

France

Framing racism and intolerance: public issues and denunciations in France. The case of 'quotas of discrimination' in French football

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Summary

On April 30th 2011, the online magazine Médiapart published a discussion recorded on November 8th 2010 by the French Federation of Football (FFF), in which the creation of quotas for young binational players was mentioned. An ever rising number of analyses name these quotas discriminatory and the discourse itself racist. This Working Paper attempts to give an account of the converging logics between the legal notion (nationality) and the racial appreciation (the fact of being "Black") as well as the mechanisms of racism (imaginary, individual practices and the institutionalization of these practices). The analysis draws on two axes of research: firstly, a postcolonial reading based on the triptych "race"/nation/sport, which attempts to explain the importance of the presence of players with a foreign origin or a dual nationality through French history (colonization, decolonization, immigration) as well as the racialisation of the French National team. Secondly, it questions the capacity of the logic of economy to legitimise and at the same time hide the racial logic at play. This report has been written on the basis of empirical data collected in the Media.

1. Databases

This report was written on the basis of data gathered in two databases. The majority of data is from the Media and concerned with the case of discriminatory quotas in football. To constitute the first database, I collected 64 items: press articles (60), TV (3) and radio (1) documents between April and May 2011. The great majority of Media

covering the case was leftwing – *Médiapart* (31), *Le Monde* (9), *Libération* (10), *Marianne* (11), *Arte* (1) *i-Télé* (1), *France Culture* (1) – and tried to concentrate the discussion on its social context and to denounce the various forms of racism – individual and institutional. The case of the quotas concerned itself with a reprehensible example of discriminatory practices in French society, and the Media insisted on the scandalous character of the original discussion. In the more rightwing Media – *Le Figaro* (2), *Le Point* (2), *L'Express* (2), *Causeur* (1), *France 2* (1) – the racist aspect of the case was usually diminished, whilst emphasis was put on how anti-racist leftwing use racism to justify their positions.

48 items take into account the racist and/or discriminatory dimension of the case, 11 of them remain neutral. 4 items do not take into account the racist and/or discriminatory character of the case. In this case, the press coverage representing binational players, Arabs or Blacks, is largely antiracist although the voice of this minority remains marginal. Thus, the discourse reveals a consensus on the denunciation of racism which also reflects the fear to be defined as racist and the will to shed light on institutional practices of selections in French football. It was not only the journalists who participated in the public debate: indeed, apart from the journalists (22), the case was also commented on by academics (13), activists and militant associations for the fight against racism and discrimination (6), people working in the sector of football (6) and politicians (6). Most participants are considered experts on the immigration debate and therefore accustomed to the sensitive and polemic character of the vocabulary regarding racism and discrimination (essentialisation/naturalisation, racialisation of identities, reproduction of prejudices, etc.). To a great extent the Media is supporting a rather anti-racist discourse, but their position still requires more nuance and is not always very clearly stated. Although the majority of the Media promotes in most cases the idea of integration, there is nevertheless a fear of appearing as an advocate of communitarianism. Besides, some of the items we examine in this report denounce the way the case was treated by the Media, the “inquisitorial” strategy of *Mediapart* (the magazine that revealed the case) and sometimes support Lauren Blanc (whose statements have been called racist). 13 items are written (press) or presented (TV and radio) by a person who can be seen as a representative of the minority concerned or as being part of this minority itself; 6 items mention the voice of the minority and 44 do not refer at all to the minority’s position. We note that a great majority of the Media was in favour of the racist and/or discriminatory “accusation” of the discussion that took place in the French Federation of Football, whilst hardly

interested in the position of the minority and not opening much space for it to express itself.

For the second database, I collected 35 items: press articles (29), TV (2) and radio (4) documents concerned with racism, discrimination and immigration, which chronicles the racist and/or discriminatory facts and policies commented on between December 5th and 19th 2011 in France. To build this report, I have mostly used articles on discriminatory quotas in French football. However, some documents from December 2011 refer to more general political and social problems as well as historic and sociologic testimonies (archives, analysis) that shed light on the French context¹. Most of the articles examine the “problems” regarding immigration and xenophobia with the impact of the financial crisis on migration and its perception in Europe (being negative and reductive, statements from Media and politicians produce xenophobic reactions and prejudices) (8), stricter immigration laws and policies for foreign students (according to Claude Guéant’s circular of the 31st of May 2011 concerning the foreign non-European students) (2) and the debate on the vote of foreigners (10). The remaining items divide into: safety in the suburbs (2), the headscarf and Muslims (1), the 60th death anniversary of Franz Fanon (1), the absence of minorities in politics (1), the exhibition on human zoos at the Museum of the Quai Branly (1), diversity and racism (2) and the history of black movements in France (4). We note that these documents were issued during the presidential campaign in April/May 2012.

