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Racial and ethnic minorities, immigration and the role of trade unions in combating discrimination and xenophobia

Second Report : Results of Sector A fieldwork and analysis
(French National Report)

Public Transport

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I CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

This sector of activities includes different modes (air, road, rail, fluvial and maritime transports) and different types of transport (transport of goods or passengers). It is the sub-sector of urban transport of passengers we have been interested in : buses, tramways, trolleys, underground. In France, the transport sector is structured by several institutions (departments of the Ministry of Transport, employers associations and trade unions, big monopolistic companies...) which have historically organized themselves around the different sub-sectors. It is no surprise, as Paradeise and Tripier¹ point out, that these limits seem to be natural in the eyes of professionals who perceive the history of their own sub-sector as being separated from that of the other ones.

Social and economic context

Employment

According to the 2003 Social Assessment document published by the Urban Transports Union, paid work within the field of transports remained constant. The number of workers has even decreased of 0.5% whereas it had not kept increasing for more than a decade. In a longer period, however, the sector of transports has strongly created job opportunities, since between 1976 and 2000 its numbers of workers have increased about one third (31%). This high growth is mostly due to the private sector, to the transport of goods (up to more than 92%), to the road transport of passengers (up to more than 34%) as well as to the air transport (up to more than 87%).

Regarding the whole sector, the rate of part-time workers is slowly rising, yet remaining below the whole of the French economy (7.5% as opposed to 13.7% in 2003).

Employment within the transport sector essentially concerns males workers (79% against the 55.2% of the whole economic sectors). This discrepancy is even larger if the transport of passengers sector is being looked upon alone.

Gender regarding socio-professional categories within the transport of passengers sector

socioprofessional Catégories	Participation of women	
	(1994-1996)	(2000-2002)
Independants	17%	12%
Management, professionals	29%	25%
Technicians	14%	18%
Clerks	59%	64%
Skilled workers	10%	15%
Unskilled workers	20%	25%
Whole sector	18%	22%
Whole economy	44%	45%

Sources Insee, Enquête Emploi

The whole sector is also characterized by a high proportion of workers (51% against 26% for the whole economy in 2003). Once again, the gap widens when only the transport of passengers activity is being considered :

¹ Paradeise C. et Tripier P., « Introduction », in Tripier P. (Éd.), *Travailler dans le transport*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1986, p. 7.

Distribution by status and skills

Socio-professional categories	transport of passengers area		whole of the economy	
	(1994-1996)	(2000-2002)	(1994-1996)	(2000-2002)
Independants	14,7%	14,3%	11,2%	8,8%
Management, professionals	3,6%	3,7%	13,0%	14,3%
Technicians	9,2%	9,7%	21,0%	21,3%
Clerks	10,7%	13,8%	28,4%	29,1%
Skilled workers	58,5%	56,1%	17,4%	17,2%
Unskilled workers	3,3%	2,4%	9,0%	9,3%
<i>Total</i>	100%	100%	100%	100%

Sources Insee, Enquête Emploi

On the other hand, according to the « Conseil National des Transports » (National Board of Transports) report on social evolution in the sector in 2002-2003, one of the main issue of transport companies is related to the ageing of their employees ; half of them are more than 40 years old : according to Insee « Employment » Survey, the proportion of more-than-forty-years-old workers has risen by 7 points between 1990 and 2000.

Transport and job culture

As Paradeise and Triplier highlight it, the transport sector is characterized by the liveliness of its corporate culture. According to these authors, this is mostly due to the separation of transports by modes that we have mentioned above : *"Certainly, this division strenghtens particularisms /.../ and it creates objective and subjective conditions so as there would be an identification between individual and collective lives within each mode²".* They recall the fact that jobs are not only ways of working, but they are also strong cultural constructions which are used as a tool to socialize the newly employed, and as markers to appraise the quality of the work to be done, offering simultaneously a view of things through which the professional function is valorized. These corporate cultures promote thereby the making of a positive self-image and they make up a tool of resistance against the pressure of cultural or financial capital holders.

The Urban public transports

Legal context and regulations

In France, except Paris, the responsibility of the organization of urban transports is essentially held by local authorities since the 1982-1983 Decentralization Acts.

The Orientation law on domestic transports (LOTI) which dated December 30th 1982 asserted a right to transportation which would allow the travelling of people « with conditions of easy access, reasonable quality and price as well as costs for local instances ».

The LOTI has also made clear the relationships between local authorities, responsible for the organizations of transports, and operators, by imposing the signing of an agreement between both parts. The search for the most advantageous cost for the local authorities and this principle of collective agreement have paved the way to the adoption of the 1993 « Sapin » law which organized the bids of transport network outside the Ile-de-France region, thus creating a competitive context.

The Sapin law, of January 21st 1993, did not question the eventual option for local authorities to realize their transport service on their own, without organizing competition. It

² Paradeise C. et Triplier P., « Introduction », in Triplier P. (Éd.), *Travailler dans le transport*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1986, p. 12.

applies when the local authority decides to delegate the duties of the exploitation of its public transport to a private enterprise, to a “Société d’Economie Mixte” (with both public and private funds) or a public one : this is the case for 94% of the networks which are members of the “Union des Transports Publics” (UTP).

Three big types of contracts can be distinguished :

- the ones in which the organising authority assume both the commercial and industrial risk ;
- the ones in which the operator assumes both risks ;
- eventually, the ones in which both risks are shared. This last type of contract is in marked progress.

The structuration of the sector of urban public transports

All the French public transportation firms are united in the « Union des Transports Publics » (UTP) that is consulted by the French authorities on all the issues about the business of urban public transports. This professional association counts 170 associates that employ 40 000 employees (not counting RATP and SNCF).

The public sector in charge of the policy and of the local organisation of transport may be a town council (9%) or an assembly of municipalities (91%) specially constituted for the business of transport or also in charge of the organisation and of the administration of other public sectors.

The urban transport operators are public, private or mixed corporations. Actually, in spite of the important number of companies, the sector of urban public transports is centralized : a small number of big firms are in charge or bring a technical assistance to numerous networks, either directly, or through local subsidiaries. More than 75% of the companies members of the UTP are linked to one of the three main big firms, namely CGEA-CONNEX, KEOLIS or TRANSDEV.

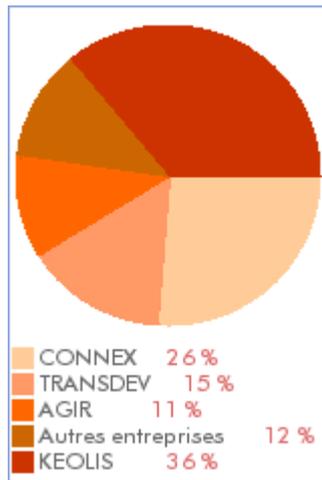
- CGEA-CONNEX belongs to the group Véolia Environment and operates about 26% of the networks member of the UTP and more specifically Bordeaux, Nancy, Rouen and Toulon. In January 2002, CGEA took over the transport business of the enterprise Verney.
- KEOLIS is a subsidiary company of “SNCF-Participations”, born from the fusion of Via GTI and Cariane. The group operates 36% of the networks members of the UTP, and more specifically Lyon, Lille, Tours and Rennes.
- TRANSDEV is a subsidiary company of the “Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations”, which is a public financial establishment. The group is present in 16% of the networks members of the UTP, and more specifically in Grenoble, Nantes, Montpellier and Strasbourg. At the beginning of 2002, TRANSDEV made a partnership agreement with the RATP.

The RATP (Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens) is the largest French urban transport company with more than 42,000 employees. With a public status, depending directly on the State, it intervenes in the Paris region and is present in more than 200 towns in the world throughout its different subsidiary companies specialized in the engineering and the technical assistance. Since the end of 2000, it has been allowed to answer to the bids for the operating of the non-Paris and international networks. Thus, it participates to the operating of the transports of Clermont-Ferrand and Mulhouse.

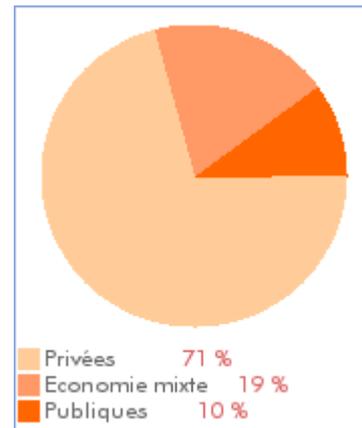
The SNCF (Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français) is a member of the UTP for its peri-urban activities in the Île de France region and in the Provinces (operating of the regional railway lines). It is also present in many foreign countries throughout its different subsidiary companies.

Eventually, the association AGIR (Association pour la Gestion Independante des Réseaux de transport public) unite companies that operates networks without the assistance of the three big groups. The association brings together about 10% of the networks members of the UTP among which are Marseille, Poitiers, La Rochelle and Troyes.

The structure of the French market



The status of the enterprises



This movement of concentration of the urban public transport companies was accompanied by a great increase of the supply of services (creation of new bus services, networks extension....) and by a reorganization of many companies to obtain productivity and profitability gains. This had various consequences : great movement of vacancy during the last ten years ; “externalization” of certain non-qualified jobs (for instance, the RATP now subcontracts the cleaning of vehicles) ; modification of the work organization in many enterprises, the latter had often led both to a transformation of the driver profession (emphasis was put on reception, on the selling and checking of tickets) and to movements of resistance to these evolutions (therefore the bus drivers from Rennes went on strike during 24 days in 2001 to refuse the system that forces the travellers to get on the train by the only front door ; this change was for them highly symbolic of the transformation of their professional status). We will come back to that later on.

The general conditions of employment

The national collective agreement of the urban public transport networks, signed by the UTP and the trade unions and applied since July 1st 1986 states in its Titre II (Conditions générales de travail) that any person who applies to a job must be “*French or a citizen from a State member of the European Economic Community or a foreigner holding a current working licence*” (article 15).

Until then, this collective agreement included a nationality clause restricting access to employment by foreigners. This clause was suppressed in 1983 for European Economic Community citizens and in 1986 for non-members of the EEC. Moreover, it is also specified in article 18 of this convention that “*the signatories acknowledge the principle of non-*

discrimination because of gender or the marital status and undertake to respect it, in particular as regards recruitment, promotion, working conditions and remuneration”.

As for the RATP, the collective agreement (signed on January, 27th 1898) limited recruitment to French workers until 1991, date at which an opening up to the members of the European Economic Community was implemented. And, as R. Kosman wrote it, “*in 2002, the 1898 clause still applied to the foreigners out the European Union who could not be a bus driver or seek a job guaranteed by the RATP³ status.*” This restrictive clause was eventually withdrawn in December 2002 and this did not cause any protest or even any reaction among the trade unions of the RATP.

Employment characteristics in urban transport

According to the latest annual report of the sector established by the Union des Transports Publics (UTP) in 2003, the urban public transport sector (except SNCF) employed more than 82 000 employees (not counting short-term contract and temps) practically equally distributed throughout the 135 transport networks in the Provinces on the one hand, and in the RATP on the other hand. This report mentions a significant increase in the number of the employees in urban transports during 2003, this increase coming after those of the previous years (+ 2.3% in 2003, + 3% in 2002, + 2.5% in 2001, + 3.3 % in 2000, not counting the SNCF and the RATP). The report attributes this growth to the continuous increase of the supply of public transport. Therefore, according to the UTP, “*public transport firms have created 6000 jobs*” since 1998 to which should be added 5000 jobs created at the RATP during the same period.

The distribution of the employees according to their professional group knows little modifications year after year. The drivers represent about 67% of the employees of the urban transports of the Provinces:

Evolution of the employees distribution according to the professional category from 1998 to 2002 (except for the SNCF and the RATP)

Evolution of distribution by status and skills from 1998 to 2002 (except SNCF and RATP)

In %	1999	2000	2001	2002
Engineers and executives	2 %	2,2 %	2,2 %	2,2 %
Control and technicians	14,7 %	14,9 %	14,9 %	15,3 %
Clerks	5,9 %	5,8 %	6,4 %	6,1 %
Workers part of train crew (drivers)	67,7 %	67,6 %	67,2 %	66,8 %
Workers non-part of train crew	9,7 %	9,6 %	9,3 %	9,6 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %	100%

Source : UTP

Compared to the whole of the French economy, the way it appeared in 2002, it can be noticed that there is an important under representation of the categories “executives” (about – 12%) and “clerks” (about –23%) and to a less extent “intermediary professions” (of the order of -6%) that has as a consequence an important over representation of the groups “workers” (about +50%). Although it lets appear some nuances, the comparison between the network in the Provinces and the RATP shows a common structure.

Distribution according to Qualifications in 2003 (except for fixed-term contracts and temporary work)

Socio-professional groups	Non-Paris networks	RATP
Engineers and executives	2,1%	8,6%
Control and technicians	15,4%	17,2%
Clerks	6,1%	4,6%
Workers	76,5%	69,6%

³ Robert Kosmann, L’origine du statut de la RATP, Trade Union archives CGT of the RATP, Fontenay-les-Bris.

<i>Total</i>	100	100
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Sources UTP and RATP : social reports

This structure of employment, characterised by an important concentration in the category of workers, and in particular in the driver jobs, leaves few possibilities to the career evolutions. This driver job, if it is considered as “clean” (for a skilled-worker job) and status enhancing, in so far as it is based on the driver’s responsibility for the passengers, is also an “exhausting” job in the long run because of the stress linked to the permanent contact with the public and with working hours that are often out of touch with the norm and sometimes divided. Through lack of possibility of redeployment within enterprises, we can notice an important phenomenon of resignations or of redundancies of workers declared unsuited to their jobs. As an example, in 2003, the RATP definitively declared 275 agents unsuited among whom only 17 were redeployed in other functions.

This low level margin of manoeuvre in terms of career evolution has been aggravated by the distribution of employees by age since, according to the annual assessment drafted by the UTP (Public Transport Union), in 2003, more than 60% of the employees from the non-Paris networks were more than 40 years old, of whom 25% were more than 50 years old. This part of the over 50s is constantly increasing (25.2% of employees versus 24.4% in 2002 and 23% in 2001. In the same way, the part of employees of more than 25 years of seniority is still increasing (15.2% en 2002 against 13.6% in 2001 and 12% en 2000). These data reflect a relative ageing of the population of the sector, linked to the mass recruitments made in the 1970s and 1980s, ageing intensified by the low proportion of young people entering the industry (less than 2% of the employees are younger than 25 years old) and by the difficulty of recruitment that occupation has been facing for some years.

Still according to the annual assessment reports of the urban public transports, the part of women among the employees continues to increase slowly, even though it is still very widely inferior to the whole sectors of economy and that it is still under the rate of the totality of the branch as well (21% in 2003).

Sex by socio-professional categories in 2003
(except for fixed-term contract and temporary worker)

Socio-professional groups	Women contribution	
	Non-Paris networks	RATP
Executives	19%	27%
Control and technicians	13%	23%
Operators	14%	18%
General	14%	19%

Sources: the UTP and the RATP: 2003 social reports

The distribution of women within the different categories of employees is relatively unequal. Because it must be underlined that the “operator” category combines both the workers (drivers or not) and the clerks and that it is in this last group that are the main part of the female “operators”. Nevertheless, a slow evolution of this distribution may be under process. Thus women, in the Provinces networks, represent henceforth 13,9% of full time staff against 13.5% in 2002, 12.8% in 2001, 12.2% n 1999, 11.8% in 1998 and 11.4% in 1997. And, in the particularly strategic category of drivers, women constituted 11% in 2003 versus 10.8% the year before and 9.8% in 2001. According to the National Transport Council report, the evolution in the proportion of women in urban and interurban bus-driving jobs, reflects the beginning of a change in attitudes on the part of companies. It should be noticed, however, that the proportion of women varies by a factor of two in towns of more than 250 000 inhabitants as compared with towns with less than 100 000 inhabitants.

Statistics concerning the distribution of workers according to their nationality do not appear in the different reports provided by the UTP or the CNT. Concerning the RATP, the numbers of staff coming from countries which are members of the EU remain very small (less than a hundred or so) and those originating from countries outside the EU are few and far between.

Recruitment difficulties

An annual report by the CNT noted in January 2001 that : *“the improvement in employment, combined with the short-term acceleration of professional mobility has boosted the growth of recruitment. As unemployment also decreases, recruitment for certain jobs in the transport sector is more difficult for employers than before. Confronted with these difficulties, the companies adopt diverse strategies, among them the implementation of staff loyalty policies, lying notably on the offer of more attracting wages and a real career evolution. The setting of new training schemes, the opening of job opportunities to new populations as well as the improvement of the image of certain jobs can also bring answers to a problem which was hard to foresee a few years ago and which is not specific to France.”*

Therefore, the beginning of the years 2000 has seen a particular situation of the labour force of the sector of public transport, which results from the conjunction of different trends : a general decrease of unemployment in France ; an extension of the needs in the work force linked to the rise of the offer of public transport; the necessity to compensate the legal reduction of the working hours (35-hour working week) ; the growth of departures for retirement due to the demographic distribution of the workers in this sector. In the French context of « discovery » of the existence of discriminations in the working world and of strong political communication on this issue, these transformations have led, in a certain number of cases, to the opening of recruitment to populations which, until then, were not looking for or even desired in these companies.

II. TRADE UNIONS WITHIN TRANSPORT

A recent report from the Ministry of Employment, Work and social Cohesion indicates that an important drop of the unionization rate has been noted during the last twenty years in France, to reach the number of 8% employees in 2003. However, since a few years, this rate has tended to stabilize and the presence of trade-union under the guise of shop stewards or representatives is developing in establishments and companies⁴.

The same report also underlines the fact that the presence of trade-unions remains stronger in the public sector: *“In the civil service, 15% of employees are affiliated to a trade-union. This is three times more than in the private sector companies and a little less than in the public companies”*:

Trade-unionists from the public sector, trade-unionists from the private sector

	Number of trade-unionists (in thousands)	Unionization rate	Presence of a trade-union:	
			At the work place	In the company or the administration
State, Local Authorities, State Hospitals	890	15,1%	52,7%	76,2%
Public Companies, Social security	160	15,6%	70,7%	89,3%
Private Companies	834	5,2%	31,2%	41,9%
Total	1 884	8,2%	38,5%	52,9%

Source: *Enquêtes Permanentes sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages, 1996 to 2003, Insee*

Besides, the size of the firm remains the determining factor for the presence of trade-unions and the unionization rate, in particular in the private sector : proportionally, the more the firm is important, the better the trade-union organizations can establish in it.

Unionization according to the size of the private establishment

	Unionization rate	Presence of a trade-union	
		At the work place	In the company or the administration
Less than 50 employees	3,5%	8,3%	19,0%
From 50 to 99 employees	5,4%	41,3%	52,9%
From 100 to 499 employees	8,3%	63,4%	74,3%
500 employees and more	8,7%	81,2%	91,7%
Total	5,2%	31,2%	41,9%

Source: *Enquêtes Permanente sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages, 1996 to 2003, Insee.*

In this context, one of the first characteristics of the sector of transport and communications is that, generally speaking, it has a unionization rate slightly superior to the average of all the different sectors (10.21% against 8.23%). However it is better to relativise these pieces of data that mix the field of transport and the one of communications in which the huge public institutions such as La Poste and France Telecom traditionally have a clearly superior unionization rate than the national average.

