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Media and Social Movements

Three snapshots of recent media coverage of French social movements may give us an introduction to theme of this lecture.

Picture One: The media kiss of death

This first snapshot brings us back to October 1997. The Jospin Government decided to submit the attribution of the *allocations familiales* (Housing and family benefit) to the income level of the families. From March 1998 French families with two children earning more than £ 2700 a month would no longer receive this help from the Welfare state. This reform has triggered a strong debate. Some organisations, specially Catholic ones, supposed to represent « families », decided to protest. They organised a Sunday demonstration in Paris. So what did the reports of this demonstration show on the evening news ? Nice little girls with marine blue platted skirts and white blouses, mothers with Hermés scarves, fathers with Loden overcoats...and in the background, noisy demonstrators from the Front National. To sum it up, images which, according to the typical French attitudes on fashion, clearly suggests a gathering of conservative catholic BC-BG ([22]) bourgeoisie...while demonstrators wished to suggest the mobilisation of families on a level beyond that of status or class.

Picture 2: All ready for the show

Just one month later, in December, the truck drivers prepared a national strike. The movement was planned to start on a Sunday. Let's have one more look to the evening newsbulletin. During the first hours of the movement, the two main channels were able to give live coverage of the road blockades in a dozen areas, helping to increase the number of demos. But this time media were not only the press and broadcasters. Using the

[22] « Bon Chic, Bon Genre »

lessons of the previous strike, the trade-unions had organised a complete network of mobile phones and faxes for the strikers. This network allowed better co-ordination, real time reactions to the negotiations...and even gave excellent pictures for the newsbulletins like the images of fax sheets with the employers' proposals thrown into the fire by angry picketters...

Picture 3: Gimme some Act'Up !

Last picture, taken from the trial of the doctors put in judgement after what has been dubbed the scandal of contamined blood, tainted with AIDS. The French law prohibits filming in courts...It's why most of the time reports are not very attractive, just showing a reporter's head talking in front of the court building. This constraint was cleverly exploited by « Act Up » militants demonstrating around the court and getting a large media audience. The editor in chief of a TV Channel had even taken the habit of asking his reporters for more attractive reports, suggesting to them: « Make me some act-up ! ».

It would be easy to give more pictures. In mobilisation processes, medias does not mirror, it has become an actor in the networks of interdependencies which construct events and public problems.

The aim of this lecture is to explore some analysis, or simply to suggest some questions without answers concerning the role of media faced with social movements, and to explore it mostly through French case-studies and research. I'd like to introduce two remarks concerning French research.

The first one is simple: we are latecomers. The take-off of French research on Political communication began only in the late seventies. As for social movements the degree of backwardness is even worse. One can say that a real research field, with thesis, papers and empirical research has existed only since the end of the eighties when American research mounted up , already able to fill a library. The reason for this backwardness can be summarised by a Rolling Stone song: « *She's so respectable* »... French political science, La science politique, has long considered for ideological reasons that the vote was the only legitimate way of political participation, and that social movements were a threat on democracy. It's the reason why the French Academia has an excellent electoral sociology but has just

recently discovered social movements, thanks to a new generation of young researchers ([23]). To suggest a comparison, the first book on media and social movements in the UK was probably Eliot, Murdock and Halloran's « Demonstration and communications » ([24]) in 1970, American research also started soon with for Instance Gitlin's study « The Whole world is watching » ([25]). Except for a few historians papers, the first French case study on media and demonstrations was made by Champagne in 1984 ([26]).

My second remark concerns the advantages of being a latecomer...The economists have called this the « Gersenkron effect » or « leap-froging », (a more accurate notion for French research ?). When one is arriving « after the battle », you have a simple choice...either re-invent what is well-known... or assimilate the whole legacy of international research.. The latter is what has been done in France. Against our parochial habits, researchers on media and social movements are perfectly linked with the progress of international research.

What I want to develop is certainly not a complete balance-sheet of research. Many theoretical conclusions are well-know from those who are interested by this subject. One just has to read Gitlin's book contents to sum it up: the Media frames the representation of social movement, the media selects leaders and may bring them star-status, the quest for media coverage stimulates spectacular actions and so on. I would rather pay attention to more recent studies and approaches...and it may sometimes intend solely to suggest questions without answers requiring further fieldwork.