Most of the Media covering racism and discrimination are leftwing – *Le Monde* (12), *Libération* (7), *Médiapart* (9), the French international news channel *France 24* (2), the radio *France Culture* (4) – only one is rightwing – *Le Figaro* (1).

26 items take into account the racist and/or discriminatory character of the event analysed in the Media thus arguing for antiracism and inclusion, amongst which 8 remain neutral. Indeed, the great majority of leftwing Media appear as a space where the established rightwing Government can be contested.

Two of the items do not take into account the racist/discriminatory aspect of the case. 8 items are written (press) or presented (TV and radio) by a person who can be seen as a representative of the minority concerned or as being part of this minority itself. 2 items refer to the voice of the minority and 25 of them do not mention it.

¹ For instance, the documentary on « The history of black movements in France », broadcasted on radio France Culture.

2. Overview of case study

On April 28th 2011, the online magazine *Mediapart* published an article entitled: “French football: executives want less Black and Arabic players”. At the centre of the article stood a meeting of the Direction Technique Nationale (DTN) from November 8th 2010, during which the creation of quotas to restrict the number of young binational players in training centres was mentioned. On April 30th 2011, *Mediapart* published the verbatim transcript of the meeting, in which the French Football Federation (FFF) and the DTN participated. The protagonists of the discussion were Laurent Blanc (former important player and now manager of the national team), François Blaquart (national technical director of the FFF – whose work consists of training players and managers, talent scouting and administering the national team), Erick Mombaerts (member of the DTN and selector for the team French under-21 national team) and Francis Smerecki (manager of the French under-19 national team). The day after the public release of the discriminatory ideas discussed at the meeting, François Blaquart was relieved of his duties. Furthermore, two boards of inquiry were created in order to shed light on the comments described as discriminatory towards the binational players: one by the Minister of Sports, Chantal Jouanno, and the other one internally within the FFF.

According to the football executives, the case of the young binational players in the training centres is problematic and relates to a broader aspect of competition between football countries. To train young players in France and see them then go play abroad (for the team of their other nationality), is in fact a loss of investment which becomes beneficial to opposing teams. As Erick Mombaerts puts it: “we work for French football, we do not work for foreign national teams”. What the analyses later showed is that if some players turned to their second country, it may be due either to not having been selected for the national team, or for the sake of promoting the country of origin of their parents. The latter – the “choice of the heart” as Stéphane Beaud likes to put it – is nevertheless detrimental to the career of the players.

Two different logics converge in the debate: First, a will to diminish the number of players holding a dual nationality (legal concept); second, a 'benevolent' will of *helping them to identify* (to come to terms with their identity). According to Laurent Blanc, their national affiliation is uncertain.

Implicitly, the entire discussion refers to the question of “national identity” (legal notion), a problem extensively discussed in France and specific to these French people with a foreign origin or “appearance”. Despite the legal aspect of it, it is still too often

implicated that Blacks² are foreigners. From the criterion or feeling of national belonging, words drift towards a logic of “race” that has more to do with culture and skin colour. As a matter of fact, it is less a drifting and rather an implicitly accepted versatility of the linguistic register, which justifies the legality of the quota debate. For anyone, including for the reader, Laurent Blanc does not need to clarify his expressions: the transition from nationality, to culture and to skin colour goes without saying as links already exist in the imaginary as well as in practice. The sociologist Eric Fassin maintains that the intertwining of the national and racial linguistic registers is in fact simply borrowed from ordinary political discourse under Nicolas Sarkozy: “It is not so much that the racist discourse is ‘freed’; it is rather that some executives of the sports sector, as well as from other sectors, are simply using the language available in the public sphere” (Fassin, 2011). The sociologist Saïd Bouamama denounces a “collective blindness”. The participants of the debate maintain that the comments have nothing to do with racism and yet, the players ought to *identify* (to find their identity): the cultural and physical differences have to be taken into account and the FFF must account for these *differences* in its quotas. To partake in racism does not necessarily imply being a racist, but rather to remain blind to the effects and consequences of the racist discourse.

