

MANAGING DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

FROM RESISTANCE TO RECOGNITION BY COMPANIES

Evalde Mutabazi, Philippe Pierre and Philip Scheiner

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I STATEMENT OF AIMS

This book contributes to the debate on diversity and equal opportunity policies, drawing on the authors' knowledge of human resource management in French multinational corporations and research work on cross-cultural management at premier French business schools.

The authors argue that their secular country, France, by separating public and private spheres, supposedly guarantees equal opportunity, but that 'liberty, equality and fraternity' has had little effect in drawing France's minorities into management.

This is because moving from non-discrimination to "inclusive management" requires a profound evolution in the way firms view minorities. Drawing on sociology, management theory, psychology and HR experience, they argue that an inclusive management

style means understanding how the other views his difference, how he educates others to this difference and learns in turn about theirs. They acknowledge that learning from and about the other is demanding, but is the only way today to manage diversity and go beyond statistical measures of diversity, which they are against. Liberty, equality and fraternity only have meaning if the values of each community are voiced, understood, accommodated and respected in the workplace. This recognition must be at the centre of motivational policies in corporations which are more and more global and diverse, and where the need to understand stakeholders is important.

The increasing presence of 'diversity' in the media and corporate social responsibility programmes is only the first stage in the application of a 'humanist' approach of recognition, which has many similarities with the African circulatory management model and South African "Ubuntu" management practice. Drawing on studies of African firms, the book examines the misunderstandings between local employees and western expatriate managers in multicultural teams. The book derives from its authors' personal and professional experiences of diversity (as immigrants,

professors, expatriates in a firm, consultants and human resource directors) and from a research programme developed over the last 15 years in firms confronted to diversity outside France.

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FOREWORD

The word 'diversity' has met with increasing success in the media, political speeches and scientific gatherings such as training seminars. Companies have witnessed the birth and the institutionalisation of *diversity management policies which aim on the one hand to avoid negative discrimination at all the different stages of recruitment in the company, and to undertake corrective action, so-called 'positive', in favour of groups considered to be insufficiently represented and recognised by the firm*¹. Is this simply a new fashion from across the Atlantic, or an attempt to respond to a profound change in the mindset of French firms, and, more generally, in our society, which has become 'pluri-cultural' without even knowing it?

Firms and the French Republic in the era of cultural identities

Plagued by "the passion for equality" and new cultural identities, by the right of all social groups (ethnic, age, disability, sexual or sexual orientation) to fully participate in the culture of our society, these new diversity policies are perhaps in reality inviting us to define a new sociology of the firm. They promise a place to those who feel discriminated against, rejected or foreign in the workplace. But what exactly do we mean by the term *diversity* in France? What is at stake - for those who work, would like to work, firms and society as

¹ ROBERT-DEMONTROND P., JOYEAU A. and THIEL D., "La diversité comme champ de controverses: socio-anthropologie du jugement des acteurs sur l'encastrement économique d'une mesure éthique", *Troisièmes rencontres internationales de la diversité*, Corte, 2007.

a whole – in the promotion of positive discrimination, the potential application of quotas.....under cover of diversity management?

The French government has clearly expressed its wish today to respond to the appeal for new cultural identities and even for 'minority citizenship' which concerns the rights to enter another society, remain there and be granted its rights and duties². The crisis which our country is experiencing can therefore be explained less by inequalities in terms of social class (conferring a common system of values, beliefs and perceptions on each of us, permitting us to recognise in the other a replica of oneself)³ than by inequalities experienced in terms of identity. France is therefore moving from one definition of citizenship, understood as a sign of national belonging, toward a *citizenship of residence* which reinforces our numerous links with local groups and regions, Diasporas, supranational institutions, other groups with which we have little contact, but with which it is possible to experience and maintain a feeling of contact and belonging...⁴

"In brief, a network of relations, a face-to-face of subjectivities left to themselves have taken the place of social classes. (.....) *The community to which one is destined has made space for the right to be different*⁵". And for good reason. One French person in five has at least one foreign parent or grandparent, and France has always welcomed foreigners, especially those from neighbouring countries (Spanish, Italian and Portuguese immigrants represented 35% of the total in 1990) and the Mediterranean basin. Starting at the end of the 1990s, political parties and firms began to use, in different ways, the expression 'ethnic variable', as a response to an international environment in which the expression was preferred to age, gender or social position to explain the trends and the inequalities in our society. Certain people claim we must measure discrimination in order to combat it, others refuse to 'ethnicise' an issue which is above all social⁶. The desire expressed

² URRY J., *Sociologie des mobilités*, A. Colin, 2005, p.168.

³ BERTHOZ A. and JORLAND G., *L'empathie*, O. Jacob, 2004, p.8.

⁴ BENHABIB S., "Crépuscule de la souveraineté ou émergence de normes cosmopolites? Repenser la citoyenneté en des temps volatiles", in WIEVIORKA M., *Les sciences sociales en mutation*, Editions Sciences Humaines, 2007, p.183.

⁵ BERTHOZ A. and JORLAND G., *L'empathie*, O. Jacob, 2004, p.8.

⁶ See BASTENIER A., *Qu'est-ce qu'une société ethnique?*, PUF, 2004, p.5

by senior French politicians in 2006 to add 'ethnic information' about the origin of offenders, from citizenship data figuring on the transcript of the interviews of those arrested during urban violence, re-ignited the debate – but in negative terms – about the possible introduction of 'ethnic files' and the fight against discrimination. The introduction of such files may assume an ethnic determinism in violent acts, which ignores the social and cultural conditions which engender these passing forms of violence.

In a covert form, 'ethnic' language has replaced 'class' language since we started speaking of *Beurs* (second-generation North African immigrants) instead of immigrant workers, and a Muslim prefect of police instead of a prefect of police. The truth is that in France, 'diversity' evokes, for the collective unconsciousness, less the dimension of the struggle against discrimination (age, gender, sexual orientation, handicap and so on) as practised in the USA or the United Kingdom, than the social integration of disadvantaged groups living in 'disadvantaged neighbourhoods'.

New European legislation on discrimination since 1999, the growth in unemployment and social inequality over the last 30 years, the outsourcing of jobs abroad and the rapprochement between firms⁷ (via mergers, alliances or buyouts) on French soil, has raised the political question of diversity and living together. In addition, demographic trends in France and in several European countries, lead us to conclude that, rather than suffer it, it would be reasonable to focus on the potential offered by immigration and people until now kept out of employment.

What is in doubt in France today is the ability of the Republic, and indirectly its firms, to defend the founding principle of secularism⁸. In a letter addressed to B. Stasi, mediator of the Republic, J. Chirac, evoked the law of 9 December 1905 separating Church and State, and stated that "the application of the principle of secularism is being questioned today. Its implementation in the

⁷ MARTIN D., METZGER J.L. and PIERRE P., *Les métamorphoses du monde. Sociologie de la mondialisation*, Editions du Seuil, 2003.

⁸ WIEVIORKA M., *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*, Paris, Editions La Découverte, 1996.

workplace, the public service, and notably in schools, has come up against new obstacles⁹.

In several countries including France, the Constitution guarantees equality before the law, without distinction of origin, race or creed. But French universalism, being idealistic and somewhat messianic in its abstract dimension, has often vexed and even belittled those who are meant to reap its benefits. In the European economic field and on the basis of the fight against discrimination, the question of diversity and its just application in the firm and in social life, has been addressed by corporate social responsibility programmes or 'positive' discrimination policies. The question is whether these Anglo-Saxon notions have a strong or weak influence on a Republican model which could be destabilised. Are we faced with two evils: a Republican equality which eliminates the 'we', and an ethnic identity which assigns a 'we'¹⁰?

The challenge for companies: an authentic management of diversity?

Despite the absence of clear legal guidelines, public and private enterprises use all these differences in their communication and human resources policies. The policies implemented concern different types of human diversity, since they are intended to help both the handicapped and those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, as well as women who are victims of segregation and the famous 'glass ceiling'.

In the face of the current proliferation of statements and actions, the drafting, on the one hand, of public reports advocating policies of diversity management in firms (report by C.BEBEAR, L. BLIVET, Y. SABEG and L. MEHAIGNERIE in 2004, D. VERSINI in 1994), and the denunciation on the other hand – principally in the axiological and socio-political field – of the risk

⁹ CHIRAC J., *Letter dated 3 July 2003 addressed to the Médiateur de la République, B. STASI.*

¹⁰ DUBET F., "Injustices et reconnaissance", in CAILLE A. (dir.), *La quête de reconnaissance*, La découverte, 2007, p.40.

of communitarianism and the ethnification of social relations (see A.M. LE POURHIET 2002 and P.A.TAGUIEFF 2003) and the danger of ethnic statistics, it is necessary to clarify the terminology and the objectives of these corporate activities.

How does 'the person who is reputed to be different to others' experience this difference at work? How does the person feel or not feel dominated and relate this to him or herself daily? How does he or she reveal himself or herself to others or more precisely how does he or she proceed such that others know and acknowledge him or her? What does he or she do so that others learn about his or her difference and at the same time enrich themselves with the other's difference? Even after many years of cooperation and coexistence at work and outside one's culture of origin or reference, how does one relate to others? How do you make your minority culture, beliefs and values known and respected in the firm, without imposing them or adopting a defensive position¹¹?

An increasingly topical issue...

In the last several years in France, there has been a striking increase in the feeling of victimisation not only among citizens but also among associations, trade unions, firms and the civil service. The creation of the '114' hotline in this respect speaks for itself. In addition, the unions can now go to court in the place of the victims and the power of labour inspectors, like procedures to alert staff representatives, exist. In what way will their powers change?

For the authorities, the problem is not the law, but its enforcement. For firms, the threat lies in an increasing risk of prosecution, linked to the denunciation of discriminatory practices, by their employees, and also a deterioration of what is called their 'employer brand'. Consequently, in the USA, large firms attempt to be ranked by magazines such as *Fortune* according to criteria such as 'diversity'. This is one of the main factors in the social rating affecting their

¹¹ KYMLICKA W. and MESURE S., "Comprendre les identités culturelles", *Revue de Philosophie et de Sciences Sociales*, no.1, Presses Universitaires de France, 2000, pp. 141-171.

stock exchange capitalisation. Today, in these rankings, the basic measure of difference still remains nationality and gender. It is mainly these two criteria which have been fixed as objectives by most business leaders and the exchanges with the social rating agencies.

For French firms, the question has rather been to make up for the difficulty created by the law, which forbids the collection of data related to 'racial or ethnic origin'. On French soil, a civil servant may not wear a veil on duty and a high school student may not wear a veil at school. At university, she may do so, and no one may stop her. In firms, the interior regulations may not contain general guidelines on these questions. In short, shouldn't secularism be a legal obligation for firms? How is it then possible to schedule breaks during periods of fasting or retreat, accommodate areas reserved for prayer and cater for the dietary requirements of staff? Isn't it strange to reserve the expression of one's religious convictions to places of worship? Doesn't religious freedom rather mean the designation of special areas and hours of presence, and rights of representation?

In fact, simply at the level of work relations within globalised firms, decisions related to diversity pose an even greater problem, which is that of acknowledgement, always central to demands relating to discrimination or equal rights. In other words, all one's relations with others are affected by the question of self-esteem and expectations of acknowledgement in relations of co-existence and co-operation between people from different cultures¹². These questions are being raised in terms of cultural identities and groups claiming collective rights, and less and less in terms of the sovereign individual or citizen. More precisely, this book is based on the idea that the supposedly universal demands for liberty and equality only have meaning and forcefulness if the values at the core of the cultural identity of those groups represented in a country or a firm are not an object of rejection or depreciation by each other. Therefore, even if it gives each individual the right to express his cultural identity, the nation or the firm in question still has to give him the opportunity to relate to it by adopting a framework suitable for the expression and self-actualisation of the above. How, otherwise, can the firm hope to deal

¹² CAMILLERI C. and VINSONNEAU G., *Psychologie et culture. Concepts et méthodes*, A. Colin, 1996.

successfully with important questions like adhesion to its objectives and maximising the efforts of its members? *How can it develop a collective work effort and mobilise teams whose members have cultural identities which are simultaneously deep-rooted, alive and differentiated?*

Understanding and managing diversity: what are the tools required for a practical sociology?

In this book, leaving aside policies of diversity management, our aim is to clarify certain vague notions used in everyday life and in the firm to designate multicultural phenomena linked to geographical mobility. We will study the efforts to assimilate by geographically mobile populations in multicultural contexts, their 'identity strategies', be they migrants of expatriate managers in the different foreign countries where firms employ them.

The theoretical perspective of this book, in the form of an open discussion with the business journalist A. TROTÉREAU, is wide-ranging, multidisciplinary and committed, and covers the three themes of '*the fight against discrimination, diversity policies and intercultural management*'. Drawing upon sociology, anthropology and business theory, we have not hesitated to pose problems in terms of practical philosophy: *what should we do with cultural identities in the workplace*¹³? How should we condemn certain manifestations of *communitarianism* at work¹⁴? In particular, what should be done when the relation with an individual is via the authority of the community he belongs to¹⁵, and not the law, the labour code or internal regulations? Should skin colour, ethnic origin or gender be a substitute for competences required for a job, specialisation or promotion within the firm?

If the book initially deals with the legal and administrative aspects of diversity in the French context, it has a wider aim which is to examine concrete actions.

¹³ SAINSAULIEU R., *L'identité au travail*, Presses de la Fondation Nationales des Sciences Politiques & Dalloz, 1977.

¹⁴ PIERRE P., "Éléments pour une réflexion critique sur le intercultural management", *Sociologies pratiques*, number 5, December 2001.

¹⁵ RENAULT A. and TOURAINÉ A., *Un débat sur la laïcité*, Stock, 2005, p.97.

Indeed, the authors call upon their professional and personal experience of diversity outside of one's country of origin, but also the results of a research programme developed over the last 15 years in firms confronted with this problem in several other national contexts.

The first part of the book deals with the conditions in which the notion of diversity has emerged in firms on French soil. We define the different forms of discrimination considered as the basis for these policies. By distinguishing between equality and equity, minority and community, tolerance and secularity, by returning to the question of so-called ethnic statistics, we will explain why the debate over affirmative action – a general but vague term which designates policies to give the means to succeed to those who have the least – is becoming predominant in France. The defence of *cultural rights at work, alongside those of social and political ones*, bear witness, beyond the recourse to statements about diversity, to their constant justification and legitimisation, and have become cornerstones of the economic efficiency and productivity of the social system of the largest firms. In fact we may note that diversity management policies rarely adopt the most suitable path of action (labour code, collective bargaining agreement, international agreements, internal regulations, local agreements etc) to enable the institution to initiate or amplify this acknowledgement of cultural differences.

The second part of this book analyses the pre-conditions for authentic intercultural management, by distinguishing it from policies against 'non discrimination', and positive measures such as positive discrimination. As sociologists and practitioners exploring these themes, the most important is not to advocate a theory or a quick 'how to' method which so many training and management consultancies have recently adopted. The essential is to highlight the recurring problems and underlying mechanisms in multicultural relations in the workplace, that is, in collective contexts where people from different cultures, with different representations and management preferences, really experience others, resulting in mutual enrichment, discrimination or rejection. The second part therefore explores the question of the management of multinational teams and intercultural competences at a time when levels of cooperation are becoming more and more horizontal and there is a growing need to increase the loyalty, continuity and stability of different parties in order to conduct action.

The third and final part of the book is a reflection which draws on philosophy and political science. In the firm, the issue of acknowledgement is larger than just that of political demands relating to differences and the acquisition of rights. All one's relations with others are affected by the question of self-esteem and by expectations for acknowledgement of multiple identities, not only those of gender or race.

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**THE DIVIDENDS FROM DIVERSITY STAKES AND
PROSPECTS**

*“Human beings should recognise their common humanity in each other, and
at the same time their cultural and individual diversity¹⁶”*

¹⁶ MORIN E., *Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l'éducation du futur*, Le Seuil, 2000.

Managing diversity and dealing with new expectations for acknowledgement

Audrey Trotereau¹⁷: Is the term 'diversity' like the term culture, in that it has more value than meaning and more usages than its basic definition? In firms, or in social phenomena like the crisis of the ethnic housing estates, is it legitimate to use the word 'diversity'? As sociologists, do you think people protest because they feel discriminated against?

Evalde Mutabazi and Philippe Pierre: The key word for us is that of acknowledgement. Recent social protests (crisis of the ethnic housing estates, but also the calls for compensation for colonialism), although heterogeneous in nature, have one thing in common. They arise from a fundamental need to be listened to, looked at, identified and acknowledged for one's human dignity. Acknowledged for what one is or aspires to be, and not solely for one's social status or what one yields.

There is no lack of examples today, such as that of the Nigerian executive who –during a seminar which we were holding – explained how he had trouble convincing his Human Resources director to promote him to a position where he had to deal with South America, because he didn't speak several foreign languages, more precisely Spanish. Having already lived in France for some years, he spoke in reality five different languages, in addition to that of his native region, including French and English. He spoke French so well that his HR director didn't consider it a criterion in his case when evaluating his potential to work internationally. His integration into French society was so complete that the director didn't recognise his origin as different, and as a result, the efforts and energy he devoted to giving value to this difference beyond his culture of origin.

¹⁷ Journalist and Chief Editor, *Business Digest*.

'Bearers' of another culture arouse mistrust since they add distance, the unknown or the hazardous, and we think, wrongly, that they are 'non-assimilable'. And when we take a close look at several work situations in France, we are forced to conclude that those who are really recognised and valued in France are largely white, 'westernised' males, whereas the country, in its unity, multicoloured and multicultural.

Is this talk about 'acknowledgement' in the corporate context totally new?

No. The debate about the acknowledgement of religious practices (demanded by North African immigrants in Europe in the late fifties) reminds us that this desire for acknowledgement is not new. Prayer breaks and prayer rooms¹⁸ have only recently been accepted in factory organisation in France. *What is new in the panorama of French firms is the desire to deal with the effects of diversity in the workplace as manifested by the 'fear of being punished', the spreading phenomenon of 'testing'¹⁹, the creation of consultancies in the field, the number of hours of training on the theme, the recent symposia and books and an epidemic in the number of appointments of a 'Mr or Ms Diversity' in organisations.*

How do we determine what is discrimination and what is not?

We define discrimination as *a restriction of a person's rights using unauthorised criteria*, punishment for which can include a prison sentence. Discrimination can occur during hiring, in the workplace, in housing, in the public space and via access to goods and services. It can also manifest itself as sexual or moral harassment. The High Council on Integration defines discrimination in France as any manifest attack, voluntary or involuntary, on equal rights, equal conditions, equal opportunities but also equal obligations of one and all.

¹⁸ SAINSAULIEU R. and ZEHRAOUI A., *Ouvriers spécialisés à Billancourt. Les derniers témoins*, L'Harmattan, 1995.

¹⁹ Cour de Cassation, 12 September 2000.

We should begin by placing this phenomenon in the current legal context. Precisely, according to the law, discrimination in the workplace means taking into account the 'origin' - or membership, real or supposed, of an ethnic group, nation or race - of an employee or job applicant. *From a legal point of view, discrimination is the unfavourable treatment of one person compared to another and for a prohibited reason.* This discrimination is direct, for identical competences, if it operates on the basis of visible criteria like skin colour. A job vacancy stating that applicants over 35 years old need not apply is an example of direct discrimination. It is indirect if a criterion or a practice is likely to put a particular group at a disadvantage. Imposing a language test where the language in question is not required for the job constitutes indirect discrimination. Not taking into account the constraints involved in fixing meetings at certain times is an example of such indirect and covert mechanisms of exclusion. Obliging a woman, whose religion requires her to cover her legs, to wear a skirt instead of slacks without explaining why a skirt is necessary for the job function, is indirect discrimination.

In some cases it seems difficult to distinguish....

Discrimination often creeps in in a positive disguise, making use of the same stereotypes of discrimination, such as hiring Moslems for positions requiring total abstinence (chauffeurs, security guards and so on). What is regrettable is the 'ethnification' of jobs and professions which systematically orient people with certain characteristics toward certain types of jobs: the least qualified, worst-paid and part-time. We are in agreement that although we rarely see a black person or an Arab behind the counter at the bank, we see a few more at reception or on the switchboard at big firms and even more washing dishes in the kitchen!

In reality, *discrimination is always a social pathology of distance²⁰, isolation and the absence of social mixing.* We can distinguish two other forms of discrimination. One operates around invariable and irreversible features such as age, skin colour or gender, which it is very difficult for the employee to

²⁰ VITEAU J., "Comment formation et discrimination se rencontrent-elles?", *Actualité de la formation permanente*, no. 194, January-February 2005, p.24.

change in the short-term²¹. Such discrimination concerns visible features. Other forms concern civil status, residential address, religious belief, union or political membership, experience i.e. apparently reversible features, even though sociology teaches the effects of social reproduction or of the domination at play in social relations, which makes it difficult for the individual to change the perception others have of him.

Nevertheless, it appears many firms highlight their efforts with regard to diversity. Is this to say their efforts are insincere?

To fight different types of discrimination, most employers envisage implementing or amplifying policies of hiring, training and internal promotion which take more account of the social or 'ethnic' origins for example of the French population. In most cases, these policies are based on sparse statistical data²², insufficient indicators and monitoring to quantify the 'diverse origins' of employees, job applicants or professional or geographical mobility. Before inventing new statistical tools, it would be wiser for firms to begin by analysing opinion surveys, discrimination tests, evidence from potential victims, recruiters, and the existing statistical and econometric analyses which evaluate the link between the origins of the working population and their position in the job market. It is high time the social and human sciences were brought into all firms!

It must be made clear that the notion of 'diversity' is a *recent construction* in France which has assimilated different contributions, such as 'corporate social responsibility', from Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world. Behind this success in imposing itself as the new 'norm' is undoubtedly the crisis of the welfare

²¹ LORENZI-CIOLDI F. et BUSCHINI F., "Vaut-il mieux être une femme qualifiée ou être qualifiée de femme? Effets paradoxaux de la catégorisation dans la discrimination positive", in M. SANCHEZ-MAZAS et L. LICATA, *L'Autre. Regards psychosociaux*, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2005.

²² TRIBALAT M., "Immigrés, étrangers, Français: l'imbroglie statistique", *Population et société*, no. 241, 1989.

²² SMITH W., WOKUTCH R., HARRINGTON K., DENNIS B., "Organizational Attractiveness and Corporate Social Orientation: Do Our Values Influence Our Preference for Affirmative Action and Managing Diversity?", *Business and Society*, 43 (1), 69-97, 2004.

state, the exhaustion of the trade union movement, and the manifest inability of political parties to transform social relations. Is it possible that, for some, 'culture' and 'cultural identities' have become the arena for one of the last collective struggles to 'change the world.' And, for others, of the liberalisation of the economy and the elimination of the state as a regulatory device?

These pseudo-truths, conceived in the name of cultural identities, should only be conceived such that the unequal class structure is not called into question²³.

The truth is that we are currently creating a 'market for discrimination'...

Many researchers and management consultants, in competition with one another, have for some years now defined the reality of *the field of diversity*, and have sometimes hastily imported Anglo-Saxon concepts without placing them in the local context (this brings to mind, for example, the negative effects of certain surveys of the 'organisational climate' in firms, or 'ethnic statistics' which categorise people in closed and supposedly homogeneous groups). Fashion often gets the better of distance and pragmatism! We should be on our guard against one form of diversity replacing another!

But you don't deny that firms have made significant efforts?

On the surface, communication often wins against more deep-rooted action. We should not forget that diversity (in respect of age, gender, height and weight, blood groups, city of birth and profession) has always existed in the firm. The multicultural nature of work relations has existed since time immemorial, like the reciprocity of rights and obligations between the members of all human communities. Since groups of hunters and fishermen have existed, from prehistoric times to the transversal and virtual teams so fashionable in multinationals today, most firms compose teams containing members with complementary skills, from different regional, national, professional, political and religious cultures. More than previously perhaps,

²³ MICHAELS W. B., *The Trouble with Diversity: how we learned to love Identity and ignore Inequality*, Metropolitan Books, 2007.

we understand this interplay of norm and difference at a time of increasing geographical mobility and rapid communications which are strongly mediated by the new technologies such as mobile phones and text messaging.

And beyond the firm, human beings have always lived in specific cultures. *Human diversity is without a doubt the most human characteristic of all.* Humans have always been endowed – culture by culture, individual by individual, by different manners of existence - with the gift of contact with others, and constantly renew themselves, without one being able to speak of ‘cultural shock’ between two groups. And even less so as regards the so-called ‘clash between the civilisations’!

For us, the term ‘diversity’ is a concept or a ‘construction’ developed by firms, their management and certain spheres in politics, to characterise the current challenges facing French society in terms of employment and promotion. Many people wish to endow the word with a symbolic autonomy, and give it an imaginary meaning of social emancipation. Diversity management policies in firms, by virtue of their powerful social representations, find themselves at the nexus between as yet unrelated arenas: academic and scientific, public decision-making and the arena of media and politics²⁴. In other words, it is no more preferable to get rid of racism than poverty, or to celebrate diversity so as to forget socio-economic inequality. We shouldn’t forget the social issue in the name of diversity or a so-called new arena of inequalities linked to representations of self and the emotions and images this conveys.

Let’s go back to the negative consequence of diversity i.e. discrimination. To what extent does it occur in firms?

All diversity policies - without stating it – make discrimination their core objective; which raises the question of who the culprits and the victims are, without being able to answer this question with a shred of evidence. For example, without carefully conducted studies, how can you prove that an

²⁴ ROBERT-DEMONTROND P., JOYEAU A. and THIEL D., “La diversité comme champ de controverses: socio-anthropologie du jugement des acteurs sur l’encastrement économique d’une mesure éthique”, *Troisièmes rencontres internationales de la diversité*, Corte, 2007.

immigrant worker doesn't get equal pay for equal work? How can you prove that he is systematically refused a promotion on grounds of more or less visible membership of a group? How can you demonstrate, and using which criteria, that his superior or human resource director acted incorrectly whereas these are the very people who are supposed to know the history of the firm, the objectives of the work and the context in which the employee must meet these objectives? Diversity management policies often try to meet the most urgent objectives, by using 'origin' to punish culprits without analysing causes.

Liberty, equality, diversity?

Is there a contradiction between current corporate diversity policies and France's attachment to the Republican tradition of welcome and integration?

The Republic is the equality of citizens before the law, as voted by free and independent individuals. There has always been consensus about the universal nature of the law concerning the balance of power between different social groups. This was the idea behind the measures adopted by the Constitutional Assembly during the French Revolution granting civil emancipation to Protestants and Jews, and abolishing guilds. In 1991, this was also the principle underlying the Constitutional Council's decision, concerning the status of Corsica, to refuse to speak about 'the Corsican people, component of the French people' because the Constitution only recognises the French people, composed of all citizens.