My first approach will certainly seem a typically French joke. Concerning the subject Media and social movements...it will centred on the article AND...

A second approach, more classical, will develop a topic that I will call « The symbolic weapons' race » between the media and social movements...It will also lead to some classical questions about the sociology of journalism.

A third and last approach will invite a return to the Hirschmann model of Exit, Voice and Loyalty..to suggest the presence of a fourth

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[23] Olivier Fillieule, Cécile Péchu, Joana Siméant, Sylvie Ollitrault.

[24] Penguin.

[25] « The Whole world is Watching Mass media in the making & unmaking of the new left », University of California Press. Berkeley, 1980.

[26] « La manifestation », Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales, n°52-3, 1984 pp 19-41. See also, Pierre Favre, « La Manifestation », Presses de Science Po, 1990.

solution: Therapy ... and to open a reflection concerning a possible bias of media culture against mobilisations.

MEDIA AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS.

The « *loss of mediatic autonomy* » hypothesis.

To speak of media and social movements is to start from an hidden premise. It suggests to us the image of social movements on one side, and of media - speaking or not, of social movements - on the other side. This approach is so strongly taken for granted that a typical dissertation subject would be « The coverage of movement A by media B ».

One of the basis of sociological reasoning is, to quote Elias, Myth-hunting. We must consider that there existed and continues to exist, many social movements which control their own media. The Chartist movement had its Press, the suffragettes too, the trade unions, the Communist movement, and many peasant movements had their own press. And the notion of « movement-controlled communication » does not apply only to the Press. The loudspeakers of movements in the public sphere were also bills, handouts, oral propaganda and canvassing. All this communication system was both a result and a maker of militant investments and activism. To suggest a simple illustration the practice of militant bill postering was at the same time a tool of communication, a ritual of integration and a social event in militant life...this practice has almost completely vanished in France.

So if we make an hypothesis concerning what I will call an historical trend to a « loss of mediatic autonomy » of social movements, now more dependant of public and private media, we have got an important research field...poorly explored. More precisely, only one side of this question is explored. A lot of research exists on the new forms of interdependencies created by this situation for social movements. This research - I will speak of it later - show how social movements must develop a specific activity, mobilise resources and skills to win media access, a favourable coverage. But this loss of mediatic autonomy invites to explore others questions...let me suggest some of them...

1 The question why ?

As far as I know there a few studies on the reasons for the crisis of militant media. Of course, it is easy to identify explanations: the breaking down of ideologies, the rise of « individualism », the crisis of class-based identities and social behaviour, the rising weight of television in cultural consumptions. In the French case one must also consider the peculiarity of the structure of national press: a very weak diffusion of daily newspapers and an extraordinary growing diversity and expansion of a press of specialised magazines on topics such as sports, lifestyles, sexuality, hobbies. For certain kinds of public problems the commercial press has even killed the militant one. The leading militant homosexual magazine « *Le Gai-pied* » has recently gone bankrupt while the commercial homosexual press is blooming. The consumers 'organisation magazines such as « *60 millions de consommateurs* » are loosing readers while lifestyle and shopping magazines are commercial success stories. But on all these questions we have more observations and vague general analysis than precise and illuminating case studies.

2 The movements' reactions .

The crisis of movement-controlled media has also triggered various changes and questions rarely studied by scholars. Let me quote three of them...

* A first reaction has been the professionalisation and modernisation of the militant press. Some movements' magazines now look more like commercial magazines (*CFDT ajourd'hui*, for example). There is even a process of publishing inflation in some quarters like the mutualist movement. However we have practically no research concerning the characteristics of the social agents who have promoted these changes, who write and design these magazines. The studies concerning political communication or local authority communication suggest the existence of a competition between agents whose resources are mainly political or elective and agents recruited for their skills as « communicators ». Does this balance of power also work inside social movement organisations ? How has this profesionalisation of movements' media changed its contents ?