Bouamama maintains that biologic “races” do not exist, whilst racism exists socially, making “races” the social products of racism. The comments on the case brought to light a tension between the accusation of “racial discrimination” and that of “racism”. While the Media massively opposed the racist character of the discussion, very few are actually able to analyse the mechanisms of racism and the systematisation of the *racialisation* of identities as social authority and discriminatory power.

The case came out in a socio-political context where the question of the “race” stirred up many debates in France, most notably since the “riots of the suburbs” in Paris in 2005. Sociologists are constantly recalling what the context of the Sarkozian era consists of (from his accession to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2002 to the presidency of the Republic in 2007): the creation of a Ministry for Immigration and National Identity (2007), the fight against illegal immigration, the speech of Dakar (2007), the debate on “national identity” (2009), the expulsion of Romas, etc. These events “are consistently promoting an implicitly “white” identity, one not corrupted by postcolonial immigration” (Beaud, 2010:87).

² We use the term « Black » in its socially determined meaning.

Moreover, in October 2010, the parliamentary collective Droite Populaire proposed two amendments, together with the UMP deputy Lionel Luca: the one would have put an end to dual nationality, the other was concerned with the acquisition of citizenship by foreign children between the age of 16 and 21 years old – provided that they have shown a will to acquire it.

The Knysna case contributed further to the creation of such a context: the strike of “*les Bleus*” in South Africa on June 20th 2010 and the “trauma” it caused within the FFF. Analyses of the event showed that the players were predominantly presented as *traitors of the Nation* in the Media, focusing on the supposedly irremediable children of postcolonial immigration (Beaud, 2011). According to Beaud, the Media and the politicians provided a very radicalising reading of the case when claiming that the “leaders” of the strike were mostly *Blacks*. The implicit meaning conveyed was thus that the “leaders of the strike come from the suburbs” and for most people: suburb = Blacks and Arabs.

The publication of the transcripts revealing the quota idea, produced an immense Media response. A large group of journalists, academics, as well as associations and public figures (Eric Fassin, Stéphane Beaud, Pascal Blanchard, Pap Ndiaye and Gérard Noiriel, The CRAN, The Indivisibles and Lilian Thuram – today actively engaged in the fight against racism and discriminations) were seized by the matter, which they considered a mirror of French society. “Football lies at the symbolic heart of the issues on national identities, not only in terms of belonging to a country, but also in its most explicit racial dimension [...]. Therefore, those in charge of French football today find themselves, whether willingly or not, occupying a function of national identity *entrepreneur*. [...] During secret meetings, the leaders of French football are merely stating what is publicly very present everyday in the national political debates.” (Fassin, 2011)

Lilian Thuram, professional football player from 1991 to 2008, played with the national team that won the World Cup 1998 and the European Football Championship in 2000. He was member of the federal council of the FFF in 2008, before resigning in 2010. Politically involved, he was also member of the High Council for Integration and created the Lilian Thuram Foundation, education against racism³ in 2008. Having been confronted to racism as a football player, Thuram today grounds his fight against racism upon lived experience and puts the emphasis on education. His position within this debate is clear: it consists of unconfessed racism, which leads to raise the wrong

³ <http://www.thuram.org/>. He also wrote *Mes étoiles noires. De Lucy à Barack Obama* (My black stars. From Lucy to Barack Obama), Editions Philippe Rey, Paris, 2010.

questions and to fake problems, notably that of binationalism. This case reaches a national dimension, one which goes well beyond football itself and reminds of the severely criticised speeches of Jean-Marie Le Pen, Georges Frêche or even Alain Finkelkraut. In 1996, the leader of the *Front National* party Jean-Marie Le Pen judged it “artificial to engage foreign players and to baptize them the ‘French team’. [...] Other teams sing their national anthem... the French do not because they *seemingly* do not know it.”⁴ On November 16th 2006, the socialist George Frêche declared in the newspaper *Midi Libre*: “In this team, nine players out of eleven are black. Normality would require that there were three or four. It would then reflect adequately society. In this case, if they are so many, it is because the Whites are worthless. I am ashamed of this country; soon, there will be eleven Blacks. When I see some football teams, it makes me sad.” The same year, in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, the philosopher Alain Finkelkraut said the French team is “Black, black, black”, distorting the well-known formula used during the 1998 World Cup, “*Black, Blanc, Beur*” (Black, White, Arab) and commented on the success of French integration policies: “People say the French National Team is admired by everyone because it is “black, blanc, beur”. In fact, today, the national team is “black, black, black”, which makes it the laughing stock of all Europe.”