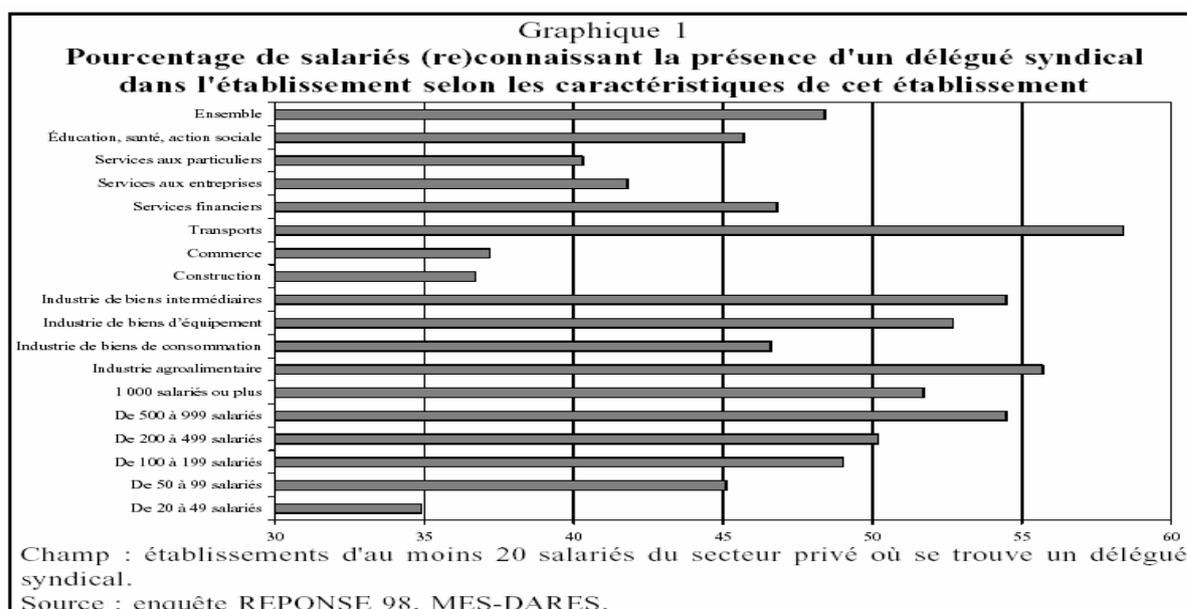
⁴ *Premières synthèses*, n°44.2, October 2004, « Mythes et réalités de la syndicalisation en France », DARES

Percentage of adhesions to trade-union organizations

	Non trade-unionists	Trade-unionists
Agriculture, silviculture, fishing	87,82%	12,18%
Food and agricultural industries	95,14%	4,86%
Energy	82,90%	17,10%
Other industries	92,62%	7,38%
Construction, building trade, civil engineering	97,37%	2,63%
Retail trade and wholesale, repairing	97,43%	2,57%
Transports, postal services and telecommunications	89,79%	10,21%
Insurances and financial activities	89,04%	10,96%
Estate activities	95,95%	4,05%
Education, health, social action	86,10%	19,90%
Services to companies	93,63%	6,37%
Services to private individuals	94,38%	5,62%
Administration and associative activities	86,30%	13,70%
Total	91,77%	8,23%

Sources : DARES

Another element : the recognition of the legitimacy of union representatives depends on the branch of industry and, from this point of view, it is the strongest in the sector of transport, as it is shown on the following bar chart, taken from an issue of *Premières synthèses*⁵:



Concerning more specifically the sector of urban transport, we can notice that the CGT is quite largely in the majority:

Percentage of the valid votes in the urban transports (www.transports.equipement.gouv.fr)

Trade-union organizations	1994-1995	1996-1997	1998
CGT	41,49%	40 %	44,0 %
CFDT	20,71%	23 %	15,8 %
FO	18,41%	19 %	16,6 %
CFTC	2,95%	2 %	3,8 %
CGC	4,21%	0,7 %	3,4 %
Other trade-unions		8 %	6,2 %
Non-union workers	1,94%	7,3 %	10,3 %

Source : CNT

⁵ *Premières synthèses*, n°22.1, May 2002, « Le regard des salariés sur la représentation syndicale », DARES.

Percentage of the valid votes in the RATP (www.transports.equipement.gouv.fr)

Trade-union organizations	1996	1998	2000
CGT	45,7%	40,4 %	40,8 %
CSA			19,7 %
CFDT	8,9%	11,8 %	12,2 %
FO	14,6%	12,9 %	12 %
CFTC	3,1%	3,1 %	3,0 %
CGC	3,4%	3,7 %	3,6 %
Other trade-unions		28,1 %	8,7 %

Source : CNT

It is difficult to give accurate figures concerning the number of trade-union members and activists in the public transport companies. For information only, the CGT Federation of Transports claims to have 27 000 members and the CFDT General federation of Transports and equipment (in French, FGTE) claims to have 51 500 members. But their spheres of unionization are not identical : in particular, the SNCF employees who organize in the CGT do not depend on the Federation of transports but they depend on the Federation of railwaymen which has 51 500 members, while they enter the unionization area of the FGTE-CFDT.

We can also indicate the estimations given by the leaders of these two trade-union organizations at the RATP, of which the results are probably superior to the setting up of these same organizations in the private companies of the provinces : the CGT claims to have 5000 members, 4 to 500 activists among them being in charge of elective functions, whereas the CFDT claims to have one thousand members, including a thousand or so of elected members.

III. WORK TRANSFORMATIONS WITHIN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

Modernization of the sector

The issue of ‘modernizing’ urban transport has arisen in France in the mid 1970s’. Its challenges in terms of work organization, relations between professionals and consumers, and structuration of the institutional system, have been the subject of many investigations.

The first one is related to the enlargement of the field of intervention in urban transport. Gradually, they will no longer be considered as a compulsory service to passive users, victims of the “all car” policy applied so far, but as a central tool for the urban reorganisation policy preserving the environment, improving the quality of life and making it easier for urbanites to have access to car-free city centres. As a matter of fact, the evolution of the role assigned to public transport corresponds to the setting of the first pedestrian shopping areas and the rehabilitation of historic centres, thus “*freed from car constraints*”, “*given back to the population*”, “*favouring rambling and socialising between urbanites*”, according to the ever optimistic planners of that period. The achievement of this goal will then require the improvement of the offer of public transport, concerning the comfort of passengers and the quality of traffic in cities. Mentionned in the urban development policies, this objective will go through the grant of important funds devoted in particular to the creation, in many French cities, of means of transport (subway, and over all new generation tramways) capable of satisfying the requirements of a public so far attached to the individual means of transport.

Another characteristic of the evolution of the sector lies in the emergence and the continuous enforcement of the public-private partnership based on contracts that make a narrow link between organising authorities and their providers. Here again, according to the administrators’ rhetoric, “*the viability of these agreements between concerned parties results from the efficiency of the distributors in the discharge of their missions but also and in a mutual way of the capacity for the networks, and the great groups of which they are the subsidiaries, to make their financial effort and their good management⁶ profitable*”.

The consequence of these challenges for the enlargement of the field of intervention of public transport and for economical efficiency have been to incite the operating staff to modify the inner organisation and the characteristic public service missions of the sector. For instance, by introducing within companies the running of networks confirmed by the satisfaction of the “users” then more and more considered as “clients”, they strive to obtain from the staff in contact with the “customers” (that is to say in this case mainly drivers) the adoption of a professional behaviour in accordance with the goal of attracting users. The companies of public service in general and particularly in the field of transport⁷ then have to multiply the attempts to create reforms aiming at increasing the “efficiency”⁸ of performances and at better associating “clients” to the discharge of their duties. Firstly, this implies to reconsider the users/clients, as it is underlined by Gallenga:

⁶ Le Breton E., « L’utilisation des transports collectifs urbains : une identité en débat au sein des entreprises », *Sociologie du travail*, vol. 41, 1999, p. 256.

⁷ See Joseph I. and Theureau J., “Régulation du trafic et information des voyageurs dans les transports collectifs urbains », in Grémion C. and Fraisse R. (Eds), *Le service public en recherche. Quelle modernisation ?* Paris, La Documentation Française, 1996.

⁸ Gallenga explains in his doctoral thesis devoted to the evolution in the long term of « la Régie des Transports de Marseille » how the fuzzy conception of “modernisation” of public transport must be achieved by the “magical use of the notion of efficiency”.

“On the one hand, the user/client is supposed to become an actor in the ‘coproduction’ of service. He becomes autonomous towards a more and more parsimonious service in terms of human presence (the number of staff tends to decrease because of automatic machines). Nevertheless, he can choose between a large range of tariff options. On the other hand, if he is a passive user he runs the risk of being rejected by a state company focused on the attraction of new clients. If he lives in a remote, non-profitable and unsafe area, he will have to do with a less frequent transport service. Thus, it is the very issue of equality in public transport that would be questioned.”

Besides, the idea is also to exercise better control of the drivers’ activity by increasing the role of the regulation services whose aims are to control the schedule adherence. This prevents the staff from using all the “tricks” of the job which consisted in “skipping” the last stops to gain time to enjoy a few more minutes during the break, to spend more time in a café or in a phone booth, etc¹⁰. Because of this, this new approach of the relation user/consumer was obviously considered as a questioning of the concrete working conditions of the staff and as a consequence they have led to major conflicts in transport company during these past twenty years.

Emergence and possible solutions to safety problems

In France, public transport is today a symbol of urban insecurity. The past years have seen the emergence of violent action in institutions such as public transport and school, widely advertised in the media as a symbol of a civil divide. In this context, daily incidents (frauds, absence of respect, aggressivity...) nearly became obsessions linked to the so called “insecurity problems” and were associated to the poor suburbs mainly inhabited by foreigners (“les quartiers difficiles”). Gradually, in this context, the term “jeunes des quartiers” was used to describe the “young-person-from-foreign-origin-living-in-popular-suburbs”. Without clearly referring to “race” or “ethnic origin”, this category nevertheless results in a racialising or ethnicising the populations thus named.

In reaction to this problem of “urban insecurity” and to its presence in the very places that symbolize the Republic, the great operators of passenger transport have made it their priority by creating assessment and action commissions. This is the case of the RATP in the Paris area, but also of the great private groups which own the majority of the provinces networks. At the political level, measures were taken after recurrent occurrences of complaints from the different partners, contributing to define the issue of insecurity as a public problem requiring the setting of appropriate public answers. For instance, at the end of 1997, a “round table on the topic of security in public transport” brought together the Ministries of Equipment, Transports, Housing, Employment and Solidarity, and Home Office as well as the GART, the UTP, trade-union organizations and users committees in order to “*make an assessment and take concrete measures*”. Among the “concrete measures” suggested then, but also in other public meetings (such as the “Rencontres Nationales du Transport Public”) in which the public problem of insecurity in transports is relentlessly raised, it is envisaged to make transport premises more “human” and “safer” by creating new jobs such as “welcoming”, “assisting”, “go-between” agents, etc.

The first initiatives of this type were introduced on a certain number of networks in the early 1990s as a response to “*the degradation of security conditions in transport, with its*

¹⁰ Le Breton Eric, « L'utilisateur des transports collectifs urbains : une identité en débat au sein des entreprises », *Sociologie du travail*, vol. 41, 1999, p. 264.

negative consequences in terms of economic impact (increase of costs because of vandalism, loss of clients, stoppages of work for drivers, etc.), according to a survey carried out by the “Programme de Recherche, d’Expérimentation et d’Innovation dans les Transports Terrestres” for the Ministry of Transport.

This is added to the fact that until recently, trade-unions, acting as partners in the assessment committees dealing with urban violence, have also played a role in this conflicting situation by using insecurity themes to illustrate their claims (according to Ghislaine Gallenga). She means that some work stoppages are due to assault: *“the number of times when buses went back “home” to support assaulted colleagues is impressive”*, she wrote, referring to the years following the very tough dispute that occurred during the years 1995-1996 at “la Régie des Transports Marseillais”. This conflict dealt with the change in the employees’ statute (creation of a “second statute”) and with the work organization : *“We went from the stage of internal fight towards the company which opposed the running of the RTM to its managing director, to the stage of external fight which seemed at the time to oppose the RTM to society in its wide definition”*, she added. Thus, in the sector of transport of Marseilles, the issue of insecurity dominated the debate and the trade-union movement relentlessly worked on it for a while. This was the case till the gratuitous and wild assault, that struck the minds, of a driver by two young persons who would have tried to set fire to him with petrol. This provoked much emotion, and happened to be a pure invention of the supposed “victim”. A boundary was however crossed, enabling the unions to distance themselves from the security issue and therefore to pose this question in other terms. The dialectic according to which the so-called “modernisation” process (a process that contributed itself to the rise in feelings of insecurity) could find an echo on the public political stage and with the question of insecurity, as it was enacted on this stage, started to break down.

The opening of the sector to young people of foreign origin

That context was also characterised by the fact that employment and in particular the employment of young people was, at that period, at the centre of local politicians’ preoccupations. The recruitment of staff specially allotted to the new tasks of social mediation, was firstly the resort of public plans of integration of young people into the world of work, often denounced by trade unions as precarious and derogatory jobs, but also as an opening towards ethnically marked employment based on qualities presumably linked to the beneficiaries’ origins and their supposedly cultural proximity to trouble makers.

This was the case of the plan “Grands frères” that the RATP set in 1994. It consisted in recruiting in a temporary manner and through an association of insertion (APMCJ), young people who came from popular areas and who were from foreign background, so as to dissuade the youth from the same social and cultural background from messing around and cheating, and *“to educate the troublemakers of politeness or even of public spiritedness”⁴*. Therefore, as Macé describes in the analysis that he makes of this device, *“a big part of these young “troublemakers” being of immigrated origin (countries from black and North Africa), it has been considered , at the launching of the device, that the recruited young people, descending from immigrants themselves, could play the authoritarian character of the “grand frère”, peculiar, it was supposed, to this cultures they came from”⁵*.

⁴ Comity and security-APMCJ, 1994-1995, activity report, RATP.

⁵ Macé E., « Service public and exclusion: double resentment and co production of the urban insecurity. The case of the suburban bus network of the RATP”, *Sociologie du travail*, vol 39, n°4, 1997.

With the appearance of Youth employment programs (CEJ in French), intended to all young people younger than 26 years old and to all from 26 to 30 years old not entitled to the UNEDIC compensation, the ethnic criteria (on which was founded the demand of “mediators’ proximity with the population of the “quartiers”) do not intervene any more explicitly in the recruitment conditions. Created in October 1997 around a national program entitled “new services, new jobs”, the device “Youth employment” aims according to legislative texts, at fulfilling two “great purposes”:

- *“to permit young people to escape from the unemployment circle and from “casual jobs” in offering them the opportunity of integrating a job for a long time and so, to acquire a professional experience that could enable them to build a career”;*
- *“to provide for emerging or non satisfied needs about the people assistance, the improvement of the quality of life, to security, to the access to culture, the extra-teaching, the environment protection, in other words it concerns fields about everyday life and presenting a feature of social utility, but which are not taken into account neither by the trade sector, through lack of “profitability”, nor by the services or the associations already out in the field, because it is about the needs whose precise outlines are still to be defined.”*

By offering employers (local governments, public establishments or enterprises, an private right not-for-profit organization) a financial assistance equal to 80% of the guaranteed minimum wage (the SMIC in French) for 5 years, this program, interrupted in 2002 after the changing of political majority, will know an important success in the transport sector. Therefore, the SNCF, the RATP and the GART (Groupement des autorités organisatrices de transport) have committed into it in agreement with trade unionist organizations, which saw, there, at least in certain networks, better working conditions than in the case of other insertion devices thanks to real training and employment possibilities. Framework agreements were then signed between the State and each of the concerned public organizations on December, 16th 1997 with the SNCF and the RATP and on January, 11th 1998 with the GART.

All in all, about 5 000 young people have benefited from this type of contract in the land transport (among which 1 500 are in the urban transport). They have been recruited either by local governments, organising networks, or by associations or by the urban transport enterprises, and were commissioned to welcome customers (“agents d’accueil”), act as go between (“agents of mediation”) or cool the atmosphere in the buses (“agents d’ambiance”).

Today, many evaluations of this device have formed the subject of many publications. As regards transport, it notably comes out that, according to networks, different ways of insertion of this staff have been privileged depending on whether it is about to opt for the perpetuation of the mediation jobs or to privilege the integration in the traditional transport jobs such as driving or the checking of tickets⁶.

The issue of racism

In this context, another feature of the transport sector in France is that manifestations of racism recognized as such concerned, above all, relations with the public. Urban transport enterprises are among the actors of the public problem drama combined in themes of insecurity and urban violence. Therefore, the relational tension with “young people from

⁶ KIRSZBAUM T., “Services publics et fractures de la ville. La “pensée publique” entre diversité, éclatement et souci du rapprochement”, *Sociologies du travail*, vol. 46, 2004 ; Paquet P. et Bourgeois F., “Agents d’ambiance dans les transports publics urbains: nouveau métier de l’entreprise et de la cité?”, *Cahiers de la sécurité intérieure*, vol. 40, n°2, 2000.

foreign background” living in the “problem areas” and the risks brought upon bus drivers in these outlying neighbourhoods have become core to transformations and pressures linked to the definition of assignments, careers, working conditions and enterprises’ exigence of profit. The consequence of this “definition of the situation” was that the questions about racism were somehow “externalized” and focused on contacts between people working in the transport and customers. The issue of racism within the enterprise –whether it is about either the recruitments, the relationships between the managerial staff and the employees, among the employees themselves or about trade union life- could be even less tackled than the employment was, until recently, closed de facto to the populations of foreign origin. That was the initial situation, that started to evolve with different rhythms according to networks.

The opening was proportionally more or less important and more or less quick depending on the places and, above all, depending on the conditions in which it was made possible in the various transport enterprises : the management’s will to create insecure contracts, the development of “new jobs” aiming at improving the reception and the security of the passengers, agreement trade-unions/management on the setting of “Youth employment programs” and of the progressive integration of staff recruited by this type of procedure within the enterprise⁷. It is still represented as a major changing that organizes the discourses on the issue of racism in a “before” and an “after”, even when, as at the RATP, this opening is already a little older. So it is really in working relationships that the issue of racism and of discriminations finds to express and no longer only in the relationship with customers.

⁷ For a detailed of this opening in a collective urban transport network in France, see Poutignat P., and Rinaudo C. and Streiff-Fenart J., “Le traitement syndical du racism et de l’insécurité dans une entreprise de transports urbains”, *Sociologie du travail*, vol. 46, n°3, 2004, p. 309-328.

IV. RACISM IN CASE STUDIES

Case studies in the urban public transport sector: a comparative approach.

We have noticed that one of the characteristic features of this work sector is the renewal of its staff recruitment. Over the past few years, urban public transport firms have opened up to a category of people who until then were refused: in general, the young people from foreign background and especially North Africans. This opening up was greater and faster according to the networks, their status and the conditions in which they operate. It also varies according to the different ways this opening occurs : the development of 'new jobs' or more precarious functions aiming to improve passengers comfort and security ; the change of work force following the transformations of the sector organization ; agreements between trade-unions and management concerning measures aiming to give young people access to jobs.

In a way or another, a generalised displacement of ethnical boundary that separates the 'Us' to the 'Them', came to happen from the outside of the firms (between employees and users) to the inside (among the employees). This redeployment of the construction of the otherness had varied consequences, such as the development of certain attitudes and discriminatory practices among the staff. This new situation constituted a new opportunity to study the trade-unions reactions about the question of racism at work and their capacities to take into account and to defend the interests of those people perceived in terms of their ethnic or racial origins. The question was to understand why the trade-unions did seize or not this question and, if yes, how and with which results?

Obviously, the national leaders of the principal trade-unions, that we have interviewed, have reaffirmed the principle of anti-racism position and put forward some of their actions: participation in national anti-racism campaign (CGT); part in the removal of nationality clauses impeding the hiring of foreign salaried (CFDT and CGT); mobilisation to prevent the "Front National" to express and impose itself in sector companies (CFDT and CGT); supporting the struggle of undocumented workers; signature of a branch agreement planning training programmes for young people from deprived areas (CFDT); educational campaign against the confusing between insecurity and immigration (CGT). However, it is clear that not much emerged from these interviews about strategic vision aiming to fight against everyday racism in firms, whereas different sources of information showed a great discrepancy in union practices. However, beyond the expression of a personal sensitivity to the racism and the discriminations problems, different union leaders made us understand that this subject was not really a priority for their organisation and its militants. The discrepancy between the multitude of negotiation subjects with the employers, on the branch level or on the firms, and the weakness of the militant forces constitutes an argument that has been advanced, to explain why this question has been more or less neglected just as other grounds of local struggles.

By developing the RITU project, we suggested that five great kinds of motivation could push the unions to deal pragmatically on the question of racism and the place of minorities, in the firms as in their own organization :

- unions can be brought to act in order to regulate the competition between 'native' and 'foreigner' workers on the work market.

- they can feel the need to intervene when racist conducts and attitudes disturb the professional relations on the workplace or in the union.

-they can answer to mobilisation and to auto-organisation of migrants or workers from ethnics minorities which can happen inside or outside unions structures.

-they can react to politics incitation and/or on a legal measure, on a local, or national or supra-national level.

-finally, they can try to compensate the decline of their size by heading an active policy of recruitment among the migrant workers or their descendants.

Moreover, it seemed to us plausible that the presence of one or several of these motivations, durably or at a precise moment, will widely depend on each particular local union, its history, the actors in presence and the specific context of intervention. These motivations are also inscribed in a general context of the more or less saliency of racism and xenophobia in Europe and the more or less political will to fight it.

For the field studies in this very sector of activity, we have searched to diversify the local configurations and, as far as possible, we have been aware of those contextual data of different networks, that we believe being essential. We have therefore inquired in detail three firms in the South-East of France and, as a counter point, more punctually, the RATP. This diversity of situations has enabled us to test our hypothesis and to bring to light different combinations of the unions motivations and practices (or non practices) that will bring to contrasted results.

To obtain case-studies that will enable to take into account the most meaningful articulations of the sector, we have, first of all, distinguished the specific situation of the Capital and of the RATP, which represents half of the employments of this sector and constitutes a reference point for the whole sector, and set it apart from the situation of the less important cities situated in Provinces.

We have concentrated our inquiries on three firms in South-East of France. We have selected, to contribute to this case study, a very big firm of urban transport, of more than 500 employees (*firm 1*), a big firm of more than 250 employees (*firm 2*), and a medium sized firm of more than 100 (*firm 3*), the two last ones also assure missions of inter and peri-urban transports. And beyond the interviews and the observations that give us a global point of view of each firm, we interviewed two employees of the transport network of the regional metropolis (Marseille).

First case study: the RATP

The RATP, with more than 40 000 employees and its public firm status represents, as we already said, half of the employments in the public sector of transport. Without getting in details, we can underline a few noticeable characteristics of the firm, which help to understand the integration conditions of more than a thousand new employees, which a good part comes from the ethnicized suburban areas served by its network.

