

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Leicester</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA28 Modern Languages and Linguistics</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Fighting prejudice and challenging clichés and assumptions about North African immigrants in France</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The study describes how the Unit’s research underpinned a national exhibition that made an active contribution to the debate about immigration and integration - issues that dominate social, media and political discourses in France. The exhibition helped to confront the clichés, assumptions and tensions characterising the national debate on the place of North African immigrants in French society. The Unit’s Dr Rabah Aissaoui was closely involved in defining the structure and content of a national exhibition entitled <i>Generations: A Century of Maghrebi Cultural History in France</i>, staged in Lyon, Paris and Caen between 2009 and 2011. The exhibition was the first of its kind to be staged in the country and brought the richness and variety of the cultural contribution made by North African immigrants to national attention. It was cited as a prime example of good practice in the fight against racism and prejudice in the Annual Report Fight against Racism, Antisemitism and Xenophobia presented to the French Prime Minister by the National Consultative Commission of Human Rights in 2010.</p> <p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Aissaoui has published widely on North African Immigration in France in the colonial and postcolonial periods, and on Algerian history since he was appointed as a lecturer to the University of Leicester in 2004. His particular research interests focus on Algerian colonial history, immigration and racism in France and discourses on identity and exile, on the diasporic construction of nationalism and also on expressions of ethnic, national and cultural belonging amongst Maghrebi (North African) migrants in France.</p> <p>He has also researched and published on two particular political movements, the Etoile-Nord Africaine/Parti du Peuple Algérien in the interwar period and the Mouvement des Travailleurs Arabes (MTA) in 1970s France. His work focuses on various forms of political discourses and modes of mobilisation among North African political activists during the colonial and post-colonial periods in France (2). His research examines the processes by which North Africans have constructed a sense of national and cultural identity and belonging through their marginal status as migrants in France (4,5,6).</p> <p>In 2009, he published a monograph (1), described by one reviewer as “an important contribution to our understanding of the socio-political history of Maghrebi migrants in France, of Algerian nationalism, and of colonial and postcolonial histories of migration more generally”.</p> <p>Part of his research is based on interviews of ex-MTA militants carried out in collaboration with the Paris-based association Génériques and he contributed two articles to a special issue of the journal <i>Migrance</i> (2005, troisième trimestre) on ‘Immigration et Luttes Sociales’ edited by Génériques. His work was, therefore, well known to the Director and academic team in Association Génériques when in 2005 they invited him to join the Steering Committee in charge of developing the national exhibition entitled “<i>Generations: A Century of Maghrebi Cultural History in France</i>” (3).</p> <p>Aissaoui was the only UK-based academic Committee member when it was set up in 2005.</p> <p>He later recommended his colleague Dr Ann Miller (Leicester 1997-2010) to the Steering Committee as a contributor to the exhibition catalogue because of her expertise on <i>bande-dessinée</i>. Miller works on French-language comic art and has published widely on this topic, including on <i>bande-dessinée</i> artists of North African origin. She is co-editor of the peer-reviewed journal <i>European Comic Art</i> (7).</p>

### 3. References to the research

1. Aissaoui, R. *Immigration and National Identity: North African Political Movements in Colonial and Postcolonial France*, London and New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 320 pp., 2009.
2. Aissaoui, R. 'Algerian nationalists in the French political arena and beyond: the Etoile nord-africaine and the Parti du peuple algérien in France in the interwar period', *Journal of North African Studies*; Volume 16, Issue 1, March 2010, pp. 1-12.
3. Aissaoui, R. 'Les manifestations culturelles dans les meetings politiques de l'ENA-PPA dans l'entre-deux guerres', *Généralisations: un siècle d'histoire culturelle des Maghrébins en France*, national exhibition catalogue, Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris : Gallimard, November 2009.
4. Aissaoui, R. 'Le discours de l'Etoile nord-africaine et du parti du peuple algérien dans l'entre-deux-guerres en France', in Nancy L. Green and Marie Poinot (eds.), *Histoire de l'immigration et question coloniale en France*, Paris : La Documentation française, pp. 167-174.
5. Aissaoui, R. 'Le discours du Mouvement des travailleurs arabes (MTA) dans les années 1970 en France : Mobilisation et mémoire du combat anticolonial', *Hommes et Migrations*, N. 1263, September-October 2006, pp. 105-122.
6. Aissaoui, R. 'The political mobilisation of North African migrants in 1970s France: the case of the Movement des Travailleurs Arabes', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Aug 2006, Vol. 26, No.2, pp. 171-86.
7. Miller, A.: *Reading bande dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-language Comic Strip*, Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 272 pp., 2007.

