

# Approximation on Broadcasting Experiences of Cultural Diversity and Immigration in Europe and Canada

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- *The article sets out the most significant results of the research work entitled “Approximation on the Broadcasting Experience of Cultural Diversity and Immigration in Europe and Canada” commissioned by the CAC Round Table on Diversity. On the basis of the migration and audiovisual context, it presents the evolution of public television programming in Europe and Canada in relation to immigration and cultural diversity. A review of the most representative and consolidated broadcasting experiences, as well as knowledge about the internal and external mechanisms of the stations to address the issue, makes it possible to extract the key issues surrounding the role of the media in multicultural societies.*

## **Key words**

Immigration, cultural minorities, cultural diversity, representation, access, audiovisual, television, Europe Canada

The issue of cultural diversity and the media has been gathering weight in Catalonia in recent years, although in Europe and Canada work has been done from diverse spheres, including the professional, political and public, for nearly half a century and has resulted in research and television programmes, policies and mechanisms to promote its presence on TV. This article is in fact the result of the CAC Round Table on Diversity’s desire to learn more about these experiences, having been commissioned to carry out research, funded by the Jaume Bofill Foundation, entitled, “Approximation of the Broadcasting Experiences on Cultural Diversity and Immigration in Europe and Canada”.

During the research period, a number of important events relating to the issue took place. For example, Unesco approved the Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expression at its most recent general conference<sup>1</sup>. The council representing the Intercultural Programmes Group at the EBU (European Broadcasting Union) met<sup>2</sup> to assess its work and to begin two projects: the preparation of a diversity tool kit<sup>3</sup> and the organisation of an international conference of public media to reflect on diversity policies in 2006. The Panos Institute in Paris organised a meeting of the Mediam’Rad network, entitled “Media of Diversity in Europe”, with the aim of sharing the situation in respective countries, analysing relations with the conventional media and proposing coordinated work<sup>4</sup>. In Canada, the meeting entitled Innoversity Creative Summit 2005 worked on cultural diversity, bringing together creators from diverse cultural trajectories and media professionals. Aside from the meetings of specialists, institutions and media on the topic, the present situation is marked by events like the terrorist attacks in London and the youth riots in the Paris suburbs – events that have shown the need to establish communication channels between the new generations that have emerged from immigration in

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Western societies and the recognition of diversity as a constitutional feature and not a problem to solve. Some media outlets try to incorporate this approach with the best of intentions. But finding out whether or not they achieve it in practice was not the aim of this work. Instead, it was to gather information on the most representative broadcasting experiences in relation to cultural diversity in the European and Canadian contexts in order to extract the key points of the role of the media in multicultural societies.

### **Methodology: Focus, Scope and Structure of the Research Work**

The research work was initially established as an approximation on the television experience of the general-interest media with regards cultural diversity, but the qualitative and quantitative importance of the meetings justified expanding the scope to include radio and cultural-minority media<sup>5</sup>. We considered it important to include elements of the migration context and the broadcasting policies of various countries and at the European scale. On the basis of these considerations, the research work went beyond the media-focussed approach towards a comprehensive take on the issue. Evaluations of specific or general programme types on issues of immigration and cultural diversity were ignored as a sterile debate. Experience shows they are all necessary. If we have to respond to the information needs of populations that arrive, so too must we make all society aware of the social changes that immigration generates and what living in a culturally diverse environment entails. Similarly, we found it unnecessary and even counterproductive to assess whether the general-interest or minority media were preferable, as both use different ways of approaching cultural diversity and/or specificity, which is why they complement each other.

In terms of the structure of content and following the approach of the research work, in the first section we reviewed the evolution of the treatment of the issue from the European framework and by countries. In the second chapter, we looked at the internal and external mechanisms of the stations that aim to promote diversity in the media.

### **The Approach Towards Cultural Diversity in the Media in the European Institutional Framework**

The discussion about media and cultural diversity in the European sphere has developed at the grassroots level in recent years, far from the institutions and the big media. Conferences, seminars and events have been held around Europe, particularly after 9/11, to reflect on the role and impact of the media in multicultural societies. The issue has been addressed from diverse perspectives, such as the media representation of cultural diversity, media staffing policies, media education in schools and the promotion of cultural minority media. From the geographic viewpoint, the issue has transcended the old countries of the EU to include the OSCE<sup>6</sup>, which considered it important to approach linguistic questions of minorities in the ex-Soviet republics and the Balkans.