In the Media, two possible positions have emerged: One that holds the statements undoubtedly racist and discriminatory, and one holding that the accusations have gotten out of proportions, denouncing the instrumentalisation of racism and the impossibility to refer to the origin of the players without being called a racist. Can sport ethics confront the amalgam – which is however not one of common sense – of nationality and “race” logic that converges into a racialisation of the French nation and its institutions, a logic that actually lies at the basis of the construction of the French Nation and the republican ideas? The discussion around binational players and potential quotas to limit their number within the training centres, carries imbedded in it the necessity for national identity clarification and shows the shift of the discourse towards a racialisation of culture and bodies. “This is precisely how “race” functions”, states Fassin, commenting the case, “within the semantic and lexical indecisiveness”. To be even more precise, the convergence of the linguistic registers is inevitable today. Logics and lexicons are intertwined, they make sense together and their links are no longer questioned.

⁴ (My *Italics*, P.V.)

3. Analysis of Media framing and agenda setting

Two main arguments will be developed here: Firstly, there is a link between “race”, nation and sport and there is, secondly, a link between an economic logic and logic of “races”.

3.1. “Race”/Nation/Sport

The current composition of the French team is explained by a 80 years history of immigration and (de)colonization. And yet, the FFF executives and the football fans seem to put aside the reasons and consequences of such a process. However, the stereotypes present in the leaders’ discourses come from the colonial epoch: idea of the power of the “black” and stigmatisation of the body. FFF executives speak of the “black’s” game as a more physical and therefore more spectacular game. According to them – and since they do not consider this stigma as producing an essential feature – the black players should be kept aside; while they are selected for their physical performances, the executives favour a more technical game that is *de facto* incompatible with the black body (as it is presented in the FFF discourse). In so doing, they insinuate that skin colour can define the technique of a game. The so-called “over-representation” of Blacks in football teams is, “to a large extent, due to the recruiters’ and trainers’ belief in the innate athletic superiority of Blacks in comparison to Whites. These prejudices, which often remain vague as to their formulation, are jointed with presumed ‘genetic differences’. These racialising beliefs would for instance explain the explosive growth or precocious puberty of young Blacks.

[...] During my interviews with the players, the great majority of them were convinced that Blacks are by nature stronger and faster. The black players shared this opinion and were thus consciously trying to adopt a style of game based on these qualities.”⁵

Indeed, according to the internal FFF board of inquiry:

“The physical characteristics of the players are at the heart of this reflection. [...] More than the skin colour, the morphology of the players is central to the debates. [...] Alongside the attempt to find a concrete solution to the problem, the repercussions of these statements could be such that twelve years old French children could be denied entrance to the national training centres because of this doubled discriminatory criterion (origin and physical appearance)”.

The identification with the national team is important and sports should not divert from its property to produce a discourse on nation: the individual body represents the national body (Ndiaye, 2008: 224-225). While the executives reduce the presence of

⁵ Quentin Girard, «Entretien avec Sébastien Chavigner», *Libération*, 6 mai 2011.

black players to their body as essence, the reason should rather be looked for in the migration and social class factors. As a popular sport, football is closely tight to waves of migration of the 20th century: Polish, Italian, Spanish and from the old colonial empire. “*Les Bleus* are a mirror of our national past, which is also a colonial past”, asserts the historian Pap Ndiaye (Ndiaye, 2008: 229) and also Eric Fassin emphasises: “We see here how the debate on football meets the “problem of immigration” as it is posited today“ (Fassin, 2011)⁶.

Football and immigration are undoubtedly linked: many analyses show the contribution of immigration has made to French football, the players who put their mark on it (Michel Platini, Zinedine Zidane, Raymond Kopa) as well as the role football plays for “integration” – a point firmly underlined in the Media and through relating exceptional personal histories. From the 20’s to the 70’s, this immigration was mainly an economic one. Whilst the immigration of Africans was postcolonial, the arrival of people from the French Caribbean’s consisted mostly in a response to the Office for the Development of Migrations in the Overseas Territories (BUMIDOM), created in 1963. French football, and more precisely the professional one, is also very much linked to the history of changes in rural and working-class France between 1945 and 1970. To a large extent, the players had their origins in the mining North, the industrial and trading East, harbour and industrial cities or working-class cities. In the 1980s, a cleavage opened between the players from popular origins and the *leader-entrepreneurs*, attentive to the developments of this new business that favours one special training “à la française”.” (Beaud, 2011: 22).