Although the firm is organised in more or less compartmentalized jobs (tube drivers, bus drivers, service workers, counters clerks, tickets collectors...), almost all the interviews put in evidence a « corporate culture » based on an image of the firm partly as a family, partly as an army. The « military » dimension is linked to the uniform (which implies, according to our informants, that, « when entering the RATP, your nationality changes »), and especially to the demanding respect of the schedule and of security orders which allow this huge machinery to work, and to transport every year more than 2,5 billion passengers.

The family dimension has many facets: a recruitment that was based for many years on the nationality clause and on the recommendations given by the firm employees (particularly for

their own children) which has contributed to create domestic migration trends, particularly from Bretagne and Auvergne but also from the DOM, leading to the creation of community associations ; a formally egalitarian style of sociability which is expressed by a salutation ritual and a systematic use of the familiar “tu” in addressing each other which excludes nobody but the management ; a tradition of organizing the employees and employees children leisure through the organization of the Comité d’Entreprise (works council) (sport and cultural activities, management of holydays centres); finally, and this is important for our concern, an internal mode of regulation of inter-individuals conflicts that we can translate by the expression « to wash one dirty clothes in family ».

Those characteristics are linked with a long story of overt expressions of a popular sexism and racism, particularly taking the form of written or oral « jokes », as witnesses the bulletin boards in the resting rooms, so that the Front National judged the area favourable enough to try to constitute its own union in the mid 90’s. It is that way that the RATP was seen by minorities:

2008AM : Me, when I started into the firm, it was a quite closed firm, let’s say a familial one. As I was living it from outside: it was a negative firm for me, in terms of racism. That was the image that I had of the RATP, the image that the youths from immigration had: they were racists, fascists (an North-African machinist , CFDT and MRAP militant).

The « firm culture » is therefore a dominant reference helping to create a united front which will mix employees, trade-unions and management in front of the outside, which could be maintained as long as the ethnic cleavage coincided with the firms boundaries. But with the recruitment transformation this boundaries have moved, and so the whole « firm culture » has been put into question. On a more or less pronounced way, all the interviews refer to the integrating the « youth » at the RATP as being the main issue at stake.

In 1996, during a previous enquiry¹⁶ in a bus depot of the RATP, we had noticed that the theme of the insecurity conditioned most of our interlocutors discourses on the interethnic relations in general and on racism especially. More exactly, the adoption of a victim attitude allowed to express, in a legitimate way, a discourse that stigmatized minorities populations. The interviews were systematically centred on the relation with the customers and especially with the youngsters of the suburbs served by some bus routes. At that time, there was rarely a week without a drivers’ strike to protest against aggressions which the circumstances, or even the veracity were not clearly established.

With a few exceptions, the rare Africans or North-Africans hired, were working in the security sector, as a « grand frère », generally with probationer status, hired by subcontractor associations, or as a guard integrated in the security staff of the firm (GPSR) which, for a time, was in great development because their missions had been spread from the railway network to the roadway one.

Back on the site eight years later, we have noticed a radical change: the insecurity question has been backgrounded and is more evocated as a memory of the past, as much that the dissolution of the GPSR could be considered in some interviews. Moreover, most of our interviewees admitted a part of responsibility from the drivers, and even instructions from the RATP, in the manipulation of the incidents. Globally the discourse on racism has moved from the relationships with users to the relations inside the firm after the changes in recruitment due to the particular context at the beginning of the years 2000 : the transition to the new

¹⁶ Poiret C and Vourc’h F, « Repérer les discriminations techniques et raciales dans le domaine du travail et de l’emploi » *Studies and documents of ISERES*, n°167,1996

legislation on the work length (“les 35 heures”) which has needed a fast hiring of a thousand drivers, together with the arrival to retirement, after 25 years of work, of the bus drivers massively hired in the first half of the 80’s. This great call of working force happened whereas the rate of unemployment was falling and the traditional provincial channels of recruitment of the RATP were running out because of the development of regional networks, and of the lag between the level of salaries offered and the cost of life - and especially of the cost of the housing in the Capital. Moreover due to its closeness to the political power - which at that time, « discovered » the existence of racism at work - and its central position as one of the first employers in Paris, the RATP is conducted to adopt a voluntarist policy of opening toward the « jeunes des cités ». From this combination, is going to result a massive and sudden recruitment of employees from foreign background whose arrival call into question the reproduction of the « corporate culture » that we were talking about.

For different trade-unionists who showed evidence of a kind of confusion between « jeunes des quartiers » and under-qualification, this opening corresponds to the « social » calling of a public firm. They therefore attach a lot of importance to the work experience placement inasmuch as it leads to a recruitment.

Globally, our different interviewees agree to say that with time going by, there occurred some readjustments toward minorities integration in the convivial rituals, a clearly less open expression of racism, and a reformulation of cleavages in term of generation in place of ethnical ones (the « youngs » on one side, and the « olds » on the other).

They also agree to underline that the integration in the firm has met many obstacles; they particularly remind that the new comers have been placed under great surveillance by the supervisory staff, and that one part of it even carried out a true disciplinary harassment toward those *outsiders*. In counterpart of the recognition of the hard integration conditions of the youths, we find in the discourses the fear that this massive arrival jeopardize the « firm culture » and the cohesion of the salaried.

It seems that the relations are more or less cleaved and that depending on the local situations, the climate is more or less tense, and that beyond individual initiatives, unionists as the supervisory staff, don’t know or don’t want to seize this question. And it is this absence of answer that seems to have given room for the creation, in 2003, of a section of the Movement against Racism and for the Friendship between People (MRAP) in a firm, which is the initiative of a small union militants group (or ex-militant) of the CGT and of the CFDT which, for most of them are part of the supervisory or managerial staff. Since that, the activity of this section in the RATP does not aim to compete the trade-unions, but to bring them, as well as the managerial staff, to seize this question. The objective is clearly an assimilationist one : It aims to make the youth enter the « big family » of the RATP, with the same rights and the same duties as the seniors.

It is hard to hold a global discourse on the minorities situation at the RATP, because it has decentralised the management of its network and of its staff. The uses of management can vary between the bus’ depots, tube lines or the RER ones, as the unions positions change, even in a same organisation according the sections. In this fragmented scenery, we tried to understand the intervention of the MRAP section, through the study of a bus depot that we had already analysed at the end of the 90’s. This depot serves partly Paris intra-muros and partly some working class neighborhoods of the North suburb (and also others suburbs much healthier). We also have asked some leaders of the two principal unions (CGT and CFDT) of the RATP, about their assessment of the minorities situation in the firm and their reactions to the creation of an anti-racist association which, despite expressions of perplexity or formal protestations, seemed to arrange most of the social partners.

Second case study: three firms in the South-East Region

The first studied situation is characterised by denegation : the main trade-union in the firm denies the even existence of the racism and discrimination issue and, as a consequence does not want to take it for granted. Minorities are not absents of the firm, but most of them stay on its fringe with precarious status.

This firm (that we'll call *firm1*) concerns an interurban network of a good size (300 salaried), with a deep unionization and a social climate characterised by the good relations between the staff representatives (CGT) and the territorial authority which is in charge of the network. Some youth from North-African background have been recently hired thanks to the «youth employment program» and they are still in a precarious situation. Beside them, a few number of employees from North-African background occupy permanent positions in the firm, notably a woman top executive, from algerian background, and a tunisian employee, member of the executive staff of the local union, who has been hired after the liquidation of a merchant transport firm which was controlled by the territorial authority; more recently others minorities members have joined the firm because of the merging of small firms of interurban transport which used to hire drivers from foreign background. Trade unionists just start to seize the racism issue, but it rather takes the form of a denial which, nevertheless creates a debate (this leads to the problem of intervention of the sociologists which presence and questions, strike the attention on what would normally be forgotten). In this context, the complaints of young belonging to minority groups (north africans or west indians) who see their appointments being confirmed (if they are) after all the others and especially after the staff's children -- , induce the unionists to wonder whether this youngs are or not « paranoiac », whether they don't suspect racism even when there is no reason to do so.

The second situation is characterised by a voluntary practice of assimilation by local unionists : here, the union leaders play a major part to integrate the new ones in (and by) the working class, so that they can control the racists tensions, and maintain a familial running of the firm (in its recruitments) and a co-management. As a counterpart of their adoption in the work community, which enables them to benefit of the same status and rights in the firm, minority workers are induced to become invisible and to identify themselves essentially as workers.

This firm (that we'll call *firm2*) is a public transport firm in a big city, which counts about 650 employees including more than 500 drivers, 85 maintenance workmen (mechanics, electricians, cleaning service) and about 20 supervisors. One of the characteristics is the strenght of the CGT union linked to a high rate of unionisation (about 75%) in comparison to others professionals sectors. We can then notice the importance of the CGT in different representatives bodies : disciplinary commitee, works council... At the time of the last professionals elections, the CGT union obtained 86,9% of the votes against 10,9% for the CFDT and 2,2% for Force Ouvrière. Thus, the union hierarchy situates itself as a appointed representative of the firm's interests, a legitimate partner for the management and the public authorities. The union ascendancy also spreads on the supervisory staff, even on the « heads of department » who acceded to the executive status by internal promotion. At the time of a previous research¹⁷, we underlined that, like what has been observed in others transports firms, especially at the SNCF (trains), and, as we have noticed about the RATP as well, these employees describe the firm as a « big family ». This representation goes hand in hand, here as elsewhere, with the staff members conformity to the own behavioral norms of the firm, i.e. civility rituals between members who demonstrate each others a mutual consideration

¹⁷ Philippe Poutignat, Christian Rinaudo, Jocelyne Streiff-Fénart: Le traitement syndical du racisme et de l'insécurité dans une entreprise de transport urbains. *Sociologie du travail*, 46(2004),pp309-328

(shaking hands at everyone), a conspicuous manliness and rough ways of speaking, which the meaning regarding the professional identity is underlined by a demanding attachment to the ancient carters coarse language and manners.

A the time of our first enquiry, a consequence was, also, that the racist names (« melon », « grey ») were constantly used in daily conversations in accordance with this virile and non equivocated use of language. The hostility charge of abusive racists terms was essentially aimed to the outside of the firm, and took as a target « young people from foreign background » who frequent some « hot lines » of the network and are typically seen by the drivers as mischief-makers. Till the end of the 90's, the firm was characterised by the total absence of foreign workers (justified, according to our interviewees, by a nationality clause subscribed in the collective convention) but also, by the almost inexistence of national workers from foreign origins. So the question of racism in the work setting, was less about the division between the workers due to their nationality that on the designation of an « enemy », external to the firm and clearly localised and identified.

The change of attitude of the union toward the recruitment linked to the incentives of public policies was justified by the better wage conditions of the « young employment program » and especially the opportunities of vocational training which could offer the best conditions for an integration in the firm. It made possible since 1999, the deep modification of the previous situation while avoiding the danger of the ethnical professionalization. Two years after our first research, the present study analyses, in its continuity, an union policy that introcuded an irreversible change in the supply and demand of employment in this sector. In the same time, the racist climate that has been accepted for a long time in the firm come to be modified, without the unionists resorting, to present or justify their choices, to a categorical anti-racist imperative.

The third situation presents an autonomous mobilization of minority workers who invest the union : in this company which offers particularly unfavourable wages and working conditions, the hiring of workers from north-african background has been massive. With support of the regional instances of the trade-union, the local union was restructured around a core of minorities workers having impelled and directed a long strike to impose their claims, eliminating on their way the old union officers suspected of racism and maybe of corruption.

This firm (that we'll call *firm3*) exploits the public urban and peri-urban transport network of an urban community which includes notably, a medium sized city, a seaside and touristy resort and a more working class small city, which is often considered as a suburb of the first. The study of this case shows some particular circumstances: this firm has known an especially harsh strike for 35 days which has led to the occupation of the bus depot and of the management offices of the public transport big group, whose the firm is a subsidiary. It ended by the strikers satisfaction, by a hike in salaries and the opening of negotiations for the changing of collective agreement. Thus an important gain could be foreseen, the agreement of urban public transport being more attractive for the employees than the one which is enforceable in the interurban transport, in force till now. This conflict that seems to be the threshold of a transformation in relatives positions between majorities and minorities in the firm and in the union struggle, occurs at the end of a ten years period in which important changes happened locally in the sector.

In the case of this network, the opening to recruitment, when it happened, has not been the result of social integration policies or measures such as « young-employment program ». On the labour market of the transport sector, this company constitutes, because of it poor working conditions and low salary, a « last choice » avoided by those with reasonable chances of being recruited in neighboring cities networks that have better conditions but a selective recruiting

system. This factor, which explains the significant turn over and the chronic need for labour, is also combined with the pressure provoked by the attribution of new contracts and the enforcement of the “35 hour week”. This need for labour has, in a short time, led to companies recruiting up to a quarter of their employees among the population of foreign origin.

The people recruited this way usually had work experience unlike the youngs who are the target of the employment programs. Indeed, their careers have often lasted long enough for them to have experienced a long term integration into a firm, and the lay-offs entailed by the economic crisis and restructuring. If these conditions may be shared with the whole crew (“*the company has closed, due to competition of Asian countries and India... It failed*”), the experience of discrimination distinguishes them, it makes them more vulnerable and tends to force them into long term unemployment.

The most involved minority workers in the union struggle emphasize the particular importance that the fulfilment of the whole employee’s claims has specifically for themselves : “*We do the opposite of the other firms: over there they struggle to try and recruit minorities step by step, we are already in, but we are struggling for better working conditions.*”

At the time of the enquiry, new union structures were on the way. A significant number of North African immigrants, most of them being recently recruited, and who have played an leading role in the struggle is going to get recognition for their capacity to represent the whole staff, in particular the one of them who is becoming the new head of the union.

Ethnic minority experience

The juridical and political doctrine of the republic doesn’t recognize ethnical (no more than linguistic and religious) minorities and denies them, in the name of equality and non-discrimination, collective rights. The doctrine do not fail to have a major influence in the context of work as in that of trade-union action, and to reject the claims backed on collective identities grounded on culture or nationality. The case of religious membership and the recognition it gets, without really making exception, has seen some changes that we will discuss later on.

1. Taking into consideration the fact that community belonging and more generally cultural differences are seen as contradictory to the principle of equality, formally defined as an implementation of universal laws, the anti-discriminatory prospect often goes hand in hand with an assimilating objective. This is the case for the firm number 2, where the unionist action has promoted the inclusion of the “jeunes des quartiers” (youth from difficult neighbourhood) into the “we” that the carrier family consists of. But in this situation, the unionist struggle against discrimination and exclusion of minorities has fitted the willing of the latter to contribute to their own invisibilisation. The following extract shows how this collective strategy aims at not showing itself as a collective :

2009AM: We haven’t made the mistake of turning into a clan. That was the big trap, we had been talking... We said: we want to see each other, eat together, there is no problem. We play football together, all the guys who are from 25 to 30 years old, who are all sportsmen, there is a club within the firm, they play, so we more or less meet in the club, we go places together, we do tournaments together, we represent the company, which mustn’t be forgotten. Indeed, last year there was 70 % of the senior team who were North Africans, who represented us, the company, it was in Marseille. I mean, it is an evolution, even if they’re “only” football players, they weren’t picked because they are North Africans, they were chosen

because they played better, but, we have never said: let's form a little clan, let's make up our own rules, we didn't fall into that trap because that would have been the worst thing to do. Everyone would have turned their backs at us.

/.../ (We didn't say) here it is guys, now that we're in the firm, we bond and we push...No. Each does his own work, and if we want to see each other, we know where to go but let's avoid...

This proclivity the minorities have to limit the demonstrations of ethnical bonds and of community feelings (restricted to the sphere of football where pride of co-ethnic's excellence can discretely be demonstrated) have to be resituated into the context of the firm characterized by a relatively massive irruption of outsiders into a particularly cohesive work environment.

You don't find this search for invisibility in firm number 3. On the contrary, in this situation, the minority workers, in particular those who are in the position of leading the union struggle, openly refer to their "community". Indeed, the context is very different. It is a special case because of the union fight and the legitimacy they've obtained by representing the collective of the workers. This legitimacy can be fulfilled with the constitution of a new trade union and with the election of union representatives where they would have an important role:

2019AM: So the tasks are going to be shared, and it'll be 50-50.

Q: Which means?

2019AM: 2006AM and me are from foreign background...Even if we're born here(...), but we will be representative of the whole of the staff.

2006AM: I know that the majority of the employees trust me, so they know that I take the right decisions, so to speak, at least I'll never tell them, well, I'll put twelve of my colleagues, also because it doesn't interest them either, there are people who are not interested you know?

Q: Twelve colleagues, you say?

2006AM: I'm not going to let in twelve North African delegates, just because there are twelve places, it wouldn't make sense, it would be an argument that the management wouldn't hesitate to exploit (Chauffeur of Moroccan origin. 28 years old, belongs to the CGT trade union)

Evoking the "50-50" doesn't mean opening up to a logic of quotas (that would have been more like 25-75) to insure the representativeness of the elected. It would rather be to underline the capacity and legitimacy minorities have to represent the staff, a capacity and legitimacy that the new leader of the local union embodies. At the same time, concerns about community membership and balance between groups are relevant here. As it is justified here, this concern could demonstrate a common sense, an aptitude to "take the right decisions", keeping a "sense of proportion", not to take advantage of the dominating part played by minority workers in the social struggle. However this situation occurs after a mobilization in which the minorities made use of the resource of the "community" in accounting for the positive outcome of the social conflict.

When the conflict became apparent I enormously insisted, along with all the people from my community, I said ' Oh, you have to be tough, you can't back out, one have to stick our neck out, show that...' because I had the answer and I know that such a conflict was going to lead to something else, I say that when it comes to integration even in the firm, to the atmosphere, to the relationship between employees, a conflict could be a good springboard, and I think that the conflict so to speak has permitted us to save 5 to 10 years" (Moroccan driver, 28 years, belongs to the CGT union)

The “community” is therefore evoked very directly. The mobilizing discourse finds its evidence without having to elaborate the content: referring to the “community”, is evoking a practical notion, “close to experience” and generally implicit which, here, indicates “the North African community”. In the process of mobilization, it allows not only to mark out, but to request a trusted solidarity. Neither this appeal nor this marking out are censored, so that it is clear that the integration of minorities in the collective of the workers, far from wanting to start a process of invisibilization, seeks to get recognition for their qualities, (though, they don’t back out, their solid...). On the other hand these qualities contribute to give them prestige in so far they participate in the success of the collective action. This way the reference to the community works as a strategy of integration, to get recognition for their true and sincere participation in the social struggle, in the work collective and in the firm as a whole.

Q: In (name of the city of the firm number two), there has been quite a lot of young people who have got integrated; But they don’t seem like a community, while here...

2006AM: Oh yes here it is..., it’s a reality, personally I’m not trying to say, well you have to integrate, go unnoticed, why be unnoticeable, you are who you are, we’re either young immigrants or old ones... Between the old and the young immigrants, things are difficult sometimes, but we do have a bond, and that’s not all, there are others. Portuguese, Serbs...

Q: So those last immigrants you were talking about, when you say “community” they’re nor included? Or are you talking about foreigners in general?

2006AM: Well, they are included and not included at the same time, I know that they are, that is I know that they, like us, have brought along with them something new...

Because of a question that draws attention to the usage of the notion of “community”, the speaker makes explicit what it implies in terms of visibility – we’re not trying to be invisible – and underlines the need of this notion to show the generational tie between the old north african immigrants and the young people from the same origin. He mentions however that this reference doesn’t exclude any national origin. Because of the researcher’s insistence on finding a criteria of definition, he is hesitant, which indicates that there is a variety of criteria, and finds a solution in a principle of inclusion, vague, but relevant in context : “those who have brought something new”. There again the importance of considerations linked to action and to a strategic aim is obvious. From that point of view, indeed, a need for a definition makes other cases appear (Serbs, Portuguese...) and with them come other criteria which can be less crucial than national origin, but remain nevertheless acceptable and understandable in a strategic aim. Thereby the advocacy of the collective bond provides a relevant resource to insure mobilization and to create an advantage in the collective action, more than it voices an expression of public identity.

The minorities’ strategic usage of membership categories that have a local pertinence, is shown, in firm number 3, through the usage of the term “*collègue*” (“colleague”) who will define inclusion and exclusion categories allowing the formulation of action perspectives and the designation of the parties involved, whether they be allies or adversaries.

- The term “*les collègues*”, (“the colleagues”), in this use, does not mean (as it would be expected according to the dictionnary) “those that work in the same company or firm”, but as it is frequently used in South of France, it means “those with whom one has a friendly relationship without it necessarily implying a personal relation, and on whom one can count” : a “us” category, transparent enough in context and most often left implicit (“North African

immigrants and their descendants”), but likely, if needed, to contain explicit but variable definitions, like we just saw.

- *“les autres collègues”*, (“the other colleagues”), this time following the definition in the dictionary “those who work in the same firm as you”, refers to the other employees, those with whom the in-group, can and must be on good terms with : a complementary outside group which is defined in reference to the whole set accountable by its participation in the movement. The distinction between these two categories is to be asserted according to relevant dimensions within the situation (the ability to struggle in this case)

- Lastly “those who are not our colleagues”, those with whom one does not get along, with whom one shares no sort of identification and with whom one has no relationship what so ever : an excluded outside group, that is, the managers and their allies, some of them “overt” racists.

