placed in the pages of the documents are based on phenotypic characteristics in order to serve as a model or as a copy of a “different body” meant as representing properly “otherness”. This process can be called of “racializing” insofar as it relies on spontaneous qualification that will produce in the mind of the reader the amalgam between certain phenotypic traits (including body colour), “difference” and “otherness”. This analysis of media communication forms is questioning them on their visual dimension in order to put forward which conceptions of “diversity” and “otherness” are conveyed by these discourses. To “promote diversity”, they operate within a framework of thinking that includes the usual categorizations reducing the complexity of the social types of

differences. Communications are based on specific physical features to make signs of “difference” clear enough and, in doing so, produce a second stereotype aiming to mean that the “group is diversified”. The produced representations are then duplicated and standardized. The recurrent multi-coloured forms can be qualified as “meme” of “diversity” such as the semiotic fixed visual schemes circulating in the internet. Thus, forms and figures circulating in these images are implicitly producing an amalgam between two levels of interpretation about what should be considered “diversity”. On the one hand “diversity” is seen as a collection of a variety of “differences” (with implications as a constitution of the referent from which the specifics or the differences existing between people become “differences”) and on the other hand, “diversity” is staging as a consortium of otherness essentialized (focusing on the body element, from which the visual, and specifically figurative, othering process works). At the same time, the schemes employed are erasing the specificities of all the bodies by designed them the same way: the clothing and the physical attitudes are very conventional. When representations are more metaphoric the figured shapes are very bright and striking coloured. They are stereotypically featured, made up to figurate a sort of “well-being at work” that refers to a professional sphere in which social role are also stereotyped, prescriptive and standardized. All these visual phenomena are framing “diversity” as an aesthetic issue.

This “diversity” rhetoric, seen as a process of representation of otherness in organizations and, widely, in society, seems to me irrelevant (even if I am aware that in communication objects and figures, it is not easy not to use essentialized and standardized characters). Moreover, the willingness to really take into account otherness (the way Lévinas was talking about it) seems here just a kind of moral justification supporting any cosmetic dimension of communication events and documents. The “Other” comes to be designed, reductively, as “another body” as well as substantially “different” from the implicit standard which remains the hegemonic norm in the collective unconscious. Now, let's have look at what, at the heart of this “diversity” rhetoric, is at stake regarding the racializing visual problematic. For me, “race” as a social category and as a visual issue has to be caught up and question from a semio-political point of view.

II.1.2 Seeing through Race from “difference” to “otherness”: how to avoid the trap of amalgams

“The idea that there were different human types gradually became codified as distinct races, although there was never a consensus as to how race could be defined. At different period, race theorists looked to the skull, the brain, art, and now the gene to find visible and permanent mark of race. Often, despite grandiose denials that this was the case, only skin colour could be found to serve as an absurdly imprecise means of categorizing people” (Mirzoeff, 1998, p. 284.)^x.

The discourses I am focusing on argue that “diversity” is accomplished whenever all the components of the population are represented or “made more visible”, when all the “visible minorities” are made visible entering the scope of media exposure. The accompanying pictures represent groups (within which there are a lot of coloured people or just colours) in a very enchanting way. Plus, the social injunction: “visible minorities have to be made more visible”, sounds as a paradox. That double bind allows visual representation to underline the most visible aspect: multicolour becomes a significant for “multiracial society”, in a way that is euphemistic and depoliticized. Then, the visual representation of ‘diversity’ strengthens a colourful idea of “diversity”, dealing with an emphatic representation of “race”. It also seems to be very mediagenic (Marion, 1997)^{xi} and can be considered as a communication tool to avoid the contentious political question of social injustice and hegemonic domination. So, questioning that visual material intending to represent ‘diversity’ is leading us to re-investigate the tension between the French republican model and the multicultural society designed by globalisation dynamics. So, I argue that “diversity” is a depoliticized visual concept in the French context. First, when it is visually designed and exposed this concept is racializing figures. He or she, as they are figured in a very colourful “diversity” mosaic is from the outset supposed belonging to another culture, immediately supposed to be “different”, because of their skin colour. They are turned into picture in order to represent the “minorities” they are supposed to belong to, as a specimen of one or another. That sort of amalgam process is widespread. “Race” seems to be the “essential” anchor point to represent “otherness” in an easy interpretable manner. Trying to avoid amalgams and stereotypes, “diversity” is recreating new forms of depicting society which are also based and stabilized social imaginary and involving new stereotypes. Thus, “diversity” is trying to make the viewer seeing a collection of physical differences which are specifically coloured to mean racial, but enough standardized in a way that “race” is not anymore relevant as an otherness deeply rooted figures. It is trying seeing through race by racializing figures. That is why I am now questioning: Is multi-coloured representation the basic model to put forward that society is multiracial and therefore, multi-cultural ? When saying multi-racial, are we supposing that “races” exist as specific cultural entities and that a skin colour is able to relate to a specific culture? It is still very problematic. In that context what does “represent minorities” means? Does that mean putting some colours in images and pictures produced by communication and media industry? As it is not something particularly visible, might “minorities’ identities” be visualized?