Nowadays, the ethno-racial or social origin is indistinctly translated into a territorial stigma by expressions such as: “from the suburbs”, “from the *cités*”. “The term “Black” has gradually imposed itself on football as a general term for all players coming from the last wave of immigration. It refers less to a racial category than to a social one. Indeed, most of the players of African origin who have reached the higher level of football grew up in the suburbs of Paris (60% of the students in the training centres have the same origin) and in working-class families [...]. They know the “culture of the suburbs” that imposed itself in the pauperized and politically poorly structured suburbs in 1990s and 2000s”⁷. According to Laurent Blanc, these players are “deviant” not because of their skin colour, but because of their social origin that induces specific behaviours. This discussion shows clearly why there is confusion or rather an

⁶ See also the exhibition that took place at the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration, in 2010 in Paris : <http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/2010/6/allez-la-france-football-et-immigration-histoires-croisees>

⁷ Beaud, Stéphane et Noiriél, Gérard, « Race, classe, football: ne pas hurler avec la meute », *Libération*, 6 mai 2011.

(unfortunate) agreement between the racial and the social vocabularies, which illustrates the *ethnisation/racialisation* of the social discourse in France since the 1980s. On this matter, at least, all the intellectuals agree.

If many famous athletes in France come from the suburbs, they all also agree on that sport is one of the rare opportunities given to them: sports, and more particularly football, appears as a unique possibility to climb the social ladder, because “sport is a vector of social integration”⁸, a symbol of social harmony or is at least perceived to be. In the 1990s, sport became one of the missions of public service, contributing to social cohesion and the fight against social inequalities. It falls under the category of public necessities and its development became legally codified into the state’s functions on July 6th 2000: “Physical activities and sports constitute an important element of education, culture, integration and social life. They contribute to the health improvement. Their promotion and development fall under general interest of the nation.” The state and local councils saw in it the possibility to daily confront social problems of the youth in the suburbs (Dubois, 2010: 91). However, in the discussion, the educational mission determined by the state seems defied.

A postcolonial reading of the discussion, highlights two main aspects: on the one hand, the question of viewpoint, and on the other, the difficulty to speak about racism. Many articles recall the discrepancy between the socio-racial situation of the executives (White and bourgeois, “of French origins”, “as French as you and me”⁹) and that of the players (“from migrant origins” and lower classes). Without wishing to crystallise the duality of these situations, one still has to note the feeling of distance that exists between players and those in power of deciding and judging which category of players can – and should – be represented in the game – this done for the sake of strategy as much as for the national image of the football team.

In the discussion, Laurent Blanc anticipates accusations of racism and defends it: “It has no racist connotation whatsoever.” In general, nowadays, it is uneasy to speak about racism. The fear of being characterised as racist and hence of being the victim of such accusations, favours the silence or the refusal to analyse the mechanisms at work. On many occasions, the authors of articles warn against any accusation of racism for it would consist in allocating bad intentions to those characterised as racist (upon what can we judge them?), and it would turn them into the victims.

“We never spoke about 'racism', contrary to what those assert, who distort this information of public interest into an obnoxious and useless debate on the racism of football and of its executives. To describe a person or a discourse as racist is a value judgment that entails

⁸ Loret, Alain, « Quand le foot s'exclut du pacte républicain », Le monde, 11.05.2011.

⁹ Discussion of November the 8th 2010.

higher bid into stigmatisation, the one who is designated posits himself immediately as the victim” (Plenel, 2011).
“There are things that should not be said, and especially not as such. I do not wish to enter the debate of 'racist or not racist', I attack no one, I just say that having held such a discourse is a capital mistake”¹⁰.

