

'Participatory democracy' in French Television Debates: The 2007 Presidential Election in Context

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Introduction

The presidential election is the high point of the French electoral calendar and as such attracts considerable scrutiny and analysis. The main focus of studies in the field is on the conduct of the campaign by candidates and their advisors (for example, in the case of 2007, Gerstlé 2006; Maarek 2009), including their use of different media outlets, and coverage of the campaign by various media (e.g. Guibert 2007; Kuhn, 2007; Bousquet 2009). The presence of a female candidate who, for the first time since such elections began in 1965, stood a chance of winning, led to the focus on gender in the 2007 campaign (for example Larrivée 2007, Coulomb-Gully 2008). The other main area for analysis is voter behaviour, covered extensively by the group CEVIPOF at Sciences-Po (see, for example, Perrineau 2007 and 2008). The study in this article constitutes the early stages of a larger, joint project,ⁱ which consists of an in-depth analysis of a corpus of televised debates broadcast during the 2007 campaign. The project is distinctive from other studies of the election in its focus on the participation of the viewing public in such debates, rather than analyses of candidates' or their spokespersons' performance. As such it is filling a gap in the literature on French presidential election campaigns in particular, and the analysis of the role of the media in politics more generally.

The number of televised debate programmes with public participation as the dominant feature of the programme format was in fact one of the salient features of the 2007 presidential election campaign.ⁱⁱ The two main terrestrial channels, the privately-owned TF1 and the leading public sector channel France 2 (F2), both staged question-and-answer sessions between candidates and a massive studio audience seated in a semi-circle evocative of the National Assembly, precisely 100 members of the public in the case of TF1's *J'ai une question à vous poser* and around that number for F2's *A vous de juger*.ⁱⁱⁱ The latter also included interventions from the viewing public via webcam and the telephone. Meanwhile, the regional channel France 3 (F3) and the educational channel France 5 (F5), both in the public sector, broadcast their own take on public participation in the programmes *Français, votez pour moi* and *Etats Généraux* respectively. In the former case, the studio audience remained silent, but the set comprised of a panel of four members of the public, seated opposite a similar number of candidates or their spokespersons, with whom they debated on themes of the panellists' own choosing. This was supplemented by a video-link with regional stations of the network, where a central spokesperson surrounded by a group of people likewise presented a particular theme to be put to the politicians for a policy solution. Pre-recorded documentaries, featuring the panellists in the studio, the regional spokespersons or other members of the general public, fleshed out the themes with specific case studies from the various regions. As for F5, a smaller-scale rectangular set was the site for a small audience of young people, among whom were seated up to four members of the public (usually recruited through voluntary organisations or trades unions)

who put questions to the political guests. All three public channels included in their programmes questions put via the Internet and relayed by the journalists conducting the proceedings. Varied in both their spatial and temporal organisation, these programmes shared certain common features: each was the flagship programme for its channel in the presidential debate, and each required the candidates or their spokespersons to confront and respond to members of the public who were present on the set or speaking through external links (webcam, internet and the telephone).

The notion of 'participatory democracy' which each of these formats staged in different ways was forefronted in each case in the programme title and in the channels' promotional literature (TV magazines and channel websites). Almost invariably, public participation was characterised as an unprecedented phenomenon. This may not appear surprising in the case of channels engaging in marketing their product, where clearly newness and originality are seen as attractive features designed to tempt otherwise uninterested viewers, or indeed on the part of journalists, similarly looking for an interesting angle (see, for example, Garrigos and Roberts, 2007). However, it was also described in similar terms by commentators such as the academic Christian Delporte, author of a history of French political communication (Delporte, 2007), who claimed in a press interview (Séry, 2007) that public participation in such debates was rare, existing in only a few isolated cases before 2007. Both the anthropologist Marc Abélès and the sociologist Sébastien Rouquette attributed the origins of this type of debate to the programme *Chirac face aux jeunes* broadcast by TF1 during the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution (Garrigos 2007; Kerviel and Séry 2006), as did *Télérama's* Lucas Armati (2007). The purpose of this article is to examine these assertions critically, to establish to what extent and in what precise sense they are true, and to provide an alternative evaluation of and explanation for the 2007 phenomenon.