The *Ancien Regime* tolerated the distinction between the rights and privileges of different orders. To be a revolutionary was and still is an effort to consider the other as equal to oneself. French democracy places differences second to common destiny, that of the Republic. *In this framework, an ethnic minority has no institutional legitimacy in France.* Indeed, in French tradition, there is no idea of an historic debt to any minority, credit for which passes from generation to generation. Neither does the government establish a

quantifiable national objective. *It therefore theoretically falls upon firms to choose the means they wish to adopt to fight racism and discrimination.* The situation is different in South Africa where certain museums relate the oppression of various communities by those in power during apartheid. This does not exist in France. The Mines and Works Act, which reserved skilled jobs for Whites, was adopted in 1911, thereby signalling the beginning of 'separate development' whereas 80% of the South African population was non-White. In the seventies, a few South African firms chose not to apply the law as regards separate amenities for Blacks and Whites. There were no 'Blacks' under apartheid, but 'Whites', 'Asians', 'Coloureds' and 'Africans'. By thinking in terms of distinct categories and by isolating 'origin', the oppressors made racism 'invisible'. This certainly comforted them in the idea that the social injustices linked to racism did not exist.

Can French firms take inspiration from abroad for their diversity policies?

In South Africa, several policies (such as employment parity in the civil service or broad-based Black Economic Empowerment) have, since 1994, tried to redress the wrongs committed to Black, Indian or Coloured people, by creating equal opportunity via actions such as the transfer of skills or capital to the previously disadvantaged majority (by 2015, 25-30% of the capital of firms should be in Black hands). The debate in France is not in the same terms, since 'Blacks' are not an 'ethnic group' with its own cultural traits ('Black culture') and identity ('Black pride').

Social inequality in our country, recent developments in parity, and the debate about the 'positive role' played by colonisation, challenge pluralism in a different way. The French Republic does not recognise 'racial groups' based on biological heredity and this is a good thing. Some people wrongly use the term 'ethnic' groups. The term 'ethnic' in such a case designates that which is not racial and which doesn't correspond to socially perceived physical differences, but rather to a subjective approach of individuals who would identify to one or several groups of origin. The example from South Africa enables the distinction to be made between legal discrimination and unfavourable treatment which has no legal basis.

We should acknowledge that in our country this notion of 'ethnic' group often refers to a group 'despite itself', as an obvious fact of the senses, such that, via an identification process initiated by others, one is 'sent back' to one's origins! Whereas many prefer to speak about 'visible minorities', others see in the 'crisis of the suburbs', for example, a problem which is mainly social and which requires economic and social solutions.

What is criticised in France today are neither the legitimate Republican ideals, nor the founding principal of secularism²⁵, but the capacity of the Republic, or its political organisation, to implement equal opportunity. When the unemployment rate of young people reaches 30 or 40% in a neighbourhood, it isn't the Republic which is called into question but its ability to reinforce equal opportunity, from school to successful employment.

In other words, we can explain the protest movements mentioned above by the fact that most of those who represent the Republic are just in their intentions, but frankly unjust in their practices and behaviour?

One of the questions asked about the Republic today is for how long young graduates from French territories abroad or naturalised from other parts of the world (French-speaking Africa in particular) will tolerate finding it three times more difficult to find a job than their French counterparts. Why, for example, should several hundred nationals from overseas territories or former French colonies in Africa continue to accept, for some obscure historical and political reason, that the upper spheres of the civil service remain closed to them? Similarly, the orders of doctors, advocates and chartered accountants agree that nationality as a condition for membership should be done away with.

In firms, the consequences of diversity policies call for a distinction between equality and equity. It means achieving equal rights – the final aim – by adopting the path of equity and certain tools and methods of measurement of diversity or selective aid for the most destitute. These policies require the adoption of equal treatment for individuals in recruitment, career management and training. Indeed, the principle of equity – which concerns the organisation of social cooperation and coexistence at work according to principles which

²⁵ WIEVIORKA M., *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*, La Découverte, 1996.

take into account differences between members of the same society – cannot be analysed without its corollary, affirmative action. Equity is the implementation of special treatment for a territory or a group which temporarily goes against the principle of equality. For example, several firms with diversity policies stress the usefulness of educational support for pupils in difficulty (*equity*). The aim is to give them the opportunity to finish compulsory schooling in the best conditions possible (*equality*).

What is the best form of diversity to promote? What does the term 'diversity management' mean: respecting differences and eliminating inequalities?

It is clear that the term diversity hides two other terms: 'difference' and 'inequality'. Inequalities are always the result of a social action which favours some at the expense of others. *One type of diversity – that of inequalities – is unacceptable, whilst another – which refers to differences – is indispensable. Inequalities are not necessarily inequitable!* By its nature, the law can only be the use of the same measure for all. Can individuals be distinct without being unequal? Judging employees with the same yardstick risks perpetual inequality. Employees for example feel – and this is true for all the countries we investigated – that the most talented in the firm should only merit a higher salary and reward if this improves the situation of the most disadvantaged in the firms or society.

The basic principle of diversity policies should, in our opinion, be to recognise that every social system be organised in such a way that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged by the arbitrary position they hold in the distribution of natural talents and abilities and which is not their fault (the result of destiny). *What is important is not the amount of liberty given to each one but the value of the diverse interests it serves. And even more important is to agree to change by exchanging with another, without losing, or altering oneself.*

We therefore speak of inequalities when the differences have the triple feature of being measurable, systematic and collective. We denounce discrimination when these inequalities are 'examined', suspected of being the result of unequal treatment. The culprit must be found!

How can we act effectively?

Knowing the mechanisms of discrimination in your workplace is the first step²⁶. For example, getting applications from those who are not routinely considered, or working with recruiters, or organising training sessions or special interviews to prepare people for interviews to compensate for their handicaps.

To better highlight discrimination and measure the progress being made, the difference has to be concretely seen. This should be the basis of all diversity policies. All discrimination raises the question of the system which produces it via the uniform application of a rule or a simple habit (for example, always calling upon the alumni of the same graduate school). This leads to favouring methodological approaches which introduce conscious regulation in order to assure equal treatment (opening your recruitment to new groups and diversifying your selection processes as with the skills method developed by the French employment office). This isn't neutral in the firm, it takes time and effort!

All the more so as the causes and signs of discrimination are numerous. Take the example of 'non-positioning' which is direct discrimination with the good intention of not allowing the candidate to fail by referring him or her to an employer who will not hire them for discriminatory motives (a coloured salesperson in the luxury goods or insurance sector, for example). Or that of 'over-adaptation', which manifests itself by greater demands made on applicants whom we know will be discriminated against.

Are you saying that the theme of diversity ultimately makes all differences of talent between employees 'suspect' , and creates the notion of 'victim' and 'culprit' too quickly?

This is of course a risk. The fear of a lawsuit may seem to incite firms to action. In 1973, AT&T paid several million dollars to 2000 black employees who felt discriminated against. The obligation to advertise a penalty, what the British call 'shaming', is part of the process of public condemnation.

²⁶ LEONARD J. and LEVINE D., *Discrimination and Performance*, Berkeley, 2003.

Victims and oppressors? We shouldn't forget when talking about 'xenophobia' and discrimination, that for generations the victims have most often been French, for example French West Indians²⁷. In this respect, a dangerous trend is emerging in France, considering as 'colonised' from inside, within their own country groups making a direct link with the Palestinian people. What is also new about diversity policies is that they concern graduates from the middle class, whose parents may themselves be French. Most French leaders have long denied this, preferring to spread the notion of diversity 'from the top' by imposing a lexical and conceptual interpretation of certain European and international accords. *The notion of diversity has enabled us in France to overcome the ban on designating ethnic groups without always sufficiently examining the process of categorisation which organises this discrimination.*

Victims and oppressors? Yes. Certain statements about diversity, notably in politics, maintain the spirit of competition between victims in our society and create injustices. We should state that the ways to create an inequality in order to promote equality, differ according to whether we are referring to 'jobs reserved' for minorities, the 'quota' which fixes a general amount, or the 'distinct competitive entrance exam' which offers special access. G. CALVES rightly states that all policies of favouritism are based on two figures which reinforce each other: the 'innocent victim' of discrimination, and 'the incompetent' both of whom, without affirmative action, would never have held the positions they do²⁸.

We should be particularly wary of a loss of direction by institutions moralising about problems of discrimination, as well as non-profit organisations who try to trap those guilty of discrimination, of those who try to 'count the number of points' simply in order to obtain ever-larger settlements after defending real or imagined victims, without conferring on these people the means to gain real long-term acknowledgement.

The theme of diversity can indeed make one become systematically 'suspicious' of differences in talent which come into existence before entering the firm. 'An equal right is in reality an unequal right for an unequal job' is sometimes used to legitimise affirmative action and quotas. We reject this.

²⁷ FASSIN D., "Nommer. Interpréter. Le sens commun de la question sociale", in FASSIN D. et FASSIN E., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?*, La Découverte, 2006, p.20.

²⁸ CALVES G., *La discrimination positive*, PUF, 2004, p.32.

We make a clear distinction between the fight against 'discrimination' and 'affirmative action', even if the two are today coming up against the thorny question of the criteria used to determine an infringement.

In those countries in which it has been implemented, affirmative action includes a series of measures with three broad objectives:

- to make up for inequalities between groups
- to fight against discrimination
- to promote 'diversity' as a democratic ideal²⁹, but also as a management challenge, especially for those global firms which request it

Most measures observed attempt to integrate social, economic or political elites into society, betting on the fact that they will later play a key role in the advancement of the cultural group they belong to. Fundamentally, affirmative action seems to correspond to a new definition of discrimination, which is not only forbidden by law but in de facto situations. In such cases, diversity policies are linked to the 'equitable representation' of different groups and cultural communities constituting the population in the different countries in which they work. In other words, firms attempt to correspond more to the 'colours' of these countries. Their diversity policies aim to introduce a degree of internal diversity reflecting that of the local environment and labour pool. The implementation of this principle is probably more complex for multinationals which have a high turnover of executives and which don't always have, at a central level, objective and detailed information of the different countries and regions they operate in. Their task is to foster the insertion into the professional world of marginalised groups with skills deficits which penalise them in the job market.

Paradoxically, the principle of affirmative action is the selective treatment of individuals in order to eliminate situations of discrimination. *The application in*

²⁹ CALVES G., *La discrimination positive*, PUF, 2004; Y. SABEG et Y. SABEG, *Discrimination positive*, Calmann-Lévy, 2004.

France of such a principle would mean transition from individual equal opportunity to equality of group results. This is not the Republican spirit. Another method is to apply affirmative action only in cases where two candidates are 'equally qualified'. In this case the candidate is considered as having an additional skill, that of knowing how to fight for, assert and obtain one's rights.

How do you explain the success of diversity in terms of its dominance as a theme today?

It is possible firstly that the ethno-racial dimension, or race as a thought category, previously used by reactionary parties as a means to divide the population, is today becoming a factor of universalisation. The fight against discrimination has become an excellent sales argument! On the consumer goods market, for example, diversity is able to rally symbols which are more universal than those using local contexts³⁰. In France, the success of this theme is certainly linked to the change in the sovereignty of our country - the borders have been extended to Europe, the euro has replaced the franc as the currency, military service has been abolished – all of which questions national unity. The threesome of 'Democracy, identity and integration' has replaced 'nature, reason and civilisation'.

P. ROBERT-DEMONTROND, A. JOYEAU and D. THIEL highlight a second reason i.e. that firms have an interest in developing activities which bring them goodwill: it is in the interest of firms to respond to social expectations before they degenerate into a crisis or become law³¹.

The third reason is partly linked to the increasing power and diversity of *stakeholders* in the firm³². 'The wellbeing of employees is in the hands of consumers: they have to be vigilant, put pressure on firms (via consumer

³⁰ NORA P., "Le nationalisme nous a caché la nation", *Le Monde*, 18 March 2007.

³¹ ROBERT-DEMONTROND P., JOYEAU A. and THIEL D., "La diversité comme champ de controverses: socio-anthropologie du jugement des acteurs sur l'encastrement économique d'une mesure éthique", *Troisièmes rencontres internationales de la diversité*, Corte, 2007.

³² TOMEI M., "Discrimination and equality at work: a review of the concepts", *International Labour Review*, 142 (4), 401-418, 2003.

boycotts motivated by altruism and other's wellbeing) to make their managerial practices more respectful of human rights³³.'

A fourth reason, certainly less negative, derives from the inherent belief that diversified teams favour innovation and ultimately economic performance. The sustainability of the firm is linked to its 'social efficiency', without our knowing which scientific theories these dominant representations are based on.

In the last few years we have seen the appearance and the development of calls for 'citizenship by and for minorities'. This means demands for recognition and the right to access the broader society, being accepted into it without losing one's identity, and enjoying the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens and groups. The Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity, adopted by the 31st session of the General Assembly of UNESCO in Paris in November 2001 reminds us that these aspirations are not limited to the four walls of the firm. In developed countries, this means fostering what may be labelled 'cultural citizenship', that is, the right of all social groups (by ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation) to participate fully in the cultural life of the society.

Listening to you, one gets the impression that difference, which you distinguish from diversity, has become a value in itself in France, comparable to diversity and its advocacy?

E. DESCHAVANNE rightly states that '*diversity apparently has no ethical value. It can perhaps be cherished as a desirable outcome of equality of opportunity and the absence of discrimination, but not as a moral goal in itself*³⁴'

³³ ROBERT-DEMONTROND P., JOYEAU A. and THIEL D., "La diversité comme champ de controverses: socio-anthropologie du jugement des acteurs sur l'encastrement économique d'une mesure éthique", *Troisièmes rencontres internationales de la diversité*, Corte, 2007.

³⁴ DESCHAVANNE E., "La discrimination positive face à l'idéal républicain: définition, typologie, historique, arguments", *Pour une société de la nouvelle chance*, La documentation française, 2006, p.162.

The duty of the civilised person today is too closely linked to so-called strict cultural, group and ethnic survival. The predominant thinking stresses the necessary uniformity, on the one hand, of global trade conditions and free trade, and on the other, of the need to protect specific local identities. Diversity as a value places itself above the founding values which may be labelled final. Final because they are antagonistic. Indeed, how can liberty be placed above equality? It's impossible. No superior value can declare one of two parties in a conflict right.

Whereas all difference is not a value. A society without distinction between race or creed remains an ideal for the younger generation. Nevertheless, they don't confuse it – and rightly so – with reality, and recognise the need to belong to a community in order to structure our identity. Recognising the existence of a common denominator between human beings, which incites all to seek good, beauty and truth, doesn't necessarily make the notion of difference a value in itself.

In this respect, R. BOUDON speaks of *two relativisms which corrupt our society, a 'cognitive' relativism which finds the notion of truth doubtful, and a 'cultural' relativism according to which all cultures are equal.* These two relativisms share the same incorrect idea that the belief in universal values is a distinctive Western characteristic. As a result, individuals are deeply irrational, since the notions of truth and objectivity are, in this thought system, illusory. *But every relativism has its normativism,* as much as in any other political system, which wants to extend its influence to all dimensions of thought and action, and to all sections of the national and international population.

Its minor premise is that if all opinions have the same value, it is – according to the champions of difference – because individuals adopt such or such norms and values, not because they are based in their minds on reason, but because they have been inculcated by their environment. Without any hope of emancipating themselves.

The major premise of relativism is to view every undesirable social phenomenon as the result of a plot by the strong against the weak. Any difference in talent is therefore suspect and to be dismantled...³⁵ Faced with

³⁵ BOUDON R., *Renouveler la démocratie. Eloge du sens commun*, 2006, p.27.

the juxtaposition of 'communities' or overt or covert interest groups, relativism advocates organs of mediation or alert, monitoring bodies or independent authorities, whose role it is to witness and classify attitudes and behaviour. From this point on, according to R. BOUDON, 'the resulting political system can only be constituted by conflict and attempts to resolve these conflicts by compromise³⁶'.

The non-discrimination of relativists is linked to a vision of opposition between oppressors and oppressed. In this 'zero-sum' game, the impostor must be apprehended, brought to book and punished, and it is important to fight discrimination and forget about living together better. Too often, 'it is no longer a question of understanding cultural differences, but simply of recording them³⁷'. We may even wonder if in the end the effect of relativism has been to end our belief in 'the possibility of objective knowledge in the human field³⁸'.

Once the limits of the 'positiveness of difference' have been recognised, how is it possible to imagine a political or professional community which doesn't refuse the right to resemblance?

For us, this is one of the main questions posed by policies of diversity management in companies.

We must distinguish here between tolerance, a loose concept, and secularism, which is, for us, more ambitious. Living side by side is not enough. Admittedly, secularism is not in itself a policy. Alone, it is unable to respond to the crises which occur in reality or to new demands for equality and even more so for recognition. This is not a reason for weakening the Republic. The Republic doesn't exist to create equal recognition of scorned identities, dominated cultures and oppressed communities. *The opposite of 'secularism' is not religion but laissez faire, and the ambition of the Republic questions the principle that 'everything is the same'.*

In all diversity management, there is mathematical justice, defined by 'weightings', measurements and figures. It attempts to 'derive' differences. We are critical of this. But in the same way as there is a justice based on strict

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p.12.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p.35.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p.35.

mathematical proportion, there is another linked to proportional geometrical equality, to which we feel closer.

In all diversity management, there is one school of thought which perceives phenomena of discrimination from the outside, in a statistical and 'objective' manner, and another, which is linked to subjectivities, surges of generosity and feelings. Diversity policies teach us that procedural justice alone is not sufficient, and that other values such as respect and generosity are required. These values are the responsibility of each of us, and not of institutions, even on 'glazed paper' brochures.

In our opinion, what is in question today and at the core of the social crisis we are experiencing, is more the possibility to change one's social class by one's efforts and good fortune than to claim one's cultural identity. *It is the dynamism of the socio-economic structure of our economy, in adherence with the laws of the Republic, which has broken down, more than its capacity to respect cultural rights.*

Company policies, real and declared practices in diversity management

Let's look at the world of work. The number of recruitment consultancies specialised in the promotion of diversity are increasing, as are the number of training organisations more or less specialised in this theme. What concrete policies do you see being implemented in France, notably in firms?

Let's begin by stressing the ambiguity of the notion of diversity in French firms today. Even the job title "Head of Diversity" can be interpreted in different ways, because of the different meanings of the concept of diversity and the differing forms of integration into the field of social responsibility of each firm. These interpretations are the source of the 'diversity' of positions and areas of responsibility for 'Heads of Diversity'³⁹.

³⁹ BROUSSILLON G. A., MUTABAZI E., PIERRE P. et SEURRAT A., "La figure du "Responsable Diversité" dans les entreprises en France. Tentative de typologie et

Without taking into account political statements and idealism, we can distinguish among the current practices of large French firms, a first group, consisting of a small number of business leaders and human resource directors, who do not evoke the subject, preferring to wait to see what happens among their counterparts before committing to diversity.

In the second group, at a primary level, we can observe practices whose aim is to conform to the law. In these firms, the human resources directors are aware of the risks of racism, sexism and what sociologists call 'facism' (or giving a job to a person with a pleasant appearance) or 'youthism' (only valuing the young people without highlighting the contribution of older employees, thus contributing to a drop in the employment rate of 55-64 year old men from 73% to 41,4% in 2001). In short, more importance is given to competence than to origin, age or physical appearance. These firms, for example, condemn the fact, in theory, that an employee over 50 is no longer entitled to training because the investment is 'useless'.

We may say that these firms reveal their 'paper identity' by putting, for example, photos of their directors in their annual reports or on their websites, taking care to 'over expose' those they consider at the same time as 'minority' and 'executives'. After being blind to their reality, we are now blinded by their so-called differences and their 'overexposure'. *We risk designating the problem we are trying to combat less and less, and simply translating it into images!* It is not uncommon to see women in management positions as alibis, alone in the photographs, in a masculine environment, and who risk conserving their exceptional situation.

At a secondary level, certain firms try and integrate diversity initiatives into their 'human resources' policies. Highlighted in their communication strategy, diversity is observable in different practises: the implementation of diversity training, the appointment of a diversity committee or head of diversity, agreements signed with the trade unions, 'job sharing' whereby two employees share a position (often women who each do a job for 3 days a week)... The banner of diversity is large! In addition, these firms attempt to open their doors to young graduates from immigrant communities or

dimensions identitaires", *Actes de l'Université d'Automne de l'IAS, Colloque de Corte / 3èmes rencontres internationales de la diversité, 2007.*

disadvantaged social classes, by working on recruitment practices supposedly guaranteed to be non-discriminatory. Although the young pin their hopes on these firms to improve their condition, the tacit exclusion arising from their skin colour or ethnic group is not always eliminated after the first few months. For a variety of reasons, which we will return to later in this discussion, equality with their French colleagues with equivalent skills and abilities is not always guaranteed and we may call this 'apparent integration'. Another factor favouring diversity in France is economic and demographic since firms are faced with the retirement and shortage executives. Diversity is therefore not for compassionate reasons but in the firm's economic and social interest! Take the example of 'Peugeot, which distributed 50000 brochures detailing the procedures for an employee victim or witness to discrimination. An email address is given so that employees can signal such cases to the Head of Discrimination at Peugeot⁴⁰.

The third group of practices observable in France for the last decade treats diversity as an issue which affects the company's strategy, and integrates it into measurable management objectives. 'Inclusive' measures are adopted for example to develop facilities for employees such as the creation of day nurseries, the adoption of rules to preserve work-life balance.....S. POINT cites the Bayer website, where *'an employee with a Ph. D can be an African-American or a foreigner who has been naturalised; a shop steward can be a former housewife; and an accountant can have tattoos under his suit. Our diversity goes beyond visible differences to include age, education, beliefs, creed, qualifications and many other criteria⁴¹'.*

Several other measures, such as mentoring, networking, advanced training for a wide range of personnel, favour greater awareness of diversity management.....without having the impact of the categories of large Anglo-Saxon companies such as the Black Employees Network at American Express or 3M's Women's Advisory Group. The creation of these affinity groups is intended to give value to differences. Their aim is to gather each minority into small committees whose responsibility is to increase their representation and improve the treatment they receive in the firm. If they are recognised as professional groups (of parents, homosexuals, transsexuals,

⁴⁰ FAURE S. & PLATAT S., "L'entreprise prend des couleurs", *Libération*, 26 September 2005.

⁴¹ POINT S., "Réussir à promouvoir la diversité dans les entreprises", *Troisièmes rencontres internationales de la diversité*, Corte, 2007.

disabled people, women, African-Americans, Christians, Muslims...) they will have budgets and 'business plans'. The idea is to make such presence and cooperation customary, so that recruitment from a pool of applications with different origins and profiles will mechanically increase.

At this third level, consultative committees on diversity are set up, 'champions' are designated and given the responsibility of promoting diversity in work teams throughout the firm. We know that apparently neutral procedures only reveal their discriminatory nature in the effects they produce among groups with certain characteristics. For example, certain mergers reveal that belonging to one of the parties to the merger can engender discriminatory behaviour on the part of the dominant partner.

Ultimately, the risk facing all such policies is to pilot each management criterion separately, and to consider each category (age, gender, social origin) as closed, leading to a 'classificatory' arithmetical, and reductive approach. The odds are that the driving force behind an increase in diversity – observed over a period of two or three years - is not the causal factor it is thought to be (management diversity emanating from the HR department or top management) but the protocol of management diversity affecting the entire hierarchy. In all likelihood, it isn't diversity defined objectively which impacts on economic performance, but diversity defined inter-subjectively, as it is experienced. Which means that what is most important is management's application of this *diversity 'experience'*, as it influences social representations throughout the organisation⁴².

⁴² ROBERT-DEMONTROND P., JOYEAU A. and THIEL D., "La diversité comme champ de controverses: socio-anthropologie du jugement des acteurs sur l'encastrement économique d'une mesure éthique", *Troisièmes rencontres internationales de la diversité*, Corte, 2007.

Don't the policies you are proposing create divisions within the firm? If everyone starts claiming rights, don't we run the risk of identity policies which attempt to create coalitions between heterogeneous communities? Of ignoring the unions internally, relying more on external legal sanction, each individual fighting for the recognition of their own culture and not for the common good?

The issue in diversity policies in France today is certainly one of recognition and not of identities. For example, the Representative Council of Black Associations (CRAN), states, happily so, that it falls under a policy of minorities and not identities. Africans and West Indians, according to the Council, can find common ground beyond their cultural difference. In a certain manner, this minority reasoning are not exclusive. The position of SOS Racisme in France, that the act of discrimination is the primary consideration, illustrates this well.

We should make a distinction here between minority and community. A minority, which can be defined as a category created solely by discrimination, enables one to speak more easily about 'diversity'. The community, which shares a culture, has a discourse which can be labelled as 'multicultural' and which gives value to the solidarity and force of a collective entity, even more than its subjection to a relation of power and domination. A minority, as opposed to a community, does not necessarily involve belonging to a group and cultural identity. However, it requires a past experience of discrimination. In our societies, many have racism and not race in common. A process of naturalisation of a social category by discriminatory practices.

Table No1: From Laisser Faire to Positive Discrimination Policies

FROM LAISSER FAIRE TO POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

Positive discrimination of the 'anti-discrimination' kind (affirmative action)

Groups such as interest groups (quotas)
Identification of discriminated groups ('monitoring')
Systematic use of 'performance' statistics + legal testing

Going from equal treatment to treatment as an equal for real equal opportunity

Positive action

Positive discrimination (stricto sensu) of a socio-economic kind

(Parity law, aid to disadvantaged neighbourhoods, % of disabled, direct entrance to Institute of Political Sciences Graduate School and so on)
Use of basic statistical tools ('simple' Republican corrective action)
Testing measures and random surveys of sensitive data

Giving more to those who have less and less to those who have more

Equity

Targeted aid and support programmes without questioning formal equality between individuals
Free interpretation of discrimination/No statistical tools

Taking more from those who have more to give to all

Laisser faire

Statistical invisibility of discrimination

Source: E. MUTABAZI and P.PIERRE, 2007

To speak 'as' in order not to be treated 'as'. This is what D.FASSIN and E.FASSIN call the minority paradox, and which implies listening to the criticism questioning the political minority in the terms of the majority's language⁴³. And to risk asking for mechanisms of compensation without questioning the foundations of the discrimination. We will return to this point.

It is said that the wise person is one who learns from everyone and is open to all differences. What are the characteristics of the 'ideal firm' for the leaders or social rating agencies which advocate more formal policies of diversity management?