Even amongst the intellectual's analysis, the name “racist” divides. On the one hand, Eric Fassin, Pap Ndiaye and Lilian Thuram denunciate irrevocably the racist and discriminatory aspect of the discussion. On the other, Gérard Noiriel and Stéphane Beaud “refuse to call 'racist' the speeches of the FFF leaders”, whilst characterising the quotas in the training centres as “clearly discriminatory”¹¹. According to the latter, the problem also lies in the simplified Media coverage that ended up trivializing racism, whilst sparing the efforts of a rigorous journalistic investigation: “if one wishes to understand what is truly at stake in this case, one ought to set it back to its original sports and social context and to highlight the constraints that weigh on an institution such as the DTN today, within the French Federation of Football”. The analysis should take into account the fact that the DTN is caught up between diverging national and economic-political major interests.

3.2. Logic of economy vs. logic of racism

Almost none of the articles tackle the question of what this racism and its relationship to discrimination consists of: the difference between imaginary, individual practices and institutionalization of these practices. Is the logic of economy part of the logic of racism? Or does the importance of what is economically at stake push executives and trainers into a pragmatism that makes them select the best players, independently of their social or racial characteristics? The logic of economy is here linked to efficiency in football strategies: the choice of players, their position in the team, the cost of a player, etc. When the case came out, Laurent Blanc justified himself by saying: “Personally, I do not speak of ethnic criteria; I only speak of technical criteria. I am only a football trainer” (Fassin, 2011). Does the FFF contribute to the institutionalization of racism? How can the individual discourse (the executives and trainers denying all racism) and the practices of a system (however created by individuals) be distinguished from one another? Can the economic market, of which football is part, be distinguished from the institutionalization of racism and the creation of discriminatory quotas for the young French *but binational* players? Dual nationality is a legal status, the executives are,

¹⁰ « Interview de Luc Sonor », *Mediapart*, 2nd of May 2011.

¹¹ Beaud, Stéphane et Noiriel, Gérard, « Race, classe, football: ne pas hurler avec la meute », *Libération*, May 6th 2011.

however, not shocked by the possibility of implementing quotas – the only exception being Franis Smerecki: “I say: in the first place, it is discriminatory.”

In 2003 and again in 2009, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) modified the nationality criteria in order to simplify the “possibility for players with a migrant origin to chose the national team of their parents’ country” (Beaud, 2010: 241). However, the interests of a such strategic decision turned against the executives’ appreciation: “For a team such as the French one, the main characteristic of which is that it for generations draws from the always renewed source of descendants from immigration, the easing of this rule on sports nationality can deprive it of some of its best elements” (Beaud, 2010: 242). If they seem to concern solely a football-strategy, these discourses nevertheless serve an economical logic touching upon the freedom of players. It also breaks down to a highly political question regarding the relationship North/South: on the one hand, we have the profits made by European countries resulting from the work-related immigration of the 1960s and 1980s together with the pool of talents constituted by the young players of African origins (mostly from North and Sub-Saharan Africa); on the other hand, the countries of the South for which dual nationality makes it possible to benefit from the results of sport-related emigration (Beaud, 2010: 254). From 2003 to 2009, the choice of binationals to play for team A (if selected) of one or the other country of their citizenships set at 21 years “usually threw them back to a conflict of identity they had for most long overcome” (Ibid.: 257). In 2009, this age limit was erased. If the trainers of the North rather see it as a loss of investment, the countries of the South, on the contrary, perceive it more as “a redistribution/compensation for the loss in human resources of the country of emigration” (Ibid.: 258). However, what the leaders do not usually mention is that, most of the time, if the players go back to their country of origin, it is because they did not make it to the French National team.

Fassin recalls that “it is not necessary to be racist in order to partake in systemic logics of discrimination. This is what one can call – in opposition to the racist intention – the effective racism inscribed in implicit practices rather than in explicit ideologies” (Fassin, 2011). Racism is here described more as a prejudice about certain groups; and yet, when individualized, this racism still acquires a moral dimension. Nevertheless, the articles never mention the risk of institutionalizing racism and integrating discrimination into structures. Indeed, as Fassin says: “it is not as much daily racism as it is the institutionalization of discrimination. It is not only about discourses and practices, but also about politics – and hence it constitutes one more step towards a logic of discrimination” (Ibid.). How can we think racism beyond all

intentions, i.e. systemically, from the viewpoint of the functioning of structures and not from ideas? Do the executives and managers, while pursuing their task of player selection, whilst making use of unconscious criteria of selection, by necessity produce some sort of racism? Racism is a way to structure society and it matches the necessities of the FFF as much as those of the Nation. Therefore, what is needed is a rethinking of football in terms of systems and identifying the actual effects of economic rationality.