II.2) Identity in the visual: what is at stake ?

II.2.1 Identity is not identification

In parallel of those previous remarks, I would like to point out that the major problem I noticed is that it seems never compulsory for the “white norm” to think itself as a norm, even less as the dominant one. “Diversity” rhetoric is not nor even recognizing, in one way or another, that there is a white privilege allowing people not to be conscious of their “race”. It is just saying “many colours are great”. And so, even if the colours pictured here are celebrating “race” as a synonym of “culture” which is very troublesome. Whiteness is always non-racially involved in categorization: it is the referent. Moreover, “diversity” representation is sometimes putting figures of whiteness as any other figures of the group in order not to call the attention on the fact that it is a dominant category. Indeed, when thought specifically in a social analysis, whiteness is the “concept underlying racism, colonization, and cultural imperialism” (bell hooks, 1998)^{xii}. When representing “minorities issues” as a beautiful and colourful “diversity” potpourri what is (re-)created and conveyed as significant operators? At first, we can interpret that it is representing the perfect “integration” or “assimilation” of “minorities” as the French republican model prescribes it. This model seems to be pretty well illustrated in these visual showing all the “people of colour” selected respecting the dressing, clothing and facing running standard codes. Plus, they are all young, smiling and beautiful. Nevertheless it rings hollow. Is that kind of representation are having an impact on renewing visual culture and on remodelling a social reality ? They might mock these figures because they cannot identify themselves to these very regulated and policed figures of “visible minorities”. Social reality as it is seen and faced by underprivileged young people (who are frequently but not only immigrants descendants) in France is far from these stereotypes and clichés elaborated by the elite through these figures. Indeed, their singular complex identities are never taken into account and are reduced by the prism of the “integration” model that is innervating the French “diversity” rhetoric. At least, they might just catch the fact that an effort were realised, even in a stereotypical way, to depict some people of colour in a communication industry in which it is, until recently, very uncommon to see people of colour. Nevertheless, the dialectic between belonging to “visible minorities” and feeling invisible in the media scope is a thematic I often reinvestigate in order to put forward that the problem lies in the way communication industry is making people visible, not only the fact there are made visible or not.

II.2.2) Diversity as a tool to catch thin identities

Are these representations of “diversity” making possible identification for people ? Or at least can they operate as reference to thin identities? I argue that identification is not identity insofar as the social mechanisms on which they are operating are not the same. Identification is a superficial social process when identities are deeply rooted and linked to the building up of each one singularity, history, personality, cultures and personal trajectory. Pap N’Diaye argues that for black people specifically (but this analysis can be extended to many others) there are a *thick* identity and a *thin* identity. The thick identity refers to all the common references, the linguistic, cultural and social background of a specific human group while the *thin* identity : “delimits a group that doesn't have in common more than an experience of prescribed identity, Black on for example which has been historically associated with suffered domination experiences, [...]. This notion of *thin* identity seems relevant to characterize Black people in their lowest common denominator: the fact to be considered as Black, with a set of stereotypes attached to them.” (N’Diaye, 2010)^{xiii}.

In the case of the “diversity” visuals I am studying, I think that identification might be playing at the very superficial level, with the recognition of *thin* identities visually designed to be recognised as “showing people of color”. So, “diversity” is acting as a standardized representation of “well integrated” minorities, within an assimilationist tendency promoted by the French republican model, safeguarding a positive image not talking about discrimination and specifically not talking about racist ones. In these pieces of representation, “race” is being the main support of intellection of the “diversity” idea, visually speaking. Visual approach of “diversity” allows me to considered representational issue as political ones. I can say that it not innocent to visualize diversity in a multi-coloured principal pattern or framework. So, on the one hand I can rehabilitate “diversity” as being a first step effort to depict minorities and to show them in a valorized way. On the other hand I can say it is not enough.