* Another research field concerns the uses of new communication technologies by the social movement. The appearance of local private and community radios in France during the eighties has brought a contribution to an identity building process among immigrant

communities. Mobile phones have for instance modified the possibilities of militant action. During the occupation of a Parisian Church by illegal immigrants during summer 1996, the use of mobile phones allowed some of the protest leaders and supporters to manage at the same time the occupation of the building, the relations with journalists, and the mobilisation of supporters when police were expected to appear. The use of Internet also opens the possibility of a radical change in the maintenance costs of organisational networks, a subject currently being explored in Canada by Anne Marie Gingras.

* Finally one must also consider another situation... where social movements adopt a strategy of controlling public communication which concerns them...by prohibiting the access to the public sphere with some kinds of message. One can think of demonstrations in the UK against « *The satanic verses* »... or by catholic integrists against Scorsese movie « *Jesus Christ last tentation* » in France. Oberschall study on the new christian right in Carolina ([27]) suggests that this tactic is typical of community-based religious movements, working to protect community lifestyles and values from outside influences.

3 The need to explore all the consequences of this loss of autonomy.

Research has focused on movements strategies to gain media attention. But there are other important impacts of this situation. Roland Cayrol humorously entitled a recent paper « Honey, I've Shrunk the militants » ([28]). When political campaigns or movement mobilisations are developing firstly through the press and media, activism is less useful, its pleasures decline, and in turn the mobilisation of militants weakens. The loss of mediatic autonomy must be thaught of both as a consequence of the crisis of traditional ways of commitment, and as one of its causes. We know by French research such as Jacques Ion's ([29]) or by American from David Snow, Louis Zurcher, and Sheldon Ekland-Olson ([30]) that between 60% and 90% of militant recruitment operates through face to face contacts with

[27] Oberschall Anthony , in « Social Movements, ideologies, interests and identities », Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick/ London 1993.

[28] « Télévision et engagement politique. A la télévision ce soir: « Maman, j'ai rétréci les militants »; in Perrineau Pascal, « L'engagement politique: déclin ou mutation », Presses de Science Po, 1994.

[29] « La fin des militants ? », Editions de l'Atelier, Paris, 1997.

[30] Social networks and social movements: a microstructural approach to differential recruitment, American Sociological Review, 1980 pp 787-801

people belonging to the social networks to which activists are linked. The disappearance, the marginalisation of media-controlled tools of communication (newspapers, handouts, bills) also means a dramatic reduction of the opportunities of face to face contact with laymen. A participant observation led in Marseille by Anne Tristan ([31]) showed that one of the reasons for the success of the Front National was the withdrawal from fieldwork in working class schemes by left oriented organisations activists.

4 When « mediatic/communicationnal » autonomy remains

Finally one must also wander if the loss of mediatic autonomy is a trend or a law ? It's certainly not a law. Some social movements have kept or develop important communication resources of their own, and are able to get a large audience for their messages in spite of the black-out or hostility of the media. Research on social movement is often west-centred ([32]). But if we pay attention to the research of French social scientists working on the Islamic world or on some immigrant communities... one discovers the efficiency and modernism of Muslim integrist movements in developing their influence through modern tools of communication: press, but more often audio-cassettes or videotapes of preaching and political speeches, and of course using the mosque as a media. Islamist movements are a perfect example a contemporary movement preserving mediatic autonomy. But this is not only the case for religious movements. The success of the French homosexual movement to structure itself as a community, to enter into the public sphere is deeply indebted to the action of the militant magazine « *Gai pied* ». It would be interesting to understand the social conditions which allow the preservation of this mediatic autonomy. Provisional hypothesis may suggest that a first situation concerns groups suffering from a social stigma which holds them back from the media, for which the construction of a positive identity with and against the stigma is a condition for mobilisation. This mediatic autonomy also seems easier to build and preserve in segmented groups, with strong social networks, a strong CATNET to use Tilly's concept ([33]).

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[31] « Au Front », Gallimard, Paris, 1987.

[32] See McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's remarks in « To Map Contentious Politics », Mobilization, Vol 1, 1, 1996, pp 18-34.

[33] « From Mobilisation to Revolution », Adison Wesley, Reading, Ms, 1976.