This ability to define in turn categories as inclusive and exclusive, allows in the same time to assert and to put ethnical criteria into perspective. It is a discursive resource which is important to agency. It shows a perspective which is organized around a “us”, which thereby acquires a performative value : it backs up a group identity, it confers a certain density to the community references and makes them exist although they’re not explicit ideological elaborations. They are far away from what the debate around the “republican model” means by “community” and “communautarism”. This same speaker gives us a confirmation, since he rejects “communitarism” in a discursive context alluding to the discussions which, in the French public arena, deal with the “republican model” and its “crisis”.

2006AM: Yes, in X. there’s two or three little “snack-bars”, and I’m afraid this will end in “communitarism”.

Q: Which means...

2006AM: A “snack” for young persons from Y (a poor neighbourhood mainly inhabited by foreigners and persons from foreign origin). “come on guys let’s go to his place because it’s home...”I think that France will turn “communitarist”.

Q: And you wouldn’t like that?

2006AM: No, I’m against that...(…) if a community doesn’t feel integrated it’ll become closed, you can see that in other countries like England...

2. Due to the image of “integrists”, religion, especially Islam, awakes and epitomize the fear of “communautarism”. However, because religion gives a content to a otherwise dim and highly variable identity, the public expressions of cultural differences are eventually managed - stressing their acceptability and conformity - from this particular point of view.

But the more often, the thematic about Islam put forward arguments aiming to defend of a secular and laic company against the drifts of communautarism in a national and international context (September 11th, the war in Iraq, the debate around the chador) that exacerbates this question in public discourses. This can be noticed in all the firms studied. Particularly in the RATP, the question of religious practice is used to reinforce control of the newcomers, especially in the period of Ramadan :

“Ramadan ends at 5 pm. I know that there are workers who eat sandwiches. They get away with it without problems! But if a supervisor should notice and say ‘hey wait, you’re not allowed to eat while you’re driving, that’s forbidden’ it’ll be different. Because there are a lot of us eating while driving! Me too, when I’m really hungry! I know very well that it’s forbidden!” (leader of MRAP-RATP)

The fact that some drivers pray in their break time is also denounced.

Islam is also a subject of rumours to try to discredit those who oppose to racism by accusing them of passing everything on to the “Arabs”.

*“I’ve learned recently that in my depot, and I’ve heard it several times, there was going to be the creation of a prayer room. When one say: a room to pray, one means for the Muslims. It’s nor for everyone. But no Muslim has asked for it. This rumour has been going around for 3 or 4 years, and it comes back periodically.”
(manager of the CGT and the MRAP)”*

The unions don’t know or don’t want to discuss this question. That is the stance of this executive belonging to the union in firm number 2:

2021AM: They’re things which don’t please me, I’m less worried about the little boy who steals your bag than that... Well, here there’s never been... But when they were integrated, the bad thing we did was to give them the right to do the Ramadan, that was a mistake, when they entered the firm and became drivers they now said ‘might we ...’ I said no, because then I would have to give Christmas day to all the Catholics, and I have around 400 Catholics, that’s going to be a problem, and the Jewish holydays, there are Jews here as well, so no, you do it like everyone, here you work, when you come here, either you take off your caps or you go back where you came from. Twice they came complaining, what about the Ramadan, I said you work if you work during Ramadan. If you don’t work you do the Ramadan, like everyone, there are lots of religions present here ...

Q: The union has discussed this issue?

2021AM: No, he just answered when the question was asked, that’s all... They’re not so open to questions and discussions like that...

The lack of a clear position which would distanciate secular orthodoxy in order not to awake uncontrollable fears makes the way, nevertheless, for arrangements.

These arrangements are evoked by the unionist minority in firm number 2, in a speech parallelling the statement of the executive above:

2009AM: It’s a secular enterprise. We don’t say to the guys: you’re a Christian, you don’t work on Sundays. I don’t see why Ramadan should be arranged for you. Your dad did it on the working place, on the building site, you’re sitting driving, you’re not allowed to ask, I would be the first to say that you shouldn’t privilege the guys who do Ramadan (...). Well, but when I was a union representative I asked, it wasn’t a big thing, for a micro-wave oven in the waiting room, and I had asked MI favours, in stead of having a break at 4: 30pm, let’s have it at 6pm that way the guys can eat. I don’t do Ramadan, but it was a wish... It was accepted without any problems, they got the microwave, each person brought their food and they ate from 6pm to 6:30 pm. That, yes. It as if tomorrow, I say I have to bring my daughter to dance class every day. I’ll make a written request, and either it is accepted or it is refused It was the same thing. So, there’s no problem, everything went well. Then, there’s religion. It’s no longer a question of racism, it’s religion. We’re not going to ask a Israelite to work on day of forgiveness. It’s the same thing. He will say “I don’t work that day, I’ll ask for a day off”.

Moreover, in France, religion has for a long time worked as a cultural difference marker and it makes possible to signify the sense of belonging to a minority. From that point of view, “Muslims” is a designation that can be replaced by others - “North Africans”, “Arabs” - by which, beside the religious practice, one means a collective identity. Besides, religion constitute one of the fields where the attribution of individual rights (to practise the religion of your choice) have to compose with a public recognition of cultural difference and expressions

of identity, since it's inevitable to lay out at least some manifestations of cult in public space, and that the distinction private/public does not always apply obviously.

In the company context, initiatives from the majority try to present this cultural difference and to highlight a "symbolic"¹⁸ recognition of the presence of "Muslims" yet at risk to treat it as a folklore. The latter, says E. Benbassa¹⁹, seems to be, in France, one of the conditions that makes religion tolerable when this one is perceived, as Islam, in direct concurrence with Secularism and Christianity. It is the case with the institution, very recent, of the "Christmas basket" which became the "Muslim basket", that we encountered in 3 out of the 4 visited sites.

The main goal is to make the gift of the works council available to all. Furthermore, this innovation is supposed to leave a place to practises that are different from the majority ones. But those intentions show all the ambiguities singled out *supra* : is it all about satisfying a religious need, struggling against a discrimination risk or establishing the management of a minority identity in accordance with dominant representations and which risks to fail its target?

For this union officer, the failure of this initiative is sufficient to show that it is not justified, and a proof of bad faith from "those who complain". Unless the complainers have been very numerous, we can rather infer that in reality, in his mind the "Muslim basket" had to leave a little choice to those who he identifies as "Muslim", whatever their religiosity is :

2017 AM : There is a new thing this year, we chose, in the gifts distribution process, to offer one without alcohol. And even better, Halal.

Q : It's the works council, isn't it?

2017 AM : Yes it is. Given that they are supposed to enjoy the gift, it's better. During many years we were in the mud but finally we realise that concerning these claims, there are many phoneyes. From a religious point of view, we offer a first quality basket, with halal products. But the one who said : I shall take it, looked at it and said " hey!, there is no alcohol, I don't want it"...and that's that. We gave 75 parcels on a total of 3200

Q : Who decided that? Was it a proposition?

2017 AM : Each year, there were people complaining so we did it.

In company n°1, a young employee analyses his dissatisfaction regarding the "Muslim basket" and emphasizes ambiguities mentioned above. He sees in it a false recognition of his identity which is grounded on a stereotype who doesn't pay attention to his real identity ("I'm young and I happen to drink").

2013 AM : "Muslim", it's somebody who is practicing. Why do they make Muslims parcels? I am young, Sometimes I drink when I'm with my friends, I wouldn't have minded to have a bottle of wine in my stuff. "Muslim Parcel", what does it mean? Only chocolate, is that it?

Q : Does it mean that you took the Muslim parcel?

2013 Am : Of course I did, they told me, here it's for you. Here is your "Muslim parcel", they didn't give me any choice. Not at all. Now I really think they took things from a parcel to put them in another one, they took candies and chocolate...so I gave it to my mother.

¹⁸ Of course, « symbolic » here, could mean « at minimum fees »

¹⁹ Esther Benbassa, the republic faced to its minorities, Jewish yesterday, Muslims today, Paris, Mille et une nuits editions, 2004 , pp.83-90

Q : They supposed, without asking you, that you didn't drink alcohol, right?

2013 AM : But to them, Muslim means Arab anyway. They make no difference between the two. A Muslim is someone practising! He can be Arab, French, Jewish, Spanish, or whatever. They thought they did something good, but it doesn't matter, I do not criticize them. But you know, don't call it a "Muslim parcel".

In company n°3, transformations regarding the “Muslim basket” of the work council, lead to a major change. An initial version, called “Muslim basket” (“syrup instead of wine, no pork, but there was turkey”) has first been modified to correspond to “Muslim” (Halal meat) to end up called “oriental basket”, so that even Christians could chose it :

2019 AM : We said “who wants an ‘oriental basket?’”. It sounded better! And even some Christians registered. And now everybody wants these baskets. It is said that we tend not to accept critics regarding our religion. And we like to show that it's not true, that we also can take the things with the fun.

This final version called “oriental basket” dissociates the cultural content from identity. The choice to secularise its name is a reminder that it is a mundane object after all. This change of register (“the fun”) allows to play with ethnic stereotypes and not to be exactly where one is expected to be : not only Christians can prefer this basket but “Muslims”, or assumed Muslims, can prove that their religious attitudes are unlike those attributed to them by those who are prejudiced, they “can take these things with the fun” as well.

Experience among fellow workers

In the majority of the interviews, the opening of transport companies to young people from foreign background is described as a phenomenon which brought about a transformation of the expressions of racism, generally towards an improvement, at least in appearance, of the situation. The narratives are thus constructed on a distinction between two periods, usually expressed by terms such as “at the beginning” and “now”, eg. “*At the beginning, perhaps there was 100% hostility, at the end it was 20% hostility and 80% were above it, so that helped*” (2003AM). There are several reasons behind these changes which are more or less linked to the local history of the companies. This is notably the case for company n°3 in which the question of general atmosphere improvements was closely associated with the role played by the young minority recruits coming from difficult neighbourhood in the triggering and the positive outcome of a conflict that gave rise to the adoption of a collective agreement more favourable for employees. Within company n°2, the reason that was often mentioned is that employees became used to the presence of minority workers and that this invalidated the stereotypes concerning them:

2003AM: Well, at the beginning it was tough because there had been a new kind of recruitment, the “youth employment program”, we were from the “difficult” districts, we had different origins and so, at the beginning it was tough, then, the drivers like all the employees in the workplace, everyone did his share and then, it was ok, they saw we, too, were there to work, to integrate, and to be promoted too... so it lasted about one month, the time needed for everyone to get to know the others and then it was ok...

Another reason concerns the departure of the senior generations of employees, described as more openly hostile, more subject to political racism theses, and the arrival of the new generations seen as less “hostile”, more open to dialogue, to the confrontation of points of view, to the case by case discussion over problems that some youngsters from immigrant background created in the districts:

3003AM: *“Before, there were lots of seniors, lots of old people with an old-fashioned mentality, with old-fashioned preconceived ideas, and so now there are a lot of retirements and so young people entered the company and we get along better together with the young people than with the old people before....”*

However, this perception of changes in the behaviour in work relations does not prevent 1) the occurring of forms of hostility even if only occasionally; 2) the emergence or development in everyday practices of more insidious forms of racism. This is what a member of the MRAP-RATP meant when underlying on one hand the evolution of the practices, due to a change of the normative frame which condemn what was authorized or tolerated in the past (*“people, today, cannot admit or officially confess they are racist”*) and, on another hand, that these more insidious practices introduce a certain uncertainty : *“there is no overt and neat discrimination. There is no overt and neat racism juridically condemnable. There are a lot of little things that make people feel it, or at least feel victims, but that...is not neat”* (2007AM)

In this context, the manifestations of hostility in the workplace often take the form of exceptional cases related in detail. They present events which call for a particular type of actions and reactions, like for instance, turning a racist aggression into a personal matter rather than opting for hierarchy or trade union intervention:

Q: at a union level, do you think trade unions should do something particular in matters of discrimination and racism within the company?

2005AM: *not, at this level not at all...no, because what do you think they can do, they can do nothing, for example if someone tells me anything, I will answer straight away, of course I take risks, but that's a thing I cannot tolerate, especially for my self-esteem...if there's a racism problem, I want to do with it by myself, I don't want a union representative or anyone else to come and do with it...*

In some cases, there is a long debate over the two options, like, for instance, when a ticket collector hired by the youth employment program tell the « problem » he encountered once with a driver:

2004AM: *I had a problem with a driver, when I began as an “emploi jeune”, we were inspecting tickets just there at X (name of the district), so we get on the bus with the team, we inspect...(…) I am about to get off and say goodbye to the driver, when I suddenly hear « oh, R (the chief inspector), you take your team of Arabs, your “bougnoles” out of the bus »*

What is from then clearly identified as a racist event introduces a break in the usual context in which the speaker normally evolves. Saying *« then you become a mere human being, even if you're of a cool ,calm and cold-headed nature, but there's a moment... »* he defines the limits of the frame of the usual expectations from a « security » agent, and announce a kind of reaction you can have *« as a human being »* this time, and which is well summarized by the expression: *« I got out of myself! I ran over him, someone held me back, but I wanted to eat him, that was all... »*.

From the moment when the impulsive reaction has failed (*« someone held me back »*), he defines the terms of an alternative as for the type of answer to give to the event. Such as it was formulated, the alternative is composed of two possible options: one consists in getting off the bus and wait for the driver at the terminus to punch him, and the other would lead the plaintiff to pass through the hierarchy to obtain a compensation. The two options are both discussed several times in his report of the facts, though they refer to two clearly distinct normative universes, *ie* that which organizes the action in the street life universe in which young people from popular classes evolve and which is based on a code of honour that obliges the victim of a public offence to obtain compensation by physical confrontation; and that which takes place

in the professional universe and that requires the victim of such an offence to go through the proceedings foreseen by the law. In the first case, as he says, « *you do away with your problem in a normal way, let's say naturally* ». Here, the use of the term « normal » comes to express the fact that his immediate preference went to this kind of reaction. This is also what expresses the reformulation he made for the two options: « *whether you do that, it's instinct, or you take a deep breath, you stay cool and you ask yourself, what is the second option?* ».

Besides these cases in which definition of the situation as “racist” can be taken for granted, other ones, of more ambiguous kind, require to know if the facts can be seen or not as expressions of racism:

2005AM: Some drivers, I think they are two-faced persons, there's a lot of everything, and that's normal too, there are some, you know they don't like Arabic people, but sometimes that's what you think but you're wrong, so you quickly change your mind... it's true there are some people like them, but frankly, these don't say it in front of you.

Most of the time, the interviewees say they can identify behaviours or attitudes of a racist type (“*We know who's who. We know the guy shakes your hand, but as soon as you turn your back, if the man can cause you downfall, he'll do it. And we know this other guy is a good one, but that's something you learn*” 2009AM). Thus, one of the acquired abilities of the potential victims of racism consists in spotting the clues that enable them to unmask certain expressions of racism. The victims know better than other people how to perceive the cues, so the concealing of racist feelings, far than calming down their anger, arouse it, this is particularly the case for the “jeunes des quartiers” who are more used to situations of physical confrontation in which the feelings are openly expressed. This tickets collector explains how particular deeds, like the fact some people do not respect the usual salutations forms, are generally ill-experienced by young new recruits and how one of his friends and himself reacted to it:

2021AM: They can't get used to it. Because they find it tough, they are stared at, there are some people who shake your hand with one finger only. When they do it to me, I grab their hand and pull them forth. I tell them " you don't shake my hand, if you want, I still prefer". I respect the guy who comes and tells me "I don't like North Africans, that's all". I respect him and that's it. Because the guy dares to tell me what he thinks. If tomorrow I have to say I don't like a race, I will do it. There's no race that bothers me, from animals to human beings, I like everyone.

Q: in those shaking hands plays, is it a covert form of racism? Is it wide-spread?

2021AM: It is. There are some people when I meet them, their arms are loaded down and they hold out their elbow, I see it. But when I come and put my satchel down, I hold out my right hand and them their left one, then it drives me mad. The next day I wave hello from a distance and they understand. Last time, I was in the work place with a friend of mine, the driver had nothing in his hands. My friend put his satchel before me and shakes his hand, the other held out his elbow: my friend insulted him in front of everybody and the driver felt bad, he was even more racist, surely!! So he insulted him...

In the next extract, the same collector describes in a more detailed way one of the snubs he had to face, again concerning the non-respect of salutations rituals. After having described the facts and the context as well as the impulsive reaction he had, he re-asserts his preference for overt expressions of rejection he says being more able to understand and accept. The thing is, as he insinuated all along the interview, in the social environment from which he comes, the one who overtly asserts the contempt he has for one person or one category of people is more respectable than the one who does not dare to clearly assert his opinion. As he states at the

end of the extract, it is even possible to find an excuse to that man by explaining the attitude he has towards the young people from north african background (here reproduced with the use of “us”) and by linking it to potential incidents he could have had in his youth:

2021AM: When we inspect a bus, two of us get on by the back door, two others get on by the front, and one or two by the mid-door. Once, I got on to shake the driver's hand but the man did not open his window, in front of everybody. I can tell, everyone stared at me, what a shame, I tell you!! "I don't shake your hand". I punched the window, I wanted to hurt him. I was on the break. What would be fine, is to have him in front of me and telling me : "listen, I don't like you", and it's okay. And there, I will respect the guy even more than another who doesn't show it. Because he was frank, I will respect his opinion: he doesn't like us and that's all. It's like that! It's not because the man doesn't like us that I'm going to hate him! Maybe the man has been attacked many times in his youth or whatever, he won't change...

Faced with this type of expressions of racism, the answers daily given by those who are in a minority position depend on individual self-protection tactics. These can take different forms whether they consist in showing indifference towards racism or whether they tend to minimize it, or even whether they consist in adopting strategies to avoid those who can be identified as racist or, on the opposite in countering stereotypes by resorting to anti-racist arguments.

The display of indifference towards racist words or behaviours refers to two types of attitudes. The first consists in acting like if they did not hurt the persons targeted (“*the drivers, be they racist or not, I don't care... they do their job, I do mine...*” 2013AM) whether they do not bother them (“*Personally, it doesn't affect my job, I know at the end of the month I earn a living like everyone, I raise my kid, racism doesn't bother me...*” 2021AM), whether they don't prevent them from doing their job (“*We don't fall into the net... you just have to ignore them and do your job, that's all...*” 2023AM).

The second reaction consists in turning the contempt back in those who are identified as racists by underlying the weakness of character (their bloody stupidity) that lead them to be so:

2009AM: There are still some looks, but we don't pay great attention anymore, we don't say “the man's a bugger, he's a fascist, we're gonna fight him”. No, he's a fascist, we let him for what he is. Anyway the man won't evolve, we didn't help him evolve, neither did the man before, nor will the next, he will end his life like that.

One can also minimize the expressions of racism by emphasizing the small proportion of “*bloody idiots...*” in the company (“*out of 800 drivers, there are maybe about 10 bloody idiots...*” or even by emphasizing the number of “*good guys*” in the company (*But, no need to make general statements, there are many good people*)

Another way consists in minimizing the degrading impact of racist insults by handling them as mere jokes, this allows to reverse the unequal relation and to put the racist himself in the position of being “*racised*” (“*you are a "pied noir"⁸*”)

2010AM: we used to laugh, now they know me. We would laugh on... “oh! You're Arabic!” but we were joking. I took it for what it was and I laughed with them. Sometimes we made fun of each other “you are a "pied noir"”. I am Tunisian, he's a “pied noir” from Algeria”. We laughed! Sometimes I was the target, but I took them as targets too. All while keeping smiling.

⁸ Expression used to indicate the French returnees from North Africa.

Another individual tactic consists in avoiding any kind of contact with people identified as potentially racist, as it is the case for the young driver from north african background in the extract that follows:

2005AM: In fact, this driver is known in the company as a racist... I've heard he's racist, so I don't shake his hand when I see him, he doesn't shake my hand too, we avoid each other...

When confronted to individuals identified as racist, some of the interviewees try to avoid the escalation by using humour as a protection ("if, for instance, one says" look, there are 50% of Arabs now on the list" I reply "tomorrow we'll be 75% !" [...] I think answering aggressively is useless. You don't have to follow the person where he wants to get you. Because, when you're in front of those people, this is escalation. And you don't have to answer by escalation, but without letting the guy degrade you! Because if you let him, it's worse!" 2025AW). Some others, on the contrary think that joke relationships can contribute to institute a racist inequalitarian relationship and refuse to let them systematically take place:

2024AM: With the drivers, there's no problem. Absolutely none... Yes, some jokes, sometimes. Jokes may turn bad. But I don't let people do. Alright, you make one joke or so, but then it's enough. I tell them directly.

Other reactions consist in showing an individual hyper correctness in order to invalidate ethnic stereotypes:

2023AM: To make people understand we are all different, I do the opposite. I'm nice, I'm more attainable (if a man wants to shift schedules with me, I do it). I want to show them we are not all scraping or fundamentalists. We're like everybody. That's the way to change mentalities... Once one told me "you're not the same, you're a good Arab" I told him "why are you saying that? It gets on my nerves when someone says that"... I'm nice in every day life, but there, I try to be nice even more to show them we're not all the same.