In the United States, the overall approach to diversity is closely linked to the notion of inclusion, linking the 'ethereal' transparency of the procedures, the 'earthy' search for roots and the imaginary 'fluidity' which bring life to organisations by circulating energies, people and goods. In the firms which are really committed, diversity policies are part of a wider framework: that of *sustainable development*. Indeed, this seems to cover both the fight against discrimination as well as the vast problem of social development (the fight against hunger, access to water, energy and new information technologies, improvement in health, conditions of life and work...). Certain firms give themselves a definite political role, by declaring openly their engagement in the struggle against discrimination, including residential assignment of those groups excluded from economic and social life...

These firms extend their diversity management practices to conditions of hygiene and security in their international subsidiaries, even to their sub-contractors in developing countries, types of remuneration, social insurance and pensions of local staff, the struggle against child labour, training of employees, consideration for diversity of local cultures, be they regional, religious, ethnic or clan-based....

In this socio-economic context, the 'ideal' firm in terms of diversity management should be like a *participative democracy*, granting its members access to information (entry criteria and advancement by profession, vacant

⁴³ FASSIN D. and FASSIN E., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?*, La Découverte, 2006, p.253.

posts and the conditions of access, training and evaluation criteria etc.) and contribute to its evolution by expressing a personal opinion⁴⁴. Indeed, in the current global environment, the celebration of mobility and professional mobility in the 'ideal' firm – for the staff, that is - will be natural, since it will naturally encourage its employees to 'immerse themselves in diversity', to 'go and seek out diversity', to 'fish for ideas', to rub shoulders with other supposedly innovative players, professions and work contexts. From the closest to the most remote contexts, the cultural and professional worlds mingle via a continuous flux of multicultural profiles and high potentials.

These executives accept the idea of not having a lifelong project (a calling, a profession, a marriage...). They are mobile. Nothing should stand in the way of their geographic mobility. Behind this exhortation to mobility and diversity, will always lie the search for greater flexibility and profit. P.A. TAGUIEFF is right when he says that 'movement' is part of frenetic neophilia (the cult of the new for its own sake), the magical abolition of time in a 'presentism' (accelerated by the normalised use of new information technologies) and juvenility (the utopia of eternal youth, boosted by cosmetic surgery and the market of miraculous cures). 'The ultimate horizon is business. The deal has replaced the ideal', he adds⁴⁵. *Each era has its own ideological canons. Our own has no centre and a boundless periphery, which doesn't mean there are no centres of decision-making, and is fed by the idea of otherness, of a desirable state of being Creole.* These would-be qualities evoke the notion of 'fluidity' referred to above. Required to be attentive to the needs of all (staff, shareholders, suppliers and so on) and capable of reconciling openness and identity, unity and diversity and multi-polar migration (North-South and South-North...but also projects, professions and job functions), such a humane and tolerant organisation is based on its capacity to transform differences into performance factors, to innovate from the diversity, mutual learning and reciprocal enrichment of its members via their everyday experience of co-operation.

⁴⁴ KELLY E. and DOBBIN F., *How affirmative action became diversity management*, American Behavioral Scientist, 1998.

⁴⁵ P. A. TAGUIEFF, *Résister au "bougisme"*. *Démocratie forte contre mondialisation techno-marchande*, Mille et une nuits, 2001, p.81.

Are you not advocating a new management model under cover of diversity management?

The discussion about diversity uses the existing symbols, but attributes other meanings than the generally accepted ones. We observe that, in the ideal firm, a sort of false imaginary, stress will be placed on an authentic transnational management of careers using sophisticated tools (succession plans, recruitment and detection of potential tailored to each local environment...). Adorned with the other virtues of our era, such as instantaneousness, conviviality, equal access and freedom (of speech), a new 'reality' - non-hierarchical and cybernetic, linking diverse fields – will be an asset of diversity, information technologies and so-called 'transparent' rules of management. Different paths of geographical mobility, the promotion of career paths alternating 'functional' and 'operational' posts and the implementation of efficient remuneration systems, will 'fortify the organisational culture' by stimulating the improved circulation of information as well as the transmission of shared values. A large part of the strategic control of the firm is thus informally in the hands of the international staff, compared to the 'central nervous system' of the organisation⁴⁶, and the existence of an 'underground network' of personal contacts across national boundaries.

'To each according to his merits'; is this the general rule of an organisation which has lost all national entrenchment?

That's right. The different centres (financial, administrative, marketing, research, production) are a miniature image of the firm, and attempt, in doing so, to respect the 'geographical coloration'⁴⁷ of different entities throughout the world. Their overt role is less to issue authoritarian directives than to ensure equal access to information and 'good practice' in each entity and each subsidiary.

⁴⁶ HEDLUNG G. and ROLANDER R., "Actions in heterarchies, new approaches to manage the MNC", in C. BARTLETT, *Managing the Global Firm*, Routledge, 1990, p.15-46.

⁴⁷ TROMPENAARS F., *L'entreprise multiculturelle*, Maxima - Laurent du Mesnil Editeur, 1994, p.284.

Such a firm, idealised rather than ideal, advocates real equality rather than theoretical or abstract equality. This means that, in its stated principles, the preoccupation with equality will have less to do with proclaiming equality of rights than with implementing equality of opportunity (over and above equal treatment)⁴⁸. The managers of these firms will bear the heavy responsibility of taking action, of getting to know the cultures of their stakeholders, of taking action notably via training in the realm of the representations of each one in order to eradicate discriminatory behaviour, which is insidious. Thus, for a position as tele-counsellor in the provinces, an obese applicant stands three times less chance of getting the job as a person of normal weight. In Paris, the person would stand four times less chance⁴⁹.

From this viewpoint, one could say that, particularly in France, we would denounce 'colourless' or non-manual headquarters or work teams, whilst putting a premium on a firm where employees of all colours rub shoulders! But behind these traditional images we should remember that when we speak of differences, we have an ideal vision of the organisation. The diversity policies we see developing refer to the experience of an initial injustice, from which it is possible to construct a definition of justice and 'redeeming' human resource management policies. But O. DESCOMBES rightly notes that 'in order to say that a *particular identity* is missing from a set if it is not recognised, we must be able to represent an ideal set in which there is a pre-defined place for this unique identity, which would remain empty if it was not admitted⁵⁰.'

What form does diversity management take if it has its eyes riveted on indicators?

The saying goes that you have to observe a reality twice to see it clearly. Once we start to observe and measure, we wish to continue, but on condition

⁴⁸ McCARTY KILIAN C., HUKAI D. and McCARTY E., "Building diversity in the pipeline to corporate leadership", *Journal of Management Development*, 24 (2), 155-168, 2005.

⁴⁹ MC BEATH S., Social and cultural workshop report, *Les diversités* conference papers, ESSEC, 2007, p.10.

⁵⁰ DESCOMBES V., *Le complément de sujet*, Gallimard, 2004, p.387.

that we act. To succeed, one must engage the organisation in a dynamic of collective learning and education, which will have positive effects on people and teams *without having to give explanations quarterly or monthly to an impatient management*⁵¹! This process engages since it highlights the inherent weaknesses of a human resources policy.

Is the ideal firm of the diversity charters supposed to align all its economic activities, investment decisions or portfolio management activities to broader 'extra-financial' criteria?

This is not new. Thus, for example, in certain regions of the world (Africa, Asia, Latin America, India and so on) policies to '*nationalise posts*' have been accepted since the early sixties for foreign firms globalising their activities in developing countries. Like the French oil companies in Africa with explicit plans to '*Gabonise*' or '*Senegalise*' positions, these policies have translated into a set of local practices for the management of differences. They linked access to jobs to membership of an ethnic or social category. Several decades later, this was echoed in France with an agreement on 'the diversity and social cohesion in the firm' between the PSA Group and five trade unions, which provides for the recruitment of a quota of 100 non-French engineers and executives, and which eases the integration of graduates from sensitive urban areas.

We have noted that the large French multinationals headquartered in France have paid more attention to diversity of nationalities than of French people. Indeed, until the signing of the Diversity Charter in 2004, the notion of diversity referred mainly to national cultures in French firms and largely ignored individual differences such as social origin, gender or physical disability⁵². *It is only a slight exaggeration to say that certain large firms were initially interested in the 'Moroccan from Cambridge' or the Senegalese*

⁵¹ THOMAS D. A. and ELY R. J., "Making Differences Matter: a new Paradigm for Managing Diversity", *Harvard Business Review*, September-October 2006.

⁵² BROUSSILLON G.A., "Recruter les Français d'origine maghrébine et noire africaine. Vers une gestion de la 'diversité culturelle et ethnique' dans la société française?", *1st year Masters' thesis, Celsa, Paris IV*, 2003.

graduate from the Polytechnic Institute than their countrymen living in Paris and Clichy-sous-Bois.'

Measures, visible differences and hidden methods of discrimination

How can one deal with the fact that in France there are no 'ethno-racial' typologies? How can one proceed when, at the same time, these affiliations are in the private sphere and the person we wish to protect does not want to be identified at this level?

Mechanisms of discrimination are not limited to access to such or such a position, but rather to the capacity of a person, once they have joined the firm, to acquire the knowledge, experiences and career paths which place them in a legitimate and legitimated position.

These mechanisms arise from the natural tendency in our societies, as detected by A. JACQUARD, to incessantly categorise individuals. It is more difficult but at the same time richer to have access to the person behind the individual. A person able to recount to themselves and to others what they are becoming. 'The human being has a double nature: there is the human fabricated by nature, with all the genetic information; this gives us the individual, who can be defined physiologically. And then, little by little, for the human race, this individual changes nature, and becomes a person. To become a person, he or she needs to meet other people⁵³'.

JACQUARD teaches us that what is crucial is indeed '*to make everyone understand that he is useful to others, that he can participate, by contributing to a vast network of encounters.*' And whatever the group concerned, their

⁵³ Discussion with A. JACQUARD, written up by T. BERTHET and N. ELISSAGARAY, "De la différence à la discrimination", *11^{ème} Université de la formation, de l'éducation et de l'orientation, Bordeaux, AEP*, no. 130, 1st quarter 2006, p.10.

role is to bring together people to show them that they need each other, that we are defined by our relations with others⁵⁴.'

Is there a danger in defining the criteria used to measure corporate diversity, and the integration of groups which have been stigmatised? Aren't we simply reinforcing the phenomenon we wish to combat, that is, racism or exclusion of all kinds?

We can only deal with what we can name; we only combat what we see⁵⁵. But before defining the criteria, we need to make the judicial system more effective in the struggle against discrimination, via real types of independent mediation, such as the *Commission for Racial Equality* (CRE) in Great Britain. In the United States, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which also fights all forms of discrimination in the workplace, has more than 2800 employees!

It is regrettable to notice that the differences must first be *seen* in the current corporate landscape. Before even defining the criteria of measurement. In this regards, we may note the pledge of many of the top 40 firms on the French stock exchange to display the photos of their top managers in their annual report.

We must be wary today of this kind of purely 'visual' treatment of difference, such as those found in flourishing Benetton-type ads. Our image, that part of ourselves which we reveal to others, has become at least as important in defining ourselves as language, which expresses identity for itself, we may say. But what do these 'glossy' brochures 'reveal' about our differences?

Don't they reveal the harmful influence of certain media and their dimension of uniformisation, which requires all men to rush to resemble the portrait which society has of them?

French state television has decided that one out of every ten people on the screen should be 'an immigrant from outside the European Union.' The

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p.10.

⁵⁵ BELORGEY J. M., *Lutter contre les discriminations*, Ministry of Employment and Solidarity, 1999.

person in question should visibly display such an origin⁵⁶! *Are we not heading towards the consecration of ethnic or racial groups, imprisoning them within that which we believe them to be?* Hasn't a territorial criterion - stating that a person from such and such a place should have such and such a skin colour – stealthily replaced a criterion of racial or ethnic origin?

*Taking diversity seriously is like growing radishes, which is more about paying attention to the roots than to the vegetable we see!*⁵⁷

For example, when we have to choose among the criteria for diversity in the future, will we have to mention elements such as piercings, tattoos, beards, military status...and see to it we have a just representation of society? The question facing each firm is how to 'verbalise' the categories and criteria enabling us to judge differences, communicate them to the staff, and if they will be subject to progress.

'She was hired because she's a woman' is what we sometimes hear. She is therefore *representative* of what women are. Every day we see people attribute to total strangers the supposed attributes of that category. Paradoxically, at the heart of the struggle against all forms of discrimination, lies the danger of stating *for what purpose the person is being recruited*, which consolidates the negative stereotypes about disfavoured groups. The person was hired because they had an advantage, which may prove that the negative opinion is 'justified'. The danger is that the more we favour a so-called 'discriminated' group, the more we imprison them in these characteristics in order to 'assimilate' them (and not integrate them). More precisely, the use of 'a-racial' categories raises the question of the dilemma of racism without race, according to the expression of P. SIMON⁵⁸. *To put an end to racism, must we start by labelling with the racist's words, by taking account of racism?*

⁵⁶ CALVES G., *La discrimination positive*, PUF, 2004, p.121.

⁵⁷ PIERRE M., *L'interculturel dans les régions*, Presses de la Seine, 2006.

⁵⁸ SIMON P., Conference speech "De la question sociale à la question raciale?", Second day "Discriminations raciales et discrimination positive", Monday 17 October 2005, EHESS.

Statistics are intended to reveal the divisions in society. But statistics aren't neutral. Don't they accentuate the phenomena of discrimination they bring to light?

To reply, take the example of the assumed distance between a white man and a 'West Indian' woman. Is it constituted by both gender and skin colour? Is the distance between this same man and a woman in a wheelchair constituted by the following elements: gender, ethnic origin, age and physical capacity? Is this distance in itself, so to speak, a barrier between people? The danger of this type of division is clear. And the same thing goes for perceived distance and 'real' distance concerning religious beliefs, language, nationality, sexual preference and so on.

Is it therefore possible that an inappropriate use of statistics can lead to the formulation of an objective set of features to define a group, without its members being aware? *It is clear that one of the greatest stakes in diversity management policies is the dissemination or non-dissemination of stereotypes. Working on the transmission of beliefs and representations goes beyond the bounds of the firm.* To gain more rights or simply to exercise one's rights, must 'our French citizens of North African origin declare themselves to be Arabs, second-generation immigrants or North Africans? Must French citizens from Black Africa declare themselves to be Black or Black African?⁵⁹

We should hasten to say that asserting one's identity in the firm doesn't reveal a *a priori* membership, but an intention to communicate, a desire to talk which must be decoded or deconstructed. *Each and every manifestation of an identity is at the confluence of several possible interpretations.* What is important each time is to uncover the link between the perception of the external signs of identity and their interpretation. An identity trait cannot be separated from its expression, and good human resources managers know this only too well, since they deal with the different dimensions of a person at work, and patiently construct their social relations with their colleagues. However, all statistics rigidify boundaries and definitions, and one is either inside or outside. The question relates to all people 'at the frontiers of their

⁵⁹ BROUSSILLON G.A., "Recruter les Français d'origine maghrébine et noire africaine. Vers une gestion de la 'diversité culturelle et ethnique' de la société française?", 1st year Master's thesis, CELSA, Paris IV, 2003, p.83.

culture', whom we find hard to classify 'at a glance', in a national or regional register. 'I tried everything to avoid it, but no one can do so, we are all an addition of identities' said R. GARY, who boasted several social identities⁶⁰.

What should be done about children from mixed unions who refused to be catalogued, but who will be discriminated against in hiring, promotion or work conditions? All differences cannot be considered as similar, and we very quickly tend to confuse differentiation and discrimination, and turn an ethnic category into a uni-dimensional one, from which there is no escape. *Discrimination is by nature cumulative (a North African manual worker, a woman over 50 years old etc) and the expression of an unequal power relationship.* It is therefore not an individual attribute given to simplistic groupings. Certain aspects are unflattering (an unsightly physical appearance) others are not. Will we in the future constitute 'unsightly' or 'unflattering' groups, depending on whether we regard physical beauty as a career plus or a handicap⁶¹?

Ultimately, for P SIMON⁶² 'the question is whether it is possible for the 'oppressed' to use the categories of the 'oppressor' in order to struggle against the domination and free himself from the fascination. Is it possible to transform this order without adhering to the way it functions?' During our own study last year, a Human Resource Director said to us that 'I don't want to force people to state what they identify with, list their memberships, pry into their private lives and reconstruct what I know about their family history. This isn't my job, even though diversity policies may require me to do so!'

⁶⁰ GARY R., *Pseudo*, Mercure de France, 1976, p.9.

⁶¹ ILKKA R., "Applicant appearance and selection decision making: revitalising", *Business Communication Quarterly*, 58, September 1995, p.11-18.

⁶² SIMON P., conference speech: "*De la question sociale à la question raciale?*", Second day: "Discriminations raciales et discrimination positive", Monday 17 October 2005, EHESS.

Economic, social and cultural rights?

Once again, isn't every policy which favours minorities condemned to recognise the identity it calls into question, by basing itself on the category it is denouncing?

In France today, the issues linked to discrimination rarely seem to be tackled in terms of group discrimination, but rather dealt with on an individual basis. Nevertheless, the current debate on diversity may trigger a progressive change in firms from the *political rights* of the Human Rights Declaration of 1798 to the *social rights* of the worker's condition and then to the *cultural rights* of women, ethnic and sexual minorities. A. RENAULT defines cultural rights as 'rights permitting members of a group with a shared heritage (language, values, various indicators) to maintain a positive relation with their cultural traits, and thus their cultural identity⁶³.' A culturally distinctive identity for a single individual. Whose rights and to what? For the individual or the group? We always pass to the community level when we grant rights to the group and never again to the individual. *Are certain universal rights only for the individual? That is our conviction⁶⁴.*

The adoption of measures which foster diversity shouldn't lead us to reject every universal perspective within the firm such as flexible careers, selective hiring and the like. Profoundly linked to the idea of communication not between cultures, but between *subjects* bearing cultures, is the idea of rational measurement of effort, of a commonly agreed upon reference which serves as a basis to measure future promotions, skills possessed and thus performance.

Beyond a declaration of principles, your research and publications stress the stakes involved – in terms of acquired and constructed identities – in corporate diversity policies. Does the assimilation of

⁶³ RENAULT A. and TOURAINE A., *Un débat sur la laïcité*, Stock, 2005, p.102.

⁶⁴ See RENAULT A. and TOURAINE A., *Un débat sur la laïcité*, Stock, 2005, p.107.

discriminated groups require a long and rigorous process of socialisation?

Every diversity management policy stresses the need to know and even more to *recognise* differences, to allow for the development of individuals who are different, deeply imbued with their diversity, and able to contribute more fully to the economic and social performance of the firm. Having studied this question in the workplace, it appears that more and more conflicts are less to do with rights or salary increases, than with the simple fact of being considered as a human being, worthy of a job or of the interest of his employer, colleagues and partners. *At work as elsewhere, the sense of our own value always depends on appreciation by others.*

It is for this reason that, whilst legislation may be a useful stepping stone, it is an insufficient response to the issue of diversity and the means to eradicate discrimination. The law, we should recall, is a credible threat, and as such fosters awareness about problems. 'It is only via regulations and laws that facts may appear as what they are, that is, as facts⁶⁵.' P. SCHARNITZKY stresses that *individuals generally 'discriminate out of concern for their psychological and social well-being; because they are reproducing an educational pattern based on beliefs which are often incorrect and unjust; and they discriminate because society doesn't send them any alarm signal to the contrary⁶⁶'.*

Moreover, in France and other Western countries, society imposes upon us a dual obligation to continually improve our conditions of existence – including for the luckiest among us – and unwavering self-esteem. When the threat of unemployment spreads, the individual in the workplace is accountable for his future without anything outside of him conferring durable meaning or possibility. Apart from a few rare public institutions offering relative job security, the price we pay for the conquest of recognition and personal independence is the management of a heightened feeling of vulnerability. Faced with the hurdles of the hiring process, the quasi-permanent or general risk of being laid off and the impoverishment of a growing number of workers,

⁶⁵ HEIDEGGER M., *Chemins qui ne mènent nulle part*, Gallimard, 1999.

⁶⁶ SCHARNITZKY P., *Les pièges de la discrimination*, L'Archipel, 2006, p.223.

people are more concerned with maintaining a minimum of dignity than with having their identity acknowledged by others. The more the individual is all alone to face life, his survival and efforts to evolve in the face of never-ending changes in his environment and demands to upgrade his skills, the greater his anxiety about losing his rank and being abandoned by those with whom he believes to be united by social, marital or professional ties.

You mention a loss of self-esteem and identity. Is this one explanation for the current success of diversity policies?

In our so-called 'advanced' societies, the question is no longer that of the degree, but rather what we can with it, in order to add greater value to the numerous years devoted to obtaining it. Even if certain individuals are the beneficiaries today of measures of positive discrimination, most graduates 'of colour' legitimately react very badly to the idea that their counterparts may think – instead of recognising them in terms of their identity and human dignity – that they obtained their positions solely because of their skin colour. It is the same for women or any other minority creating clubs simply to equal their male counterparts, those who are physically 'normal' or without visible handicaps.

These examples demonstrate that individuals risk losing neither their identity, nor themselves, especially by geographical and social mobility, or professional advancement, out of their group. The only risk they run is linked to their way of managing the negative or conflictual experience which affects the representation or image they have of themselves and therefore the roots of their identity. In a to and fro movement between one's culture of origin and the groups one belongs to (professional or otherwise), this representation of self is extremely sensitive to the image others convey back, and, for the majority of current immigrants, to rejection and lack of recognition from the social environment. This in turn triggers mechanisms of narcissistic withdrawal, the creation of identities which are either defensive or overly ethnocentric, a set of phenomena which psychologists label the *over-assertion of a depreciated self*. For this depreciation to exist, the mechanisms

of recognition must already have been in operation to produce self-esteem⁶⁷. Those who are the objects of contempt or scorn must also understand the social significance of this contempt, and should not possess a real or ideal community of reference whose positive recognition fully or partially compensates the former. In this respect, 'we only become what we are by the secret and radical negation of what they have made of us⁶⁸.' This raises the question of what lies *beyond the compensation or redress*, by an exchange of arguments, negotiation or recourse to narrative. Every manager working with diverse teams knows this, or should know this.

And such situations are taken to the extreme in straightforward situations of racism...

Indeed. It is the racist who creates race. The racial notion is above all a human experience and racism in its most violent form is the experience of assigning identity, as a result of being reduced to an object. Being a problem for others is always a strange experience. W.E.B. DUBOIS in his time noted the 'dual consciousness' of the social environment, the coexistence and dual presence within oneself of society and its minority⁶⁹. Being black is neither an essence - a fact of birth - nor membership of a cultural community, but the result of a social relationship. 'There are Blacks because we consider them as such⁷⁰. 'Yes' D. FASSIN reminds us 'human beings have biological differences; no, the idea of race is of no help in categorising these

⁶⁷ LAZZERI C. and CAILLE A., "La reconnaissance aujourd'hui", in *La revue du MAUSS*, no. 23, 2004, p.104.

⁶⁸ SARTRE J. P., *Réflexions sur la question juive*, Gallimard, 1954, cited by LAZZERI C. and CAILLE A., "La reconnaissance aujourd'hui", in *La revue du MAUSS*, no. 23, 2004, p.106.

⁶⁹ DU BOIS W. E. B., *The Souls of Black Folks*, Dover Publications, 1994, cited by FASSIN D., "Nommer. Interpréter. Le sens commun de la question sociale", in FASSIN D. and FASSIN E., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?*, La Découverte, 2006, p.35.

⁷⁰ DIAYE N., "Questions de couleur. Histoire, idéologie et pratiques du colorisme", in FASSIN D. and FASSIN E., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?*, La Découverte, 2006, p.37.

differences; yes, the notion of race is helpful when giving an account of experiences, socio-political injustice and racism⁷¹.

In firms, this may take the form of withdrawal from the workplace, amongst other forms of internal exile⁷² which affect the personality and its ability to adapt to the host culture. This is the case for example with foreign graduates or graduates from less-privileged classes who are doubly penalised: they live at the 'wrong address' and they have physical features or names which connote ethnic, national or cultural origins which recruiters a priori perceive poorly, having their own cooptation habits as the norm. J. PALMADE has clearly demonstrated the loss of self-confidence, and that which triggers - or fails to - the recognition by peers or management. According to the author, 'anxiety about the future makes one's identity more fragile, and correlates to a withdrawal into the private sphere or the Self. In turn, this withdrawal induces adaptive behaviour - of the 'dependence-submission' type - to work conditions, the firm, power, experienced as anonymous and hegemonic, but above to all the future, within which one must say goodbye to all the promises and projects inside of oneself⁷³.'

The implementation of diversity policies run the great risk today of treating things superficially whilst at the same time not treating discrimination and conditions of access to forms of acknowledgement. Take an example. What meaning can we attribute to the frequently referred to notion of a 'visible minority'? Should we focus on real membership of a discriminated group (whose criteria we share), or on the auto-identification demanded by an individual with a group, such that he may benefit from specific policies in favour of diversity, such as exemption from recruitment tests or more days off to exercise his religious beliefs?

An employee may belong to several communities of the same category (dual nationality) or cultural entities of different levels (regions, religious

⁷¹ FASSIN D., "Nommer. Interpréter. Le sens commun de la question sociale", in FASSIN D. and FASSIN E., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?*, La Découverte, 2006, p.31.

⁷² SAINSAULIEU R., *L'identité au travail*, PFNSP/Dalloz, 1977.

⁷³ PALMADE J., "Communication managériale et disaffiliation", *Quaderni*, number 53, Winter 2003/2004, p.88.

communities, professions, political parties, clans and so on). Membership of each of these may lead to discrimination. We often forget that it isn't because the individual sees himself as a member or heir to the Spanish, Catalan, Castilian or Andalusian regional cultural traditions that he will be perceived as such by the people he meets or by his colleagues. For this reason, he must himself undertake the task of 'revealing his identity to others' i.e. the membership he has chosen or claims, plus the beliefs, values and norms he strongly adheres to.

For many immigrants or members of minority groups, identity is not split but plural, their personality is 'composite', without for that matter being fragmented, or the individual in question being crushed by over-simplified designations, weighty regulations or statutes raining down on them⁷⁴.' On account of this, the right to 'indifference', or more precisely the request to be like others, comes up against the constant reminder of their origins, and the often negative stereotypes and shortcomings which are too hastily attributed to them. The ones who survive the many ordeals are those who - after several years of experience in multicultural environments - attain the distance and synthesis which allow them to adapt to different contexts and to foreign counterparts, neither relinquishing their cultural heritage nor the idea of their 'deep-seated identity'.

