

Featured Translated Research Outside the Anglosphere

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Cultural diversity according to Netflix: a means of legitimizing an industrial strategy?

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Abstract: The theme of diversity is a central feature of Netflix’s communication practice and is a key element for legitimizing its corporate strategy. Netflix’s discourse on diversity varies according to the company’s interests. This article highlights three dimensions of diversity which structure Netflix’s communication practices: algorithmic diversity, globalized diversity, and inclusive diversity.

Keywords: Netflix; cultural diversity; corporate strategy; video on demand; SVOD

In the audiovisual industry, the issue of diversity has been the subject of numerous debates and controversies, in both the scientific and institutional worlds, for about sixty years (Mattelart 2017), which are finding new opportunities for renewal in the context of digital platforms development (Albornoz and Garcia Leiva 2019). In the political economy of communication, research on diversity highlights the fact that it is impossible to objectify without taking into account the discourses and strategies implemented by the social actors concerned. In this regard, discourses on diversity appear first and foremost as “discourses of truth,” embedded in games of legitimization and power (Bouquillion and Combès 2011; Bouquillion 2008).

As the world’s leading video-on-demand platform, with more than 230 million subscribers at the start of 2023, Netflix also plays a major role in the production of films and series, occupying an increasingly decisive position in the global audiovisual

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economy (Wiart 2021, 2022). Its model has become a benchmark within the industry and is disrupting audiovisual ecosystems around the world, raising a range of concerns and worries in the process. The omnipotence of a company like Netflix, capable of mastering consumer behavior data and imposing itself both upstream and downstream in the audiovisual industry, is thus perceived by a number of professional and political players as a potential threat to cultural diversity (Cardou 2021). Yet it turns out that the theme of diversity is at the heart of the accompanying discourse that Netflix is developing about its activities, and is even becoming, according to our hypothesis, a central element in the legitimization of its strategy. How does Netflix understand and emphasize the notion of diversity in its communications? What features of diversity does the company choose to emphasize? How does Netflix's communication on diversity fit in with its expansionist industrial strategy?

To address these research questions, we conducted an analysis of Netflix's discourse and strategy, based on a corpus of documents drawn from the platform's official communication and an interview with its communication director in France. Flexible enough for Netflix to invest it with different meanings, we will show in this article that diversity is the subject of a discourse, during which its content appears to be modulated according to the company's own interests in order to consolidate its market power.

1 Theoretical and methodological approach

1.1 Framing diversity into discourse

The term diversity is characterized by its plasticity and the semantic ambiguity that surrounds it. Our research into its use in Netflix's communication and strategy is in line with this polysemy of the term, but mainly encounters the work and approaches of two scientific anchors. The first is that of political science researchers, who have shown that diversity is a theme of Anglo-Saxon origin, forged in a context of consolidation of anti-discrimination policies in the United States since the 1970s, before spreading to business circles, where the concept would become the subject of managerial recovery (Bereni 2009). In the 2000s, under the influence of European institutions and multinationals based on the continent, this theme spread to Europe. In France, the word "diversity" appeared in the public arena in the mid-2000s, taking over from the terms "positive discrimination" and "equal opportunity" (Bereni and Jaunait 2009; Sénac 2012). Subordinated to the principle of equality, diversity has become the generic concept for public policies aimed at providing greater support for populations with "diversity backgrounds," the term here referring to the ethnic origin, religion or skin color. It is used and claimed in this sense by public policies for

which diversity is “frequently conceived as a value in itself, an ideal to be achieved: it then refers to the image of a society made up of disparate elements harmoniously assembled” (Bereni and Jaunait 2009). It is also mobilized in a significant way by the business world, as witnessed in particular by the employers’ “Diversity Charter” initiative (Point 2006a, 2006b). Marie-Cécile Naves (2012) shows that the term has notably become a tool of economic marketing. Displaying their support for diversity would be an opportunity for companies to become part of a narrative of tolerance and improve their image.