Eventually, another way of trying to influence the racist people consists in resorting to antiracist education. In this case, the goal is not to change the image of minorities, but to make the practical demonstration of the absurdity, inefficiency and incoherence of the racist way of thinking which, if applied, risks to overturn against the very people who stick to it:

2023AM: Once, on the very morning, I catch a guy who was saying : "The "Bicots"⁹ and all that". I told him "why are you talking like that? You have no respect, we wear the same uniform, you and me, we do the same job. I'm often downtown and if one day I see you in trouble with a guy, I'll be there to help you. So don't talk like that". Since then, he doesn't speak like that anymore.

Experience of management/supervision

The widening of hiring opportunities in the transports sector was perceived by the minorities as a rare opportunity, even a surprising one, to practise a profession which was not accessible to them most of the time. "They were looking for drivers, I applied for the job and, to my big surprise I must say, I was hired. We were all welcome" (2006AM).

In company n°3, the chronic need for work force and the widening of hiring that resulted from it engendered, in a short amount of time, the presence of a quarter of foreigners or workers from foreign background in the total staff of the company. However, the interviewed

⁹ Very insulting term to say North African person.

minorities members underline that they work for a company which “the others” don't want to work for or do no more. *“so, then, they hired people from all nationalities...there was no discrimination but it was under the number”* (2006AM). According to this person, experience has proved that chances of being hired in this sector in the labour market area are still burdened with a discrimination aiming at protecting the “well-paid” jobs. *“when I entered the company I realised that the well-paid jobs are less accessible, you don't have to wonder why”*.

The ongoing restructuring process lead locally to a dualistic labour market for the same job. Thus, the discrimination because of the origins finds its expression in an unequal assignation in companies according to the differences in wages and working conditions. In addition to this discriminative logic of the hiring on a dualistic labour market, we can find inside this company a specific segregative process that tends to assign drivers from north african background to the routes serving difficult districts :

When I entered the company, there were about 4 people who can be called "issus de l'immigration" (born from immigrants parents), they were 4 or 5, and they were rather old people. And then suddenly, there were a lot, especially on the V. network (an area). It's for the best for our community, but, on the other hand, it's not a good thing, because they post them all to V., even the customers say "hey, what's this? All the drivers now are..." you see what I mean? In a sense I'm glad to see my fellows working. It's a good thing because it shows that we are able to do any kind of job. Okay, it's not an extraordinary job, but still it's good. In the past, there were so many restrictions that they could not even work in this sector. During my youth, there were none of them. So now we are all confined to V. and to A. none of us... Listen, the new recruits, you go here, you go there, it's always the same thing. You, OK, you can drive on A. The others, when they came from time to time, they worked on V. "oh no! there are problems there, I don't want to work there..." so, they were allocated to A.

In another, bigger network, the segregation consisting in the allocation of the youngs from foreign background to routes serving “difficult” areas is reinforced by the fact that the depot these buses are coming from is stigmatized as the worplace of “the Arabs”: *“When we hear a conversation between the superiors before coming into an office and they say "it's okay, it's the Melon' depot [...]" or when we hear the others say “oh my god, you're going to the Arabs”* (2018AM). Meanwhile, this segregative logic is not only imposed to, but also assumed by the drivers from foreign origin who, on their side, find in this assignement a way of escaping racism they are victim of in mixed work relationships:

2018AM: Some people chose to work in N. because when they worked in an other depot, there were some talks that bothered them... I was on R. but when they told me to work in N., I was relieved... Because when I entered the rest room to have a coffee and I heard things like "they are bugging us, those bloody Melons" or things like...I don't know, I've heard so many things of the kind... [...] Working in such a context becomes hard... So, it's normal you want to go elsewhere, that's all.

In companies 1 and 2, where the minority workers enter the firm through the youth employment program, the differences of treatment between majority and minority groups are expressed by the opposition between the *“jeunes des quartiers”* and the employees' children or relatives (referred to by expressions like *“the kids of Pierre, Paul or Jacques ”*, *“the sons of so-and-so”*, *“the nephew of so-and-so”*).

2002AW: We, the young who were hired in the company, we had to prove by our work, by our seriousness that, you see what I mean..., to integrate the company. That the kids of Pierre, Paul or Jacques, they come... till now it's always the same, the kids of Pierre, Paul or Jacques they are privileged, they score good marks, they

are promoted. And the others, us, we have to work hard, we have to work very hard to prove we are able, we only succeed by our work.

As these differences of treatment are described, they consist especially, as mentioned above, in requiring more from those who “are less¹⁰”, either because some benefit from “privileges” while others don’t, or because the latter have to overcome the negative stereotypes and prove more than the former their abilities and motivation: “*it’s a struggle, unfortunately you have to prove yourself twice as much as anywhere else when you are an immigrant, but you have to do it...*”(2006AM). “*Doing more than others*”, it can also mean refraining oneself to demand one’s rights, such as sick leave:

2013AM : Actually, I’m in a probationary period. The others didn’t go through this, but I did. I have to behave well. If tomorrow I am sick, I still have to come.

Q : They ask more from you, don’t they?

2013AM : If I’m sick tomorrow I have to come, and if I don’t, they’ll say : that’s it..

Moreover, this kind of incitement not to use one’s rights can be interpreted as a way of stressing the exceptional nature of the presence of the youngs from the young employment program in the company. This is a well-known process in recruitment situations during recession periods. It consists in getting applicants to take, given the hard times, the working conditions as they come, and to feel happy to get a job at all. The applicant is therefore in a situation where claiming his or her rights (paid holidays, overtime, etc.) constitutes a misplaced demand :

2013AM : On that day, I was called in about because someone was said to be absent... So I replaced someone, I worked overtime, and when I called saying “I think you haven’t paid my overtime, they answered that I was brazen for having demanded overtime, and yet, I did those hours. They said I was brazen, that’s what they said, the very word.

Another difference of treatment often denounced consists in granting a lower tolerance of professional misconducts to these employees than to the others :

“There is you and there is me, you are going to fail, but it’s ok, we are going to make it be fine. But if I fail, they’re gonna make a fuss...”(2004AM)

“It’s like justice : for us, it has two speeds, two faces...”(2013AM)

“Some come without the appropriate clothing and they never say nothing, as for you, you have the right clothing and everything, but they are still going to look if you put your tie the right way, your shirt, the big coat, as some never wear them, and won’t get any remarks”(2013AM).

We can’t do faults as other can. There is one who comes late, pfff ! It’s serious, 30 and 40 minutes late every day ! But despite this, he still have got his employment contract, even if he was late... some times he comes and forget his bus cashier. If it was me who forgot my bus cashier ! Believe me ! (2013AM)

This is a form of discrimination particularly insidious and therefore difficult to denounce since it’s hidden under the strict enforcement of the rules.

The same types of discriminations can be observed in the RATP :

2008AM : (...) There has been an important influx of “jeunes issus de l’immigration” (...) But these new recruitments happened with difficulties. And as

¹⁰ As Guillaumin writes, « Minority groups define themselves by their state of dependence to the majority. They are, in a state of minority. Minority : be less” (Guillaumin Colette, L’idéologie raciste, Paris-La Haye, Mouton, 1972, p 86.

the staff representative, on the first year, I had to take part in almost 40 disciplinary procedures, 37 or 38 of which were 'jeunes issus de l'immigration'.

Q : What happened?

2008AM : Line bosses had prejudices. If an agent made mistakes such as driving while making a phone call, it was not important, but if a minority worker did so, it became really serious. I even heard in the staff room a guy from the management saying " that's enough. There are too many".

This daily treatment difference is clearly perceived by the victims who more or less accept it :

2007AM : These are rather daily concerns. The guy's going to say "oh yes, you always leave 10 minutes late", and everybody does that but he's the only one who's going to be noticed. And he knows that... that's what it's difficult to accept.

Minority workers often complain about discriminations in advancement as well. Here again, they use the distinction between "staff's child" and "jeunes des quartiers" to account for the discriminating practices consisting either in "impeding" certain categories of workers or in supporting others :

Q : How are the points distributed? Are they distributed or is it automatic?

2002 AW : Well, they're distributed but not to the new ticket collectors yet, unless they have their driving license. Now they ask us to be versatile and make everybody take their driving license. By the way, two ticket collectors are replacing bus drivers. And from then, the quota increases, we started at 190 and reach 200. But if you're not versatile you remain at 190, unless your father works in the firm and then you can reach 200. Even a young girl who started in the intervention squad about a year and a half ago is at 200. In fact, they give the points to whoever they like, that's all.

For these minority workers, the experience of discrimination means also to be exposed to the consequences of its denunciation. Not "letting go by" and make these differences become a problematic matter in the firm (by denouncing) risks to expose oneself to an increasing hostility, adding to the unfairness of the difference of treatment. As a young employee says, "It's not good to compare yourself with others, it can make you be even less appreciated" (2013 AM).

According to some of our interviewees, the discrimination process consists in two steps. On the one hand, companies recruit some youngs from foreign origin to "reach the quota" (2016AM), so that discrimination in hiring is not obvious. On the other hand, they make the less docile ones undergo moral pressures and tend to replace them with "18-year old youngsters who never complain about anything".

In the RATP network, the concern of the management with the racism issue and the presence of a union officer from an North African background, have both contributed to alleviate the disciplinary harassment applied by a large part of the supervision :

2008AM : I think that unionism greatly helped : especially for X [depot]. The fact that I've been involved in the union really helped. They had problems and they knew who could resolve them. So they came and talked with me, using the law to make things being respected. That's why 40 out of 60 are minority workers. This have been helpful to avoid problems.

The relationship with supervisors is very important, because it has an impact on career evolution. The possibilities of an evolving career among machinists are rare. And we know that accessing other jobs largely depends on supervisors appreciations :

2008AM : There are various jobs accessible depending on your career development. The more it is slowed down, the less chances you'll have to access these jobs. But all the "jeunes issus de l'immigration" are left behind! None of them became a chief.

Officially, the youngs have been distributed, randomly, in the various depots which have a large management autonomy margin since 1991 Christian Blanc presidency, when there was a decentralization of the service organization, from the central management to various operating centres. So the situation in the depots is unstable. Depending on the localization, the work is more or less hard (clientele type, schedules...) and the proportion of "jeunes issus de l'immigration" also varies. If our interviewees agree to estimate it up to 10% of the drivers, they also agree to say that they are unequally distributed. Without being equivalent to the segregative process like the one we described in the Marseilles situation (which is seriously denounced by the unionists), it seems that in certain centres of the Northern district, this percentage is rather 30% than 10%. According to a national union officer, the RATP would have submitted the permanent recruitment of some youngs hired as "grands frères" to their settlement in the depots serving their own districts:

2027AM : "Following our actions, some have been hired at the RATP as bus drivers under some conditions, one of which was to remain in their depot. This condition, of course, applied only to them. It wasn't written, as it was illegal.". Adding that "the firm tries to make bus drivers work in their districts". This is a form of discrimination"..

Moreover, there are also some possibilities of internal segregation depending on the bus routes, the schedules, etc., since redeployments are determined upon seniority, so the last arrived are the worst placed. That's how in the depot X, a "refuge" line built up, also called "National Front line", where seniors gathered, and among them were CFDT machinists, which is embarrassing for this trade union:

2008AM: "I'm not going to call them fascists! They are rather nostalgic of the past, of the RATP family and everything. It's difficult for them to adapt to these changes. Because there is also the population change in the staff but also in terms of work, productivity... Many things changed".

Experience among trade unionists

To begin with, accessing more important jobs for the minority trade unionists is really hard, as explained this machinist staff representative of the depot X of the RATP :

2008 AM : When I took my card and I started to put myself on the CDFT lists, some agents quit because they couldn't stand an "Arab" being appointed! That's what I heard! I even had agents who refused me coming with them for a disciplinary interview... or when they had a sanction, they said it was the "Arab's fault".

Racist reactions combine with the bureaucratisation phenomenon of the union functions to limit the rotation of elective jobs. Although the CGT and CFDT officers we met highlight the necessity of "opening to young people" (CFDT) or presenting lists at professional elections that "represent the employees of the company" (CGT), it seems that the implementation of these orientations is globally limited and very unstable depending on the work places.

Beyond the "official" anti racist position of union organizations, local unionists pay more or less attention to discrimination matters, depending on the context. We are going to examine

a case because it shows the reticence of the unionists regarding racists matters, which can help to justify a discriminatory situation that leaves minorities powerless.

This company can appear as the most opened (or rather the less closed) to minorities which some members have been present for a long time among the union structure and the firm supervision staff. The odd thing is that it is in this particular context that unionists tend the most to minimize the existence of racism and discrimination on the workplace, starting with the two minority members who hold high position in the company (a North African staff representative and a woman senior manager from North African origin).

According to Mr X, for long the only member of a minority group in the firm, “there is nothing to say about that”. He is very glad of its full integration in the company (*“Everybody is satisfied with my work... When they see me it’s over! It seems like I’m a god to them. Never any problems”*), which he attributes to his employee qualities (*“I’ve been working in the firm since 14 years, I’ve never been absent, not even ill*), and which he thinks is an example for youngsters from North Africa : *“That’s why I tell them : look how I am, I go to the boss office, I knock at the door, I come in, whenever I like, I come in and I chat... We try... But they are narrow-minded”*. For Mr. X, the racism matter does exist only for those who don’t know how to avoid conflicts, who have no “diplomacy”, which he has : *“sometimes, you have to remain silent...”*; *“I’m doing a service to everybody”*; *“even if someone is going to say... I don’t pay attention”*; *“ I’m not a spiteful person”*.

The other minority member integrated since several years in the company (a young woman from North Africa, 38 years old, member of the managerial staff) attributes her good integration to her know-how : to intervene *“when people are exaggerating”*, without *“feeling persecuted”*; *“knowing how to respond to racists, without being aggressive, but showing we are smarter than them”*.

Like Mr. X, Miss Y uses her personal experience (*I was very well integrated*) to disprove the existence of discriminating practices, although this general sense of satisfaction was tempered by allusive remarks like *“ Despite the fact that...some use certain terms...”*, or *“ this doesn’t mean that I haven’t seen or heard things”*

The trade union activists of the majority group, express, on the contrary, the minimalization through a specific discursive structure consisting in insisting on nuances that can temper the undoubtable truth of the racist phenomenon.

That’s how the expression *“don’t close your eyes”* came to be used frequently and rhetorically like a concession that allows, once said, the production of nuanced correctives, introduced by phrases like *“ Now, this being said...”*

For example:

2015AM: To say that we haven’t got any racists within the firm, would be to close your eyes/.../ now... in the firm...

2015AM (L1) : It’s true that there are racists in the firm, you can’t close your eyes on it. Now, it’s not the majority

Whether expressed by native French people or integrated minorities, the denial is based on a personal assessment (I don’t think) in which the speakers often refers to their beliefs (frankly, honestly...), their experiences and senses (seeing, hearing)

For example:

I’ve worked for two years on the quay, I’ve been around the drivers every day, and frankly I haven’t heard any of that, you don’t hear that kind of thing.

The “quays” mentioned here being precisely those where a racist incident that no one can ignore recently took place, we can see that the value of this negative “testimony” (I haven’t heard any of that) is not to relate a fact, but to deprive of its general validity the positive testimony concerning a specific event reported by members of a minority.

This statement, apparently harmless, replaced within the context, provides an extreme case of the difficulty of the “proof” exercise for the person who thinks to have actually been victim of racism. This is an extreme case, because here it is not the reliability of the testimony as a proof that is in question, it’s the fact itself that there is something to be proven by a narrated description of an experience.

A personal statement presented as a negative testimony represents only one of several forms of denial in the firm. The reality around racism can also be questioned by attributing problems that minorities have to other characteristics than his/her race.

For example:

2025 AM: The problem does not exclusively concern people of foreign origin: these people react the same way with all the drivers, they don’t make the distinction.

2015 AM: A black man had been attacked, but for me it wasn’t about race...I think it could have happened to anyone.

Another typical minimizing procedure consists in attributing to the discriminated a symmetrical prejudice towards a category of workers who, inspite of being defined by everything but race, is described as a victim of pseudo-racism.

There was a little tension, a bit of jealousy among the young ones, because it was the “boss’s nephew”. In that sense it was a form of racism.

This tendency of the local trade unionists to minimize the presence of racism in the work environment comes in contrast with the sensitivity of complaints about racism and discrimination by minorities. This contrast enables an interpretation of racism as being a form of paranoia, which, if not specific to this work environment, is in this case like a interpretative sheme that everybody refer to, either to reinforce it or to contest it.

The labelling of the minorities as “paranoid” is one of the most subtle demonstration of their stigmatization. Saying that the discriminated has a defective comprehension of reality breeds doubt in him/herself, and the uncertainty of what is the good interpretation, makes the problem perpetually insolvable: “*how to know, you wouldn’t know about racism, how could you know, it’s eating me away, why? Why?*”; “*I think too much, and you can’t make it that way, if you suspect everyone you go crazy. I close my mouth, I don’t say anything, because...If I think too much about it, I’ll end up thinking only of him. But if I’m not 100% sure I don’t say anything... It could be paranoia, I feel that...I’m not sure...*”

The permanent menace that the labelling of paranoia represents also constitutes a particularly strong social pressure. To hang on to a “racist” interpretation of the situation is like entering a vicious circle of the “stubborn ones”, who discourage the good will of the union delegates, and who are kept at distance from the fellow minorities who know when not to think too much about it. The labelling as paranoid or the one who “ plays the victim” is not only the majority’s doing, it is frequently used by the minorities’ members who have succeeded, in order to distinguish themselves from those who have no other option than to use racism as an excuse for their failure. This is the case with this 38 years old staff delegate of the RATP, who uses this example to emphasize the difference between two “generations” of North Africans : one (his own) forged in activism and the fight for citizenship, the other

“softened by the easy years of Mitterand” who use the racist argument as an excuse instead of fighting for their rights:

However, the young generation of immigrants often victimize themselves. They see a lot of racism, everything is racism to them: They see that...they've chosen this mode of struggle, and as soon as there is an obstacle in their way it's...: they justify a failure with that. And that surprises me. Right away it's: Oh, they're racist, if he did that, it's because...when most of the time the reason is not racism. That's what I find negative about the RATP. The way they always use racism as an easy way out.

In the company n° 1, the “generation” difference is also frequently evoked to explain the differences of behaviour facing racism, but in another sense. The generation opposed to the “jeunes des quartiers” who recently got jobs through the Youth Employment Program, is their parents’ one, their fathers who were immigrant workers “from the first generation” to whom they associate the image of the “docile workman” (called “the ewe” or “the mule”, “one tells him it’s a desk, he says it’s a desk”), heartily accepting his condition (“gull”, “nice guy”). They can recognize these characteristic features among the old immigrants still present in the company, who perpetuate this humiliating memory (“those people are like our parents, they are mules”, “they work during the worse week-ends”).

For those young people, caught, as Beaud and Pialoux point out, between a non-assumed workman inheritance and a colonial inheritance scarred by the memory of the over-exploitation and by the humiliation and the scorn that their parents underwent, the issue of racism is indissociable from the immigrants’ working conditions and their own possible maintenance in this condition. Accepting to put sideway the racism suspicion (“never get obstinate”, “pass over”) to defend oneself from being accused of paranoia, means for them to accept injustice (give up trying to make people admit “that one was not at fault”), and makes another suspicion uprise : which is thus to conform with the immigrant’s expected behaviour (“saying amen to everything”, “being a good Arab”) and to become an accomplice of one’s unworthiness as a worker.

Behind the crossed accusations of complicity to discrimination and paranoia that characterize the relationships in this company between the trade unionists and the “jeunes des quartiers”, here are in fact two standards of justice which clash :

- One, supported by the proper origins of the representatives (from North-African or Italian origin) that carved out their place in the company, situates the right recognition of the immigrants’ place in the society, in the progressive way to the status equalization, confirmed by their possible access to jobs that were not open to them before. In this pragmatic vision, above all interested by the result (being integrated) the minority must obviously do the main part of the job to pacify inter-ethnic relations (turning a blind eye on the “doubtful” practices, accepting to “pass over”, arranging so that “things do not aggravate”, etc...)

- The other one, on the basis of which some identities are built and legitimized such as the “rebel” ones, situates the right recognition of the minority in the dignity that is granted to him (compared to the indignity made to the father). What characterizes the rebel is his moral requirement : the will to make prevail over any other consideration (even his own material interests) the moral recognition of his good right, makes them strongly resist (to their detriment) to unionists pressure aiming at getting from them more flexibility. In this vision, even the improving of the professional situation which are sometimes obtained thanks to the representatives’ efforts to “make things better, is considered as a submission bonus.

One tells me I'm working better, the only thing that has changed in my work is that I moan less than I used to, I am less asking : why them and not me?

If the relationships between trade-unionists and the young “rebels” often seem to be a dialogue of the deaf, it’s that the way the representatives defend them and try to “make things better” typically represents for those young people a demonstration of the shameful treatment they consider to be subjected to. Without being discriminatory in itself, it is a fact that unionist practices towards the minority groups are discriminatory, because they refuse to grant a public credit to the hypothesis of racism and discrimination in the explanation of treatment inequalities and their repair.

This strategy which denies racism is underlain by the idea that the Trade Union declarations on this argument may strengthen the racist feelings in the majority group and favour in the minority group an exaggerated focus (paranoia) on the problem.

