Religious Media in the Maghreb: What Are the Boundaries between the Public and Private Spheres?

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Abstract: The Maghreb region, besides being a melting pot, is also a region that has known all Mediterranean civilizations thanks to the culture of its people who have always assimilated the monotheistic religions. In addition, the privileged place of this religious variable has made it a required tool for the governors towards their people. Since the 1956's, the traditional use of religion has dissipated to the detriment of new models of influence through the classical and then digital media, which have put forward several new powerful political and economic actors who have overturned the divine word as well as the references of the believers.

1. Introduction

Since its appearance in the Arabian Peninsula, the Muslim religion has evolved in the four cardinal points with more success and implantation in the East and West. Caliphates and dynasties have succeeded one another, marking the private and public lives of Muslims. The history of religions clearly shows us the multiplication and diversity of religious practices from the Middle Ages to the present day. Epochs have followed one another, and the means of diffusion of religion have taken the paths of orality, writing, and representation in traditional media as well as in current electronic and digital media.

There was a time when the literate set out on long journeys in search of liturgical knowledge. Nowadays, information and communication technology floods all spaces without concern for the convictions of some or the beliefs of others. In this case, the Maghreb, which interests us in this research, is no exception to this rule.

The era of modernity, marked by the rise of individualism and the weight of the means of mass communication, has imposed on the Maghreb countries—newly emerged from the protectorate and French colonization—a management of religion adapted to emerging societies. The evolution in the three countries, in spite of common references, has seen some divergences in the recognition or secularization of the Muslim religion, which is dominant in these territories. The relationship to other minority religions remains no less important.

At first glance, the constitutions since the 1950s have been the first reflection of the establishment of a constitutional framework of religion (Arêas 2016). Leaders have seized the religious field to regulate its structure and direct it.

The media field has also undergone the same treatment and regulation to adapt it to a new public and political space.

(Douyère and Antoine 2018, p. 1) think that, "Religions and the media talk about each other, use each other." Indeed, the religious dimension is an integral part of this media space. The media's treatment of religions varies from a country to another, and especially according to the place that

religion occupies in the country: "The media is a place where the religious are said and shown, but also a tool that religions use when they create magazines, a radio network, animate a radio or television station, an Internet site, in a "spiritual" or political perspective" (Douyère and Antoine 2018, p. 10).

In the light of a discussion–analysis among the three countries (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), we will try to identify the specificities of media use and practice of religion. The preferred methodology is immersion research to detect the interactive mechanisms between media and religion. How can we compare the forms of mediatization (Tudor and Bratosin 2020, p. 3) of religion and their impacts on the public space? Can we speak of a religious space stabilized by traditional media? What is the influence of social networks and satellite television? How is the diversity of religious media spaces experienced?

The mediatization of religion (Tudor and Bratosin 2020, p. 3) obeys uses and values that are conveyed by the specifications of national media, but the distortion of the media system has been swollen by the explosion of the offerings of the internet, social networks, and satellite channels. (Willaime 2001, p. 64) notes that, "[t]he mediatization of the religious constitutes a putting into perspective of the religious, which has many biases. First of all, there is a vast selection of religious information likely to interest the media (Tristan 2018, p. 102). Interventions by religious personalities and institutions are of more interest to the media if they deal with social problems than if they deal with more specifically religious problems."

The dimension of the public space in the Maghreb shows that religion is also a strong political tool at the service of the states. In fact, citizenship is confused with national cultural components (traditions, languages, and religion) and involves, among other things, the promotion of Muslim religious culture, a central element of national identity and tolerance of other faiths. The national identity is reconstructed by politics through the mass media and even includes being open to other economic models promoted by Islamic banks.

2. Religious Media and Sociability

The development of the audiovisual or media space in the Maghreb toward a relatively religious theme has taken place in a very punctual manner. Indeed, a mediatization, in the broad sense of the term, from media carrying religious messages to media that incite hatred and jihad, has gone through several stages, whose origins are not necessarily endogenous (stemming from the societal dynamics of the Maghreb countries), but rather exogenous (stemming from the international dynamics).