Second, our research is based on a fertile current of information and communication science that seeks to study the cultural and creative industries from a critical perspective (Bouquillion et al. 2013). In this context, it is the notion of “cultural diversity” and its evolution since the 2000s that is being studied by researchers. While Armand Mattelart points out its ambiguous or equivocal nature since it took over from the term “cultural exception” in the mid-1990s, cultural diversity has nonetheless formed a common basis for many public policies since the adoption of the UNESCO convention dedicated to it in 2005 (Mattelart 2009). Cultural diversity refers to the need to maintain and promote a plurality of cultural expressions potentially threatened by globalization, trade liberalization and the expansionist ambitions of the main industrial players in the culture and communications sectors. Viewed in this way, cultural diversity “presents itself as the guarantor of the maintenance of national or regional policies related to its preservation” (Mairesse and Rochelandet 2015).

With the development of digital platforms, researchers in information and communication sciences working on cultural industries show that discourses on cultural diversity now oscillate between catastrophism and enchanted vision (Bouquillion and Combès 2011). On the one hand, we find researchers insisting on the benefits of the digital economy for consumers and creators, with both cultural content and tools for creation and distribution now accessible to the greatest number (Jenkins 2006). On the other hand, the concentration, globalization and financialization of the cultural industries would encourage the standardization and Americanization of content. The increased power of platforms and their market power leave little room for marginalized cultural diversity (Smyrnaio 2017). Such observations are in line with the theory of cultural imperialism, which has denounced since the 1970s a “form of domination that crushes the diversity of cultures under the weight of a homogenizing culture” (Chaubet and Martin 2011). Initially focused on criticizing dominant states, this theory then evolved into an approach that places greater “emphasis on the power of multinational firms, particularly in the cultural and media industries” (Chaubet and Martin 2011).

At the heart of the economic and technological dynamics at play, the theme of cultural diversity remains prevalent and appears to be a consensus enough for

industrialists to seize upon and turn it into a commercial slogan, as exemplified by the Vivendi group during the time it was led by Jean-Marie Messier (Bouquillion 2008). Claiming a course of action favorable to the expression and dissemination of a diversity of cultural content in fact makes it possible to support and legitimize a business strategy towards the various stakeholders of the company (investors, suppliers, public authorities, media, consumers, etc.). In the audiovisual sector, this theme has taken on greater importance, first with the proliferation of television channels, then with SVOD platforms, which have “led to the distribution of audiences around more clearly targeted programs” and to the adoption by audiovisual groups, particularly in the United States, of editorial lines articulated around multiculturalism and diversity (David 2021). In this context, the use of cultural diversity appears to be a means of better segmenting the content on offer to win over new audiences. The discourse on cultural diversity promoted by dominant audiovisual players such as Netflix can thus be interpreted in terms of their role in supporting development strategies designed to ensure their economic expansion.

1.2 A hybrid approach of a communicative corpus

It is in the light of these theoretical developments that we investigated. From various corporate websites of Netflix, we collected all texts and documents that we found to be related, directly or indirectly, to diversity, published in English. Our corpus consists of nearly 200 documents published online between 2012 and 2021. To compile it, three sources were utilized: the *Netflix TechBlog*, where the company’s technical teams (engineers, developers, data scientists, etc.) communicate about the innovations they develop; the *NetflixJobs* site, dedicated to disseminating information about its corporate culture, human resources management and recruitment policy; and the *newsroom*, where Netflix disseminates its press releases.

This corpus of documents provides us with a comprehensive overview of how Netflix approaches diversity in the different contexts of enunciation that characterize its corporate communication. It is based on a hybrid approach, both quantitative and qualitative. On the one hand, the corpus served as the basis for a textometric analysis carried out using the Iramuteq software.¹ The aim of these statistical manipulations was to identify recurrences in the terms used, as well as lexical proximities by highlighting obvious links between groups of words. This approach makes it possible to identify the lexical universes invoked by Netflix in its communication whenever the argument of diversity is invoked. Furthermore, we

¹ Technical manipulations were carried out by Coraline Lethimonnier, econometrician (Stats&Co), based on our guidelines.

worked on this corpus qualitatively, through an analytical reading of the texts it contains. Finally, the analysis was completed by an interview with Joïakim Tuil, Communications Director of Netflix France, conducted in December 2021. The interview, semi-structured in nature, was centered around Netflix's stance and the diversity initiatives undertaken by the company.

2 Three prisms of diversity according to Netflix

The analysis we carried out identified three registers of discourse, depending on whether diversity is focused on the algorithm, the production of local content or the inclusion of under-represented themes and social groups. Throughout our argumentation, the deployment of these discourses is apprehended with regard to Netflix's strategy, its objectives and its main evolutions.