An unprecedented phenomenon?

Participation of the public in political debates broadcast on television was certainly not unprecedented in 2007, nor can it be said to have started in 2005. The practice goes back as far as the 1970s, when political debate programmes of any kind were still in their infancy on French television. Indeed, the 2005 programme cited as the inspiration for the 2007 phenomenon, with an incumbent president using this medium in order to bolster his policies and presidency, had its own precedent in Giscard's appearance in a special edition of *Les Dossiers de l'écran* broadcast on 1 February 1977, entitled *La France à l'Elysée*. Although unprecedented for a president to engage in such a dialogue (Michel 2005), this was still not the first political programme to involve members of the public: *A Armes égales* (broadcast on the first channel from 17 February 1970 – 28 March 1973), followed by *Les Trois Vérités* (27 June 1973 – 24 July 1974), featured members of the public who put questions to two politicians engaging in a head-to-head debate. In many respects, *A Armes égales* set certain precedents which have featured in subsequent programmes, including in 2007. The first of these is the cooption of the polling agency SOFRES to select the participants. This recourse to professionals experienced in selecting representative samples of the population at large transforms the representative function of the studio participants, and legitimizes their role, raising it above that

of individuals speaking only for themselves. TF1 has continued its relationship with this agency (now TNT-SOFRES) since the channel's privatisation in 1987, and used it to select the audience for *J'ai une question à vous poser* in 2007. Calling on a company external to the broadcaster suggests that the channel is impartial, since it has entrusted the selection process to those deemed expert in the field, using a rigorous, supposedly 'scientific' and hence non-partisan procedure.^{iv}

In spite of this continuity in having recourse to La SOFRES, the presentation of the participants was markedly different in the 1970s than in 2007. In *A Armes égales* the participating public was split into three panels, each representing a different age group, referred to as 'generations', and defined in relation to the Second World War. The general public was thus seen through the prism of recent French history, characterized as experienced differently by particular cohorts, but presented as a collective experience within each generation. In *J'ai une question à vous poser*, on the other hand, participants intervened as individuals (signalled in the first-person singular pronoun in the title), there being no spatial or temporal grouping of participants according to age (though there was spasmodic grouping of individuals along thematic lines, when the programme's presenter, Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, called for questions dealing with similar issues such as unemployment or discrimination to be taken in rapid succession before the politician was given an opportunity to reply). These organisational differences reflect a similarity of approach on a different level, however, as in both cases the channel was presenting a modern image of itself, in touch with the problems of the day. *A Armes égales* reflected a post-May 68 perspective which, with the advent of new freedoms for young people, was perceived to be a source of 'conflict of generations': collective experience was deemed to be shared within generations, but not across them. The 2007 programme, which for each speaking participant presented an on-screen profile detailing name, age, profession, geographic location, marital status and number of children, was more in keeping with the postmodern notion of fluctuating, mosaic identities.^v

The second element of *A Armes égales* which persisted in subsequent programmes was the notion that politicians are ultimately accountable to the voting public and so ordinary people constituted a challenge which politicians had to meet, and which they mishandled at their peril. In the 1970s' programme, each of the two political guests who featured in each programme made a film of their own creation on the theme under discussion. Neither politician had any prior knowledge of the other's film, to which they had to react immediately on viewing. The panellists, however, saw the two films two hours in advance of the broadcast, giving the latter the advantage of preparation and collaboration. This differential is intended in part to overcome the difficulties presented by involving potentially inexperienced public speakers to face the cameras, but it is also part of the *parcours du combattant* that a French televised debate programme is designed to be for the politician. The makers of *J'ai une question à vous poser* claimed a similar imbalance between a well-prepared general public and the supposedly vulnerable politician, deprived of any prior knowledge of the questions which would be put (Services France et Médias 2007; Armati 2007: 68): 'Bien sûr, les questions sont libres et ce sera un exercice à haut risque,' said Etienne Mougeotte, vice-president of TF1 (in Garrogos and Roberts 2007). The controversy surrounding the idea that the

