



Wednesday 18 June 2008 Opening Conference

How do new dynamic immigration and reception policies interact ? What part does communication play ?

2.30 pm/3.30pm : Society and communication

Expert speaker :

Dominique WOLTON, Sociologist and Head of the Communication Science Research Programme at the CNRS, author of numerous books about the media and communication.

Debate participants :

Marc GASTAMBIDE, Team consultant "Dynamique des territoires" at DIACT.

Pere Puig ANGLADA, General Director of regional policies at the European Commission

René SOUCHON, President of the Auvergne Regional Council, co president of the Massif Committee.

Dominique SCHMITT, Préfet for the Auvergne Region and Préfet coordinator for the Massif Central

Chairman :

Thomas HERVE, chronicler on France 2 television on the programme "Science...on tourne" and "télé Matin".

New communication technology maintains the illusion that men live in proximity to one another. It redesigns the world's cartography through a huge network of interlinked individuals. However, according to Dominique Wolton there are too many technological tools. Contrary to the simple transmission of a message, communication is based on differences, meaning that it brings together individuals from varying horizons : "communication is approached by negotiation, without which coexistence is impossible. This is the main challenge for a democracy". At local level, communication has to deal with the challenge of society with its diverse members, political and civil. The present migration dynamics are characterised by a multitude of paradoxes which emphasizes their complexity.

Migration movements are visible and numerous : nearly 5 million illegal immigrants are registered in the world. However if national and international mobility is increasing, migration is mostly short lived with people frequently returning to their homelands.

Mobility is conflicting with the desire to preserve a territory, which results in an increased allegiance. Cultural identities tend to strengthen and assert their uniqueness.



While Europe promotes the opening of borders, the majority of countries within the Union have shown little tolerance, they consider foreigners as a menace. Dominique Wolton discussed immigrants ; considered as “low life”, forced to try to integrate into an unknown community and torn between two opposing cultures.

In this case the simple notion of welcoming has become blurred, measures must be taken in order to welcome new immigrants.

- Work, education and the environment are three fundamental issues that should be available for immigrants.
- The host country should inform the newcomers of its past history, in order to help them improve their understanding of the local culture.
- The administrative procedure should be shortened to simplify the integration procedure for immigrants.
- Secularity should be associated with openness, with a clear difference between the private and public sectors as well as between religion and politics.
- The host country should give civic institutions an important role because they offer different viewpoints from political organisations.
- Access to open borders should not be reserved for the privileged.

With this analysis in mind, the challenge for territories becomes clear : “It is essential to create real policies aimed at opening up territories rather than extravagant communication strategies”. At the root of all political programmes ; immigrants should not be considered as a cause of division. Dominique Wolton concluded “It's mankind in general that is concerned. Equality is the key element to peaceful cohabitation”.

Equally convinced of the importance of human involvement in immigration policies, Dominique Schmitt has made the opening up of the Massif Central one of his main political battles. This region has suffered an alarming drop in the population ; there has been a continual decrease in its overall population. From now until 2030, the Massif Central should lose around 270 000 inhabitants. With this statistic in mind reception policies have a double challenge :

- It is essential to attract qualified people from France and foreign countries in order to boost the job market and regional economy.
- It is also essential to respond to the problem of an ageing population.

The “préfecture” proposes a programme containing two fundamental measures: create guidelines for welcoming and offer more services to businesses. In order to attain these objectives the coalition and mobilisation of the six regions in the Massif Central is a major asset : Dominique Schmitt underlined “In an effort to take action in the region, we have set up steering committees and held pre meetings”.

At European level, **Pere Puig Anglada** also promotes communication with the concerned regions, thus creating a strong bond with local people. Thanks to a significant budget for regional policies, the European Commission has decided to opt for contact measures by directly meeting the people involved. This quality initiative has proved to be extremely successful. Pere Puig Anglada explained that general mobilisation is necessary within Europe, this is enforced by the “Lisbon Treaty” controversy after the negative Irish vote.



Since 1997, **René Souchon** has lobbied at the Auvergne Regional Council for the reinforcement of reception policies ; he supported the idea of a communication strategy on the web. This advertising campaign “Les Urbanophiles” was modern and witty and it has greatly helped to boost the Auvergne's image by fuelling the buzz syndrome.

Communication however can only be used once the necessary dispositions for welcoming new inhabitants have been set up : “Before developing a communication strategy, the first step is to build on the guidelines for welcoming new inhabitants”. These propositions are based on fundamental issues such as work, services, local development, grants etc....which are essential to people coming from cities who want infrastructures on hand.

Other measures were set up to attract newcomers: for example the Auvergne region's business quarter offers free of charge short stay leases so that those interested can discover their new professional surroundings before taking their final decision.

Marc Gastambide believes that communication at local level should aim to attract both big firms likely to set up business and individuals who want a life change. In both cases it is essential to adapt the message to the culture of those interested, based on the region's strong points : “To attract new businesses it is essential to have convenient services. As for individuals the available job market is the determining factor”.