2.1 Algorithmic diversity

The first form of diversity to consider is the role played by the platform's algorithmic recommendation system. As early as the late 1990s, when Netflix's business consisted of renting DVDs remotely, its teams were thinking about developing a device to support subscribers' decisions. Initially imagined to "divert customers' attention from films the company no longer had, or didn't have enough in stock" and to "bring up the more profitable films for Netflix," the system was eventually configured "backwards: instead of starting from available stock to influence the consumer, it was better to start from consumer tastes to manage stock" (Le Diberder 2019). In 2000, under the name Cinematch, Netflix introduced its first recommendation system, which uses its members' data to make suggestions tailored to their profile and preferences.

In practice, Netflix's recommendation system is based on collaborative filtering, the principle of which consists in predicting which works are likely to appeal to a subscriber by matching his or her profile with those of other subscribers with similar consumption behaviors. To operate, the algorithm uses explicit (ratings provided by members, etc.) and implicit (viewing practices, browsing history, devices used, etc.) data about subscribers, plus information about the content itself (genre, directors, actors, etc.). Recommendations are automatically displayed on screen, and take their place in the interface in the form of personalized content lists based on each member's profile. Within the platform, Netflix also gives its users access to didactic information on how the algorithm works. This posture of transparency aims to develop "awareness" among users and encourage them to act in accordance with the practices prescribed by the platform (Drumond et al. 2018). In any case, this is what

the engineering and development teams explain on the Netflix TechBlog, in a post published on April 6, 2012: “We want our members to know how we adapt to their tastes. This not only fosters trust to the system, but also encourages members to provide feedback that will result in better recommendations.”²

As it was rolled out, Netflix’s algorithmic recommendation has undergone improvements (Biddle 2021). Starting from 2012, Netflix has been developing a profile system to individualize the usage of the platform when the same subscription is used by multiple people. In 2017, it was the way in which members rated content that underwent a major overhaul: the option of rating a work on the basis of one to five stars was abandoned in favor of a thumbs-up or thumbs-down. This simplification has made it easier for members to engage with the evaluation system and led to a significant increase in the number of votes cast. To accompany this new feature, Netflix also deployed a “percentage match” system, which indicates to users the likelihood that they might like the content in the form of a percentage. In 2018, the personalization of the system intensified when Netflix teams decided to vary the thumbnail illustrations of content according to members’ profiles. As it appeared then, the recommendation system used its information of subscribers’ preferences to suggest content they might enjoy, while enhancing their choices with personalized visuals.

While Netflix’s algorithmic recommendation has undergone significant evolution over the years, its place is fundamental to the subscriber experience. Its deployment on the platform serves the company’s sales pitch, highlighting its ability to deliver a better service to its members. It is also a means of differentiating the company from its competitors, particularly cinemas and TV channels, whose traditional broadcasting methods do not lend themselves well to algorithmic recommendations. The analysis we conducted on our corpus of texts from the *Netflix TechBlog* shows that the key issue capturing the attention of the technical development teams is finding a balance between suggesting a diverse range of content to members and taking their preferences into account. In other words, the aim is to encourage the discovery of new content while personalizing it as much as possible. Work on the algorithm and on-screen formatting of recommendations is intended to provide a solution to this problem. The choice was thus made to organize the interface in a two-dimensional way to ensure the diversity of the recommendations proposed:

Selecting a diverse set of items is important in a recommendation system. However, it can be difficult to navigate through a diversified ranking, as relevant items are mixed in with other items that don’t always match the person’s current expectations. But by presenting a two-

2 Xavier Amatriain & Justin Basilico. 2012. Netflix Recommendations: Beyond the 5 stars (Part 1). *NetflixTechBlog*. <https://netflixtechblog.com/netflix-recommendations-beyond-the-5-stars-part-1-55838468f429>.

dimensional navigation system, a member can scroll vertically down the page to easily sift through whole lists of content that don't meet their current expectations; and to find a more relevant one, they can then scroll horizontally to view more recommendations within it. This makes it possible to select coherent, individual and meaningful lists while maintaining the diversity of videos displayed across the page, and it thus enables the member to achieve both relevance and diversity (April 9, 2015).³