questions might be 'leaked' in advance (it was discussed widely by both the national and regional press on the programme's launch^{vi}) begs the question of agenda-setting and 'authorship' of campaign themes, and it is difficult to imagine that experienced politicians (or journalists) could not anticipate the general tenor of questions likely to be raised. Nevertheless, the potential scandal this represented is a legacy of the days when televised political debate was pre-prepared by journalists in consultation with the politicians they were to interview, and nothing was left to chance. The insistence that the politician enters the arena ignorant of his or her interlocutors' questions is intended to signal that the programme makers are on the side of the sovereign people, and not in cahoots with the politician: it is a symbol of democratic accountability.

Unlike TF1's *J'ai une question à vous poser*, which relied exclusively on the studio audience for interaction between politician and voting public, the other three channels also used state-of-the art technology to enable the viewing public to participate in the debate. Webcam, used by F2 for *A vous de juger*, was totally new in 2007, the technology having only recently been developed and even more recently accessible to the general public – indeed, one webcam participant took part in a number of programmes, testimony no doubt to the paucity of people who could then exploit this medium and who were also interested in and willing to participate in programmes of this nature. All three public channels relayed questions put by email. F2 also used the telephone, and F3 video link-up. With the sole exception of webcam, all of these technologies have been used in French political programmes before, and webcam can be seen as a modern version of video links. The telephone featured for the first time in a political debate programme in the long-running *L'Heure de vérité* on Antenne 2 / France 2 (20 May 1982 – 25 June 1995),^{vii} which in 1985 also introduced the precursor to the Internet, Minitel, for its infamous instantaneous opinion polls whereby members of the 'public' (in fact a panel of 250, then 500, households) passed judgement on the politician's performance while the programme was in progress. In the same year, FR3 (later to become France 3), flirted briefly with the 'worm', an on-screen dynamic graph measuring second-by-second evaluations of the politician by members of a panel seated in an adjacent room during the broadcast of *Face à la Trois*.^{viii} *Le Monde en face* (TF1, 17 Sep 1987 – 17 March 1988) used video link-up to create a one-to-one exchange with individuals. The screen was so large that after an initial shot showing the transition from studio interview to video-link, the filmed interlocutor appeared to be side by side with the politician, as though the latter had been suddenly transported from the studio to the person's home or office. This contrasts with the use made of external links on F3's *Français, votez pour moi* in 2007, where there was no attempt to mask the technology used to create the link. On the contrary, here the emphasis was on the multiplicity of such links, with six or more regions shown simultaneously on a single screen, forefronting the role played by the regional network in covering the six corners of the Hexagon. A similar effect was produced in 1995 in F2's *La France en direct*, but this time across the whole series of programmes, rather than in each edition. Cameras were taken to bistros in a different town for each programme, so that over the series the video link-up constituted a 'tour de France', each locality bringing forward a theme presented as specific to the region. In 2007 each region had a single spokesperson, surrounded by a silent group signifying the speaker's representative status; in 1995 a number of interlocutors in each locality voiced their particular concerns. In both cases, the local / regional link was used to

construct the national population, in mosaic fashion. This contrasts with the individualistic approach taken by TF1.

In short, what can be concluded from this survey is that far from representing an unprecedented phenomenon, a break with past practice, the programmes broadcast in 2007 were building on the traditions of previous political discussion programmes. Not only was it inaccurate to say that prior to this election public participation had not previously featured in televised political debate in France, or that it only featured in rare, isolated, cases, the notion of a departure from past practice is erroneous even in the more restricted field of programmes broadcast during a presidential election campaign. *Le Monde en face* and *La France en direct*, for example, were devised for the 1988 and 1995 presidential election respectively. Indeed, there were some elements of public representation – the use of opinion polls, *vox pop* or 'micro-trottoir' – which featured in earlier programmes but were not exploited in 2007. The only unprecedented element was the use of webcam, which, although a technologically more advanced version of video-link, was, as yet, inferior to its predecessor in the quality of image and sound it produced. Recourse to this visually inferior form of mediation was less costly for channels than video-link, both in staffing and hardware, and gave them a more modern image. It also added yet another means of involving the general public, the diversity of such techniques itself symbolising the breadth of consultation of the public at large.

