



Wednesday 18 June 2008 Opening Conference

How do new migration and reception policies interact ? What role does communication play ?

3.30pm/4.30pm : Communication and Migration

Expert Speakers :

Jean-Christophe VICTOR and **Virginie RAISSON**, Geographers specialised in geopolitics, authors of the programme "Le dessous des cartes", on ARTE, and Heads of Research at LEPAC.

Participating Experts :

Jean-Paul DENANOT, President of the Limousin Regional Council

Pierre HENRY, President of France Terre d'Asile

Animateur :

Thomas HERVE, Chroniquer on France 2 for the programme "Science ...on tourne" and "Télé Matin".

Due to the negative image of immigrants, **Jean-Christophe Victor** and **Virgine Raisson** decided to consecrate a programme of "**Dessous des cartes**" (a series of reports broadcast on the channel ARTE) to the analysis of migration movements. Through the projection and interpretation of superposed maps any previous opinions were put into question. Virginie Raisson's method is based on three factors "space, length, links". This helps to show the possible diverse interpretations of maps depending on their historical setting and their geographical situation. It questions the use of maps as referential documents, and even our **conception of the world**.

Video projection of the programme entitled "Migration, the unreal menace" The maps were thereafter presented in a Power Point document and commented by Virginie Raisson.

A migration policy that contradicts the real need to renew population levels.

In developed countries the population over sixty has increased progressively between 1950 and 2000, **from 7% to 10%**. By **2050** this age group should reach **21%**. This situation is caused by the rise in life expectancy, which has increased by 20 years from **1950 to 2000**. At the same time these countries have suffered a high decrease in the birth rate which is now at the level of 2.1 children per woman. The fecundity chart illustrates this fact, and shows the vast range of countries faced with the same demographic situation. The coexistence of these two factors has led to an ageing population in rich countries. The distorted age pyramid illustrates this phenomenon: at the bottom of the pyramid the representation of the young generation is weak. However the pyramid widens at the centre, demonstrating the predominance of the **30 to 60 age group**.



On regional level in France, there are contrasting demographic situations. Some regions such as Ile de France have a natural surplus resulting from a high birth rate and high immigration. On the contrary in the Auvergne and Limousin region there is a **natural deficit**, and consequently the regions are at risk of depopulation.

An ageing or a disappearing population causes **economic consequences** in the concerned countries or regions. It has thus become essential to welcome new inhabitants ; the only solution is to renew the population. However the immigration level remains particularly low in Europe. The map showing the **Shengen Zone** illustrates this contradictory situation. The **Shengen Zone** is an ambivalent area where it is possible to circulate freely ; a stronghold protected from the outside world by reinforced controls on its frontiers. The map shows the numerous immigration camps spread out in the highly developed countries. In the prohibited areas, premature mortality hits potential migrants ; severe policies such as the closure of certain territories are responsible for this. As a result we question why countries that need to renew their population are reluctant to welcome inhabitants from foreign countries. According to Virginie Raisson, it is necessary to wipe out certain set ideas in order to welcome newcomers.

The break down of prejudices : an essential step towards an opening in communication.

One of the most common portrayals is the association between foreigners and **danger**. This idea is fixed firmly in the public's imagination : Virginie Raisson explained "Immigration is an enforced situation, it is not chosen. The image of illegal immigrants swarming into countries has been developed by the media, without ever giving the cause of this supposed menace". Lastly the legal distinction between illegal immigrants and legal immigrants is based on chance depending on an individual's capacity to cross a frontier. Despite the fact that all social classes are concerned by expatriation, immigration is still associated with misery, concluded Virgine Raisson.

According to **Pierre Henry**, these false portrayals have to be eradicated in order to communicate effectively : "The fear of violence and insecurity prevent any opening". The media and the network of public opinions can and should be used as means of changing mentalities. Pierre Henry believes that migration regulations are law based rather than humanitarian : "**16 000 people** in France are affected by the family union". Migration can be a possible solution to the unbalance that exists within the population, the economy and the ecology : Pierre Henry continued "It is even more urgent to react because the tough migration policies have reduced the appeal of some territories. Between 2000 and 2007 the figure for asylum seekers has decreased from **400 000** applications to just **200 000**"

Jean-Paul Denant believes that the basis of all communication strategies lies in the elimination of prejudicial ideas. In an effort to promote the **Limousin** region he led a double combat aiming to attract newcomers and also to convince the existing population of the importance of welcoming new inhabitants into their community : " This meant setting up an internal communication strategy in order to change mentalities." At the same time the communication strategy aimed directly at the region's residents and the use of the multi media proved to be successful : Jean-Paul Denant confirmed that " 9 people out of 10 living in the Limousin say they are willing to welcome foreigners. "A certain number of measures were thereafter set up to create a structured welcome : mobilisation of a network of individuals and services, language and administration courses.....With **3 000 new inhabitants** each year since 1999 and a migration figure of **+2% in 2003** it is true to say that the project has been a success.