The Council of Europe recently included the issue of 'media and diversity in contexts of crisis' on the political agenda in a new action plan agreed upon in Kiev in late 2005. But it has been skirting around the issue since the late 1970s, with the study 'The Big Media at the Service of the Cultural Identity of Migrant Workers'. This study did not give rise to precise orientations despite its results, nor was much effort made to publicise it. At the end of the 1980s, there were a number of European conferences focusing on ex-changes between researchers, organisations that promote cultural diversity in the media and representatives of the media most aware of this issue. The issues that concerned the Council of Europe at the time were respect for pluralism in the audiovisual landscape, the fight against multimedia monopolies and television's public service mission with regards cultural pluralism in society. Assessing the situation at the start of the 1990s, experts from the Council of Europe drew up various reports on the issue but few directives or guidelines were translated into political texts, particularly with regard to public-station policies, where intervention was, in principle, easier. On the other hand, a step forward was taken in making people aware of cultural diversity and immigration, which changed from being considered a social problem to being considered an aspect inherent to society. So, although the contribution of international organisations has not had a significant impact on the improvement of institutional policies, it may be that they have affected the field of reflection and promotion.

## **The Approach Towards Cultural Diversity on Television in Europe and Canada**

Although the migration and audiovisual situations of the European countries and Canada cannot be compared, and possibly in fact because of that, a review of the trajectory of this relationship in diverse national contexts enables us to learn about a rich range of experiences in relation to addressing cultural diversity. Each country has a history of migration and each television station has developed a certain type of programming depending on its political and broadcasting framework. Comparing the current situations and trajectories in various countries, which is not explicitly established, makes it possible to find similar and different aspects in audiovisual policies, programming and multicultural media. Bearing diverse criteria in mind, we selected the following European countries: Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

### **Germany**

The first public programmes of a national and regional scope for immigrants began to be broadcast in the 1960s. The 'guest workers' programmes became a crucial part of the daily rituals of many immigrant families. According to Unesco, more than 75% of immigrant workers in Germany listened to them faithfully in the mid-1970s. As in the rest of Europe, these programmes disappeared for various reasons based on the evolution of the country's migration and broadcasting situations, such as the entry of satellite and cable stations, giving rise to a more multicultural type of programming in Germany addressed at the general public. In terms of multicultural initiatives aimed at hybrid and ethnically diverse audiences, today's situation is not terribly encouraging. On the one hand, this is due to competition between the big TV stations in the immigrants' home countries and on the other, because of most German people's and stations' lack of knowledge about multicultural issues. In fact, the political and social process towards the recognition of the migration reality in the country has had a very limited repercussion in the media production industry. Many journalist children of immigrants confirm the significant difficulties they face getting into the German media, particularly television. Figures from 2001 speak of between 1% and 3% of journalists on staff at the stations having an

immigrant background. On the other hand, there are experiences that support a multicultural approach, such as the regional public station WDR in Cologne, which has maintained a policy sensitive to the migration reality both in terms of production and programming.

The French-German public station ARTE warrants special mention in the framework of media with specific approaches towards cultural diversity. ARTE appeared on the European broadcasting scene in 1998 with the aim of designing, realising and promoting television programmes of a cultural and international nature, and promoting understanding between the peoples of Europe. In this regard, the immigrant population, and more particularly cultural diversity in European society, became a transversal line both in the approach towards issues and in programming. ARTE is associated with various public stations in Europe, including TVE in Spain, ORF in Austria, RTBG in Belgium, NPS in the Netherlands and the BBC.

### **Belgium**

Cultural diversity in the Belgian media has been tackled from various angles. The French-speaking public station began to be concerned with the issue and to incorporate it in its programming in terms of the news service in the 1960s, 20 years after the arrival of the first waves of Italian migrants to the country, to respond to the information requirements of the immigrants of southern Europe, Turkey and North Africa. These programmes evolved over the years, but it was not until the extreme right used immigration to capture votes that the government reacted. Between the 1970s and 1980s, anti-racist campaigns began and immigration committees started to establish links with immigrants and the ethnic communities that had been ignored for decades. Today the programming of the country's public stations is diverse. While the Flemish-speaking channel offers a range of multicultural programmes of diverse genres, ranging from current-affairs shows to the hybrid genre of the docusoap, fiction series and children's shows, the French-speaking public station has not diversified its multicultural offer.