Where the programmes of 2007 were innovative, was in the specific programme design *around* the notion of public participation. Each programme produced its own unique style, with the effect that even TF1 and F2, which both opted for the large, arena-style semi-circle, adopted quite different forms of interaction: the first consisting of a maximum number of short question-and-answer sessions between individuals and politician, with a minimum of response to the answers provided and minimum journalist intervention; the second with lengthy exchanges between fewer participants and extensive journalist mediation, including a straight journalist-politician interview at the start of each programme. In this sense, while creating new programmes, the producers were acting entirely in line with previous practice, which has always been inventive in the range of types of intervention deployed and in the specific combination of different kinds of means at their disposal. In short, innovation in this area has long been a classic staple of political programme design in France, producing the notion of the *agora*, consultation on a vast scale, through a multiplicity of modes of interaction (see Perry 1998).

Significance of the 2007 phenomenon

What was unprecedented in 2007 was the fact that *all* the channels producing programmes for the presidential election adopted this format and that in each case the majority – and in the case of TF1, all – of the airtime was dedicated to politician-public interaction. It was the scale of the phenomenon which was new, rather than public participation *per se*. This ubiquity created a sense that the election campaign as a whole was being built around greater democratic accountability, creating the impression that 'the voice of the people' stood a greater chance of being heard. This in turn shifted the symbolic significance of these programmes, which, instead of being peripheral to the election campaign,

watched by only a small proportion of the voting public, became a central feature of it, contributing to and engaging in renewed enthusiasm for political debate and the significance of the election for the future of France.

This, of course, had been the programme-makers' aim, but it is difficult to imagine arch rivals TF1 and F2 cooperating to bring it about. If it emerged as a result of copycat programming (all too prevalent in contemporary media competition), one still needs to explain why channels saw public participation as a winning formula worthy of emulation, or why the public sector would adopt it as a central feature of programmes on *all* its channels. It is to the immediate context that we have to turn to explain this upsurge.

The channels advertised this programme format so as to restore their tarnished reputation in a context of political crisis in which they were perceived to have been complicit with a discredited political class. The public's disaffection with institutional politics manifested itself in increasing abstention rates for all types of elections in France from the late 1980s onwards: all previous abstention records were broken, some more than once, culminating in a record low turnout in the first round of the presidential election of 2002, which, allied with voting for marginal candidates, resulted in the extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen defeating Prime Minister Lionel Jospin in the bid to get through to the second round. Media professionals were blamed by demonstrators for their role in all of these developments: their connivance with politicians through the Parisian microcosm, resulting in their inability to call politicians to account in defence of ordinary people, whose lives they understood no better than did the politicians they interviewed; their responsibility in Le Pen's success due to an agenda all too preoccupied with his chosen theme of insecurity; their assumption that the 2002 election was a foregone conclusion, resulting in little effort to engage viewers in debate (see Kuhn 2005; Moores 2005; Terral 2004).

The aim was therefore to show in clear, unambiguous terms, that television was on the side of the voting public – hence viewers – and not that of the discredited political class. Since television journalists had apparently failed to exercise their role as representatives of the people by proxy, what better way to restore their reputation than to allow the public to intervene directly on their own behalf? 'Les gens en ont assez du bocal dans lequel nagent journalistes et politiques' explained F2 presenter Arlette Chabot to the press (Garrigos and Roberts 2007). This new, modest approach was symbolised on TF1 by its star political journalist Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, reduced to the role of mediator or 'chef d'orchestre' (Robert Namias, in Bernard 2007), a spectator at a tennis match (Schneidermann 2007) or, as expressed in less flattering terms by journalists for *Libération* (making a play on the usual abbreviation of his name to PPDA), 'Passe-plat d'Arvor' (Garrigos and Roberts 2007). Political journalists, like politicians, were coming down from their pedestal before the 'sovereign people'. Secondly, it was important to construct 2007 as the antithesis of 2002, as the antidote to that election, or as the 'anti-21 avril' as it was put in terms reminiscent of the 2001 terrorist attack on New York: like 9/11, 'le 21 avril' had become an iconic date for which no year needed to be given, signalling a national disaster. Channels aimed to differentiate 2007 from 2002 in both nature and number. Public participation had featured in presidential election programmes in 1988 and 1995, but not in 2002: its introduction in 2007 made 2002 the exception. Whereas a plethora of programmes had been devised