This is a technicist vision of diversity that emerges here: diversity becomes a reality to be optimized and rationalized technically through the use of new technologies. The discourse exhibited by Netflix thus falls within the realm of “technological solutionism.” Theorized by Evgeny Morozov, this current of thought has its origins in Silicon Valley, and views all of society's problems from the perspective of technological solutions and innovations (Morozov 2014). In contrast to the logic of traditional audiovisual programming, whose core activity is based on the editorial work of qualitatively constructing a grid of previously selected and highlighted content, a platform like Netflix favors a quantitative increase in supply, supported by a recommendation system that qualifies and classifies content *a posteriori*, and offers a diversity tailored to each individual's profile. This technicist vision of diversity incorporates the principle of “audience plebiscite,” where culture is first understood “from the perspective of its success in popularity” and “would be criticized when it does not meet any other criterion” (Drumond et al. 2018). From this point of view, critics of Netflix's recommendation system worry about the “datafication of culture” (Arnold 2016) and the “mathematization of taste” (Alexander 2016), which would manifest in phenomena such as the dehumanization of cultural practices, the disappearance of serendipity and the enclosure of users in “filter bubbles,” synonymous with the loss of cultural diversity.

2.2 Globalized diversity

During the second half of the 2010s, the algorithm became a less prominent argument in Netflix's communication. The company increasingly relies on its international development, particularly on the different geographical areas in which it operates to produce or co-produce original creations. At the beginning of 2016, when the platform became available in most countries around the world, Netflix's global dimension was highlighted by its CEO, Reed Hastings, who announced at CES in Las Vegas: “You are witnessing the birth of a new global Internet television network.”³ Since then, Netflix has focused a significant portion of its efforts in this direction and has

3 Netflix. 2016. Netflix Is Now Available Around the World. *about.netflix.com*. <https://about.netflix.com/en/news/netflix-is-now-available-around-the-world> (January 7, 2016).

been actively promoting its ambition to present the widest possible diversity in the stories to be told and the aesthetics presented to its members.

The company's communications focus very strongly on its business relationships and the investments made in each country where it sets up operations, on the number and quality of professionals involved locally in these investments, and on its desire to produce content from these territories and adapted to local preferences. Most often, Netflix's discourse incorporates the same talking points: "supporting diversity in both forms and formats," "contributing to the development, in terms of diversity, genre, and quality, of African content," "telling original, authentic, and multilingual stories." The excerpts from press releases below provide an illustration of this discourse, where a set of similar arguments about local diversity is repeatedly deployed.

Growing up in India, entertainment is ubiquitous. (...) At Netflix, we like to tell stories that bring people together. Films and series whose authentic narratives are entrusted as much to your favorite Indian creators as to new talent. (...) Our new programming offers more variety and diversity than ever (March 3, 2021).⁴

Canada is rich with incredible diversity, and increasing our local presence will allow us to share more authentic stories with the world, whether through the development of original content or through co-productions or acquisitions. As always, our goal is to offer our members a wide variety of choices (February 11, 2021).⁵

To accompany and justify its local initiatives, Netflix constructs a discourse centered primarily around two elements: first, a stated desire to offer, in countries where the platform is available, content that allows consumers to maintain greater cultural proximity and resonates with their own values; and second, an interest in supporting professionals and cultural industries in the areas where the company intends to expand its catalog. According to Joïakim Tuil, head of communication for Netflix France, this strategy is internally referred to as "countryfication," the guiding principle of which, according to him, is to "establish teams around the world to produce stories, projects, series, and films from various cultural environments." In Japan, for example, Netflix partners with local production houses to produce anime; in Brazil, the company invests in *telenovela* production; in Mexico, reality TV show productions are highlighted. Local productions are globally distributed on the platform and can thus become significant international successes, as evidenced by series such as *Squid*

4 Shergill, M. 2021. Bientôt disponible: tout un univers d'histoires indiennes irrésistibles [Coming soon: A whole universe of irresistible Indian stories]. *about.netflix.com*. <https://about.netflix.com/fr/news/coming-soon-a-universe-of-irresistible-indian-stories>. (March 3, 2021).

5 Sarandos, T. 2021. S'installer au Canada [Moving to Canada]. *about.netflix.com*. <https://about.netflix.com/en/news/making-a-new-home-in-canada>. (Feb. 11, 2021).