As a result, the corporate diversity policies being implemented today feature discrimination as a central concern without often accepting *the pertinence of the 'multi-criteria' analysis of the factors or mechanisms at the heart of the transformation of identity at work in the attitudes and behaviour of the groups who are victims of discrimination.* What is more, and we have already raised this point, *discrimination is cumulative and multifaceted.* Indeed, it may result from the taking into account of a particular feature of the person concerned (a job applicant, an employee and so on) such as origin or gender, sexual preference or membership or non-membership, real or imagined, of such and such an ethnic group, country or ethnic group of origin, political opinions or trade union activities, religious beliefs or physical appearance, name or state

⁷⁴ See BERTHELIER R., "Ce qu'en pense le psychiatre", in CHARLOT M., *Des jeunes algériens en France*, CIEMM, 1981, p.232, cited by GUERRAOUI Z. and TROADEC B., *Psychologie interculturelle*, A. Colin, 2000, p.77.

of health⁷⁵. Discrimination may often result from the simultaneous consideration of several of these criteria, such as the nexus of age, gender, and social or ethnic origin. Nevertheless, in the corporate context, the rejection of a candidature for a hiring or a promotion by management or the human resources manager, may result from non-discriminatory criteria such as degrees or experience, professional competence or seniority.

You are describing the emergence of a society based on contempt, which recalls the work of E. GOFFMAN, for whom the basis of the human struggle is not the desire to assert the superiority of one's need for recognition, but rather the more intimate desire to avoid the contempt arising out of the presentation of oneself. A just society enables a person to escape contempt. Do different forms of discrimination in and outside of the firm bear any similarity to different degrees of violence to others? To remedy this, what do you think of the idea of introducing legal quotas based on ethnic, cultural or religious identity?

The firm indeed appears to us as 'an arena of ordeals' for the employee who constantly 'experiences himself' and for whom, the opposite of recognition (non-recognition) is different to its antithesis (contempt). What certain members of our society question today is the fact that the Labour Code is the same for all, entrenching the rights of citizens and employees. What they contest is the close correspondence between 'the people' and the citizen, rejecting any identity issue based on social origin or religion. No specific rights for identifiable minorities. Indeed, a universal conception refutes any notion of a *pluralistic* construction of equality. What these people or groups question is the uniform treatment of different situations for the weakest. The most moderate among them assume that differential or preferential treatment will disappear when the group concerned has overcome its handicap or made up its alleged backwardness. What is at stake is to re-establish real equality of opportunity. For us, such policies are understandable in the case of a country like the USA which, in their time, had to virtually start from scratch, as regards the rights of the black population, for example. But we are more dubious

⁷⁵ According to articles L.122-45 of the Work Code and 225-1 of the Penal Code.

about France today. Questions of diversity performance indicators highlight the fact that legal regulations are necessary but of limited use, and that the real issue is the job of educating those who wish to commit to diversity now or in the future. *Basically, statistical analysis – even multi-factored – is not enough. It must be complemented by a psychological and sociological understanding of different elements like the work situation and the meaning employees attribute to it, the stakes for employees and the firm, so as to isolate the features of discrimination.*

Take the example of disability. What is really at stake is to socialise the future decision-makers to the notion of difference from the minute they join the firm so that they don't serve as the vehicle for a set of prejudices about disabled people later on. Not only does the disabled person have to adapt, the firm must be in a position to accommodate him. Values do not stem from education, but vice versa. Values are not conventional and arbitrary, but have to stand the test of time and be experimented with. For the head of a firm or the human resources director, this raises the question of closely analysing identity features such as ethnicity, culture or religion, which are doubly-subjective, for those who claim them and those who attribute them, and which are rooted in objective reality.

Are you saying that diversity management policies are having difficulty spreading because the French firm is culturally considered as being in the public sphere? That in some way, we hesitate to introduce notions, such as beliefs and values, from the private sphere.

In the French mindset, the firm – both in the private and public sector – belongs to the public sphere. In the Republican tradition, nothing in the private sphere of the employee or citizen should find an echo in the public sphere i.e. the firm. However, most diversity policies are of Anglo-Saxon inspiration and require one to clearly set forth differences or express difference in all circumstances. Republican values do not require the French public to understand what differentiates us or to pry into our private lives. *The public domain such as that of the firm is considered to be universal and homogeneous. It operates on the principle that each one should forget to be himself in this domain considered as public. Today, however, it is as if our*

fellow citizens want less or nothing more of this. The person on the carpet, or who wants to express himself in the firm, is the contemporary individual who sees himself in 'his minority' and wishes to positively assert this fact in the public arena, with their distinctive characteristics, and receive dignity and acknowledgement in return.

In this respect, the demand for authenticity and equal dignity affirms itself as the expression of a legitimate individual or collective difference. The two dimensions are inextricably linked in our societies on condition that we distinguish between norms, values (which derive from the public sphere) and conventions (which derive from the private sphere). However, every 'community reflex' appears precisely when we try "to transform these norms and customs and impose a specific law⁷⁶". Whilst conventional and specific customs can be explained by tradition, norms and values appeal to the liberty of the subject and may have a universal character (as demonstrated by the trite example of politeness highlighted by R. BOUDON⁷⁷). Politeness is a universal norm because it expresses a value which is itself universal: the acknowledgement of the other person's dignity as a human being⁷⁸.

Diversity policies inevitably raise two questions: should we defend the emergence of cultural rights alongside social or political rights? And what is the appropriate level of action (Employment Law, collective bargaining agreement, international agreements, internal regulations, local agreements and so on) on which to base or extend this acknowledgement of cultural difference? And enabling us to acknowledge particular cultural rights and give them a 'concrete' dimension to derive salaries, qualification scales, anonymous CVs or other management practices?

Rights are not and never will be a substitute for the equitable treatment of individuals. Stated otherwise, a catalogue of rights is insufficient in determining equal consideration. We do not have enough hindsight to argue that the anonymous CV contributes more to real equality than other options of this nature.

⁷⁶ BOUDON R., *Renouveler la démocratie. Eloge du sens commun*, 2006, p.76.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p.46.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p.47.

Regarding current diversity policies, what place should we make for the expression of religious convictions in the workplace, the public space and in public services?

The question is whether or not to take into account concretely cultural dictates such as religious festivals or dietary requirements. To answer this question, we may study how other countries deal with the 'signs' and the 'symbols' of diversity.

A case which comes to mind is a firm which goes global and locates to a country with a Sikh community. Should it exempt this 'Sikh culture' from wearing a helmet in its workshops, as was the case with the government of British Columbia in 1996 and bicycle helmets for members of the Sikh community?

In the same country, the Chamber of Lords basing itself on a race relations law to resolve a similar problem, decided in 1983 in favour of a Sikh child who refused to wear a cap – part of his school's uniform – and preferred wearing a turban. The Chamber of Lords decided that, in certain circumstances, discrimination against a religious group constituted racial discrimination. In point of fact, English law makes several concessions to Sikhs, such as the exemption from wearing motorcycle helmets. The House of Lords, in this case, gave a broad meaning to the term 'racial group' as commonly understood, even though the Sikhs cannot be considered as such. To constitute a 'racial group', a community must identify itself as such by virtue of a long common history, a cultural tradition, a common geographical origin, common language or religion or the fact of constituting a minority.

Thus, in this case, discrimination against a religious group may constitute racial discrimination. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that this jurisprudence does not apply to Moslems.

In Germany, articles 136 to 141 of the Weimar Constitution, an integral part of the fundamental laws, regulates the relations between Church and State. Even though there is no State Church, neither is there a separation between Church and State. Therefore, religion must be registered in police and school records, and courses on religion are compulsory at school. Paradoxically for

French people for example, the fundamental Law guarantees each German citizen 'freedom of belief and conscience'.

In Belgium, it is forbidden to ban a distinguishing feature such as the headscarf if the students participate in all the lessons, and in particular physical education, sports activities and swimming lessons. But Belgian law forbids the wearing of the *chador*, which covers the entire face.

In some countries, pupils may be obliged to wear a school uniform, to which they may add a headscarf or a turban, on condition that it is the same colour as the uniform, devoid of any decoration, and tightened during certain lessons such as chemistry and physical education. In Germany once again, the wearing of a headscarf in educational institutions has not created any major conflict. The Federal administrative court nevertheless considered it legitimate to exempt Moslem girls from physical education classes, since separate classes could not be provided for boys and girls. The court pointed out that the obligation to wear loose clothing for the occasion would constitute an unjustified exclusion⁷⁹.

This short detour abroad underlines the multiple manners in which to legislate, identify and put forward claims. In this regard, J. LEVY notes that "the unification of French society has undoubtedly diminished the magnitude of the differences between French people: there is less difference between a person from Brittany and Savoy today than a century ago. At the same time, we notice that there are still people from Brittany and local customs and practices have survived or even intensified, the reason being more linked to the assertion of a chosen identity within a wider community than to 'resistance', as is often said. We may envisage the same processes on a global scale: a decrease in these magnitudes, and a simultaneous assertion on the bases of other identities⁸⁰". *The national register continues to exist and doesn't eliminate multi-identity*. Even if C. BEBEAR and Y. SABEG⁸¹ note that "every equal opportunity policy assumes the recognition of the existence of

⁷⁹ Institut de Droit Constitutionnel Européen (IDCE) web site, www.uni-trier.de.

⁸⁰ Discussion with LEVY J., "La géographie pour comprendre les sociétés", *Sciences Humaines*, no. 122, December 2001, p.38.

⁸¹ SABEG Y and MEHAIGNERIE L., *Les oubliés de l'égalité des chances*, Institut Montaigne, 2004, p.27.

minorities”, most French people born of a recent wave of immigration expect to be acknowledged for two or three identities, and not just one origin.

This evolution requires that we abandon the frame of reference of methodological nationalism⁸², and to understand the mechanisms of a new ‘transnational’ geography, to which are linked both diversity policies and, more generally, reflections on intercultural management in the firm. Indeed, cultures - rather than dissolving themselves - are mingling with each other at the threshold between the local and the planetary⁸³. *This nexus glorifies the perpetual search for the self, which means that it is less the situation which gives meaning to our behaviour than the construction of ourselves as subjects*⁸⁴. This articulation goes beyond loyalty to a specific geographical origin, national destiny or particular ethnic group, and requires a study of geographically mobile people, their initiatives and itineraries, be they physical or symbolic. It also incites us to enrich our thinking about intercultural management. Indeed, for G. HOFSTEDE, “it is principally at the national level that we may talk of culture, for in our time, societies are the most complete human groupings, both in terms of internal relations and their independence in relation to their environments, to maintain a rate of integration between their members which one doesn’t find at other levels of the social structure⁸⁵”.

This has evolved. *Up till now, intercultural management research has given little place to the individual, to his multiple identities, preferring to focus on the constitution of behavioural differences arising from the process of national socialisation.* This research holds that each society has a powerful ability to develop unique cultural styles typical of their national context, which ‘reveal’ themselves in a work context with the greatest frequency. We are increasingly dubious about this. We argue in favour of rehabilitating the situation or context of intercultural interaction, since our conclusion about the firms we studied is

⁸² BECK U., *Qu’est-ce que le cosmopolitisme?*, Aubier, 2006.

⁸³ BENICHO M., *Le multiculturalisme*, Editions Bréal, 2006, p.123.

⁸⁴ TOURAIN A., “Sociologie sans société”, in WIEVIORKA M., *Les sciences sociales en mutation*, Editions Sciences Humaines, 2007, p.36.

⁸⁵ BOLLINGER D. and HOFSTEDE G., *Les différences culturelles dans le management*, Editions d’Organisation, Paris, 1987.

that there is no automatic link between the place of education and later application, between national culture, higher education and management⁸⁶. Management practices stamp the processes of adaptation of employees with dissimilar features, which makes it impossible to reduce them to one unique path, which tends in the end to the automatic assimilation of the values of an organisation and reproduction of the same behaviour derived from membership of a national culture.

⁸⁶ BARMAYER C., *Intercultural management et styles d'apprentissage*, PUL, 2007, p.3.

-II-
**FROM DIVERSITY POLICIES TO INTERCULTURAL
MANAGEMENT**

“The cultural challenge for organisations in the future will probably be a system able to recognise and vitalise the constant plurality of their members, because far from being the result of the spread of the values of one dominant group, we must see in them the possibility of developing a path of internal creativity, based on the acknowledgement of differences, the emergence of new identities and collective projects.” (R.SAINSAULIEU)⁸⁷

⁸⁷ SAINSAULIEU R., *Sociologie de l'organisation et de l'entreprise*, PFNSP/Dalloz, 1988, p.203.

The internationalisation of firms and cultural imperatives

Audrey Trotereau⁸⁸: You distinguish between diversity policies - which are today largely associated with disadvantaged minority groups – and “intercultural management”, a notion which is still unclear today and which refers notably to expatriates required to leave their cultural origins to work abroad...

Evalde Mutabazi and Philippe Pierre : As we can observe from several rich countries (France, Germany, the United States and so on), it is as if the problem of diversity and multiculturalism only concerns disadvantaged groups from foreign cultures and more precisely economically less-advanced countries⁸⁹. However, since the end of the 1980s and as a result of globalisation, immigration and mobility have become a larger and more complex management problem. For instance, 85000 IT engineers leave India each year. In the United States, researchers from developing countries represent one-fifth of all research and development staff. This problem of cross-border mobility doesn't only concern disadvantaged groups, but also elites working for global firms in poor countries encountering cultural diversity and foreign management practices outside of their cultures of origin via bosses, colleagues and counterparts of different nationalities and from different cultural horizons.

Long before globalisation as we know it, immigration existed in both directions. Several poor countries, in Africa for example, have hosted since they were discovered and mainly during the Colonial era, a greater number of immigrants and Western expatriates than the number of immigrants from some countries in the Western metropolises. Even if it is true that these expatriates enjoy better economic conditions, as well as an educational level allowing them to adapt more easily to other cultural arenas, it remains that as human beings they encounter personal and professional difficulties integrating

⁸⁸ Journalist and Chief Editor, *Business Digest*.

⁸⁹ See ERBA S., *Une France pluriculturelle*, E.J.L. 2007, p.41.

(cooperation with others, ease of implementation of projects) outside of their own national and professional culture.

This leads us to distinguish between diversity policies which operate in one country, and intercultural management which evokes the crossing of national frontiers, and cohesion between several diversity policies.

This is typically the problem facing managers of global firms who have to deal with different conceptions of equality in France and South Africa, Canada and Brazil, and who nevertheless have to lay down the principles of a 'global' policy of human resource management for their subsidiaries. But the diversity and intercultural management policies which we advocate are not only distinct from the point of view of their geographical application. They represent the two different conceptions of togetherness in the firm which we are about to explain.

Over and above quotas, legal sanctions and the sought after 'capital of goodwill' arising from legal rulings which still motivate many French firms today, our research shows that multicultural firms still have a lot to gain by enriching their diversity management via a more nuanced and rigorous approach. With this as an objective, the features of the intercultural management model we advocate, differs largely from current diversity management policies⁹⁰.

Since the end of the eighties, the difficulties encountered with mergers, and the management of subsidiaries in Africa, Eastern Europe, India or Latin America, have progressively raised awareness of the fact that the exchange and cooperation between multicultural partners is not self-evident. Those firms which have really taken these differences into account, after questioning their systems of authority and governance, have realised that cultural and managerial diversity are a powerful lever for innovation and socio-economic performance, on condition the dominant culture doesn't favour conformity more than performance.

⁹⁰ See MORIN E., *Introduction à la pensée complexe*, Editions du Seuil, 2005, p.121 and D'IRIBARNE P., "Culture et 'effet sociétal'", *Revue Française de Sociologie*, XXXII, 1991, p.599.

Paying attention to discrimination in diversity management policies, and seeking complementariness in intercultural management. Aren't these two sides of the same coin? How do diversity management policies differ from intercultural management?

Faced with the treatment of difference and the question of togetherness in the firm, an initial reaction is to deny the existence of discriminatory behaviour in the firm, or even to accept it, for the reason that combating it is too expensive. A second reaction derives from fear of being caught, the Labour code and the courts. A third reaction is the use of statistics, and a will to conduct a diversity management policy according to indicators and a scoreboard. Management seeks an ideal in terms of equal treatment of individuals via a human resource management policy based on a reduced gap between individuals or minority groups and groups of 'reference'.

At this third level, measures and surveys linked to discrimination must be distinguished from those linked to management diversity. In the one case, we are measuring the groups exposed to discrimination (via lists - based on socio-ethnic criteria - of Arabs, Berbers, Indians, of criteria of origin of Africans, Europeans, West Indians and so on) and stereotypes based on appearance; in the other, we are dealing with careers, socialisation paths and integration in the firm.

At this stage, management generally favours - something we are against - positive discrimination, and offers members of disadvantaged groups, positions from which they are generally excluded. They may go even further and favour 'affirmative action' - which we are equally against - making the firm's employees a representative sample of the area it operates in. In this case, human resource management is based on the systematic management of diversity (statistics are operative and there are an increasing number of quotas). In order to do so, is it necessary to invent sector thresholds, as a function of the 'rate of representation' of ethnic or other minorities? This seems reprehensible. It is important to agree on a threshold where diversity is

considered 'acceptable'⁹¹, the risk being that one may spend more time proving that a group is the object of discrimination than acting on it together⁹².

The fourth level is that of intercultural management, which is both more profound and dynamic, as it seeks synergies and complementariness.

Intercultural management, by placing itself in the long period necessary to build trust between different partners, tries to combat "ethno-racial" or sexual engineering whereby all employees are observed and subject to analysis as a function of how they appear to others!

Intercultural management derives its effectiveness from its active surveillance of the processes of discrimination and its effects. Benchmarking techniques follow indicators which are stable over time and determined outside of the organisation, that is, in other firms, reduce the human resource director's role to that of a robot! The principle of a useful human resource management policy for all doesn't mean conceived for all elsewhere!

The aim of intercultural management isn't to be an 'identity check' in the sense of giving a competitive advantage to membership of one group over another. It is rather a policy to foster the creation of the conditions necessary for acknowledgement in the firm. We will consider this key point in more detail.

⁹¹ AMELLAL K., *Discriminez-moi ! Enquête sur nos inégalités*, Flammarion, 2005, p.369.

⁹² See DESCHAVANNE E., "La discrimination positive face à l'idéal républicain: définition, typologie, historique, arguments", *Pour une société de la nouvelle chance*, La documentation française, 2006, p.173.

Table No. 2: From diversity management to intercultural management

Fight for 'non-discrimination'
Intercultural management
Diversity policies
Defensive attitudes
Proactive policies

FROM DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT TO INTERCULTURAL MANAGEMENT

Improving the performance of the firm

Reaching agreements and encouraging equality
Favouring innovation, learning processes, opening to new markets, benefiting from the diversity of stakeholders (new clients, shareholders, suppliers and so on)

Improving the performance of diversified teams

Developing synergies and intercultural learning

Piloting individual management of diversity

Hiring and integrating better, managing competencies (reporting schedules), fostering employee involvement, foreseeing labour shortages and so on

Demonstrating one's engagement as a socially responsible firm (indicators of progress)

Anticipating the risk of a deterioration in the firm's image

Conforming to legal requirements

Sources: IMS Entreprendre pour la Cité and E. MUTABAZI and P. PIERRE, 2007

But indeed, what arises from the experience of the firms you have studied or worked in?

As J.-F. CHANLAT has shown very well in his work⁹³, the challenge of diversity today lies not only in the integration of minorities on domestic soil, but also of managers and executives of global firms, especially in the case of business partnerships. There are currently at least three issues for firms operating globally. The decreasing share of 'domestic' markets is forcing firms to invent new strategies of survival and development. A feature of these strategies is the race for size, that is, an incessant increase in business partnerships via mergers or acquisitions, strategic alliances or international joint ventures. Competitive pressures are being exacerbated and product life cycles reduced in a world which has never been so rich and unequal (whilst 1,3 billion people don't have access to drinking water, the richest 200 people on earth have over 41% of total revenue of the world's population).

Approaching business partners, clients and collaborators from different countries, becomes far more complex because their lifestyles, languages and behaviour are evolving and diverse. Globalisation does not lead to cultural uniformity. Even though a strong tendency towards uniformity is underway, deep-seated community, ethnic and cultural trends are alive. Fascination and resistance, ethnic demands and the commoditisation of the world are, in some way, different facets of the same dynamic phenomenon⁹⁴. In this context, company managers frequently need to deal, not with easily-identifiable competitors or familiar partners as is the case on domestic markets, but with organisations, human communities or professional groups which are both dynamic and complex and marked by different cultures and lifestyles, and with diverse and even contradictory 'management preferences'.

To describe these differences or management preferences, P.DUSSAUGE and B. RAMANTSOA speak about 'nationality as experienced' and evoke the (supposed) nationality of a firm. For them, corporate identity is based on a collective imagination and the production of symbols: "In respect of myths,

⁹³ CHANLAT J. F., *L'individu dans l'organisation. Les dimensions oubliées*, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1990.

⁹⁴ MARTIN D., METZGER J.L. and PIERRE P., *Les métamorphoses du monde. Sociologie de la mondialisation*, Editions du Seuil, 2003.

rites and taboos, the office layout (Japanese-style in the *sagosacha* in France), handshakes (French style), back slapping (American style) the more or less Anglo-Saxon jargon and dress codes.....are symbolic productions which, over and above the anecdote, are closely linked to the collective imagination and thus to nationality as experienced". The collective imagination "is based on the representation which the staff construct for themselves of the tasks at hand for the multinational ("above national states", "a national player facing other states" and so on), refers to the image of ideal moral and professional qualities which an associate must have as well as the image which the power structure must have in the firm⁹⁵."

Can you say a little more about the main instruments of action which can be used in multicultural contexts or in the intercultural management which you wish to see?

Regarding the management of people at work – but the issue of diversity also arises in the implementation of a strategy in marketing, communication and the management of distribution networks – it is becoming more and more difficult to impose behaviour, management styles and management procedures or motivational criteria today. Employees are better informed and generally better equipped to understand what is going on in other countries or competing firms, and executives in particular are likely to become more and more demanding in terms of equity and the quality of life at work, the equilibrium between their contribution to the firm and their remuneration, and their professional and personal development. Certain people will use diversity management as a pretext for refusing a decision they consider as unjustified. Aren't we witnessing today the most highly qualified among them – certainly in a covert way because of unemployment – refusing to fit into an organisational mould imposed from the outside, whose values and rules contradict their own? *Aren't we seeing more and more of them taking a back seat when management only expresses a minimum of acknowledgement?*

⁹⁵ DUSSAUGE P. and RAMANANTSOA B., "Les multinationales, champions nationaux ou citoyens du monde: une question d'identité", *Revue Française de Gestion*, Paris, September-October 1984.

For several years now, our conclusions have matched those of many other authors who argue that this demand for acknowledgement, which is being expressed less and less by trade unions and other social movements, is fuelling a silent rebellion, whose suppressed energy backfires on executives who are under constant pressure from shareholders to perform better and faster. This observation in itself, and the paradoxical situations it produces at work, portrays the rather unfavourable managerial climate in which diversity management policies are being implemented today. Because of the lack of time, this context permits neither listening nor face-to-face interaction.

Consequently, between 50 and 60 percent of business partnerships have failed, or been plagued by costly managerial problems (HP and Compaq, Daimler and Chrysler, Renault and Volvo, to name a few) over the last ten years. Whilst the share price of certain firms has skyrocketed following a merger or an acquisition, their strategic incompetence has not only led to massive layoffs and plant closures, but also to the implementation of often poorly-prepared changes to the organisation, notably characterised by the lack of integration of different cultures (local, regional, national or professional)⁹⁶.

Over and above the aspects of diversity which are today accounted for by legal provisions or norms used in ratings, the real challenge for firms will more and more consist in developing shared references, in order to obtain the desired synergies, the convergence of efforts and complementariness between culturally diverse employees, sometimes operating several thousand kilometres apart. *New arrangements for "on-site" internationalisation in firms* – such as the personal assistant of a regional director who speaks three or four languages each day to dozens of people in different countries – will fashion new arrangements for intercultural communication in the firm. Face to face contact with a foreign partner will decline, and be replaced by devices of all kinds, from internet to videoconferences!

Current events are placing new intercultural demands on the organisation of teams. This is the case for a number of firms which, in

⁹⁶ D'IRIBARNE Ph., "Ce qui est universel et ce qui ne l'est pas", *Revue Française de Gestion*, no. 64 September-October, 1999.

the consumer goods field for example, face a strategic choice: to globalise their marketing, or develop product strategies and therefore specific “glocal” marketing corresponding to different segments of their world market.

New intercultural requirements also arise when joint ventures link firms with different cultures together, giving rise to very complex demands: different types of corporate law, labour legislation, and other general regulations such as those concerning profit-sharing.

To fight effectively on all these different fronts, and resist the resulting strong contradictory pressures, one of the competences which was neglected in the past but which has become indispensable today is knowing how to account for and assimilate into one’s system of management the diverse expectations, mindsets and behaviour patterns and plural strategic and identity issues. The local manager and the human resources director must analyse complex situations featuring individuals rooted in different universes, situations in which conflicts are avoided by compromises which avoid recourse to an absolute solution. For them, seeking compromise suggests the eventuality of a principle capable of creating compatibility judgements based on objects from different universes (the cultures of professions, nations, ethnic groups or influential professional networks). *The identification of different ‘social worlds’ is the first stage in the construction of agreements. This is a preliminary step required by all diversity policies, but it is insufficient.*

Does intercultural management, seen as an ideal goal, go further?

Yes. On a company level, intercultural management also raises the question of confidence and distributive justice within the company. Traditionally, justice treats similar cases in a similar manner. Simply complying with legal or productive standards is insufficient to take advantage of the diversity of cultures and reference models provided by the multicultural partners now represented by companies. *To a greater degree than in the past, the intercultural management that we recommend calls on the thematic of identity and Otherness, as well as the dialectic of acknowledging differences.* As such, practicing intercultural management is an experience that is both

managerial and political. The fact is that all policies lend themselves to reciprocal recognition and even the making of comparisons with elements that cannot be compared, not so much to list them from the strongest to the weakest but rather to better grasp their characteristics and use them as levers for collective action.

Generally speaking, today's companies are not particularly prepared to face this challenge of cultural diversity and management models. While experience is leading a greater number of managers and executives to discover (while taking care to avoid stereotyping) that American, French and Japanese have expectations that are often very different from one another with regards the company and the employer, work and salary, products and clients, leadership and cooperation with others, very few know how to efficiently confront the various issues we have just raised. *This is because they presuppose that the concerned company has the means to understand the links that exist between cultures and management models, and are equipped with the tried tools and methods needed to anticipate the positive or negative consequences of cultural diversity in the implementation of collective actions.*

Unlike the managerial practices developed up until the end of the 1970s, our proposed approach has no universal pretensions. On the contrary, for us, its promotion and use are only of value when they are contingent, adapted to the various professional, economic and political contexts and based on a solid diagnostic that, by definition, is either unique or singular⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ MAURICE M., SORGE A. & WAINER M., "Societal Differences in Organizing Manufacturing Units: a Comparison of France, West Germany and Great Britain", *Organization Studies*, no.1/1, 1980, p.59.