2015AM : But it's true that we don't act (against racism).It's very specific. We are vigilant but it's specific. But if we are just vigilant, it's also a way for us to struggle against the settling of a certain type of racism in the company and just of the racism, nothing more and nothing less. Because pay attention to paranoia with certain people...

Q : Aren't there any systematic actions ?

AM : Absolutely none

Q : And do you think it would be a good idea that there is any?

AM : Sincerely, I think so. This shouldn't be something too frequent. But why not ? At least once a year we could hold a conference or a debate against racism in the company. At the training period.

X : But, wait, we haven't got any, indeed. And it must not become an obsession either.

In the examined situation, the reticence from the unionists for a frontal attack of the racism “problem” in order not to exacerbate the racial prejudices (and they know how important they are in their company and even among their own members), has not given the expected effects at all. On the contrary it has contributed to settle the question of racism around a battle of viewpoints (denying/paranoia) which hardens the points of view and tends more to strengthen than to weaken the frontier between the majority and the minority groups.

Experience of clients/customers

Racist reactions towards the presence of minorities

Concerning the relations with the users, the minority employees are always likely to be faced, at one time or at another, with a demonstration of hostility that sends them back to their outsider supposed position. For example :

2013AM : Last time I was talking to a driver, we were teasing. All at once there is a lady who gets up and tells me : Anyway, you just have to work in your own country, go back home. (case n°1)

All the tensions that may arise in the buses during the interactions between drivers and passengers (when tickets are paid, bus-stops managed, doors shut, ...) can degenerate into a racist incident. That risk is even bigger for the ticket inspectors, who, because of their job, are often faced with the reported customers who are aggressive. In their case, as the interviewed below explains it clearly, racism can even be used by the transport user who is in the wrong as a defensive “tactic” to transform the accusation of fraud that is made against him into an accusation of iniquity towards the ticket inspector.

2003AM : in the relationship with the public, it's something else, it won't change... there is racism and there will always be... but we don't fall into the trap, once, twice and that's all...the thing is to ignore and to do your job, that's it, because you meet so many times a woman concerned who says : "why don't you just go and control the young people of A. ("difficult" area) I can hear that all the time" or : "you do report me because I'm fair-haired", so it's a reverse racism, and : "you don't report Arabs", but it's a defence too, it's not even racism, for me it's a defence, they use this to defend themselves, it's like : "you control me because I'm fair-haired" and they want to switch to another level to make us go into something else, so we are taken in once and then...

But even more than those punctual incidents that are quite rare in fact, the insidious hostility shown by certain categories of transport users constitutes for most of our interviewees, the everyday experience of racism.

2023AM : with the customers, what I feel regarding a certain age bracket, men in particular, the 20-35 40 year-old men, they throw the coin, it's as if I were the one who took his place. I feel that. I'm sometimes watched with a look of...

The racist reactions of transport users are even stronger when, as it's the case in the 2nd company, the minority entry into the staff of the transport company has been done in a very sudden way and quite massively. Undoubtedly fitting the traditionally anti-immigrant climate of the district where far right votes have always been important, the hostility towards those new members has been expressed under the guise of a real general hue and cry and its effect was protest letters to the the company managers and the town authorities.

2001 AM : but the main problem remains the customers, the customers haven't always accepted to be reported by an Arab, eh ?/.../ We regularly receive letters

Our interviewees' sentences emphasize that their presence has been felt like an incongruity and underlined so through face expressions or more or less aggressive or despising looks, but showing anyway a noticeable anomaly.

2021AM : When we arrived there, we were not feeling at ease, eh, I tell you honestly, we arrived, we saw, we could see the people's look, we got on the bus, we were stared at, but I didn't know how I did to cope with...

Because, wait, at the beginning, when you are a driver, during the first months... the little granny you pick up at C. over there (name of a middle-class area of the town), when she gets on and when she sees the driver... it isn't even worth it for her to talk, it's on her face, eh, it's written, it's printed...

Apart from expressions of overt hostility coming from some users, their first experience of racism as employees recently hired, has been the uneasy feeling provoked by their own visibility in the eyes of the passengers. This visibility is all the more noticeable that what the drivers usually complain about is, on the contrary, the users' indifference towards them, the way people "do not see" them as people but they consider them as "robots", as "driver machines", as « furniture »...

The oddness of their presence in the buses as drivers was not only because of their manifest social belonging (seen at first glance : "when she gets in, she sees the driver...") to a minority (north african or black) group, but also to the clues (more subtle than the colour of the phenotype but nevertheless easily noticeable by the customers) enabling the passengers to identify them as « jeunes des quartiers », a social category particularly stigmatized by the antisocial behaviours (delinquency, rudeness...) that are attributed to its members. In this case, display of racism were less supported by the traditional stereotype of the "immigrant coming and eating the French people bread" (like in the above quoted phrase : go back home)

than on the more recent one which concerns the second-generation youth, the hooligan, the delinquent, the troublemaker.

2021AM : The people, they were getting on the bus, I was considered as a hooligan, I assure you, I was getting on the bus, I couldn't even drive any longer some times...

Those stereotyped characteristics of the young suburban residents (that is well sum up by their designation as “little savage” by a former Home Secretary) make them urban actors typically opposed to the professionals of the urban security. Yet, the urban transport professionals, even though they are not specifically invested with a security mission as policemen are, are nevertheless compelled through their job achievement to have a public order respected along their route and inside their vehicles. As we have previously underlined, it is partly this mission of maintaining the public order that has justified the opening of the transport companies to the youth from difficult neighbourhood, and particularly those from North African origin. They are supposed, because of their very origin, to own a specific know-how allowing them to manage with any situation of conflict on the bus routes serving deprived estates of social housing.

But according to the passengers, the resemblance of these new drivers with the young people who adopt all those illicit or uncivil behaviours (not paying their transport ticket, smoking, messing around, insulting other passengers, etc...) produces a confusion in the casting of the parts they were used to : on the one hand the “jeunes des quartiers” most of them being North-Africans, adopting those denounced behaviours ; on the other hand, recognized representatives of the institution, most of them “white” and “French”, in charge of having a public order respected that is threatened by the activities of the former ones.

Due to the repressive function the inspectors are invested with, identifying some of them as North-African makes even more trouble than in the drivers' case, the currently admitted definition of professional part, an implicit attribute of which is that it is held by a member of the majority (a “white” or a “French”).

2010AM : Sometimes I intervened , and people were looking at me... It happened that I had to control buses, I wasn't given any tickets. The customers didn't give me their tickets : “Who are you ?” “I am a ticket inspector, Madam”, “Oh no!”.

2003AM : At the beginning, they weren't used to it/.../because they have never seen that, in their mind, a ticket inspector was thought to be so, a French man, they had never seen an Arab ticket inspector, it's the same for the police too, I think, like for the firemen... At the beginning there were protest letters saying we were the ones who weren't paying our bus ticket and now we are playing the part of ticket inspectors.

The transport users' reactions in front of those non-consonant professionals contain a more or less strong hostility charge towards them, from an offensive notice (“We hire Arabs now!”) to avoiding : *she gets off immediately and that's when you understand the trick, she waits for the next one, as there are buses every 22 minutes : I got 4 leeks to buy in “Champion” (supermarket) down there, I'm gonna get off right now.*

The passengers who can be identified as “racists” were not the only ones to show their amazement in front of that sudden interchangeability of parts (people not paying their tickets/ticket inspectors, or “master on board”/rowdies) until then clearly identified and dispatched on the two sides of a socio-ethnic line. Even the (rare) passengers who positively evaluate this change can only do it by confirming the prejudice according which the person whom they had to deal with was not normally eligible for this type of job.

2004AM : *I was talking with a friend, when he began as a driver, he said : you know what, today, a woman told me, oh it's a great pleasure to see a young man... people are always there telling you : a young "jeune des quartiers"..., but what a pleasure it is to see a Black or an Arab driving a bus!*

In the relationships with the transport users as, in a general way in the achievement of their job, the minorities are the ones who must "do more" in order to face the discriminatory attitudes and the preventions they are subjected to. "Doing more", that means appear, beyond the courtesy and the attention given to the passengers expected from any professional working as a transport officer, as a particularly "kind", "considerate" and "polite" person. The interviewee here-under explains how he applies this tactic of *impression management* targeting a particular group of users (the old ladies from middle class areas) the most likely, according to him, to spread out the favourable impressions opposed to prejudices.

2009AM : *...the mother who is not at the bus stop coming out of "Champion" (supermarket) who hails the bus that opens its door, the mother when she goes back home at night : you know my son, I came across a bus driver, he was like that, I was 50 meters far from the bus stop, he opened the door for me... on the (line number serving a middle class area), the little old lady, she tries to run, you stop the bus before to explain to her that you are waiting for her and you don't want her to get smashed up while coming down the boulevard, you look good to her, she's gonna talk about it because it is... bridge club... : "he's like that, he's like that".*

Minority customers' feeling of revalorization

With regard to the customers belonging to the majority group (often designated as "the public"), the presence on board of professionals coming from the "quartiers" has, as we have seen it before, disturbed a division line well established on a socio-ethnic basis until then (young people from North-African areas and French conductors). If this blurring could trigger off reactions from the majority customer group contributing to a tension of the inter-ethnic relationships in the transport services, it has symmetrically highly contributed to pacify the relations the populations of those areas establish with buses, and through them with public services.

From these users' point of view, the professionals of transport, beside other professionals who maintain the public order such as policemen or firemen, represent the symbolic actors of the frontier separating the suburban world (poor people, immigrants) from the majority French society. It's precisely their symbolic position of gate keepers which settles these professionals as a target during urban guerrilla warfare ("loose stoning" of buses, chase with the policemen) that periodically make the media headlines. Apart from its dramatized expression in the "riots in suburbs", the feeling of the peripheral district residents to be second zone transport users, and the resentment it creates, find every day matter for backing up the various humiliations which they feel to be subjected to, from authority and public services representatives. In urban transports, the responsibility of "master on board" the conductor has, gives him a certain amount of leeway to interpret the rules in a more or less strict or benevolent way. The harassment against some transport user groups can be practised under the guise of a scrupulous respect of the rules by a pernickety professional.

2005AM : *sometimes there are drivers who are the ones to make trouble that's what I felt...I can give a very simple example, once I was in BMI, a driver calls us at about 9.00 pm, he said I stop the bus at G. and I wait until you arrive... Shit we thought, what's happening, it must be urgent... we go there in emergency, we arrive, we get on the bus, there was a girl with her mother (North-Africans, living in a peripheral district) and they had a cardboard box, I'm the one to get on the bus, I didn't ask the driver, I went to see the girls, I asked them what's happening*

because I wondered what was going on, and she told us “isn’t that driver mad?!” , in fact they had paid for two but the driver wanted them to pay one more ticket for the box they were carrying... It seems that it is stated by the rules that when you carry a big cardboard box, you must pay a ticket for it...but in that case it was something like plywood, it was thin but quite large... I went to see the driver, I said “hey, don’t you think you’ve exaggerated a bit here, and in fact this driver is known in the company as being a racist...”

The management of the stops which confers a great discretionary power to the driver (for example waiting or not for a passenger who is late) is particularly favourable to those displays of scorn (towards certain transport users) that are insidious and ostensible at the time :

Because I tell you, I, my parents, my friends, people that I know, the perception they had from the RATP was that it represented an absolutely racist company. And the practices of a large number of drivers were racist practices. It was the guy, when you were at the bus stop, because you were a North-African, he didn’t stop, he pretended not to see you, or you asked him to stop and he didn’t stop.

Even though it remains very low, the increased presence of minority employees in the transport companies has nevertheless had considerable effects, not only on the representation that the populations of foreign origin have of these companies, but on the representation they have of themselves as transport users. As the interviewee explains here under, for minority groups passengers, used to be on a permanent alert aiming at preventing from racist aggression (hugging the walls, shutting one’s mouth), dealing with a professional who belongs himself to a minority group brings the comfort of reintegrating a “normal” transport user’s part (saying hello, showing one’s card...)

*2008AM : And then you’ve got guys, you cannot be appreciated by everyone! On the contrary it is a great comfort to the North-African population. The North-African and African population they were feeling enhanced, it was a pleasure for them to show their card, to say hello. Because before, when they got on, they hugged the walls. And there, they had got this pleasure, this pride of being allowed to say hello./.../this you feel it! With certain old people that I took in my bus. They get on, they feel enhanced and seem to say : “I had been waiting for that moment for a long time. I’ve travelled by bus during 30 years, I’ve shut my mouth and hugged the walls for 30 years, the bus passed by me without stopping for 30 years, I had to walk to go...”
And now there is a recognition for them.*

The opening of the urban transport sector to minority groups workers, as we saw it, is mainly due to pacifying effects expected from them because of their closeness to “difficult” publics, mostly of North-African origin. The results of our inquiry show that the impact of this regulating function of urban conflicts certainly goes beyond the profits which were expected by the transport companies in terms of social peace and marketing. The minority group entry in those employment sectors has not only had an anti-discriminatory effect regarding job access, it has also made a breach in a socio-urban frontier which was both thought in terms of an opposition Them/Us and Up/Down.

2018AM : At the same time, the guy thinks, well er, it’s ok, he comes from the same... he comes from the bottom...That if one speaks to him from the top, we can feel that there is a difference eh... Even a scorn sometimes...

2003AM : ...There is no more wall that separates them (the inhabitants from the peripheral districts) from the ticket inspector or the bus driver, he’s gonna say, I’ve got my neighbour who’s a ticket inspector, it created a link... it’s like the young who throw stones on the firemen, why, because they think, there is a frontier, but if tomorrow he had his neighbour coming to extinguish his fire, it would create

*a link and then no stone will be thrown anymore... they won't say yes anymore,
firemen it's only for them...*

V RESISTANCE AND STRUGGLE

Under this heading, we are going to study in detail the case of two companies where original forms of resistance against racism and discrimination were implemented : the first (in the company n°2) developed by the union, the other (in the RATP) by an anti-racist organization.

Company n°2: a unionists' voluntarist action of integration

The case of this company enables us to see that, in conditions originally very similar to those of the company n°1, the risk of evolving towards a situation of mutual mistrust, between the unionists and the “jeunes des quartiers”, was only overcome because the same recruitment opportunity of these young people (by the youth employment program) was immediately dealt with by the local unionists as an opportunity of the company's openness to minorities. Thus, racism was not a reality to be questioned (whether to attest its existence, relativise it, or deny it) but an obstacle to overcome to reach that goal. It follows that the work to be done to overcome that obstacle did not rest mainly on the minorities (to behave well) nor the majority (to overcome racist feelings) but on the union itself, on its ability, most of all, to gain the confidence of the minorities without alienating the confidence of the majority group.

With this few room for manoeuvre the union succeeded in integrating 40 employees from foreign origin (accounting for 4 to 5% of the staff) in a company which had had practically none until then and which had a long tradition of family recruitment. The account given by one of the very rare minority members who worked in the company before the youth employment program gives us an idea of the incongruous and unseemly recruitment of an “Arab” (even a sweeper at the bottom of the job scale) in the eye of the other employees.

2010 AM. Questions I would have were: who are you? Who are you the son of? Of nobody. I was 18 and I was the only Arab in the company. There was nobody. When I was hired, there was nobody. Employees would asked me: who are you? How did you get in? Then little by little, those I got on with, I explained them a little, but that's true, people had a way of looking at you! It was as if I was taking the place of an employee's son. Sometimes, young people talked to me, it meant: now we are hiring the Arabs!

In that context characterised by a rigid barrier preventing minority recruitment, the unionist openness strategy, was first built on anticipating a risk which could have had long-term consequences for this work sector : the risk was the fragmentation of the staff and of their occupational identities which the introduction of “ethnic” employees could have provoked, not only on account of their origins but also on account of the nature of their work. It was to counter that risk (and not only for conformity to the traditional unionist opposition to all forms of precarious work) that the unionist leaders said from the beginning that they refused to confine the young hired through the youth employment program (half of them coming from “difficult neighbourhood”)¹¹, to the specific mediation jobs they were recruited for. As Macé has demonstrated about the RATP, the social mediation tasks, when they are based on a supposed cultural vicinity between the mediators and their audience (as in the mediation

¹¹ Expression qui rappelle est dans le contexte français une euphémisation de l'appartenance à un groupe minoritaire, la plupart du temps maghrébin.

devices of the type “grands frères”), can provoke a double resentment tending to “break” the work collective : the resentment from the incumbents to be confined to “Arabic job”; and the resentment from the established workers facing the creation, within the company, of “reserved” jobs from which would be excluded their own children (who should be in their opinion, the “natural entitled” persons for the job).

The company unionists have therefore very strongly insisted on integrating the jobs specifically created for young people into the company’s job scale (drivers, controllers...) To be more precise, the purpose was to make them accede to the job which is at the heart of the corporate culture and identity in this employment sector, the job of driver :

2001AM: We have always claimed that we have to really put them on the jobs, and it's on the company jobs that they are better integrated./.../ I think they are a part of the company especially those who are drivers./.../ I'm going to explain to you. The driver means the family, you are a driver, so you are a part of the family, so it means that the driver job enables a better integration than... it's the family, when you are talking with them, it's...but if you go through the jobs that are a bit like satellite jobs in the profession...(head of the running network, CGT trade unionist)

The full integration of the minority groups in the “large family” of the carriers implied on one side, to overcome the company’s employees’ racist prejudices towards the “jeunes des quartiers”, and on the other side, to socialize the laterers within a culture and a professional ethos totally opposed, a priori, to the culture of the “quartiers”.

Giving guarantees to the employees and showing the advantages

Regarding the permanent employees, the trade union has been wary to guarantee the preservation of the “family privilege”. They insist to complement the recruitment of youths from difficult neighbourhood by the employment agencies, with a recruitment by trade union channels, therefore implicitly reserved to the employees’ children.

The line of action that gradually emerged in order to overcome the prejudices was one of pragmatic educational methods, consisting in showing the concrete advantages of their presence rather than defending general “anti-racist” ideas.

2003AM: They (trade union officials) showed results to these drivers, so the drivers saw that the fraud had lowered, that they were less assaulted, the spits, all that stuff, they made statistics, they explained to them that since the arrival of those 40 youngsters, there's a decrease in violence and in fraud and so the drivers have then seen their own interest because it's true that now they can drive on difficult lines through some areas, they can drive brand new buses, which they could not do before... you've to know that before we arrived, fraud was tremendous... now we make profit, we have a good control rate, drivers feel safe... they've seen right from the start that, even if we come from difficult neighbourhoods, work is done, they aren't afraid of driving, that's what matters...

This utilitarian vision of employment of minority people do not particularize this company. It has been a model for several years to the employment policies of companies specialized in the service sector set up in “difficult districts”: the recruitment of employees who are ethnically and socially alike the customers is seen as the best way to diminish the social tensions between professionals and passengers. In the companies of urban transport in particular, the different networks have implemented measures to counter insecurity including the recruitment of mediators (mainly from North African background) coming from these boroughs. If the evaluations of this devices (Begag, Rossini) show the regulating effects they have in terms of social pacification and commercial advantages for the enterprise, the

recognition of the utility of the work made by the « jeunes des quartiers» do not necessarily lead to the attenuation of racism (their acceptance as colleagues). On the contrary, it can reinforce a logic of racial domination in which the security supplementaries (« colored ») are at the service of real professionals (white). That was the case within the studied enterprise, during the whole period when the young people hired through the youths employment program acted as mediators. Some drivers purely and simply forbade the access to the bus to these “melons” ; some others consider them as a sort of aborigène bodyguards :

2021AM: We have changed that too. As we were here, they felt strong... Come back to earth, we are going backward . We are not your bodyguards. We want to do the same job as you, the same as you. And at the beginning, we were like bodyguards... That 's what changed

This typical colonial form of contempt has not quite disappeared in the company, it continues to characterise more or less openly the relationships that certain drivers, identified as being the most “racist ones”, have with the North African tickets collectors :

2021AM: Each time we have to go out to help them, and we come as quickly as possible. We can feel it, the guy almost says to us: “come on, get that whole bloody race out of here. It drives me crazy!

But what has changed with the recruitment of the young people (hired through the youths employment program) as permanent workers doing traditional jobs in that sector (drivers or inspectors) is that it has put a stop to relationships formerly structured on both a racial and professional basis (i.e. white drivers/ North African bodyguards). The display of racism, which is still frequent within the company, cannot now be attributed, however violent it is, to a “They” category (the drivers) as in the quotation given above (“they felt strong”), but to racist individuals, to “fascists” identified by their damning “bullshit”.

2009AM: That's why now, we could say that we are more or less integrated. Well, there is always an hard core of fascists, but well, even in 50 years, they won't move...

At each step of the process, the trade union action regarding the permanent staff has consisted in preventing the racist expressions to expand beyond a “hard core” group of racist employees; this also implied backing out when the trade union pressures for the integration of the young people from the youths employment program could have led to a clash between the racially opposed We and They.

2020AM: There is something on which I had to back out. It was about the young people from the youths employment program; the trade union held that they could claim the seniority they accumulated, for their salary, but I had a problem concerning the line turnover. This means the bus route choice according to seniority. Bloody hell! What a general outcry : “they are stepping over us , these fucking ones». Then, I quickly backed out, and said : but this is a nonsense. The managers didn't catch it, we never asked for seniority concerning the line turnover, they are assholes

Winning young people's trust and providing proof

2001AM: The day he told us: “don't worry, you are all going to be hired, one by one. Do your job don't worry we have a job behind.” It's true that practically we don't see them working, you can have a moment of doubt...but the proof is here today.