#### Evidence of Quality:

Review of Monograph: "Rabah Aissaoui's monograph is well written, clear and impressively interdisciplinary, applying history, sociology and discourse analysis to good effect. There is an excellent balance between close empirical study and conceptual discussion." *Jim House, Co-Director, Institute of Colonial and Postcolonial Studies, University of Leeds.*

#### Research grants (Dr Aissaoui as Principal investigator):

- AHRC Research Leave Award - Research project title: 'The Politics of Identity and Migration' (2006-7): £24,387
- British Academy Small Research Grant Awards: January 2007, £2,832; March 2010, £6,970.
- External funding secured for Algeria Conference (multi-funded; 2012): £4,658

### 4. Details of the impact

Impact was achieved through Aissaoui's partnership with Association Génériques and his close involvement with the high profile exhibition organised by the Association entitled *Generations: A Century of Maghrebi Cultural History in France*, an exhibition that showcased the richness of the cultural production of North Africans in France in the twentieth century (A). Miller's subsequent work for the exhibition also contributed to impact. Association Génériques is a national organisation which aims to preserve and promote the history and memory of immigration in France. It identifies and preserves archives on immigration in Europe through cultural and scientific initiatives.

As a result of his research on the political, cultural and social development of the North African diaspora and on the construction of racism in the colonial and post-colonial periods in France, Dr Aissaoui was appointed as a key academic member of the Scientific Committee of Génériques (E) which was responsible for defining the thematic content and structure of the exhibition. His work on the concepts of national and ethnic identity and on the development on political activism among Algerian migrants in France in the colonial period and on North Africans in France in the postcolonial period informed a series of meetings held by the Scientific Committee in Paris between 2006 and 2008 to develop the exhibition project.

The *Generations* exhibition retraced a century of the cultural history of North Africans in France through music, film, literature, visual arts, theatre and politics. It chronicled the significant moments

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of resettlement from the Maghreb, through cultural practices, intellectual life and artistic creativity, and included largely unpublished audio and audio-visual archival materials. The exhibition has been visited by more than 50,000 people at three venues (**B, C**):

- Archives Municipales de Lyon, France, between 11<sup>th</sup> June and 29<sup>th</sup> August 2009 (**D**).
- Cité nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration (CNHI), Palais de la Porte Dorée, Paris, between 17 November 2009 and 18th April 2010
- Collégiale St Sépulcre, Avenue de la Libération, Caen, from 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011 to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011.
- The exhibition will also be open to the public at Cloître des Jacobins in Toulouse from October 2013 to January 2014.

As well as providing crucial strategic input into the structure and content of the exhibition, Aissaoui made a number of other material contributions including:

- A chapter for the exhibition catalogue entitled "Political mobilisation and cultural events among the Maghrebi community in France between the wars". The chapter chronicled the development of Algerian nationalism in the interwar period in France and shed light on the role of culture in Algerian political activism and anti-colonialism before the Second World war (**F**).
- A selection of short biographies of Algerian political activists in the colonial period for the exhibition (**G**).
- The exhibition included a day conference in Lyon in June 2009 which examined stereotypes and misrepresentations of the Maghrebi community. Aissaoui presented a paper entitled "Maghrebi cultural circles in Metropolitan France 1934-1939" and Miller presented a paper on "The Maghrebi and Comics" (**H**).
- As part of the same conference, Aissaoui gave a radio interview to Agora FM in which he discussed the relationship between culture, politics and antiracism in France (**H**).

This exhibition was cited as a prime example of good practice in the fight against racism and prejudice in the *Annual Report Fight against Racism, Antisemitism and Xenophobia* presented to the French Prime Minister by the National Consultative Commission of Human Rights in 2010 (p. 277(J)). It was described by the French press as "an answer to current problems of stigmatisation and identity crisis... focusing on the promotion of a collective culture" and "an exhibition that should break old clichés".

The exhibition touched tens of thousands of members of the public, many of whom left testimonies in a visitors' book, which chronicled the impact of the exhibition on their perspective and emotions. They included the following messages:

- "Bravo! We are proud to be French, finally! A (minimal) reparation but a reparation nonetheless! Thank you for all that smart and sensitive work."
- "We will have to all agree, we must live together."
- "This is a very beautiful and rich exhibition. It enriches the history of France."
- "A significant exhibition, even more important given world events, but also policies in France."
- "A beautiful and valuable collection of memories which will hopefully enlighten our life together."
- "A magnificent exhibition, a milestone in our national history."
- Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, currently Minister of Women's Rights and spokesperson for the French Government led by Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, declared after her visit to the exhibition: "Thank you for this moving exploration of the past. I hope that it will teach some of us about the failures of our present."