The metamorphoses of 'globalised' companies

But what is the point of discussing changing perspectives when certain firms such as IBM and Shell have been internationalised and even "globalised" for so long?

By simply achieving consensus, organisations lose their competitive edge. As we have previously mentioned, cultural diversity and management models have been neglected and fought against for many years. Up until the end of the 1970s, this was permitted by the economic environment as the profit losses and hidden costs linked to negligence or the denial of differences within multicultural contexts could be masked by the continuing growth at that time, or were largely financially compensated by the high level of profits that, despite all, were being made by companies. All that was needed was that their managers juggle certain standard management parameters. These managers were able to make use of a number of variables, such as the choice of regions or countries where subsidiaries were operating, equipment modernisation, the cost of manpower, the value of currencies, taxes (tax havens) and so on. In this way, they were able to succeed – despite their denial of cultural differences or their ignorance of the advantages that these could hold for their companies – in carrying out highly profitable operations by buying out local companies or setting up new subsidiaries⁹⁸. All this was made possible by the potential markets to be conquered.

In other words, *as long as the environment was relatively favourable to their economic development, many companies spontaneously used the same management routines and the same organisational methods in all countries.* They enthusiastically standardised procedures and invested a vast amount of energy in trying – occasionally in vain and disastrously – to standardise management practices and the attitude to work taken by their employees. At that time (the 30 glorious post-war growth years), the complete transfer of methods, whether developed in the head office or having successfully proven

⁹⁸ MUTABAZI E. & al, *Management des ressources à l'international. Fusions, acquisitions, alliances, filiales et coopérations internationales*, Editions Eyrolles, 1994; MUTABAZI E., "Le management en situations multiculturelles en Afrique", *Afrique Industrie*, January 1989, p.52.

themselves in the home countries and cultures of the multinationals, was given even more credibility as managers chose to interpret the process as a universal scientific value.

With the exception of certain rare cases, this poor treatment of diversity often resulted from a tacit compromise between the model importers and exporters. This compromise saw, on the one hand, the need to civilise the model importers and, on the other hand, the need to act in the same way as the exporters in order to be like them. This action logic, based on the pseudo-scientific nature of *best practices* developed in economically leading cultural spheres, was first developed by North American companies in all their international subsidiaries and then generally adopted by western and Asian multinationals, followed by the less industrialised African and Latin American countries and, finally and more recently, in the former Soviet bloc.

This universalist and occasionally imperialist approach blossomed as it benefited from the fascinating appeal it had for main model-importing countries which, in nearly all cases, naively and blindly adopted a *complementary mimetic attitude*, hoping to rapidly become as rich and powerful as other industrially and economically more advanced countries⁹⁹.

The difficulties met, the resistance encountered and the failures recorded were often explained by the ignorance or unsuited behaviour of local personnel. The fact is that most of the managers or technicians responsible for exporting models and transferring technologies to international subsidiaries in Africa or Europe were not at all prepared for working in multicultural contexts. The preparation of the managers was limited (up to very recently in a large number of management schools) to an understanding of technical management aspects, especially finance and marketing, to which was superficially added an 'international' qualifier. Even in departments covering 'international affairs', the concerned schools only taught scraps of comparative law and international taxation. The courses included no conceptual or methodological approach to an understanding of cultural and managerial differences, the links between them or their impacts on the

⁹⁹ MUTABAZI E., "Pour un interculturel management", *Le Monde*, Wednesday 27 May 1992.

operation of multicultural work teams. These terms are not to be found anywhere in any management training manuals.

Concerning the internationalisation of companies, the contents of the teaching courses only covered aspects linked to the exportation of products and technologies, but never examined communication or management problems within multicultural contexts. The main aim was to train agents so that they could export products, services, procedures and technologies that fully copied the way they had been developed and used in the home countries of the concerned multinationals. A large number of existing management schools have no specialists whatsoever in the field of intercultural management and this explains why there is such a lack of expertise in this field within companies. It also explains why their managers are not prepared to invest in this sector, given that they have little or no understanding of the issue and that certain have never really been immersed in multicultural contexts or at least have never really been obliged to adapt.

Those who understand and are fully operational in this sector are clearly less willing to assist managers from other companies and thus contribute to their development!

Do you see any other difficulties linked to implementing multicultural management?

Companies are becoming aware that speaking the same language or having the same profession is not enough for people to understand one another or develop a synergy with their opposite numbers from different cultures. Even though these two aspects remain real advantages when working internationally, it is nevertheless necessary for them to be fully understood if they are to be used as levers for organising work, managing teams and developing multicultural relations. However, this type of full use is not easily achieved. Proficient use of the language or shared professional culture presupposes good reflexes as well as good tools to decode social phenomena and organisational behaviour. It also calls for an open and flexible form of reasoning that will allow the person to react while taking the different cultures into account, as well as the impact on the dynamics of the work teams.

Over and above the naturally indispensable linguistic skills, managers need to be able to understand those around them while being able to integrate and confront, by going beyond stereotypes, what is obvious and what is not. They need to be able to incorporate what is legitimate, honourable, optional and obligatory in their own culture and in that of their partners from different cultures. For example, gestures and symbols as well as organisation charts and management procedures only represent the tiniest visible part of the iceberg of beliefs and values that can give them meaning, be they convergent or divergent, contradictory or opposing. All this will depend on whether or not team members share at least one reference culture (national, professional, etc.).

Intercultural management policies, more ambitious than those of diversity management clearly seek to go beyond the tools represented by general law and statistics. The intention, on the one hand, is to understand the real effects of any discrimination linked to a person's origin and, on the other hand, to provide a basis to decide whether or not to grant new rights to the concerned persons in order to develop synergies.

Are diversified teams always more efficient within a company environment?

No. *Any demonstration of such a causal link between diversity and performance inevitably leads to discussion due to the multifactorial nature of this performance.* Data collected on this subject are both contradictory and difficult to obtain (given the heterogeneity of empiric data when it comes to the type of diversity being studied, the micro- and macro-economic context of the studies carried out, the sociocultural context and the socio-politics of the field of enquiry, as well as the heterogeneity of the methods used to collect, treat and interpret empiric data). This is surprising given that it is very rare to see anything written concerning the relative nature of the effective contributions made by diversity within the teams. P. ROBERT-DEMONTROND, A. JOYEAU and D. THIEL note that, according to certain results, the socio-demographic diversity resulting from groups of individuals with different profiles, favours the generation, promotion and implementation of new

ideas¹⁰⁰ and innovation through a form of 'mutual apprenticeship'¹⁰¹. This takes the form of a reduction in operational costs linked to the loyalty of the personnel, a reduction in the cost of recruitment and positive effects in terms of reputation and image. These result in a competitive commercial advantage¹⁰². But the results are challenged by other research works which, on the contrary and only using ethnocultural diversity as a diversity criteria, state that this can inhibit inter-individual cooperation, cause intra-organisational conflicts as well as problems of communication and reciprocal confidence. This, it is claimed, prejudicially affects the creation of value^{103/104}.

Culture and management functions

You use this book to argue a dynamic approach to the construction of cultural identities within the working environment. Over and above pathological cases, it is clear that no-one is insensitive to differences and no-one can exist independently from others. Given that the experience of diversity often takes place within teams, what do human

¹⁰⁰ VAN DER VEGT G., JANSSEN O., "Joint Impact of Interdependence and Group Diversity on Innovation", *Journal of Management*, 29, 729-751, 2003.

¹⁰¹ VAN HOOREBEKE D., PIRE-LECHALARD P., MORANA J., "Apprendre de la diversité pour innover: le cas de la PME innovante", *Actes des 2èmes Rencontres Internationales de la Diversité*, Corte, 5-7 October 2006.

¹⁰² ZACHARY P., *The diversity advantage: multicultural identity in the new world*, Boulder, Westview, 2003.

¹⁰³ COX T. H. et BLAKE S., "Managing Cultural Diversity: Implications for Organizational Competitiveness", *Academy of Management Executive* 5(3), 1991; POLZER J.T., MILTON L.P. & SWANN W.B. Jr., "Capitalizing on diversity: interpersonal congruence in small work groups", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47 (2), 296-324, 2002; VON GLINON M.A., SHAPIRO D.L. & BRETT J.M., "Can we talk, and should we? Managing emotional conflict in multicultural teams", *Academy of Management Review*, 29 (4), 578-592, 2004.

¹⁰⁴ See O'REILLY et al, 1989, JACKSON et al, 1991, TSUI & O'REILLY, 1989, GLAESER et al., 1999, ZENGER & LAWRENCE, 1989, ALESINA & LA FERRARA, 2000, EKVAL, 1996 and ROBERT-DEMONTROND P., JOYEAU A. and THIEL D., "La diversité comme champ de controverses: socio-anthropologie du jugement des acteurs sur l'encastrement économique d'une mesure éthique", *Troisièmes rencontres internationales de la diversité*, Corte, 2007.

and social sciences teach us concerning these multicultural work phenomena within the company environment?

Anthropologists and ethnologists have always been interested in the lifestyles of different types of communities. It is to these specialists that we essentially owe most of the conceptual and methodological tools used to analyse the multicultural phenomena concerning us. It was on the basis of the lessons learned from the study of the American Hopi Indians by C. LEVI-STRAUSS¹⁰⁵, African communities by R. BASTIDE¹⁰⁶, the approach to diversity in metropolitan communities by J. JAKEZ-HELLIAS¹⁰⁷, as well as the much earlier work by A. de TOCQUEVILLE¹⁰⁸ on the discovery of lifestyles of foreign communities, that our research tools and methods were developed. These were initially intended to help understand the diversity of regional cultures and then went on to professional and managerial cultures in western countries.

To answer your question in a more detailed manner, anthropological and sociological research produced a theoretical corpus that provided a concept of culture on which we could base ourselves to understand and treat the relational phenomena most often encountered in multicultural companies. In more concrete terms, a clear understanding of a culture – being a normally coherent system of beliefs, values and social rules of conduct – calls on having a direct experience or a complete immersion in that culture. Unless shared with other members of the given culture, this experience remains superficial and theoretical. Simply having heard a language spoken, read books and seen films concerning a given community or country is not sufficient to understand its culture. It is important to be thrown into the deep end and learn how to swim in the culture by having to resolve various day-to-day problems such as meeting the needs of local administrations, studying in the concerned country, creating a network of friends and acquaintances, managing a team or being in charge of daily work relations with locals.

¹⁰⁵ LEVI-STRAUSS C., *Mythologies III. L'origine des manières de table*, Paris, Editions Plon, 1968.

¹⁰⁶ BASTIDE R., *Religions africaines et structures de civilisation*, Présence Africaine, no. 66, 1968, p.110-121.

¹⁰⁷ JAKEZ-HELLIAS P., *Le Cheval d'Orgueil. Mémoires d'un breton du pays bigouden*, « Terre Humaine », Plon, 1975.

¹⁰⁸ TOCQUEVILLE A. de, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Gallimard, 1986.

Although no-one can fully understand a given culture without having been completely immersed in it, its emotions and mental architecture, the concept of culture nevertheless forms part of the most important results provided by the considerable amount of research carried out in both anthropology and sociology. If management now integrates the contribution of these two disciplines, it is because the concept and the *dynamic study of the environment*, and not just the *power of the main players*, have proven invaluable for analysing, understanding and managing multicultural phenomena within companies.

For us, culture is a system of ways of thinking, feeling and behaving. It is a system that is more or less formalised (through laws, rules of conduct and judgement criteria) and learned (throughout a person's life via social institutions such as family and school, church and army, as well as political parties, university and colleges, profession and company). It is a system shared by a majority of persons (through which members of this community acknowledge each other, mobilise and identify one another) as a community (national or regional, religious or political, professional or company, etc.) that is highly specific and different from the others.

For us, to think in cultural terms means admitting that no-one is simply one thing or another. Whether black, Indian, woman or Muslim, these definitions are no more than points of departure. *Real life reveals a wide range of identifying strategies*¹⁰⁹. Consequently, the definition of what is meant by discrimination is not the same in immigrant populations and that, for example, claims to the same ethnic origins depend largely on the social environment of individuals. The very concept of origin makes reference to a birth that is identifiable, country-based and dated, aspects that do not necessarily make sense to all individuals. As expressed by R. DEBRAY, "each country is a cluster of singularities that, rather than being a source of pride, simply demand that the population be aware of them"¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹ PIERRE P., "La socialisation des cadres internationaux. Stratégies identitaires et mobilisation de l'ethnicité", *Gestion*, HEC Montreal, volume 27, number 1, Spring 2002.

¹¹⁰ DEBRAY R., *Ce que nous voile le voile*, Gallimard, 2004, p.76.

How does the cultural concept work?

“If a Spaniard refuses to develop a commercial relationship with me”, notes P. DEVAL, “it is not necessarily because I have not understood the rules of proxemics, his perception of time or inductive reasoning. Above all, he is a human being who reacts according to his personality and secret self”¹¹¹. This clearly underlines the living nature of cultures. They should not be considered as easily describable or rapidly materialised systems for which an initial understanding, much like that of a green guide for a nation, would provide an understanding of the quality of interactions. But, as described by T. TODOROV, all this evokes “conglomerates of fragments from different origins” that always remain elusive¹¹². This is of particular significance for social partners and has a clear effect on their history. As a result, we believe that culture should be seen as a collection of techniques, customs, ideas, values and beliefs, initially engendered by individuals but which have a more durable existence. Be it someone from England, China, France or the frozen stretches of northern Canada, the person’s cultural behaviour is always the joint product of what R. BOUDON called “an effect of position (it depends on the position occupied by a decision-maker or a player within the context of a given action and that conditions the person’s access to relevant information) and an effect of disposition (depending on the mental, cognitive and affective dispositions of the concerned decision-maker which are always partially pre-formed by an earlier socialisation)”¹¹³.

Whether a manager, executive or member of a multicultural team, culture (be it national, professional, etc.) reveals itself to be a mechanism that is far more complex, deep and powerful than the stereotype which can be expressed as the representation or image that one has of one’s own culture or that of the others and which intervenes in the orientation of our attitudes and behaviour with regards to the team members. *Culture reveals itself to be a “semantic inventory” that allows individuals to interpret signs and symbols*¹¹⁴. As such, we are caught up in a network of meanings that we ourselves have woven.

¹¹¹ DEVAL P., *Le choc des cultures*, Editions ESKA.

¹¹² TODOROV T., *Les morales de l’histoire*, Grasset, p.118.

¹¹³ FRIEDBERG E., *Le pouvoir et la règle*, Editions du Seuil, 1997, p.56.

¹¹⁴ SCHEIN E. H., *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 1986.

Since M. WEBER, we now know that the study of culture is not an experimental science in search of governing laws, but rather an interpretive science that places people in a state of resistance when confronted with elements that are initially judged to be indisputable because they are cultural in nature. Thus, when we discuss a given culture, the *interculturality* of relations between members of different cultures, we designate those elements shared by the largest possible number of people representative of each of these cultures and only choose those to be found in the centre of the GAUSS curve. In other words, we know that no culture is formed from clones and that a proportion of its members will be found at the two ends of the horizontal axis and that this positioning will depend on context. As such, we are very aware that French culture, for example, contains several cultural components or sub-assemblies linked to regions, religions, jobs, types of training, political ideologies, union membership, etc. C. BARMEYER notes that “even when individuals speak the same language, this does not mean that they think in the same way or share similar opinions. Syntax, grammar and vocabulary are clearly elements forming the structural basis of the language spoken and understood by a given society, but all individuals forming part of this society have their own vocabularies, their own realities and, within the society, are able to express their own individual and unique attitudes and opinions that allow them to stand out from the collective population”¹¹⁵.

No matter what the level or perimeter of the considered community, its specific cultural model is characterised by a set of beliefs, values and social standards that are relatively shared by its members. Beyond – as well as alongside – their rites and folklores, their theoretical and artistic knowledge, etc., this shared culture has been forged and tried and tested throughout their history or specific shared experience and resulted in an approach generally able to cope with shared problems and concerns (economic or technical, political or religious, sanitary or climatic, etc.) within their environment or within their particular living or working context.

¹¹⁵ BARMEYER C., *Intercultural management et styles d'apprentissage*, PUL, 2007, p.3.

From this point of view, can culture be said to have several functions?

Yes, they include communicating with others, understanding them and being understood, thinking and inventing solutions to various types of problems, living or surviving, sharing and cooperating, learning and developing with other members. Communication and mutual understanding, as well as cooperation and operational complementarity are generally much easier among those who share at least the crumbs of a society (national or regional, professional or managerial, etc.), and can be very difficult if not impossible among those who have nothing in common¹¹⁶. And no wonder, because culture operates both as the 'coder and decoder' when it comes to communication. It permits an understanding of the *silent language*¹¹⁷ of those with whom we share it, to understand the meaning of their signs and gestures, the looks given and the words exchanged... Consequently, we believe that the first step towards developing a truly intercultural policy consists in making all associates aware of *their dual status as the cause and the solution to problems of diversity*. Once this level of difficulty in exchanging and communicating has been overcome, it is only when the tools (concepts and methods) are available to analyse and understand cultures – over and above their apparent or audible aspects – that it is possible to measure and anticipate their impact (on attitudes and behaviour, reasoning modes, logic, styles of action, the deep-rooted orientation of behaviour patterns and ways of living in society, etc.).

These tools, alongside certain skills in avoiding or making use of the trap represented by stereotypes, provide the means to successfully communicate and cooperate with others, understand the significance of their discourses and gestures, evaluate their degree of authenticity, involvement or commitment, relativise our habits, and consequently understand and gain from what other cultures can provide. Because forms of interest and rationality are not constructed in the same way in each society, the concept of culture is not restricted to values that can be found by the systematic comparison of attitudes, practices and values of personnel members from different countries or from values provided by extensive survey

¹¹⁶ MUTABAZI E., "Le management des équipes multiculturelles: l'expérience des équipes afro-occidentales", *Management international*, vol. 8, no. 3. Spring 2004.

¹¹⁷ HALL E. T., *Le langage silencieux*, Le Seuil, 1978.

questionnaires. Only human beings can be the source of intentions, actions, decisions or beliefs – and therefore cultures.

Monocultural, multicultural and intercultural approaches

From your comments and for several previously mentioned reasons, it would appear that the road to intercultural management is not something easily followed in a large number of companies. Is this because the skills demanded remain very rare? Do the advantages of diversity remain largely unknown by most managers?

The challenge of diversity and interculturality now facing companies – be they national or international, public or private, industrial or service based – is such that theoretical knowledge and technical skills are no longer sufficient for them to either develop or maintain their position when faced with global competition. In addition, when it comes to rapid reactions or decision-making, few managers have the necessary reflexes, qualities or skills needed to analyse and incorporate or evaluate and anticipate the positive or negative impacts of different solutions when making strategic choices, defining policies (marketing, HR, etc.) or setting up personnel management structures and policies.

Over and above figures and organisation charts, technologies and procedures, most companies now have to accept that they need to be changed and influenced when coming into real contact with diversity if they want to be able to make use of a new dynamic able to offer their operational units new organisational behaviour patterns. *What works in Asia could result in a complete failure in Africa.* A majority of players, whether or not managers, are deeply attached to their earlier experiences and are fascinated by the successes of the past and of companies that have proven their strengths. They are deeply influenced by habits and existing practices, by behaviours and strategies that have led them to the levels of success they have now attained. Despite the lessons of the past and current political and economic realities, we often tend to forget that, unlike illnesses, yesterday's successes

(economic or technological) or those that took place elsewhere, are neither contagious or transferable without change to another individual or community from a different context (cultural and economic, political and religious, climatic and historical).

All too often, this factor has gone unrecognised in the history of management, particularly in the management of relationships between national or professional communities from different cultures. Companies now need to be more vigilant when faced with a certain number of pitfalls that are particularly linked to what we call the *monocultural approach to management* and the *multicultural approach to management*.

What we mean by a monocultural approach is the pitfall into which, in the past, most companies and national or international public institutions fell when trying to manage diversity. *The monocultural approach is blind to differences inasmuch as the cultural, organisational and even social differences between the head office and subsidiaries for an international firm, or between trades, are not denied but must remain confined within each employee's private space.* Because the multicultural pressure coming from the bottom is a potentially subversive influence insofar as the established order is concerned, none of these differences must reveal themselves in the company's public space, being that within which the head office management and the general management's standards and methods are applied. Expatriates are designated as "masters", hold degrees from the home country and are assumed to be more loyal and skilled. Exchanges between the personnel departments of the head office and its subsidiaries, whose cost is high in terms of overrun expenses, are very restricted. They essentially cover the adaptation problems faced by expatriates and their families. Adaptation problems are minimised as these companies consider that expatriates are able to adapt without any particular preparation to the ways of life in the countries where they will be working. It is a question of tact which is, in itself, a question of good education and the quality of the information amassed concerning the host country¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁸ See J.-P. SEGAL, "Les pièges du interculturel management, une aventure franco-québécoise", *Gérer et Comprendre-Annales des Mines*, December 1990).

There is a strong contrast between the attention paid to the management and evaluation of a small number of national executives, for whom expatriation is simultaneously an opportunity to acquire skills and a setting where talents can be detected, and the hundreds of local executives asking to be expatriated to engage in a career and put behind them any “marked ethnic, social or cultural particularities”. In the past, the monocultural approach had often been developed by economic and policy decision-makers who believed that all human societies evolved towards a single and same development model, being that of the most technologically, economically and militarily powerful country. Well-known by company sociology, this set of beliefs is expressed in the ‘one best way’, a system that had for many years been applied to work organisation and manpower management. This occasionally dangerous utopian principle, promoted by the followers of TAYLOR at the beginning of the industrial revolution, consisted in believing that to succeed, it was simply necessary to apply the same managerial systems throughout the world to successfully develop a country or a company.

Is it now possible to standardise all work methods, management procedures, styles of management and work behaviour with impunity?

As shown by a number of specialists as from the end of the 1960s¹¹⁹, the monocultural and the managerial “one best way” approaches have an enormous cost that is always directly borne by those who are subject to it (the film *Modern Times* by C. CHAPLIN provides a marvellous illustration¹²⁰). The assimilation that underlies the monocultural approach has a dual significance: the action of making similar in the sense of making equal and the act of volition which considers being similar that which is different. A more modern meaning of the term assimilation, inspired by physiology, defines it as a process by which living beings transform others into their own essence¹²¹. “Assimilation becomes synonymous with absorbing and ingesting; and the

¹¹⁹ HAIRE M., GHISELLI E. E. and PORTER L. W., *Managerial thinking: an international Study*, Wiley, 1966.

¹²⁰ FRIEDMAN G., *Le travail en miettes*, Gallimard, 1956.

¹²¹ DUBOIS P., DURAND C. and GILAIN G., “La prise de décision dans l’industrie: étude comparative France-Bulgarie-Hongrie”, *Rapport Groupe de Sociologie du Travail*, 1986. HALL E. T., *La dimension cachée*, Editions du Seuil, 1971.

fusion continues until the disappearance of the foreign element which undergoes a conversion into the substance of the assimilating organism"¹²². The political archetype of the "assimilator model" is a model that favours the hierarchical taking of decisions which are then distributed from the highest centres of powers towards subordinated centres of power. France as a nation-state largely contributed to exporting this model which is based on cardinal centralisation, nationalisation and civilisation concepts¹²³. According to M. CROZIER in *Le Phénomène bureaucratique*¹²⁴, "This cultural model which, thanks to the formalism and extreme centralisation of structures, reconciles the protection of individuals and the organisation of collective activities apparently corresponds to a deep-rooted tendency in French society which, since the *Ancien Régime*, has continued to rationalise social structures. This takes the form of centralisation and uniformity both in the way that the state and companies exercise their powers to the detriment of all forms of local innovation".

With the benefit of political and economic historical hindsight, we now know that the monocultural approach only works when it is voraciously nourished by the additional superiority complexes of certain individuals and the inferiority complexes of others¹²⁵, as well as by their respective attitudes towards imperialism and short-sighted mimicry.

And the assimilation processes can be violent...

Yes, for instance, up to the 1950s, Aboriginal children in Australia were taken from their parents and placed in residential schools with the so-called aim of giving them access to modernity. We now also know from history, especially colonial history and that of all the first multinationals, that the 'monocultural' approach is developed on a destabilised relational basis, especially insofar as the power relationships and the sharing of project profits among partners are

¹²² MOREAU G., "Quelle politique d'intégration?", *Esprit*, December 1992, p.10.

¹²³ See CAILLES A., *France-Japon, confrontation culturelle dans les entreprises mixtes*, Librairie des Méridiens, 1986, p.177.

¹²⁴ CROZIER M., *Le phénomène bureaucratique*, Editions du Seuil, 1963, cited by SAINSAULIEU R., *Sociologie de l'organisation et de l'entreprise*, PFNSP/Dalloz, 1988, p.145.

¹²⁵ MEMMI A., *Le portrait du colonisé*, Paris, Payot, 1973.

concerned. While western companies generally ceased using the system towards the end of the 1970s in Africa, Asia and Latin America, this approach dating back to the colonial era remains deeply entrenched in the mentalities of certain managers who continue to dream that they can clone all their associates no matter where they are in the world. Concerning the diversity of cultures and models, their attitude consists in ignoring or denying differences, to the extent of spending colossal sums in order to eradicate and replace them by standards imposed by the head office. *These generally vain approaches are often based on the idea that, without any experience of industry or the modern economy, communities in less developed countries have no understanding of organisation or management.*

Faced with mass revolts against the different types of withdrawal, operational slowdowns, the abuse of means and general strikes noted in various companies against the imposition of external models, faced with the failure of operations and the exorbitant costs (failure of projects, rejection of expatriates, failed negotiations, etc.) resulting from these organisational and social phenomena, and finally, faced with the increasingly globalised competition, an increasing number of companies abandoned the authoritarian imposition of standards and, as from the end of the 1970s sought to move beyond the monocultural approach.

Increasingly aware of the hidden costs of denial or ignoring cultural differences, the directors and managers of these companies progressively decided to make place for cultural diversity and collective work management models in their international subsidiaries. Following the example of the model that had earlier been developed in most of former British Empire companies, these American and European companies progressively moved from a monocultural approach to a “multicultural” approach based on the following principle: *think globally and act locally* – being another way of saying ‘leave the locals to get on with it, on condition that their efforts and energy serve the interests of the group’.