THE MEDIA/MOVEMENTS 'GAME

If we come back to the fact that most of the time social movements need media relays in their mobilisation process, we also happen upon the topic where most research is concentrated, French as International: the question of interdependencies between media and movements. As the best known and most convergent of research results are concerning these questions, I will try not to labour an obvious point

The media double-framing of social movements.

The framing power of media on social movements and social problems is currently a point highlighted by many research. Through their framing of movements the media is bringing a strong contribution to the production of meanings, social perceptions, legitimacy or marginalisation of mobilisations. Such an approach is developed by the works of Gitlin, Gamson , Molotch in the USA, Anderson, Hall or Schlesinger and Tumber in the UK ([34])

In France, Patrick Champagne has developed a strong analysis of this « media-construction of social problems », starting from the coverage of mobilisations and riots in some French suburbs ([35]). These movements began in the early eighties near Lyon. They are the result of very complex social process linking the consequences of unemployment, crisis of schooling and welfare state, effects of housing and urban policies which triggered phenomena of social, ethnic and spatial segregation.

Shall I say that the very fact of speaking of the media coverage of the « Problème des banlieues » (Suburbs 'crisis) is a symbol of the prominence of media framing? A framing which is coding class and social problems in a spatialized vocabulary. The fact is that the media framing of these problems is ruled by very simple schemes. Banlieue is the result of an

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[34] Gamson William, « Talking Politics », Cambridge University press , Ms, 1992; Molotch Harvey, « Media and Movements » in Zald Mayer N & McCarthy John D, « The dynamics of social movements », Winthrop Publishers, Cambridge, Ms, 1974; Anderson Alison, « Media, Culture and the Environement », UCL Press, London, 1997; Hall Stuart, Critcher Cas & Jefferson Tony,« Policing the Crisis », Macmillan Press, Basingstoke, 1978; Schlesinger Philip & Tumber Howard, « Reporting Crime », Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994.

[35] « La construction médiatique des malaises sociaux », Actes de la recherche en Sciences Sociales, n° 90, 1991, pp 64-75.

equation which interacts three parameters: Unemployment, Immigration (Ethnicity, Integration, Islamism) and law and order. One may possibly add a fourth element : Youth as anyone over thirty seems often invisible in media reports. Banlieue slowly takes the meaning of Ghetto, in the American sense. As most framings this one is plastic, soft. One can insist on the villains: dealers, drug-users, gangs, islamists... but also value the presence of the suburb-style good guys... the « *beur* » , the sons and daughters of Algerian immigrants creating his/her small company, the elder brothers struggling against dealers. But even these good guys must be young, immigrant, exotic. Let me give an illustration. After riots and movements in a Lyon suburb, the top French TV Channel asks for a report by a TV team from Lyon. What is the report's remit sent over from Paris: Show us a dealer, a drug user an angry young black... and please some pictures of burning cars. The TV team of Lyon was composed of young people from this suburb. They decided to prepare another report, made of discussions with community leaders, without burning cars...it was never Broadcasted.

In another program, on Channel 3, « La marche du siècle », the topic discussed in March 1997 was « Paris New-York: In the heart of ghettos »...A report on the Bronx...a second one on an area in Pontoise, near Paris. The casting is classical: Some black teenagers playing Rap are the good guys...but one also sees black hands rolling a huge joint. In fact, in front of the cameras the youngs from this suburb have perfectly integrated the casting prepared by media coverage, even overdoing it, as a young man with a gun appearing in front of the camera. Let me quote one of these young men interviewed after the broadcast by a reporter from the magazine « Telerama »: « *We were hiding our faces with scarves. It was ridiculous but it pleased to the tv crew. In front of the cameras we were saying: If society does not act for us, we gonna destroy everything. It was a I don't give a damn rant. We had to behave like show-offs to impress our friends. Now I feel that we have been used. I understand now that all that was interesting the journalists was the show* » ([36])

I don't wish to discuss now why this framing exists, which one can explain by a lot of media and commercial imperatives: working fast, searching for shock-images, the difficult task of conducting an enquiry in a social world very far from the journalists' one. What I want to focus on is the idea of a *double-framing*.