For their part, the local media have taken up communication experiences from the associative world over the past few years which, as well as complementing the institutional television offer, have promoted immigrants' access to

the broadcasting space, taking power away from the simplified representation of immigration that the big media generally show.

### France

The issue of diversity in the French media has been taken up over the past 15 years, on the one hand from the social and professional fields, and on the other hand from the institutional and media ones in a process towards visibility and proposals for change. In 1998 the Collectif Egalité denounced the absence of *visible minorities*<sup>7</sup> in the media and called for a better representation of black-blanc-beur France. The Collectif's president denounced the Ministry of Culture for its discriminatory attitude towards black people. In a second phase, the group took up a position in favour of a policy of quotas on television stations, questioning republican principles, and took its demands to the CSA<sup>8</sup>, which assumed a mediator role in the process of raising awareness about the situation. To bring the issue to an end, it commissioned a study entitled "Presence and Representation of Visible Minorities on French Television". In 1999, on the basis on the results of this study, the CSA released a statement saying that a fair representation of visible minorities in the media was the only credible way, in terms of television, to carry out its role as an integrator, i.e., to reflect French society as it is, and pledged to monitor compliance of the new obligations of the *cahiers de charges* of the public media on the basis of the application of the 2001 decree, and to also transfer it to private stations, usually more open when it comes to reflecting social diversity.

With regards the presence of journalists on French TV as a measure of reflecting diversity, besides the period of specific chat shows promoted by the Fund for Social Action during the mid-1970s, the issue was taken up at the start of the 1990s with the progressive incorporation of journalists of diverse cultural backgrounds at the head of news programmes and as characters in popular fiction series. In fact, after 2000, many professionals from cultural minorities joined cable and terrestrial stations, presenting the news, weather and other types of shows. Despite isolated cases that illustrate an evolution towards visibility, these initiatives show the stations' desire to develop a situation in which there is still a long way to go in the field of representation to overcome stereotypes.

### Italy

Italian public television has followed two parallel roads since the end of the 1980s to inform about immigration coinciding with the rise in the arrival of foreigners to the country. On the one hand, by approaching the issue in programmes addressed at a general audience, and on the other hand via specific programmes addressed at immigrants. The general stations give little importance to immigrants as a potential audience, an attitude that will possibly grow over coming years. On the other hand, since the 1990s the local media have promoted numerous experiences of multilingual programming, particularly on radio, with the aim of favouring access to the media for immigrants in the region and at the same time guaranteeing a more correct representation. Some of the most significant initiatives of this era in local television include *Una strada a colori*, from Teleregione in Rome and *Bianco, nero e a colori*, from Antena Vesuvio in Naples. Other shows appeared around the year 2000, following a mixed funding model. These included *Extra TG*, from TV Vicenza, *Mosaico*, from the local television station in Pisa, and *TG Multietnico*, from TeleBrescia, with a scope that covered 12 provinces.

### The Netherlands

Cultural diversity has been a key issue in Dutch broadcasting policies, particularly in the public and local media, because of social and professional organisations that have devoted themselves to this issue and because of the proliferation of media aimed at minorities which has favoured the legislation. Besides the programmes on public stations in the 1970s addressed at immigrants, institutional measures to support the diversity policy of the 1990s have been transmitted by the public broadcasting authority with regards the work sphere, by programming and by the production of national and regional public media.

Despite progressive institutional support for broadcasting companies to promote a diversity policy, and the growing demands of professionals from cultural minorities, there is still a certain resistance on the part of the broadcasting industry to become inter-culturalised. However, their presence in the general media, and particularly at the head of minority media, has contributed to an improvement in the media representation of multiculturalism in Dutch society. In this sense, the diversity of radio and television cable sta-

tions managed by and addressed at cultural minorities warrants special attention because of the role they play in the processes of integration and representation. On the basis of the broadcasting policy of concentration and professionalism of local media, in 2001 local immigrant television stations in Holland's major cities formed a single national television station called Multicultural Television of the Netherlands. As well as MTNL, there are presently around 200 local radio and television initiatives managed by and addressed at cultural minorities in the country.