The traditional mass media, such as the press, television, and cinema, as well as the new instruments of "mass self-communication"—namely, social media—have penetrated so deeply into all human activities that it is impossible to imagine individuals and social groups existing outside the dense web of media influences. In brief, the media and society have grown together into a mutually indispensable and interdependent entity. The mediatized society can also be seen as an ecosystem that allows the circulation and exchange of ideas on a large scale and at high speed. Fads, fandoms, beliefs, and rumors originate within society and spread via the media thanks to the platforms that it offers. There are several dynamics by which the classical mass media and the new media combine to pervade and mold our "mediatized society": from private to formal relationships, from creation to consumption, from religion to art, from local to global, from journalism to politics, and many more (Strömbäck and Esser 2014, p. 42).

The mediatization of politics, including the mediatization of religion (Bratosin et al. 2017), is clearly part of the main process of mediatization of society, but it assumes special importance wherever the power is exercised and related relationships are involved. It can be defined as the result of media-driven influences in the political domain: "[T]he media have gained a central position in most political routines, such as election campaigns, government communication, public diplomacy, and image building" (Mazzoleni 2008, p. 3048). This shows how the logic of the political sphere—or a good part of it—is yielding to the supremacy of the logic and imperatives of the media in contemporary societies. Politics and communication have always been interlaced, and the former has tended to use the latter to achieve its aims.

In the debate on the mediatization of religion and/or politics, there are quite a few implicit assumptions about the nature of the organizations that are targeted, but no explicit concept of how the diverse forms of religious and/or political organizations are affected by the media. In the literature, most authors speak of political actors, and not explicitly of organizations. The equation of organizations with actors is not unproblematic: Organizations are not only actors that are capable of acting, which means that they have goals, a strategy, resources, etc.; they are also structures in which individual actors act. This duality of organizations, being "both micro and macro" (Taylor et al. 1996, p. 1), underlies their important role within our society as a whole and political communication in particular: (Political) organizations act as agents or bridges—others say intermediaries (Habermas 2006)—between citizens in their "*Lebenswelt*" and the political system. Therefore, we have to distinguish between organizations as actors and structures of political communication (Strömbäck and Esser 2014, p. 181).

When equating actors with organizations, scholars commit themselves to a rational paradigm in organizational theory. Following (Scott 2003), the rational paradigm considers organizations as systems of formalized structures designed to attain specific goals with maximum (or at least satisfactory) efficiency. In such a paradigm, communication is regarded as an instrument of the organization to attain its goals. In other words, party organizations want to win elections, and therefore, they communicate in a specific way. However, Scott also specifies two other paradigms within organizational theory. In a natural system view, organizations may be regarded as "collectivities whose participants are pursuing multiple interests, both desperate and common, but who recognize the value of perpetuating the organization as an important resource" (Scott 2003, p. 28). In corresponding theories, e.g., the process-oriented approach of "organizing" by (Weick 1979) or the "resource dependence perspective" by (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978), it is not assumed to be a necessity for actors in organizations to share common goals (Strömbäck and Esser 2014, p. 182). The focus is their interaction and the result of their interaction, which we call the organization.

The postcolonial political movements in the Maghreb countries that sought to consolidate their legitimacy vis-à-vis the governed and the international opinion already became polarized between the East and West; the question of religion was a masterpiece that could be used in the face of relatively illiterate populations seeking freedom, social development, and a life of descent (Yassine 2020).

On the international level, the struggle against communism in Afghanistan or Shiism in Iran through a mobilization of Malikite Sunni Islam (mainly in North Africa) and Wahabism (Arabian Peninsula) as two homogeneous groups (structures) was fully supported by the West in the face of an ideologically "red" enemy that was relatively well introduced in Africa and Central Asia.

This situation is very important because the use of the media has been very well assimilated by the bearers of Islamic ideology in the face of communist "miscreants" thanks to the support of the West with all the necessary technicality, which far exceeded the potential of the Maghreb states, whose populations had access to very modest media services, particularly radio (Houdaïfa 2017).

