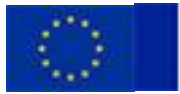




Diversity in Europe

– *In varietate Concordia* (CE Bruxelles, 2000)



issue 11 – Diversity in the media

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*« These strangers in a foreign World
Protection asked of me-
Befriend them, lest yourself in Heaven
Be found a refugee »*

*« Ces Etrangères, en Monde inconnu
Asile m'ont demandé
Accueille-les, car Toi-même au Ciel
Pourrait être une Réfugiée »*

Emily Dickinson (Quatrains II-2, 1864-65, Amherst, Massachusetts, Etats-Unis)
traduction en français de Claire Malroux (NRF, Poésie/Gallimard, Paris, 2000)

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Diversity in the medias

Since November 2018, the Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (Iriv) has published a newsletter entitled “Diversity in Europe” that addresses the issue of diversity. It is expressed in the motto chosen since 2000 by the European Union *In varietate Concordia* which anticipated the largest enlargement of the European Union from 15 to 25 members in 2004.

The first issue (November 2018) was dedicated to the school with Rotterdam (Netherlands) whose inhabitants with foreign origins represent more than 70% of the total population, a challenge and an opportunity to test new approaches. Paris also has in its classrooms, students with very diverse profiles.

The second issue (March 2019) addressed religious and cultural diversity, and the Jewish community with a comparison between Paris and Thessaloniki, cities sharing a tragic history during the Second World War.

The third issue (November 2019) addressed the issue of interreligious dialogue with articles on Switzerland and France. In secular countries, religious freedom is the right not to believe and not to belong to any religion.

The fourth issue (March 2020) was dedicated to education and interfaith dialogue in multicultural countries in the United States and Europe with the example of Sarajevo, a model of peaceful existence between religious communities before the Balkan war (1991-1995).

The fifth issue (November 2020) addressed diversity in the Mediterranean with its eastern part, a crossroads between Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The strategies are contradictory, and the role of the European Union is changing

The sixth issue (March 2021) evoked artistic diversity and intercultural education in Mexico with the great richness of its crafts and in Europe with intercultural dialogue and intercultural education.

The seventh issue (November 2021) illustrated Francophone diversity, at the heart of the Organisation of Francophonie (OIF) which has many facets, including literary, with Goncourt prizes awarded to Francophone authors.

The eighth issue (March 2022) was devoted to Ukraine at war by suggesting a reflection on the diversity of learning, competence and analysis of unpleasant and conflicting experiences to move things forward.

The ninth issue (November 2022) addressed diplomatic diversity- war is always the expression of a failure. What is the role of La Francophonie and Intelligence in moving from war to a ceasefire, in the absence of real peace?

The tenth issue (March 2023) was dedicated to the diversity of the South - cooperation between countries of the “global South”; reminding of the universal character of the fight for democracy (Aimé Césaire).

The eleventh issue (November 2023) is devoted to the diversity and plurality of the media, a democratic principle severely tested by the rise of authoritarian regimes and extremism of all kinds in the world.

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Diversity in the media - media under influences

Pluralism of information is one of the founding principles of democracy with the plurality of political parties. The more numerous and diverse the media, with the expression of different opinions, the more democratic society is. All opinions can be expressed under three conditions- that the information is not false («fake news»), that it is not defamatory or directed (private information disclosed without the consent of the persons concerned to tarnish their reputation) and that they do not constitute offences (discriminatory, racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, homophobic remarks, etc.). The principles that underpin the European Union are respect for diversity, universalism, human rights, equal opportunities... Diversity and freedom of expression do not have the same meaning in Europe, which has a highly developed anti-discrimination regulatory and legal basis (unique in the world) and in the United States where the openly discriminatory expression of certain extremist groups (supremacists in particular) is unleashed on social networks. In Europe, to combat online hatred, the European Commission adopted on 25 August 2023 a directive providing that what is illegal offline is illegal online with penalties provided for platforms (1).

Traditional media (print and audiovisual) are challenged by all new media accessible on the Internet and especially social media which have experienced an unprecedented boom at the beginning of the 21st century. They have allowed access to a massive amount of information, and often knowledge, by a considerable number of human beings equipped with a computer or smartphone to be informed. The problem is the reliability of the information and its true open access. GAFAM algorithms (Google, Apple, Meta, Amazon and Microsoft) but also X (ex-Tweeter) or Instagram or Tik Tok guide the information that the Internet user can access, based on a profile developed from his research (tastes, interests, etc.). The «freedom» invoked by the network X acquired by the multimillionaire Elon Musk, poses problem with the spread of hate speech, calling for crime and insurrection (2). This «freedom» of expression led to the worst in the United States with the attempted coup fomented by the supremacist supporters of Donald Trump in the Capitol in January 2021. Their mobilization took place through social networks. The Qanon conspiracy network that relays the worst conspiracy theories since 2017 has also experienced incredible development on social networks.