specially for the 1995 election,^{ix} there was a marked dip in 2002, with TF1 taking little interest in the election, and F2 broadcasting standard journalist-politician interviews bearing the straightforward title *Elections 2002*.^x In 2007, all channels, public and private, sought to obliterate the memory of failures in 2002 with a new look, and with programmes in prime time. Television's engagement with the democratic process was promoted with new programme formats designed especially for the occasion.^{xi} 'Participatory democracy', a form of direct rather than representative democracy, was a theme of Ségolène Royal's candidacy and had grown out of the debate over gender parity in politics and the need to respond to the political crisis by greater attentiveness to people's desires: the media were also jumping on this fashionable bandwagon in a move designed to flatter the viewing public with a renewed sense of their own importance.

In addition to this political context, the media context also had a part to play in this development. Following criticism of media representations of ethnic minorities by pressure groups,^{xii} the regulatory body, the CSA, inscribed a better representation of the diversity of the French population in the schedule of obligations (*cahiers des charges*) of first the private, then the public channels. The CSA was formally given responsibility for overseeing the promotion of diversity in broadcasting (to be interpreted in the broadest of terms, not purely ethnic) by the law on Equal Opportunities of 31 March 2006, under the auspices of the junior minister Azouz Begag. Public participation in programmes provided an opportunity for channels to fulfil this new mission quickly and at little cost: the diversity of people was symbolised by the diversity of their forms of participation. Staging members of the electorate also made it easier to attract audiences than with 'hard' politics, and was in line with contemporary trends in television and other media (the development of what in France is called *la peopolisation de la politique*), where, in line with celebrity culture, the focus is on emotional and dramatic confrontation of personalities, rather than on policy, on individual personal narratives, with a blurring of the boundaries between the public and the private.^{xiii} Finally, competition from the Web, which is eminently interactive, free from CSA regulation,^{xiv} and where taboos could be broken, made television a traditional and somewhat outmoded medium. A poll conducted by the agency CSA^{xv} for Radio France in October 2006 showed that 83% of the population continued to use TV as their main source of information for the presidential election, compared with 43% for the print media, 34% for radio and only 15% for the Internet (Services France et Médias 2007). However, it is qualitatively rather than quantitatively that the Internet was becoming a serious rival, in the nature of the debate it can offer. Not only does it escape the constraints of broadcasting, it provides an interactive forum in which members of the electorate can speak to each other, without either politicians or journalists as intermediaries, but in a public space to which politicians may or may not respond. The shift is important: politicians have to 'tune in' to the electorate, rather than the other way round. In this context, being interactive became an essential element if television wished to be seen to move with the times and able to renew itself to meet new media competition. Integrating webcam into television programmes was another way of harnessing the new media in the service of television. In addition, the interaction between public and politicians was carried on beyond the programmes on the channels' websites and blogs of subsequent days, giving the public the final word, and the opportunity to debate among themselves.