### **United Kingdom**

The representation of cultural diversity has been an important base of the British media, both in terms of institutional policies and internal media initiatives to show a faithful reflection of the multicultural society. Today, social pressure in the area of the fight against racial discrimination and the demands of channels of expression by cultural minorities have influenced the proliferation of media and initiatives to promote self-representation. In terms of television, the first waves of immigrants to the United Kingdom coincided with the birth of TV. Since then, immigration gradually became a concern of the public stations, both because of the fact the immigrants developed into a new audience and in terms of the stations' responsibility to show them on-screen. Over time, the stations, particularly the public ones<sup>9</sup>, began to incorporate the diversity of British society in their programming, either through specific programmes or ones of a general scope, and with the support of internal mechanisms such as Channel 4's Multicultural Programmes Unit and the BBC's Asian Network, among many others. The presence of professionals from ethnic minorities in the media took on an official and planned character in 1988, when the BBC adopted an equal opportunities policy so that the composition of the staff would fully reflect that of society. The creation of Channel 4 also contributed to a rise in the number of professionals from ethnic minorities for three reasons: the station's vocation to serve all minorities, mixed funding, and the opening up to independent producers. In fact, in 2003, 11% of the station's employees were from minority groups, along with 8% of managers. For 2006 the prevision is for 13% and 9% respectively. In the case of the BBC, 22.5% of job applications in 2004 came from ethnic minorities, although they represented only 13% of

contracted staff. For 2007, the BBC has proposed new goals for the representation of ethnic minorities to cover 12.5% of the whole workforce and 7% of management positions.

Despite the critics, the United Kingdom is the country with the highest level of good practices in relation to the representation of ethnic minorities in the media, particularly because of the rollout of the equal opportunities policy, compared with other European countries which still do not have institutional mechanisms to check the presence of minorities in the broadcast industry.

### **Canada**

In Canada, the media plays an important role in the public perception of multiculturalism, which is at the same time a defining trait of the country at the official level, making it a link for the newly arrived in the new context and helping the rest of society be more aware of the changes of a diverse society. "While the general-interest media usually broadcast problems related to immigration, the ethnic media tend to show stories of integration in daily life"<sup>10</sup>. Even so, there are increasingly more general media aware of the need to improve treatment with regards diversity both behind and in front of the camera.

In 2003, research work by the Canadian Private Broadcasters' Association, commissioned by the broadcasting regulatory authority, publicised the state of the matter with regards the presence and representation of cultural diversity on private Canadian television. The results confirmed the existence of serious problems of under-representation of visible minorities and aborigines in front of and behind the camera. The study spoke of the trend towards 'ghettoes' of professionals from cultural minorities in media outlets or programmes addressed at their group, and of the difficulties in accessing the conventional media. This was despite the application of an equal opportunities work policy in public stations of a national scope based on the principles of justice, balance and equality. In principle, the CBC<sup>11</sup> has a workforce "as diverse as that of Canadian society".

In relation to Quebec, where there are media outlets in English and French, ethnocultural and racial diversity is not so well represented on the French stations as on the English ones. This might be because the French-speaking industry is more focused on the history of the Quebecois rather

than immigrants. Also, there is the fact that the audiences of cultural minorities, for diverse reasons, tend to watch broadcasts in English. The broadcast production market with regards cultural diversity is concentrated particularly in Montreal because of the multicultural composition of its society. In general, besides the Canadian public stations, private and community ones also apply the multicultural approach to their work and programming spheres. Special mention goes to Télé Québec and City TT, as well as the multilingual radio and television stations that began in the 1970s, CHIN International and OMNI TV in Toronto.

### **Mechanisms to Promote Cultural Diversity in the Media**

There are a number of initiatives in Europe linked to organisations and institutions aimed at promoting cultural diversity in the general media, raising professional awareness, training cultural minorities and promoting ethnic media. One example is On Line More Colour in the Media, OLMCM, which has been promoting the European Day of Media Monitoring since 2003, a project that forms part of the European Week of Media and Minorities dedicated to analysing the treatment of cultural minorities and immigrants in the conventional and minority media of diverse countries and at the European level. The 2004 congress disseminated the European Manifesto of Minority Community Media, both at the institutional level of the European Parliament and through media outlets and associations.