C. A. BARLETT and S. GHOSHAL¹²⁶ note four different types of company categories that we feel are worthwhile mentioning:

- The *global* centralised company, organised by functions or by worldwide product lines. The subsidiaries have little autonomy and important positions are held by managers from the home country.
- The *multinational* company, which seeks to adapt to a large number of markets by giving subsidiaries run by locals a considerable level of autonomy.
- The intermediate type *international* company, organised into activity groups and large geographical regions. The skills developed in the head office are gradually transferred to the subsidiaries.
- The *transnational* company, which seeks to widely distribute decision-making centres and “promote the best elements, no matter where they come from”. The role of top management is to develop wide-ranging coordination processes aiming to optimise economies of scale for production units that, although dispersed, are nevertheless interdependent.

Within the scope of our approach, the interest of this typology rests in the fact that strategic power is relatively shared between several national centres without the formal authority of a single centre, such as can be found in the imperialist policy of the monocultural approach. Concerning the exercise of leadership, the company operates a “cross-pollination” that consists in giving locals operational responsibilities in their countries while having them participate in European or global coordination committees. Our experience of companies with this type of structure reveals that the passage from the monocultural approach to the multicultural approach presupposes the existence of a local elite able to ensure the interface between the transnational company and its subsidiaries and to manage the latter while

¹²⁶ BARLETT C. A. and GHOSHAL S., *Le management sans frontières*, Les Editions d’Organisation, 1991.

applying the strategic choices of the central head office. Thus, several companies, such as Total, Schlumberger, Danone and Dow Chemical, have for many years invested in training courses for the managers of their international subsidiaries. These are held in the head office or in major regional centres across the world. These companies are more than prepared to give important functions to the 'best among these managers'.

In other words, faced with issues of identity, be it from expatriates who cannot or do not want to change their managerial habits, or locals who do not want to adopt models in contradiction with their own values, the multicultural approach reveals itself to be a new approach to diversity, a new way of approaching the problems of coexistence in the workplace between populations from different cultures working within a same transnational group.

This approach to management evokes the encounter between persons, each with their specific universe of significances and a vision of the world that differs according to its unique reference-linked identifying components (cultural codes, values, beliefs, living habits, etc.). If there is a head-on encounter between their differences, the identity of each concerned party finds itself challenged and called on to display its inner coherence. This can lead to tensions, blocking and even conflicts.

Fundamentally, the experience of multicultural situations in which identities are challenged leads us to state that the value given to 'human rights' is not specific to western culture. It is one of the universal conditions required to interact with others, not simply as a means to an end but with respect and dignity, even if the meaning and manifestation of these two values can be expressed differently in time and space. In other words, it is the social or cultural context that sets the rules imposed on individuals, but does not overly determine their feelings or behaviour. Although it sets the limits of the person's autonomy and can restrict their actions, it nevertheless leaves room for manoeuvre.

Acquiring intercultural skills?

Interacting with the Other as an end in itself. Is it possible to train oneself to become the intercultural manager that you believe is needed, a person able to successfully battle against discrimination and effectively run diversified teams?

While diversity management policies essentially place emphasis on a *capacity or incapacity to exercise*, the more ambitious intercultural management approach prefers to place emphasis on skills.

First of all, how to train people to recognise a discriminatory process and how help resolve it?

A discrimination reveals itself. As manager, you are not generally responsible for its development, but rather for the 'conditions allowing its development'¹²⁷. *Training means providing an opportunity to see and understand where discrimination springs from.* How often does it take place? The fact is that knowledge concerning discrimination is not widely communicated. It is built up over time. There is a need to go beyond noting its presence and act on it. "Once the conditions exist for discrimination to make itself apparent, there is a need for it to be expressed in terms of knowledge"¹²⁸. For managers, the skills to be developed are simultaneously:

- Legal: identify the criminal dimension of the discrimination, create an action standard? Flush out the breakdown in equality of treatment which can have one or more causes: a prejudice, a habit, deficient procedures, lack of legal understanding, a militant approach to non-democratic ideas, etc.
- Clinical: know how to carry out a diagnostic and root out the causes. Find where discrimination is used in discussions, in the courses taken

¹²⁷ VITEAU J., "Comment formation et discrimination se rencontrent-elles?", *Actualité de la formation permanente*, no.194, January- February 2005, p.21.

¹²⁸ VITEAU J., "Comment formation et discrimination se rencontrent-elles?", *Actualité de la formation permanente*, no.194, January-February 2005, p.22.

by trainees, in their social relations and their sense of belonging. Understand the reactions of individuals.

- Political: favour the development and communication of political ideas within the institution.

Intercultural management demands an understanding of complexity. It calls for an understanding of a wide range of sign systems and a capacity to leap from one reference system to another, an ability to constantly decipher and simultaneously use several codes. Training someone to fight against discrimination means giving the person taking the course the possibility of naming what the company or firm has not named and providing the concerned person with all needed backing. There has to be the courage to state that discrimination exists – proving it is a second stage. *There is, in the sources of third stage intercultural management, a wish to make clear and spell out the action principles – and it might be said legal principles – on which people can rely when justifying situations and taking decisions.* Intercultural management is based on the fact that all company members can rely on the principle of external justice. This means that they can base themselves on a model of justice other than the one presented and used in the situations in which they find themselves.

Intercultural management aims to prevent all explanations of a social situation being interpreted as power relationships based on egotistical interests where all individuals are suspicious of the other and where they all remain entrenched in their particular positions. The individual's culture provides a framework. It does not destroy the person's autonomy. The world around us harbours a plurality of values because there exists a plurality of groups or communities, each of which having forged its own rules by which it lives, rules that take into consideration the specific requirements of its living environment. Practicing intercultural management means finding harmony between different groups, each with their different values. The aim is to provide them with a framework within which they can agree with one another and/or find the level of harmony needed to direct their efforts towards a shared goal. All intercultural training should favour this type of approach. The courses are held very soon after the concerned persons assume their functions.

You have stated that the search for mutual understanding and the convergence of efforts by a culture that is technocratically based or imposed from the outside (the purportedly strong cultures of certain companies, developed at the top of the pyramid and generally unevenly distributed) does not work. It generally leads to the effects of one group being dominated by another. What founding principle of an agreement would be universal and fully recognised as being equitable by all the members of all cultures and communities? Earlier on, you mentioned Human Rights.

Faced with this prickly question, intercultural management acknowledges that there exists, through the successive stages of developing ties between companies, a potential for solidarity or reciprocity incorporated into the fundamentals of relations between subjects (although this is not always revealed or explicitly expressed). In addition, the intercultural practice of management only makes sense if it affirms a non-restrictive concept of work value which thus becomes more than a simple fact or invention. Work is raised to the rank of praxis. Awareness of the subject is not built up separately but rather expresses itself as the product of a social bond. This form of intercultural management, in which we place a great deal of faith, seeks to reintroduce the theme of acknowledgement in the work environment. *Intercultural management implicitly seeks to push beyond a market-driven society and the production system – a universe populated by atomised individuals – to attain the level of a political community providing the basis for complete inter-subjectivity.* The intention is to achieve this goal without falling into the trap of otherworldliness or a world suddenly deprived of hidden power relationships. To this effect, the aim of intercultural training actions is to teach trainees to recognise themselves as *intersubjective beings* who exist among other persons presenting demands that are occasionally in conflict with their own.

It bears repeating that for the players, skills in intercultural communication means being able to separate between arguments based on different values that are unable to accept an overshadowing point of view. It is a capacity to make connections and acknowledge equivalences. This capacity allows the players to listen to the demands of partners and, if necessary, keep their

disputes within the framework of a form of justice that is coherent with the nature of the situation. *Intercultural 'truth' is that particular moment during which the players measure up against one another in a way that creates equivalence between them*¹²⁹. Creating the conditions for intercultural management, means analysing complex situations that incorporate players firmly implanted in several worlds where disputes are avoided by compromises that avoid having to always resort to providing proof (as is all too often the case with diversity management policies).

Intercultural promises and constraints

Does this mean that companies can no longer escape from either the risks of a monocultural approach or those of a multicultural approach? Have you noted any more advanced, high performance practices?

Companies are not chained to their mono- or multicultural habits or traditions. More than a luxury or a humanist action, investing in a better management of cultural and managerial differences is currently imposing itself as a means to meet the challenge of global competition. It would seem that companies using managerial practices that remain deeply rooted in a monocultural or multicultural approach do so as a result of ignorance or lack of skills. These companies clearly suffer from the danger of a shrinking public space around them. There is a need to underline that there is a risk of creating small spaces strictly governed by "diversity" experts specialised in justice management procedures and the creation of equity between competent employees. These experts ignore that in many circumstances the problems encountered are based on a more widespread logic that might well concern employment catchment areas or the battle to provide equality for all, including those who are not part of any visible and potentially integrating system such as a company or district.

¹²⁹ See DEVEREUX G., *Ethnopsychanalyse complémentaire*, Flammarion, 1985, p.206.

As a result, among those wishing to work towards diversity, there unfortunately continue to be companies that bring in consultants who only superficially grasp the issue through flawed articles on management and literary studies, and have no solid training in company sociology, psychology or management. We believe that the recruitment of these trainers or consultants needs to be based on real skills acquired through appropriate training courses and concrete experiences of multiculturalism outside their own culture. This is because technical, theoretical and linguistic knowledge is wholly insufficient when it comes to providing a high performance level in this field where it is necessary to propose instruments able to correct inequalities as well as tools that can change the way society is appreciated. *The role of all training courses is less to provide a thorough understanding of another culture than to understand what it is that makes the others unintelligible to us. A training course should provide an understanding of how discrimination is socially produced by historical conditions and how these are subjectively constructed by social partners.*

Over and above these so-called diversity experts, the way in which companies can get out of the vicious circles represented by monocultural and multicultural approaches resides on the one hand in the commitment of their executives involved in the hands-on management of the multicultural men and women employed by the company and, on the other hand, the approach of the executives to the cultural communities in the countries or regions where they are working. This commitment will protect them from the pitfalls that we have looked at and allow them to fully invest in the development of intercultural management. *Integration, which we believe is based on intercultural dynamics, is something simple, without any militant or missionary pretensions. It assumes neither the conservation of a collective identity – such as evoked by the word insertion when linked to the multicultural approach – nor the loss of an individual history by an externally applied and imposed assimilation such as that linked to the monocultural approach.*

This approach seeking to integrate differences is partially linked to demographic changes and policies nationalising job positions. It is also dependent of the pressures applied by governments, resulting in companies awarding key posts to individuals from different backgrounds who are able to communicate with foreign clients. It is also linked to the increasing presence

of companies on the global market, a situation that has resulted in a considerable need for qualified manpower, able to develop within cultures that are different from those of the home countries.

The acknowledgement of diversities has for many years taken the form of the definition of failures linked to cultures, types, sexual orientation, handicaps, etc. However, we define intercultural management as a managerial approach whose policies and practices are structured around the mutual acknowledgement between players of different cultures (national, regional or professional) connected by a repeated process of interactions and exchanges. It is a management approach based on a team spirit characterised by mutual respect, apprenticeship and enrichment based around a project whose objectives are constantly shared and revised.

Could you go into greater detail concerning the performance levels of diversified teams and the demands of intercultural management?

Full use of the diversity of cultures and management models demands certain conditions. In comparison with traditional teams where the members share at least national and professional cultures, diversified or multicultural teams are clearly far more efficient over time in carrying out research and innovation rather than repetitive tasks. They are much richer and effective at the beginning of projects than in their final stages. This is because these action phases respectively call for the production of varied and multiple ideas in the former situation and a convergence of efforts in the latter.

In order for its members to give their best, the multicultural team needs a little more time to create a collective spirit. While this is derived through the clear-cut and easily understood nature of the project, achieved using equally clear and accepted methods, the development of a team spirit based on persons from different cultures requires a time period during which the members get to know one another and appreciate each other's talents. It is also necessary to have a framework that is favourable to the production of shared operational and collective action rules. Apart from the need to acknowledge their cultural and professional identities, as well as the provision of possibilities for the members to express and develop their specific contributions, the running of

these types of teams requires a high level of openness, sensitivity and flexibility from their managers. Like the team members themselves, managers cannot be limited to or only inspired by their specific culture. Constantly subject to the expectations, reasoning modes and legitimacy criteria of the team's various members, the style and behaviour of managers are often questioned, reviewed and even reappraised as a result of their sometimes unexpected reactions, questions or attitudes to work which are occasionally found "strange" by team members.

Although not always openly expressed by all its members, multicultural teams – especially those made up from specialists – often refuse all ready-made solutions, decisions that are unclear or made without consultation, as well as any measures aiming to standardise their responses or behaviour. The experience of the several hundred companies within which or with which we have worked on this subject reveals that no solution is so well-rounded that it can be given a blanket application anywhere in the world or be fully introduced in all companies.

These developments lead us to conclude that all intercultural measures depend on the acknowledgement of the other. In his time, TOCQUEVILLE had already stated that in all societies, all individuals aspired to having their dignity acknowledged, and judged standards and institutions in this light¹³⁰. In its most common meaning, acknowledgement can be considered as an action of locating, much like a patrol on field reconnaissance prior to entering into action. This is naturally on a different register than the recognition of a school or the diplomas awarded to its students, being a way of providing proof that the diplomas correspond to the criteria accepted by the authority which thereby recognises the quality of the teaching in the school and its professors. However, these two forms of acknowledgement remain silent insofar as the concerned persons are concerned. This is because acknowledging people as individuals means accepting that the values underlying their existence are as important to them as ours are to us. The same applies to the intercultural management of teams whose fundamental postulate consists in considering that all team members have the right to be acknowledged through their individual identities and their specific contributions.

¹³⁰ TOCQUEVILLE de A. *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Gallimard, 1986.

These developments also lead to the need to emphasise how the construction of identities in the diversified teams is not just based on “social” aspects. The construction is also “moral”, in other words it is based on the constant search for a level of integrity providing proof of dignity. Individuals do not simply encounter one another through a pure relationship of domination or subordination, “but also through a conflict relative to the contents and objectives sheltered within the behavioural system we call culture”¹³¹.

¹³¹ BASTENIER A., *Qu'est-ce qu'une société ethnique?*, PUF, 2004, p.36.

-III-

Acknowledgement of identities in the workplace

“There is only civility because I have undergone the test of the strange and the stranger, because I have confronted the faces of beggars and illegal immigrants, all those for whom time is discontinuous and whose words are orphans”. (M. ELBAZ)¹³².

¹³² ELBAZ M., “Mondialité, politiques de l’identité et citoyenneté”, *Multitudes*, no. 6, September 2001, p.107.

Jointly defining what is 'right'

Audrey Trotereau¹³³: *In companies, when working with foreign partners, the question is raised as to how to agree on who is 'right' and who is then prepared to have this decision respected. It is the issue of common values, criteria and arbitration capacities that are in play in all decisions concerning the evaluation of a performance, a recruitment or a training course.*

Evalde Mutabazi and Philippe Pierre: The search for intercultural management incorporates the search for a stable grammar of correspondences or universals, or at least fields of equivalence when it comes to organising to produce, punishing criminal acts, rewarding good conduct leading to increased efficiency and qualifying a decision as being right where it makes reference to equality.

*We believe that the ideal aim of intercultural management always consists in determining an insurmountable tension between incompatible magnitudes. However, it can be seen that what devastated Europe in the last century was the reduction of the human world to the confrontation of two wills and that what was all too often lacking was the introduction of strong third party, a neutral arbitrator provided with incontestable authority. Company sociology was called on to treat confrontations, all those situations where the most important factor was to corner the other, rather than trying to find the basis for agreement between parties having discovered that they were different from one another. Above all, sociologists considered the battles between social groups to be symbolic confrontations in which each party sought to impose on all society its vision of the world which aimed to improve the place the party held in that society. Admitting that individuals have the right to have acknowledged the dignity that makes them different from one another, A. CAILLE discusses *post-modern acknowledgement*, noting that the demands*

¹³³ Journalist and Chief Editor of *Business Digest*.

to be acknowledged made by our contemporaries are not of the same nature as an objectivable value (the time at work spent socially). In the past, one was oneself by introducing the universal into oneself. In today's world, you become yourself, in other words you subjectively appropriate by experiencing the belief and objectivity of your social class. The differences have a value that permits the granting of rights and the creation of duties. In our work carrying out surveys on companies, we have always been surprised by the considerable energy that people expend every day to become elements of social comparison, to seek the social approval of their colleagues. In the beginning there is the individual that I am, constructed by a type of nature that can be physiologically defined. There is then the person that I am and to whom I constantly tell my story, the story of my life, the fruit of my encounters with others. *As an individual, I can be categorised, classified. It is less easy when I am a person.* "I was born poor. I was born a woman. I was born black. I was born a Muslim", explains S. OTOKORE. She adds: "I do not know in what order I ought to rank these proposals. But it is on them and sometimes against them that I have constructed my life"¹³⁴.

In listening to what you say, it would seem that the fundamental issue for companies consists in finding how they can persuade their members to acknowledge their differences, make use of them and take advantage of them together in the workplace while fully respecting one another and using mutual contributions in a positive manner.

The intercultural approach that we support is based on the opening and understanding of the system of beliefs, values and rules internalised by individuals and which these individuals use as a basis to make specific evaluations of what is good or bad, noble or base, honest or villainous. In addition, the point of departure for all real battles against discrimination should be an understanding of the feelings (of disdain or humiliation, denial of acknowledgement or, on the contrary, the enhancement of differences) felt by the members of groups or communities being discriminated against. Unless this preliminary measure takes place, certain claims that are seen as completely legitimate by a group A can well appear unjustified or are often

¹³⁴ OTOKORE S., *Safia, un conte de fée républicain*, R. Laffont, 2005.

unjustly refused by group B which is in interaction with the former group. Similarly, all multicultural conflicts can first and foremost be envisaged as “conflicts of feelings” suffered by those who consider that the values or moral beliefs underlying their cultures (national or professional) are being ridiculed. This was recently seen in the debates concerning the caricatures of Mohammed where it was obvious that the problem was based on deep-rooted and invisible beliefs that are almost impossible to change from the outside, especially by those that defend – in all honesty and quite legitimately – their own values. *Fundamentally, most multicultural conflicts, including those concerning the redistribution of resources or the sharing of riches, call on a normative process.*

Faced with these elements and without being antinomic, it is clear that diversity management and intercultural management policies do not target exactly the same projects.

In the former case, we are battling in favour of non-discrimination and equality in the matter of redistribution (job positions, wealth, etc.) while, in the latter, it is the acknowledgement of identities that lies at the heart of relational issues or difficulties encountered by members of “different cultures” within multicultural companies. In the first movement – *that of redistribution* – we seek to use legislative measures and specific regulations to achieve equality of rights or status. This, for example, can take the form of corrective measures which are generally developed at an “upper managerial” level. In the second movement – *being that of acknowledgement* – it is a case of taking into account the identities of subjects in order to go beyond them so that the individuals can blossom, fully contribute to the shared project and acknowledge one another on the basis of shared values, not necessarily with all but at least with a proportion of the employees working in the considered company or society.

Although occasionally expressed through collective expression (professional or unions, sectional or associative), the demand for acknowledgement is the deep-rooted expression of an “I singular” through which each individual seeks to be acknowledged as being unique among others, rather than equal among others or similar to others in their differences. As a result, in our companies,

apart from strikes that are often led by a single leader, we currently note that there are fewer collective battles for acknowledgement than there are interior movements, more harrowing bitterness or hidden suffering than spontaneous collective revolts. From a sociological point of view, the latter are often linked “to the social devaluation of forms of self-achievement” in our society¹³⁵.

Faced with these societal phenomena, practicing intercultural management is above all a recognition of the need to explore the cognitive structures available to persons to enter into relationships with one another, and build up teams or networks allowing them to operate efficiently together on a shared project or objective. This leads us to the thorny issue of having confidence or mistrust in working partners who remain largely unknown factors in multicultural contexts. *Within these contexts, two types of frustration suffered by stigmatised groups can be noted: the loss of universal rights (especially economic rights) as well as a loss of equality in treatment status, a factor that generates a feeling of inequality in the acknowledgement of differences.* Consequently, it might be said that the paradigm of redistribution enlaces itself in the economic order while that of acknowledgement, obtained through intercultural management, is coextensive to culture. It is through phenomena linked to the latter that intercultural management provides the clarity necessary to introduce the transforming practices of diversity, a positive factor for both the companies and their employees. The bottom line is that diversity, by definition, is an intrinsic feeling, while acknowledgement is a matter for individuals who “give and receive it”. It is never the result of regulatory systems imposed from the outside by law-makers. Let us not forget, no-one can force us to become friends with one another!

While for intercultural management it is a matter of “managing” the cultural differences already present, in the case of diversity management companies first need to successfully “manage” different types of sociability and provide real access to the company. On the one hand, there is the ‘doing together’ specific to intercultural management and, on the other hand, the ‘putting together’ of all measures linked to recruitment and the integration of diversity policies – although there are obviously overlaps between the two. The challenge of diversity management is to invite, recruit and integrate to have

¹³⁵ ION J., “La dignité, nouvel enjeu de mobilisation”, *Sciences humaines*, June 2006.

skills at a given time t , while that of intercultural management is to maintain these skills at $t + 1$, to develop capacities, particularly those of intermediary management, to work with people who do not resemble one another.

While all good intercultural practices begin with an understanding of differences prior to providing a framework favourable to dialogue and the development of transitional spaces, it should not be forgotten that they function in a democratic manner based on the positive confrontation of representations. The diversity of meanings that they bring out subsequently leads to the invention of a set of practices and rules that employees can then use to coexist and cooperate with one another within the company. Over and above what they currently reveal in France, diversity policies lead us to separate two aspects of acknowledgement within the company environment. One is 'objective', to refer to the expression first used by C. LAZZERI and A. CAILLE, and concerns properties that can be reconnoitred and used as focal variables. The other is 'subjective' and consists in "knowing what people wish to see acknowledged"¹³⁶. Diversity policies are based on the first aspect while intercultural management is more focused on the second for, if a person seeks to be acknowledged, what aspects does that person seek to see acknowledged: their contribution, desires, beauty, usefulness, beliefs, etc.?

What companies in France often lack in taking these various expectations into consideration is an appreciation provided by more experienced 'elders' able to provide an interface, employees who have themselves undergone acculturation in various cultural universes (such as a sudden promotion, a change in job, international mobility, etc.) and who are able to offer their skills to others, especially younger employees.

What our companies and societies probably need to initially overcome is the 'cultural solitude' of individuals. People are culturally alone when they are convinced that others see no further than their surface appearance. This is clearly an area where intercultural management can considerably contribute

¹³⁶ LAZZERI A. and CAILLE A., "La reconnaissance aujourd'hui. Enjeux théoriques, étatiques et politiques du concept", *Revue du MAUSS*, no. 23, 2004, p.88.

to the development of diversity management policies. Standing up for an intercultural approach is a way of promoting a management policy that places emphasis on an organisation based on a learning environment, the use of memory and the transmission of skills to younger employees.

Promoters of intercultural management want to organise the company around the issue of actively acknowledging differences rather than economic inequalities or access inequalities. They raise the question of how to cross over from principle to action in terms of diversity management, and how to cross over from the legal consequences of discrimination (in terms of the law) to the effective acknowledgement of diversity (on management level and in terms of day to day incidents)? All company discourses have a tendency to slide from the *legal approach* used to reprimand discrimination to a *demonstrative approach* to diversity¹³⁷. But what about the *deliberative approach* which consists in providing routes to arrive at the desired end and which is used by intercultural management? It is an approach under construction. As eloquently put by Martin Luther KING, "It may be true that the law cannot make a man love me, but it can keep him from lynching me". The underlying point is vital and it is now up to companies to grasp the intercultural approach to change.

For either an individual or a people, being acknowledged means being acknowledged as a man or a woman and not simply incorporated – as is often the case at present – into a localised unbending package that leaves no room for individuals. By going beyond the stereotypes through which we generalise on the basis of experience or historic contexts, it is possible to reach a thought-out approach in which being acknowledged allows individuals to acknowledge others. In other words, individuals can accept themselves for what they are, without having to carry the excess baggage of positive or negative stereotypes. This is where the powerful contribution of intercultural management makes itself felt through its considerable capacity – when compared with standard management practices – to associate players by enhancing their differences, and by giving them the confidence that allows

¹³⁷ SEURRAT de la BOULAYE A., "La construction de l'exemplarité. Légitimation, mise en forme et en circulation de "bonnes pratiques" en gestion de la diversité dans l'entreprise", Research thesis in information and communication sciences - Université de Paris IV, 2005, p.29.

them to express the very best of themselves while remaining able to enrich the contributions made by others¹³⁸.

A method for coming to grips with intercultural realities?

Exactly what rules do you give yourselves for understanding intercultural realities and how to explore this roadmap for change? Do you have a method for coming to grips with intercultural realities in the workplace?

Sociology has a bright future! This is quite simply because it is a discipline that provides an understanding of how management structures and models are *culturally* constructed on the basis of norms that privilege a dominant group and institutionalise the reproduction of social inequalities and hierarchies justifying exclusion. Sociology provides a route from what is 'downstream', being corrective and compensatory measures, to 'upstream' (the understanding of causes throughout the period of a process). Because we are not afraid of using political philosophy categories, as we do in this interview, sociology finds itself in a fertile setting where the discursive, the social and the normative intersect one another. It challenges illegitimate powers. It throws light on the search for efficiency sought by all organisations seeking to reduce malfunctions resulting from a workforce that is poorly motivated and uninvolved as it has the impression of not being acknowledged for its true value and having its skills ignored.

The issues of method and access to intercultural realities are essential and sociology can be of great help in these matters, but how to go about measuring the unexpected that results from intercultural situations? Very few tools exist and, as underlined by M. BOSCHE, intercultural reality always corresponds to a highly specific situation that is far from easy to anticipate. Fluidity and creative occurrences represent the essential characteristics when

¹³⁸ DELANGE N. and PIERRE P., "Pratiques de médiation et traitement de l'étranger dans l'entreprise multiculturelle", *Esprit critique*, summer 2004.

members do not know each other well and come from different social, professional or national environments. The tools, by calling on a rigid order of cultures, can be applied to the description of cultural characteristics and even structures that are static or self-enclosed. They are not open to processes of communication or social exchange that the capacity to modify the behaviour of players as well as the referentials that they introduce¹³⁹. This is what we believe is revealed by research into intercultural management.

To return to the example of the politics of diversity; these often refer to and base themselves on the norm of the majority group. This runs the risk of only measuring the vague result of a so-called global company culture while forgetting the underlying micro-cultures that give it life. To avoid this pitfall, it is necessary fully clarify and uncover these underlying factors when carrying out diversity audits. This is achieved by increasing the awareness of the targeted public (candidates, company employees) as to whether or not – and why – ethno-racial variables should be introduced into the diversity analysis tools, obtaining consensus concerning the proposed categories through a self-definition approach, ensuring the legality of the approach, introducing diversity policy evaluation indicators, etc.