Given the success of the Iraqi–Iranian war, the fall of communism, and the unconditional financing of the Gulf States, the advent of satellite television and the experiences accumulated by religious media operators—broadcast mainly from Egypt (via NILESAT), Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon—propelled a new dynamic that was manufactured for the struggle and destruction and began to look for a new target: jihad, which was reinforced and financed, and to which people were indoctrinated by the worst theological fraction of Islam, which is that of Wahhabism. It has no value of citizenship, living together, or intellectual ascension. In addition, the values of Malikite Islam in North Africa are of a cultural scope, with practices and rites that are in phase with the characteristics of North African cultures, which have been open to Mediterranean cultures for centuries.

However, the delays in the development of media spaces in the Maghreb countries at the level of the audiovisual liberalization and the proliferation of media services (excluding the political written press) due to economic reasons and the delay in the democratization process of the political field have given way to the Arabization of religious media, which are free of charge, rebroadcast all day long, and give a simple answer to all the problems of society: If Islam is not applied, you will

remain poor, and the causes of your poverty are your leaders of Western colonialism. Therefore, the Wahabite ideology has just turned its attention to a new target in order to make its existence and its enterprise concrete.

The use of satellite television will make an extraordinary upheaval in the minds of the Maghreb's populations, since their media references will be called into question, but they will be an easy prey as the audience of these religious channels of the Middle East who would question the whole logic of the programs and the formats of the programs due to the incredible number of channels and the virulence of the sheikhs carrying the holy word, who explain that Islam must be practiced in an identical and unique manner throughout the Muslim territory with the expectation of a complete Islamization of the planet.

That said, fanaticism has no limits because its existence is linked to the abolition of all human, civilizational, or even religious morality. However, it must be observed that Islamic fanaticism is close to the mechanisms of neo-liberalism in the pejorative sense of the term, where one single doctrine dominates (Wahabism).

The actors are atomized (the populations), the market makers are the Gulf States, and the followers are the governments of Muslim countries, which are under the influence of a system that recognizes no legitimacy except that of money.

3. Religion and Public/Private Space

This notion of "public space" was first adopted as an analytical concept by Jürgen Habermas in 1960 in the framework of a theory of the Frankfurt School, which focused on cultural domination linked to the Marxist study of society. According to him, the public space designates the sphere of political debate, the publicity of private opinions that will participate in the emergence of public opinion, and mediatized communication.

The notion of the "public sphere" in Habermas's sense is a concept that can help us solve the problem of the boundaries between what is part of the public sphere and what is not. It designates a space in modern societies where political participation is concretized through discussion. It is the space where citizens debate their common affairs, and provides an institutionalized arena for discursive interaction. Conceptually, this arena is distinct from the state, as it is a place for the production and circulation of discourses that may, in principle, be critical of the state. The public sphere, according to Habermas, is also conceptually different from the official economy; it is not an arena of market relations, but rather an arena of discursive relations; it is more a theater of debate and deliberation than a place of buying and selling. Thus, this concept of the public sphere allows us not to lose sight of the differences between state apparatuses, economic markets, and democratic associations, distinctions that are essential to democratic theory.

Defined as an intermediate and symbolic space where the discourses of different actors and protagonists confront each other, each with its own logic and values, it is a space in perpetual construction insofar as it reflects an interaction between social actors. Nowadays, it is characterized by an omnipresence of information and a variety of communication tools. Topics vary from the political to the economic and social.

Several books have appeared in recent years on such varied themes, targeting areas of application of this concept of public space, including the city and its architecture, its spaces for sharing, and religious practices. This meaning derives directly from the notion of the Greek "agora" as a public space shared by all citizens. However, the Muslim religion has a particular character that structures the space and time of citizens. The rites practiced have a publicizing character and are based on social visibility, encouraging public actors to reflect on the comparison with other spaces where religion and its real and symbolic practice are part of the private space.

"The public space evokes not only the place of political debate, of the confrontation of private opinions that advertising tries to make public, but also a democratic practice, a form of communication, of circulation of diverse points of view" (Paquot 2009, p. 3).

In this form of mediation, the cultural dimension is a structuring element of the practices. Generally speaking, culture expresses the state of knowledge of a human being on an intellectual and artistic level. An individual who is said to be cultured is supposed to master the foundations of the culture of their time. In an anthropological sense, culture refers to the way of thinking and acting of a particular community, including the social behavior of groups, ideologies, forms of interaction, ethnic rules, moral rules, etc. In an anthropological sense, culture refers to the way of thinking and acting of a particular community, including the social behavior of groups, ideologies, forms of interaction, ethnic rules, moral rules, etc. Relying on social networks, cultural identities appear as dynamic processes aspiring to evolution or even explosion.