Conclusion

After somehow have made up the situational analysis around the communicational paradox that is “diversity” in France by observing the ways it is publicized, I pointed out to the need to criticize the essentialization of figures. I

highlighted how the “exposed body” through these documents are the result of a phenotypic characteristic emphasized in order to be able to use these bodies for seeing them as model “other bodies”. I have also identified the effect of main direction of this visually attractive practice for communication: making of these figures racialized copies of each of the groups considered to be “other”, and this, in a failure to take into account the irreducibility of the singular person to any representation essentialized. I have therefore shown that the rhetoric of “diversity” when it is present in the documents of communication of these organizations, has not truly for project to take into account otherness or singularity of its personnel (it is not aiming to), but it activates (perhaps despite itself) a process of othering that reduced the figures chosen to stereotyped categories according to a fairly net paradox with its objectives of departure (and particularly fight against stereotypes and so on discrimination). We also noticed the possible confusion between two different interpretation levels of “diversity” : firstly as an idea of various human “differences” (source of wealth and performance) and, secondly, in parallel, an idea of a consortium of international otherness (potentially avoiding the problem of representing the national self as diverse and international/intercultural problematic of management).

Thus, between euphoria (manifested by very emphatic speeches on the subject of 'diversity') and euphemism (about actual discrimination), we were able to observe in some speech of 'diversity', to draw hollow the proposal of a rather utopian worldview (in which the ideological bedrock of neoliberal capitalism as a social system is at no time questioned) , to which is attached a design that makes the 'diversity' the representative of each of the "other groups", either the representative of essentialized otherness (in the plural), i.e., exoticising identity. In addition, the process of publicizing the notion students to the rank of value driven organization which, in turn, is valued by this approach (with all that this entails as issues in terms of public image of the organization). Pendulum swing which made comeback on the organization to glorify the exemplarity and qualities ethical under policies of 'diversity' valued as such, seems to favour some kind of cross-promotion of “diversity” by the organization and the organization by his rhetoric of the “diversity”. It is also doubling in value the organization which speaks on two levels of different speech: both at an institutional level compared to the ethical values and on the more commercial plan for the arguments of “performance” and “business”.

Finally what we wanted to show here, it's how much can be controversial and fragile the relationship between “diversity” figures and figures of otherness (which is concretely not expressible) through questioning that can deploy in science of information and communication on the images, the silhouettes, faces. Not abandoning the sirens of "diversity" this demonstration of an otherness atrophied by its fragmentation in essentialized groups, we want to keep all the philosophical contribution of Emmanuel Levinas to think the other simply as another person, another singularity, as another individual and anything else. Indeed, the question of the face as the threshold of the irreducibility of the singularity of each other in Levinas, continues to wonder about representational modalities that should be adopted to say and above all truly take into account the variety of socio-economic profiles that inhabit our societies. I have no recommendation to make on this point, because there isn't the object of research in information and communication science that must, (and it's already very difficult) to seek to understand the mechanisms by which operates the social significance. So, do we need maybe humbly try to reposition the cursor by reinvesting the figure of another, either at the level of its essentializing communication, but in a true egalitarian relationship at all concrete everyone, in order to propose a path that leads to the recognition of the individual specificities but also a real concern for equality between individuals; thinking that our contemporary capitalist systems seem to have completely evacuated. So, my last question will be : How could we rethink philosophically “otherness” while considering race effects on social relationship ?

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ⁱⁱ Tosel A. 2005. « La presse comme appareil d'hégémonie selon Gramsci ». *Quaderni* n° 57 : « Gramsci, les médias et la culture ». pp. 55-71.

ⁱⁱⁱ Morin E. 2014. *Introduction à la pensée complexe*. Paris Seuil.

^{iv} Krieg-Planque A. 2010. « La formule “développement durable” : un opérateur de neutralisation de la conflictualité », *Langage et société* (n° 134), p. 5-29.

^v Marin L. 1989. *Opacité de la peinture. Essais sur la représentation au Quattrocento*. Paris, Editions Usher. p.12.

^{vi} Op.cit. p.73.

^{vii} Op.cit.

^{viii} Rueda A. 2010. « Des médias aux médiations : quelles médiations, quels objets, quels enjeux », *Les Enjeux de l'information et de la communication (Dossier 2010)*, p. 88-103.

^{ix} Doytcheva M. 2009. « Réinterprétations et usages sélectifs de la diversité dans les politiques des entreprises », *Raisons politiques* (n° 35), p. 107-123.

^x Mirzoeff N. 1998, *The visual culture reader*, London, Routledge.

^{xi} Marion Ph. 1997, « Narratologie médiatique et médiagénie des récits ». *Recherches en communication* (n° 7), Louvain-la-Neuve.

^{xii} Bell hooks. 1998. “Representing whiteness, Seeing Wings of Desire” in Mirzoeff N.1998. *The visual culture reader*. London, Routledge.

^{xiii} N°Diaye Pap. 2011, *La condition noire, Essai sur une minorité française*. Paris, Folio actuel.