The fact is that intercultural encounters cannot really be measured or reproduced. They escape from all standard social sciences research categories. This interaction cannot be understood through binary confrontation or complementarity logics as third parties are present and affirm themselves. For example, it is striking to think of all those young French people who hoist the Algerian flag on match days while at the same time proclaiming their love for the French team and its players in whom they recognise themselves. It might be said that for these people, patriotism has become a non-exclusive sentiment.

It is worthwhile combining the interaction framework and the body of signs that are specific to culture, even though these can never exhaust the meanings expressed by the players. They simply provide a perimeter made intelligible by classification and grouping. For the observer, they present the

¹³⁹ See M. BOSCHE, *Intercultural management*, Nathan, 1993.

basis for generalisations and interpretations based on resemblances, differences and stereotypes. The cultural difference is always due to the observer. Real knowledge is acquired by interpretation and even, it might be said, by impregnation in the extended time needed for attentive observation. This idea of an identity that is not immediately expressable is well illustrated by the MOEBIUS strip where the exterior becomes the interior and vice versa. Depending on the country, culture seems to resemble a film script whose contents are able to vary enormously. Generally speaking, the chapter headings are the same, but the understanding of their contents can vary greatly from one culture to another¹⁴⁰. Simply thinking in terms of national culture or just in terms of ethnic subcultures is to think in terms of generalisations subject to ethnocentricity.

To grasp an intercultural reality, is it therefore necessary for a micro-sociological analysis of cultural interiorisation phenomena to be accompanied by a background macro-sociological understanding of their structural aspects?

Exactly. D. DESJEUX was right to underline that “culture is simultaneously a structure and a dynamic”, and this is why it is so difficult to comprehend. “As a structure, it incorporates stable elements that can give the impression of being an essence when, in reality, this stability is essentially based on its long historical existence¹⁴¹”. “The question of scales makes it possible to resolve a proportion of the difficulties linked to the observation of the culture: what is observed on the macro-social scale and highlights the regularities of a culture, disappears on the micro-social scale which is dominated by cultural and behavioural diversities. The two are simultaneously valid and this makes it disconcerting and even difficult to accept, despite the fact that they make it easier to understand the reach and limits of each cultural approach¹⁴²”. In his

¹⁴⁰ BADDELEY A., *La mémoire humaine. Théorie et pratique*, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1999.

¹⁴¹ DESJEUX D., “Les échelles d’observation de la culture”, *Interculturel et communication dans les organisations*, GRECO, Université M. de Montaigne Bordeaux 3, no. 22, 2002, p.88.

¹⁴² DESJEUX D., “Les échelles d’observation de la culture”, *Interculturel et communication dans les organisations*, GRECO, Université M. de Montaigne Bordeaux 3, no. 22, 2002, p.88.

works, G. HOFSTEDE bases himself on the interesting metaphor of the tree and the forest. He breaks down his study of the organisation of intercultural relations into an ethnographic approach dedicated to the in-depth study of each culture (each tree), alongside an approach that makes use of attitude scales able to situate all cultures (the overall forest) in relation to one another. In scientific terms, G. HOFSTEDE thus opposes ideographic approaches that consider each case within its specific categories and nomothetic approaches that compare the various cases using common reference points.¹⁴³

Picking up the challenge of intercultural understanding means learning through situations, in other words a modification of cultural representations to suit specific moments and contexts. It means not relying on what appears to be self-evident and being prepared to question. For example, a proportion of managers, whether deliberately or unconsciously, find it impossible to imagine an Arab, a North African, an Asian or a Black assuming a managerial position. In many countries, there is a considerable amount of work to be done to change attitudes. It is clear that the representations developed by observers are as stereotyped as those of the players that they observe. Given the difficulties of observing interculturality, what is required is a detailed approach via intersubjectivity. There is a need to create a tradition of the present third party rather than a tradition based on the outcast, a need to rediscover the wisdom of the traveller.

And all travellers risk being seen as outsiders...

Yes. Being a foreigner, an immigrant or a person having travelled over a long period of time sees that person going through the three stages of being a foreigner to others, a foreigner to him or herself and becoming a person other than his or her initial self. When a foreigner, a migrant or a traveller, everything is plural: double or triple culture, double or triple nationality, plurality of language forms in the office, at home, when returning to the home country... when that is possible. Another being insinuates itself into the person, often without the individual even being aware of it.

¹⁴³ BENNETT M. J. and BENNETT J. M., « Between Etic and Emic. Intercultural Empathy and Sympathy », *SIETAR congress*, Poitiers, 1997.

The encounter between this travelling foreigner and the reception environment is not always fully determined by foreseeable cultural contingencies. The environment is created by the players and these, at least to an extent, are unpredictable. Even if the scripts have been learnt in an implicit manner by repetition, much like representational structures learned and stored in memory without making any particular effort, all intercultural situations demand that those concerned step outside the standard framework and go beyond simple repetition.

This would imply that understanding the diversity of intercultural situations means having to think in terms of paradoxes.

Let us take one as an example. The paradox expressed by C. LEVI-STRAUSS that invites us to believe that if humanity's wealth lies exclusively in the multiplicity of its modes of existence, then the mutual hostility of its cultures is not just normal but also, at least initially, indispensable¹⁴⁴ !

From rights to responsibilities

Does claiming the exercise of everyone's equal right to social respect reduce the very concept of acknowledgement? In other words, how to introduce acknowledgement in terms of rights (diversity management policies) through the creation of relations of esteem based on reciprocally assumed responsibilities (intercultural management) by members of multicultural teams with regards one another?

Diversity management policies represent an invitation to acknowledge the right to be different. Rather than being a matter of unanimity, the common will, whether within a company or society as a whole, takes the form of a shared interest that bonds the majority of voices. The social link is constructed from

¹⁴⁴ LEVI-STRAUSS C., *Race et histoire. Race et culture*, A. Michel, 2002.

reciprocal obligations or debts. It cannot exclusively be up to the individual. V. DESCOMBES writes with reason that this social link cannot be developed “between the empiric individual and him or herself (objective predisposition), nor between the empiric individual and the normative individual (subjective predisposition), but rather only between separate empiric individuals having the “necessary social spirit¹⁴⁵”. Seen in this light, it is far from certain that diversity management policies, currently attracting great attention in France, represent a roadmap or a “magical solution to the current crisis”. We fully concur with S. HABER when he states that “acknowledgement is the first thing that happens when I use language in a way that goes beyond exercising a hold or an influence over others: without this experience of reciprocity at its best, no interaction incorporating mutual acknowledgement can be expressed socially or form part of day to day life¹⁴⁶”. Intersubjective acknowledgement is never fully acquired and constantly needs to be relaunched through the use of efficient measures. It is this factor that underlies the development of relationships within a company and is something that cannot be decreed from the outside¹⁴⁷.

In terms of political philosophy, P. RICOEUR defines ‘multiculturalism’ as the demands for equal respect from cultures that have grown and developed within a same institutional framework¹⁴⁸. The claim is based on the identity of groups and the equality of esteem given them with, as a constant, the interiorisation of an image that victims believe derogatory and even degrading. P. RICOEUR defines this as a demand for a ‘singularising acknowledgement’ that combines individualism with the breaking down of social hierarchies that had formerly placed honour at the summit of esteem values alongside its corollary, the “egalitarian claim¹⁴⁹”. He believes that it is necessary to link multiculturalism with the experience of low self-esteem and denial. This is clearly applicable to companies as these are settings where individuals can clearly accumulate snubs and slights.

¹⁴⁵ DESCOMBES V., *Le complément de sujet*, Gallimard, 2004, p.348.

¹⁴⁶ HABER S., “HEGEL vu depuis la reconnaissance”, *Revue du MAUSS*, no.23, 2004, p.70.

¹⁴⁷ See E. RENAULT “La reconnaissance au cœur du social”, *Sciences Humaines*, June 2006, p.34.

¹⁴⁸ RICOEUR P., *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, Stock, 2004, p.311.

¹⁴⁹ RICOEUR P., *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, Stock, 2004, p.312.

How do the policies of diversity management and intercultural management confront the issue of racism?

Being a racist means believing that a person should be judged on the basis of belonging to a community or a group, rather than on that person's specific, unique and individual qualities. Being a racist is always based on attributing a constant and similar nature to all members of a group through the definition of a small number of traits, opinions and attitudes. Being a racist means permanently enclosing a person within a negative definition that places emphasis on the person's assumed traits. The danger always arrives when it is the person's differences that are used to define his or her identity. "Racism can be defined as the rejection of a person on the basis of one of their characteristics and the reduction of that person to that characteristic¹⁵⁰". D. SIBONY explains that "the only superiority of the person who is not racist might well be an understanding of the other person's racism, something that the racist is incapable of understanding¹⁵¹".

In France, there is often a reluctance to discuss racial discrimination because there is a refusal to believe that races actually exist. "Intended to measure and analyse the integration process in order to improve it, the French institutional device refuses to measure what might be caused by racially constituted inequalities or analyse the results of discrimination mechanisms¹⁵²", writes E. FASSIN who believes that denial translates the repudiation of an absence of integration that bears witness to the quality of the social contract on which national identity is based. Even French people of good will find it difficult to discuss race in the workplace and the differences in the treatment of persons according to their country of origin. When discrimination is discussed, it is rarely racial in nature.

Does diversity mask domination?

¹⁵⁰ CIFALI M. and B. MYFTIU B., *Dialogues et récits d'éducation sur la différence*, Les Paradigmes, 2006, p.81.

¹⁵¹ CIFALI M. and B. MYFTIU B., *Dialogues et récits d'éducation sur la différence*, Les Paradigmes, 2006, p.80.

¹⁵² FASSIN D., "Nommer. Interpréter. Le sens commun de la question sociale", in FASSIN D. and FASSIN E., *De la question sociale à la question raciale?*, La Découverte, 2006, p.137.

You seem to be saying that equality is achieved through differences rather than through similarities. You reveal a wish to assume equality in all its significance. Your work also reveals a need to separate between diversity policies and the problem of ethics, with the latter being seen separately from a moral position.

The extension of diversity policies in companies seems to go hand in hand with the recent development of “ethical” obligations. Faced with this phenomenon, there is a need to take great care to avoid the introduction of a new moral order disguised as diversity and its so-called efficient management. There are currently a growing number of private and institutional investors becoming highly demanding as to the ultimate ethical object of their investments and who insist on regular reviews alongside social and environmental assessments, especially insofar as companies quoted on the capital market are concerned. Despite having no idea as to how it might be achieved, these investors often raise the issue of how to choose a valid evaluation reference base applicable to all companies, how the information should be collected, and how the information should be aggregated and subsequently communicated.

J. PALMADE underlines with reason that since the 1970s and the development of increasing powerful concepts of ethics and confidence, there has been “a growing investment made by companies, including public companies, in a policy of communication. The intention has been to accompany the structural reforms imposed by the market and have them accepted by moving the structural level (especially social relations in the workplace) over to the cultural level (taken in the singular)¹⁵³”. In the early 1980s, the concept of corporate citizenship had operated much like a “linguistic mirage” that, in a nutshell, claimed to be able to reconcile two very different universes and orders, being the economic order of specific interests and the political universe, being the space of general interest¹⁵⁴. There is a

¹⁵³ PALMADE J., “Communication managériale et disaffiliation”, *Quaderni*, number 53, Winter 2003/2004, p.81.

¹⁵⁴ D’ALMEIDA N., *L’entreprise à responsabilité illimitée*, Editions Liaisons, 1996, p.56 cited by SEURRAT de la BOULAYE A., “La construction de l’exemplarité. Légitimation, mise en forme et en circulation de “bonnes pratiques” en gestion de la

need to take care that we do not create a *new mirage calling for new requirements from diversity policies that constantly raise the issue of the norm, the positively correct or comply with a morality that in our societies demands that we be open, 'nice', that we avoid causing offence, that we be respectful and welcoming, etc.*

The issue of difference and its management should not merely be reduced to what is fashionable. As expressed by A. FINKIELKRAUT¹⁵⁵, the popularised ideology of culture as a religion is now based on *another popularised ideology in which difference is considered to be sacred, revered and hypostasized.*

In addition, it is also quite clear that the new 'identity'-based militancy (feminism, multiculturalism, etc.) is currently "monopolised by the intellectual middle class, with the resulting exclusion of the working classes from the public space – despite the obvious and considerable differences of being a black worker or a black middle class citizen (the same applies to women, Moslems, etc.)¹⁵⁶". We find that many speeches concerning diversity management aim to 'depoliticise' the way in which companies are seen and place them within a 'humanitarian' logic that minimises the hidden impact of domination.

Several renowned consultancy firms are said to be refusing all assignments labelled under the heading 'diversity' that could potentially be in contradiction with the positions they have taken in their fight against discrimination. These firms want to ensure that their consultants are well trained in matters of discrimination and provide them with the necessary backing in all actions that they undertake. Their position is to provide their clients with recruitment criteria uniquely based on 'performance' and professional and personal skills. They refuse any requests from their clients made during the selection phases, be they in the form of questionnaires or interviews that might be interpreted as illegal discrimination. The position held by these experts leads us to ask ourselves how to develop and promote 'ethical' positions in terms of non-discrimination insofar as clients, candidates and civil society as a whole are

diversité dans l'entreprise", *Mémoire de Recherche en Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication* - Université de Paris IV, 2005, p.21.

¹⁵⁵ FINKIELKRAUT A., *La défaite de la pensée*, Gallimard, 1987, p.137.

¹⁵⁶ NOIRIEL G., *Racisme: la responsabilité des élites*, Textuel, 2007, p.35.

concerned, while also working in close coordination with associations battling against discrimination. How, as expressed by these firms, can they submit their professional practices to external analysis (audit, sociological study, etc.) while developing the results of all their experiments concerning the battle against discrimination in, for example, the recruitment sector?

We believe that the propagation of diversity management policies makes a considerable contribution to blurring the divide between the role played by the State and that played by companies. If, within the French Republican tradition, differences between people are expressed outside the public sphere, what space is currently available for companies developing their diversity policies? Within or outside the public sphere? In the past, the protestant ethic and then the progressivist ethic operated as psychological mobilisation and capitalist rationalisation support factors and their efficiency largely resulted from the fact that their sources and end results remained outside the economic sphere. In today's world, a powerful link in terms of value organisation is provided by (private) companies that, having been rehabilitated over 20 years ago in France, are not particularly interested in 'reinvesting' the economy into a social sphere that extends outside their control. With the advent of diversity, do companies really want to take over from the States in the construction of a universal social (market) link following the loss of colonial power?

M. AUGÉ was quite right to state: "All in all, everything seems to be taking place as if one of the characteristics of our era was to reassign to individuals the responsibility for creating types of relationships with third parties able to allow them to live, to individually fill the symbolic deficit brought about by the weakening of intermediate cosmologies and instituted mediations¹⁵⁷". While feudal society was characterised by individuals being powerful before they were even born, the equal dignity of humanity was affirmed with the French Revolution. From the company as matter for society¹⁵⁸, we progressively moved towards *society as a matter for companies*¹⁵⁹. But what happens in our contemporary societies when the value-producing institutions are also the employers of individuals having adopted this system of values? Put another

¹⁵⁷ AUGÉ M., *Pour une anthropologie des mondes contemporains*, Aubier, 1994, p.88.

¹⁵⁸ SAINSAULIEU R., *L'entreprise, une affaire de société*, PFNSP, 1990.

¹⁵⁹ D'ALMEIDA N., *L'entreprise à responsabilité illimitée*, Editions Liaisons, 1996.

way, what happens when companies acquire a growing importance as centres where values are produced and where the criteria for success or failure in the economic sphere grow ever closer to the concerned values? The result is that moral action no longer appears incompatible with the specific interest and arguments in favour of diversity and sustainable development raise “the idea according to which the growth of morality has the effect of improving the performance of organisations¹⁶⁰”.

An ethical positivism based around the defence of diversity would be replaced by a Taylor-based positivism¹⁶¹. But, as L. WITTGENSTEIN reminds us, there cannot be a ‘declarative ethic’ and the end-purpose of the company cannot be moral. While the search for power has always been one of humanity’s great activities, it would seem that this search is no longer supported by any transcendence. In addition, economic systems often create problems that the economy when taken in isolation is incapable of resolving. Manager and human resources directors, whose very role is to mediate, are faced with this need to ‘give meaning’, but their heritage finds itself increasingly less backed by any form of social legacy.

As a backdrop, globalisation seems to be the first universal system that, rather than being governed by a system of ideas, is governed by institutions whose decision-makers have little contact with those whom their decisions affect. Concerning this, J. SACKS underlines that “there is little in common between extraterritorial elites for whom physical distance is irrelevant and for whom time is everything, and the others, who have an abundant quantity of time (often due to unemployment or part-time work) but little freedom of movement¹⁶²”.

What is striking in French society and in French companies is not the occurrences of ‘otherness’ that are eliminated – we have perhaps never been

¹⁶⁰ D’ALMEIDA N., *L’entreprise à responsabilité illimitée*, Editions Liaisons, 1996, p.199 cited by SEURRAT de la BOULAYE A., “La construction de l’exemplarité. Légitimation, mise en forme et en circulation de “bonnes pratiques” en gestion de la diversité dans l’entreprise”, Information and communication sciences research thesis - Université de Paris IV, 2005.

¹⁶¹ MARTIN D., METZGER J.L. and PIERRE P., *Les métamorphoses du monde. Sociologie de la mondialisation*, Editions du Seuil, 2003.

¹⁶² SACKS J., *La dignité de la différence*, Bayard Culture, 2002, p.59.

*further in the exaltation of differences and in the refinement of their legal expression – but rather that the concept of the Other is denied any social, political or even ontological significance*¹⁶³.

Our society constantly examines and revises its social practices on the basis of new information concerning these practices provided by economic models with a supposedly higher performance level. This constitutively modifies their nature.

The fear of the Other, the share of the Other, the contribution of the Other

Finally, why do you so closely associate diversity policies and intercultural management when the concerned differences between players (migrants, expatriates, workers, executives, etc.) are not always the same?

Diversity and intercultural management policies are very similar when it comes to issues of differences and the effects of social, professional or geographical mobility on the physical operation of companies. These processes could be better used to take into consideration the identities that are present and allow them to express and develop themselves, acknowledge one another, in order to better cooperate and co-produce within organisations that are becoming increasingly multicultural and international. Within this context, it should not be forgotten that the crossing of cultural spaces through professional or geographic mobilities is also the crossing of organisational structures and social hierarchies. In addition, all forms of mobility are subject to what psychologists call a recognition implementation process. This results in the specific need to find a balance between what people think of themselves and what others think of them. P. BOURDIEU notes that honour presupposes “individuals who always grasp issues when with others and who need others to exist because the image that these people form of themselves

¹⁶³ JACQUARD A., *Inventer l'homme*, Editions Complexe, 1984.

is inseparable from the image given to them by the others¹⁶⁴. The strength and difficulty of honour lies precisely in this reciprocity.

When trying to grasp multicultural work relationships, rather than merely seeing them through conflicts of interest or power, it is worthwhile trying to read them through the sense and principles of life in society, such as the “logic of honour¹⁶⁵”. These principles are ridiculed when the concerned person experiences a feeling of contempt. This leads to the intervention of moral and even affective expectations that are not covered by existing diversity policies. These can take the form of quotas or anonymous CVs, positive discrimination, etc., simply because these policies are not developed on an individual level.

It is worth underlining that someone who is different (the foreigner, the woman in a man’s world, the disabled person, etc.) is the one who highlights the problems in what a group considers to be evident and who raises questions concerning what the group members deem normal or unquestionable. *Two important particularities concerning the foreigner or the disabled person lie in their “objectivity” and their “questionable loyalty”*. The objectivity is linked to their critical distance. As these people do not share the ‘tribal idols’, they are able to pick up any incoherence in the cultural model being used. Consequently and as expressed by M. WIEVIORKA, cultural differences “are rarely socially neutral or indeterminate¹⁶⁶”. “Society is not a universe without historicity in which each group is distanced from the others, protected from risks of cultural dissolution or violence by geographical distance, nor is it a simple juxtaposition of culturally different groups seeking to affirm their presence or existence. Society is constructed from interpenetrations and constant relations both between and within these groups¹⁶⁷”.

Within this field of cultural interpenetration, the individual process of understanding a foreign culture, being that of the company or overseas

¹⁶⁴ BOURDIEU P., “Le sens de l’honneur”, in *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*, Le Seuil, 2000, p.40.

¹⁶⁵ D’IRIBARNE Ph., *La logique de l’honneur*, Editions le Seuil, 1988.

¹⁶⁶ WIEVIORKA M., “Culture, société et démocratie”, *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*, Editions La Découverte, 1997, p.56.

¹⁶⁷ WIEVIORKA M., “Culture, société et démocratie”, *Une société fragmentée? Le multiculturalisme en débat*, Editions La Découverte, 1997, p.56.

subsidiary that an individual joins, reveals itself to be a process that is far from linear. It demands the separation of several phases of perception, contact, discussion and comprehension. A. SAYAD, for example, has clearly explained how the initial estrangement inherent in the act of emigrating is also accompanied, for many people, by the feeling of having betrayed the community they have left.

When working and developing in a world of interconnections, when pushing through the barriers, a person is always considered as being 'inauthentic' in one way or another. An element of doubt is introduced.

The person becomes caught up between several cultures and several ways of being identified¹⁶⁸. *Raising the issue of intercultural management results in the person questioning the logic underlying his or her personal diversification and finding the way in which to remedy a demeaned authenticity.* Respect is another way of expressing oneself but treating others with respect is not self-evident. Showing respect means finding the right words, gestures and attitudes¹⁶⁹.

Concerning current delocalisation management practices, companies will increasingly be called on to go beyond 'individual talent hunting'. Whether Indian computer programmers, Moroccan labourers, Tunisian telephonists, Madagascan dressmakers or Senegalese fishermen, the current system used to recruit, pay and more generally manage these people often ignores that these distant associates have a cultural identity; in other words, a system of beliefs, values and rules by which they live in a specific society and in which they strongly believe. *The first repressive movement expressing rejection when faced with the foreigner always calls for a second reactive approach based on a demand for acknowledgement.* It is particularly worth noting that in the vast majority of cases, the managers of these operations, increasingly used by multinationals, forget that these deeply rooted cultural systems correspond to specific managerial expectations that are occasionally in contradiction with those of their associates who, for example, have been educated in Western or Asian cultures. As noted over several years in a

¹⁶⁸ See SAYAD A., *La double absence*, Le Seuil, 1999, p.51.

¹⁶⁹ SENNETT R., *Respect*, A. Michel, 2003, p.235.

number of target delocalisation countries, the non-acknowledgement of local cultural identities and, as a result, the imposition of external management models, often results in unfortunate management processes within which 'locals' are stigmatised, enclosed within an inferiority complex and a state of mental fascination.

In other words, can it be said that the lack of consideration of links between local cultures, behaviour in the workplace and managerial expectations that only favour dominant models – whether exported from head offices to national or foreign subsidiaries – are always translated by the deterioration of the company's image capital, by managerial difficulties and even the failure of local operations?

Absolutely. Over and above industrial and commercial companies, several field investigations have revealed that a mechanical and stereotyped approach to the relationship between individuals and their culture in no way corresponds to the perception that foreigners have of their identity, the specific resources that they hold or the image that others have of them¹⁷⁰.

Let us take the example of a Japanese restaurant owner who has lived in Brussels for the past 20 years who exaggerates his accent and speaks haltingly when he takes the local newspaper to his customers' table and gives a sickly smile in response to the jokes on the humour page. What is he trying to express when using these stereotypes? What message is he trying to put across to others apart from the fact that while acknowledging his roots, he is now also part of Belgian society and that the worst possible insult would be to take him for what tasteless opinion imagines him to be?

Much like immigrants or the working class in France, often understood through their links to larger collective entities or through generalisation phenomena that are meaningless and have no positive effects in terms of enhancing talents (the 'Algerians', the 'Portuguese', etc.¹⁷¹), the offsetting and

¹⁷⁰ See PEROTTI A., *Migrations et société pluriculturelle en Europe*, L'Harmattan, 1996, p.185.

¹⁷¹ See POUTIGNAT P. and STREIFF-FENART J. *Théories de l'ethnicité*, PUF, 1995, p.16.

contraction of local values and their replacement by management modes applied in units that have been delocalised to other countries creates organisational malfunctions and individual and collective counter-performance.

The error often made in multicultural contexts consists in forgetting – whether consciously or not – that the value of a person has a deep-rooted cultural significance that employees do not leave behind them at home or at the entrance to the workplace. It is often forgotten that what contributes to creating a team spirit within a company, what really creates the unity of immigrant populations (Moroccans, Brazilians, Malians or Turks in France) is often based on their identifying roots and, paradoxically, on their shared refusal to being defined by their cultural, ethnic or foreign identity. These two feelings are particularly reinforced when this definition is applied to quotas or to classification criteria that take no account whatsoever of individual personalities, cultural diversities (professional, associative, political, etc.) acquired by each individual, a person's assets and specific contributions to his or her village life, urban district, sport or work team, etc.

Faced with the clichés and fantasies within which they find themselves enclosed, a large number of Moslem immigrants, especially those from North Africa, have not always succeeded in disclosing their identity in most European countries. They have not really understood the crossovers linked to their specific values nor, as a result, really been able to fully integrate. This is because they are often seen and understood to be part of a same cultural group that is globally unable to integrate into a country with Judeo-Christian traditions. The arrival of a new generation, being the sons and daughters of migrants, generally born in France of North African parents and educated by the French State, has revealed the difficulties of professional insertion faced by these men and women. As demonstrated by A. PEROTTI¹⁷², the fairly widespread belief in the myth of cultural homogeneity held in modern societies is now translated by the fact that certain people – be they racist or not – believe that Islam, rather than being a religion or a metaphysic, is a spiritual, legal, political and social block from which nothing or any person, nor

¹⁷² PEROTTI A., *Migrations et société pluriculturelle en Europe*, L'Harmattan, 1996, p.13.

any Moslem can be excluded. These people believe that Islam, with its set of rules by which to live and its religious values and ideals, render it 'incompatible' with human rights and, a fortiori, women's rights.

But the fact is that a large number of analyses show that generally speaking, Moslems – apart from the diversity of their countries of origin – are better integrated than other populations that retain very strong separatist and defensive community-oriented structures in France or elsewhere in the world. Within the framework of multicultural countries, as exemplified by France, it is clear that the same actions cannot be applied to new migrants, descendants of former migrants who have become French, or expatriates who only remain temporarily in the country before heading off to other countries where their companies operate which, occasionally, are also their country of birth. Therefore, as underlined above, these three types of population do not share the same concerns, the same resources or the same projects with regards to the foreign country or culture that welcomes them over a more or less long period. In addition, as demonstrated in our research, it is necessary to take into account their unequal levels of capital and the *acknowledgement strategies* they employ to make better use of their specific contributions. Their integration should be accompanied rather than simply being based on trying to sort them according to their technical skills.