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[36] Télérama, 2395, 6 décembre 1995 « Banlieues et TV: la guerre des clichés ».

Media frame the social perception of mobilisations. Through this framing they frame also the very action of movements, the behaviour of their actors. We see it in the last example, in the behaviour of the young people portrayed...they behave as youth from suburbia is supposed to behave according to media narratives. In the same time the selection of images and interviewees is excluding from representation other actors, other behaviours, other aspects of the everyday life in these suburbs. Even for more structured movements than the suburbs riots, media framing are able to influence the collective action repertoires, the selection of leaders. During a truck-driver strike, media had invented a leader, who was not a real representative of truckers...but who became a provisional celebrity. Nicknamed Tarzan, physically powerful, speaking thick and fast, cheeky, he was perfectly fitted to symbolise the truck driver as seen by Parisian journalists.

Source-professionalisation : Paper demonstrations and the unequal uses of the media by movements

The point here is to suggest that the interdependency between media and social movements offers a perfect illustration of what Philip Schlessinger describes as the « source professionalisation » process. Social movements such as Greenpeace have succeeded in forming reflexive knowledge, sometime very subtle, of what media are waiting for, of their formats and professional imperatives. Patrick Champagne has coined the concept of « Paper demonstration » to describe the trend of many great national demonstrations in France. These demonstrations are more and more prepared as a tool to gain media access and a favourable coverage. The success of a demonstration can from now on be measured not only by the number of demonstrators, but also, to the length and contents of the « *Revue the presse* » (newspapers cuttings) prepared by the press service and read the day after by high-ranking civil servants and politicians. The good metaphor here is probably the image of a symbolic weaponry race between social movements and the Press and media. Movements are able to develop a professional management of media. Journalists learn also how to decipher media-events, how to prevent being trapped by movement activists... a reflexive ability which stimulates more sophisticated media management from movements, and so on.

This structure of interdependencies produces complex effects. One of its potentials is probably a shift of collective action repertoires through more pacified, more reflexive behaviour, something like an

intellectualisation of protests. But this sophistication creates, widens new inequalities in the access to the public sphere of media. Social groups or social movement organisations have very unequal resources to manage media imperatives. Huge gaps do exist between groups concerning the volume and structure of their symbolic, financial and social resources. On the one hand, some movements, especially when they can mobilise cultural capital and experts can combine colourful demonstrations, good media events, and a speech of authority referring to science, expertise, public interest. On the other hand, groups, often linked to the working classes, may have less ability to anticipate media requirements, less skill to realise innovative symbolic actions, less discursive resources to defend their claims, to overcome their stigmas (let's think of the unemployed). These groups are often condemned to an alternative lying somewhere between a silent helplessness or violent outbursts of anger... outbursts which may gave them media coverage... but most of the time a coverage which reinforces the stigma, or puts them in the position of a group **spoken for** by media-prejudices, not **speaking** by and for itself... just like these young people from suburbia.

For a complete sociology of journalism and social movements: Back into the editorial rooms.

I will just introduce a last point in this development, a point that lead me to say a few words about methods and discussions in the field of the sociology of media. I have already tried to emphasise two arguments. The first concerned the framing power of media, and through the case of the suburbs coverage, I was focusing on the weight of routines and prejudices in the definition of interpretative frameworks. My second argument was to show, thanks to Schlesinger and Champagne how social movements , as information sources, must be thought as active, able to use media.

Where is the problem ? In the possible blindspots of such an approach. If one goes « outside the office », outside the media and newspaper's buildings to pay attention to sources' activities, one see more things...But the point is we must simultaneously think of the journalists ' work... study **both** sources and media, and the journalistic field. The journalistic field is also a space of struggles, of competition between papers...and this competition has direct effects on the coverage of social

movements. A recent study by Sandrine Levéque ([37]) offers a strong illustration concerning the national social movement of December 1995.