Game (South Korea), *Lupin* (France), or *Money Heist* (Spain), which have gathered millions of viewers worldwide. In its official discourse, Netflix thus communicates about aligning the platform's offerings with the demand for diversity and the global openness of its subscribers.

For us, entertainment meets a fundamental human need. It distracts us from our concerns and gives us a common topic of interest. But how common is it? For example, concerning Netflix, it seems that each subscriber shares six series in common with any other subscriber worldwide. In other words, you may realize, upon meeting another Netflix enthusiast in Seoul, Sao Paulo, New York, or even in Antarctica, that you have both watched the same six series! (February 12, 2019).⁶

Behind a benevolent communication, evidently sensitive to multiculturalism, the company pursues a more complex strategy, the analysis of which allows us to partly nuance this image of a platform primarily open to a diversity of cultures and countries. In this regard, several points are important to note. First, Netflix remains a US-based company that tends to export not only its content internationally but also its production methods and marketing strategies. Most of the most important decisions are made at the headquarters in Los Gatos, California (Lobato 2019), and even in foreign countries where Netflix establishes offices, the company seems to bring with it methods derived from the professional cultures of the US film and audiovisual industry. Such an observation was notably made in India, where Netflix has established itself by imposing certain working methods, especially to improve writing and storytelling modes (Bouquillion and Ithurbide 2021). Regarding the content itself, the purely local anchoring of themes and stories told also deserves to be tempered. As several industry observers note, locally produced content also meets international standards and leads to a form of standardization, or even formatting of cultural offerings to facilitate their consumption worldwide (Touzé 2020). During his investigation into the content creation process of Netflix in France, Alexandre Kauffmann thus observes a “disposition to standardization”: “another type of formatting is at work, made up of false transgressions and excessively digestible dramaturgies. ‘Easy to follow,’ ‘easy to understand,’ these are Netflix’s instructions to its creative teams” (Kauffmann 2022).

Second, Netflix’s choice to expand internationally is part of an opportunistic logic inspired in part by strategies initiated in the past by other US-based audiovisual groups such as Bloomberg, MTV, or National Geographic. Having started to internationalize from the 1990s, during the cable and satellite deployment era, these companies initially sought to simply export their programs abroad by relying on an

6 Netflix. 2019. Nous avons tous 6 séries en commun [We all have 6 series in common]. *about.netflix.com*. <https://about.netflix.com/fr/news/we-all-have-6-shows-in-common> (Feb. 12, 2019).

undifferentiated image of the global market before evolving their approach to develop offers tailored to the specificities of national markets. From its first attempts to establish itself outside the United States, Netflix seeks to adapt to cultural differences. Gradually, the company will invest in new geographical areas, ensuring each time the possibility of having a large number of local subscribers, as well as the existence of an organized and dynamic audiovisual industry on site. In Africa, for example, Netflix communicates about its presence in Egypt, Nigeria, or South Africa; in Asia, India, Japan, and South Korea have been favored since the abandonment of attempts to establish in China; in Europe, countries such as France, Spain, or the United Kingdom seem to be more highlighted. It must be said that it is now on the international market that the bulk of the firm's growth and the acquisition of new subscribers are at stake. The maturation of the North American SVOD market in the late 2010s, where the number of subscribers tends to plateau, pushes the platform to emphasize its international expansion: of the 230 million Netflix subscribers worldwide in January 2023, two-thirds were indeed outside Canada and the United States. Netflix's discourse focused on the diversity of its local productions and the platform's desire to tell stories from around the world aims to accompany an internationalization process that has become essential for its development.

2.3 Inclusive diversity

The final form of diversity that Netflix focuses on is an inclusive approach. Starting from 2017, in the context of the MeToo and Black Lives Matter social movements, the company made this theme a privileged axis of its strategy and communication. In the book he co-authored with Erin Meyer on the company's managerial policy, Reed Hastings states: "To the list of our cultural values, we have also added inclusion. This is a way of signifying that our success will be due to the presence, among our teams, of the audiences we wish to reach, as this will enable the stories we tell to be a true reflection of the lives and passions that animate this audience" (Hastings and Meyer 2021). Attention is focused both on seeking greater diversity on screen within the content produced and distributed by Netflix, and internally, among the teams within the company.