An effective communications strategy by Génériques with the CNHI, including an online press pack, raised the profile of the exhibition nationally, resulting in three reports on Radio France; four short documentaries (Télérama, TV5 Monde, France 3, Médiapart); five programmes on Beur FM. National and regional newspapers and magazines reported on the exhibition (*Le Monde, Libération, L'Humanité, Le Point, Témoignage Chrétien, Ouest France*, etc (**I**)). To accompany the exhibition, a number of activities were developed, including film showings, art and music shows and guided school visits. A music CD box set (3 CDs) entitled *The Masters of Maghrebi Music in Exile* was produced with EMI music and online resources were designed, including pedagogical

dossiers for teachers and students that were widely used and a virtual pedagogical tour of the exhibition.

The exhibition attracted the support of many influential individuals in France, including representatives of France's Ministry of Culture, France Television and French politicians, intellectuals and business people. These included Bertrand Delanoë (Mayor of Paris); Bertrand Collomb (Mayor of Lyon); Philippe Douste-Blazy (Foreign Secretary 2005-2007); Laurent Fabius (MP, Prime Minister 1984-1986); Jean-Claude Gaudin (Mayor of Marseille and Vice-President of the Senate); Alain Juppé (Prime Minister 1995); Jack Lang (Culture Minister 1981-1986/1988-1993); Pierre Mauroy (Prime Minister 1981-1984); Mehdi Charef (novelist and director); Christian Poncelet (President of the Senate, 1998-2008); Louis Schweitzer (Chairman of Renault until 2005) and Leïla Sebbar (novelist).

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Exhibition website: <http://www.generiques.org/actu.php?id=59>
- B. Information on visitor numbers and examples of exhibition-related activities from Head of communication/partnerships at Génériques.
- C. Information on sponsorship.
- D. Report of the exhibition's opening in Paris:  
[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xbm6v1\\_exposition-cnhi-fadela-amara-politi\\_news](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xbm6v1_exposition-cnhi-fadela-amara-politi_news)
- E. Invitation by General Delegate of Association Génériques, Paris, to become a member of the Scientific Committee of the exhibition and minutes of Scientific Committee meetings.
- F. List of contributors to the exhibition catalogue <http://www.generiques.org/ang/catalogue.php>
- G. Example of biographies written for the exhibition  
[http://www.generiques.org/images/inventaires\\_art/pdf/Biographies\\_Maghreb.pdf](http://www.generiques.org/images/inventaires_art/pdf/Biographies_Maghreb.pdf)
- H. Programme of conference events in which Aissaoui's and Miller's contributions are listed:  
<http://www.polville.lyon.fr/static/polville/contenu/Culture/aralisgenerations.pdf>. Weblink to details of the radio interview:  
<http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/musee/expositions-temporaires/generations-un-siecle-d-histoire-culturelle-des-maghebins-en-france>. For information on the Literary festival: Le Maghreb des livres, see: [http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/la-16e-edition-du-maghreb-des-livres\\_845980.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/culture/livre/la-16e-edition-du-maghreb-des-livres_845980.html). Internal report on the exhibition: 'Généralions: un siècle d'histoire culturelle des Maghrébins en France': une exposition de Génériques available on request.
- I. Examples of press coverage:  
Arte: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAof4kO4-ms>  
Médiapart: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCLN8158GuE>  
Télévision Lyon Métropole:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2AGzXBysQg&feature=related>  
Radio report on French national radio:  
<http://sites.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/chro/espritcritique/index.php?id=90025>  
Télérama (15 December 2009): <http://www.telerama.fr/idees/au-lieu-de-debattre-de-l-identite-nationale-si-on-allait-voir-l-exposition-generations.50599.php?xtor=AL-73>  
*Le Point magazine*, 5 January 2010 <http://www.lepoint.fr/archives/article.php/410639>  
La Croix : 13 November 2009 <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/S-informer/France/L-immigration-maghebine-en-France- NG -2009-11-13-600867>
- J. La Lutte Contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et la Xénophobie, Année 2010, Rapport de la Commission Nationale des Droits de l'Homme Présenté à Monsieur le Premier Ministre, p. 277,  
[http://medias.lemonde.fr/mmpub/edt/doc/20110412/1506227\\_95b4\\_cncdh\\_2010\\_basse\\_de\\_f.pdf](http://medias.lemonde.fr/mmpub/edt/doc/20110412/1506227_95b4_cncdh_2010_basse_de_f.pdf),