At the moment of our inquiry, all the employees recruited through the youths employment program agree to attribute to the trade union action their good integration and underline its exceptional character :

2003AM: Then it's true we got, we got a chance in our company, we got some people who believed in it from the start and we got a lot of people in the trade union who have been frankly, sincerely, they have really been...it's a lot thanks to us we could have advanced so quickly, otherwise we could have stayed 25 years and don't have a thing like in the other areas.../.../it's CGT, they have been here from the start, they believed in us, even when we were coming from different origins, they believed in us and then, there have been other employees of the company, chiefs that have believed in it too, and then and here we are.../.../But you must know that in the youths employment program everybody has been integrated, little by little, it has been made very quickly, and that I don't think many others areas or networks in France have done that.

2009AM: I think that without our majority trade union, it wouldn't have happened that way. Because from the start, they have built the foundations, they have said: they are employees like you, like me. Not: keep your nose clean, but : give them their chance, we'll see later ; we could feel they were on our side. They thought to themselves : we are going to integrate them, we are going to give them the way for that. And so they have done. Before we arrived, they prepare our entrance, while we were there, they frequently said : We congratulate the BMI squad, the youngsters of the youths employment program, always you know, in the trade union newspaper. So there has been a work, there has been a fundamental work, now we don't need it anymore.

That confidence has not been acquired at once, on the contrary. The feeling that dominated at the time they were recruited was that it was going to end like usually in that kind of helped-jobs : by the come back to the small jobs and unemployment; and that their origin (both racial: be an Arab, and territorial: coming from a difficult neighbourhood) would prevent them to get the job :

2009AM: Personally two years ago, I was more sceptical: you'll always be for them what you are...but there no.

Against the scepticism of those who have more or less resigned at the idea of undergoing the lot of the « dumb who was taken out of his neighbourhood, and was given a job for five years, and will be given money from the State, and five years later will be told “ok thanks” (2009 AM), the union had to “sell the arrangement”, as the Executive Secretary explains :

2020 AM: Something has been very different here, we told them : “That's true, guys, you should make the “agents d'ambiance”, walking about, playing soccer and telling bullshits, but that's not so good for you”. That's also what enabled us to really selling the plan : “you're going to be productive to be integrated as quickly as possible” Because the goal was : “we do it provided that they become integrated, they become drivers, they become salaried employees”; and, five years later, they won't be told “thanks for coming” because it could also have happened that way. You could also have an hiring policy that doesn't take into account their existence, and then tell them they could go off.

These hiring promises would not have been enough to overcome the distrust if they had not been confirmed very quickly by real facts: the refusal by the trade unions of a specific working outfit for them, which would have conspicuously distinguished them from others employees in the company ; the satisfaction of their claims about bonus; their integration in control teams; the driving licence, and, about a year and a half the first hirings.

2021AM: What they have told has been done. They said: it's gonna be like this and like that. And, month after month, everything was all right.

2005AM: Then frankly I think we came across a good company because they did not make fun of us.. We had a five year youths-employment program contract and in one year and a half, we were hired.

It is most of all the ability of the trade union officials to credibilise their will to integrate them in the company, which has represented the first condition to the plan success. That credibility has imposed, step by step, beyond the initial scepticism, by the instauration of a mutual contract in which the trade union commitment to “give them a chance” appeared as the counterpart of their own commitment “to not fail”.

2009AM: (they told us) don't jerk it off, show them what you can do, that you can do something else than stealing or insulting, we are on your side, as soon as there is a problem, we are the ones to call for, we'll be there /.../ The day the trade union called for us to tell us: if you make a fault, we will shot you down in flames , if you're within your right, we'll all be on your side... we were all in the next room, I remember it as if it was yesterday, it rang a bell in us.

There again, the union leaders were the ones to make that contractual relation credible, by catching all the opportunities to show by actions, and not only by speeches, their own commitment. From that viewpoint, two types of actions have been decisive:

1/ the “exemplary” sanction of a racist act towards a young North African employee, happening a little bit after the implementation of the youths-employment program. This sanction showed without ambiguity the will to impose a “climate” change within the company.

2004 AM: I got a problem with a driver when I arrived, we were controlling /.../ suddenly I heard: oh RI your Arab crew, there your Arab, really, get them out of the bus /.../ I said: sorry, but what did you say? He told me: yeah, you clearly understood what I said, you want me to repeat it: so, you Dirty Arab, get out of my bus, that's my bus /.../ I became crazy, I ran into him, I wanted to kill him, I pounced on him /.../ I phoned, they came for me, I stopped to work, I went up, I knocked at the Grand Central doors, at Al (chief) I have knocked at the door, I went in, I didn't want to be told to wait, because I have got started...and, surprisingly, RI had already produced a report the time I went up and he had already warned the managers, like I was coming, and that's good, because you discover the people too, you discover certain people like RI, I didn't know him much, he has produced a report, that's something, he's a supervisory agent, he has produced a report, describing exactly what had happened, that he called me dirty Arab /.../ When I went up in the office, RI had already called Al, he has taken over someone from the driver, he has send a car and they put another driver, they made him taken over, they summoned him, a week of suspension. He worked in the company for 25 years.

The exemplary character of this case, what has given it a strong meaning of commitment, is largely due to the features of the trade union implantation in that company : the exceptionally extensive power of the main trade union, the very high rate of unionization, and at last the confusion between levels of hierarchical positions in the firm and responsibility in the trade union. These characteristics have made that the repressive action involved both the trade union and the whole company-institution; it also showed the trade union determination to punish its own members, thus enhancing their commitment alongside the potential victims of racism :

2002AW: *Well at the beginning, the first year has been tough. The drivers used to insult us. Dirty Arab, go home. At the beginning, it was tough. Then, the trade union has really defended us, some were given a real dressing-down, there have been suspensions. It (the trade union) has really defended us. The trade union is nice in that company /.../The drivers have been summoned by the operating chief, one had had a suspension, and he has bluntly gone to the depot, because it was repetitive. Here the punishment is going to the depot. Washing the bus. The punishment /.../ because it was repetitive, each time we wanted to control, he told us: go off! : Then, a report, two reports, three reports...*

Q: *Who produced the reports?*

2002: *The squad agents. The supervisors*

Q: *So it was not a trade union action. Or were they also trade unionists?*

2002: *Well...we are all trade unionists. Everybody is trade unionist here.*

Q: *Including the racist drivers?*

2002: *Including the racist drivers. But they were given a real tongue-lashing by the trade union too. By the boss and by the trade union. Here, we have two bosses; we could say that the trade union is really the boss here. That's true!*

2- The support to the initiatives taken by the young people recruited through the youths-employment program, for elect their own representatives:

2009AM: *I presented myself as a representative, because the things has to move forward, is that it; even if we had the trade union on our side, when we started, we had a very big problem, because there was a huge gap between the guy that cleaned the bus in the evening, who had a 155 coefficient, and he earned more money than us. We have been hired to the SMIC, 4800, not more. Little by little, we had things getting better: but come on, we control, we take back dough, we would like the bonus of this, the bonus of that, well they (the trade union) have helped us a lot, on our side...*

In a context where, as the young woman explained it in the quotation above (2002AM), “everyone belongs to the trade union”, these young new members’ early socialization to the trade union struggle, with which they had scarcely been confronted, anticipated their future integration but also ensured that this socialization would be made according to the norms of the corporate culture.

An assimilating socialization

The trade union strategy of the “jeunes des quartiers” integration implied a variety of socializing actions, which aimed at stripping them of the characteristics of the suburbs’ culture, and at making them interiorize the professional ethos of the “real tram worker”: the punctuality, the discipline and the regularity at work, the standards of courtesy, the clothing correctness...

2001 AM *In fact, as the same time they have discovered the company, they have discovered work, they have discovered social life...you find out that a lot of these young people still lived in their families, and that, somewhat, to have a salary, a form of security, they have rushed into it, with all the cultural gap which...but when I say cultural, it's not the fact that they are North African, no, but the fact that they are coming from N, from V (names of two “difficult” districts), because I say that this is the true cultural difference, it's not because they're North African, come on, they are better dressed than me, they're wearing Nike shoes I can't afford to have, but that gap has existed, and it will always exist, but they tackle it in a different way...Today these people work...do you remember the lateness problems*

we used to have , the guys used to come to work two hours late and they wondered why we screamed on them...Today the guys come to work and when you're a driver, you can't afford to be behind your work, they come to work, we have a behaviour towards them, they are messing around , they are summoned, and that's over...But it has taken a long time, we pushed it, a lot of will was required, they have remained a long time or even when they did their job, they have remained outsiders for a long time...but today, the ones that are integrated, well ,now...In fact, all the people involved , trade union and company, wanted to succeed, each one with his particular viewpoints, but from there, it makes things easier... Then , from that common viewpoint, we have worked within the context of the company running, an so we went in the right direction, but we have never looked behind, because we'd got to keep on moving...Today, if you stop for a moment, if you think about that thing, you say to yourself, bloody hell, something really happened, a socialization of these people, an integration in a heavy system, we have constraints, around here, you come to work on the dot (network running head, CGT trade unionist)

This socializing action, even if it proved its efficiency in the end, had yet some paradoxical aspects: on one side, it aimed at being strongly inclusive and anti-discriminatory. Beyond the job requirements, to inculcate the “jeunes des quartiers” “good manners” for example, was a way to allow them entering “the carriers’ large family”. But on the other side, these socializing actions were not free from cultural prejudices about North African societies and families; it situated right away the “jeunes des quartiers” as ethnical Others; so all their behaviours, including, as the example above, a behaviour so widespread as the instrumental use of the trade union by salaried employees, could be attributed to “cultural difference.”

2020AM : It doesn't exist in the family nor in the milieu, the first approach (of the union) was... “When do I have to pay, when do I have to pay the bakchich It wasn't clear. But, it's their story, the story of their family. I have some family experience on this matter, it is the weight of people story, it's here. So we'll see how it evolves, some people step up a little, come to the union assembly, but actually, you don't really know if they use it as a stepping stone or if they really want to get involved in it, they don't have the same definition of collectivity than us. ... That is to say, when we organize typically syndical events /.../ we ask guys to come along. A large proportion of those young people who come believe in Give and Take “You did me a favor, I'll do you one” But they evolve, with this kind of thinking, but they evolve.

It is yet difficult to distangle, in the different saying of the unionists reported above, what the otherness that the socializing action of the union wants to reduce, owe to ethnic cultural features (education in north african families, cultural practices like bakchich (bribe) supposed to be traditional in arabic societies), to background or social environment (suburbs culture opposed to middle classes social conventions), or to generational positions (unconcern of youth opposed to professional responsibility of the experienced worker).

All these dimensions of otherness are combined to appraise the distance between the new comers and the We-group of the carriers’ family the formers have to be assimilated to.

Cultural difference is here, more than in the other sites of survey, explicitly emphasized (also under the form of prejudice and cultural stereotypes where you can still find the trace of colonial condescension towards populations to “civilise”), and this is paradoxically due to the union strategy of total assimilation of these young people in order to change them into people “like us”. Again, we can recognize in this paradoxe the specific contradictions of the french doctrine of republican universalism which the working-class version is here illustrated by the strong unionist resistance to the ethnicisation of social matter (leading to the rejection of all

the expressions of differences likely to divide the workers, but also to minimize the reality of racism and discriminations as we saw it in the entreprise n°1).

The unionists strategy largely consisted in changing these *Outsiders* into *Insiders*, by giving them a good external appearance, an appropriate behaviour, social values, professional ethic, that is to say the *habitus* which will permit them to melt into the big family. We can assume that the minorities have been willing to conform to the norm only because they could quickly see that the promises of assimilation, like getting rid of their status of immigrant, would be kept :

2009AM: The other day, I was watching TV. They need so many workers in catering, in building trade... that they're going to reopen the borders to roll up immigrants. As for us, it's right that we are not so badly off, we're bus driver after all, we don't hammer or spade all day long. you don't get dirty , it is not a degrading job. The clothes, the uniform give you... you're an employee like the others... You've got a certain responsibility and if you're given a responsibility, it means that you are not a dunce. If you're given the responsibility of a bus of 2 millions francs, with 80 people inside, 80 lives, you're given this responsibility , because they trust you. At first, you don't realize it, but you have faith in yourself. You think: If they gave me that job, it is because I'm worth it, because I'm not as dumb as my teacher told be: "dunce you are, dunce you will stay." So it improves the image of the person a bit, even if he begins with nothing. He begins from here and becomes a bus driver and tells himself: I'd managed quite well so far!

2011AM: It's true it's a great job, with security of employment. We're dressed, we don't get dirty, we have a job that is not really tiring. It is stressful but still it's not like working on a building site. You can have a credit, invest in property business. You don't get particularly high wages but it's fair. I don't turn up my nose on it. It's true that if I hadn't been integrated, I would have done something else. But I'm fine and I'd do anything to remain in this company.

Through these extracts, like in most of the other cases studied, we can see how the youths from immigrant families use the stereotyped image of the immigrant to evaluate their own social condition. But in this case the stereotypes of "immigrant job" (the "yard", "building trade", "hammer and shovel") are not evoked to compare their own situation to the humiliating condition of their fathers, but to emphasize the characteristics of their job ("not tiring", "not degrading", "not dirty", "dressed") showing the distance they put between this humiliating condition and themselves.

Even if it is principally seen as a personal victory or luck, appraised according to past experiences of the individual (like the recovery of self-esteem compromised by a bad scholarship) and living projects it makes possible (access to property), entering the world of jobs of service has a meaning of a collective experience, the one of a generation sharing the same social conditions and showing the same commitment to make them evolve. Actually, a vague sense of community exists under the guise of the responsibility to promote their own people ("arabs", "immigrants"), which the minority individuals who found their way out feel attached to. This sense of community also appears through the collective right claimed by minorities, as a group, to control and to make people respect the practices of non-discriminatory employment and promotion in the future.

2010AM: We are employed. We have a wall in front of us and we have to get over it.

Q: That is to say?

2010AM: I don't see an Arab becoming a manager /.../ It is our next stage /.../ For you too, for your study, I think the second stage is someone becoming supervisor. /.../ It would be great, it would be a good thing for the company, it would be fantastic. One or two. There would be some right hand men inside. Because we can't say it is a racist act (the lack of minorities in supervisory jobs) because no one has been there long enough. But it would be good to have one in the next years. The arabs which are working would see that there is a manager and would have to make an effort to progress like us.

2011AM: The tram will be done in 3 or 4 years. We will have work for 5 or 6 years. We will see how the situation has evolve, without any questionnaire: it will be obvious. But I hope there won't be any problem. In any case, they can't employ... Well, of course they can, but I can't see a driver of the same bus for 30 years, near retirement, training to become tram driver. They need young people. There won't be 100% of us coming from the youth employment program, and that is totally normal, but I hope there will be fair quotas. At least the same we represent within the number of drivers. We are 500 or 600 drivers. Those from the youth employment program, that is to say 90% of "issus de l'immigration", we are about fifty... we represent 5% of the total. And let's say, if they take 5 for 50 drivers... If they employ more of 5, that's a good thing, if not, someone would have to point it out.

Conclusion: Contrary to the other situations studied, the outcome of the experience of minorities integration in this company is the one which is most similar to the assimilation known by the descendants of immigrants of previous waves. The process of individual achievement, social mobility and leaving the minority group suggested by this notion, does not erase, for people interrogated, the sense of belonging to a minority community. This group awareness is less founded on a feeling of cultural community (including the religious dimension which does not appear in the company), than on the strong consciousness of a chain of generation linking, through individual success, the destiny of their immigrant fathers to the one of their followers, that is to say, their youngest brothers or their own children. Ironically, it is their assimilation to the corporate culture of the company, including their support to its very conventions (string pulling and family preference) because of which they were excluded before, that makes their success irreversible for their "community".

2011AM: Of course, they're going to employ more people (of foreign origin) but it will be done little by little. I think it will principally concern our children because this company works with string-pulling. If you don't know anyone here you'll never find a job, even if your name is Jean-Louis. There's a chance on a hundred that he will be taken, but it's true that you have more chances to be taken if your name is Jean Louis than if it is Rachid. But I think that thanks to string-pulling, we could make employ some of them. Because lots of people demand to enter this society. But there's no immediate entry. You have to know someone. And I think it will work the same for us.

A new experience in France : MRAP at RATP

The creation in the RATP of a section linked to the MRAP took place in 2003, from a small group of militants or ex-militants of CGT and CFDT, who wanted to act against racism and discriminations at work, concerning professional and unionist relationships. The founders of MRAP-RATP explain their initiative by a triple report: the evolution from an open racism to a veiled racism even more difficult to fight that it is deeply engraved in the structures of the

company ; the lack of action of unionist organisations due to loss of militant forces and an increasing implication in joint management absorbing their strength and leading them to status quo; the voluntary blindness of the administration which is satisfied with noticing that a few number of complaints come to them.

Analysis of the situation made by the founders of MRAP-RATP

According to our interviewees, most of the complaints coming from minorities drivers concerns, first, an inegalitarian treatment from executive and supervisory staff but which is formally in conformity with regulations and therefore not legally reprehensible; secondly, it concerns the ostracism from the insiders, which cannot be liable to a disciplinary treatment either.

Union apathy

Faced with this situation, the trade unions are not playing their part as regulators as they should. Even if union officers have good will, what stood out during the interviews was the fact that in reality statements of principle do not pass easily in the facts. Interviews with representatives of the two major french trade unions underlined the gap between "bottom" and "top" of the union : as for example the (rare) initiatives of the militants which are not supported by the trade union: *"I try to raise the problem but I'm only a minor shop steward of CFDT. Even if it is the major section of RATP, it still is a small section... If other centres don't do anything, my doing want change anything at all, no matter how hard I try."* (2008AM: Algerian driver part of CFDT and MRAP) ; or official orientation which are not applied by the grassroot : *"During debates within the union, we don't have any problem with principles but if the others, in depots, considered they're not important, they are not going to apply them..."* (2027AM: National leader of CGT)

In any case, examples of racism which are not dealt with by the union are minimized and usually located inside competing organizations. It's not that trade-unionists are not aware of the fact that the future of their organizations goes by the renewal of their militant core and the necessity to open up to young people in general and young people from difficult neighbourhood in particular ; but the needs of representativeness within a public company of this size (continuous services, delegation hours, administration of work's council...) force union officers to avoid hurting their traditional grassroots:

2026AM: It's true that when a trade union represents more than 40% of the employees, there are a lot of issues at stake because it keeps hold of the work's council and many things we don't want to lose. It threatens the means of support of trade union. But sometimes you have to put your foot in it. (salaried employee part of CGT and MRAP).

2008AM: One have strategical interests that make him shut up. This is the feeling I get sometimes, this is what I feel. Some of us prefer to keep their mouth shut because the interests at stake are important for them. Most of the time, they are electoral interests and it gets on my nerves. During an election, you must not provoke a scandal. [Laughs]. Some people had their own ideas but because of the elections you have the feeling that they push them aside. They pretend not to see anything till the day the problem will explode. This is what I'm fearing the most: the fact that it would explode right in our faces if our company is nor public spirited and if we don't do anything.

The issues are even more important that the possibilities of drivers' career evolution are limited and access to union responsibilities is a rare opportunity:

2027AM: We've got a problem with the integration of young people. When a militant has responsibilities, he doesn't want to give up on them because he finally does something else than driving a bus. So we've got problems to integrate new people.

Besides, union trades members are already staggering under the management of current matters and they can't deal with everything at once:

2026AM: It's also true that with this type of functioning, we're staggering under tons of... (...) 95% of employees ask militants or the trade union questions like: "Why has my grant lessen? Why can't I be promoted?" Very basic subjects! So we spend a lot of time to sort out that type of things, which are important but not worth 95% of our time. This is to the detriment of other subjects like the fight against discrimination.

One of the consequences of this militant weakness is the fact that trade-unions do not dare to sort too much the persons they give responsibilities:

2007AM: The decline of union trades is important: It's not new but it's going on and on. They hadn't find a way to stop it so you can find a union officer who is racist. I mean no one can avoid it (salaried employee, MRAP-RATP officer)

A management which doesn't want to "make waves"

As far as the management is concerned, it seems that its main concern is not to risk to enter in conflicts with the employees, about this issue, when there is a lack of initiative from the supervisory staff :

"today, they said "No, there's no more racism than elsewhere. But it is not true, there's more racism than elsewhere. The only problem is that no supervisor, and I the first, I don't deny it, won't dare to enter in conflict (...) because it is not something one can do. So (...) the company says "Nothing goes up"" 2007AM)

or without the support of trade- union :

"Management won't follow if the union trades are not ready . It won't stand against the trade- unions: if they don't ask its help, it won't do it. Everything is fine for them, they don't want to make waves. It is the policy of the RATP: everything is fine! We'll see when it explodes" 2008AM)

So the question is about displaying the racism issue in the open, in front of a management who wants above all hush the problem up:

2026AM: In most cases, they just try to calm things down and call it quits. It would justify the fact that a group of the MRAP... An other reason is that when you only cover the problem, nothing really go better. As a supervisor, I've already dismiss people but it was because they had made a big fault. (...) The role of supervisors in the RATP, whatever the conflict is, is... ok, we're going to make sure everything calm down and then... (...) it is so much more comfortable! We never solve any problem.