To understand Netflix's discourse on this matter, we conducted a co-occurrence similarity analysis on the portion of our documentary corpus focused on inclusion (Figure 1). Figure 2 thus reveals about ten lexical clusters that reflect the predominant themes in the discourse employed by the platform. A first cluster, located in the center of the figure, revolves around the word "woman" ("gender," "female," "role," "life," etc.) and shows the significant interest in the female condition. Film and series production activities are also notable for their centrality in the figure and demonstrate

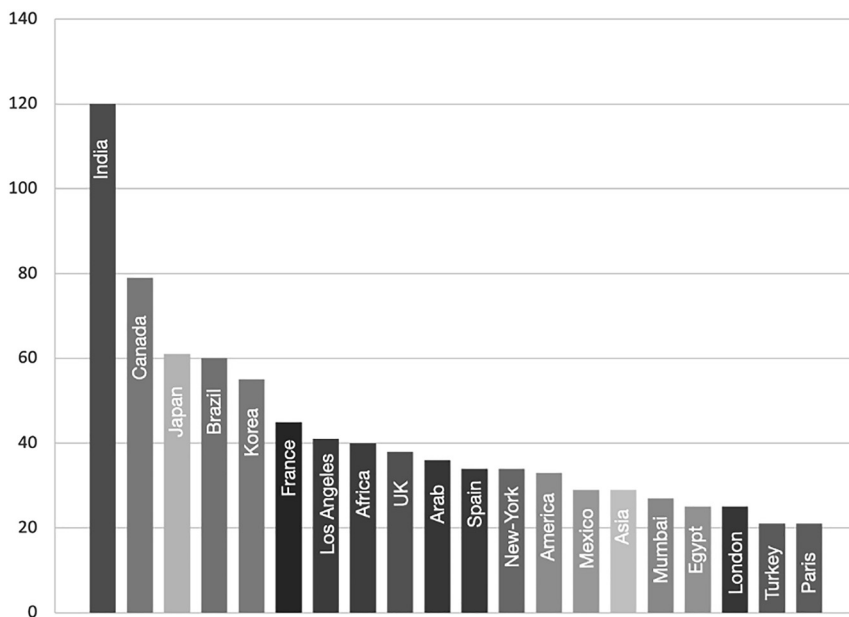


Figure 1: Regions, countries, and cities most mentioned in press releases. Based on a corpus of 178 press releases.

efforts to diversify representations on screen. At the top of the image, we can identify clusters that reveal Netflix's desire to foster a plurality of narratives and voices ("story," "voice," "right," etc.) and to drive social change throughout the industry ("industry," "change," "hope," "underrepresented," etc.), particularly by developing specific training programs ("program," "train," "person," "participant," etc.). At the bottom of the figure, the predominant clusters tend to link the question of inclusion ("black," "diversity," "community," "representation," "opportunity," etc.) with working conditions within the company ("team," "work," "hire," "employee," "workshop," etc.).

If one analyzes more deeply the content of Netflix's official communication, it becomes clear that the implementation of a proactive inclusivity policy results in numerous initiatives that the company emphasizes, such as training and mentoring programs, seminars, workshops, as well as partnerships with festivals, schools, and associations aimed at socially underrepresented groups in the audiovisual industry. Criteria such as gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, or disability situations are highlighted. In addition to the desire to give more prominence in its activities to these social groups, Netflix significantly enriches its catalog with content that tackles progressive topics, such as gender identities, systemic racism, intersectional feminism, and sexual liberation. By displaying both political and social stances, the