I must point one of the peculiarities of this movement which had a direct impact on journalists. If this mobilisation was focused on the public services, it had consequences for French society as a whole, with the total strike of French Railways or Post-office for instance. It also generated a political crisis. Another effect of the movement was to blur some of the strongest divisions of journalistic work, the distinctions between news-sections for example. With this huge mobilisation, Events which were usually shared between various news sections (Home, Politics, Society, Welfare, Opinions) can from now on be treated as a whole, thanks to the « peg » called « Plan Juppé and its effects ». This peculiar situation will open the door to quite different strategies, themselves linked to struggles between and inside the journalistic teams.

At « *Liberation* », a paper whose readership is young, intellectual and left-wing, the journalists will feel ill at ease and produce a coverage of the movements considered as weak by their colleagues, and partly by the readership. Why ?

For economical reasons: the economic situation of the paper is weak, the desk has been « downsized ». Liberation has no longer enough journalists to go on the spot, to multiply contacts with the strikers. For Political Reasons: The editor in chief, former leftist Serge July has acclaimed the courage and cleverness of the Plan Juppé when it was presented in Parliament. It is uneasy then to give comprehensive coverage of a huge social movement against this « courageous » reform. For cognitive and cultural reasons linked to intellectual schemes, what I Will call the « French new labourism » of « *Liberation* ». In this intellectual system there is no longer a working class, trade-unions are old fangled and cut from the real society, the public service is outdated. And then, we see the biggest social movement since 1968, driven by the old trade-unions, coming from and for public service, with a quality of debates which strikes journalists, with new trade union leaders like Bernard Thibault from the CGT Railways national union who are breaking away from the old representations of the trade-unionist. A fragrance of cognitive dissonance for many journalists.

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[37] « Crise sociale et crise dans le journalisme.Traitement médiatique du mouvement social de décembre 1995 et transformation du travail journalsitique », Critiques Sociales, n° 10. 1997

A final element of « *Liberation* »' s discomfort is linked to the fact that this newspaper is the perfect symbol of what one may call an expert or « learned » journalism for which the work of journalists is to search for information and explanations by calling high level civil servants, experts, often his/her former professors at « *Science Po* ». The result is a deep change in the structure of journalists address books...containing fewer contacts with trade-unionists, militants, social activists...a structure, nevertheless, that can have some disadvantages during a social movement.

The comparison with « *Le Monde* » is exciting. *Le Monde* is competing with Liberation, but there are also struggles inside « *Le Monde* ». What happened in December 1995 is an alliance between Edwy Plenel (Who has successfully developed an investigative reporting with the Greenpeace Affair, or the Elysée illegal phone-taping affair) and Lhomeaux (Who comes from *Liberation*). This union has a double stake. It tries to beat Liberation on the very ground where it constructed its image: Reporting, A comprehensive, sympathetic coverage of a popular social movement. The stake is also inside *El Mooned* to give more space, more legitimacy to a journalism made of raw reporting... that means to prevent the old guard of the politics news section to take-over the movement coverage, with a coverage made of comments, political analysis and meta-discourse. And , surprisingly indeed, *Le Monde*'s coverage of the movement was more comprehensive, more « live », closer to a comprehensive approach of the movement as lived by strikers or ordinary commuters sitting prisoners of huge traffic jams.

What I wanted to suggest with this rather over-summarised case-study from Sandrine Leveque was the importance of the analysis of what is happening inside and between competing colleagues of the field of journalism. One must both think about source-activities **and** media functioning. Think about the routines of coverage **and** the power of some social movement to break the routines and partitions of social **and** journalistic activities

III MEDIAS VS SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ?

My last approach can be summarised in an hypothesis...the way media are speaking of social movements is structurally unfavourable to the rise and legitimisation of social movements.

One must be crystal clear on this point. My view is not Chomsky's. I do not think that the French or British Press works like the Soviet Pravda. Media, all media is rarely hostile to all social movements. It is even possible to identify cases where the dominant framing are friendly like for instance during the strike of the women from the *Maryflo* factory, in Britanny, against a male chauvinist pig foreman, or concerning the mobilisations of Algerian democrats. The research of Sandrine Leveque on the December 1995 leads to the same conclusions. The media is never completely hostile to social movements because media commitments are various, because mobilisations also become stakes in the struggles inside the journalistic field. The notion of structural bias suggested here means something else. I will try to clarify it in two points.