The analysis of this case requires giving an account of the multiple expressions of racism and discrimination: systemic racism, institutional racism, racial discrimination, racist discrimination, direct and indirect discrimination, systemic discrimination, structural discrimination.

In the articles covering the case, racism is associated to racial discrimination and to the superficial care the leaders of the football sector have for it – just as if sports in general, and football in particular, was exempt of racism by virtue of its unifying nature. Football is no longer associated to its integrative role (strongpoint of the fight against racism). The people in power, refuse to be called racist, and yet their discourses have largely been described as discriminatory. Who does this denunciation come from? And where is the border that determines whether this case is of a racist nature or whether these discourses are discriminatory? The article published in *Mediapart* on May 6th 2001 by Alain Piriou, an expert in the fight against discriminations, answers the question by confronting the discourse of the FFF executives with the Penal Code. He notes that the discourses are illicit for four main reasons: direct discrimination related to nationality, indirect discrimination regarding “race” and nationality, injunction of discrimination and use of personal data. The racism at play here is not only associated to discriminatory practices (quotas), but also to a xenophobic logic concerned with the proof of belonging to a nation (problem of dual nationality, skin colour linked to nationality).

Saïd Bouamama underlines that the disagreement regarding the interpretation of “racist discriminations”, is constantly denied in France. On the one hand, there are those who think racist discriminations are the result of individual behaviours imbued with racist prejudices and constitute an expression of xenophobia regarding migration (ideology). On the other hand, we find those who consider these discriminations as systemic, structured by a colonial imaginary, “that is, inscribed as one of the contemporary regulating modes of capitalist production”. The imaginary, structures visions and reproduces colonial representations (paternalism, cultural explanations, etc.). To analyse racism and discriminations through the lens of colonial inheritance is

to consider the “colonial contribution” as persistent in the imaginary as well as in the practices in terms of an economic logic. To speak about contemporary racism is to speak of its genealogy (of the consequences of the enslaving and colonial systems) and to know whether this colonial way of reading the case can exhaust itself through changing the mentalities by educative means or if it represents a social way of relating inherent in the management of the economic system. At stake in the former, is racism imposed by a dominant category, while in the latter, “racist discriminations are perceived as a means to the reproduction of a social system” (Bouamama, 2007).

Hence, the question raised by the discussion of the FFF and the DTN allows developing further the problem of racism and discrimination in terms of lack of knowledge of the ‘other’, incriminating the ‘other’ for his failed integration and his cultural backwardness. The discussion encourages to tackle the “social processes of production of discrimination, completely legally”. Post-colonial racism is “a constant and systemic production of our society, the representations inherited from the past are reformulated and newly empowered to serve contemporary interests. It is indeed our society that, today, keeps on producing indigenous populations in the political meaning of the expression: “sub-citizens”, “subjects” who are not foreign legally speaking but who are nevertheless not treated as full French citizens” (Tevanian & Bouamama, 2011).

Conclusion

Following the case of the quotas concerning the young binational players in French football, the proliferation of reactions in the Media – mostly leftwing and anti-racist ones – raises the question of what racist and discriminatory discourses mean individually and institutionally.

At stake is what the sociologist Eric Fassin calls a “shift” in the linguistic registers (from nationality to skin colour) together with what we suggest to call a convergence of logics, implicitly acknowledged and known by everyone. The analysis of the mechanisms of racism (imaginary, individual practices and institutionalization of these practices) raise the question of a “collective blindness” (Saïd Bouamama), i.e. of the blinding effect and consequences of these discourses.

We have chosen to consider the case along two different axes found in the Media:

- A postcolonial reading based on the triptych “race”/nation/sport
- The logic of racism confronted to the logic of economy

The first axis was chosen in order to explain the importance of the presence of players with a foreign origin or dual nationality through French history (colonization, decolonization, migrations), together with the *racialisation* of the French National team. The second aspect questioned the capacity of the logic of economy to legitimize and at the same time hide the logic of racism at play.

What we shall remember from this analysis of the mechanisms of racism is that: on the one hand, stereotypes and stigmas are maintained in the mentalities and representations (origin and physical belonging keep on being associated to technical and strategical capabilities); on the other hand, the constant questioning of institutionalizing racism – i.e. to what extent individual discourses can be distinguished from the practices within a particular system.

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