Conclusion

It is clear from this analysis that public participation in political debate programmes was not in itself a new phenomenon, neither within political television in general nor, more specifically, in television output during presidential elections. However, the scale on which it was deployed in 2007, involving almost all terrestrial channels in prime-time television,^{xvi} produced something of magnified symbolic significance, constructing the 2007 election as more responsive to people's needs, and hence more democratic, providing greater legitimacy to television as a forum for public debate. It took shape in the context of a very specific, post-2002 electoral and media context, with a desire to construct the 2007 election as an 'anti-21 avril [2002]'. This symbolic *rupture* was in symbiosis with the specific characteristics of the 2007 election, in which there was a new generation of candidates: neither of the front runners had been a presidential candidate before and, for the first time in eight elections (since the introduction of the election of the president by universal suffrage in 1962), neither the outgoing president nor a former or outgoing prime minister was standing for re-election. All three major contenders in the first-round claimed to be attempting to re-shape politics;^{xvii} in this, they were not only seeking to differentiate themselves from each other, in the manner necessary in all modern political communication, but were also attempting to steal Le Pen's clothes as an anti-establishment candidate, by promising to break the mould of French politics. With these programmes, television was also seeking to be an anti-establishment medium, on the side of the electorate rather than in the pockets of the political class, providing a forum for the sovereign people from which it hoped to gain its legitimacy. Compared to 2002, there was greater investment in programmes for the presidential election overall, and, within the programmes on offer, a greater profusion of styles, thanks to the varying forms of public participation deployed. Public participation was key to this renewal.

In terms of audience ratings, this move proved a great success. For example, *J'ai une question à vous poser* with Ségolène Royal (19 February 2007) totalled 8.9 million viewers, beating all records for fifteen years according to Michel Abescat, writing for *Télérama* (Abescat 2007).^{xviii} This led to the charge that the participants were simply 'de la viande à Audimat' (Marcelle 2007), exploited in the name of commercial television in its ratings war with its rivals. It is clear that this was indeed TF1's ambition in devising its programme: the channel's editors chose the format in the light of the commercial success of the programme broadcast during the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, *Chirac face aux jeunes*, which enjoyed 7.4 million viewers (Armati 2007: 69). But one should beware of falling into the trap of the 'intentional fallacy': just because TF1 (or indeed any channel) cynically devised a programme to maximise its audience share, it does not automatically follow that this was the *only* purpose it served. Programmes, like works of art, take on a life of their own both in the making and in the interpretations to which they give rise when broadcast. Participating members of the public do not always respectfully keep to the rules imposed, or carry out the roles ascribed to them once the programme begins, and neither do the politicians. In addition, in all cases a programme gives rise to extensive commentary in which competing factions fight to impose their interpretation of the event. The truth of this is

illustrated, paradoxically, by the fact that the charge of exploitation was made: where channels sought to regain political legitimacy as impartial mediators between citizens and their prospective leaders, their efforts were interpreted as cynical commercialism. Furthermore, the diversity of modes of public interaction deployed in 2007 should make us circumspect in making any generalisations about the programmes broadcast: for example the charge that this signified a dereliction of duty on the part of political journalists who left a less well-qualified public to do their work for them (Marc Abélès in Garrigos 2007, Schneidermann 2007) was vehemently countered by both Arlette Chabot (in Armati 2007: 69) and Paul Amar (in Kerviel and Séry 2006), both of whom took a considerably more active role in the debate in their respective programmes (*A vous de juger*, F2 and *Etats Généraux*, F5) than did Patrick Poivre d'Arvor on TF1's *J'ai une question à vous poser*. The contribution of these programmes to democratic debate can only be evaluated with extensive study both of the programmes themselves and of their public and private reception.

Audience ratings, and the readiness of people to take part in these programmes, suggest that the channels did, indeed, tap into a popular trend in adopting this participatory format. This adds a certain irony to the outcome of the election. For, as Philippe Maarek has rightly commented, the election of Nicolas Sarkozy, with his emphasis on a programme of action, in preference to Ségolène Royal and her promise to listen to what citizens wanted, might be interpreted as 'la victoire de la démocratie représentative sur la démocratie participative' (2009: 15). In other words, one might conclude that while a number French citizens may well have been keen to play a decisive role in agenda setting, in challenging politicians to tackle issues they deemed important, in making them aware of the impact of policy – or lack of it – on their daily lives, while millions of others were keen to watch this spectacle of accountability, nevertheless a majority of voters did not wish to take the decisions in the politicians' place. The prevailing notion of leadership – at least as it applies to the Head of State – remained intact, and a majority of voters appeared to see their engagement in this type of debate as part of, but not a substitute for, representative democracy.