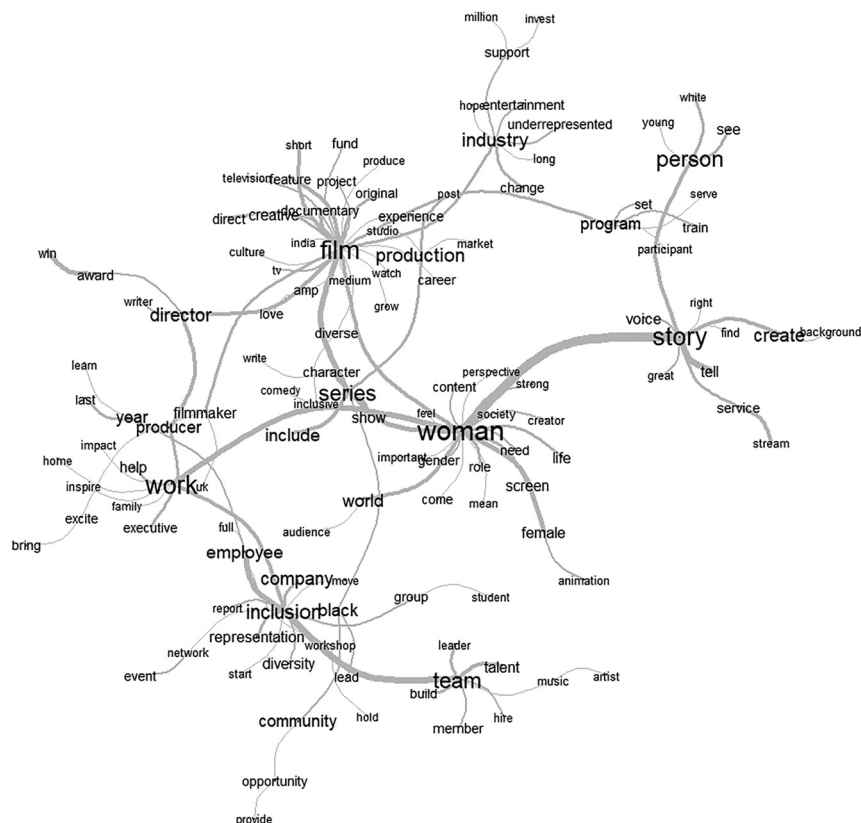


Figure 2: Similarity analysis: around social inclusion.

company cultivates a liberal image and highlights its contribution to changing attitudes and practices in the audiovisual industry, and even in society as a whole. Below, the excerpts from press releases that we have selected provide a good illustration of the activist discourse employed by Netflix: “Over the years, we have realized that to truly make a difference, we need to approach our work through the ‘prism of inclusion.’ This involves asking more questions like: ‘Whose voice is missing?’, ‘Is this representation faithful to reality?’, or ‘Who is excluded?’ This prism directly influences the individuals recruited at all levels and the stories we create for our subscribers” (February 26, 2021⁷).

7 Ted Sarandos. 2021. Bâtir un modèle d'inclusion: les résultats de notre première étude sur la diversité dans les films et séries [Building an inclusion model: results from our first study on diversity].

We highlight stories driven by black British citizens. We bring to the screen the life of a gay man with cerebral palsy, a first on television. We entrust the management of a portion of our assets to black community banks. Inclusion is at the heart of many of these initiatives (January 13, 2021).⁸

Once again, Netflix's claims regarding inclusive diversity must be understood in light of the platform's strategy and business model, which is centered on commercializing access to an online content offering in the form of subscriptions. Indeed, the company seizes societal issues to build a positive image and to retain a portion of its customer base that shares these same concerns and values. The emphasis on inclusive diversity thus allows it to better differentiate its offering from that of competitors by diversifying it toward new themes and investing in market niches that may correspond to very targeted audience typologies. In other words, the objective pursued first and foremost aims to increase the variety and specificity of content available within the catalog. This opportunistic vision of inclusive diversity as a means to better segment and diversify an audiovisual offering is confirmed in an interview with Joïakim Tuil:

This corresponds to a very pragmatic ambition, (...) our ambition is to entertain the world, and in that regard, we believe that what can bring novelty, freshness, and renew interest in certain series, certain stories, certain films, is to tell stories, characters, situations, that we're not used to seeing, hearing. I think today there are people looking for that, characters that resemble them, stories, situations that resonate with their lives. And we believe that for us, it's a development opportunity because if we manage to tell these stories correctly, this audience will find themselves in them and will also want to be with us. (...) It fits into an offering approach.