For example, within the French framework, a 'monolithic' approach would currently be foolish if not catastrophic both for the concerned individuals and for the local companies, regions and host organisations. It should not be forgotten that the number of immigrants (permanent residents born outside France) is nearly five million, of which 40% from Africa and 13% from Asia. This number is even greater if one adds young people born of migrants (currently estimated by demographers at two to three million) who have adopted French nationality but without changing their cultural identities and who do not appear in national statistics. While they are all worthy of acknowledgment and a satisfactory level of acceptance, Africans and Asians are marked by their own cultural differences and their integration which is more or less eased by their economic, political and cultural relations, being factors that differ widely from one another in France and African and Asian countries.

Finally, if one adds the 4.5 million people currently living in 'sensitive urban areas', 19% being immigrants, of which 32% under 20 years old and 83% being from outside the European Union, one can gather an idea of the complexity of integration issues in France. These figures reveal that this is an economic, political, social and cultural problem that no quantitative or 'monolithic' approach can adequately resolve.

Outside France, the unsatisfactory handling of this problem has had considerable consequences, especially for countries with an ageing population, such as Spain and Germany where young, dynamic manpower is becoming increasingly rare and expensive.

Those in favour of 'chosen immigration' need to remember that 40% of the civil service will be retiring between 2006 and 2010 and that this phenomenon does not spare the private sector where it is estimated that over 60,000 people retired in 2007 in France. Immigrants are the victims of unemployment which is simultaneously a factor that translates and results in a lack of economic growth. While these two elements are different from one another, there is nevertheless considerable interaction between them¹⁷³.

Limits to acknowledgement?

Ultimately, what are the limits to introducing diversity management policies within companies?

The main danger that we can imagine would be the systematic introduction of insufficiently thought out positive discrimination measures. This would run the risk of believing that it is possible to give rights back to people who are discriminated against or simply eradicate discriminatory practices by merely introducing quota policies and anonymous curriculum vitas for recruitment or career management measures. *This approach runs the risk of chasing after*

¹⁷³ SILBERMAN R., in HERAN F., *Immigration, marché du travail, intégration*, Commissariat général au Plan, 2002.

all types of discrimination and clearly laying them out in supposedly exhaustive legislative enactments. Lying behind diversity policies, there is always a tendency to seek out the victims, the oppressors who impose their discrimination and the 'endangered species'.

More ambitiously, trying to create an intercultural management means that company directors must accept that foreigners do not integrate well into their organisation, and that deserving employees are unjustly penalised and can be victims of violence or suffering in the workplace. *It also means being able to acknowledge and accept defects and failures.* However, the position currently being taken in companies generally advocates an opposite stance. It presents and places emphasis on fully adaptable, all-round executives who are happy to work in an environment that is constantly changing, within a social order that is 100% based on strong company values or cultures. The truth of the matter is that this satisfied multi-functional executive does not and never will exist!

The difficulty lies in allowing employees and those who believe they are being discriminated against to have freedom of expression. An incorrect opinion that is reported is better than a concealed conviction that risks remaining hidden because not heard and thus neither open to enrichment or transformation. It is our duty under all circumstances to accept that the right to have convictions does not just belong to certain national or professional cultures while the others find themselves completely powerless. We can no longer accept that one group is better than another¹⁷⁴.

E. ENRIQUEZ expresses this wrong as being 'that which is different is increasingly unacceptable to a society that wishes to be homogeneous and undifferentiated'. In a world where social structures are in a state of constant change, an effect linked to the mobility of groups, alliances and exchanges, there is a clear modulation of identity. Unfortunately, this often remains outside the grasp of a large number of company directors. In the absence of an identifying referent (belief, territorial affiliation, physical traits, shared linguistic traits, etc.), taxonomic demarcation operations play an essential role

¹⁷⁴ CIFALI M. and MYFTIU B., *Dialogues et récits d'éducation sur la différence*, Les paradigmes, 2006, p.84.

in the construction of a social or ethnic identity. The attribution of ethnonyms and the process of denomination are therefore more based on a performative act than on a classification operation. Ethnic groups produce as much taxa as they do entities or species (genus, family, group, class). In other words, intercultural encounter processes are problematisation and self-training processes and there are very few tools available. The use of sociology and other human and social sciences is essential to understand evolutions and to give meaning both to the tool and the rules governing its use.

A. SEMPRINI writes that “with the diversification of hermeneutic and experiential horizons, it is the range of interpretations that broaden. Truth becomes less an affair of transmission than a question of conviction. The development of the communicational paradigm is one of the motors underlying this dynamic. It is to the semiosphere of multicultural space what knowledge and education were to the political space of modernity¹⁷⁵”.

Is there any point in discussing battles when, nowadays, most conflicts are internal and less and less often through a collective coming out on strike, a union being organised or a group of employees halting production? Should we not rather linger over voiceless individual experiences, struggles, the dissonances in demands for recognition experienced by a disabled person unable to find work, a woman judged too old, an expatriate and his family in a foreign country or a manual worker, all of whom, admittedly in different circumstances, are obliged to choose between loyalty to a tradition, a local way of working or an internalised refusal to abandon their origins when pushed to integrate?

Along with T. VEBLEN and V. PARETO, we believe that “acknowledgement forms part of a monopolistic competition, thus transforming it into a rare resource and, as a result, generating a multiplicity of social conflicts¹⁷⁶”. In other words, *promoting intercultural management means favouring open debate concerning the company’s end purposes*. It is equally as important to jointly understand what is being discussed as it is to know who, at the end of the day, is ‘right’.

¹⁷⁵ SEMPRINI A., *Le multiculturalisme*, Collection “Que sais-je?”, PUF, 1997, p.123.

¹⁷⁶ LAZZERI A. and CAILLE A., “La reconnaissance aujourd’hui. Enjeux théoriques, étatiques et politiques du concept”, *Revue du MAUSS*, no. 23, 2004, p.94.

Because individual employees cooperate in the action, intercultural management can be based on the principle that employees can also cooperate on what underlies the rules governing the action – an approach more ambitious than cooperation based on the politics of diversity management¹⁷⁷. Concerning this point, S. HABER notes that “policy has no specificity nor, strictly speaking, an particular place; justice, as it were, only comes into play in the immanence of social relations that are successful because psychologically satisfying; and even the law (...) only exists to contribute in its particular ways to the dynamic of self-realisation¹⁷⁸”.

J. HABERMAS underlines that, in itself, the argumentative procedure incorporates moral rules that are necessarily agreed to when accepting to enter into debate. “The result of this communication ethic is the acknowledgement of equality between speakers and, inasmuch as the aim of the considered measure is the genesis of public standards governing the life of a society, the type of acknowledgement resulting from this inter-understanding is a political acknowledgement¹⁷⁹”.

Concerning the culture of sharing and solidarity, the irreplaceable nature of the partners in the exchange process creates what might be called *an effect of “meaning”*, indicating the non-anticipatable nature of intercultural encounters. However, at the same time, a certain distance exists in this form of sharing. “The Other is the person who gives and receives; the Other is the person who receives and returns¹⁸⁰”. *It is this linkage (with its resulting freedom) that characterises intercultural encounters.*

¹⁷⁷ LAZZERI A. and CAILLE A., “La reconnaissance aujourd’hui. Enjeux théoriques, étatiques et politiques du concept”, *Revue du MAUSS*, no. 23, 2004, p.95.

¹⁷⁸ HABER A., “HEGEL vu depuis la reconnaissance”, *Revue du MAUSS*, no. 23, 2004, p.84.

¹⁷⁹ LAZZERI A. et CAILLE A., « La reconnaissance aujourd’hui. Enjeux théoriques, étatiques et politiques du concept », *Revue du MAUSS*, no. 23, 2004, p.96.

¹⁸⁰ RICOEUR P., *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, Stock, 2004, p.377.

Does this mean that before trying to understand the Other, it is therefore first necessary to accept that this understanding is impossible or highly unlikely?

In parallel and using Freudian terminology, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the 'I' is not master of the situation. When the experiment carried out by the Other is successful, it leads to an awareness of one's own strangeness. Relations with the youngest or with the oldest can only take place within an environment of exchange and reciprocity. This does not mean equality or symmetry.

The moment has come to conclude our discussion. Insofar as companies are concerned, what are the main prospects opened by your reflections? What kind of reasoning, what vision of the Other needs to be cultivated to ensure that the intercultural management you advocate can be successfully used to irrigate and develop practices within companies?

Following the globalisation of the markets and the bridging practices of international companies – no matter whether these be mergers, acquisitions, alliances or joint ventures – *the intertwining of cultures has become a phenomenon at least as important as the existence of separate cultures*. Up until the end of the 1960s, contiguity with events in other countries generally only concerned a privileged class of managers and executives, as well as a few technicians and line supervisors, and took place following the creation or purchase of a foreign subsidiary, the starting up of site works or the provision of one-off or repetitive technical assistance operations. This is no longer the case.

Large companies have seized hold of the issue of diversity but issues of discrimination need to be handled over an entire territory and involve companies, local authorities, public employment services, job-seeking networks, associations, unions, etc. All this will take some time. Currently undergoing development, the ideal of an intercultural management seeks to improve the inter- and intracultural relations now needed at work, especially insofar as multinational teams, relations resulting from the subjective

experience of mobile persons, as well as the international transfer of management tools are concerned¹⁸¹. On a company level, intercultural management corresponds to a challenge also shared by democratic countries, being the capacity of all social systems to create social ties over the long term and integrate differences without having pressure arbitrated from the upper levels of a hierarchy. This needs to be carried out while assuring the possibility of *acknowledging the Other as equal to oneself*.

But up to what point can a difference (of culture, type, etc.) be appreciated as a value from which rights and duties for employees can be determined? Are we heading towards an extension of cultural acknowledgement practices? Do employment quotas reserved for members of certain communities or an adjustment in the duration or recruitment selection tests to take ethnic groupings into consideration represent a success, a step forward? We do not believe this to be the case. Nor do we believe that ethnic origin should be a criterion for obtaining a job. G. CALVES was right to say that while “the positive discrimination technique integrates harmoniously into French legal and political culture, the spirit of this tool focussed on the group is, on the other hand, radically foreign from the country’s spirit¹⁸²”.

The question is how to be productively organised if one takes into account the holy Friday of Muslims, the holy Saturday of Jews and the holy Sunday of Christians? Faced with the problem of employees working in subsidiaries having access to responsibilities and the composition of the management hierarchy across the world, is it possible to practice a quota policy without the measure risking being seen as a sign of a social treatment of racial or ethnic discrimination? In France for example, and as underlined by Y. MOULIER-BOUTANG, “the issue of the headscarf at school or in the workplace reveal that “interculturality’ cuts across both the productive space and the public space¹⁸³”. When, in a company, will it be possible for a community, based on type, sexual orientation or ethno-racial origins, to be able to open schools in

¹⁸¹ CHEVRIER S., *Le intercultural management*, collection “Que sais-je?”, PUF, 2003, p.3.

¹⁸² CALVES G., *La discrimination positive*, PUF, 2004, p.61.

¹⁸³ MOULIER-BOUTANG Y., “Mondialisation: entreprises et main-d’œuvre à l’heure du capitalisme cognitif”, dans Michaud & al., *Qu’est-ce que la globalisation?*, Editions Odile Jacob, 2004, p.144.

subsidiaries, publish newsletters, have staff representatives elected on this differentiation criterion, have premises available for meetings, broadcast on independent wavebands or start up a specific web site?

Should different types of persons have identical rights or should rights be adapted according to the different persons? To what degree can companies now imagine rights to a cultural identity? Not just collective cultural rights that threaten the rights of the individual, but the rights of the individual allowing employees to express the cultural aspect of their identity. What *institutional acknowledgement* can a company give cultural groups? Can it be provided by a *legal acknowledgement* by which employees are given rights, or by a moral acknowledgement giving employees the assurance of a moral discernment capacity¹⁸⁴? Or can it be given by *social acknowledgment*, being the value of a person's contribution to the life or the project of a clear-cut community, with emphasis placed on loyalty and reciprocity, dignity and solidarity.

Why is it that management – the epitome of modernity and condition of its efficiency – has only been able use the fragmentary and incomplete approaches to define what is meant by the Other and the manner in which to live with this person at work? Could it be because cosmopolitanism, often encouraged to favour the mixing of cultures and the circulation of persons representing them within a given space, often appears exercised by symbolic violence, acculturation or even, occasionally, alienation?

Diversity policies are desirable but will always remain a stage that only touches on the most visible aspects the discrimination issue. There is clearly a need for a more in-depth methodology that involves a scientific approach to the knowledge held by cultures and a greater understanding of vital subjects that are both cultural creators and creatures. There is a need to understand the confidence mechanisms built up by persons who are firstly foreigners and who then subsequently wish to be treated in a manner that respects their specificities so that their contribution to the common good is fully acknowledged. Enhancing differences and building synergies is a long process and there is never any guarantee of success. In companies, this requires new skills in terms of human resources management and the training of managers to help them overcome their fears, understand their own cultural

¹⁸⁴ TAYLOR C., *Sources of the Self*, Harvard University Press, 1989.

background and its impact on their behaviour patterns. This implies the construction of parity between unions, associations and company management.

For A. TOURAINE, the intercultural society that remains to be built “is not characterised by the coexistence of different cultural values or practices, and even less by a generalised miscegenation. It is rather a society in which the greatest possible number of individual lives are constructed and successfully combined, each time in a different way, associating those aspects that bring them together (instrumental rationality) and those that separate them (the life of the body and the spirit, project and memory)¹⁸⁵”. It is worth stating once more that what devastated the last century in the belligerent continent that is Europe, is the reduction of the human world to a binary confrontation of two wills. What was so cruelly missing was the presence of a *strong third party*, a neutral arbitrator with complete authority able to unravel the cultural knots that existed and reweave them in an interrelated and interdependent manner.

Dialogue permits mutual acknowledgement of the parties and the ability to introduce a shared relationship with regards reality and a sharing of the produced energy. In other words, it provides a means to communicate having integrated the culture as a medium, creating a potential space for dialogue and giving the possibility of achieving this end. But even in these conditions, care has to be taken to ensure that we only acknowledge Otherness when this is necessary – being the situation in today’s companies – and not simply by natural inclination. This constraint is essentially ethic and has little in common with the political correctness of debating platforms. This is the miracle brought about by the trial of responsibility to which we are invited by the face of the Other. *Within the intercultural dynamic, “sociable people always lives outside themselves¹⁸⁶” and are not simply passive witnesses of suffering, lack of adaptation to work, non-fulfilment of the Other or managerial deficiencies.*

For interculturality to work in the interests of the companies and all their employees and social partners – and not just the shareholders – it is

¹⁸⁵ TOURAINE A., *Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble?*, Paris, Editions Fayard, 1997, p.303.

¹⁸⁶ ROUSSEAU J.J., *Discours sur les origines de l’inégalité parmi les hommes*, Paris, Editions UGE, p.329.

necessary to consciously provide a space for the encounter and mutual discovery of all cultures present in the workplace. It is also necessary that the ethical requirement precedes physical encounters between people. This is because, and to put it somewhat crudely, violence remains present in these multicultural dialogue spaces. It is only when this violence is acknowledged and analysed that it can be transfigured. The diverse cultural differences can be clarified, with the various parties making the effort to reveal their differences, ensuring that they are understood and able to understand the others.

There is also a need to examine the similarities of understanding concerning the various day-to-day events in the company's life. *Interculturality is not 'otherworldly'. It is above all, a way of accepting and working with the Other given that it is not always possible to agree to a single standard if it refers back to practices considered as illegitimate by one or more of the cultures that are present.* Otherness is not an objective phenomenon that can simply describe or destroy without demolishing the individual's identity. Interculturality presents itself as a dynamic relationship between two or more subjects seeking to give each other meaning, life and humanity. The subjects seek to conserve a memory by discovering a multiple history.

The nation continues to talk in terms of Republic, while society acts and thinks in terms of democracy. There is a divergence between standard and culture, between the history of France and the lives of the French people. There is a growing lack of confidence in the concept of the State; it is considered to be insufficient. As expressed by SIEYES, the task is not to change everything, but rather to change something. No other country has set itself such a universal horizon and none seeks to. It goes without saying that a considerable gap exists between the ideal and the reality. The Republic exists. The Republic, if it wishes to continue its existence, must also be a culture that inspires, that cannot be reduced to a controlling legal framework¹⁸⁷.

The Republic's project is not to just build a nation based on reason, simply because this would be incompatible with an acknowledgement of religious,

¹⁸⁷ DEBRAY R., *Ce que nous voile le voile*, Gallimard, 2004, p.59.

cultural and other types of pluralism. There is no such thing as an abstract civic education without literary, artistic and historic foundations or without, for instance, the teaching of religions at school.

Access to the ideal promulgated by the Republic depends on us. We need to pay far greater attention to the third foundation stone of the French Republic because, be it in a company or in everyday life, Interculturality rhymes with Fraternity.

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List of questions

Audrey Trotereau: Is the term 'diversity' like the term culture, in that it has more value than meaning and more usages than its basic definition? In firms, or in social phenomena like the crisis of the ethnic housing estates, is it legitimate to use the word 'diversity'? As sociologists, do you think people protest because they feel discriminated against?	18
Is this talk about 'acknowledgement' in the corporate context totally new? ..	19
How do we determine what is discrimination and what is not?	19
In some cases it seems difficult to distinguish.....	20
Nevertheless, it appears many firms highlight their efforts with regard to diversity. Is this to say their efforts are insincere?.....	21
The truth is that we are currently creating a 'market for discrimination'	22
But you don't deny that firms have made significant efforts?	22
Let's go back to the negative consequence of diversity i.e. discrimination. To what extent does it occur in firms?.....	23
Is there a contradiction between current corporate diversity policies and France's attachment to the Republican tradition of welcome and integration?.....	24
Can French firms take inspiration from abroad for their diversity policies? ...	25
In other words, we can explain the protest movements mentioned above by the fact that most of those who represent the Republic are just in their intentions, but frankly unjust in their practices and behaviour?	26

What is the best form of diversity to promote? What does the term 'diversity management' mean: respecting differences and eliminating inequalities?	27
How can we act effectively?	28
Are you saying that the theme of diversity ultimately makes all differences of talent between employees 'suspect' , and creates the notion of 'victim' and 'culprit' too quickly?	28
How do you explain the success of diversity in terms of its dominance as a theme today?.....	31
Listening to you, one gets the impression that difference, which you distinguish from diversity, has become a value in itself in France, comparable to diversity and its advocacy?.....	32
Once the limits of the 'positiveness of difference' have been recognised, how is it possible to imagine a political or professional community which doesn't refuse the right to resemblance?	34
Let's look at the world of work. The number of recruitment consultancies specialised in the promotion of diversity are increasing, as are the number of training organisations more or less specialised in this theme. What concrete policies do you see being implemented in France, notably in firms?.....	35
Don't the policies you are proposing create divisions within the firm? If everyone starts claiming rights, don't we run the risk of identity policies which attempt to create coalitions between heterogeneous communities? Of ignoring the unions internally, relying more on external legal sanction, each individual fighting for the recognition of their own culture and not for the common good?.....	39
It is said that the wise person is one who learns from everyone and is open to all differences. What are the characteristics of the 'ideal firm' for the leaders or social rating agencies which advocate more formal policies of diversity management?	41
Are you not advocating a new management model under cover of diversity management?	43

'To each according to his merits'; is this the general rule of an organisation which has lost all national entrenchment?.....	43
What form does diversity management take if it has its eyes riveted on indicators?	44
How can one deal with the fact that in France there are no 'ethno-racial' typologies? How can one proceed when, at the same time, these affiliations are in the private sphere and the person we wish to protect does not want to be identified at this level?.....	46
Is there a danger in defining the criteria used to measure corporate diversity, and the integration of groups which have been stigmatised? Aren't we simply reinforcing the phenomenon we wish to combat, that is, racism or exclusion of all kinds?.....	47
Taking diversity seriously is like growing radishes, which is more about paying attention to the roots than to the vegetable we see!	48
Statistics are intended to reveal the divisions in society. But statistics aren't neutral. Don't they accentuate the phenomena of discrimination they bring to light?	49
Once again, isn't every policy which favours minorities condemned to recognise the identity it calls into question, by basing itself on the category it is denouncing?	51
Beyond a declaration of principles, your research and publications stress the stakes involved – in terms of acquired and constructed identities – in corporate diversity policies. Does the assimilation of discriminated groups require a long and rigorous process of socialisation?	51
You mention a loss of self-esteem and identity. Is this one explanation for the current success of diversity policies?	53
And such situations are taken to the extreme in straightforward situations of racism... ..	54
You are describing the emergence of a society based on contempt, which recalls the work of E. GOFFMAN, for whom the basis of the human struggle is not the desire to assert the superiority of one's need for recognition, but rather the more intimate desire to avoid the contempt	

arising out of the presentation of oneself. A just society enables a person to escape contempt. Do different forms of discrimination in and outside of ..57

the firm bear any similarity to different degrees of violence to others? To remedy this, what do you think of the idea of introducing legal quotas based on ethnic, cultural or religious identity?57

Are you saying that diversity management policies are having difficulty spreading because the French firm is culturally considered as being in the public sphere? That in some way, we hesitate to introduce notions, such as beliefs and values, from the private sphere.....58

Regarding current diversity policies, what place should we make for the expression of religious convictions in the workplace, the public space and in public services?60

Audrey Trotereau: You distinguish between diversity policies - which are today largely associated with disadvantaged minority groups – and “intercultural management”, a notion which is still unclear today and which refers notably to expatriates required to leave their cultural origins to work abroad.....66

Paying attention to discrimination in diversity management policies, and seeking complementariness in intercultural management. Aren't these two sides of the same coin? How do diversity management policies differ from intercultural management?68

But indeed, what arises from the experience of the firms you have studied or worked in?71

Can you say a little more about the main instruments of action which can be used in multicultural contexts or in the intercultural management which you wish to see?.....72

Current events are placing new intercultural demands on the organisation of teams. This is the case for a number of firms which, in the consumer goods field for example, face a strategic choice: to globalise their marketing, or develop product strategies and therefore specific “glocal” marketing corresponding to different segments of their world market.....73

Does intercultural management, seen as an ideal goal, go further?74

But what is the point of discussing changing perspectives when certain firms such as IBM and Shell have been internationalised and even “globalised” for so long?	76
Do you see any other difficulties linked to implementing multicultural management?	78
Are diversified teams always more efficient within a company environment?	79
You use this book to argue a dynamic approach to the construction of cultural identities within the working environment. Over and above pathological cases, it is clear that no-one is insensitive to differences and no-one can exist independently from others. Given that the experience of diversity often takes place within teams, what do human and social sciences teach us concerning these multicultural work phenomena within the company environment?	80
How does the cultural concept work?	83
From this point of view, can culture be said to have several functions?	85
From your comments and for several previously mentioned reasons, it would appear that the road to intercultural management is not something easily followed in a large number of companies. Is this because the skills demanded remain very rare? Do the advantages of diversity remain largely unknown by most managers?	86
Is it now possible to standardise all work methods, management procedures, styles of management and work behaviour with impunity?	88
And the assimilation processes can be violent... ..	89
Interacting with the Other as an end in itself. Is it possible to train oneself to become the intercultural manager that you believe is needed, a person able to successfully battle against discrimination and effectively run diversified teams?	93
You have stated that the search for mutual understanding and the convergence of efforts by a culture that is technocratically based or imposed from the outside (the purportedly strong cultures of certain companies, developed at the top of the pyramid and generally unevenly distributed) does not work. It generally leads to the effects of one group	

being dominated by another. What founding principle of an agreement would be universal and fully recognised as being equitable by all the members of all cultures and communities? Earlier on, you mentioned Human Rights..... 95

Does this mean that companies can no longer escape from either the risks of a monocultural approach or those of a multicultural approach? Have you noted any more advanced, high performance practices? 96

Could you go into greater detail concerning the performance levels of diversified teams and the demands of intercultural management? 98

Audrey Trotereau: In companies, when working with foreign partners, the question is raised as to how to agree on who is 'right' and who is then prepared to have this decision respected. It is the issue of common values, criteria and arbitration capacities that are in play in all decisions concerning the evaluation of a performance, a recruitment or a training course..... 103

In listening to what you say, it would seem that the fundamental issue for companies consists in finding how they can persuade their members to acknowledge their differences, make use of them and take advantage of them together in the workplace while fully respecting one another and using mutual contributions in a positive manner. 104

Faced with these elements and without being antinomic, it is clear that diversity management and intercultural management policies do not target exactly the same projects..... 105

Exactly what rules do you give yourselves for understanding intercultural realities and how to explore this roadmap for change? Do you have a method for coming to grips with intercultural realities in the workplace? 109

To grasp an intercultural reality, is it therefore necessary for a micro-sociological analysis of cultural interiorisation phenomena to be accompanied by a background macro-sociological understanding of their structural aspects? 111

And all travellers risk being seen as outsiders..... 112

Does claiming the exercise of everyone's equal right to social respect reduce the very concept of acknowledgement? In other words, how to

introduce acknowledgement in terms of rights (diversity management policies) through the creation of relations of esteem based on reciprocally assumed responsibilities (intercultural management) by members of multicultural teams with regards one another?.....	113
How do the policies of diversity management and intercultural management confront the issue of racism?	115
You seem to be saying that equality is achieved through differences rather than through similarities. You reveal a wish to assume equality in all its significance. Your work also reveals a need to separate between diversity policies and the problem of ethics, with the latter being seen separately from a moral position.	116
Finally, why do you so closely associate diversity policies and intercultural management when the concerned differences between players (migrants, expatriates, workers, executives, etc.) are not always the same?	120
When working and developing in a world of interconnections, when pushing through the barriers, a person is always considered as being 'inauthentic' in one way or another. An element of doubt is introduced.	122
In other words, can it be said that the lack of consideration of links between local cultures, behaviour in the workplace and managerial expectations that only favour dominant models – whether exported from head offices to national or foreign subsidiaries – are always translated by the deterioration of the company's image capital, by managerial difficulties and even the failure of local operations?.....	123
Ultimately, what are the limits to introducing diversity management policies within companies?.....	126
Does this mean that before trying to understand the Other, it is therefore first necessary to accept that this understanding is impossible or highly unlikely?	130
The moment has come to conclude our discussion. Insofar as companies are concerned, what are the main prospects opened by your reflections? What kind of reasoning, what vision of the Other needs to be cultivated to ensure that the intercultural management you advocate can be successfully used to irrigate and develop practices within companies?.....	130