Media rarely develops a « comprehensive » approach (weberian sense) of social movements.

Media seldom develop a comprehensive coverage of social movements. This is especially true when movements arise in social worlds distant and different from the journalists ones. This statement should, of course, be qualified...as suggested the case of Le Monde during December 1995. ([38]). But quite frequently the reporting of social movements lacks a comprehensive, emphatic dimension. Many reasons can explain this fact. I would just quote some of them: Most of the journalistic elite are recruited in the upper class of French society, more and more of them are trained in « *Ecoles de pouvoir* » where they mix up with the future leading politicians and civil servants ([39]), acquiring a common cultural background and common - and reluctant - schemes of perception of contentious politics. As Jean Chalaby ([40]) showed it, Investigative reporting has long been completely marginal in the culture of the French journalist. Even those called « *Journalistes sociaux* » , journalists in charge of the news-section

[38] Just to suggest another illustration of the possibly balanced behaviour of the media, It would be possible to show - (See Van Zoonen Liesbet, « Feminist media studies », Sage, 1995 and Neveu Erik « Women journalists, gendered genres and the renewal of French press », ECPR 25th Joint sessions, bern, 1997)- that the feminisation of journalism is linked to the rise of a kind of ethnographic reporting, paying more attention, more comprehension to the painting of ordinary lives, including during mobilisations. But this is not the main trend of media reporting of social movements.

[39] See Rieffel Remi, « L'Elite des journalistes », PUF, Paris, 1984.

[40] Chalaby Jean K, « Journalism as an Anglo-American invention. A comparison of the development of French and Anglo-American journalism, 1830s-1920s », European Journal of Communication, 1996,3 pp 303-326.

called « Social » are reflecting a significant change. Until the sixties the « Social » pages where mainly dedicated to industrial relations and conflicts, and « Social » journalists were most of the time linked by political commitment or friendly relations to leading trade-unionist. To day the « Social » pages are dedicated to the Welfare state, or to the management of the Welfare ruins...and « Social » journalists are experts on these questions. The cost of this change is also an increasing gap between journalists and representatives of working classes ([41]). I will give two illustrations of these phenomena.

The first one is offered by Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the media coverage of the December mass protest. He showed convincingly how most broadcasted debates were structurally biased against strikers. Strikers representatives were treated as the accused. Experts, Pundits, Politicians who were often already accustomed to behaviour in a TV studio, were treated in a much more deferential way, allowed to speak longer without being interrupted ([42])

The second one can be found in the extraordinary media space given to the capping of allocations familiales family benefit...with very weak mobilisations this question was widely discussed by papers and media...while others Welfare reforms (such as strong reductions on help for the unemployed in 1996) were quickly left aside in the media agenda. It would certainly be unfair and simplistic to suggest that the first reform, striking the « rich » was striking many families among leading journalists...but ....

Media culture vs « Voice strategies » ?

To conclude I'd like to explore the media-social movements relation by widening the analysis to the global flow of media programs, and not only to information. I want to shift from the media coverage of movements to the way the media - more so than the press- is constructing the legitimacy of collective action... or making it unthinkable.

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[41] On these press specialist-correspondans see « Journalisme social et construction d'une catégorie du débat public », Levêque Sandrine, PhD, Unpublished, University Paris 1, 1996.
[42] « Sur la télévision », Liber Editions, Paris, 1996.

We can start from Gamson's remarks on the cultural and discursive construction and conditions of mobilisation. The uprise of a mobilisation requires the possibility of expressing suffering, a social frustration as being the result of an unjust situation, to link it to a narrative which point out enemies and solutions, which express claims. And Gamson shows, starting from case studies (on environment, industrial relations) how what he calls « Injustice frames », frames expressing social stakes in a language of emotion, constructing them as an injustice are hard to identify in media coverage. To go beyond Gamson's analysis and to actualise them I would focus on two points.