By focusing on the presence of underrepresented social groups and addressing certain social causes, Netflix maximizes the utility of its catalog for its subscribers, meaning its ability to entertain and satisfy them considering the diversity of their profiles. However, under the lens of inclusive diversity, it seems that a shift in importance is occurring in the rhetoric employed. In its official communication, Netflix repeatedly emphasizes its desire to offer stories capable of reflecting on screen the lives of as many people as possible. In this perspective, it is no longer just about adapting the offering to the expectations and tastes of the audience, but also considering it in terms of everyone's right to be represented and to see their life, values, and concerns highlighted in the films and series they watch. While such an observation does not question the commercial pragmatism demonstrated by Netflix in its production strategy, it is nonetheless a significant shift in focus, which is part of

in movies and series]. *about.netflix.com*. <https://about.netflix.com/fr/news/building-a-legacy-of-inclusion> (February 26, 2021).

⁸ Verna Myers. 2021. L'inclusion prend racine chez Netflix: notre premier rapport [Inclusion takes root at Netflix: our initial report]. *about.netflix.com*. <https://about.netflix.com/fr/news/netflix-inclusion-report-2021>. (January 13, 2021).

a broader dynamic crossing cultural circles since the late 2000s, with the progressive recognition of “cultural rights.” Placed at the center of the cultural production process, individuals are recognized in their right to freely live their particular cultural identity. It is therefore about ensuring that all cultural references upon which they rely to define themselves, express themselves, and build themselves as human beings are respected and valued, but also that these individuals can participate in shaping cultural life. Through an inclusive discourse that strongly emphasizes “the importance given to people of color and women,” “the plurality of voices, faces, and accents,” or “the multiplicity of lived experiences,” Netflix also responds in its own way to these contemporary aspirations that renew our approach to cultural diversity.

Theoretised in the Fribourg Declaration of 2007 before being the subject of multiple versions (notably in France, where they have been incorporated into article 103 of the NOTRe law of 7 August 2015), cultural rights postulate that ‘each person is the bearer of an endogenous culture’, that ‘each person is the bearer of an endogenous culture’, and that ‘it would be a matter of mobilising their resources to found a cultural initiative or moment’ (Pailler, 2021: 73).

3 Conclusions

The analysis we conducted highlighted three main axes, which refer to a plurality of conceptions of diversity, around which Netflix’s communication is structured. First, Netflix prioritizes algorithmic diversity, associating it with the recommendation algorithm that allows users to explore the platform’s catalog and discover content. This automated and technicist vision of diversity is deployed from the 2000s, at a time when the company aims to differentiate itself from traditional forms of linear broadcasting practiced by television and cinemas. Second, Netflix develops a rhetoric of diversity focused on the valorization of locally produced content. It is a globalized diversity highlighted by the company, whose audiovisual production strategy consists, from the second half of the 2010s, in betting on locally produced content capable of crossing borders and being exported worldwide. Third, Netflix disseminates a discourse favorable to diversity conceived as a means of combating discrimination and taking into account sociocultural differences. Deployed in the wake of the MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, this inclusive vision of diversity is manifested by a privileged treatment of certain societal themes (racism, feminism, gender identities, etc.) and by the promotion of content production and internal recruitment policies aimed at ensuring better representation of minorities.

If there is a consistency that runs through all of these discourses, it undoubtedly lies in the fact that diversity as understood by Netflix constitutes the instrument of a corporate strategy focused on acquiring and satisfying subscribers on a global scale.

Our research thus confirms our hypothesis that Netflix's communication about cultural diversity primarily serves to legitimize its global industrial strategy. Netflix's promotional argumentation is indeed that of a platform that makes available to its members the widest possible variety of content and stories, offering works from various regions of the world that resonate with different types of values and lived experiences. In this context, the emphasis on diversity mainly serves a marketing objective of segmenting the offering, designed to adjust to viewers' preferences. This diversity appears standardized to meet a global demand. It is also rationalized and optimized by an algorithm that organizes the members' interface and makes recommendations. According to a study by AQOA, Netflix is pushing this functionality to the limit: 95% of the titles highlighted on the platform's home page are suggested according to the subscriber's profile (AQOA 2021). The paradox here is that the diversity claimed by Netflix, being tied to a powerful algorithm, primarily and predominantly exposes the subscriber to content selected according to their tastes and consumption habits, with the risk of locking them into "filter bubbles" that make a good portion of the catalog invisible to them. In the end, it appears that what defines Netflix's strategic horizon is less the perspective of promoting diversity of cultural expressions than that of providing each member precisely what they expect, showing them a world that reflects their preferences and concerns.

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