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Notes

- ⁱ Conducted in partnership with Maggie Allison, of the University of Bradford (UK).
- ⁱⁱ The second was the rise in use of the Internet, discussed below.
- ⁱⁱⁱ In each case the number of people who put questions to the political guests was considerably smaller than those present: up to 50 for TF1 and around 12 for F2.
- ^{iv} This functions purely on the symbolic plane, since, even if one accepts the notion of 'public opinion' deconstructed by Patrick Champagne (1990), a studio panel is statistically too insignificant to be representative, the margin of error – plus or minus 3% for a sample of 1,000 – doubling each time the sample size is divided by four (Meynaud and Duclos 1985).
- ^v Interestingly, Robert Namias, Deputy Editor of News and Current Affairs at TF1, justified the choice of programme format in 2007 on the grounds of a 'generational turning point' reminiscent of the 1970s' perspective (in Bernard 2007). He was clearly trying to present the channel and its programme as modern and forward-looking.
- ^{vi} The suspicion that TF1 might be cheating was heightened by the fact that none other than Jacques Chirac had been caught out in a programme designed for him by TF1 during the campaign for the referendum on the European constitution: the president failed to anticipate the questions put to him by the young people who composed the audience, and his 'non-gaullian' 'je ne vous comprends pas' cost him – and the 'yes' campaign – very dearly. To compound the issue, this failure occurred in spite of the fact that press reports (e.g. Gurrey 2005) revealed that on this occasion, TNS-SOFRES had engineered a supposedly more favourable audience for Chirac by extending the traditional age-group designated as 'les jeunes' to include those aged 25 – 30, on the grounds that the under-25s consisted of a disproportionately large body of unemployed people, thought likely to 'skew' the line of questioning, and that this would reflect badly on the president. Given Nicolas Sarkozy's personal links with the channel, it was suspected the programme makers would do all in their power to protect him from a political error such as that committed by Chirac.
- ^{vii} Telephones had been used in the 1960s by *Faire face* (10 June 1960 – 9 February 1962), and the television history programme, *Les Dossiers de l'écran* (6 April 1967 – 3 September 1991).
- ^{viii} Claude Estier claims that he discovered a plot to use a 'worm' for the 1995 second-round presidential election debate between Lionel Jospin and Jacques Chirac, but managed to stop it (1995: 320).

^{ix} This resulted in there being a programme every day except Fridays, and four on Sundays. For details, see Perry (1999a and 1999b).

^x Olivier Mazerolle and Gérard Leclerc questioned candidates and their spokespersons around a triangular table, against a background of night sky and passing traffic through a picture window.

^{xi} Although some programmes, such as *A vous de juger* (F2) and *Etats Généraux* (F5), pre-existed the election campaign, they were redesigned for the campaign period.

^{xii} For example, the Collectif Egalité, led by Calixthe Beyala (demanding quotas in 1999), or the Club Averroès (presided over by Amirouche Laïdi).

^{xiii} A trend in which the 'revelation' of President Mitterrand's daughter Mazarine was an important historical moment, as Sue Collard's article in this journal testifies. See also Bigot 2007, Dakhliya 2008. Within television, this has manifested itself in the tendency for politicians to participate more frequently in chat shows: see Neveu 2005.

^{xiv} The CSA (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel) regulates the allocation of airtime to electoral candidates and their spokespersons.

^{xv} To be distinguished from the regulatory body (see previous note), the polling institute CSA is headed by the academic Roland Cayrol.

^{xvi} The exceptions were M6 and Arte, with a combined market share of less than 15%.

^{xvii} Nicolas Sarkozy proposed a 'rupture' from previous practice (including that of the government in which he had served) based on decisive action; Ségolène Royal promised a new, more participatory form of democracy; François Bayrou promised a 'third way' in which the bipolar opposition between Left and Right was cast as outmoded.

^{xviii} He was, presumably, ignoring the head-to-head debate between the two rounds, which, even in the 'lean' year of 1995, totalled 16 million.