A essential motivation concerning the creation of a section linked to the MRAP is therefore to put in the agenda the question of racism and its treatment by the company and by union's authorities as well, with the will to integrate the outsiders in the RATP family, in the same way as in *firm n° 2*

A strategy concerning three issues

Faced with the obstacles they identify, the strategy of the founders of MRAP-RATP is

composed of three axes: concerning minority young people, they put themselves in a situation of protection and mediation; they bring pressure on trade-union to incite them to seize the problem; they act as partners of the management to bring them to determine anti-discriminatory rules.

Protecting minorities and making them invisible

Leaning on a core of executives and elected union members, militants of the MRAP try to ease things down and to protect young people from too much discriminatory treatments. They do it by intervening individually when they work on particular cases, by making themselves spokesmen of minorities workers and by encouraging the management to act in order to calm things down :

2007AM: And the drivers know that I'm here. When they've got a problem, they tell me about it before making a fuss... It is also the goal! They don't get excited on their own. Because an agent, alone, would complain about racism. They head him for failure because he challenges the foundations of the company. And the company won't forgive him, not to the one who is responsible of a racist act. But the one who denounced him (...) but when I'm the one who goes to the management and says "eh oh, calm down there", they are afraid, they think this old man there, this idiot, he will make a mess [laugh] It's true that the issues at stake are not the same: for a driver, it is all his career.

By utilizing their position, their seniority, personal networks, they try to limit the impact of racist harrasment some employees from minority could be victim of and to calm down these latter and urge them upon discreteness, invisibility and avoid eventual explosions. By interpellating the centers managers, or even the direction of bus network, they try first of all to individualise the treatment of the case in order to forestall conflicts.

2026AM: a west indian bus driver... On a sunday morning, the bus which should have gone first had a problem, the doors had been broken. So, he arrive with the second bus but he had to take people of the first bus as well as those of the second. So there is a profusion of people, and it doesn't go off well. He hailed an supervisor who was there this morning and told him: "Perhaps you should have told me that I was going to be in that situation". And the supervisor would have answer him: "Anyway, it wasn't really a problem, there were only Blacks and Arabs." The fact that the driver is West-Indian adds to it. So the colleague doesn't take it well and talks about it to a member of the MRAP. And the discussion was: What should we do for this case? And the request of two or three adherents was a sanction; We all had a little discussion and we decided that first, the case would be the subject of a letter sent to the centre direction to ask for an audience, a meeting. And the two people should at least be able to talk.

By offering an alternative to the generalised deafness which results of minimization or denial, it is a question of preventing outburst of violence or withdrawal on community in-group which would threaten the unity of the RATP family.

A victim is in need to be reassured, to know that one does something, to be able to think I was understood

In a more general and preventive way, the founders of the MRAP-RATP have started a work of information and awareness. They visited the different depots to meet the management and the executive staff of the centres of exploitation in order to publicize the problems:

2008AM: We met the people in charge of the premises, the staff managers, the production managers. The welcome was pleasant. We set up an open-door day at depot W, there were union trades and everything went on well. We were seen as an

essential tool because these problems existed but everyone hid it. It seemed that no one wanted to face the problems. When the MRAP arrived, they were seen as the saviours: finally, here is an interlocutor we can speak to. They needed a tool. The MRAP played that role.

During our study, the militants of the MRAP were thinking of an information material for the whole staff in order to make everyone know that recourses exist and that the MRAP can intervene, without creating too many illusions on the chances of success of such approach.

2007AM: At the present time, the problem we've got is that people don't know their rights, nor the extent of the law. In fact, when they come to an anti-racist association they expect a procedure, something clear: they go to court and win. But, it doesn't really work that way. Or also they go and see a staff representative who would go and see the boss and the latter would say: Ok, this one will be laid off for 8 days because this executive had said a bullshit." That's not how it's going on! (...) We start by the reasoning saying "if we inform people globally - that means including racists (...), if we manage to inform everybody globally, people will know that there is an action which is possible (...) So, it's more in that direction, having a message, which, on one hand scares some people a little and, on the other hand, trains the others not to think that the creation of a section such as MRAP will solve all the problems.

Motivating unions

With union organizations, the question is to put the MRAP section on a non competitive footing. In the eyes of MRAP activists, once the issue of racism is going public, it is a business of the union to seize the problem, which threatens the unity of the workers :

2008AM: Normally, someone who is victim of discrimination, whatever the kind it is, should first contact his/her unionist organization. Whatever the kind of the latter, He has the choice in the company to do it. Yet today, many unions move back". (2007AM).

So, the ideal would be that unions intervene, but if they don't, the MRAP will.

"To me, it would have been the union's responsibility to intervene about that. And my union would have had more to win than to lose. I think there are corporatist interests which came into consideration so that nobody wanted to take care of this. It has been 15 years and I have never heard unions talk about it, about discrimination problems. None of them. On the contrary, the withdrawal regarding the changes in statute, when the door has been opened for foreigners, and the security speeches, that's something they have always been very good at, even if it was almost xenophobic, that's something they knew how to do. But when it was about discriminations! I've never seen a union being clear about that.

When asked about the presence of an anti-racism organization in the company, the union officials don't have much to say, either because they are not aware of this information ("It's possible, I didn't really pay attention" 2027AM; "Really?! Here, at the RATP, I didn't know..."2029AM) or because they choose a wait-and-see policy.

2014AM: at the top of the union, we've been rather standing back concerning that. We are waiting to see what they are going to and how it will be received. We wondered about what the link was, what their activities were. Compared to a union's activity... For the moment we don't have any answer because it is brand new. (...) We are following this very closely because we have friends who are there. We are waiting to see. That's all I can say about it.(CFDT RATP Official)

On the whole, they don't express any opposition to the installation of the MRAP (*"I know that they [the CGT militants] work in relation with other existing associations, so there is no reason why they shouldn't work with the MRAP" 2027AM*), but at the same time, they underline the risk that the organizations might discard this issue to associative activists who would become some kind of "specialists" at the margins of unions, as it was already the case in CGT where specialists of workers from oversea origin frequently complain that they are cut off their own organisation:

2027AM: I'm afraid we are in the same spirit. By saying it's a good thing, now we have an antiracist association. This is good, right! Because it can cover a wider area than the organization in itself and can be an important gathering place, which doesn't mean we have to turn away from this question.

The reception of union officials who oscillate between indifference and relief is, as a matter of fact, confirmed by the MRAP activists:

2008AM: The unions, no, we had no echo about them. We had no feedback. They have said nothing at all. It's a question each union, especially the CGT wanted to treat, but on an electoral, strategic level. They didn't dare to do it because of their voters. The appearance of the MRAP has been a real relief to them. It was a thorn taken out of their pillow: the problem was raised, it was going to arrive and to explode.

However, on the ground, the reactions would have been more diversified

« There have been two reactions. On the official level, it was very good. You are supported, you are perfect, we can't do it but what you do is very good, we are completely behind you. (...) if you need any help. And I'm not talking about the CE (Comité d'Entreprise = work's council), if you need a room, or some equipment, they will help you. (...) As we don't introduce ourselves as competitors, and as it is not their goal, they are ok with that, if we could do the job they are supposed to do, or they would like to do but can't (...) However, it's true that even inside their two organizations, there are some problems with this concern."2007AM)

Once again there is the fear of doing too much for «Arabs», «Blacks» and «Moslem». The involvement of well known union activists in the MRAP may harm the image of the trade-union, facing potential voters troubled by the rumors of their favouring minority groups.

The MRAP intervention also aims at motivating trade-unions to decide on a policy towards the openly racist union members, at a time when recruiting young union members is a question of survival. The interviewees in charge for trade-unions (CGT orCFDT) at high level of responsibilities, state that they would not hesitate to pronounce exclusions in the event of racist incidents. But they add that the case never occurred because overt racists are supposed to take themselves the decision to resign. However going to the the grassroot, discourses are very different : when overt racist expressions among the union-members are acknowledged, the question is whether exclude them or preferably try to bring them to change their mind step by step.

Q: What could the union do in order to fight racist behaviours in a more efficient way?

2026AM: First of all, it should be more careful within the union. And it should not tolerate racist talk among unionists.

Q: Do you mean that there is a kind of tolerance at the moment?

2026AM: When people are talking in an assembly, there is always someone to talk naturally in a racist way. It's part of their manners, of their ways of behaving. It's

even more difficult to accept that as we are in a union, but it's not easy either to talk about it to have these people changing their behaviour. Because we are not in the case of the supervisor who says «you don't talk like that or you will have problems».

Q: So it happens also in unionist assemblies?

2026AM: Well, it's true that during assemblies,... my god, where are we! From some people, who talk like that... (...) It's the discussion you can have with colleagues, work relations, and, who... The racial characterization, the racist insult, for some people it's obvious. In fact me, I would prefer that someone, who develops racists ideas would be a member of the CGT because, as long as he is a member of the CGT, I have the hope of making him change his mind.(....) With time, you can see people change. So, I'm not saying it's done already, but I prefer them to change, even if they don't instantly become converts and antiracist militants. I prefer them to stay and evolve slowly instead of seeing them slam the door and continue to utter their bullshit. (...) Discussions between unionists are usually more... When members disagree, whatever the subject on which they disagree, it never ends bad. It's not like an agent from the Maghreb who absolutely wants to say «Hi» to a fucking racist and they will have a quarrel and then it will end bad. I think that the structure, or the fact of being between unionists, who share a number of common values, helps in a way to gather people and to diminish these tensions.

To catch the management at its own marketing game

The MRAP activists also address the Administration management, and especially they take the company's speech about citizenship at its word :

2008AM: We felt it when we were doing our visits in the centres: for a lot of them there are emergency calls. There was the centre of Y where there were lots of problems between generations or between different cultures, which were very hard. The staff is divided by many conflicts, and it's really difficult. That's what frightens us the most. If it's not clearly stated at the RATP "there is equality for everyone in the RATP , we are all equal" that there is a white line not to be crossed, that there are laws, I think it should say that kind of things if it wants to be a decent firm for all, it has to go the whole way.

As the RATP set up a whole process in order to elaborate a charter of transports, a charter should be created about racism and discriminations. A educational device which would associate all partners in order to not restrict the question of racism and discrimination to a problem owned by minorities but instead to universalize it in terms of great principles which are relevant as well to travellers as to the staff :

2008AM: The idea we had, here at the MRAP and, which I set forward in the union, is a charter of good practices, concerning as well the employees as the passengers. The same way we have a charter about transports, we need one against discriminations. (...) Sometimes you need laws. And I think that a charter would be a kind of parapet and would give people a feeling of involvement. It's an interesting tool, but the charter should be established with the drivers. It shouldn't be created just like that. It should be created by a working group including persons from the management and from the workmanship. Same thing with passengers. It should be made in cooperation with the drivers and the passengers, we should manage to have a charter of good behaviour towards people.

The problem is also to motivate the Administration to communicate about antiracism and to use it as a marketing tool.

2007AM: When you sell transport and you want to give a good image, you also want to give the image of a socially-minded company. Not a socially minded company which gives bus to Cuba! It's just to clear out the garages.(...) We should try to treat this discrimination problem as a marketing style. Paradoxically. It's stupid because we turn it to a cake of soap, a marketing product, but the solution requires it. (...) Ten years ago, the RATP was proud of being socially-minded because it was proud to go in "difficult" districts to bring the good word. True or not, I'm not here to analyse, but it was part of its publicity! If we manage to make people understand that the fight against discriminations is a force (...) It would be better if the RATP made its publicity campaigns on its fight against discriminations."

The aim is to stake on the RATP's weight in the urban transport sector to incite other companies to follow it:

2007AM: When we are certified on our bus lines, we require the other participants to be certified too! It's the same logic... A large company, which comes in a thing like this one, brings inevitably other companies ! (...) If we manage to bring two or three other companies to get in this process of using the anti-discrimination fight as a marketing product, then many more people would be brought in this kind of thing and it would become a product like the others.

When we did our survey, MRAP's militants drew a mitigated assesment of their action, since the first year when their association was created. Among other things, they denounced the limits of a policy made of discreet pressures, which are both ponctual and individualised, and rely on the sociability networks of the funding members group that was created by co-optation. So they considered the possibility to talk to all the staff in a more systematic way, in order to make them join the association, to mobilize them and try to create a confrontation on the issue. A strategic change of direction which, if it was put in practice, could offer a new frame for collective voicings of the minorities' protest and anger, without it being communitarian.

VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE TRADE UNION PRACTICE

Breaking the law of silence

In 1997, the General Secretary of the FO confederation declared that “racism does not exist within companies,” adding that “it is not appropriate to talk about it, since this will create a division between workers” (AFP’s declaration). This way of thinking is far from being isolated in France. It rests on real difficulties that some activists have encountered in leading concrete antidiscriminatory actions, without finding themselves isolated from grassroot – these are facts that we collected during previous surveys in other areas¹². Within bureaucratic organizations, and according to the proverb “misfortune is brought to the one involved in a scandal”, it is more the denunciation of racism than its very existence which is the problem.

But the denegation or minimization of racist behaviours do not prevent division. The example of company n°1 shows that this attitude may result in an open separation between minority people, whose testimony is denounced as being not receivable (accused of being paranoiac, of adopting the position of the victim...) and trade unionists who are seeking to make “things better” but are actually seen by the formers as a party of the discrimination process. The result within the company, is the hardness of a frontier based both on ethnicity and generation.

The very division that unionists consider to be so dreadful can also have its positive effects. It is on this issue on racism that the local union of company n°3 happened to be completely rebuilt ; the exclusion of former racist leaders went together with the showing of minorities capacity to struggle, and even to the take over collective claims from the whole staff.

Within company n°2, the head on dealing with problems of racism (essentially direct discriminations) has contributed to the integration of minority people. It can even be said, what in France is still thought to be a paradox, that it has contributed to these people cultural assimilation within the whole collective (the “family” of carriers). In this situation characterized by real risks of division, trade union has really acted as a mediator, behaving as the guarantor for majority as well as minority people of an approach of incorporation practically defined in contractual terms as a “win-win” operation.

The constitution of a section of the anti-racist organization (MRAP) by activists of the two most important trade unions of the RATP is an example of the way to overcome the silence conspiracy. In that case, it is about modifying the “corporate culture” without breaking it. The tendency to minimize racism and discriminations is anchored in the institutional *habitus*, which consists both in “sorting out conflicts within the family framework” and in “defusing” them, by making compromises between individuals (like in the company number 1, but in a more institutional footing). Inspired by that “culture” and too directly implicated by the management of the company, the trade union officials are showing themselves unable and unwilling to break the consensus.

The RATP size has, for the first time in France, made possible the creation inside the company of a anti-racist association, conceived as a third party breaking the one to one

¹² See “Organisations syndicales, immigrants et minorités ethniques en Europe”, *Studies and researchs*, Paris, ISERES-European Social Fund, 2000

encounter between management and trade unions, too well-ordered to let racism and discrimination issues disrupt their agenda.

“Social usefulness” and general interest

In the companies we have studied, the minorities recruitment, generally corresponds to a necessity rather than a choice, even though there has been, in certain cases, policies favouring citizenship behavior and access to employment for young people from foreign background. Everywhere, these youngs have been summoned to answer to the utilitarian expectation which underpinned their exceptional hiring. In short, as always in such circumstances, they had to prove themselves so much than they are waited for the chance to trip them up, as shown by the disciplinary harassment they are often victims. Aware, since they are children, of this particular high standards expected from them, they often insist on their perfect adequacy to the job necessities, but also on the improvement that they have brought to the service, concerning the relations drivers-passengers.

The risk, in insisting on that second point, is of course their confinement in functions of order keeping and their being attributed the most difficult routes that most established employees don't want to serve (see Marseille).

The union action, in two of the case studies, though very different, has made it possible to overcome these pitfalls by imposing a definition of the situation, embedding the specific social usefulness of the newly hired people, in the general interest. In company n°2, this approach has been carried through thanks to the "universalist" position of the union, its refusal of specific jobs and status (and even of particular uniforms), but also via the imposition, on newcomers, of norms of professional and relational behaviour. In company n°3, it is not only by voicing opposition against racism, but by taking charge of the staff's general claims, that the new employees found a legit place in the company, as members of the staff and as union representatives as well. We witness there a complete modification of the situation's definition, since the ethnic boundary is replaced, at least partially, by the "classical" "employer/employee" cleavage line.

In those two companies, the union has largely contributed to deflate the ethnic definition of the issue through making room for footbridges and translations between general interest and special demands. However, those new shared definitions of situation are precarious and subject to current professional and relational dynamics.

One of the present and future challenges concerns the access of minorities to common place professional posting (bus routes and schedules traditionally distributed according to seniority), their ability to access training and promotion, and the displacement of the cleavage between proper and improper behavior concerning ethnic relations within the company : this concerns the openly racist expressions (insults, forms of sociability including racist jokes and comments, etc...), which persist and are still often minimized, and also, and maybe even more today, the hidden and insidious ones (suspicion, least toleration of professional misconduct, etc...).

For dealing with these problems, the unions generally agree on principles, but often disagree on the extent and the cost of their concrete application. The method which is proposed by the RATP antiracist activists, is the contractual elaboration of a charter of good practice. This is one of the possible way for converting the anti-discrimination measures into "universal" collective principles, that appears to be the best way to overcome the current pitfalls.

The minority experience

In view of the information gathered during this study, it appears that one of the systematically underestimated elements of the interethnic relations within the work collective, is the "minority experience" of the new workers.

Even if it is not as drastic as it is in the company n°1, the denial of this experience is common.

Yet, the direct experience of the process of racism, gives minorities a real expertise of the situations they have to face. The charges on paranoia or lack of humor aim at discrediting this experience. It is a part of contemporary racist ideology and practices in France, that the word of the minority is almost always challenged, or at least doubted, and in the best case considered as anecdotic. Yet, beyond individual cases, accounts on personal experiences of racism tend to unveil the modalities of discursive and behavioural expression of everyday racism¹³.

In fact, the entrance of minorities in work collectives where the expressions of racism are common-place and of no consequences, modify considerably the former interethnic relations status quo. First, it forces people to censure ordinary behaviours which can be perceived as hurtful or offensive. But above all, it tends to reveal facts that were unseen before, hidden, and often obscure for the protagonists¹⁴.

On a more symbolic way, but nevertheless with some practical effects, the new employees also refer their own place in the company to the experience of their ascendants. Thus, the refusal of playing the role of the "harki" (during the colonial war in Algérie, the harkis were the natives employed as extra military forces), of marginalization, obstacles to mobility, lack of respect, is fed by the colonial experience of their community, and the memory of the immigrant conditions which were imposed to their fathers. Therefore, lots of immigrants sons see their access to jobs they could'nt have before (because they were seen as trouble-makers), as an historical revenge.

Thus letting people tell their experience of racism and express their historical affiliation of identity - both are closely linked - could be an obligatory path to make racism at work decline from now on.

¹³ Cf. Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism*, Sage Publications 1991

¹⁴ Cf. Collette Guillaumin, "Femmes et théories de la société: remarques sur les effets théoriques de la colère des opprimées" in *sexe, race et pratique du pouvoir L'idée de nature*. Paris, Côté Femmes, 1990.

ANNEX – INTERVIEWS

Company n°1 interviews

2012AM: Driver, 45 years old, Maghreb origins, staff representative, CGT
2013AM: Driver "emploi jeune" (job created for a young unemployed person), 26 years old, Maghreb origins
2015AM: Driver, departmental union official, CGT
2016AM: Driver "emploi jeune", 20 years old, Maghreb origins
2022AM: Driver, 26 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2025AW: Executive, 38 years old, Maghreb origins, CFDT

Company n°2 interviews

2001AM: Chief of network operation, 53 years old, CGT
2002AW: Conductress, 25 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2003AM: Conductor, 26 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2004AM: Conductor, 25 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2005AM: Driver Inspector, 32 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2009AM: Driver Inspector, 33 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2010AM: Driver Inspector, 26 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2011AM: Driver Inspector, 20 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2020AM: Union official, 53 years old, CGT
2021AM: Conductor, 22 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2023AM: Driver Inspector, 23 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT

Company n°3 interviews

2006AM: Driver Inspector, 28 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2019AM: Driver Inspector, 37 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT
2024AM: Driver Inspector, 58 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT

MRAP-RATP interviews

2007AM: RATP Executive, 50 years old
2008AM: Driver Inspector, 38 years old, Maghreb origins, CFDT
2014AM: CFDT Secretary-general, 43 years old
2026AM: RATP Executive, CGT

RTM interviews (Régie des Transports de Marseille)

2017AM: Local union official, 48 years old, CGT
2018AM: Driver Inspector, 44 years old, Maghreb origins, CGT

Key respondent interviews

2027AM: CGT Transports Official
2028AM: FO Confédération Official
2029AM: CFGT Transport Official
2030AW: MRAP National Official
2031AM: Union départementale Official, CFDT Paris
2032AW: CODAC Official, Paris