It is clear that the omnipresence of self-produced information in new media, such as social networks, and especially Facebook, is imposing a new national and even international mediation. Bernard Lamizet notes on this subject that, "The public space, redefined as a space of information, ceases to be a space of effective meeting of the actors of communication: Politics, democracy, the exercise of relations between actors and between citizens are exercised, henceforth, by the mediation of representation and by the mediation of forms of communication. That is to say, the increased dependence of politics on the media, and, consequently, the increased political responsibility of the media and those who make them" (Lamizet 1995, p. 184).

4. Religion and Media Power

All religions have gone through phases that structure their evolution, including the phases of installation and credibility, through different discourses and forms of argumentation. The final accomplishment is often marked by the conquest of other spaces and the quest to impose a religion on other religions or beliefs.

The current media reinforce this path and often seek, by all means, to occupy space, to find new arguments, and to try to convince listeners, viewers, internet users, bloggers, hackers, etc. about the merits of religion.

After an understanding and assimilation of the potential risk that the international media can generate on the political landscapes of the Maghreb countries, several paths have been opened up that define the three countries as a regional bloc in different ways. For the Moroccan case this includes the consideration of the importance of a free and sovereign national media space in terms of advertising, funding, invested capital, and thoughts conveyed on the airwaves or on the internet.

Given the rise of Islamic thought at the level of political parties and given that the schemes proposed by the parties of the Right as well as the Left have expressed their management weaknesses and the inability of the state to deploy its development strategies, all of its elements will need a fertile media space in order to dominate the regional space, since the religious satellite media from the East are intended for the whole Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and even some European countries.

Thus, the liberalization of the Moroccan audiovisual landscape has strictly prohibited the creation of a national audiovisual service (TV or radio being broadcast from the national territory) having a relationship with a trade union, political party, or economic interest group.

In media language, religious programs are broadcast by public operators under the supervision of the kingdom's religious authorities, since the King is also the commander of believers, and religion is not part of the political field, but rather of the private sphere, which is also associated with Moroccan practices for which the person of the King is the guarantor.

In parallel with their messianic role, the media often trigger debates on religion and challenge the institutions charged with overseeing good religious practices. In this respect, the liberalization of the Moroccan media field has also been linked to the issue of regulation in order to guarantee free access of private investment to the media space without the religious issue (a classic audience drain) being a thematic requirement for obtaining an operating license. A liberalization focused on the proliferation of media services and the multiplication of themes at the national and regional levels

was, at the beginning of the 2000s, like an upheaval of the scheme established by international satellite television. However, the rise in power of Moroccan Imams carrying the Sunni and Malikite thought with a multi-support presence within the framework of the overhaul of the Moroccan religious field after the attacks of 16 May 2003 in Casablanca allowed the Moroccans to know their religion in a different way.

However, at a time when the states are trying to catch up with the gap of the past years in the classical media field (Hertzian TV, radio, satellite), the religious field invested very early in the web in different forms: web TV, web radio, social networks, etc. This time, in the web, the context is no longer institutional or organized. Anonymity, speed, interactivity, the logic of networks, and influencers—bearers of the word of the people—make up the religious dimension, where it's appreciated as a theme among many others that make up the daily lives of Moroccan and Maghrebi youth.

In early October 2013, the written and audiovisual media launched themselves into a form of "intertextuality" with commentary on a kiss called "the kiss of Nador", an image published by two young people from the same city on their Facebook accounts. This image shocked some and challenged others, reminding us that the writings and images disclosed on Facebook circulate in a public space, given the large number of "friends" who can access them.

Facebook promises to change our everyday lives, to tackle our perceptions of the world, for better or worse. Private life and public space interpenetrate. The risks to privacy and intimacy have never been greater.

The media "buzz" of "Nador's kiss" was made through the national and international press, as well as the electronic press such as Hespress, international channels such as Canal + in two highly watched shows, "Les Guignols" and "Le Petit Journal", the continuous news channel France 24, the Moroccan channel 2M, several radios such as Hit Radio, etc.