The first one is to suggest how the conservatively ideological mood of the nineties in France (Is it just in France ?) emphasises stronger this disqualification of injustice frames. One of the most visible illustrations of this trend can be found in the way by which many economic journalists are developing what is close to a militant discourse on the implacable strength of « economic laws », supposed to be an absolute hindrance to most a social movements' claims. Of course, there are economic laws. But are we sure that journalists are their wisest interpreters ? In December 1995 - a wealthy anchorman is accused a railway worker earning £ 85O a month of being a threat to economic progress by his movement claims... Is it political economy ?..Or simply politics dressed in the symbolic authority of economics ? It would be funny to study closer the media uses of what I Should call the popular classics of media discourse on economics... French strikers have been invited for years to moderate their claims by the small media catchline of what was called Chancelor Schmidt's law (*To day'profits are tomorrow investments which are the future jobs*)... It seems that this discourse never imagined that profits could also be distributed to shareholders or oriented through the stock exchange. There lays a stimulating research field on the social uses and media uses of social sciences... how economics, sociology can be used to give the authority of science to political discourse against social movements... Take for instance the in-famous « sociological law » of a « Tolerance threshold » against immigrants which was invoked against protesters during the movement against immigration regulations in 1996.

But my second point is more important. The media very often frame and discuss social problems, problems that can be constructed in injustice frames, in a way which de-socialise them... which transforms collective stakes in individual problems. Everybody brings up this classical

text of Wright Mills ([43]) where the American sociologist explains how a divorce can be a personal drama, but that when 25% of marriages are rapid wrecks it becomes a social stake. Contemporary media discourse works often in the opposite way... social problems are cut into little pieces, transformed in individual responsibilities, individual dysfunction's.

I'm am specifically thinking here to the framing and discourse of many talk-show and « reality-show », studied in France by Dominique Mehl ([44]). I shall, here again, speak of a double framing, in relations to many of these talk-shows and programs

First: emotional, affective and sexual problems appear as the core of the hardships suffered by human beings.

Second: many kinds of suffering, of unrest are systematically depicted as symptoms of individual disfunctionment, of individual lack of adaptation. The solution suggested is often a therapeutic action, an action of self-reform, self-improvement conducted by and on the victim.

If one agree that a mobilisation process embodies a discursive dimension, a process of construction of individual suffering and frustrations into a collective claim, a call directed at politician and state authorities... the logic of large parts of the media flow and programming is exactly reverse. It is a process of Public construction of private problems, a process crumbling the concept of collective stakes (Such as the consequences of the crisis of the Welfare, of School, of Unemployment, of economic crisis) into infinite series of individual cases. What is suggested here is a logic of serialisation , not of collective-isation.

If I try to link these remarks to the trilogy of Hirschman « Exit, Voice and Loyalty » ([45])...It seems to me that a fourth path is lacking. The therapeutic discourse, described by Bellah ([46]) or Mehl is not a discourse of exit, not a discourse of voice, of revolt. Neither it is the silence of loyalty. It is a fourth way... where the solution of grief and suffering is to be found in an action of self improvement, in a psychic or cognitive effort by the claimants on themselves. It's potentially an absolute alternative to mobilisation... a process leading social problems to be no longer « social » or « public » , a process increasing the market for psychic, sexual, consumerist, cultural consultants and giving to therapist the mission to deal with the strains generated by social relations.

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[43] In « The Sociological Imagination », Oxford University Press.

[44] « La télévision de l'Intimité », Seuil, Paris, 1996.

[45] Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Ms, 1970.

[46] Bellah Robert N, Madsen Richard, Sullivan William M, Swidler Ann, Tipton Steven M « Habits of the Heart », Perenial Library, New York, 1986, Chapter 5.

Hirschman suggested that cultural differences could be linked to his model. The States can be analysed as a culture of exit, through spatial mobility for instance. France or Italy were societies of Voice Culture. The main international trend is certainly to day the rise of therapeutic societies. Let me just give a final example. During many industrial conflicts a framing or media report is the concept of « Problem of communication »...if workers go on strike, if people are demonstrating...it's a « problem of communication », the managers or the Government have not properly explained their policies... laymen have not understood. The implicit reasoning here is that rulers can't be wrong, they just have to explain better their wise choices. The reasoning is also that workers or laymen should not protest... they would better try to understand the iron laws of modernisation, make an effort of self improvement to adapt themselves to the harsh imperatives of globalisation.

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