

Hamid Senni

From the cité to the City

*They told me : "You'll never get a job..."**With Brigitte Dusseau*

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« Your name's Hamid ? You ought to change your name my friend, it would make things a lot easier... » « We don't need people like you ... » « You are too ambitious, you will never get a job... »

Hamid had written out dozens and dozens of job applications in France. But to no avail - no internships, and no work. In 1997, with a degree in economics behind him, he was even told by the director of postgraduate studies : *« You'll be a black mark on my records. Next year, you won't find a job. »*

The son of a Moroccan factory worker in a high rise estate in the South of France, familiar with racism and discrimination, and the challenges of a dual culture, Hamid Senni was always expected to struggle. So he struggled, became angry, and slammed a few doors on the road to finding his own way. But he was inquisitive, lively, intelligent, and determined to find a better way, supported by a headstrong father who would always tell him : *« You are the head, and your brothers and sisters the tail. If the head sets the example, the others will follow ... I don't care how many diplomas there are, you will get all of them ! »*

Hamid took all his diplomas, but he went abroad, refusing to let himself be locked into the world's expectations of him. Globalisation ? A great opportunity. Another world where your competencies count more than your name or your origin.

At 25 years of age, there he was, a product manager at Ericsson in Sweden, married to a Swede, living in a house with its own private beach. At 30 years of age, his company Vision Enabler was launched in the City of London, and his name is still Hamid Senni.

Hamid is proud of his journey, from his high rise estate by the Rhone river to London's City. It was a journey full of traps, but he learnt a lot on the way. He wasn't at all surprised by the riots in the suburbs, where the sense of isolation and hardening of conditions always worried him, nor by the "CPE" crises. On the way, he even came to terms with his relationship with France, and made himself the impassioned defender of cultural diversity, because a society capable of calling on all its resources is a stronger society. And that, *« that is something worth struggling for... »*

It's the point of view and experience of the son of an immigrant, but also that of a young international French man, who understands what it takes to participate in a globalised world, which today he wishes to share. It's a story which is both ordinary and exceptional, sometimes depressing other times inspiring.



*Born in 1975 in the Ardèche, **Hamid Senni** was born into a modest family of 8 children. His father was an immigrant from Morocco, and a factory worker. With graduate and post-graduate economics qualifications behind him, he left France in 1998 to go abroad. Earning his MBA in management in Gottenburg, he worked for Carnaud Metal Box in Oxford, and Ericsson in Stockholm, before trying his chances in France again in 2001. But the hundred or so job applications in France only landed him a job as a travelling salesman. He then worked at BP in London, where the prospect of a transfer to the French offices in 2005, led him to create his own company, Vision Enabler, which is based in the City. **Brigitte Dusseau**, runs Agence France-Presse in London.*

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