Social networks are also active players in the process of socialization of religion; we can read several publications about cases involving morality. For example, in 2014, three teenagers—a couple and the photographer—were arrested and then released for publishing on Facebook photos where they kissed. The schizophrenic views of young Moroccans confront religion, modesty, and individual freedom. This shot" that made the rounds of the national and international electronic press was first posted on a Facebook account of the two teenagers before being published later on Moroccan and foreign online newspapers. The two youths were imprisoned and then released.

This media coverage was characterized by two radically opposed social currents of youth. The first accused the two teens of disrespecting the Muslim religion and Moroccan social norms, which are modest and respectful of the public space. The second trend opted for a solidarity-based approach that emphasized the principles of human rights, individual freedom, freedom of expression, and body autonomy. These intra-media confrontations are the symbol of a relaxation vis-à-vis the treatment of subjects close to the red line in certain countries of the Greater Maghreb, such as Morocco.

The electronic press also took hold of this topical issue, including Point.fr, which published a statement about the great mobilization of social networks after the arrest in Morocco of teenagers who posted photos of a kiss between two of them has shaken a society very marked by religious conservatism, according to experts. The girl and boy, aged 14 and 15, and their friend who posted the photos, were arrested on 4 October and detained for three days in a juvenile center in Nador, in the northeast of the kingdom. Their arrest had immediately inflamed social networks and the judicial authorities in Nador had to release the three adolescents pending their trial, which, was scheduled to begin this Friday.

The press and social networks were exploited for pro-religious purposes, but also as a vector of observation of the authorities and Moroccan society.

Based on the principle of a posteriori control, media regulation in Morocco, as in Tunisia, is based on self-assessments to follow up on identified shortcomings or on the reactions of institutional or individual listeners. Consequently, the notion of public space takes back its full place. In the Moroccan

case, the question of broadcasts with a religious scope is intransigently sanctioned, especially if they have a direct relationship with the protection of young people, the image of women, public health, or hate speech (Yassine 2018, pp. 80–93).

Within the framework of regular monitoring missions of radio and television programs, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication[1] (Morocco) noted observations concerning the 6 January 2017 edition of the program "استشارة فقهية", an interactive program broadcast by the radio service "CASA FM" and edited by the company "MFM RADIO TV", during which a listener made a phone call asking for a religious opinion from an expert, who is presented as a juris-consult is a permanent guest of the program, about the fact that she beats her husband when he comes home drunk. However, there are differing opinions about the respect for the principle of freedom of expression and the right of each speaker to express his or her opinion and position. The speech of the aforementioned guest, presented in his or her scientific and moral capacity, constitutes content of a nature, at least for one category of the public, that incites violent behavior punishable by law, which is likely to affect people's safety; this, without any regulation whatsoever on the part of the program host, is required by the requirement of mastery of the airwaves.

On the other hand, in Tunisia, and despite the existence of a regulatory body since May 2012 (the High Independent Authority of Audiovisual Communication (HAICA)), several television services with both religious and political significance broadcast their services freely without a license. The risks of indoctrination and the use of religious symbols are outside any monitoring logic, of programs or the creation of a democratic space.

In this sense, and after a long struggle for democracy, Tunisian society has experienced strong modifications in the political scene since 2012 in the face of the new political reality, which has seen the emergence of currents of all sides: liberals, fundamentalists, and the so-called center-right religious, in addition to the inherent terrorist risk, etc.

The creation of a media regulator within the framework of the institutional mosaic was intended to block access to the appropriation of the media by politicians, and particularly Islamists. Thus, it has become forbidden for a political party or a union to appropriate a television channel and do political self-promotion or even attack other competitors in this media space, which is considered public space according to the new legislation of 2012.

However, the independence of the Tunisian media sphere has not had a favorable echo among politicians who consider this space as giving them a right to expression. The Islamists' response occurred be eight years after the creation of the regulatory body.