The «classical» media have found a new social and democratic utility by trying to dismantle false information and all conspiracy theories thanks to teams of journalists in the editorial offices to verify the information relayed (images, statements, published articles, etc.) that attempt to establish the origin of the sources. They are an essential link in the hybrid war in which democratic countries are engaged to defend themselves from the incessant attacks of authoritarian regimes and extremist movements that want to manipulate national public opinion either by traumatizing them by unsustainable images - videos relayed by the Russian private militia Wagner since its first abuses in Syria in 2013, or those broadcast by the Hamas terrorist movement against Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023; either by setting up implausible scenarios from scratch - mass graves in Africa presented by the Wagner militia in 2022 as abuses by the French army in Mali; Beirut port explosion in 2020 attributed to external actors while it was caused by the Lebanese Hezbollah movement that stored highly explosive materials without any precaution. In all good faith, many people think they have been well informed, by reliable sources.

A difference must also be made between news and opinion media (3). The former are characterized by the most objective presentation of the facts with investigative work and information intersected by different sources. Work demanding and which takes time, excellence is rewarded by awards given to journalists who have fulfilled their mission rigorously, often at the risk of their lives in case of conflict. The Bayeux Prize for War Correspondents has been awarded annually for 30 years in France (4). The Pulitzer Prize has been awarded by the Columbia University of New York in the United States since 1917 to journalists who have done outstanding work(5). The Albert Londres prize, created in 1932, rewards the best French-speaking «great reporters» every year (6). These prestigious awards demonstrate the importance of the role of journalists in a democracy. They are the watchdogs and tireless witnesses of the hottest news, so that their fellow citizens can understand the turbulence of the world.

On the other hand, the opinion media do not have the same requirement and can turn into formidable instruments of influence in interested hands. The example of Rupert Murdoch (7), an Australian tycoon, has often been cited with media outlets that do not glorify journalism. The Fox News channel in the United States is a voice for the most reactionary theses ; the former British tabloid News of the World disappeared in 2011 after a scandal that revealed the shameful ways used by their reporters to smear personalities. In France, the influence of French tycoon Vincent Bolloré (8) is worrying. The media acquired by his group are not examples of ethics or journalistic models- editorial work put in step at Canal + (deprogrammed documentary), Itélé in 2015 (now CNews), then at Radio Europe 1 in 2022 and finally at the weekly newspaper «Journal du Dimanche» since 2023. These media have lost an audience (audience and readership) accustomed to quality information and not to reactionary, often inflammatory, positions

Glimmers of hope appeared in France in 2023: some media outlets were created, others older saw their financial independence consecrated, thanks to businessmen respectful of the independence of journalists and concerned about an enlightened freedom of expression. The weekly «*La Tribune du Dimanche*» was launched in October 2023 thanks to the financial support of the Franco-Lebanese businessman Rodolphe Saadé. The daily newspaper «*Le Monde*», saw its independence acquired thanks to an endowment funded by businessmen Xavier Niel and Mathieu Pigasse in September 2023

The best definition of journalism was given by the famous French reporter Albert Londres (1884-1932): «*Our job is not to please, nor to do harm, it is to carry the pen in the wound*».

- (1) European Digital Services Regulation- <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/285115-dsa-le-reglement-sur-les-services-numeriques-ou-digital-services-act> ; first legal process launched against Elon Musk and his platform X after spreading fake news during the attack of the Hamas against Israel (7th of October 2023)
- (2) upon the acquisition of Twitter, E. Musk suspended the accounts of journalists critical of his personality or his companies
- (3) the crimes of opinion exist elsewhere only in dictatorships such as Russia or China where opponents are imprisoned under false pretences
- (4) Bayeux prize - <https://www.prixbayeux.org/>
- (5) Pulitzer prize - <https://www.pulitzer.org/> ; the New York Times has a large number of award-winning journalists on its editorial team
- (6) Albert Londres prize - <https://prix-albert-londres.scam.fr/>
- (7) documentaries broadcast on Arte in March & April 2022 to denounce the Murdoch group's methods - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-x0BSripWU>
- (8) documentary produced by Reporters Without Borders in October 2021 on the methods used by Vincent Bolloré- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NiLrN7QBnDE>

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