Prizes are another important mechanism when it comes to assessing audiovisual productions in favour of social integration. Some of the most consolidated in Europe and by countries are: Prix Iris, "European Media Prize for Equality and Tolerance"; Prix Civis, which depends on the Civis Media Foundation for integration and cultural diversity in Europe. This award gave rise to the Civis Youth Video Award, aimed at young filmmakers on the issue of "living in cultural diversity"; the Ebu Prix Jalla, an award created on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EBU's Intercultural Programme Group which recognises young filmmakers committed to a multicultural Europe, and IFJI, an award from the International Federation of Journalists for the journalistic production that has most contributed to improving unders-

tanding within the multicultural European society.

Once again, the internet has become an essential tool in coordinating initiatives at the European level and offering resources. Highlights include three portals specifically devoted to the media and multiculturalism: the On Line More Colour in the Media network manages a resources portal called The Multicultural Skyscraper<sup>12</sup>; MMC 2000<sup>13</sup> (Multicultural Multimedia Channel), created by the Italian NGO Cospe, a member of the OLMCM network and conceived as a platform for multicultural media from that country with links to European initiatives; and TV Plurielle<sup>14</sup>, created by the organisation Médias France Plurielle by journalists from different backgrounds.

However, in the various countries there are internal mechanisms in the channels that affect work and production policies, as well as external initiatives from different professional and social organizations. Below is a selection, without entering into any type of assessment, of the most representative and best consolidated in the different countries. Beginning with TV stations' internal mechanisms, there are the following: In Germany the regional station of North Rhine-Westphalia, WDR, has had a reference figure for questions of integration and cultural diversity since the late 1990s<sup>15</sup>. In Belgium, the Flemish public station VRT started a Positive Action Plan in 1999 to increase contracting of staff from diverse cultural backgrounds and achieve a balanced representation in programming, which gave rise to mechanisms like the "Diversity Charter"<sup>16</sup> and the "Diversity Cell"<sup>17</sup>. In France, the Week for Integration and Against Discrimination on France 3 has been held since 2003, with institutional support from the HCI<sup>18</sup>, linked to the OLMCM's European Week of Media and Minorities. Another important measure is the Positive Action Plan for Integration at France Televisions, presented in 2004, with the aim of improving the representation of the diversity of the French population on TV which arose from a report on visible minorities in the public television service.

Countries with a long history of migration feature policies to promote equal opportunities, such as positive discrimination, which is followed by the public TV stations of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Canada to ensure the presence of staff from minority groups in proportion to their representation in society through a system of quotas. In the UK, the BBC has begun other initiatives and pro-

grammes: Ascend, a training course for members of ethnic minorities within the company; the BBC Mentor Project, an initiative to promote access to students interested in working in the media through a mentor figure; BBC New Talent, a programme that promotes talents in diverse genres and functions; Diversity Database, a database that permits access to people and organisations related with cultural diversity in the country, and the position of the Head of Diversity, in charge of coordinating and following the station's measures with respect to diversity, in the areas of programming and staff.

At the same time, the involvement of institutions in improving the representation of cultural diversity in the media has generated a range of measures of significant impact. In the Netherlands, the government has developed policies aimed at promoting multiculturalism in the media through the preparation of documents debated in Parliament, regulations, ongoing research, the signing of agreements, government plans and prizes. One example is the integration policy document *Getting Opportunities, Taking Opportunities: Integration Policy for the 1999-2000 Period*, which includes the role of communication in the framework of the integration policy; the 1999 government plan on the media and minorities entitled *Make Way for Cultural Diversity*, which aimed to transfer the changes in the composition of Dutch society to the media in terms of programmes, production and audiences; and the signing in 2001 of the agreement of the public radio and television authority (NOS) with the ministers of Social Affairs and Employment and Urban Policy and the Integration of Ethnic Minorities to start up an intercultural policy of human resources.