Thus, the members of the parliamentary commission on rights and freedoms composed mainly of members of the new parliamentary coalition (Ennahdha, Al-Karama, and Qalb Tounes(Arêas), proposed two major amendments to Decree 116/2011 of 2 November 2011, relating to the freedom of audiovisual communication and creating a High Independent Authority of Audiovisual Communication (HAICA):

i. The amendment of Article 7 of Decree 116 aims at changing the modality of the choice of the nine new members who must pass by a majority vote in Parliament. Several interpretations have been proposed for this new situation. In this respect, the question of the politicization of audiovisual regulation and the interference of the parliament in the work of a supposedly independent authority is highly debated.

ii. A second amendment mainly aims at canceling HAICA's authorization for the creation of a television channel or a radio station (in contradiction with Article 16, which sets out HAICA's missions). In this regard, it was precisely Ennahdha, Qalb Tounes, and Al-Karama who voted "favorably", accumulating 11 votes, while the Democratic bloc (composed mainly of

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[1] Decision of CSCA N° 12-17 related to 01 RAJAB 1438 (30 MARS 2017) relative to the radio program called in arabic **"**استشارة فقهية**"** broadcasted by «MFM RADIO TV».

the deputies of Attayar and the Echaâb movement) and the Free Destinian Party (PDL) voted against (three votes), and the representative of the reform bloc abstained from voting.

Politically, the bill in question seeks to circumvent the current law that makes the Nessma and Zitouna TV channels illegal. Both channels are respectively owned by Qalb Tounes and the duo representing the Islamist current, Ennahdha and Al-Karama.

It should also be recalled that the organization of the religious right that carries a message of "propaganda" for the Tunisian Islamist current, Zitouna TV, is illegal because its promoters refuse to sign the specifications for audiovisual broadcasting and do not explicitly reveal their sources of funding.

Amendments of this magnitude may allow satellite TV, web TV, and web radio to operate legally without being eligible for the conditions of access to the sector, whose rightful owner is the audiovisual regulator. The issue of frequencies is not much discussed because most operators broadcast their content via satellites with signals emitted from abroad (Malta, Egypt, or Jordan, such as for Nesma TV).

Algeria is another case study. It is a country in which radicalism has done a lot of damage in the Maghreb and even in Africa in what is called the "Black Decade". Since 1988, the Algerian media scene has experienced both a cultural and political struggle that has left a deep impression on the Algerian citizens, even going so far as to be spoken of as a clash of civilisations (Arabic/French speaking).

Since 2012, the Algerian government has put in place the first milestones of a media communication law that will make it possible to configure a media landscape around the values of freedom and openness. This approach supposes the creation of an independent audiovisual regulatory body, which will enable project leaders to invest in the media sector without leaving room for any political indoctrination through the content offered to citizens in the public audiovisual sphere.

Nevertheless, the bloody past of the country has conditioned the delay in opening up and the fear of a pluralist media landscape that will allow Islamists to regain power. Thus, the Algerian case is relatively interesting and unique compared to those of Tunisia and Morocco in terms of the genesis, dynamics, and evolution of the media space, but the common point between the three countries is the fact that their citizens are tools and collateral victims of religious fundamentalism and political Islam from the East.

5. Religious Media Production: Polyphony or Cacophony?

Like most media, the Arab media will take the side of the religious community they represent. In countries where there are several religious communities, such as Lebanon, the landscape is tailored according to the requirements and representations of each community. "In fact, it is difficult to consider Lebanon as a 'nation' in the classical sense of the term. Denominational or identity-based folds are common. This is perhaps the case in a large part of the states of the Near and Middle East, insofar as the question arises as to whether the 'citizen' identity prevails over another component of the confessional identity" (Nader 2019, p. 127).

In a global way, the retreat toward the Muslim religion, antinomically with the trans-nationalization, occurred starting in the 1990s through satellite TV channels in search of a pan-Arab and pan-Islamic audience, which were set up by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Since the arrival of international satellite channels, the reception and media consumption of Arab viewers had begun to change, but since the advent of continuous Arab news channels, profound changes in the Arab audiovisual landscape have occurred. Monopolies have been shaken and local operators have been forced to revise their editorial lines. In addition, there has been a computer explosion in the southern countries, which corroborates this thesis. These new technologies will be a breath of fresh air for Arab youth in search of a social ideal. Avatars and virtual relationships will dominate exchanges through chat forums and social networks. Human encounters, restricted by borders and visas, will slide towards the web. Virtual mobility will be imposed on all Arabic-speaking societies.

Social networks such as Facebook or Twitter have made their appearance in the lives of young people who aspire to a better future. International channels will quickly understand the importance of these networks and will associate them with their conquest of information and their mediatization

of new spaces (Bendahan 2012). This period is characterized by great tensions on a global scale (the Gulf War, the First and Second Intifada, etc.). Identity markers emerge in times of crisis, particularly religious markers.

History has shown that most social and cultural movements use the channels available to them. Propaganda, sermons, and other forms have exploited written, audio, and visual means. The internet has, in fact, gathered all these dimensions into one. Audio and audiovisual cassettes have marked entire generations with the preaching of sheikhs known in the Arab world; and some revolutions, such as the Iranian revolution, have been supported by these means of communication, which are more practical than word of mouth.

The Maghreb countries are major consumers of these means of communication. The political orientation of these last decades marks a return of the audiovisual as an essential component of the management of the religious field (for example, in Morocco, Radio Mohammed VI and Assadissa television). The return to the audiovisual is justified by the coverage rate and the simplicity of access for listeners and viewers. The use of more sophisticated means, such as social networks, blogs, and web TV, has made its way among decision-makers and receivers who have become providers of media content.

6. Reception and Religious Representations

Religious media construction has often focused on salient markers of the Muslim religion, either to show good practices, to highlight limits and anticipate contradictions, or to defy prohibitions. The media are the barometer of society; they detect overpressures and introduce some oil into the mechanisms.

Two media poles stand out in the society of the Maghreb: The first is the guarantor of continuity and stability, and the second is the watchdog for failures, inadequacies, and taboos. For a long time, questions about the family, women, and related issues have been the daily bread of the media in the world. In Tunisia, for example, Mustapha Bakir notes that "Tunisian society knows a paradoxical organization between Arab-Muslim and modern secular identity. The overall picture in diagrams offered by Arab-Muslim societies is essentially summarized around two issues: The analogy between women and Islam, between subordination and law" (Bakir 2016, p. 244).

With respect to the median social line enforced by regulations, Morocco and Tunisia have had a management that is quite close to the religious side with their symbolism and representations. It is clear that the monitoring of programming and the empowerment of media actors are elements that improve the choices made by decision-makers. In the same sense, Raland J. Campiche insists on "the importance of the role of social regulator played by the media in matters of religion." He distinguishes the sociocultural effect from the form of regulation: "In other words, sociocultural effect and regulation do not have the same meaning, even if the notions are not exclusive of each other. To have effect means to influence the content, the production of religion in our society. To regulate religion is to determine the forms and treatment of religion in the social game, to contribute to the hierarchization of events or organizations" (Campiche 2000, p. 268).

Alongside the structural constraints of society and the political agenda, the media are additionally subject to a market imperative. To what extent do these imperatives structure religious media? Indeed, the temporalities are those dictated by events and ritual ceremonies, but this ritual installed in continuity is sometimes disrupted by religious minority events emanating from the extremisms of the 21st century.

However, the media reinforce the social role of religion by publicizing certain forms of religion and covering all its events.

7. Conclusions

Religious populism in Morocco is not just a practice that is felt in the media, but a political and societal burden that weighs heavily on the productive sectors and public space.

However, the achievements of the audiovisual sector should not be overlooked, such as the multiplication of regional audiovisual services, the public channel Assadissa intended mainly for the Moroccan public throughout the world in the Arabic and Amazigh languages, the fight against extremism in the national audiovisual space through an enlightened and moderate discourse, and the free access of all political components of the country to public debate without any restriction on the different currents of thought.

The media in the countries of the Maghreb have indeed played their role in the fight against all forms of discrimination by implementing a policy of "State–Regulator–Operator–Citizen" aimed at establishing a strategy for developing the sector and national production in the medium and long term by trying to detach themselves from the vagaries of the East.

The paths taken by the different countries of the Maghreb in creating a space for freedom of expression offer us a spatiotemporal reading of the difficulties encountered in adapting the notion of public space in Habermas's sense in a context of religious propaganda in some countries, which requires public acceptance through politics. However, we have also seen how other institutions, such as media regulators who maintain their independence and discretionary power, have been able to create a space in which the religious vector is not a tool at the service of either politics or economics.

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