As a measure implemented by diverse British public and private stations<sup>19</sup>, the Cultural Diversity Network has been dedicated since 2000 to promoting the improvement of the representation of ethnic minorities both in front of and behind the camera, from a commitment on the parts of the managers and directors. Some of the mechanisms the CDN has shored up are quotas for contracting people from ethnic minorities in all positions, the creation of online databases of ethnic minorities, the promotion of research about cultural diversity in the media, and the implementation of cultural diversity monitoring systems on stations and the incorporation of a multicultural approach to news production and presentation.

In the associative and professional areas there are initiatives in all the countries dedicated to raising awareness about the multicultural reality of communication, the promotion of access of cultural minorities to the media and the improvement of their representation. In Italy, the Federation of Foreign Cultural Media became a platform for the media and journalists from diverse backgrounds, and Asterisco is responsible for the Comunicando Festival dedicated to intercultural communication. In the Netherlands, Mira Media is a reference point in this field and also promotes European initiatives like the OLMCM Network. In France, the Collectif Egalité and Club Averroes develop monitoring, reflection and claims work on the representation of visible minorities on the stations. In the UK, the CMA<sup>20</sup> supports the third audiovisual sector from a multicultural perspective. In Canada, the ACTRA<sup>21</sup> has become a defence organisation of minority interests and demands, and the Innoversity meeting creates bridges between innovation and diversity in the media.

### **By Way of an End or Beginning**

Beyond the presentation of programmes about immigration and cultural diversity on European public television stations that this article sets out, the issue of their representation can be tackled from diverse viewpoints, such as an equal opportunities policy, anti-racism, the right to access and even the commercial requirements of the broadcasting industry. These aspects have not been dealt with here, despite how interesting they are, but I do want to mention a reflection by Club Averroes on the role of the media today. "Given the impossibility of fighting discrimination against cultural minorities without resolving the issue of the negative clichés that society surrounds itself with, communication is the key sector that will make it possible to repair this injustice". Despite the media's limitation in this respect, there have been successful and consolidated experiences that show how the media can handle the multicultural reality. Knowing how other countries with a longstanding tradition of migration have approached this challenge is fundamental to being able to profit from and adapt these experiences to the media and sociocultural contexts of Catalonia. This article represents a step in that direction.

## Notes

- 1 Unesco intergovernmental conference which took place in Paris from 3 to 21 October 2005.
- 2 Meeting held in Berlin on 18 October 2005.
- 3 The diversity tool kit is established as a collection of diversity mechanisms and policies of Europe's public stations.
- 4 With this meeting (21 and 22 October), the Panos Institute decided to include representatives from Catalonia and Spain in the Mediam'Rad network.
- 5 The publication's topic, i.e., "Immigration and Television" and space limits mean the article focuses only on the public television experiences, leaving aside private and community ones or looking at the issue from genres. It also does not include radio initiatives, the section devoted to the legal framework or recommendations on this question.
- 6 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
- 7 *Visible minorities* are understood to mean ethnic minorities of a non-European origin, classified into three groups: blacks, Maghrebis/Arabs and Asians.
- 8 Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel.
- 9 Channel 4 was included in this category, even though it is an exclusively private station.
- 10 Reflections from the article "Ethnicity and Media" at the Diversity Now! Website of OVNI TV (29 June 2005).
- 11 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
- 12 [www.multicultural.net](http://www.multicultural.net)
- 13 [www.mmc2000.net](http://www.mmc2000.net)
- 14 <http://tvplurielle.free.fr>
- 15 Its action principle considers that "the keys to acquiring competence in a multicultural context are mobility, flexibility and integration". It says that cultural diversity among staff is an indispensable condition for producing mutual learning relations and progressing in a multicultural capacity from the professional sphere.
- 16 A declaration of commitments to be able to reflect cultural diversity in all spheres of the station.
- 17 Specific staff members dedicated to stimulating a balanced representation of cultural diversity in programming, creating awareness on the issue among programme heads and favouring the incorporation into the station of new talents from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- 18 High Council of Immigration.
- 19 The member stations of the CDN are: BBC, Channel 4, Sky, Five, GMTV, ITN, ITV, PACT and SMG Television.
- 20 Community Media Association.
- 21 Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists.