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Africa's Socioeconomic Development in the Age of New Technologies: Exploring Issues in the Debate

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Abstract

New technologies are perceived as the engines that drive socioeconomic development across the world. However, the extent of the availability, use and impact of new technologies on the socioeconomic development of Africa remains a subject of research investigations. Research on the impact of new technologies on the socioeconomic development of Africa is critical to the development of knowledge and the official policy for social change in Africa.

Key Terms: ICTs, New technologies, Socioeconomic development, Africa

Résumé

Les nouvelles technologies sont considérées, de par le monde, comme le moteur du développement socioéconomique. Toutefois, le degré de disponibilité, l'utilisation et l'impact des nouvelles technologies sur le développement socio-économique de l'Afrique demeure un terrain fertile pour le recherche. La recherche axée sur l'impact des nouvelles technologies sur le développement socio-économique de l'Afrique s'avère indispensable à la mise en place de connaissances et de politique favorables au changement social en Afrique.

Mots clés : TIC, nouvelles technologies, développement socioéconomique, Afrique

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Introduction

Is there a positive relationship between new communication technologies (ICTs) and Africa's socioeconomic development? Diverse perspectives abound on the extent to which new communication technologies enhance or impede the socioeconomic development of different countries and regions. For Africa, Emeagwali (web document 2007) is unequivocal in his view that there is a strong link between new technologies and economic growth. He argued that: 'Africa's inability to realise its potential and embrace technology has left it at the mercy of the West'. But Rodriguez and Wilson (2000:3) insist that, 'Although these new technologies appear to be improving economic performance and welfare among the user populations, the link between ICTs and society-wide economic progress has been more elusive'.

Nevertheless, multinational indices of socioeconomic development based on the diffusion of new technologies continue to place Africa at the bottom of the ladder. In many instances, lack of progress in the uptake of new technologies has been cited as the chief cause of Africa's poor performance. However, Guermazi and Satola (2005:23) remain cautious about the optimism associated with new communication technologies.

> For ICTs to deliver on their promise of economic and social development, it is critical that countries adopt enabling legal and regulatory environments that support e-development… this enabling environment was recognized in the Declaration and Action Plan of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which emphasized that a trustworthy, transparent, and non-discriminatory environment was essential for the use and growth of ICTs in the developing world.

As Obijiofor et al. (2000:59-60) observed, 'the assumption often made is that if one just purchases a few computers and modems, a post-industrial society can magically result'. Research has shown that this is not the case.

Communication Technologies as Tools of Development and Empowerment

Emphasis on new technologies as the basic tool for Africa's socioeconomic transformation has been drawn essentially from the experiences of western industrialised countries. For example, during the industrial revolution, many western countries experienced the constructive force of science and technology and found them to be the vital tools of development. Based on that historical experience, there are now widespread perceptions that new technologies constitute the engines that power the socioeconomic growth and development of many countries. Against this background, there is growing pressure on Africa to invest in new technologies. In spite of

overwhelming optimism associated with new communication technologies, many people still hold the fear that what worked for the West may not necessarily work for Africa. But greater evidence seems to suggest that there is a positive relationship between new communication technologies and socioeconomic development of many industrialised countries.

Coincidentally, the benefits of new technologies, touted by advocates of the technologies, have not been lost on African governments. Kwansah-Aidoo and Obijiofor (2006:359) note that 'various African governments have recognised the strong link between new technologies and socioeconomic development and are proceeding to put in place measures aimed at harnessing and maximising their perceived benefits'. For example, Uganda's National Information and Communication Technology Policy Framework 'recognises that ICTs have a big role to play in stimulation of national development, in particular modernization and globalization of the economy' (Mwesige 2004:88). Similarly, Ghana announced in the mid-1990s a policy to abolish tariffs imposed on imported computers. Ghana's ICT policy aimed, among other things, to promote public access to computers and to enable school students to appreciate the benefits of computer literacy.

Even with rising optimism about the potential of new communication technologies to solve Africa's socioeconomic problems, it is important to caution that the mere presence of new technologies does not determine whether the technologies will be used or what people do with them. Research evidence shows that new technologies are adopted when they are deemed useful by the adopting culture. For example, in a study of the technological adaptation process among the Maori of New Zealand, Schaniel (1988) noted that new technologies create change in society. More significant, he pointed out that the direction of change is often determined by the nature and use of that technology in the adopting culture.

The debate in the literature suggests that new technologies can transform African economies, although researchers agree that there are huge obstacles that need to be overcome in Africa before the continent can expect to reap the full benefits associated with the implementation of new communication technologies. One of the obstacles is the inability of the majority of people in Africa to access new technologies. On this point, Ho et al. (2002:129) observe that 'Questions about the information and organizational capacities of the Net will also have to address the reach of the Net to various populations'. Rodriguez and Wilson (2000:4) acknowledge this point.

> Although there are great complementarities between ICT and economic and social progress, there are also some important trade-offs between equity, well-being and the unhindered development of ICTs. Simple claims

> about the links between ICTs and progress are not correct, and may in some cases be dangerously wrong.

Sonaike (2004:42) also believes that socioeconomic inequalities would impact adversely the ability of Africans to access web-based services. He suggests, for example, that the Internet is likely to amplify inequalities in Africa.

> There is growing fear that rather than narrow existing inequalities in African countries, the Internet may widen them by providing a minority, urban-based elite information that strengthens its links with rich, western countries but is of dubious benefit to the struggle to reduce poverty and disease on the African continent.

In order to understand the link between new technologies and socioeconomic development, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Lal (2003:34) examined the factors that affect Internet diffusion and access in 41 sub-Saharan African countries. They identified various factors that impact Internet diffusion and access, and argued that 'high levels of GDP, a strong presence of Internet hosts and an effective telephone network, are indispensable to the diffusion of the Internet…' They also caution that a 'network society without an educated citizenry may not lead to the required transformation into the network society' (2003:34). Education, they note, serves as a catalyst for socioeconomic development.

With specific reference to how developing countries can improve Internet access and lower the digital divide, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Lal (2003:34) recommend that 'African countries need greater investment flows, since huge investments are a prerequisite to building effective communication networks'. They concede that, although Africa has made significant progress in the development of literacy at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, a growth in basic education is not sufficient to trigger socioeconomic development. In their view, 'Explicit investments will have to be made if African countries are to develop a digitally literate citizenry' (Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Lal 2003:34). They identified other factors which influence Internet diffusion. These include private investments in telecommunications, economic policies that stimulate investments in the telecommunications sector, as well as an increase in the number of personal computers. With regard to the growth in computers, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Lal (2003:33) point out that 'the existence of a computer is a necessary condition for Internet access'. Rodriguez and Wilson (2000:33) acknowledge the point, listing what they believe to be the merits and drawbacks of computer access or lack of access:

> The reason that computers raise inequality appears to be two-fold. First, workers with greater levels of education are precisely the workers who are best able to use information technology. Therefore the introduction of information technology widens the gap in opportunities: it allows college graduates to earn higher wages while it reduces demand for – and the wages of – unskilled workers with a high school diploma or less. Second, the introduction of a new technology allows firms to substitute machines for people. The people who are displaced by machines create a new mass of unemployed that depresses existing wages:

Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Lal (2003) also identify other problems that hinder Internet access in Africa:

> One infrastructural constraint, that of "lack of computer terminals", is often a result of improper deployment of computers when they do exist. It is common to find a relatively new computer in an academic department with full Internet access but located in the Head of Department's office where it is hardly used. This limits the use of the computer for other academic staff.

Similarly, in a study of the impact of new technologies on the socioeconomic and educational development of Africa and the Asia-Pacific, Obijiofor et al. (2000:21) observe that 'there are serious barriers to ICT use in educational and socioeconomic development, such as issues of infrastructure support, access to the ICTs, training and skills development, and hierarchical social relations which determine who has access to ICTs'. The researchers found that the execution of ICT policies in Africa was taking place in a context where the cultural and institutional barriers were being overlooked.

Djamen et al. (1995:231) believe the new communication technologies will serve Africa's interest in the digital age. In their view, 'Electronic networking will not only enable Africans to access global data but will also help the entire world to access information on Africa in Africa. Thus, the present situation in which Africans do not directly control their own data would be reversed.' Similarly, Henten et al. (2004:3) underline the advantages associated with use of the Internet and email technologies:

> World Wide Web and e-mail provide new opportunities for low cost communication and dissemination of information, and thereby promotion of economic and cultural development. Tele-medicine can extend the outreach of public health services, tele-learning and on-line extension services can support farmers and increase agricultural production, and producers have better access to market information and marketing.

As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, evidence exists of a positive relationship between new technologies and socioeconomic development

(Oyeyinka-Oyelaran and Lal 2003; Henten et al. 2004; Nwesige 2004; Sonaike 2004; Kwansah-Aidoo 2005). Nevertheless, as acknowledged earlier in this paper also, there are enormous obstacles yet to be surmounted before Africa can expect to leverage the full benefits associated with new technology uptake. For example, Sonaike acknowledges that the Internet can lower the existing technological and knowledge disparities between western and non-western countries. But, for that to happen, he advocates 'appropriate development of telecommunication and Internet technology on the continent' (2004:43). Jegede (1995:221) is less optimistic about how the Internet and other new communication technologies can assist Africa to overcome problems of socioeconomic development. He identifies institutional and infrastructural obstacles that impede the use of Internet for socioeconomic development in Africa.

> Three quarters of Africa's population is illiterate (so hooking them to the Internet is out of the question); three quarters of Africa is rural without basic facilities of electricity and telephone (so hooking up to the Internet can only be restricted to the urban areas); three quarters of universities in Africa have depleted library resources, have overworked academics and run computer science departments without computers… and there are currently 200 million personal computers worldwide but less than one percent of them are located in Africa (Jegede 1995:221).

Figures on Internet use in Africa (see Jensen 2002, web document) suggest that, 'Of the approximately 816 million people in Africa in 2001, it is estimated that only 1 in 35 have a mobile phone (24m); 1 in 40 have a fixed line (20m); 1 in 130 have a PC (5.9m); 1 in 160 use the Internet (5m).' As far back as 2001, there were about five million to eight million African Internet users (out of an estimated population of 816 million people), 'with about 1.5-2.5 million outside of North and South Africa. This is about 1 user for every 250-400 people, compared to a world average of about one user for every 15 people, and a North American and European average of about one in every 2 people' (Jensen 2002, web document). Comparatively, Jensen reports that, for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1 in every 30 people use the Internet; 1 in every 250 people use the web in South Asia; for East Asia, the figure is 1 in every 43 people; for Arab states, it is 1 in every 166 people (Jensen 2002, web document). Current figures show that, of the estimated population of 933,448,292 people in Africa in 2007, about 33,334,800 (3 per cent) use the Internet, while 97 per cent of the rest of the world are Internet users (Internet World Stats 2007, web document).

As grim as the figures on Internet use in Africa might appear, Kwansah-Aidoo and Obijiofor (2006:359) insist that 'the growth and development of

the Internet in Africa has been slow but steady'. For example, Sonaike (2004) noted that only four African countries were connected to the World Wide Web as at 1993. By 1997, the number of African countries with access to the web had risen astronomically to 44. And by 2000, 54 African countries could claim Internet access although most of them were located in the urban centres (Sonaike 2004:46). But, even with the growing Internet presence in Africa, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Adeya (2004:68) caution that, 'mere exposure to a technology does not guarantee usage, and as such the existence of information in society does not assure the use and concomitant acquisition of knowledge'. Their caution should be underlined because, based on their study of 200 teachers in 10 universities in Kenya and Nigeria, Oyelaran-Oyeyinka and Adeya (2004:75) found that only a handful of their respondents used the Internet to engage in electronic commerce. On that basis, they argued that:

> The low intensity of Internet use for e-commerce is symptomatic of the deeper problems of the underdeveloped finance sector. The reasons include lack of credit cards to poor financial resources. The lack of credit facilities compounds the problems, since it is a necessary component for online shopping. Obtaining an international credit card from African financial institutions requires proof of a healthy bank balance and above average income. This locks out most lecturers/researchers and limits their involvement in e-commerce.

Research data from other parts of Africa also support the view that Internet use in the continent is dominated by email communication, while African Internet users engage in little electronic commerce (see Kwansah-Aidoo and Obijiofor 2006; Sonaike 2004; Nwesige 2004; Robins 2002; Lee 1999). The implication of this trend of Internet use in Africa, according to Sonaike (2004:43), is that 'The vast potential of the Internet for research and education, as well as for commerce, would be lost to this majority' of the African population. Also, Kwansah-Aidoo and Obijiofor (2006:363) found, in their study of Internet use among university students in Ghana, that 'an overwhelming majority of respondents use the Internet mainly for sending emails'.

Conclusion

Even with evidence of a positive relationship between new communication technologies and socioeconomic development of various parts of the world, there are still vast obstacles that hinder the uptake of new communication technologies in both the urban and rural areas of Africa. Africa's ability to successfully harness new communication technologies for socioeconomic development of the continent would depend largely on the com-

mitment of African leaders and how quickly African governments move to conquer the range of institutional, social, economic, and political barriers that impede greater access to and diffusion of the new technologies.

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Internet and Development in Senegal: Towards New Forms of Use

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Abstract

This article addresses forms of Internet use within the framework of a development project. Through use of a case study of four telecentres set up by the Acacia initiative of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the article presents the theoretical claims of Internet use for development and determines the impact of the Internet on members of Senegalese economic and popular organisations. In this sense, the telecentre project reflects the tendency of international development to regard the Internet as a new and efficient strategy. However, the article asserts that only concrete uses demonstrate the role of the Internet in development. Traditional Internet uses – electronic mail and navigation – do appear. However, the results show a broader dimension of use that includes the appropriation of the telecentre itself and they advance the recognition of the presence of traditional communication as a complimentary element to Internet use. The article concludes that the local context and culture must be integrated into Internet use as a development strategy.

Key Terms: Internet, development, telecentres, Senegal

Résumé

Cet article examine les formes d'utilisation d'Internet dans le cadre d'un projet de développement. En se basant sur une étude de cas de quatre télécentres mis sur pied par l'initiative Acacia de l'International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canadien, l'article présente les arguments théoriques en faveur d'une utilisation d'Internet pour le développement et détermine l'impact de cette technologie sur les membres des organisations économiques et populaires du Sénégal. Dans cette perspective, le projet des télécentres participe à une

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tendance du développement international qui considère l'Internet comme une stratégie nouvelle et efficace. Toutefois, l'article précise que seules les utilisations concrètes démontrent le rôle qui est celui d'Internet dans le processus de développement. Les usages traditionnels – d'Internet messagerie électronique et navigation – y figurent en bonne place. Néanmoins, les résultats attestent d'une plus grande dimension d'utilisation qui comprend l'appropriation du télécentre même en même temps qu'ils voient en la présence de la communication traditionnelle un élément complémentaire à l'usage d'Internet. En conclusion, l'auteur recommande fortement l'intégration de la culture et du contexte locaux dans l'utilisation d'Internet en tant que stratégie de développement.

Mots clés : Internet, Développement, Télécentres, Sénégal

Introduction

In order to place the impact of the Internet and development into perspective and to move away from the dominant optimist or critical discourse on Information and Communication Technologies, this author is most interested in – within the scope of his Ph.D. in communication – a concrete development project in the African country of Senegal. As such, he has chosen to analyse the Acacia initiative, a project of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) focused on ICTs and development in Africa. The research touches upon four telecentres[1] established by the Acacia initiative and 41 survey respondents. Research results were obtained by means of semi-guided interviews, observations and content analysis. Two impacts which the project focused on were analysed: 1) network-building; and 2) action-related capacity building for Senegalese economic and popular organizations. Thus, this article has the following objectives: 1) to present the results of research on concrete Internet uses in Acacia telecentres; 2) to comprehend the logic of the theoretical discourse on the claims related to the Internet and development; and 3) to determine the impacts of use in network-building and action-related capacity building on Senegalese economic and popular organisations.

In order to attain these objectives, the first part of the article addresses the research by explaining the operations of the telecentres. The second part presents the theory on which development-related Internet use practices are inserted. The third part of the article explains and questions the forms of Internet use which have been observed in Senegal.

Research Context

The proposed project of Acacia contributed to the establishment of telecentres equipped with Internet access and dedicated to economic and social development. In this way, Senegalese economic and popular organisations could have access to the Internet and could attempt to create networks aimed at increasing their capacity. First, we will present the Acacia initiative, followed by an explanation of the nature and organisation of the telecentres.

The IDRC and the Acacia Initiative

The Acacia initiative is a program of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) which is a Canadian Crown corporation founded in 1970 in order to help developing countries to find long-term solutions to economic, social and environmental problems that afflict them. Acacia was started in 1996 following a conference organised by the G-7 in South Africa. It aims to 'empower sub-Saharan communities with the ability to apply information and communication technologies (ICTs) to their own social and economic development' (Acacia 1997:1). In Senegal, Acacia developed a working method which shifts the focus to marginalized communities from financing ICT-related projects and their contribution to development. These projects are quite diverse: the integration of gender into the Acacia-Senegal strategy, the introduction of ICTs to marginalized youth, and the role of ICTs in the implementation of decentralization policies in Senegal, etc.

Of the ICT projects financed by Acacia-Senegal, the focus will be on two: 1) Enda Tiers Monde's 'Use and appropriation of ICTs by popular organisations in Senegal' project; and 2) Trade Point Senegal's 'Decentralization' project. The project presented by Enda Tiers Monde aims to 'reinforce the operational and strategic capacities of popular organisations through the use and appropriation of information and communication technologies through a network coordinated by Enda Ecopole and composed of community resource centres[2] managed by groups of local actors.' When the project was proposed by Trade Point Senegal (1998:7), its goal was 'to experiment with decentralizing the services offered by Trade Point Senegal to contributing economic actors in areas outside of the capital, Dakar, by utilizing information and communication technologies through a network of local collectives in the country's two regions', all from the perspective of development.

Analysis of Telecentres

According to Reilly and Gómez (2001:1), 'Telecentres are a new trend in international development. Loosely defined, telecentres are a physical space that provides public access to information and communication technologies, notably the Internet, for educational, personal, social and economic development.' The research discussed here was conducted in 2002 and in 2004, and it analyses four telecentres in Senegal: Al-Baraka, Khadimou-Rassoul, Thiès and Yeumbeul, in order to consider telecentres as a new Internet-based development strategy. These telecentres bring together many members of economic and popular organisations that want to develop networks and increase their capacity. They are administered by one manager and one assistant. Content analysis, semi-guided interviews and observations were conducted. In all, 41 people were interviewed. These are divided into three categories: nine initiators, eight telecentre managers and assistants and 24 users. Of the 41 respondents, 11 were women: four members of the initiating groups, four working within the telecentres and three users.

Table 1**: Categorized Distribution of Respondents**

	Categories		Number
		Acacia	2
	Initiators	Enda Tiers Monde	2
		Senegal	5
		Al-Baraka	3
	Telecentres	Khadimou-Rassoul	1
		Thiès	3
		Yeumbeul	1
		Individuals	3
	Users	Economic and popular organizations	21
Total	3	9	41

During the observation periods, it was noted that the telecentres were equipped with computer and telecommunications infrastructure.

Table 2: Telecentre Materials

	2002				2004			
	Al-Baraka	Khadimou Rassoul	Thiès	Yembeul[i]	Al-Baraka	Khadimou-Rassoul[ii]	Thiès	Yeumbeul
Computers	4	1	4	-	4	-	8	-
Monitors	4	1	3	-	4	-	4	6
Printers	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	1
Telephone (community access)[iii]	1	2	0	-	1	-	0	2
Telephone (reserved for employees)[iv]	0	0	1	-	0	-	1	1
Phone call Counters[v]	1	2	0	-	1	-	0	2

i. The Yembeul telecentre could not be analyzed in 2002 as respondents were not available.

ii. The Khadimou-Rassoul telecentre could not be analyzed in 2004 as respondents were not available.

iii. The communicty access telephone refers to public telephone use in what we most commonly refer to as a telecentre in Senegal – that is, a centre which has a telephone the community can use for a fee. This type of telecentre is different from a telecentre dedicated to development, like those of Acacia.

iv. This is a telephone reserved exclusively for use by employees of the telecentres.

v. This is a machine that counts telephone pulses and calculaqtes rates. For example, if the unit is 70 francs CFA and the machine indicates that the number of pulses used, the user will need to pay 210 FCFA.

Starting from these numbers, more qualitative data were developed. In 2002, the telecentres in Al-Baraka, Khadimou-Rassoul and Thiès had computer equipment, software and an Internet connection. The telecentre in Al-Baraka had an Internet connection, but it was reserved for managers. According to their responses, members of the public had to pay a fee if they wanted Internet access. In 2004, only the telecentres in Thiès and Yeumbeul were functional. Baraka had no computer equipment or Internet connection. To elaborate, the Internet connection is a modem connection that, during the pilot phase, was paid for by the organisations that initiated the project (Enda tiers monde and Trade Point Senegal). At the end of the pilot phase in 2000, the organisations ceased payment. However, this aid continued for other projects until 2002. In 2004, the initiating organisations were no longer in charge of the Internet connection and only material support was possible.

The context of the research presented here and, above all, the information and data concerning telecentres demonstrate that information technology was a central concern for Acacia. Such evidence tends to indicate the growing importance of technology and, in particular, the Internet, in

the development strategies employed by Acacia in Senegal. The following theoretical discussion allows us to understand the emphasis placed on ICTs as development instruments.

Theoretical Comprehension of Internet Use in Development

While the Internet may have begun at the end of the 1960's (Béra & Mechoulan 1999), many authors agree on 1995 as the official birth year when NSFnet ceased operations and the public had access to personal computers (Godeluck 2002; Castells 2002). For Castells, 'the Internet is the technological basis for the organizational form of the Information Age: the network' (Castells 2002:1). Castells (2000:500) emphasizes that the networks 'constitute the new morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of the networking logic substantially modifies the operation and the outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture'. This situation moves Castells to state that 'under these conditions, the Internet (...) became the lever for the transition to a new form of society – the network society – and with it a new economy'[3] (Castells 2002:2). Elsewhere, the author asserts that 'core economic, social, political, and cultural activities throughout the planet are being structured by and around the Internet' (Castells 2002:3). In fact, the Internet has become a central actor in development. However, before explaining the role of the Internet in development, the notions of Internet use and impact need to be addressed.

Internet and the Notion of Use

Looking beyond its technical capacities and effects which implicate various actors such as the military-industrial complex and universities, as demonstrated by Béra and Mechoulan (1999:21), we find a space for examining the functions of the Internet. According to Desbois (1994:1),

> The most frequent use is certainly electronic mail (exchange of messages through a telematic network). Next is file transfer (transport of data or programmes from one computer to another on the network) and remote connectivity[4] (connection from a network computer appears at a different site).

The difficulty of use plays a central role in reflections on the Internet. This question is not new and has evolved over time. At the theoretical level, the *Uses and Gratifications* school (Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955) and reception theory (Hall 1980; Ravault 1986) have addressed the notion of reception and use in different manners while reflections on ICT use have solidified in recent years. Breton and Proulx (2002) see a driving continuum of simple adoption (purchase, consumption) as opposed to appro-

priation (technical mastery, creative integration, possible re-inventions) passing through to use (functional employment, conformity of manner of use, face-to-face with the object). In light of this proposition, the notion of use should be approached from two dimensions: a *stricto sensu* dimension relating to the use and seen as an appropriation of all the technical capacities of the Internet; and a *lato sensu* dimension that relates not to the technical object itself but to potential contribution of external factors.

Impacts of the Internet

Wolton (2000:45) notes that the Internet crystallizes three ideologies: 'the market as an end unto itself; technical super-performance, aspiring and claiming to transform society; and modernity, born of crisis in the grand utopias'. Yet, the derivative effects of the Internet such as the advent of the Information Society (Castells 2002) and the amelioration of living conditions (Lévy 2000; Quéau 2000; Negroponte 1995) permit an understanding of the expected social changes to be brought about by this technology. Nevertheless, even if the Internet tends to demonstrate universal characteristics, it is in local contexts that responses to these postulations can be found.

The Internet and the Excluded

Castells (2002:247) declares that: 'The central role of the Internet in many areas of social, economic, and political activity is tantamount to marginality for those without, or with only limited access to the Internet, as well as for those unable to use it effectively'. However, there are two types of marginality. The first concerns those who are already online while the second – of concern to this author – is the 'digital divide' which 'relates to unequal access to the Net and its content (...). The divide between developing countries and rich countries can be found in every nation where the poor, the minorities, the handicapped, the rural, the old are often left aside' (Godeluck 2002:20). Likewise, the digital divide is defined by Castells as 'inequality in Internet access'. Castells (2002:261) maintains that, 'the world, the global economy, and the networks of communication are being transformed with and around the Internet, while ignoring for the time being the overwhelming proportion of the population of the planet – over 93 percent in the year 2000'. In light of such a situation, one has to wonder how a change that has touched a measurable seven per cent of the world's population has all the force of a revolution.

The Internet in Senegal

The technological lag of African countries weighs heavily on a massive investment being made in ICTs in order to stave off the aforementioned digital divide. Thus, the choice of Senegal as one of the IDRC's focus areas is justified as it is in most African countries: teledensity is very low. As noted in a document issued by the Senegalese Minister of Communication (1999:13),

> We draw attention to the fact that for the entire continent the median teledensity is the lowest in the world. For the sub-Saharan region (excluding South Africa), it is 0.5 telephone lines per 100 individuals, compared to 36 for Europe, more than 50 for North America and a world average 13 telephone lines per 100 individuals'.

According to Osiris (2004), the teledensity of Senegal was 2.27 per cent and according to Sagna (2001), until 1983, there were less than 100 computers in Senegal. Since 1996, the rate of market growth has stayed between 15 per cent and 20 per cent and in 1998 the number of computers sold was between 10,000 and 12,000.

The Internet made its first appearance at the end of the 1980's with the implementation of a node on Orstom's[5] RIO network (Réseau intertropical d'ordinateurs or Inter-tropical computer network). This network, however, only included a few dozen people. Officially, the Internet was born in Senegal in March 1996, thanks to an agreement signed by Sonatel and the American company MCI. Nevertheless, Internet access remains excessively difficult for potential users, most of them found in large cities. According to Sagna (2001:65), it is because of this that clients of cybercafes are predominantly made up of expatriates, travellers, members of the upper-class and 'generally wealthy youth for whom it is a "must" to go surf in a cybercafé'. Despite the presence of these cybercafes, Internet access remains limited. Many international organizations have established projects aimed at improving public access to the Internet, a strategy that counters the marginality demonstrated by Castells and Godeluck. It is within this setting that telecentres were established with the goal of improving the living conditions of the population. Ultimately, when looking beyond the universal characteristics of the Internet, only the analysis of the local context permits the comprehension of different development-related Internet uses.

Internet: Technology as A Development Strategy

The origin of the question of development came principally from post-World War II political and theoretical spheres (Albertini 1987). It was

born primarily of a report on the retardation of one part of the planet by another. However, in order for development to become a reality, many methods, economic as well as social, are put forward. In this strategic quest, the presence of technology is important. Suggesting that countries research new technological and economic approaches, Albertini (1987) submits that 'countries of the Third World must be provided with the means for technological appropriation'. Are we to understand that technology is an efficient means for successful development? Guillaumont (1985:283) puts forward certain responses to this question, maintaining that 'If the existence of ''modern'' techniques, said to utilize a certain proportion of capital or to resort to recent innovations, characterizes the industrial sector, industrialization can be regarded as the diffusion of this type of technique to the whole of the economy.'

All the same, industrialization is integrated in the logic of development. This is much more often the case than of the 'steps to knowledge' mentioned above. Rostow (1963:19) maintains that 'the subsequent cause of startup was essentially (but not exclusively) of the technological sort'. On the whole, we are led to understand development as inextricably bound to industrialization (modernization) and technology.

The link between technologies and development does not seem to be new (Mowlana & Wilson 1990:25). What appears to be an innovation is the insistence that ICTs are the only means by which other indicators of under-development can be resolved: health, education, democracy, etc. Many authors espouse this view, presenting ICTs as the primary appropriative means for development. It is in this manner that Ossama (2001) argues for the adoption of ICTs for successful development in Africa; the challenge of ICTs would be to manage development problems as they arise. For him, if there are difficulties related to adoption it is because African decision-makers have not established a veritable link between ICTs and development. And yet, for Ossama (2001:16-17), it is clear that ICTs can serve as a lever for development in Africa for three reasons:

> 1) They make easier and cheaper access to information possible in a context where the mastery of ICTs has become a critical factor of development. (...);
>
> 2) New information technologies provide African countries with the possibility for profound economic and cultural global integration. (...);
>
> 3) New information technologies create new riches which will be accessible to developing countries because they will be more conditioned by

> intelligence and creativity than by the traditional capital that founds industry.

The principal theories on development or the role of the Internet in development tend to forget that development remains 'the history of an occidental belief' (Rist 1996) and that development should be analyzed according to forms of knowledge, forms of subjectivity maintained by this discourse and the system of power that it characterizes (Escobar 1995). Proceeding along these lines, Internet use in development should be approached with the analytical framework advanced by Vitalis (1994:9):

> It comes, in other words, from the recognition of the power of the user, but also a power that is constrained and severely limited by the dominating power of production. Indeed, use appears at the intersection of three principal logics: a technical logic that defines the range of possibilities, an economic logic that determines the range of viable uses and a social logic that determines the particular position of the consumer with his/her needs and desires.

The different theoretical reflections presented here each emphasize the possibilities of social transformation attributed to the Internet. All the same, these discourses – at times contradictory – should be confronted by the reality of field research in order to overcome the discursive dichotomy of the Internet and to explore a less speculative course of reflection. Likewise, the goal here is to comprehend and analyse forms of Internet use within a specific development project. Throughout this inquisitive process, attention is devoted to concrete impacts as well as the impact of the Internet on privileged target groups.

Concrete Internet Uses in Acacia Telecentres

Concrete uses of the Internet for Senegalese economic and popular organisations can be determined through interviews and observations. As a whole, of the 41 respondents, 30 people use the Internet and 11 have never used it. However, a particular concept takes shape here. Of the 30 Internet users, eight maintain that they are indeed users while elaborating that they use the Internet through other users – above all, the individuals responsible for the telecentres. Of the 11 respondents who have never used the Internet, the data demonstrate that two of them have used the Internet through other telecentre users. Thus, there are, in fact, 32 Internet users.

Consequently, we can divide these results into three categories. First, it can be determined that there are 22 direct users. These are users who go to the telecentre in order to use the Internet themselves. Secondly, there

are 10 *indirect users*. These respondents maintain that they navigate the Internet but, generally for reasons of illiteracy, cannot do so as they do not know how to read or write, do not understand French or English (primary Internet languages), nor are they familiar with computers. Due to these qualifying factors, they usually call upon the services of telecentre employees to navigate the Internet on their behalf. Thirdly, there are 9 *non-users*. These have never used the Internet nor have they used intermediaries able to navigate the Internet for them.

Table 4: Number of Internet Users

Direct Users	Indirect Users	Non-Users	Total
22	10	9	41

Of the 32 Internet users, 11 are women and 21 are members of economic and popular organisations. Of the latter, 20 use the Internet – 9 directly and 11 indirectly.

However, if these numbers are valid for 2002, it should be noted that in 2004, when telecentre Internet connections were cut, the same number of users was maintained as users began to obtain their access in cybercafes as opposed to telecentres. It should nevertheless be mentioned that these figures rest primarily on observations and remarks of the respondents as collected in 2002 and in 2004.

The problem is that real Internet use in the telecentres is of a far lower rate if we are to base it upon the fact that two telecentres were without Internet connections during field research periods and that the connection at another telecentre was reserved for exclusive use by management. If respondents from the two connection-less telecentres are eliminated, the number of Internet users drops from 20 to 12 for members of economic and popular organisations. On the contrary, the fact that Internet use is reserved for the manager of the third qualifying telecentre does not change the number of Internet users at all. In fact, the majority of users are, in reality, indirect users as the manager carries out Internet-related activities for them.

Internet: Reasons For, and Forms of Use

Having presented the types of Internet users, it is important to explain the motivations that drive members of economic and popular organisations to use the Internet. For the 21 direct Internet users who are members of these organisations, types of use do not vary; none of the respondents stated that they use the Internet for personal reasons and observations support these

statements. Thus, one can draw the conclusion that one solitary goal guides them: Internet use for professional reasons. In effect, they are all using the Internet to resolve certain issues pertaining to their organisations.

With regard to the responses and observations gathered, one can deduce two forms of Internet use: electronic mail and Internet navigation. Users assert that electronic mail is used to carry out discussions with companies or organisations. Through Internet navigation, they search for precise information. However, while there are some users with a clear idea of what they would like to use the Internet for, others leave this definition of use to the discretion of the direct Internet users. They wish nothing more than to see concrete results – whether or not their message has been received. However, the results of their Internet use are not always visible as reception of messages sent is not always easily ascertained.

Over the course of this research, the use of a particular telecentre became evident. Ultimately, the telecentre seems to be a place for meetings and informal discussions by members of economic and popular organisations who do not often see one another and have adopted this location as a meeting place. Members of economic groups meet to discuss probable business opportunities while those from popular groups hold meetings in order to organise and coordinate their activities. They discuss politics and problems concerning the region, Africa or the world. However, members of these groups sometimes ask the managers for help which the managers willingly provide.

If this particular use appears frequently in the telecentres, the *stricto sensu* types of use – electronic mail and navigation – must be performed in an optimal environment. This, however, does not appear to always be the case.

Difficulties of Internet Use

On the whole, Internet use is not without difficulties, the first of which is cost. This is an opinion that is shared here as well. The majority of members of the economic and popular organisations, as well as the management of the telecentres, assert that costs for Internet use are exorbitant. The second difficulty has to do with conditions of Internet use which are related to the use of the tool itself. Even if users find it to be a faster and more efficient tool than other means of communication such as the post, very few users believe their problems to be purely technical. Disconnection issues, though, are a recurring problem. The third difficulty has to do with problems outside the immediate scope of the Internet: throughout 2002, power cuts in Senegal were quite

regular.[6] This situation was harmful to the telecentres as users were unable to use computers during power cuts.

The difficulties related to Internet use have had an impact on Internet access as can be seen in some telecentres that have suspended their Internet connection for one reason or another. However, other telecentres have maintained Internet service, confirming that Internet use impacted on the economic and popular organisations.

Impacts of Internet Use

There are two sorts of impacts expected from Internet use: 1) network-building by economic and popular organizations; and 2) improved capacity-building for these groups.

In terms of network-building, all 21 economic and popular organisations mentioned that they have made contacts with other local groups, citing the names of groups that were in their neighbourhood, town or suburbs. They asserted that if these other groups had certain needs or information they would phone them to see if they could be of use. However, it should be mentioned that only one organisation stated that it had made contact with another local group by email and not simply discovered the group and their telephone number on the Internet. Ten of the 21 organisations stated they have international contacts. Thus, we can conclude that the constitution of an international network remains quite limited.

Network-building at the local level deserves to be analysed thoroughly. Paradoxically, it seems to have acquired a more important place than the constitution of an international network. In effect, the results demonstrate that an informal local network was created by the economic and popular organisations that frequent the telecentres. This link could have been established through the simultaneous presence of members of these groups in the telecentres, discussions between these individuals developing into more profound contacts between their groups. In fact, face-to-face communication seems to be the central tool of communication in informal local network-building. In order for this face-to-face communication to take place, however, the pretext of Internet use in the telecentres needs to exist.

When pursuing improved capacity-building, economic organisations essentially use the Internet to find partners, create an online commercial presence and to sell their products. They believe that successfully making international contacts will allow them to increase their revenues, employ more people and to have greater financial means at their disposal. In this setting, we can deduce that increased capacity relates to a purely eco-

nomic volition while the social organisations have a much more social vision attached to their actions. In the case of these groups, improved institutional capacity makes them more capable of improving living conditions in their neighbourhoods: fighting against poverty, poor health, sickness, etc. In this sense, the Internet, for them, has become a way to do things better than before and has become a means by which they can overcome their previous institutional limitations. The results indicate one case of improved capacity through the foreign sale of artisanal products by a Senegalese economic organization. However, in analyzing this encouraging case of sales to American organisations, we come to understand that the situation has perhaps been made possible because the Senegalese group has had a willingness to use the Internet. This example demonstrates that the volition to use the Internet existed even before the Acacia telecentre programme was initiated, at least within one Senegalese organisation.

Conclusion: Internet Use – A Solution for Development in Africa?

Analysis of the telecentres shows that the interactive situation we find there demonstrates Internet use from a perspective larger than that of the technical tool itself. We find this in the *lato sensu* dimension of Internet use. In fact, for the managers as much as for the users, the Internet is a signifier much larger than the content of a computer. We could perhaps posit that Internet use can be understood to be the appropriation of a centre as a place for communication. If the goal of the Internet is to connect computers around the work with one another, in the case of Acacia's telecentres, Internet use manifests itself according to broader social phenomena depending on where access points are situated. Consequently, Internet use consists of an appropriation of the physical space in which it is located. It is as if the active sphere of the Internet has grown to include the actual telecentre. However, this appropriation corresponds to the contextual reality of use demonstrated by the fact that traditional communication, based on orality and face-to-face communication, is present in Senegal, even in the context of Internet use.

Surely, the Internet should be associated with the local context of development. Development projects thus should envision the integration of traditional communication practices with modern techniques. Such a choice would aide in the re-appropriation of development by Africans themselves and the integration of ICTs in their development strategies. All the same, the culture seems to have been inculcated with the concept of Internet

use. The research explored here, however, demonstrates the centrality of this inculcation of Internet use. As such, do development strategies not need to rely on the culture of the local Internet use setting (as it is done in Senegal) rather than considering it simply through the eyes of the production (i.e. North America or Asia)? Similarly, resources for national languages must be considered in the provision of Internet access. These different points, however, imply many adjustments aimed at optimizing the use of the Internet: training for computer specialists, integration of national languages in Internet content, etc. Putting these propositions into practice would allow for the realisation of the full potential of the Internet.

Nevertheless, Internet uses such as those exercised in the Acacia telecentres demonstrate a willingness of Senegalese people to follow the technological evolution. Some sort of belief in the Internet as a tool for development is present here and this expectation creates a motivation for its use. However, this use has encountered problems that sometimes are independent of the technical object itself, in this case related to local use. Would it not be better to envisage other forms of technology that better reflect local realities? Indeed, with rolling electrical blackouts, Internet use via new computers such as the '$100 laptop computer' project could be one alternative strategy. Hence, even if Internet use is valued by the Senegalese, the development strategy does not need to be limited to the singular use of ICTs. Other urgent problems are, indeed, present: sanitation issues, poor schooling, lack of potable water, etc. The Internet by itself cannot resolve these issues.

The uses of the Internet, thus, exhibit interesting dynamics that deserve to be reinforced. While the Internet has, indeed, been present, the organisations examined here tend to always focus on their local environment when building networks. In the Senegalese context, it is used primarily for building international networks. In addition, the improvement in capacity-building for economic and popular organisations seems to be carried out to the detriment of Internet use. This tool could have been used as a catalyst but traditional networks were quite active and made it possible for these organisations to strengthen work they had previously engaged in. Moreover, the research presented here asserts that the Senegalese have integrated the theoretical discourse of the Internet and development, demonstrated through their use of the Internet as a development tool. Theoretical discourse, thus, seems to have provided motivation for Internet use. These various factors help to explain why the Internet remains a means of development, but simply as a tool. It must be put at the service

of the general population and respond to the desires of their popular base rather than dictating these desires.

Notes

1. The nature and configuration of the telecentres are explained in detail later in the article.
2. The community resource centres are another name for the telecentres.
3. It must be noted that throughout this entire book concerning the Internet, Castells takes certain methodological precautions, affirming that his work was based on 'limited observation' and has a central goal 'to nourish and found the on-going debate on the Internet'.
4. Emphasis by Desbois.
5. Orstom was founded in 1943 and is a French research organization now known as l'Institut de recherche pour le Développement (Development Research Institute). The IRD is a French public organization that focuses on science and technology under the direction of ministers of National Education and Research; Foreign Affairs – Cooperation; Foreign Affairs; Economy, Finances and Industry; and the Overseas minister. Its mission is to develop scientific projects centred on relations between humankind and its environment in the inter-tropical zone.
6. It must be noted that during the first research trip, a duration of almost 4 months, I recorded power cuts at least once per week. However, seeing as the cuts were isolated, I am unable to provide a general opinion on electrical outages in Senegal. Once, I noticed the power cut while spending time in a telecentre and it lasted an hour or two. However, when I went to a different neighbourhood, electricity was available.

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Using ICTs to Enhance Healthcare in Zambia

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Abstract

This paper examines an electronic record system in Zambia, where Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been adopted and are being used innovatively in one area of the health sector – perinatal care. The paper explores how the system known as the Zambia Electronic Perinatal Record System (ZEPRS) is being used in Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. Having carried out fieldwork in 2005 where interviews were conducted and observations made in relation to the system, the paper makes the case that such use of ICTs is contributing to human development and subsequently helping to meet some of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This paper therefore makes the case that ZEPRS, one of a first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa, is a good example of a programme that is being used to meet United Nations (UN) MDGs, of which enhancement of health is one of them.

Key Terms: ICTs, ZEPRS project, healthcare, Africa Information Society Initiative, UN Millennium Development Goals.

Résumé

Cet article porte sur un système d'archivage électronique en Zambie. Dans ce pays, en effet, les technologies de l'information et de la communication sont rentrées dans les mœurs et sont utilisées de manière novante dans un des sous-secteur de la santé – La santé périnatale. L'article examine l'utilisation du système dénommé Zambia Electronic Périnatal Record System (ZEPRS) à Lusaka, la capitale, du pays. Au terme de ses travaux sur le terrain effectués en 2005, constitués d'interviews et de séance d'observation relatives au système, l'auteur soutient la thèse selon laquelle pareil usage des TIC contribue au développement humain et éventuellement à la réalisation de certains des objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement (OMD). En conséquence, cet article fait sien l'argument selon lequel le ZEPRS, un des pionniers en son genre en Afrique au sud du

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Sahara, demeure un exemple valable de programme mis à contribution pour la réalisation des OMD des Nations unies, au rang desquels figure l'amélioration de la santé.

Mots clés : TIC, Projet ZEPRS, Santé, Africa Information Society Initiative, Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement (Nations Unies).

Introduction

More than ever before, ICTs are having a huge influence on human lives. There has been a tremendous amount of research on this aspect, particularly in respect to developed countries. More recently, research attention has shifted to the impact of ICTs on Africa and in particular sub-Saharan Africa. There is an understanding at national, regional and international levels that ICTs are a catalyst for social and economic development. For instance, at the national level, this is evident in Zambia's national ICT policy, which was officially unveiled in March 2007. At the regional level, this understanding is evident in the Africa Information Society Initiative (AISI), which began in 2003. At the international level, the two United Nations' World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS) held in 2003 in Geneva and 2005 in Tunisia lend credence to this understanding.

In general, a plethora of studies exists on the potential of ICTs to enhance social and economic development (Hafkin and Huyer 2006; Song 2003; Green 2002; Ohmae 2000). For example, Hafkin and Huyer (2006) explore various aspects of how ICTs are being used to empower women, including the problems that limit such empowerment, namely inadequate ICT policies that fail to meet women's needs in the knowledge society. On the other hand, Song (2003) offers several possibilities of ICT use especially in rural and under-served areas, including the view that ICTs can help to provide efficient social services, enhanced informal social safety nets, and an increase in the potential of rural areas to receive more industrial investment, as well as the potential of ICTs to empower communities to gather and assess the information needed to formulate decisions and to be heard. Various ICT studies show the importance of ICTs in development. However, such studies also often fail to emphasise the importance that health plays in the social and economic development of countries, including how ICTs can be and are linked to health in order to support social and economic growth. In this context, this article sets out a framework for exploring the enhancement of healthcare within the context of ICTs and demonstrates the potential benefits by drawing on the ZEPRS project in Zambia which focuses on perinatal healthcare.

In order to understand the need for enhancement of health in development, the article sets out a discussion grounded within some contemporary development theoretical concepts. The article subsequently incorporates perspectives on social constructivist technology in order to cultivate a relationship between development, health and ICTs. This leads to a discussion on health and ICTs in relation to the ZEPRS project. In this regard, particular reference is made to some of the UN MDGs that relate to health and how they inform human development. The article concludes by making the case that such a project can be used as a good practice and is possibly generalisable to other aspects of healthcare, including other development agendas not only in Zambia but also in other parts of the developing world.

Methodology

The article reviews some aspects of development approaches in order to chart the course of declining medical healthcare and how this is being mitigated in newer development paradigms such as human development. It is, however, beyond the scope of this article to give an exhaustive account of development approaches. Also, the author has no intention of providing detailed accounts of the development approaches discussed here. As part of the methodology, the article uses extracts of interviews with workers of the ZEPRS project who include project officers and nurses. The assessment of the viability of the ZEPRS project is also undertaken as a result of the observations made during the course of the field work.

Reviewing Development Concepts to Understand the Need to Enhance Healthcare

There is a myriad of interpretations and understandings of the term development. Qing (1999) discusses development in relation to 'growth, expansion, making something stronger, more effective or more available to everybody' (1999:57). Sen (1999) argues that development is about the freedoms that people enjoy such as education and health, while Kim and Weaver (2003) observe that 'development is defined as economic globalisation' (2003:122). After Zambia's independence in 1964, its social and economic development was one of the strongest in sub-Saharan Africa. Like most countries, this was the period when Zambia's development was underpinned by modernisation. The modernisation period meant the creation of jobs, expansion of industries, provision of state subsidies in agriculture, as well as in education and health. In respect to health, this meant everyone had access to free healthcare. However, the Zambian

economy began to experience a steady decline in the late 1970s due to high oil prices at the time. This had a knock-on effect on copper prices which slumped on the international market. As Zambia's main foreign exchange earner is copper, the fall in copper prices also meant that there was a negative impact on its economic growth. The country's economic malaise was also compounded by its inability to pay back its balance of payment to countries that had lent it financial support. This was due to high interest rates. As a result, many services that received government subsidies such as agriculture, education and health began to suffer.

The introduction of neo-liberal development approaches like Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs)[1] that were encouraged by international financial organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Word Bank (WB) only seemed to exacerbate the suffering of most of the people. The IMF and the WB insisted that Zambia and other countries that were experiencing an economic decline should implement SAP if they were to qualify for financial aid. These included, among other conditions, the privatisation of state-run enterprises, liberalisation of the economy, reduction of government expenditure and the removal of state subsidies. The privatisation of state-owned enterprises was considered as a precursor to efficient management of the enterprises. The liberalisation of the economy was to encourage competition while the removal of subsidies was to encourage long-term economic growth with less dependency on state funding. The emphasis therefore was on achieving macro-economic (national economic) growth at the expense of micro-economic stability, that is, basic social needs. The effect on healthcare of a neo-liberal development perspective such as SAP was such that the removal of health subsidies and consequent introduction of user fees had an adverse effect on most poor people. This meant that many facets of healthcare have been affected, including perinatal health. It might be argued that women's health suffered the most not only because they were directly affected in perinatal health but also in many aspects of health, such as looking after the sick and the aged.

Although the removal of subsidies, as well as the sale of state enterprises, including other changes that developing countries had to adopt to meet SAP conditions, seem severe and harsh in many instances, commentators like Sahn et al. (1997) have argued that SAPs have not necessarily harmed the poor in Africa but benefited them albeit in a small way. Sahn et al. (1997) admit that, although programmes like SAP may be inefficient in tackling poverty, 'contrary to much conventional wisdom, the evidence suggests that trade and exchange rate policy reforms in them-

selves do not harm the poor, but instead tend to raise their real incomes' (1997:94). Such an observation has also been made by Engberg-Pedersen et al. (1996) who argued that, as a result of SAPs, at least as far as agriculture is concerned, pricing and marketing have improved especially for those in urban areas. Creevy (2002) also argues that although SAP has had a negative impact on the poor, some of them have done well due to the informal financial networks that have emerged.

However, these commentators neglect to assess what the full impact has been on health and how, as a result of this, social and economic development might decline rather than improve. It is as a result of such decline that Baliamoune-Lutz (2005) argued that the poor have become poorer while the rich have become richer. Rugumamu (2005:5–6) further posits that

> The continent [Africa] scores poorly on every major human development indicator: life expectancy, infant mortality and school enrolment. Above all, Africa is defined by diminishing economic growth, growing unemployment, high debt levels, balance of payment problems, a falling share of world trade and adverse terms of trade. Although the continent accounts for about 10 per cent of the world's population, its economies account for only 1 per cent of the world's GDP.

Owing to the negative effects that SAP has had on ordinary people, the development paradigm has undergone a shift to embrace the Human Development approach. The Human Development concept differs somewhat in focus from earlier development paradigms. Rather than focusing on a country's macro-economic growth, the paradigm focuses on many facets of human development, not just the financial and economic aspects, to include microeconomic basic social needs. Therefore, rather than examine only a country's gross domestic product (GDP) which is one pointer to indicate a country's economic growth, the paradigm focuses on indicators that encourage human development. Human development is measured by the Human Development Index. This uses a number of different indicators to measure a nation's human development, including life expectancy, literacy, education, and standard of living. These indicators can also be drilled down for gender differences, including access to and use of ICTs. This allows an understanding of how a country's population is faring in, for example, its citizens' standards of living, human rights, equality, including social justice (UN Human Development Report 1990).

The 2006 Human Development Report ranks Zambia 165 out of 177 countries, showing that it is one of the least developed countries in the world. The report also suggests that there is a slow but steady diffusion of technology use in regard to Internet and mobile phone uptake. However,

the report shows that life expectancy is very low, with female life expectancy at 37.1 compared to 38.2 to that of men. Unlike the other development concepts such as modernisation, the Human Development concept gives greater consideration by making more explicit elements of human development such as health that are important to the wellbeing of people.

For example, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a good indicator of how human development puts ordinary people's wellbeing at the heart of development and include:

- the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger;
- achievement of universal primary education;
- promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- reduction of child mortality;
- improvement of maternal health;
- combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- ensuring environmental sustainability; and
- development of global partnerships to achieve development.

In all the goals, health is most prominent in three. Highlighted in the three areas are issues such as child mortality, maternal health and the combating of HIV/AIDS, including other diseases like malaria which are one of Zambia's major health concerns. For example, Zambia's infant mortality rate stands at 102 while the under-five mortality rate is at 182 per every 1000 live births. Maternal mortality rate is at 750 per every 100,000 live births while the HIV prevalence is at around 17 per cent for ages between 15 and 49 (UN Human Development Report 2006). Bearing in mind these challenges in health, how can and how are ICTs being harnessed to enhance healthcare in Zambia? Furthermore, how can subsequent enhancement inform human development and contribute to meeting some of the MDGs?

Adopting Technology with a Social Constructivist Perspective to Enhance Healthcare

The Zambian government has suggested that ICTs can be harnessed to contribute to the achievement of the MDGs in its National ICT Policy (2006). One of the ICT policy goals is'To improve access to quality healthcare as close to the family as possible through the deployment and exploitation of ICTs and other modern technologies' (Zambia National ICT Policy 2006:43).

The introduction of an ICT project such as ZEPRS is a good case in point where the MDG goals of eradicating child mortality, maternal health and HIV/AIDS and other diseases like malaria are beginning to meet the above ICT policy goal. By so doing, they also help to promote the wellbeing of ordinary people. However, in applying ICTs to healthcare, it is vital to understand that its application should be context specific in order to meet the particular needs of a local community. Wyatt et al. (2000:8 & 9) reveal that technologies are, by and large, understood within three categories:

> The first [as] "technological determinism", in which technologies emerge as if from nowhere and then proceed to transform the society into which they are diffused. [The] second as "technology as neutral" also has the technology emerging from nowhere but, that people choose how they want to use it. The third as "constructivism", [which] emphasises the origins and development of technology, demonstrating how people are involved in the creation of technical networks, not only in how they are subsequently used).

Based on the preceding discussion, it is evident that technology does not operate in a vacuum. Therefore, in order to enhance healthcare in Zambia, the adoption and use of ICTs would need to be context specific to meet the demands of the people they were intended for. Adopting ICTs as if by themselves they might influence change in the enhancement of healthcare may leave unfulfilled its adoption and use. This is because this way of adopting ICTs often fails to contextualise its relevance to the needs of local people. For instance, many telecentre projects in Africa have since folded (Heeks 2005; Jellema & Westerveld 2001). Part of the problem had to do with the assumption that what worked in the West would work in the North without consideration of what the North actually needed. Oxaal and Baden (1997) assert that, for any development project to work, the needs of the local community have to be taken into consideration. Therefore, a deterministic approach in adopting ICTs to enhance healthcare may not work well in a Zambian environment.

In considering a neutral approach when adopting ICTs to enhance healthcare, scholars like Wajcman (1991) and Green (2002) have shown that technology is not neutral. As such, it is difficult to expect ICT adoption in healthcare in Zambia to be neutral. For instance, access and use of technology between men and women cannot be said to be neutral because several variables are at odds with this perception. These include but are not limited to education, financial status and other cultural ascriptions. It is the social constructivist perspective of technology that lends credence to potential enhancement of healthcare. This is because the

constructivist approach takes into consideration the fact that, often, technologies are interpreted differently by different users, in different environments and for different purposes (Heap et al. 1995). Using the constructivist perspective in considering the relationship between ICTs and enhancement of healthcare allows users to influence and shape the way they want to use ICTs. Users also interpret and use a technology to render it functional or inappropriate for a specific group. As a result, appropriation of a technology may differ geographically, regionally, locally and according to one's social and economic needs. Furthermore, a constructivist approach allows users to experience a sense of ownership of an ICT project due to their involvement from the time it is introduced to the time it is implemented and evaluated. This allows users to feel a sense of ownership which is an important catalyst for any long term viability of an ICT project.

ZEPRS has the hallmarks of a system that has applied a constructivist approach. Firstly, it has been developed to meet the needs of mostly underprivileged women, as seen from the high population density clinics that operate the system. Secondly, it has sought to use open source software in order to mitigate the costs that come with proprietary software. Thirdly, the project has sought to train local people on developing software for local needs and fourthly, it has sought to build a database in order to advance further research on ailments that usually persist in pregnancy. These steps have ensured that local people feel ownership of the system because it involves them at many levels – firstly, as workers within the system and secondly as users of the system that helps to meet and improve the health needs of pregnant women.

The introduction of the ZEPRS project in under-served communities of Lusaka has meant that such communities stand to gain in the development of innovative ways of integrating ICTs and healthcare. In addition, for any development to be useful, capacity building is of utmost importance to the local community, which is what the training in software has been able to achieve. The fact that the ZEPRS project is concerned with one of the most vulnerable people in the community – women – also helps to encourage the well-being and development of such groups. So, what is ZEPRS and how is it contributing to the enhancement of healthcare in Zambia and subsequently making a contribution to development through the application of ICTs?

Mitigating Healthcare: The ZEPRS Approach

ZEPRS is a perinatal electronic medical record system which was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It is run by the Centre for Infectious Diseases in Zambia (CIDZ). The system started in 2001 and is one of the first of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa. ZEPRS' premise has been to target pregnant women in order to enhance the potential of their health and that of their unborn children. Essentially, its central theme has been to improve perinatal care through efficient medical record keeping by introducing the use of ICTs. Before ZEPRS' introduction, record keeping was undertaken manually and as a result had a negative impact on several areas of perinatal patient care. These included anything from delayed patient care to difficulties in following up on patients who might need further care due to loss of or difficulty in locating patient records among other challenges. The efficiency that resulted from ZEPRS meant that there was a knock-on and positive effect on other parts of the healthcare system dealing with perinatal care such as longer time allocated to patients by health personnel, easier location of records and easier follow-up on patient care. Goorman and Berg (2000) argue that electronic patient records (EPR) can 'lead to higher quality of healthcare, increase the scientific base of medicine and nursing, and reduce healthcare costs' (2000:1).

The ZEPRS project is for the time being confined to the capital of Zambia, Lusaka, and has networked 24 health clinics which provide antenatal care for women. The main reason for confining the project to the capital city was due to a consideration of both physical and technical infrastructure. One of the challenges for the slow uptake of ICTs in a country such as Zambia has always been the limited (or lack of a robust) physical and technical infrastructure, including human resource infrastructure. It is difficult to expect faster uptake of ICTs where it is needed the most, especially in rural areas of the country which would probably need innovative projects like ZEPRS to cushion the effects of staff shortages and other limitations. Britz et al. (2006) have pointed out that for ICTs to work effectively in any country, connectivity, human intellectual capacity and infrastructure are of utmost importance. Therefore, the challenge remains that Zambia will have to improve on these aspects in other parts of the country if ICTs are to make a difference in rural and remote areas.

The 24 networked clinics have all been connected using wireless networking and have been subsequently networked with the main hospital of the country known as the University Teaching Hospital (UTH). This meant that referrals have been easier to process due to easier and faster com-

munication between the clinics and the main hospital. ZEPRS is modelled on a similar system at the University of Alabama, Birmingham, United States (UAB) which has been operating for 25 years. According to one of the project officers[2] interviewed, the UAB system generated a significant amount of money for the public health system because individuals and research institutions pay to access UAB's database which was created from the project for research purposes. As a database is also being created by the ZEPRS project, it is hoped that a similar interest might be generated in order to advance further research in perinatal care. Further research resulting from the ZEPRS database means that there is the potential to have more insight and subsequent solutions into ailments that are presented on a continuous basis. For example, if it is found that there are more women who have miscarriages or who die at a particular time during pregnancy, the idea is that the availability of the database would make this type of information easily available to health carers whereupon solutions might be sought. However, without such a database to fall back on, it may prove difficult to know what the major health concerns in women's pregnancies are, during which time they are experienced or how to rectify them.

The following interview extract from the project officer gives insights into the thought process of the database. The project officer revealed that one of the advantages of the system was that it offered analysis of trends happening with pregnant women for the long-term improvement of their health. She pointed out that before the ZEPRS initiative, when a woman died in childbirth, there was rarely an investigation, and therefore no way of finding out what happened to cause the deaths and therefore no trend data to analyse and learn from. The project officer started by making reference to the difficulties of the manual system:

> There is no way to tie up the result after childbirth to what happens before, no way to link outcomes. But with this system you cannot only do totals but you can also click on a particular patient and get those details about the patient, but only clinicians can do that. He can click on the list of patients who died that month and look at other cases where they were treated, where they were referred and at what point in their pregnancy they died.

The database comprises records relating to women's perinatal experiences pre-and post-pregnancy. Only information of a more general nature and not personal records will be accessible for research purposes. The database holds a variety of information, from details about contraception to the weight of their babies and any birth complications. The system also

documents and records the activities in obstetric care as well as the antenatal visits including delivery and post-natal visits, all entered into the computer instead of handwritten as the case was before. This helps to improve pregnant women's health and that of their unborn babies because the database gives ideas on how to improve women's perinatal health. This can also inform other health centres about how to improve their caregiving. As such, this is not only beneficial to women but also to communities as a whole because there is a likelihood of a reduction in healthcare costs if there are fewer pregnancy complications. The use of the database for potential research itself signals long-term viability beyond the initial funding period. Consideration of future sustenance beyond the funding phase is important because, as discussed earlier, some donor-funded projects do not usually survive beyond the initial funding phase. However, because a system like ZEPRS attends to the core needs of the communities, for example, needs of pregnant women, capacity building, database development, the potential for survival is much greater.

During the initial stages of the programme, CIDZ spent over a year training nurses. This was a challenge in itself because, as the project officer pointed out, '75 per cent of nurses have never used a computer' before and therefore had no prior knowledge. The project therefore not only offered new ICT skills to the nurses but also helped them grow in confidence in their use. In addition, the project also provided other staff members with more technical skills by training them in the development and use of open source software. In writing about electronic patient records in maternity, Henwood and Hart (2003) reveal how introduction of such systems might not always be welcome by those who are supposed to use them. This is particularly when there is no adequate understanding of the system, including what is entailed in users in terms of their role. In essence, Henwood and Hart (2003) have underlined the importance of user involvement at all stages of a new system – be it at feasibility, implementation or evaluation stages. The importance of user involvement is seen in ZEPRS' training of the nurses as well as in the technical skills training in the development and use of open source for staff members.

The training and use of open source software in the ZEPRS project allows the system to be tailor made to suit the community's local needs. ZEPRS's use of open source software is also advantageous because it not only encourages creativity and innovation but also cuts down on having to rely on proprietary software, thus avoiding the need for constant and expensive software upgrades. Additionally, creating tailor-made software to suit local needs and the environment indicates flexibility and adapt-

ability, particularly for the future. Admittedly, open source is not very popular in Africa where only about 5 per cent of computers run it. Heeks (2005) reveals that this is due to a number of reasons which include a lack of knowledge of open source software, a lack of international links to work with, as well as the fact that there is a lot of pirated proprietary software. These factors subtract from acquiring more knowledge of alternative software and therefore skill development. As such, the use of open source software in the ZEPRS project is a good attempt towards achieving these benefits and avoiding the problems that come with proprietary or pirated software.

Other Tangible Benefits

The ZEPRS project clearly has a positive and effective impact on not only pregnant women but clinicians as well. By using the new system, the clinics are not only able to instantaneously communicate with each other online but with the main hospital. This has made referrals quicker and much easier as patients records can be accessed from any system of the connected centres. One nurse who was interviewed revealed the following:

> It is easier to make follow-up appointments at various points. Before the system linked all the clinics, there were instances when some pregnant women would often change centres they attended. This is because when they had been diagnosed with what they considered to be an embarrassing ailment such as syphilis, they probably thought that clinicians at the centres they had been diagnosed from would judge them. Therefore, in order to overcome that concern, they would go from one centre to the next in the hope that their ailment would not be detected and that only their pregnancy would be dealt with. Unfortunately, such thinking was not only risking their own health but the health of their unborn babies as well. But with the inception of the ZEPRS programme, whichever centre women go to in Lusaka, health workers are able to retrieve their records online, are able to see what their health history is and then also able to continue their course of treatment without necessarily asking them too many awkward questions.

Such mechanism is also a cost effective measure because it avoids re-diagnosing ailments whenever a client goes to a new centre. Re-diagnosing can be costly and time consuming. Therefore, the system allows clinicians to only treat already diagnosed ailments and detect new ones without having to do the same every time a client goes to a new health centre.

On following up the above sentiments, the project officer added that the ZEPRS project had helped in saving women's lives in both a direct and indirect way. The following interview extract highlights her views when

she was asked whether she thought the system had contributed to saving women's lives:

> Oh yeah definitely and there is no question in my mind that this will save not only women's lives but newborns' lives. We found with pregnant women it's an easier group to target into because there are about 50,000 babies born in a year in Lusaka alone, it's a lot of lives. And I mean we found syphilis rates of about 6 per cent so if you are looking at about 3000 babies and am not sure of the transmission rates, you could literally look at a few thousand babies to be treated. This system also allows for mothers to be offered HIV testing as they come four or five times during a pregnancy. So in the event that a woman is tested positive, clinicians can refer them to one of the nine district clinics offering ARVs [antiretrovirals], particularly to two of the clinics offering special ARV programmes only for pregnant women so they can feel sort of comfortable. Additionally, when a woman does not qualify for ARVs yet, she can be put on a single drug, which she can take during labour, and a single drug for the baby which is a syrup when a baby is born which reduces the HIV transmission rate by about 50 per cent.

According to the project officer, CIDZ uses the same software design as that used by ZEPRS for the ARV programme to create ARV software. The project officer revealed that because 60 per cent of CIDZ's patients were female, they also correspond to 60 per cent of HIV positive women in Lusaka and Zambia overall. Due to this, such a programme favours and saves the lives of women and their unborn children. Not least because it can help the mother to know her HIV status and start medication if need be but because it also helps to avoid transmitting the virus to the unborn child during child birth. Without such a mechanism within the system, transmission from mother to child would continue unabated.

The system also uses voice over internet protocol (VOIP) which makes patient referrals to UTH much quicker and easier than before. This allows the hospital to prepare well in advance of a patient's arrival by sourcing the needed medical apparatus. It is faster to do so because the hospital is informed well in advance over VOIP and due to this, it is also able to source patient records from their networked system and have them in hand before a patient's arrival. One nurse added that:

> In Zambia, we have a saying that goes "a person well prepared is a person well received". The system has made it easier to avoid any delays in treating a patient, unlike in the past when a patient had to go to the hospital without the hospital having prior knowledge of her imminent arrival. This meant that there were inadequate preparations in terms of medicines or medical apparatus that might have been needed to take care of the patient.

> Most women found they had to wait for long periods before they could be attended to. This of course had repercussions for not only the lives of the pregnant women but the babies as well.

Even access to medical records was apparently a problem because of the chaotic manual filing system that existed before the programme was initiated. Stories were often told of medical files not being found on time or being lost altogether. The project officer narrated an incident in which the filing of medical reports was in a chaotic manner when some members of CIDZ visited the hospital. She revealed that the medical records room at UTH was a: 'Stack of files! Just stacked everywhere - just thrown. There is one picture actually when we went to take a picture of somebody who was pregnant; there were piles and piles of files.'

Before the ZEPRS system, nurses relied on manual paper-based recording which was time-consuming, tiring and had to be repeated each time a client visited a clinic. However, the new system has resulted in better accessing of patient care records and better time management. This has subsequently meant better and more time spent on the patient. In addition, before the introduction of ZEPRS, security and confidentiality risks were high because patients were more prone to losing their referral cards as they had to carry them all the time. Furthermore, there was no guaranteed security and confidentiality on patient records once entered in the 'blue book' (the book nurses use to enter patient details) as it was easier even for non clinicians to have access to the blue book. However, with the ZEPRS system, a nurse has to log on with her password as the only way to enter a patient into the system. Once a patient is cleared, the record is cleared too for the next patient, which is only accessible once again via personalised passwords. This is not to suggest that the ZEPRS system is not open to security breaches as no web-based programme is entirely safe. It is also not being suggested that measures have not been taken to guard against any such eventualities, but merely to point out potential risks.

Considering the Challenges

Technology is always changing and because of this, it is inevitable that the dynamics of such web-based projects like ZEPRS will change as well. As a result, there is a constant need to keep updating the technologies in order to keep up with the latest developments. Therefore, keeping up-to-date not only means continued investment in physical and technical infrastructure, but also investment in human resource and continuous capacity building. For developing societies like Zambia that have limited resources, this might

prove a big challenge even when measures are being put in place such as ZEPRS' capacity building programme. The problem is more evident in rural and remote areas that are far away from the capital city. Therefore, mechanisms need to be put in place to rectify this particular challenge. When a roll-out is planned for other areas in the country, planning of a robust infrastructure needs to be put into consideration, including education, potential for further capacity building and awareness. Hanson and Narula (1990) highlight the need for ICT awareness which they term *social infrastructure.* This is because they see the success of ICTs as dependent on 'creating technology awareness, developing applications and levels of skills' (1990:6). Technology awareness will not only help other parts of the country improve in the area of perinatal health but will be seen as a step towards embracing further use of ICTs in other developmental agendas of the country.

The picture that emerges so far is that there is a clear benefit in the use of ICTs. This benefit can be of further advantage in remote parts of the country where specialised medical practitioners are in low numbers. For example, Chanda (2004) in his look at tele-health reveals how in some remote parts of Zambia there were instances where only a nurse or a technician staffed health centres. In one site, there was only a casual worker in charge of dispensing drugs to patients. Chanda's argument is that it is areas like these that need the integration of electronic medical health systems to compensate for the lack of specialised personnel. The pattern that Chanda describes is also beginning to be seen even in the bigger urban hospitals (although *still far* from the dire description that Chanda gives) as qualified doctors and nurses leave for better jobs elsewhere; investment in such systems is ever more critical. However, together with the advantages of such systems come challenges that ought to be taken into serious consideration. For example, remote clinics which have few if any trained staff might not be able to take advantage of electronic medical health technologies as they might lack technical skill and know-how. Without adequate technical know-how, the potential of such systems may never be realised in a larger context. Electricity is another matter that may need looking into as well as the other fees which such centres might incur in order to keep an electronic health system running. These are challenges that need attention if ZEPRS' benefits are to be replicated across the country. In their analysis of tele-medicine, Warriner and Martinez (2005) assert that such systems can and do contribute to reducing inequalities in access to health services for women and babies in more rural areas.

Conclusion

Rarely has there been particular emphasis on the well-being of individual human beings in development approaches. In many aspects, the emphasis has been on the general macro-economic development of countries. However, what this article has shown is that the approach to development has changed over the years; from modernisation and neo-liberal SAP approaches where the emphasis was on national development to the human development paradigm which emphasises human wellbeing. The human development paradigm, which is about enhancing people's life choices, offers the potential for meeting some of the MDGs. This is also especially possible with the application of ICTs, as the case has shown in the ZEPRS project. In this case, the use of ICTs in perinatal care has provided the opportunity and potential to directly meet some of the MDGs which include the reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health and the combating of HIV/AIDS and other diseases like malaria.

ZEPRS demonstrates that by harnessing the potential of ICTs in perinatal health, the possibility exists to reduce child mortality. This is possible through continued medical treatment of mothers who might keep changing health centres in order to avoid public awareness of their embarrassing illnesses such as syphilis. Because the system is such that medical records are accessible at any of the 24 centres in the capital city, it means that the mother can continue to receive needed medical treatment when need be. This has a direct impact on the health of the child and consequently reduces child mortality which was the case before the introduction of ZEPRS. Similarly, because mothers are offered HIV testing, they are able to be referred for further treatment when found positive. In the case of the unborn child, when a mother tests positive, measures are put in place during the phase of the pregnancy and during delivery to ensure that there is little to no chance of transmitting the virus to the unborn child. Again, the result is the potential reduction in child mortality and subsequently meeting this particular MDG. These possibilities also mean the improvement of maternal health, which is another goal which can be said to benefit from ZEPRS. Furthermore, because the system allows mothers to be offered HIV testing and then referred for ARVs when found positive and if they are at a stage where they need to start treatment, this also has a direct impact on combating the spread of HIV and prolonging the lives of mothers. The above benefits not only help to meet the MDGs related to health but also offer enhanced life choices as demanded by the human development paradigm. By implication, healthy individuals contribute much more effectively to the overall development of the country.

Evidently, the harnessing of ICTs for healthcare not only has a direct impact on the MDGs described above but also has an indirect impact on the other MDGs. For instance, it is much easier for healthy individuals to contribute to the eradication of poverty and hunger and hence contribute to the development of a country. By virtue of being healthy, it is easier for people to go out and earn a living in order to sustain themselves and their families than when they are unhealthy. This may be a simplistic way of looking at eradication of poverty and hunger because, admittedly, poverty and hunger have more multifaceted elements than simply health. However, being healthy can contribute to the eradication of a problem like hunger, albeit in a smaller way if other factors such as loss of jobs are taken into consideration. However, there exists a link between harnessing ICTs in healthcare and eradication of poverty and hunger, albeit an indirect one. In addition, because ZEPRS' main targets are women, this also has an indirect impact on meeting the goal of promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. In this case by using ICTs in the enhancement of perinatal health, the implication is that women become empowered in their own right as a result. Finally, the fact that there has been an obvious partnership between the funders of the ZEPRS project and the recipients of the system is a good example of how the MDG of developing global partnerships for development is being fostered. Such partnerships and the other MDGs mentioned are integral to the development agenda of Zambia.

In sum, this paper has made the case that ICTs can be harnessed for development and in so doing help in meeting some of the MDGs, particularly those related to healthcare. In this respect, ZEPRS was used as one good practice where ICTs have been introduced to enhance healthcare in Zambia. The analysis of ZEPRS revealed that such a system has the potential to save time spent by clinicians on a manual and subsequently slow system and instead devote more time to clients. The system also availed women the opportunity to have better health checks for themselves and their unborn babies due to easily available and retrievable records. This contributes to saving the lives of mothers and those of their unborn babies. This has a direct impact on the reduction of child mortality, improvement of maternal health and the combating of HIV/AIDS. In addition, the impact is not only on an individual but on a general community as a whole. A healthy population contributes more effectively to a more developed national economy.

ZEPRS' development of a database which is intended for research in order to further improve health is also an innovative way of using ICTs in a developing country like Zambia. Lessons learnt from the ZEPRS project can also be used in other parts of the developing world in the sense that where Zambia has excelled in its use, such lessons can be adopted by other countries and where Zambia has failed, these lessons can be improved upon. As the system is only confined to the capital city, it will be interesting to see what mechanisms will be put in place to roll it out to other parts of the country, particularly those areas in rural and remote parts of the country. This is because such a roll out will provide an opportunity to learn how much of an impact ICT projects like ZEPRS have on the overall development of people in under-served areas of the country. In the meantime, the picture is such that there are evident potential benefits in using ICTs in developing countries like Zambia. This is demonstrated by ZEPRS in its application of ICTs to enhance healthcare. Enhancement of healthcare not only means a step towards the contribution of the individual to human development but also the social and economic development of a country like Zambia.

Notes

1. SAPs are programmes by which the World Bank and the IMF lend in support of economic and institutional reforms rather than for specific investments. These reforms aim at enhancing economic growth through economic efficiency in the use and allocation of economic resources. Thus, SAPs provide loans to countries on the condition(ality) that they embark on a number of economic policy reforms to foster long-term economic growth. Even though SAPs are almost always negotiated in the context of economic crisis and in an effort to resolve balance of payment problems, they are increasingly used to purportedly boost the international competitiveness of borrowing nations (Mensah 2006:4)
2. One of the people in charge of managing the project who has worked on a similar model at the UAB. The author carried out an intensive interview with this project officer who was able to give detailed insights into the project. However, due to anonymity concerns, the interviewee has been referred to as project officer.

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Everyday Use of Mobile Phones in Niger

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the effects of mobile phone use on relationships among people in Niger. The study is based on a fieldwork conducted during the summer of 2003 and 2004 among Nigerien urban users of mobile phones in Niamey, the capital city. Semi-structured interviews were used to find out how people 'experience' the use of mobile phones in their everyday life. The author argues that the use of mobile phones in Niger is expanding women's sphere of privacy, challenging the disintegration effects of urban life, reinforcing communal ties, changing social use of time and what Pertierra et al. (2002) call 'discursive practices.' The paper concludes by explaining that the popularity of mobile phones in Africa and particularly in Niger lies essentially in the manipulability and low cost of those telecommunications devices, including the fact that mobile phones do not require a certain level of literacy among the users.

Key Terms: mobile phone, privacy, urban life, gendered technology, ITU, sub-Saharan Africa

Résumé

Cet article porte sur une analyse critique des effets de l'usage du téléphone mobile sur les relations interpersonnelles au Niger. L'étude est basée sur des travaux de terrain effectués pendant l'été en 2003 et 2004 auprès des citadins Nigériens utilisateurs de téléphones mobiles à Niamey, la capitale du pays. Les interviews semi-structurées ont été utilisées afin de comprendre comment les citoyens 'vivent' l'utilisation du téléphone mobile au quotidien. Du point de vue de l'auteur, l'usage du téléphone portable entraîne une extension de la sphère d'intimité chez les femmes. Se faisant, l'usage de ces 'gadgets' permet

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de lutter contre les effets de désintégration de la vie moderne, renforce les liens communautaires, modifie la gestion du temps et de ce que Pertierra et al ont convenu d'appeler 'les pratiques discursives'. En conclusion, l'auteur justifie la popularité du téléphone mobile en Afrique et au Niger en particulier par la manipulabité et l'abordabilité des coûts de ses outils de télécommunications, y compris le fait que le portable n'exige pas son utilisateur d'avoir un certain niveau d'instruction préalable.

Termes clés : téléphone mobile, Intimité, Vie urbaine ITU, Afrique sub-saharienne.

Introduction

According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Africa is now 'the world's fastest growing mobile market' (2004:1). ITU states that between 1998 and 2003, the increase in mobile phone subscriptions exceeded by 1,000 per cent those of fixed lines and that more than 51.8 million people in Africa had mobile phones (this figure is expected to rise to 90 million in 2005) while only 25.1 million owned fixed lines. ITU's report also found that mobile phone penetration in Africa extended to 6.2 per 100 inhabitants by the end of 2003 while fixed-line penetration stood only at 3 per 100 inhabitants. By 2003, almost 70 per cent of telephone subscribers in Africa were using mobile phones. In sub-Saharan Africa, three out of four subscriptions were for mobile phone users, 'the highest ratio of mobile to total telephone subscribers of any region in the world' (ITU 2004:1). The report adds that the annual average growth rate of mobile phone use in Africa is 65 per cent, compared with 33 per cent for the rest of the world. As discussed earlier by Alzouma (2005), this report and the accompanying figures show a remarkable and perhaps unprecedented pace and scale of adoption of a new technology in Africa. For example, between 2000 and 2004 there have been more mobile phone connections in Africa than land-line connections in the entire past century (ITU 2004).

What are the factors that help explain the popularity of mobile phones in African countries? Is this popularity the result of low costs or easier access or the result of more profound cultural determinants? More importantly, is mobile phone use changing Africans' relationships with one another? Is it changing communication styles? Although this study is limited to the case of Niger, it seeks to partially answer those questions by examining everyday use of mobile phones in that part of Africa.

Methodology

This research was undertaken as a qualitative exercise between 2003 and 2004. It focused on the participants' perceptions, subjectivities, experiences, and realities. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using 'interview guides.' These guides list the issues to be discussed during the interview, but these issues were only used as references. The process and the course of the interviews depended on the interaction between the researcher and the interviewees. Priority was given to flexibility in that the conversations were neither limited nor subjected to a fixed and predetermined set of themes and questions. However, the discussions met the objectives of the research.

The author interviewed 20 mobile phone users. They were randomly selected from pre-paid telephone card buyers. The author stood in front of stores that sold pre-paid telephone cards in order to meet all kinds of users. The interviews were taped, transcribed and, when necessary, translated. From data obtained in this way, the author developed coded segments of interviews which were significant for the research, using the headings and the list of questions of the interview guides. Thus, although the author proceeded inductively to interpret and structure the meanings inherent in the interviews, the structure of the interpretation was derived from the structure of the interviews themselves. The author also included individual case studies to illustrate the ways in which people in Niger use mobile phones. Although a sample representativeness (in a quantative sense) was not sought in this study, the author was careful to ensure that the data described mobile phones and mobile phone use in Niger.

Mobile Telephones in Niger

The first mobile phones in Niger were promoted and sold by the Société Nigérienne de Télécommunication (SONITEL). In Niger, mobile phones were introduced and became popular about the same time as the Internet (1997-1998). Most of SONITEL's first clients were embassies and international organizations, because mobile phones were very expensive. According to a report by Touraoua and Tidjani in Sahel Dimanche, Niger's governmental-owned daily newspaper (1998), the cost of a mobile phone was 215,000 CFA francs (approximately US$450) for a one-year domestic subscription and 365,000 CFA francs (approximately US$750) for an international subscription. Therefore, by the time they were introduced, mobile phones were beyond the means of the average Nigerien whose annual income did not exceed US$250. However, in a very short time,

mobile phones were on sale on the streets of Niamey and in shops. Vendors imported most of the phones from Dubai and some other countries such as Thailand and Hong Kong. More interestingly, a few private Global Systems for Mobile Communication (GSM) operators, TELECEL, CELTEL, and SAHELCOM gained access to the Nigerien market. Along with SONITEL, they are now the country's main mobile telephone service providers. Today, CELTEL boasts more than 350,000 subscribers with a national coverage of 54 per cent of the surface area of the country. According to a recent press release (APA 2007), this figure is expected to rise to 85 per cent by 2008 with 200 localities and their rural surroundings. As for the second operator, TELECEL, it covers 34 towns in Niger and had approximately 40,000 subscribers by the end of 2005 while SAHELCOM had 38,000 subscribers (CIPACO 2007). All of these companies are still growing.

Callers use pre-paid telephone cards instead of annual or monthly subscriptions. Pre-paid telephone cards are sold almost everywhere in towns by street vendors and shopkeepers. Their price goes from 200 CFA francs (approximately 50 US cents) to 10,000 CFA francs (US $20) making them affordable for most people. People who do not have enough money to buy pre-paid telephone cards usually have recourse to what is called the 'bip' in Niger. It consists of calling someone and then disconnecting after it starts ringing so that the caller can return the call if he or she has enough credit. In some parts of Africa such as Nigeria and Ghana, this practice is known as 'flash'.

Mobile Phone Users in Niger

Of the 20 mobile phone users interviewed, only three were female. Niger is a Muslim country in which most women are confined to their homes and, when they are not, are reluctant to talk to men who are not related to them. Therefore, in Niamey, the city in which the survey was administered, one is likely to meet and interview more males than females. Women are also poorer than men in Niger (Poverty Reduction Strategy paper 2002), and their access to technology and other services is limited.

It is also important to note that, although many young people own mobile phones, adults are more likely to buy mobile phones, as adults have more earning power. According to the UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), 'in Niger, 63 per cent of its population live in poverty and 50 per cent are under age 15. Poverty has left 32 per cent of its youth unemployed and constrained to urban exodus.' (UNCCD 2007) Most young people do not have their own income. In contrast, all of the

adults that were interviewed were employed (e.g. traders, civil servants, retailers, or engineers). Most were over the age of 35. None was younger than 21 and none was older than 57.

The interviews covered the following topics. The first one dealt with how mobile phones help to maintain or reproduce relationships. The introduction of a technology in a given society has been shown to affect its social organization, especially when the purpose of that new technology is communication. In this perspective, one can hypothesize that the introduction of mobile phones may have inevitable consequences in social settings such as Niger, mostly dominated by oral communication and face-to-face relationships. Related questions focused on how mobile phones affected intimate relationships and whether they helped people to develop new relationships in what Pertierra et al. (2002:2) call 'expanded spatio-temporal contexts'. Another important objective of the research was to see if mobile phones had consequences for 'discursive practices' (Pertierra et al. 2002) and for the individual and social management of time.

Before analyzing the reasons given by subscribers for using mobile phones, some case studies of users are presented in order to describe them, their motives and their social conditions.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Rakia

Rakia is a 22-year-old woman living in Niamey. She is a computer assistant with a college degree. She says that she knows a lot of people who use mobile phones. She bought a mobile phone because she said she could not afford to visit her distant relatives. As some of her relatives do not live in Niamey, she reasoned she could communicate with them on her mobile phone.

When asked how she uses her mobile phone, she responded: 'to get in touch with friends, relatives, and other acquaintances.' She added: 'On my mobile phone, I talk about everything; all topics are covered, from A to Z.' However, and surprisingly, she claimed that she rarely spent more than three minutes on the phone because the pre-paid telephone card costs between 500 and 10,000 CFA francs (US $1-20), which she said was expensive for her. She said communicating by e-mail was cheaper. In this context, her mobile phone conversations are not as long as her face-to-face communication. She prefers these shorter exchanges. What the mobile phone has changed the most in her life, according to her, is the possibility of having more intimate and candid conversations. 'Me, honestly, now

that I am used to talking with mobile phone, I prefer using it because in face-to-face conversation, it is difficult to say everything you want while with the mobile phone you can.'

She also claims that the mobile phone helps her to make new friends and to strengthen old relationships because she speaks more frequently with them on her mobile phone than she would if they lived in her town. More important, she is more 'relaxed' when talking on the phone with her parents, even about sensitive issues. She said she didn't have a pressing need for a mobile phone when she bought it (although she sees the necessity today) but she still proceeded to buy one because so many people around her already had mobile phones. She said: 'I had not the means to buy a mobile phone, but I decided to buy one because I saw everybody around buying one.'

Case Study 2: Ibrahim

Ibrahim is a civil servant in the Ministry of Education. He is 36 years old and holds a postgraduate degree in education. He is married and lives in Niamey with his family. Not many of his relatives use mobile phones, and he got one to communicate with a friend and business colleague living in Algeria. Ibrahim takes care of business activities in Niger. Indeed, his friend bought the mobile phone for him. He said, 'the success of mobile phones is due to the fact that it helps you save money and also helps you solve problems fast.' Maintaining friendship is the most important advantage he gained from the use of a mobile phone. He describes his mobile phone conversations as 'usually very brief.' 'We use a special language. We do not waste time, and we go to the core of the talk very quickly. We do not have sufficient time because, well, we think about the cost aspect of long conversations, which means that we communicate very quickly. There is no sufficient time for long discussions.'

Obviously, the mobile phone changed Ibrahim's conversational style, reducing the time he spends talking and what he talks about. Ibrahim calls this 'a new way of communicating', which is characterized by a specific way of organizing the message so that the essentials can be conveyed quickly. 'There are also some topics one cannot talk about in face-to-face conversations. The topic may be embarrassing; so it is better to talk about them on the phone. But when it comes to some burning issues, I prefer meeting with my interlocutor; it is, I think, a more convincing way.'

Case Study 3: Abdou

Abdou is a petty trader who has never been to French-style school. He is 35 years old. He is married and lives in Niamey. Many of his relatives and acquaintances use mobile phones. He, too, uses a mobile phone to maintain friendship, to call his relatives in case of social events and to conduct business. He finds the duration of conversations quite insufficient 'because sometimes I have a lot to say and I have not enough money to afford time-consuming conversations.' For him, the advantage of using mobile phones over face-to-face communication is that 'when you want to tell someone something a bit embarrassing, using the mobile phone is better.' Besides, as he has no means of transportation, the mobile phone helps him to save time: 'In the past, I had to go from one place to another for any need of communication I had. Now, I just pick up my phone and call.'

Reasons For Mobile Phone Use

Several practical and economic reasons can explain the rapid spread and adoption of mobile phones in Niger. All of our interviewees insist on the easy access they now have to their relatives, business partners, friends and other people in Niger and abroad. In Niger, where only a few people own cars and have access to other means of transportation, for their users, mobile phones have eliminated the necessity to walk long distances to meet others.

> With the mobile phone, I can now contact relatives, not just those who are in Niamey, but even those who live in distant places and beyond, in Europe, in America…. (Rakia, female, 22).

> It helps me reach directly my relatives without any waste of time, without spending my money for taxi…. (Matthew, male, 32).

> People use mobile phones because they are of a great assistance. For instance, if I am in a different place and a client is somewhere else, I can call him or her to tell them about the last price of a house and the person at the other end of the wire may agree or disagree and propose a different place. So, I will not have to go anywhere unless it is absolutely necessary (Murtala, 57, male, house vendor).

Interviewees therefore claim they have adopted mobile phones for practical reasons. However, what we usually might consider 'practical' does not itself escape explanation. 'Practicality' is in line with what Bourdieu (1990) calls habitus, the set of integrated dispositions acquired through education and experience and which govern our ways of behaving, seeing and understanding the world. In other words, the willingness to acquire

and to use new technologies and even the 'need' expressed for them is not inscribed in us. We are socially determined to express our 'needs' and tastes. Why do we prefer mobile phones to fixed lines or even face-to-face communication? Is it an economic necessity? Is it fashion? Is it an easier or more 'modern' means of social exchange? Is there something in Niger's culture which predisposes its people to choose mobile phones? Or are Nigeriens the slaves of marketing strategies that are promoting new modes of consumption?

This study shows that mobile phones have not replaced ancient or traditional ways of communication in Niger; they merely expanded them. Face-to-face conversations, oral communication in general, in addition to other ways of communicating, coexist with mobile phones. They neither disappeared nor receded with the introduction of mobile phones. Rather, they continue to occupy the same place in Nigeriens' social life. However, social relationships (at least among some users) have been reframed by the use of this new technological device as shown by some responses from the interviewees:

> Now I move less, even for my work and family. This is a good point, right? Another thing is with the mobile phone, you cannot miss the person you want to talk to (Adamou, male, 36 years old).

> When I did not have a mobile phone, I was always absent from home because I had to go and meet people. Now I stay longer at home because I can solve my problems without going out (Mariama, female, 21 years old).

> The difference between face-to-face conversation and conversation on the mobile phone is that you can now talk about issues you would find hard to abode [sic] if your interlocutor is physically present, especially in our society where there are many taboos, and people whose physical contact one has to avoid (Abdou, male, 25, petty trader).

Therefore, the use of mobile phones apparently proceeds from a selective process rooted in social representations. As shown by Lewis and Samoff (1992) and Uimonen (2003), among the highly educated elite of Africa, the ownership and use of digital technologies are usually associated with 'modernity' and 'development'. In the same way, in Niger, fear of 'lagging behind' (as expressed by Lally, 2002) and the desire to stay in touch with the family are powerful incentives for acquiring and using mobile phones, which are viewed as instruments of sociality (as stated in the quoted passages above by Rakia, 22, female and Matthew, 32, male). In addition, there is certainly something in the mobile phone design which is

compatible with Nigeriens' habits and social dispositions. What could this be? A first response is to be found in the ubiquity of mobile phones. As shown by Geser (2004), they are objects which challenge the universal constraints of space and time.

A Ubiquitous Technology

Niger's mobile phone users belong to all strata and ethnic groups. They comprise traders, retailers, civil servants and students. Also, unlike Internet users, mobile phone users do not have to be literate in French or in another language to use that technology. Illiterate users (in the context of this paper, people who have not attended the French-style modern school are referred to as 'illiterate', although some may have studied the Koran) of mobile phones certainly outnumber literate users. Above all, mobile phones carry voice and therefore do not require the user to be able to read in his or her own native language or another language. Therefore, as technologies of communication, mobile phones pose no threat to African languages and cultures, they can be more rapidly accepted and appropriated than the Internet or even radio and television (which are not interactive and are controlled by remote foreign structures or government agents with their own agenda).

This is the case for Murtala, a 57-year-old house vendor, who cannot read or write French because he has never been to school. He can be described as an illiterate, at least in French. He said he used to believe that mobile phones were gadgets for educated people and 'authorities' before he discovered that he could have the same access to them:

> 'Contrary to what I was thinking, it turned out to be something for sale which could be found and bought anywhere. The price came down… as low as 30,000 CFA francs for secondhand mobile phones (US $60). Thus it is something everyone can afford now… In the past, I had a bicycle and used to run around all the districts of Niamey visiting and showing houses to potential buyers. Since I discovered that I could buy and use mobile phone like anybody, things are far easier for me.'

Many technological devices are status symbols. Their use sets apart a category of people either as highly specialized users, as in the case of very sophisticated machines or as a minority even in what could become of popular use. In any case, the mastery of new technologies often constitutes a barrier to other potential users. However, in the case of mobile phones, their user-friendly nature makes them popular. As Geser says,

> Multimedia functionalities (of mobile phones) are combined with significantly reduced size, weight, energy needs and buying prices, as well as by

> a much simpler, user-friendly interface, which makes it possible to be used by younger children, illiterate or handicapped people and other marginal population segments not able to come to terms with MS Office and W2k. (Geser, 2004:5)

Mobile phones are also more affordable than computers. Therefore, more people own mobile phones. In contrast, land-line phones in countries such as Niger were only accessible to people with high incomes. In the 2002 International Telecommunication Union Digital Access Index, which ranked countries according to their ability to obtain and make use of information and communication technologies, Niger had the lowest access rate to telephone with only 0.04 on a scale of 0 to 1 (ITU, 2002). Also, the authors of a 1999 paper written by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) note that in countries such as Niger and Central African Republic, only a tiny percentage of the population can afford telephone lines: 'The limited teledensity is also linked to the fact that a much smaller proportion of the population can actually afford their own telephone – the cost of renting a connection averaged almost 20 per cent of the 1995 GDP per capita, vs. a world average of 9 per cent and only 1 per cent in high income countries' (UNECA, 1999). Moreover, although land-line phones were commonplace elsewhere in the world, they were never owned by children and young people to the extent that mobile phones now are. By contrast, younger and older people, males and females use mobile phones, no matter what their social status or their moral behavior is.

Another important aspect of the mobile phone is its compatibility with the African household. How would a computer fit in a crowded house without designated living rooms, studies or dens? A westerner would simply assume that a computer will rest on a desk or table near an electrical outlet. Indeed, all familiar domestic objects, not only computers, are always represented in our minds with their assigned place in the house. These objects take place within a set of domestic objects which, together, participate in the construction of the way we manage our privacy and represent ourselves. For Lally (2002:9), they participate in a process of 'incorporation, negotiation, and objectification' which gives its full meaning to the notion of ownership which, according to her, 'is an activity rather than an attribute'.

Are all objects able to create this sense of 'feeling at home,' especially when, like computers, their design, use and permanent positions require social, economic and intellectual resources and abilities that Nigeriens do not have? Certainly not, and this is a primary difference between Nigeriens' use of computers and mobile phones. Computers require a designated

place in the house. A condition that cannot be met by most Nigerien users who, especially in towns for poor families, live in crowded houses. However, mobile phone users do not have this restriction, since mobile phones are small and can be put in any pocket, even the pockets of a djellaba, a large robe worn by Nigerien men. At home, the mobile phone can be anywhere. More importantly, it does not cost too much money and can be operated on portable batteries. This ubiquitous aspect of the mobile phone explains why it is used by Nigeriens from all social categories. Indeed, the context of its use is as important as its designated function. There is a social logic underlying the practical use of such technologies.

However, this very uniform use of mobile phones across social categories may have a destabilizing effect on the social order. As demonstrated below, many women in Niger use the mobile phone as a way to escape social control.

A gendered Technology: Nigerien Women's Use of Mobile Phones

According to the 2002 Demographic and Health survey released by the Niger Government, 98 per cent of the Nigerien population is Muslim, abiding by the patriarchal values of Islam. Therefore, the Nigerien culture can be said to be male-dominated. In such a situation, mobile phones may have a subversive potential because they undermine the constant surveillance and control to which women are subjected. In [some] other circumstances they can also reinforce it by giving husbands and fathers the possibility of keeping better track of their wives and daughters or even of checking who else they are talking to. Notwithstanding this, it can be said that women's sphere of privacy can be expanded through the use of mobile phones, thus empowering them in their resistance to patriarchy. According to some interviewees:

> There are disadvantages of the mobile phone concerning married people. Mobile phones are sources of several conflicts between couples. There are some men who give their numbers to their mistresses or girl friends and those sometimes call at home. This has created many scandals in Niamey. Of course, it is the safest way to flirt because none will know about apart from the concerned ones (Ibrahima, 36, male, married).

> Yes, sometimes I use the mobile phone to flirt. Most young girls use the phone to flirt; in fact not just girls, now boys use it a lot for that purpose (Ousseina, 24, female, single).

> Some married women use the mobile phone to flirt or to talk to people they should not talk to in normal circumstances. Now, all that women could not do in the past, they can do it and are doing it (Hassan, male, 41, married).

In the social and moral context of Niger, flirting is only tolerated between people who are supposed to marry each other. Married people and particularly women are prohibited from having intimate conversations with interlocutors other than their spouses. For all these reasons, it can be said that mobile phones make it possible to challenge or to reinforce gender roles, but not in the same way as other communication technologies do. Computers and the Internet, for example, allow for the possibility, not only of hiding one's identity in forums and chat groups but also of interacting simultaneously with many different people; to form discussion groups based on gender, interests or professions. In the same way as groups in the real world can be identified in the social space, those 'virtual' groups can be located in cyberspace. The mobile phone allows no such possibility. What is at stake in gender-related use of mobile phones is the control of the sphere of intimacy by both women and men.

Mobile phones introduce a new way of managing interactions, of avoiding the traditional restrictions that characterize face-to-face relationships. For example, Nigerien culture, especially among the Songhay-Zarma, is structured by the concept of 'hawi' (shame), which marks the relationships between first-born children and their parents, married people and their parents-in-law, young people and older ones, and women and men. Verbal exchanges, such as with fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law, are very restricted and when they occur, they rarely go beyond formalities, such as greetings. First-born children are prohibited from calling their parents by their first names and vice versa. Speaking about love or people of the other sex typically is not done in the presence of one's parents. When children want to speak to their parents about some sensitive issues, they do this through peers or friends who act as intermediaries.

However, this 'shame' exists only in face-to-face relationships of people who should avoid each other in their daily activities. In this context, we can easily understand that mobile phones make these stressful relationships more supportable. They facilitate interactions among relatives by making the verbal exchange possible without the obligation of being in the presence of the participant in the discussion. This was apparent in the responses of some interviewees:

> There is a difference between talking on the phone and talking face-to-face;

> if you want to tell someone something a bit embarrassing, you can use the phone (Abdou, male, 25, petty trader);
>
> When I want to hide something, I prefer using the mobile phone. There are some topics you cannot entertain your interlocutor with in their presence; but with the mobile phone you are free to speak your mind (Ibrahim, 24, married, petty trader);
>
> The mobile phone is popular because if you have something secret you want to tell someone, nobody else can hear you. You can make appointments, date someone, and meet with someone somewhere without other people knowing it (Harouna, male, 45, married).

Thus, in the context of Niger, mobile phones give the opportunity to talk to people within a relationship characterized by the 'hawi' without having to be in physical proximity. It is so because the 'hawi' involves the well-known anthropological notion of avoidance which contrasts with joking relationships as theorized by Radcliffe-Brown (1940). The principle of avoidance suggests that some people of the opposite gender or some kinsmen and women, particularly fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law and children-in-law, formally avoid physical proximity with each other and even keep their verbal exchanges to a strict minimum. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, in Concepts et conceptions Songahy-Zarma (Nubia 1982), has emphasized the importance of the 'hawi' in communication situations among the Songhay-Zarma. In that context, it is understandable that mobile phones open a new sphere of everyday relationship management, especially for women, who are the most concerned with the 'hawi' and who are expected to show modesty and reserve in their interactions with others. Thus, privacy and intimacy are the main benefits of mobile phones according to the interviewees who mentioned the possibility of discussing sensitive individual issues without being subjected to the scrutiny of a society, which has kept most of its traditional practices, particularly when it comes to gossip and social control of individual behaviour.

However, this advantage is perceived as a disadvantage in some other circumstances, because of the possibility for deception:

> On the phone, anyone can change their voice and deceive you; but in face-to-face interactions you can tell whether the person is reliable or not (El Hadji Maazou, male, 42, married);
>
> Listen! I prefer face-to-face conversations because with the mobile phone, everyone can hide his true sentiments (Adamou, male, 36, postgraduate student).

To conclude, the empowering capacities of mobile phones appear in the alternative options they give to their users faced with social control and the need to preserve privacy and intimacy. For women, this means more freedom and autonomy, particularly in a Muslim society such as Niger, where most women face seclusion and restrictions when establishing relationships with men. Seclusion is required by Islam and observed by many families in Niamey. It forbids women from leaving their homes to receive any male other than their immediate relatives, such as brothers and fathers, or even to speak to a man. Thus, thousands of women live their entire lives without ever going outside of the family's home or having any verbal exchange with any male who is not a relative. In such a context, the mobile phone becomes a powerful tool for challenging social control because it expands the range of communicators beyond the family sphere, giving opportunities to re-establish contact with old friends, to date and to gossip.

How Mobile Phones Challenge the Disintegration of Urban Life and Reinforce Communal Ties

According to Geser (2004:3):

> The significance of the mobile phone lies in empowering people to engage in communication, which is at the same time free from the constraints of physical proximity and spatial immobility. As it responds to such deeply ingrained and universal social needs, it is no surprise to see the mobile phone expanding worldwide at breath-taking speed. In fact, there are reasons to assume that it would have been equally welcome in all human societies and cultures in the past: that is, under all imaginable specific cultural or socio-economic conditions.

Geser (2004) explains that physical proximity was a necessary condition for human interaction, while stable dwellings were one of the conditions for group cohesion over time. Although nomadic groups, as one of the main human forms of social organization, were an exception to this rule, they could not escape the necessity of physical proximity for their members to interact and communicate. Former advances in communication had the effect of eliminating the necessity of proximity, but not the constraints of location.

> Certainly, the landline phone has eliminated the physical proximity, but on the other hand it has preserved (or even reinforced) the need to stay at specific places. While there are conditions under which individuals on the move are at least able to continue face-to-face interactions (e.g. by sitting in the same train compartment), they have to remain at home or at office in order to be reached by remote callers (Geser, 2004:4).

By contrast, there is a perfect compatibility between mobile phone communication and mobility. A user can reach and be reached from almost everywhere within range.

The importance of such possibility for African urban residents lies in the capacity of mobile phones to maintain and to reinforce relationships, and more importantly, to respond to the disintegration of communal ties by urbanization. Indeed, one of the differences between the village and the town is that the latter disperses community members over a large area and reduces the opportunities to maintain daily contact and interaction. Such effects are accentuated in periods of rapid mass migration and urbanization, when poor populations, without the necessary income, are often obliged to settle in new environments which have not the adequate infrastructure. Thus, most of the interviewees stress that before they bought their mobile phones, they had to walk to reach their relatives because they had no car.

> I bought a mobile phone because it helps me reduce my movements. The mobile phone is successful because it helps reduce movement. Mobile phones reduce distances (Adamou, male, 36);
>
> Mobile phones are successful because you save time; you don't have to go and see the person; you don't have to take a taxi; so you earn time and money (Mariama, 21, female);
>
> You know that these last years, the city of Niamey has grown very big, and with regard to the cost of transportation, it became difficult to contact people; that is why people welcomed the invention of the mobile phone (Ibrahima, 36, male).

Most interviewees said the cost of transportation, the lack of telephones, the long distances and the time they had to spend to get to their destinations limited their opportunities for interaction. They emphasized the practical aspects of mobile phone use in a context in which maintaining social integration with communal groups of kin and friends is becoming more and more difficult.

It is important to note that the interviewees were referring to primary social interactions, such as visiting someone, contacting relatives or talking about social occasions, such as naming ceremonies and marriages. Therefore, if we exclude relationships with colleagues, mobile phones are used for personal purposes. Mobile phone numbers are given to family members, friends, other close relatives and people with whom Nigeriens expect to have informal relationships. For example, in the Niger region of Boboye, most of the men migrate to Ghana, Ivory Coast, Benin, Nigeria,

Togo, Cameroun, and now as far away as the United States and Europe. Sometimes, they stay away from home for years, even decades. Some never come back, having decided to settle permanently in those foreign countries. However, since the advent of the mobile phone, many families scattered around the world are rediscovering and sharing kin relationships and a common identity they believed had been lost. How?

For many people, it is difficult to imagine an African village with mobile phone users. Yet, people in many African villages use mobile phones. In three small villages in the region of Boboye that are familiar to this researcher, namely Tigay, Bouringa Kaina and Bouringa Beri, one can find at least three owners of mobile phones in each. Most of the phones were bought overseas and sent to family members by relatives living abroad. They are powered by cheap generators bought in Nigeria and which are becoming commonplace in Nigerien rural areas. The same goes for pre-paid telephone cards which are sold by street vendors or shopkeepers in the remotest parts of the country. The few village mobile phone numbers are exchanged, collected by migrants from those villages and used to call home. Mobile phones in the villages have a collective use. Any villager can make or receive calls on them. Thus, seemingly lost family members can now be found and now communicate regularly. Any owner of a mobile phone in Niger can now talk to a cousin or some other kin with whom he or she had no relation before. Last year, this researcher added more than 10 cousins, uncles, and distant relatives he has never met before to his address book. All of them use mobile phones to call and to chat.

Similar observations have been made in Italy (Fortunati 2002), Great Britain (Fox 2001), and the United States (Bachen 2001). Pertierra et al. (2002:139) made the same observations in the Philippines. According to them:

> Despite significant cultural differences, a common and universal structure of usage emerges. Global forms of mobile-phone use are emerging; cell phones generate predictable convergences in their uses. Connectivity and mobility are 'grounded' in the state of unease generated by the modern condition (Pertierra et al. 2002:139).

Geser (2004:12) emphasises that mobile phones can compensate for the threat to communal ties in urban settings.

> The mobile phone can function as a powerful tool for re-establishing the fluid, casual modes of informal communication typical for traditional communal life, thus counteracting the losses of communalistic social integration caused by traditional media as well as the depersonalizations of modern urban life.

In regions such as Africa which are experiencing an unprecedented urbanization in a context of inadequate social services and public infrastructure, households are suffering the devastating social effects of low income and precarious settlements (ISTED 1998). In such a context, people resort to 'communalization' and tradition in response to the challenges of urban life. Facing social compartmentalization, people retreat to the protective framework of their community of origin. Thus, ISTED's (1998:13) report notes that in Africa, 'associations of migrants from the same village and the part of the family in the town, form the social environment of the new urban dwellers'.

However, economic conditions, as well as bureaucratic management of time and space, can prevent the realization of this desire of 'communalization'. The need to join and interact with the extended family can be impaired by the cost of habitat dispersal, cost of transportation, and lack of time. As shown below, the mobile phone does not surmount all of these obstacles.

Mobile Phone Use and Social Time: Changes in Discursive Practices

A superficial observation may explain the rapid spread and adoption of mobile phones in Africa in terms of 'vociferous traditions.' Indeed, such inferences have been made and can be found in several newspaper articles (Hall 2003). There is no doubt that the mobile phone allows the recreation of the patterns of communication in so-called traditional societies in which more time is devoted to socializing and therefore to speaking and interacting. Unlike land-line telephones, which impose spatial constraints, mobile phones are compatible with the more informal way of living, moving, and communicating that is observed in traditional societies. As Fox says:

> landline telephones allowed us to communicate, but it was not the sort of frequent, easy, spontaneous, casual communication that would have characterized the small communities for which we are adapted by evolution, and in which most of us lived in pre-industrial times (2001 web document).

In some instances, land-line telephones reflect a world in which people do not have control over the organization of their work and time, while mobile phones mark the advent of a society in which the autonomy to manage time and overcome space constraints is expanded. That is why they are more adapted to the fluid, informal interactions of African societies.

However, mobile phones give only the potential for such autonomy. Depending on social and economic conditions, the management of time as related to mobile phone use can result in very different patterns. Thus, all the interviewees stressed that they spend only a few minutes speaking on their mobile phone because of the price of communication. They all admit also that this is changing their habits of communication, forcing them to adopt briefer and more concise styles of communication.

> Me, when I call, it never goes beyond one minute….Now our conversations are brief…. The style of conversation has been modified…..you can't talk as you wish (Adamou, 36, male);
>
> On average, when I call someone, I rarely exceed one minute and a half. No, I don't think this time is enough for me to cover all of the topics of the conversation because there is a lot to say, but we are obliged to shorten our talk (Mariama, 21, female);
>
> When I call someone, it is usually very brief. We use a special language. We do not waste our time. We go to the core of the talk very quickly. We do not have sufficient time because, well, we think about the financial aspect; which means that we communicate very quickly. Conversation on the mobile phone is very expensive; so we don't have more than one or two minutes to say what we have to say (Ibrahim, 36, male).

Most of the time, the users would prefer longer conversations, but they cannot afford them because they are charged by the minute.

> 'Well, it is not enough, but we fear the cost! Otherwise it is not enough; but the cost is too high…Sure, it has contributed to changing the way we talk to each other. I have mentioned the cost; with the mobile phone, you cannot speak as you wish…. Therefore, we often use a code or a very simple language to talk… The mobile phone has changed the style of conversation, in the sense that we cannot make long sentences' (Issaka, male, 32).

The way in which people use a technology in a specific context is born of necessity. It is the result of a negotiation between the socio-economic conditions and people's needs and desires. In this case, users always make a call with the knowledge that time is running out. All respondents, without any exception, cite pre-paid telephone cards and high cost as a determining factor in the way they talk on a mobile phone.

This is compelling evidence that mobile phones are changing the patterns of conversation among Niger's users. On the one hand, the mobile phone re-creates pre-industrial societies' atmosphere of sociability, while, on the other hand, it reintroduces modern and capitalist constraints by restricting the time allowed for speaking. Undoubtedly, the rules of the

marketplace govern verbal exchanges, imposing a rational use or a rational management of time. In the process, parts of Africans' habits, when it comes to interpersonal civility and politeness, are being erased: 'We avoid long salutations,' says Harouna. 'The style of conversations has changed. People speak like telegrams,' says Ousseina, 21, a student. For Oumarou and Maazou, long salutations are a waste of time:

> 'I just take a few minutes, like three minutes maximum. I conclude the discussion quickly because of the pre-paid telephone card; it is expensive, and you can't afford talking for a long time…the mobile phone has brought a change in the way people interact ….the mobile phone has taught people to talk less because you think about the card, the money you are going to spend…. Yes, the style itself has changed because we cannot talk for a long time. We have learned to be brief' (Oumarou, 24, male);
>
> 'When I talk on the mobile phone I cannot take time because, as soon as you talk, within a few seconds, the pre-paid telephone card is finished' (Maazou, male, 42);
>
> 'Because the card runs out fast, I just introduce the topic of my calling and we go directly to the main point, without wasting time in salutations' (Maikassoua, 42, male).

This is an indication that new patterns of sociability and a new discipline are being created under market constraints. Market imperatives are dictating a calculated sense of time among Niger's mobile phone users. One can perceive some tension arising between the spheres of affective relations (the desire and the need to communicate with relatives) and the cold and impersonal relations governed by the law of supply and demand in capitalist societies. The first sphere is related to what Bourdieu (1997) calls 'the gift economy'. It is based on 'a denial of the economic (in the narrow sense), a refusal of the logic of the maximization of economic profit, i.e., of the spirit of calculation…' (Bourdieu 1997:234). In contrast, the rationalization of the exchange in capitalist economies, according to Carrier (1995:1), 'dissolves bonds between persons based on kinship and other ascriptive criteria'. The consumption patterns of mobile phone users are thus dictated by this tension which, of course, has affected the organization of both personal and collective behaviour.

For people living in such conditions, planning, or at least, setting predetermined conditions into which conversations can take place becomes an imperative. Communicators have to adopt more formal ways of interacting, and even invent a new language. But it is to be expected that when the mobile phone becomes cheaper, the result will be a more spontaneous way of interacting.

Conclusion

The rapid spread of mobile phones in Africa and particularly in Niger can be explained by the manipulability and the low cost of those devices. Another factor is that mobile phones do not require literacy. They fit better in the African domestic environment and are in accordance with the way illiterate people who need not know how to read or how to arrange a text perceive the world. With mobile phones, Africans can speak their own languages with the full emotional content and the rational, the logic of verbal communication between themselves and others. Mobile phones are in line with what Ong (1982) calls 'orality and oral cultures' in which, according to him, 'language, narration, memory' and the way the world is understood are all distinct from those of 'the print culture'.

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Adoption of ICTs in a Marginalised Area of South Africa

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Abstract

This paper examines how a community in Dwesa, a marginalised area in the Transkei Region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, adopts Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This research is part of the Siyakhula project, which aims at promoting the potential of the area through ICTs. The project is situated in four different schools: Mpume, Nondobo, Mtokwane and Ngwane. Fostering ICT awareness and a sense of ownership by the community are seen as crucial factors, and computer literacy education is an integral part of the project. The study focuses on how diverse groups of people adopt new technologies and approach ICT education. Qualitative research methods such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Participant Observation (PO) were adopted in the study.

Key Terms: marginalized, Siyakhula project, computer literacy, new technologies, adoption

Résumé

Le présent article étudie l'adoption par une communauté de Dwesa, une zone marginalisée de la Région du Transkai de la province du Eastern Cape, Afrique du Sud des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (TIC). Ce travail fait partie du projet Siyakhula qui a pour objectif la promotion du potentiel de la région à travers les TIC. Le projet est abrité par quatre écoles : Mpume, Nondobo, Mtokwame et Ngwane. La sensibilisation par rapport aux TIC et le développement d'un sentiment d'appropriation parmi les membres de la communauté sont considérés comme des facteurs essentiels. En même temps, la

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formation à l'utilisation de l'outil informatique fait partie intégrante du projet. L'étude se focalise sur l'adoption par différents groupes des nouvelles technologies et la manière dont ils abordent la formation en matière de TIC. Cette étude a fait usage des méthodes qualitatives telles que l'approche participative et l'observation participante.

Termes clés : Marginalisée, Projet Siyakhula, formation à l'utilisation de l'outil informatique, Nouvelles technologies, Adoption.

Introduction

ICTs are essential tools that enable communities to access information and other services in the world. However, most marginalised communities do not get the opportunity to use ICTs as they lack access to information relevant to their living. The Siyakhula project implemented an ICT project in Dwesa (South Africa), which aimed at creating ICT awareness. According to Harris (2001), technology has to be used resourcefully to develop local communities and accomplish affirmative results (and therefore create new opportunities). New education, health and business services have been put forward as a result of the introduction of the Internet. These include e-learning, e-health and e-commerce. These new services allow communities to access services regardless of their geographical location (Harris 2001).

Marginalised communities have lived for years without Internet or computers. Therefore, when these technologies are introduced for the first time, adoption becomes a complex problem. Also, as individuals are diverse, the way they accept and adopt innovation is also different. These differences are influenced by a number of factors that determine how each individual adopts a new idea. In this study, three independent variables have been identified as having an effect on how individuals adopt ICTs especially in marginalised communities. These are education, gender and age. The research reported here discusses and describes issues that affect and slow the adoption process. It investigates the problems different groups of people in Dwesa encounter when getting acquainted with computer use. The study also looks at the challenges that might cause discontinuation and resistance towards ICT use. In addition, the study examined the various stages of new technology adoption. It aimed to answer the following question: How do individuals with different levels of education, from different age groups and gender adopt ICTs?

The paper starts with a description of Dwesa and different groups that are found in the area.

Dwesa: An Overview

Dwesa is a marginalised area situated on the Wild Coast of Transkei, in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. It has been the site of extensive research for a long time (Palmer, Timmermans and Fay 2002). Its population is estimated at 15,000 people living in 2,000 households. The inhabitants of Dwesa survive through traditional farming and they depend on the land, arts and craft for their livelihood. The region features a coastal nature reserve. The community formally owns it and it is managed by an employee of the South African National Parks Conservation Board. The area has a potential for both eco- and cultural tourism due to the rich cultural heritage and the marine conservation project undertaken at the nature reserve (Dalvit et al. 2006).

In many ways, Dwesa represents many rural realities of South Africa and Africa. It is encircled by lack of infrastructure in terms of roads and electricity, as well as by poverty and lack of services (Human Sciences Research Council 2005). There is a high unemployment rate and most people are illiterate. People who manage to complete secondary education do not manage to go further (Dalvit et al. 2006).

Dwesa has a lot to offer tourists and the outside world in terms of preservation of traditional background and services. However, it is difficult for business people to advertise their goods to a wide market because of lack of computer and Internet skills (Dalvit et al. 2006). That is why it was decided by the Siyakhula project members that the development of the e-commerce platform was necessary. Most people in Dwesa, mostly women, are highly talented in arts and craft and they take pride in their culture. This shows that Dwesa has the potential to develop into a tourist hub, which would play a leading role in job creation. That would help to retain young people who usually leave the area to look for employment opportunities in big cities.

Siyakhula Project

The Siyakhula project is a project undertaken by the University of Fort Hare and Rhodes University to study the execution of ICT-based solutions in rural communities in regard to encouraging growth in the area (Dalvit et al. 2006). Siyakhula has deployed computers, connected to the Internet and these are provided with the use of the Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT), made available by Telkom. Computer laboratories were

set up in four different schools – Mpume, Nondobo, Mthokwane, and Ngwane primary schools – which were identified because of their central location (each school is named after its village).

Project members provide basic, intermediate, advanced levels and also Internet use training to teachers from all schools, learners and community members, so as to develop essential computer skills. The Internet is being paid for by the universities centres of excellence. Researchers from both universities go to Dwesa for a week every month to provide more training, introduce more ideas and programmes that would help the community, and also assess progress that individuals make. The project has embarked on the following:

1. **ICT Infrastructure**: The two universities provided the basic infrastructure necessary to undertake the project. The initial infrastructure comprises of computers, networking, software and other secondary devices.
2. **Computer Literacy**: Teachers at various schools were trained in computer use; they, in turn, train the learners and the rest of the community on the use of ICT tools and techniques. Training course material and initial tutoring of the community were also provided.
3. **E-commerce Platform**: A working prototype of an online portal to facilitate the economic activity in Dwesa was provided to ensure growth in the region. This was designed to enable the local entrepreneurs to advertise and sell their products and services to a wider market.
4. **Support and Upgrades**: Ever since the beginning of the project, technical support for hardware and software issues was provided. The two institutions have maintained an on-going presence in Dwesa and provide the necessary upgrading of the infrastructure.

Community Focus: The project is designed to encourage collaboration among community members. The resources were made accessible to all members of the Dwesa community.

Champions from various training sessions who led subsequent training were also identified. In this process new and appropriate venues for the subsequent training and installation of equipment were also identified. The aim of the implementation was to encourage the development of the area (Dalvit et al. 2006).

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

There are a lot of issues to be considered when technologies are being introduced in areas where there has never been any form of technology before. For example, who are the possible adopters? Do they have substantial reasons to adopt the innovation? Would the community perceive the need to adopt the innovation? These are some of the questions that need to be asked (Nedevschi et al. 2006). Diffusion is a process whereby a product meant to bring innovation spreads within a population, reaching a number of adopters (Rogers 1995). The process begins with the introduction of the innovation to the population and ends when the population fully adopts it. A product or service of innovation can be disseminated and adopted at 100 per cent or less (Rogers 1995). Rogers differentiates diffusion from adoption in that the diffusion process occurs within a society to all different groups, whereas adoption has to do with the individual's feelings and needs (Rogers 1995).

Stages of Adoption

The adoption of innovation is made up of a number of stages that are usually followed by adopters. These stages assist in understanding how an individual adopts innovation. According to Rogers (1995), these stages can be broken down into five as follows:

- Awareness: The innovation is introduced to a person who does not have sufficient knowledge about the product or service. Because of this lack of information the individual does not feel the need to go out and look for more information, and also does not consider buying or using the product or service;
- Interest: One decides to find out more about the innovation/product, but does not really know how or if it can be useful in their own life. That is when the individual decides to access information and more knowledge about the product so as to decide whether or not to adopt;
- Evaluation: The individual starts making decisions about the innovation. The individual asks questions concerning the use of the product, whether it is really worth buying, whether it would make a difference, etc. These are the types of questions that individuals ask themselves during the evaluation stage. If the innovation appears to be useful to their life, they will try it out;
- Trial Stage: This is a stage whereby the product/innovation is used to a limited extent. That was when people attended the training in Dwesa to assess the project's usefulness. They thought about how ICT use

could become advantageous to their needs. After that, they came up with suggestions on how it could be used for the benefit of the whole community; and

- Adoption Stage: The individuals use the information they gathered in the interest and evaluation stages and with the results of the trial stage to make a decision to adopt the innovation. At this point, individuals consider a lot of opportunities concerning the innovation. It is adopted with ideas on how it will be used for improvement in their lives. However, due to various reasons, individuals might reject the innovation after they have adopted it (Rogers 1995).

Different Groups of Adopters

According to diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers 1995), there are five categories of adopters of innovation. It is very clear that people adopt innovations at different times and for different reasons. The community in Dwesa also comprises of different types of adopters:

Innovators: This is a group of risk takers, people who calculate the risk. In the case of the Siyakhula project, this group is made up of the project members; they calculated the risks involved in the diffusion of innovation, but resolved to make the project work. They came up with ideas on how the project can become successful in marginalised areas.

Early Adopters: Teachers in all four schools, who have been approached by the project members to learn and help to conduct training for learners and community individuals, represent this group. With help from certain individuals in the community, they helped in recruiting people from the village and they also helped the project members to introduce the project to the community leaders and elderly citizens in the village.

Early Majority: This group comprises of a few people who have been attending the training from the beginning. There were challenges at the beginning but they continued to learn. Some have become champions who also took part in teaching the beginners. They have been learning to use computers and the Internet. For example, they practice typing and also search the web for useful information.

Late Majority: This group is made up of a few arts and crafts makers who attended the meetings and only decided to adopt the project if they felt it was going to help in improvements in the arts and craft business. However, they did not want to participate fully in the use of computers and the Internet because they felt their age was a handicap. As a result, they decided to work with one of the teachers.

Laggards: Among the adopters of innovation, there are also a number of laggards in all different groups. This group believes that ICTs are meant to be used by a particular group of people. As a result, they are not keen to learn. A few women who also proved to be laggards believed that computers were supposed to be used by teachers, because they were educated. Men believed that ICTs should be used by women only; a few teachers also did not show much interest. As a result, they were not willing to participate in the training.

Motivation to Use ICTs

Based on the interviews, most people mentioned they were 'not motivated to use ICTs because we would not know what to do with them. Mostly, we do not know what we will benefit from them'. Given the conditions the community has been living in, this proved to be a reasonable feeling. There have never been computers in the village even in schools. Individuals have traditional businesses that had been operating since they were young, so it would not be easy to understand quickly how ICT use would improve traditional businesses. However, arts and craft makers were motivated with the hope that they could market their products to a wider market.

Marginalised communities adopt ICTs differently from urban populations. Findings from Pierson's study (2002) on ICT adoption and use by self-employed persons and micro-enterprises in Flanders (Belgium) suggest that people living in marginalised areas are more likely to adopt ICTs for personal and work related reasons. People living in urban areas were more likely to adopt ICTs for personal reasons. These include (aside from an individual's work) online shopping, viewing holiday destinations, communicating with people from other countries, etc. (Pierson 2002). This is due to different information and communication needs and motivations (Shields and Samarajiva 1993; LaRose and Mettler 1989; Patterson and Kavanaugh 1994). For example, Patterson and Kavanaugh (1994) found that marginalised residents in Australia were more interested in telecommunication services that facilitated interaction with people and events in their local area.

Attempts to understand and improve the effectiveness of ICT adoption for agriculture have also been noted ever since ICTs became available for agricultural management and production. ICT adoption for agriculture and rural development remains a major national and international concern. In addition, education through ICT and ICT training are also identified as common poverty alleviation factors (Gelb et al. 2004).

According to our findings, most individuals in Dwesa believe that, in order to get motivated, they need to learn more things they can do that are interrelated to their daily living. The introduction of e-commerce platform gave people hope. During the meetings, a few people suggested new ideas, such as typing and printing of programmes for events like funerals and traditional ceremonies. Mpume community became motivated to buy a printer, and it is used by the community and the school.

Challenges Encountered in the Adoption of ICTs

Osborn (2005) believes that successful development projects connect and balance local skills and knowledge rather than trying to change people into having the skills they need. Much of people's cultural and indigenous knowledge, especially in rural areas, is enclosed within and is expressed through their local languages. Limiting people to the use of ICTs in a foreign language tends to intensify the digital divide. In the process, it makes it difficult for people to quickly adopt ICTs and, in fact, it generates fear. As a result, ICTs are perceived as tools for educated people only (Osborn 2005). A community member pointed out that 'it gets difficult to understand and follow instructions given when using computers/Internet, because we do not understand English; it would help if project members could provide isiXhosa written material as well'.

Methodological Choices

We used two methods, namely participant observation (PO) and participatory action research (PAR). These two methods required that we get involved in the area of study and work closely with the population. PO allowed us to learn more about the environment, inhabitants and their activities. PAR has a cyclical aspect to it. It allowed the community to be active in the project, to be involved in decision making and planning. It also equipped them to be prepared for the changes that occurred in their environment. It also encouraged people to reflect on and give feedback about the project. Their feedback contributed to our insights into how they perceived the project and adopted ICTs.

Participant Observation (PO)

According to Bruyn (1966), PO is a method used by researchers who spend time and observe the research area as participants. The researcher takes part in the activities of the research area and in the process the researcher gets to know the respondents and the environment. This framework was used in order to discover in-depth information about social ac-

tivities in the community. The process involved observing the environment and how it plays a role in the way people adopted ICTs.

Our observations comprised of general observations about the four sub villages in Dwesa and members of the community that showed interest in the project. Dwesa is led by chiefs with their headmen in each sub village. It has a shortage of basic infrastructure such as electricity. Even the schools that have electricity are subject to frequent power cuts. On one visit by the researchers it became difficult to conduct the training because there was no electricity for almost the entire week. The electricity company (Eskom) could not fix the problem because of rains and the muddy roads. Homesteads in each village are somewhat far from one another; as a result, individuals walk long distances when they need groceries and when they visit relatives and friends. Mode of transport to town is an individually owned bus, and a few minibuses. The bus leaves the village very early in the morning and comes back later in the afternoon. Most young people, who do not study, work on projects in the village. Those who do not help their parents in taking care of livestock and in ploughing fields.

Training at Mpume showed that some individuals were somewhat reserved when teachers were using computers/Internet. When it was time to make decisions about the project, it was difficult for individuals to put forward ideas; as a result, a few discontinued with the training. Teachers were keen to learn new ideas and also to train others. Arts and craft makers showed interest but because they were mostly middle aged, they indicated that they struggled with poor eyesight. Long distance to the school also affected their daily attendance. Individuals walked long distances as there was no regular transport between the villages. It was also mentioned that they were preoccupied when selling their products. At Mthokwane School, teachers opened the lab for the community to use computers until afternoon and learners would come after school hours.

Mpume School is one of the under-privileged schools in Dwesa; it lacks infrastructure such as equipment to trim lawns. There were no telephones, fax machines, etc. The school had no proper fences; as a result, livestock from the village moved about freely. Classrooms were not properly furnished and some windows were broken; most doors had no locks. The environment was not very attractive for computer use and training. However, teachers managed to integrate ICT use in their teaching activities. Compared to Mpume School and Ngwane, at Mthokwane and Nondobo some teachers seemed less keen to use computers/Internet. They were busy with their work and left immediately after school hours.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research is somewhat similar to Participant Observation method in that it requires a deep understanding of the community's lifestyle and background. PAR also requires that respondents put their practices, ideas, and assumptions about institutions to the experiment by gathering evidence. It involves, allows and equips participants in objectifying their own experiences (McTaggart 1989). The community participated in the implementation of the project. For example, the community helped in recruiting people from the village. Also, key people to be consulted were identified and meetings were arranged to discuss the project.

Other Forms of Data Collection

In-depth Interviews: According to Sekaran (1992), respondents should be allowed to speak openly especially about issues that affect them, which is why open-ended questions are important in an interviews (Sekaran 1992). Open-ended questions allow respondents the independence to raise new topics, an opportunity to clarify responses and also to ask questions if they did not comprehend. Additionally, interviews provide researchers an opportunity for follow-up questions or to ask for additional explanation (Oppenheim 1992, cited in Wimmer and Dominick 2003).

Informal Conversational Interview

According to Patton (1990), this is a relaxed way of interviewing respondents. This is an informal conversational interview that may occur spontaneously in the course of field work, and the respondent may not know that this is an interview. Questions appear from the immediate perspective, so the wording of questions and even the topics are not pre-arranged. The researchers do not compile questions, they just engage in a conversation with the respondents (Patton 1990). That was possible in our research because we understood the language and the background of the respondents. According to Patton (1990), this type of interview requires an interviewer who is knowledgeable about the area of the interview and strong in interpersonal skills, since he or she will have significant decision in terms of directing the interview. We used this method to interview male and female respondents, but mainly with men in the village and that helped to create a relaxed environment. Respondents led the discussion by asking questions and we found a chance to ask our own questions in a conversational manner.

Interviews

These interviews were conducted in a manner that ensured that all individuals expressed themselves freely about the project and ICT use. They were both in-depth and informal conversational for all groups. Respondents were interviewed every time we went to Dwesa, so as to assess changes and progress among individuals and groups. The interviews were conducted with individuals and also in groups. The four schools were all primary schools from grade 1 to grade 9. Each school had about 200 learners and 12 teachers. Teachers from different schools were interviewed individually and also as groups. From Mpume Primary School, 8 teachers were interviewed, 6 from Mthokwane, 6 from Ngwane and 5 from Nondobo. At the beginning, all teachers were interviewed, but as time went by, a few mentioned that the training sometimes clashed with their lessons. They believed that the project was good for the school and the community, but still showed reluctance to participate. However, they noted that the projects helped to increase the number of learners, because they had received a number of applications from learners for next year.

Each village had a few individuals involved in arts and craft and these were mostly middle-aged and elderly women. Eight women from Mpume village were interviewed as two groups; five women from Ngwane village as one group; 7 women from Mthokwane as two groups and 4 women from Nondobo as a group.

From the four schools, learners from Grade 9 attended the training and a few were selected for interviews – 10 learners from Mpume, 12 from Mthokwane, 7 from Ngwane and 4 from Nondobo. Four grade 12 learners from Nqabara High School were keen and at the beginning they came for the training but discontinued later. Nqabara village is situated far from the other four villages.

Men of different age groups from the four villages were also interviewed – 6 men from Mpume, 4 from Mthokwane, 3 from Nondobo and 6 from Ngwane. They were all interviewed as groups. Most men were not available and those who participated in the interviews said, ‘We work in other projects in the village; so we do not have time after hours’. Elderly men showed interest but only for their children; they committed themselves to ensure their children attended the training.

Power Struggles Regarding Ownership and Control of the Project

On the one hand, community members (especially at Mpume) did not see the need for teachers to conduct the training because they believed that

teachers were already employed so they should allow unemployed people to conduct the training and to develop their skills. On the other hand, others believed that computers should be used by the teachers because they were educated, and they knew what they wanted to do with them. This led to a few people being reserved in decision-making. Four nurses who were interviewed at the clinic at Mpume believed they were also in the right position to control the training. One nurse mentioned that: 'It would be easy to instruct people because I have done computer literacy training'.

According to the nurses, the clinic was open till 4pm, whereas the school closes at 2pm. This implied that people would use computers until late. Observations showed that community members were dependent on the teachers. This created the impression that teachers controlled the project. That gave teachers the power to dominate although not deliberately. In the perceptions of the community, teachers were in control because they were educated. One other problem concerned the general lack of knowledge of the benefits of computer use. This did not apply to teachers who were skilled in computer use. In addition, there was the perception that teachers were in a position to use computers because they understood the language of new technologies.

Variables Identified in the Adoption Process

There are three variables identified as having an effect on the way communities in Dwesa adopted ICTs. Education was found to be a fundamental variable in the adoption process. It proved to have a major role in creating some misunderstandings between different groups in the community. Age and gender were also identified as having an impact on the adoption process.

Education

Education is one independent variable that played a fundamental role in ICT adoption in Dwesa. It had positive and negative impacts. Teachers adopted ICTs in order to enhance their teaching skills, to teach learners and community members and also for their own personal benefits such as reading newspapers, shopping online, internet banking, applying for education and bursaries and maybe other employment opportunities. This showed that teachers had clear ideas on how to use computers, as compared to community members who did not have formal education.

Most young people received some high school education but could not complete their studies. Some community members who showed interest in ICT use had completed high school education but could not further their

studies. This was a major issue in regard to adoption of ICTs because community members who were not educated had noted that computers were for educated people such as teachers in Dwesa.

Education also affected ICT adoption in the sense that community members felt inferior to the teachers. This affected community discussions on the ICT project. Lack of education implied that most people in the community depended on teachers; for example, it was difficult for individuals to use computers if teachers were not available. Community members who needed to use computers on weekends and during vacations could not express their needs during community meetings.

Some nurses from Mpume village clinic also showed interest in ICT adoption. They said they were unable to attend the training because, by the time they got to Mpume school, they would find that the trainers had already closed for the day. 'We should be given one computer or keys should be given to one responsible person in the village, who can continue with the training when teachers leave school in the afternoon.'

At Ngwane Primary School, ICTs are used mainly by teachers and learners. Young people were encouraged by their parents to attend the training. Arts and craft makers were keen on advertising their products online; however, they showed reluctance in the practical use of computers. Some of them said: 'We will not always have time for the training, because we have to make our products for selling and we will ask teachers and learners for help.'

Gender

Gender also played a role in the adoption of ICTs in Dwesa. The general assumption is that men pay greater attention to technology. Dwesa village proved that women willingly adopted ICTs and became skilled in ICT use. Our findings showed that men were slow to adopt ICTs, with the exception of teachers in the schools.

Women showed greater interest in attending computer training programmes in the community. Some men explained: 'We do not see the necessity to attend the training because we do not wish to use computers.' Some men said they would like to attend the training but could not do so because of their commitment to other jobs in the village. A few young men mentioned that 'we have been away; and when we got back we saw the project and we saw that there are not many men attending the training; project members should recruit more young men'. Elderly men were cooperative but could not use computers. This general lack of interest might be caused by the fact that, in most marginalised areas, where most people

are not educated, manual labour is seen as an appropriate way for men to earn a living. In most cases people from marginalised communities prefer to live life traditionally in the way they have been used to. They do not accept change easily. In the perception of some community members, the introduction of technology has never seemed appropriate to the traditional way of life. However, those who sent their children to school believed it would be a good thing if they (the children) could learn to use ICTs. One elderly man said: 'My wife makes arts and craft and my daughter finished grade 12 many years ago, but we do not have money to send her for further education. She helps my wife in making arts and craft; she got very excited when she heard about the e-commerce platform.'

Age

Age also proved to have an impact on the way individuals adopted ICTs in Dwesa. All age groups showed there were people who became first adopters and also laggards. Elderly men and women accepted the project but could not really adapt to ICT. Young people were perceived as the ones who should learn to use ICTs, as they might be relevant to their lives. During meetings which were called to introduce the project formally, elderly people promised to support the project. For example, when extra equipment was needed, the community rallied around members, collected money and bought the equipment. Arts and craft makers also accepted the project but they noted they could not afford to be at the training sessions all the time because of their engagement with the products. Teachers and young people were asked to help to upload the products on the Internet for advertising and marketing.

Misconceptions about the Project and Computer Use

At the beginning of the training, community members were not well informed about the project. Some people felt the project was a government initiative to develop marginalised areas. The perception was that the project was for schools and teachers only because the project was located in the schools. This made it difficult to convince people to attend the training. People of all ages were invited to a meeting during which it became clear that many people did not understand the objectives of the project. Community members could not understand why a marginalised community should have computers. Project members emphasised that the project was not only for the schools and a few community members but also was for the entire community.

Conclusion

As shown in this study, there are three factors that influence ICT adoption in a marginalized community in South Africa. The factors are education, age and gender. There are several indications that show that Dwesa community can fully adopt ICT use. If the arts and craft women were able to adopt ICTs and develop their businesses, it would be a practical example for everyone in the community. People would see the benefits of ICTs and start developing interest in the project.

Learners who would like to advance their education elsewhere would find they could also use computers to access information about different institutions. This suggests that learners in Dwesa community should participate in the computer training programme, so they can acquire the necessary skills.

All community members need to take a more leading role in ICT use. Use of ICTs helps to create job opportunities in the village, as well as in the urban centres. For this to happen, a range of training programmes should be introduced. All schools would need a permanent trainer and most teachers should include ICT use in their curriculum. With improved computer skills, businesses would develop and young people would be able to find jobs in their communities rather than migrate to the cities in search of jobs.

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Univers discursif et réforme des télécommunications : étude comparée du Sénégal et de l'Afrique du Sud

Oumar Kane

Résumé

Avec la montée de l'utopie de la communication (Breton 1997), la communication est investie du pouvoir de permettre, à travers la transparence dont elle est supposément porteuse, l'amélioration de la société. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'une communication intersubjective, telle que l'agora grecque ou l'arbre à palabres africain ont pu en servir de modèle (Diagne 2006). Un discours promoteur de la libéralisation dans le secteur des télécommunications s'est progressivement imposé, aboutissant à une déréglementation mondiale généralisée du secteur. Dès 1984, la *Commission Maitland* de l'Union internationale des télécommunications (UIT) s'est penchée sur les infrastructures africaines de télécommunications et a dressé un bilan particulièrement négatif de la situation générale du continent. Le développement des télécommunications est ainsi analysé comme le *chaînon manquant* entre les pays du Sud et ceux du Nord. Notre propos est ici de mettre en perspective la conjoncture qui a permis l'émergence à la fois d'un discours et d'un train de réforme du secteur des télécommunications. L'accent est mis sur les facteurs tant externes que proprement nationaux qui ont déterminé la conception et l'application d'une réforme structurelle du secteur des télécommunications dans les pays africains. Basé sur une étude de cas et sur des données secondaires issues de la littérature, le présent travail adopte une perspective comparative. Il s'appuie sur le cas de deux pays africains particulièrement contrastés en termes de langue, d'aire culturelle, de démographie ou d'héritage colonial : le Sénégal et l'Afrique du Sud. L'analyse comparée des étapes majeures de la réforme du secteur des télécommunications met paradoxalement en évidence l'évolution similaire du processus dans les deux pays malgré leurs physionomies divergentes.

Mots clés : Télécommunications, Sénégal, Afrique du Sud, Communication

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Abstract

With the communication utopia (Breton 1997) claiming more ground, and through transparency it theoretically guarantees, communication has now become invested with the power to enhance societal life. We are not concerned, in this regard, with inter-subjective communication, as exemplified in the Greek agora or the African palaver tree models (Diagne 2006). Progressively, views sympathetic to the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector have emerged, leading to a widespread deregulation of this sector at global level. As early as 1984, the *Maitland Committee* set up by the International Telecommunications *Organisation* carried out an audit of the telecommunication infrastructures of Africa and as it turned out, the situation was particularly desperate throughout the continent. As a result, the development of the telecommunication sector has been perceived as the *missing link* between the countries of the South and those of the North. This paper seeks to highlight the circumstances that led to the emergence of both logical thinking and the resulting series of changes that occurred in the telecommunication sector. Special attention is paid to the external as well as exclusively national factors that determined the conception and the implementation of a structural reform of the telecommunication sector in African countries. This study uses a comparative approach and is based on a case study and secondary data obtained from the review of relevant literature. It focuses on two African countries, Senegal and South Africa, which contrast markedly in terms of language, cultural area, demography as well as colonial heritage. In spite of the surface differences, the comparative analysis of the major steps in the reform of their telecommunication sectors suggests, paradoxically, a parallel evolution of the said process in the two countries.

Key Terms: Telecommunications, Senegal, South Africa, Communication

Cadre d'analyse

Le Sénégal et l'Afrique du Sud sont deux pays très contrastés. Historiquement, le Sénégal, ancienne capitale de l'Afrique occidentale française (AOF) pendant la période coloniale, a accédé à l'indépendance en 1960 et est très engagé dans la Francophonie[1]. L'Afrique du Sud appartient quant à elle au Commonwealth et connaît une tradition de Common Law, au moins au niveau des principes puisque l'apartheid y a prévalu jusqu'en 1994. Au niveau économique, l'Afrique du Sud est le pays le plus industrialisé du continent africain, à l'inverse du Sénégal qui a récemment rejoint la cohorte des Pays les moins avancés (PMA). En termes de population, de niveau moyen de revenus, de culture politique et institutionnelle, les deux pays sub-sahariens présentent un tableau

particulièrement contrasté. Cette grande disparité, dont on pourrait raisonnablement supposer qu'elle induise des principes très différents de gouvernance du secteur des télécommunications dans les deux pays, a été un critère important de leur choix pour le présent travail. Ainsi, l'analyse comparée à laquelle nous procédons ici permettra de réduire le biais lié à la proximité institutionnelle et culturelle des pays d'Afrique noire (Diop 1959). En effet, une grande proximité de cet ordre pourrait expliquer certaines similarités observées par des éléments « internes » au détriment de l'influence des facteurs « externes » sur lesquels nous nous appesantirons également dans la suite de l'analyse à travers les acteurs transnationaux de la gouvernance globale des télécommunications.

En effet, la mutation du cadre de gouvernance nécessite une légitimation discursive des limites de l'ancien système et des bienfaits attendus de la réforme. Ces discours, qu'ils émanent des organisations de gouvernance (UIT, Banque mondiale) ou des États-nations africains mettent l'emphase sur la nécessité de promouvoir le secteur des télécommunications considéré comme un levier important du développement national. Dans l'ordre politique interne, les politiques de communication sont l'instrument privilégié mobilisé à cette fin.

Selon Ithiel de Sola Pool (1974), l'émergence des politiques publiques de communication comme champ de recherche est en grande partie tributaire de l'accélération de plus en plus importante des inventions technologiques dans le champ médiatique. Ainsi, jusque dans les années 1950, les changements technologiques étaient assez lents pour permettre une généralisation des résultats des études sans prendre en compte les facteurs institutionnels liés au contexte. Dans les années 1970 par contre :

> we are now at the point, on the exponential acceleration of change, where major innovation in our communications system are coming every decade, and there is no reason to expect that acceleration to stop. *We are entering a period in which the whole communications system will be in a period of constant flux* (souligné par moi). That makes the communications system itself an object of research. The important issues for scholars looking at the next decade are not only how people behave in the existing communications system, but what the communications system itself will be (de Sola Pool 1974:33).

Dans ces mêmes années 1970, l'Unesco a fait de l'accès aux moyens d'information par les pays pauvres un de ses principaux chevaux de bataille. Dans ce cadre se situent les travaux de la commission McBride ainsi que la Conférence de San José au Costa Rica de 1976. Des assises de San

José a émergé une définition précise des politiques de communication comme :

> …des ensembles cohérents de principes et de normes destinés à tracer des orientations générales à l'intention des organes et des institutions de communication dans chaque pays. Ils fournissent un cadre de référence pour élaborer des stratégies nationales dans la perspective d'une mise en place d'infrastructures de communication qui auront une fonction à remplir dans le développement éducatif, social, culturel et économique de chaque pays (cité par Mattelart 1992:22).

Il apparaît dès lors que les politiques de communication sont l'objet d'enjeux et de problématiques sociétaux et que leur importance pour le développement économique national est cruciale. Bien qu'elles soient souvent abordées dans une perspective fonctionnaliste, les politiques publiques peuvent également être considérées en tant qu'elles concernent la gestion des ressources collectives. De ce fait, une appréhension critique de la question devient possible, à laquelle l'économie politique en tant qu'approche peut apporter une contribution importante.

Parallèlement aux premières recherches sur les politiques publiques en communication, la recherche académique sur les mass médias a initialement suivi deux écoles antagonistes, celle des Cultural Studies et celle de la sociologie positiviste. On s'intéresse en économie politique notamment à l'industrialisation de la culture avec un intérêt marqué pour la production et la consommation culturelles au sein des sociétés et des économies capitalistes.

En exergue de *Contribution to a Political Economy of Mass Communication*, Garnham (1979) cite Raymond Williams qui, en 1977, appelait de ses vœux une approche inédite pour l'étude des industries de la communication, approche qui nécessiterait de revoir la dichotomie marxiste classique entre base et superstructure dans la mesure où l'industrialisation de la culture a rendu inséparables l'activité économique capitaliste et la production culturelle. C'est cet héritage que revendique Garnham qui estime que l'économie politique de la communication de masse doit chercher à déterminer les conditions de la production matérielle des moyens de communication. Face à la complexe diversité des processus historiques et sociaux, l'économie politique cherche à identifier les aspects du champ social qui sont les plus pertinents pour comprendre le moteur de cette dynamique, et ainsi saisir la logique de son contrôle humain, qui revient à celle du pouvoir.

De fait, le matérialisme dont se revendique l'économie politique en tant qu'approche pour l'analyse des industries médiatiques est censé déboucher sur des propositions politiques concrètes, c'est-à-dire susceptibles de changer l'ordre des choses.

Un aspect important de l'économie politique de la communication est qu'elle ne prétend pas chez Garnham à l'universalisme, mais s'estime pertinente pour l'étude de la période historique contemporaine dans les sociétés occidentales capitalistes. Ithiel de Sola Pool avait déjà contextualisé l'aspect temporel de la recherche en communication, mais il semblait tenir pour acquis que le modèle était exportable, d'où l'emphase sur les bienfaits de la communication internationale. C'est pourquoi nous préférerons la définition de Mosco (1996:25) qui, sans nécessairement la relier à une conjoncture socio-historique spécifique, définit l'économie politique comme « l'étude des relations sociales, particulièrement des relations de pouvoir, qui constituent conjointement la production, la distribution et la consommation des ressources ».

Il demeure, cependant, pertinent de se demander en quoi cette approche peut être invoquée pour l'analyse de la régulation des télécommunications en Afrique. D'une part, le modèle économique capitaliste est de moins en moins historiquement et géographiquement situé. Contrairement à l'assertion de Garnham, nous constatons une uniformisation chaque jour croissante des règles du jeu économique à travers le monde. L'analyse de la régulation des télécommunications en Afrique et dans le tiers monde plus généralement montre en quoi la déréglémentation et la libéralisation du secteur échappent de plus en plus à la souveraineté des États et sont régies par des organisations transnationales de gouvernance[2]. De plus, malgré de nombreuses réticences en Afrique, notamment de la part de la société civile, l'État reprend souvent à son compte les thèses néo-libérales. L'exemple le plus parfait en est peut-être le Nouveau partenariat pour le développement de l'Afrique[3] (NEPAD) pensé comme levier du développement africain dans ce qui est conçu comme une économie de plus en plus inéluctablement libéralisée et mondialisée.

De l'interventionnisme aux nouvelles règles du jeu

L'interventionnisme d'après les indépendances

La démocratisation de la culture a été souvent invoquée, au Canada et en France notamment, pour promouvoir les politiques publiques volontaristes. S'appliquant à la production artistique nationale et à la diversité culturelle, cette volonté d'égaliser l'accès à la culture, et partant, l'accès aux moyens

et structures culturels, a souvent été critiquée comme renforçant les inégalités en permettant à ceux qui disposent d'un capital culturel hérité de profiter davantage des ressources publiques. En Afrique, dans le domaine des télécommunications, l'interventionnisme étatique à travers un opérateur public en situation de monopole a été la règle depuis les indépendances, survenues pour l'essentiel au cours des années 1960. La justification de cet état de fait a été basée sur l'affirmation que les télécommunications sont un « multiplicateur de développement » et sont de ce fait d'intérêt public. Les organismes étatiques comme l'Office des postes et télécommunications (OPT) sénégalais ou la Direction des postes et télécommunications (DPT) sud-africaine géraient, un peu partout sur le continent, les postes et les télécommunications[4], avec une comptabilité commune et un personnel caractérisé par une certaine mobilité entre les deux secteurs. Au cours des années 1980, l'environnement et le cadre de gouvernance changent. C'est en effet la période des Programmes d'ajustement structurel (PAS) et singulièrement de la promotion par la Banque mondiale d'une réforme des entreprises publiques au rang desquelles les offices publics en charge des télécommunications occupent une place de choix. Avec la vague de commercialisations[5] et les nouveaux objectifs de libéralisation, la majorité des pays ont séparé les postes d'avec les télécommunications, ce dernier secteur étant confié à un opérateur jouissant d'un statut de monopole sur les infrastructures autant que sur les services en matière de télécommunications. Cette situation de non-concurrence a permis aux organismes publics de maintenir un niveau de tarification élevé malgré la qualité médiocre des services offerts. Les investissements nécessaires pour la modernisation des réseaux étant hors de portée des États des nations postcoloniales confrontées à des priorités autrement plus urgentes comme la santé, la nutrition ou l'éducation. Il a fallu la conjonction de plusieurs facteurs pour qu'il soit procédé à une réforme législative en vue de la privatisation du secteur dans la majorité des pays africains.

Le contexte de la globalisation

Le General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) a cédé le pas à l'Organisation mondiale du commerce (OMC) en janvier 1995. Avec l'importance croissante prise par le secteur des services dans l'économie mondiale, l'Uruguay Round a principalement consisté en l'intégration des services dans un cadre réglementaire qui avait été initialement prévu pour le commerce des biens seulement. La conclusion de cette ronde de négociations s'est faite à Marrakech et la déclaration finale a consacré la

création de l'OMC. Tous les 18 pays alors membres du GATT sont de facto devenus membres de l'OMC et le cadre de régulation des activités commerciales internationales prévu pour les biens a été étendu aux services. Mais selon Sinclair (2002:1) :

> The GATS [General Agreement on Trade in Services] is extraordinarily broad, dealing with every services imaginable. It applies to measures of all governments whether federal, First Nation, provincial state, regional or municipal (…). The agreement is not confined to cross border trade, but intrudes into many domestic policy areas including environment, culture, natural, resources, health care, education and social services.

Cette hégémonie mercantiliste permet de comprendre pourquoi la régulation dans le secteur des télécommunications semble si uniforme au niveau des législations nationales malgré la diversité des traditions et des structures politiques dans les différents pays africains. Théodore Leavitt, alors directeur de la *Harvard Business School*, a été l'un des maîtres penseurs de la globalisation. Il a doté le terme d'un fondement théorique et en a vulgarisé l'usage. Concrètement, ses recommandations sont à l'opposé des procédés classiques de marketing qui consistaient à segmenter le marché selon les publics et à appliquer à chaque niche de consommation une stratégie spécifique à ses besoins et à ses caractéristiques propres tels que l'étude de marché a auparavant pu les identifier.

Pour sa part, Jesús Martin Barbero (1998:165) avance une définition toute différente de la globalisation:

> Ce que les réseaux mettent alors en circulation, ce sont à la fois des courants d'information et des mouvements d'intégration à la mondialisation techno-économique. Un nouveau type d'espace réticulé est produit, affaiblissant les frontières du national et du local et convertissant en même temps ces territoires en points d'accès et de transmission, de mise en œuvre et de transformation du sens de la communication.

Il serait, par conséquent, plus adéquat de parler de mondialisation que d'internationalisation pour caractériser la dynamique actuelle. Car l'internationalisation suppose une souveraineté encore forte des États, centralité étatique que la mondialisation est justement en train de remettre en cause par son procès même. Les États s'avèrent de ce fait de moins en moins capables d'exercer une quelconque autorité sur un certain nombre de domaines qui relevaient jusque-là de leur champ spécifique de compétence. La régulation des télécommunications en fait partie comme en témoigne le fait que les règles du commerce international et les réglementations nationales, particulièrement en Afrique, offrent une

physionomie de plus en plus unifiée. Il n'est que de considérer le cas de deux pays aussi différents que l'Afrique du Sud et le Sénégal pour s'en convaincre. Malgré leur disparité économique et politique ainsi que le panorama contrasté offert par leurs secteurs respectifs des télécommunications, ces deux pays présentent cependant une similarité frappante dans leur processus de libéralisation. De la mise en place d'un nouveau cadre législatif dans les deux pays en 1996, à l'application de la réforme législative consacrant la libéralisation des télécommunications, l'identité des mesures adoptées dans les deux pays et leur simultanéité est frappante. Même le fonctionnement des organes de régulation dans les deux pays et la manière dont, malgré une autonomie consacrée par les textes, elles sont cependant sous la tutelle effective d'instances étatiques pousse à réflexion. Le contexte général des institutions financières internationales bâilleuses de fonds qui ont promu la déréglementation et la privatisation des opérateurs de télécommunications, les principes de gouvernance édictés par l'UIT, le pouvoir contraignant de l'OMC avec la prééminence de l'AGCS (Accord général sur le commerce des services) sont quelques facteurs externes qui expliquent l'identité des dynamiques malgré la variété des contextes et des cadres institutionnels nationaux.

Dynamique des réformes et formes de régulation

Les causes de la déréglementation en Afrique

Outre les pressions externes exercées par des organisations transnationales de gouvernance, des institutions financières internationales et des pays disposant de moyens d'influence[6], un certain nombre de facteurs ont légitimé le discours promouvant la déréglementation des télécommunications dans les pays africains. La faiblesse de la densité téléphonique en Afrique, il est vrai légèrement améliorée par l'introduction de la téléphonie mobile, était patente et le service là où il existait était souvent défaillant. Par ailleurs, la répartition inégale de la population sur le territoire et le coût de l'électrification et de la connexion au réseau téléphonique des zones rurales ou enclavées classaient les niveaux d'investissements parmi les plus élevés au monde. Plus généralement, la faiblesse et la vétusté des infrastructures, la mauvaise qualité du service qui en découle, la quasi-absence d'investissements publics pour rénover le réseau existant ou l'étendre aux zones rurales, la situation financière problématique des opérateurs publics en situation de monopole, la montée en puissance des discours néo-libéraux ainsi que les pressions externes diverses exercées sur les pays africains ont abouti au milieu des années 1990 à une étape supplémentaire qui fut la

privatisation des opérateurs historiques de télécommunications. Il faut cependant noter que cette vague de privatisations n'est pas restée confinée aux télécommunications, elle a également touché les secteurs de l'eau et de l'énergie selon les impératifs de la réforme des entreprises publiques africaines initiée par la Banque mondiale.

La réforme législative

Vers le milieu des années 1990, apparaissent les premières mesures pour une réforme du secteur des télécommunications. La *Communications Act* en Afrique du Sud et la *Déclaration de politique de développement du secteur des télécommunications* sénégalaise voient en effet le jour la même année, en 1996. Elles définissent le cadre dans lequel la déréglementation, désormais perçue comme nécessaire, doit avoir lieu, permettant une adaptation à un marché de plus en plus concurrentiel, et l'articulant avec une société de l'information en devenir. Est évoquée la nécessité notamment de ne pas rater le train de l'informatisation comme les pays africains auraient raté celui de l'industrialisation, d'autant plus que l'insertion dans la société de l'information est tenue pour garante d'un développement jusqu'à présent inaccessible. Mais cette vue optimiste n'est pas partagée par tous. Ainsi, la privatisation de l'opérateur historique des télécommunications a été vivement combattue dans certains pays africains, notamment au Sénégal et au Mali, où les syndicats l'ont perçue comme une menace de leur statut professionnel. Mais malgré la différence de rythme constatée ici et là, la locomotive de la déréglementation et des privatisations s'est bel et bien ébranlée partout sur le continent. On peut distinguer un mouvement en quatre temps dans cette réforme en Afrique:

La séparation postes et télécommunications

Elle a commencé au milieu des années 1980 avec la séparation des postes d'avec les télécommunications. En Afrique du Sud, l'ancien organisme unifié, la DPT, s'est scindée en deux départements distincts : les Postes et les télécommunications. Un événement similaire est survenu la même année, en 1985, au Sénégal. Il s'est agi dans ce dernier cas d'un double mouvement de séparation-fusion. Au sein de l'OPT, un divorce des Postes et des Télécommunications a eu lieu. Cependant, dans le même mouvement, la Direction des télécommunications a fusionné avec téléSénégal d'un côté tandis que la Direction des postes intégrait les services financiers pour donner naissance à l'Office des postes et de la Caisse d'épargne (OPCE) de l'autre.

La privatisation progressive de l'opérateur historique des télécommunications

Un deuxième moment important de cette réforme a été la privatisation, une dizaine d'années plus tard, de l'opérateur national des télécommunications qui était né de la scission initiale et qui détenait le monopole sur son secteur d'activités. Cette privatisation a eu lieu de manière progressive. Elle a été préparée par des contrats de gestion, de maintenance ou d'assistance conclus avec des opérateurs étrangers qui préparaient ainsi une prise de contrôle de plus en plus probable du monopole public qui attisait de nombreux appétits. En 1997, les opérateurs sud africain *TELKOM* et sénégalais *SONATEL* (Société nationale des télécommunications) ouvrent leur capital, respectivement à *Telecom Malaysia* pour 30 pour cent des parts et à une filiale de *France Télécom* qui acquiert 33 pour cent des parts à l'ouverture du capital, puis accroît sa participation à près de 42 pour cent en 2003. Nulle part sur le continent, cependant, l'État ne se désengage totalement en privatisant l'opérateur à 100 pour cent. La prise de participation par des intérêts étrangers varie entre 30 pour cent et 60 pour cent du capital des opérateurs historiques. Ainsi, en l'espace de trois ans, la physionomie offerte par le panorama des opérateurs de télécommunications à l'échelle du continent varie considérablement. Entre 1992 et 2002, le nombre d'opérateurs est resté constant avec 52 opérateurs mais leur statut a changé. De 46 opérateurs publics en 1992, on est passé à seulement 29 en 2002. La cession de l'opérateur se fait presque partout au bénéfice de celui de l'ancienne puissance coloniale selon l'analyse même de l'UIT (2003). Dernièrement cependant, avec la récession récente du secteur, de nombreux investisseurs se montrent réticents à investir dans le fixe dont les marges ont baissé et dont le cycle de retour sur investissement est très long. Ils préfèrent investir dans la technologie mobile qui est plus en demande au niveau des usagers africains. Son taux de rentabilité est supérieur et le cycle de retour sur investissement est plus court que pour la téléphonie fixe.

La création d'un organe de régulation des télécommunications

Un troisième moment fort de cette dynamique de libéralisation des télécommunications en Afrique a été la création d'un organe de régulation distinct de l'opérateur et jouissant d'une certaine autonomie. En 1996 a eu lieu en Afrique une conférence régionale axée sur le développement des télécommunications. L'objectif était de superviser le passage du secteur des télécommunications à une économie de marché. Les fonctions de réglementation, de régulation et d'exploitation, toutes auparavant assumées

par l'opérateur, sont alors séparées et organisées de manière indépendante. Mais l'autonomie de l'organe de régulation demeure souvent relative. La question de l'autonomie ou de l'indépendance des régulateurs est âprement débattue, la question centrale étant de savoir si un organe chargé de réguler les ressources publiques peut légitimement prétendre échapper au contrôle de l'État en dernière instance, ce dernier étant le dépositaire de la souveraineté populaire et ayant un degré de légitimité supérieur à celui des organes administratifs. Promouvant la plus large autonomie possible des régulateurs africains, l'UIT cite en exemple les cas de la Mauritanie et du Botswana comme modèles pour les autres pays africains.

L'introduction de la concurrence

La quatrième étape de la réforme des télécommunications fut l'introduction de la concurrence. De manière générale, malgré leur privatisation partielle, les opérateurs historiques ont néanmoins gardé le monopole de certaines de leurs prérogatives pour une durée déterminée. Ainsi au Sénégal, la *SONATEL* a gardé son monopole sur la téléphonie fixe pour une durée de sept ans après sa privatisation en 1997. *TELKOM* en Afrique du Sud a également bénéficié du même monopole sur la téléphonie fixe jusqu'en 2002 malgré sa privatisation à la même date que la *SONATEL*. Ces deux pays ne constituent pas une exception concernant la téléphonie fixe. Par contre, la téléphonie mobile ainsi que les services à haute valeur ajoutée ont été mis en concurrence plus rapidement. Cette privatisation des opérateurs historiques préalablement à la libéralisation effective du secteur a été très controversée. L'un des arguments récurrents avancés par ses contempteurs étant que les bénéfices attendus de la réforme sont annulés par cette mesure qui de fait transforme un ancien monopole public en un monopole privé.

L'analyse comparée des deux organes de régulation

La régulation des télécommunications s'est faite en fonction de nouvelles règles du jeu, mais il s'est avéré nécessaire dans un premier temps que la loi soit amendée pour adapter le dispositif législatif de chaque pays aux impératifs de la libéralisation du secteur. S'ensuit donc une transposition des normes de droit du niveau international vers la législation nationale même si la rationalité des deux univers est différente : « (…) les politiques mondiales sont développées selon des normes globales, alors que les politiques nationales s'appuieront sur des principes favorisant l'expression de valeurs sociales et culturelles particulières » (Raboy 2003:135). Concernant les organes de régulation de l'Afrique du Sud, l'ICASA[7] (In-

dependent Communications Authority of South Africa) et du Sénégal l'ARTP[8] (Agence de régulation des télécommunications et des postes), elles dépendent pour la première du Ministère des Postes, des télécommunications et de la radiodiffusion et pour l'ARTP directement de la Présidence de la République du Sénégal. Il est à noter que le Telecommunications Act de 1996 qui porte création de la SATRA a également créé une agence chargée du développement du service universel. Le secteur audiovisuel est resté en charge de l'IBA (Independent Broadcasting Authority) dont la création remonte à 1993. Leur mission de régulation des télécommunications a été octroyée aux régulateurs en contrepoint d'une part à l'opérateur dominant désormais en charge de la seule exploitation et d'autre part au secteur audiovisuel régulé séparément par une autorité distincte.

L'autonomie de l'ICASA est garantie par les textes qui l'ont portée sur les fonts baptismaux mais dans les faits elle doit soumettre ses décisions à son ministère de tutelle pour approbation malgré la déclaration d'indépendance attachée à sa dénomination. Au Sénégal, l'ARTP ne dispose pas du pouvoir de promulgation des textes de loi qui doivent être adoptés par l'Assemblée nationale, même si elle a, en pratique, le pouvoir de soumettre des projets de loi par l'intermédiaire de la Direction des études, de la planification et de la législation et matière de télécommunications (DEPLT) qui est chargée de la réglementation du secteur. Pour ce qui est de l'allocation des licences de téléphonie filaire, leur attribution est revue sur une base annuelle par l'ICASA, et les attributions doivent être là encore sanctionnées par la tutelle ministérielle, quand ailleurs comme au Botswana, l'organisme de régulation statue en dernière instance.

En Afrique du Sud, les propositions de révision des tarifs sont adressées à l'organisme de régulation par les opérateurs, et l'ICASA les fait approuver par le Ministère. Au Sénégal, en cas de litige ou de désaccord entre l'ARTP et un opérateur, ce dernier peut interjeter appel après du tribunal administratif. En cas de litige entre deux opérateurs, c'est l'ARTP qui tranche.

Alors que l'UIT pousse dans le sens d'une autonomie totale des régulateurs qui les ferait échapper aux pressions étatiques, il faut cependant constater que c'est loin d'être le cas vu que dans la majorité des cas, les régulateurs africains dépendent de fonds publics pour leur budget[9]. Autant l'ICASA que l'ARTP sont soumis à une certaine tutelle et doivent référer au ministère des télécommunications dans le premier cas, et directement à la Présidence de la République dans le cas de l'ARTP. Une différence importante cependant concerne le domaine de compétence des deux

régulateurs. Avec la transformation de la SATRA en ICASA[10] survenue en juillet 2000, la convergence technologique est prise en compte et le régulateur Sud africain désormais multisectoriel s'occupe des « communications », terme qui regroupe les télécommunications, l'audiovisuel et la Poste. Ses missions sont principalement de promouvoir un environnement compétitif pour les opérateurs ainsi que les investissements domestiques et étrangers, et de favoriser la diversité de contenu au bénéfice des usagers ainsi que le service universel. L'élargissement des attributions de l'ancienne ART en ARTP a eu lieu en 2006 et s'est limité au secteur postal malgré le désir de certains des membres de l'organe de régulation de l'audiovisuel de voir procéder à une fusion entre le Conseil national de régulation de l'audiovisuel (CNRA) et l'ARTP. Au Sénégal, le Président de la République a fait des technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC) son cheval de bataille dans le cadre du Nepad et le pays est en charge notamment des infrastructures et des autoroutes de l'information.

Le NEPAD et la société de l'information

Le Sénégal et l'Afrique du Sud font partie des pays qui ont pris l'initiative de lancer le projet de Nouveau Partenariat en 2001 à Abuja au Nigeria. Le Nepad affiche l'ambition de relancer le continent africain en comblant le fossé du développement. Pour ce faire, la société de l'information en devenir semble à ses chantres une occasion inespérée :

> Les nouvelles technologies sont une chance pour l'Afrique. Nous avons raté la révolution agricole, la révolution industrielle, il ne faut pas rater la révolution de l'information. Avec l'Internet, l'Afrique a pour la première fois, une chance historique d'accéder aux sources d'informations dans les mêmes conditions que les pays du Nord (membre du CRDI[11] cité par Guignard 2002).

On le voit, les TIC et les infrastructures de télécommunications qui les sous-tendent sont investies d'attentes très importantes pour le développement économique et sociétal des pays africains. C'est dans cette même perspective développementaliste que le Nepad approche la question des télécommunications. Les secteurs prioritaires[12] identifiés par le Nepad sont au nombre de dix, les NTIC en occupent les troisième (infrastructures) et sixième (NTICs) places. La partie du document de présentation du Nepad traitant des NTIC est intitulée: « Combler l'écart numérique: investir dans les technologies de l'information et de la communication ». Les TIC y sont conçues comme fondées sur l'interaction entre

les ordinateurs, les télécommunications et les médias classiques et comme ayant une importance cruciale pour l'économie de l'information. Par ailleurs, les TIC sont censées permettre l'intégration de l'Afrique dans l'économie mondialisée.

Les critiques faites aux promoteurs du Nepad ou au projet lui-même sont cependant nombreuses. En juin 2001, lors du sommet du G8 à Gênes, en Italie, les cinq initiateurs du Nepad se sont déplacés pour présenter leur projet et discuter des modalités de financement prévues pour le sommet du G8 en juin 2002 à Kananaskis, au Canada. Cette démarche a été préalable à toute campagne d'information à destination des populations africaines par rapport à un projet les concernant au premier chef et supposé révolutionner leur avenir. Pour certains analystes, le terme même de « Partenariat » pour nommer le projet est problématique car tout partenariat suppose une certaine forme d'égalité, quand on sait à l'opposé que les rapports économiques actuels répondent à une logique de rapports inégalitaires dont les Africains souffrent le plus. À l'opposé, le président sénégalais Abdoulaye Wade estime que: « depuis le lancement de cette initiative, nous n'avons que trop parlé. Le moment est venu d'agir réellement », s'inscrivant ainsi dans une approche plus pragmatique qui prétend susciter l'action et l'initiative au lieu de reproduire l'éternelle complainte sur la domination des Africains, même si les rapports internationaux ne sont pas équitables. Un aspect préoccupant demeure l'absence de toute perspective critique face à la mondialisation et le fait de considérer intrinsèquement la technologie comme un « nouveau sésame pour le développement ». Concernant les télécommunications, se pose la question importante de l'accès ou du service universel[13]. Par ailleurs, malgré la virulence des débats, la libéralisation « est d'ailleurs largement engagée, en particulier dans les nouveaux services, qui attirent de nombreux investissements étrangers au détriment des investissements téléphoniques de base, pour couvrir les zones rurales par exemple, qui sont par contre délaissées » (Jouët 1994:209). Les déterminants à la fois nationaux et externes du processus de libéralisation des télécommunications en Afrique sont difficiles à démêler, même si le rythme, à peu près régulier suivi par de nombreux pays africains, semble militer en faveur d'une certaine extraversion décisionnelle du processus. Ce qui apparaît par contre clair, c'est que, comme le Nepad le fait clairement apparaître, la thématique du développement et celle des bienfaits inhérents à l'adoption des TIC servent de puissants adjuvants discursifs à la promotion de la réforme du secteur des télécommunications en Afrique.

Conclusion

Kenichi Ohmae (1985) a été l'un des théoriciens du concept de « global » dès le milieu des années 1980. Il a pour ce faire défini une triade comme espace privilégié de déploiement de l'économie globale alors en devenir. Comme on peut aisément l'imaginer, les trois pôles de la triade sont l'Europe de l'Ouest, l'Amérique du Nord et les « puissances émergentes asiatiques ». Cet oubli récurrent du Tiers Monde semble pouvoir être comblé selon certains théoriciens par le recours aux technologies numérisées, qui passe par la réduction rapide de cette fracture qualifiée de numérique. Mais en amont d'un impact supposé de la technique sur le social, se pose le problème de son implantation et donc celui des infrastructures de télécommunications. C'est dans ce cadre que réglementation et régulation se complètent pour permettre, en matière de télécommunications, que déréglementation et concurrence totale puissent progressivement prendre forme. Ce procès qui semble paradoxal *a priori*, ne l'est que dans la forme, dans la mesure où une réforme des législations nationales est nécessaire pour que les États se départent du pouvoir de contrôler des secteurs qui vont passer des monopoles publics aux multinationales. Ce processus est grandement favorisé par des organisations désormais transnationales[14] telles que l'OMC, l'UIT ou la Banque mondiale. L'analyse comparée du processus de réforme du secteur des télécommunications au Sénégal et en Afrique du Sud montre que les mesures et les différentes étapes présentent une grande similarité dans les deux pays, et ce malgré les nombreuses différences liées aux contextes historiques et politiques qui les distinguent. Bien que le processus de libéralisation des télécommunications dans les nations postcoloniales africaines trouve ses racines au début des années 1980, son insertion récente comme préalable à l'émergence de la *société de l'information* est de plus en plus revendiquée et relayée par les initiateurs du NEPAD et plus largement par les politiques africains. Une économie politique des télécommunications, détachée d'un discours dithyrambique, nous semble susceptible de re-interroger le procès de cette réglementation-régulation, en vue de replacer les priorités dans le cadre spécifique d'économies en développement, et de ce fait peu préparées à une l'ouverture globale que la globalisation semble en voie de réaliser.

Notes

1. Léopold Sédar Senghor, le premier président du pays fut l'un des pères fondateurs de la Francophonie. Abdou Diouf, son successeur est l'actuel secrétaire général de la Francophonie depuis son retrait de la vie politique en 2000.
2. Ces organisations de gouvernance sont transnationales dans la mesure où les décisions y sont prises par des acteurs aux statuts distincts. Ainsi, les corporations multinationales ont voix au chapitre lors des délibérations de l'UIT. *A contrario*, les organisations internationales sont celles dans lesquelles les États sont seuls détenteurs de la légitimité décisionnelle. Il est notable que l'UIT soit passé à travers un processus de réorganisation interne qui ait fait passer l'institution d'un régime international à un régime transnational. Cette réforme interne a eu lieu dans les années 1990, celles-là même qui ont consacré la privatisation des opérateurs historiques africains et la libéralisation du secteur.
3. Le Nepad a vu le jour en octobre 2001 à Abuja au Nigeria.
4. Cette structure a été héritée des colonisateurs qui ont érigé sur tout l'empire colonial les mêmes structures organisationnelles.
5. Il ne s'agit pas, à proprement parler, de privatisations dans la mesure où la propriété demeure étatique. C'est plutôt le mode de gestion qui est revu, il est plus orienté vers le modèle privé et la rentabilité financière. En ce sens, il s'agit davantage d'une « commercialisation » du modèle de gestion que d'une privatisation lors de cette vague de réformes des années 1980.
6. La France, par exemple, dont l'influence en Afrique francophone est manifeste avait besoin, avec les nouvelles règles du jeu prévalant dans le secteur des télécommunications, que son opérateur historique, France Télécom, puisse se redéployer dans de nouveaux marchés porteurs en termes d'investissements.
7. Anciennement SATRA (South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority), elle date du *Telecommunications Act* de 1996.
8 Anciennement ART (Agence de régulation des télécommunications), elle a été créée par le *Code des télécommunications* de décembre 2001.
9. Les redevances payées par les opérateurs aux régulateurs pour l'utilisation des ressources communes que sont les fréquences par exemple, relèvent du pouvoir de taxation de l'État que ce dernier délègue à un de ses démembrements que constitue l'organe de régulation. En ce sens, les ressources du régulateur peuvent donc être assimilées à des deniers publics.
10. Par la fusion entre la SATRA et l'IBA
11. Centre de recherche pour le développement international (CRDI) situé à Dakar.
12. Il s'agit de : la bonne gouvernance publique, la bonne gouvernance, de l'économie privée, les infrastructures, l'éducation, la santé, les NTICs, l'agriculture, l'environnement, l'énergie, l'accès aux marchés des pays développés. Voir Nepad. Document de présentation. (http://www.nepadsn.org/french_version/index_french.html). 23 mars 2007.

13. Cette distinction est essentielle et le recours à l'une ou l'autre notion renvoie à des conceptions de l'usage et du service public particulièrement contrastées. Qu'il suffise ici de rappeler que l'accès universel est une notion moins ambitieuse en termes d'objectifs que le service universel et qu'elle tend à remplacer cette dernière dans la terminologie des politiques publiques des pays africains.
14. Nous utilisons le terme « transnational » dans la mesure où ces organisations ont un membership diversifié dans lequel des acteurs privés ou parapublics siègent aux côtés des États pour définir le cadre global de gouvernance.

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Médias, pluralisme et organes de régulation en Afrique de l'Ouest

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Résumé

La crise du monopole de l'État sur les moyens de communication et son corollaire, notamment l'instauration des régimes de démocratie pluraliste imposent la création d'organes de régulation des médias dans plusieurs pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest. Dès lors, se pose la double question de la distribution de cet espace audiovisuel et celle de son encadrement. Autrement dit, comment gérer l'accès équitable des partis politiques et même des autres forces en présence au niveau des médias d'État et surtout organiser la libéralisation du nouvel espace audiovisuel en Afrique ?

Mots clés : Pluralisme, médias, organes, régulation, fréquences, démocratie.

Abstract

The crisis resulting from the State monopoly over communications infrastructure and its corollary, the advent of multiparty democracy, called for the creation of regulatory bodies in many West African countries. As a result, the distribution of the audiovisual landscape among the various protagonists and its management have become problematic. In other words, it is a question of how the regulatory bodies will be able to guarantee equitable access to State media for all political parties, including the other attendant forces and, more importantly, better manage the liberalisation of the new audiovisual space in Africa?

Key Terms: Pluralism, Media, Organ, Regulation, Frequencies, Democracy.

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Introduction

Avec l'instauration des régimes de démocratie pluraliste, les systèmes de monopole de l'État sur les moyens de communication entrent en crise. Le développement des autoroutes de l'information, notamment les progrès spectaculaires dans le domaine de la communication (explosion de certains vecteurs comme les câbles, les fibres optiques, les satellites et Internet) viennent, en plus, souligner le caractère archaïque du monopole étatique sur la presse et la communication audiovisuelle. Dès lors, s'impose la nécessité d'une mutation du paysage et, surtout de l'audiovisuel.

L'explosion de la presse écrite est suivie dans certains pays de la création spontanée de radios privées. Dans d'autres États, plusieurs opérateurs privés affichent leur intention de s'investir dans l'audiovisuel.

Dès lors, il se pose la question de la distribution de cet espace audiovisuel limité entre les nombreux candidats à la création de stations émettrices de radiodiffusion et de télévision. Comment encadrer juridiquement ce secteur afin de protéger les auditeurs et les téléspectateurs contre les groupes de pression politiques, économiques et religieux ? Comment assurer l'accès équitable des partis politiques, des organisations non gouvernementales et des citoyens aux médias d'État ? Bref, comment organiser et gérer la libéralisation de l'espace audiovisuel ?

Pour répondre à ces préoccupations devenues pressantes, plusieurs États africains ont créé des instances de régulation des médias. Il s'agit en fait d'organes non juridictionnels chargés de réglementer le secteur, d'assurer un équilibre entre les intérêts des différentes forces en présence, d'arbitrer au besoin entre ces intérêts et de réprimer éventuellement les infractions. Ces instances ont pour vocation de garantir la liberté de la communication audiovisuelle et de contribuer au pluralisme médiatique.

L'émergence des autorités régulatrices des médias est particulièrement remarquable en Afrique de l'Ouest où se trouve la plus forte concentration de ces institutions. Si le principe de création des organes de régulation des médias est communément admis en Afrique de l'Ouest, cela ne signifie nullement une unanimité quant à leur statut et la mission qui leur est assignée. Les modèles adoptés varient suivant les États. Dans certains pays comme le Nigeria, la Côte d'Ivoire et le Sénégal, les instances de régulation demeurent en bonne partie proches de l'exécutif, même si leur rôle n'est pas purement consultatif. Dans d'autres États, la liberté de communication audiovisuelle est incarnée par une instance de régulation officiellement autonome du Gouvernement. Le Bénin fait partie de cette catégorie de pays. Des pays comme le Libéria et la Guinée Bissau accusent encore du retard, puisque c'est un département du Ministère de l'Information qui gère la régulation à la place d'une véritable instance indépendante. Quant à la Gambie, son instance vient fraîchement d'être mise en place et devra asseoir son arsenal juridique et institutionnel. Au total, on peut dire qu'il y a une aspiration de l'ensemble des pays de la sous région vers la création d'organes de régulation

que justifiaient d'ailleurs un paysage médiatique très diversifié et un contexte international devenu subitement hostile au monolithisme de l'information et très sensible aux questions de pluralisme et de démocratie (Adjovi 2003). Dans ce travail, il ne s'agira pas de présenter la totalité des organes de tous les pays d'Afrique de l'ouest, il sera tout juste question de revisiter quelques échantillons d'organes et de procéder à l'analyse de leurs aspects fonctionnels et dysfonctionnels.

Méthodologie et problématique de la recherche

Elle consiste à revisiter les organes de chaque pays et à montrer les points saillants, c'est à dire les forces et les faiblesses des organes en question. Dans cette optique, la réflexion va s'articuler sur les avantages, les atouts mais aussi les limites de chaque organe étudié.

Cette approche repose donc sur un diagnostic documenté des organes et des pays étudiés. Par la suite, il sera question de procéder à une comparaison de certains pays de la sous région. À ce stade de l'analyse, on tentera d'une part de montrer les dysfonctionnements de certains organes et d'autre part, les modèles les plus achevés en matière de régulation au niveau de la sous région. Il ne s'agit pas d'apprécier un organe en fonction de la beauté de son architecture institutionnelle mais surtout et fondamentalement en fonction de son indépendance, son efficacité et ses capacités décisionnelles.

Nous n'oublierons pas les questions liées à la bipolarité, à la gestion des fréquences et à la convergence des médias et des institutions qui gèrent et supervisent les médias et leur fonctionnement. Enfin, ce travail d'analyses, de commentaires et de comparaisons doit déboucher sur des recommandations utiles et opérationnelles pour les chercheurs, les experts et les décideurs qui interfèrent dans ce secteur très dynamique des médias.

En définitive, la double mutation des paysages médiatiques africains (libéralisation du secteur des médias et émergence de nombreux organes de régulation) exige : l'exploitation des ressources documentaires disponibles sur la régulation des médias, la consultation systématique des différents sites électroniques et la recherche sur internet, la garantie de la diversité de l'information.

L'exploitation des ressources documentaires disponibles sur la régulation des médias en Afrique de l'Ouest : Il s'agit, pour n'en citer que certains, des mémoires soutenus sur les médias et sur les questions de régulation qu'on peut trouver à la médiathèque du Cesti, des publications de l'Institut PANOS Afrique de l'Ouest, des Recueils d'Actes, des Rapports d'activités de certains organes de régulation, des Répertoires et toutes sortes de documents utiles pour une présentation aussi complète et aussi actuelle que possible de ce travail.

La consultation systématique des différents sites électroniques et la recherche sur internet font partie des outils utilisés dans cette recherche.

L'objectif minimum à toutes ces instances, était de garantir la pluralité des médias et de conduire à un certain retrait du monopole de l'État sur le secteur.

La garantie de la diversité de l'information : Toutefois, ces organes de régulation ont revêtu des formes très diverses dans les différents États de la région. Les différences peuvent être sensibles, notamment quant à leur statut juridique (parfois régi par la Constitution), à leur indépendance et l'impartialité, par rapport au pouvoir politique ou gouvernemental, en particulier. Cette indépendance elle-même cherche ses propres garanties, à travers la composition et la qualité des membres de l'organe de régulation, le mode de désignation de ces membres, les instances auxquelles ces organes de régulation rendent compte, l'origine des ressources qui en permettent le fonctionnement.

Les domaines de compétences des organes de régulation sont délimités selon plusieurs variables tels que le type de média, le rôle dévolu à l'organe de régulation.

Le type de média qu'ils régulent : certains ne régulent que l'audiovisuel, d'autres l'audiovisuel et la presse écrite, les médias publics, privés etc. Du coup, le nombre de ces organes de régulation peut varier y compris au sein d'un même pays.

Leur rôle : certains organes de régulation ont un rôle de conseil et émettent des avis et des rapports sur la politique nationale et sur la situation des médias, d'autres, en revanche ont un rôle décisionnel.

Concernant leurs prérogatives, certains organes de régulation nomment des directeurs des médias d'État, d'autres gèrent l'aide à la presse.

Le niveau et le champ d'intervention aussi n'est pas le même pour tous. Certains attribuent les fréquences et veillent sur les contenus, d'autres se limitent à contrôler les contenus uniquement. D'autres enfin se sont dotés de compétences en matière de déontologie. Aujourd'hui, la question majeure qu'on se pose est de savoir, au regard de la pratique et des lois, quels sont les modèles les plus achevés ? Ceux qui répondent le mieux aux critères d'indépendance et d'efficacité ?

Le développement des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (Internet, explosion du mobile, expansion de la diffusion satellitaire, etc.) fait que l'on parle de plus en plus de convergence des médias (journaux en ligne, récepteurs mobiles de programmes radios ou TV) configure un nouveau champ et, par conséquent, de nouveaux moyens de régulation de l'information, aussi bien à l'échelle mondiale qu'à l'échelle des différents pays. Les pays africains malgré leur retard dans ce domaine de la convergence doivent forcément intégrer ces mutations en cours aussi bien au niveau des télécommunications que des médias.

Approche des organes nationaux

Sénégal

Le Sénégal présente quatre organes dont trois de régulation et un d'autorégulation. Parmi ces organes, il n'y a que le HCA devenu CNRA qui nous intéresse véritablement.

Le Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel (HCA) devenu récemment CNRA

Identité de l'Organe :

Siège : Boulevard Djily Mbaye, Immeuble Fahd, 15è étage
Adresse Postale : BP 4027, Dakar
Téléphone et fax : 33 823 47 84 et 33 823 47 85
Statut : Organisme autonome

Date de création : le 25 mai 1991 création du Haut Conseil de la Radio Télévision par décret, n° 91-537.
En 1992 le Haut Conseil jusque là régi par un acte réglementaire devient une institution régie par la loi. C'est ainsi que la loi n°92-57 du 3 septembre 1992 est votée. On est donc passé d'un décret à une loi. En 1998, le Haut Conseil de la Radio Télévision est remplacé par un Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel. La loi n°98-09 porte la création du Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel.

Nature juridique : Autorité administrative indépendante
Nombre de membres : 9 choisis pour une durée de 6 ans non renouvelable
Origine : Le président doit être un juriste (magistrat, enseignant)
Le secrétariat est assuré par le Directeur de la Communication
Genre : masculin et féminin

Mode de désignation : le Président du HCA est choisi par le Président de la République sur une liste de trois noms que lui propose le président du Conseil Constitutionnel. On peut noter la présence de deux journalistes, d'un représentant des associations féminines, d'une personne qualifiée dans le domaine de la culture, d'une personnalité venant des organisations des droits de l'homme ainsi que d'un juriste de l'Université de Dakar. On peut aussi noter la présence d'un parlementaire choisi par le président de l'Assemblée Nationale et d'une personnalité choisie par le Président de la république.

Durée du mandat : Les membres sont élus pour une durée de 6 ans non renouvelable (Ba 2001).

Compatibilité des fonctions des membres avec d'autres fonctions : le problème ne se pose pas puisque les membres ne sont pas permanents. Ils se rencontrent une ou deux fois par semaine, sauf pendant les périodes d'élection où ils doivent se réunir tous les jours. Chaque membre conserve ses fonctions antérieures. Le HCA demeure donc une activité résiduelle pour ces derniers.

Compétences (attributions)

Type de média : Radios, TV publiques et privées ; la presse n'est concernée que pendant les périodes d'élections.

Pouvoir de décision : Surveillance et Régulation des médias audiovisuels. Le HCA peut passer de l'avertissement à la suspension d'un média. Il peut aussi saisir les juridictions compétentes pour contraindre un organe de respecter la loi. Cependant, le HCA ne peut faire respecter la loi par lui même ou se substituer à la loi.

Niveau et champ d'intervention : Le HCA contrôle et surveille l'ensemble des radios et télévisions publiques et privées du Sénégal, y compris les médias étrangers.

Le HCA supervise la couverture des campagnes électorales par les médias audiovisuels et la presse écrite.

Publication d'un rapport annuel et d'un rapport trimestriel

Secrétaire permanent : Modou Ngom

Efficacités et Capacités administratives

Budget : 50 millions de F CFA

Ressources humaines à disposition : les 9 membres nommés plus le secrétariat. Le HCA ne donne pas d'agrément pour l'obtention de fréquences qui est du ressort du Ministère public.

Pour les médias étrangers (Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel 2000-2001) les bureaux régionaux qui représentent leurs stations mères sont contactés par le HCA pour le respect du traitement équitable de l'information surtout pendant les élections. Il est vrai que les médias étrangers présentent la particularité de ne pas être directement concernés par les dispositions du code électoral sénégalais, notamment l'article L.58 relatif à la campagne déguisée. Cependant, ces médias relèvent de la compétence du Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel en vertu des articles 5 et 7 de la loi du 2 mars 1998. Il s'agissait de rappeler à ces médias les prérogatives du Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel, mais aussi de s'informer sur leur participation à la couverture de la campagne électorale.

Au Sénégal, l'Agence Internationale des Télécommunications s'occupe de l'octroi des fréquences et des questions techniques en général tandis que le HCA supervise les contenus. Les deux instances peuvent coordonner leurs actions mais demeurent à ce jour distinctes.

Téléphone 33 820 47 60 77 661 03 92

Modou Ngom : Secrétaire permanent.

Analyses et commentaires

Le Sénégal présente un paysage diversifié en matière de régulation. On y note trois organes de régulation et un d'autorégulation. Parmi les quatre organes cités (Direction de la Communication, CRED, CCNP, HCA devenu CNRA), il n'y a véritablement que le CNRA qui nous intéresse du point de vue des objectifs à atteindre. La Direction de la communication dépend du Ministère public donc de l'État, le CRED mis sur pied par les journalistes n'a pas de pouvoir de décision. Il n'est pas toujours écouté même par certains journalistes qui veulent lui trouver un déficit de légitimité. Le CRED se borne donc à donner des avis qui peuvent être contestés par certains journalistes aux velléités trop indépendantistes. Cet organisme indépendant est chargé d'examiner les plaintes de toute personne morale ou physique contre un journaliste sur des questions de manquements à l'éthique et à la déontologie par les professionnels.

Il n'y a que le HCA qui joue le rôle de véritable organe indépendant. Cette structure a aussi des limites :

- d'abord tous ses membres sont nommés par le Président de la République,
- le HCA ne donne pas d'agréments pour l'obtention de fréquences,
- le HCA ne gère pas l'aide à la presse et son budget est trop modeste. De même le HCA n'est pas habilité à nommer ou à faire appel à candidature pour la nomination des directeurs généraux des entreprises de presse audiovisuelles.

La Direction de la Communication rattachée au Ministère de la Communication est chargée de la mise en œuvre da la politique nationale de communication et de la gestion de l'aide à la presse, et d'autre part de la Commission de la Carte nationale de Presse (CCNP) qui dépend aussi du Ministère de la Communication.

Bénin

Première institution : l'ODEM

Identité de l'Organe
Nom : Observatoire de la Déontologie et de l'Ethique dans les Médias (ODEM)
Siège : Rue du stade de l'Amitié
Adresse postale 05 BP 708 Cotonou
Téléphone et fax 325273 et 941058
Email et site web odem@h2com.com; edloko@yahoo.fr
www.h2com.com/odem
Statut : Association à but non lucratif composée aussi bien de professionnels du secteur privé que public
Observatoire d'autorégulation du secteur des médias créé le 6 octobre 1998 et installé officiellement le 3 mai 1999
Affiliation Réseau des Instances africaines d'autorégulation des médias (RIAAM).
Missions : Autorité morale dans le secteur des médias, juger les journalistes dans leur travail.
Faire respecter les règles déontologiques et d'éthique dans les médias.
Protéger le droit du public à accéder à une information libre, complète, honnête et exacte.
Défendre la liberté de la presse.
Encourager les journalistes et organes de presse à faire preuve de professionnalisme.
Veiller à la sécurité des journalistes dans l'exercice de leur fonction en garantissant leur droit d'enquêter librement sur tous les faits.

Mener des recherches et des réflexions sur l'évolution des médias.
Activités : dépouillement des journaux.
Saisine individuelle ou collective par une personne physique ou morale se sentant lésée dans son droit d'information, son droit à l'image, victime d'une atteinte à sa vie privée, d'injures ou de diffamation.
Traitement de plaintes à propos d'un article ou autres et prise de décision.
Auto-saisine pour encourager ou dénoncer tout acte commis par un journaliste
Réunion une fois par mois
Décerne des prix chaque année :
Prix de la Déontologie dans la presse écrite, Radio, TV et un prix de déontologie image
Formation
Adoption d'un code de déontologie de la presse béninoise le 24 septembre 1999 : déclaration des devoirs et des droits.
Siège à la Commission d'attribution de la subvention d'État à la presse privée
Publication de communiqués périodiques sur l'ODEM
Publication sur l'état de la presse au Bénin.
Rencontres avec les organes et associations de presse
Représentants Édouard Loko, Président, 941058
Sylvestre Fohoungo 325519

Deuxième institution : HAAC

Identité de l'Organe
Nom : Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication (HAAC).
Siège : Avenue de la Marina, face à l'hôtel du port.
Adresse postale : 01 BP 3567 Cotonou.
Téléphone et fax : 311743, 311744, 311742.
Email et site Web haac4@hotmail.com
Statut : Instance de régulation et de moralisation des médias.
Institution indépendante de tout pouvoir politique, tout parti politique, toute association ou groupe de pression de quelque nature que ce soit. Elle est créée le 21 août 1992.
Affiliation : Réseau des Instances Africaines de Régulation des Médias (RIAM).
Indépendance : Instance indépendante de tout pouvoir et de tout parti politique même si le Président de l'instance est nommé par le Président de la République.

Missions et compétences

Garantir l'équité de la campagne pour les élections législatives

Garantir et assurer la liberté de la presse et sa protection, ainsi que de tous les moyens de communication de masse dans le respect de la loi.
Veiller au respect de la déontologie en matière d'information et à l'accès équitable des partis politiques et des associations.

Déterminer et contrôler tous les accès aux médias publics aussi bien en période électorale qu'en temps ordinaire.
Assurer, le cas échéant les arbitrages nécessaires.
Larges compétences aussi bien dans le secteur de l'audiovisuel que de la presse écrite.
Contribution à la gestion des affaires politiques.
Propositions au chef de l'État en conseil des ministres à travers un appel à candidatures pour la nomination des cadres responsables des organes de presse du service public.
Élaboration du mode d'accès des partis politiques, des associations et des citoyens aux médias du service public.
Gestion des campagnes médiatiques pour les élection législatives, présidentielles et municipales.
Gestion des fréquences de radiocommunication et délivrance des licences d'exploitation des radiodiffusions sonores et des télévisions privées.
Gestion des programmes de formation et de recyclage des journalistes.
Actions de promotion : séminaires, conférences, colloques et autres ateliers sur la déontologie.
Délivrance des cartes de presse et du dépôt légal.
Gestion des crédits relatifs à l'aide de l'État à la presse privée.
Retrait provisoire des autorisations d'émettre.
Disposition de moyens coercitifs pour faire respecter ses décisions (pouvoir d'investigation, d'injonction et de sanction).
Président : Timothée Adanlin 311739, 311739, 932022

Analyses et commentaires

Au Bénin, la régulation et la moralisation des médias sont assurées par la Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication. Créée en août 1992 et membre du Réseau des Instances Africaines de Régulation des Médias (RIARM), la HAAC gère les campagnes médiatiques pour les élections. Elle est aussi habilitée à lancer les appels d'offre de candidature à proposer au Chef de l'État pour la nomination des directeurs nationaux au niveau de la presse béninoise, c'est le cas de l'Agence Bénin Presse (ABP) et de l'Office de Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Bénin (Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication 2000). Cette structure attribue les fréquences de radiocommunication et délivre des licences d'exploitation des radiodiffusions sonores et des télévisions privées. Elle gère aussi les crédits relatifs à l'aide de l'État à la presse privée et elle est habilitée à retirer provisoirement les autorisations d'émettre (Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication 1997).

L'instance d'autorégulation est l'Observatoire de la Déontologie et de l'Éthique dans les Médias (ODEM), une association sans but lucratif composée de professionnels du secteur privé et public. Il a été créé en octobre 1998 et officiellement installé en mai 1999. L'ODEM est membre du Réseau des Instances Africaines d'Autorégulation des médias (RIAAM). Il est à la base de l'adoption

d'un Code de Déontologie de la presse béninoise en 1999 et siège à la Commission d'attribution de la subvention d'État à la presse.

Burkina Faso

Première institution : CSI devenu CSC à partir des années 2000

Identité de l'Organe :
Nom : Conseil Supérieur de l'Information (CSI)
Date de création : 1er août 1995
Adresse postale : 01 BP 6618 Ouagadougou 01
Siège: 290 avenue Ho Chi Minh
Téléphone et fax : 301124 et 301133
Email : csi@fasonet.bf
Site Web : www.primature.gov.bf/republic/acc-csi.htm
Statut : Organe de régulation de la communication et de l'information
Missions et attributions: Rôle de gendarme des médias
Garantir l'exercice de la liberté de l'information dans les conditions définies par les lois et les règlements en vigueur
Gérer l'espace hertzien du Burkina Faso
Veiller au pluralisme et à l'équilibre de l'information
Contrôler les programmes des médias
Éviter tout dérapage sur les ondes
Responsable : Luc Adolphe Tiao, Président

Deuxième institution : ONAP

Identité : Observatoire National de la Presse (ONAP)
Date de création : mars 2000.
Adresse postale : BP 4577 Ouagadougou.
Siège: o1S/ des Éditions Le Pays.
Téléphone et fax : 31 35 46, 30 07 85, 314550
Email : ed.lepays@cenatrin.bf
Site Web : www.lepays.bf
Statut : Instance d'autorégulation des médias
Missions et attributions : Respect scrupuleux de l'éthique et de la déontologie, gage de la liberté de la presse
Conférences sur l'éthique et la déontologie
Élaboration des saisines et auto-saisines
Élaboration de communiqués pédagogiques de rappel à l'ordre
Perspectives :
Élargissement des bases consensuelles de l'ONAP
Représentants : Boureima Jérémi Sigué, Président, 313546
Adama Hector, Secrétaire Général, 365012.

Analyses et commentaires

Au Burkina Faso, il existe une seule instance de régulation et une d'autorégulation. Il s'agit du Conseil Supérieur de l'Information (CSI). Créé en 1995 et placé sous l'autorité de l'État, il est chargé de garantir l'exercice de l'information dans les conditions définies par les lois et les règlements en vigueur.

L'instance d'autorégulation est l'Observatoire National de la Presse (ONAP). Sa mission est de veiller au respect de l'éthique et de la déontologie. Elle a la capacité de prononcer des saisines et de s'auto saisir.

Côte d'Ivoire

Première institution : CNCA

Identité de l'Organe :
Nom : Conseil National de la Communication Audiovisuelle (CNCA)
Siège : Plateau immeuble de la douane
Adresse postale : Non
Téléphone et fax : 20311580
E. mail : Non
Site Web : Non
Statut : Institué par la loi de décembre 1991 fixant le régime de la communication audiovisuelle
Le décret du 15 juillet 1992 définit son fonctionnement et son organisation
Missions et compétences :
Veiller à l'égalité de traitement des différents courants d'opinion et à leur expression dans les médias audiovisuels, surtout pendant les périodes électorales
Activités :
Détermine les quotas annuels de temps de publicité pour les concessionnaires du service public
Veille au respect des cahiers des charges
Étudie les dossiers de candidature dans le cadre d'un appel d'offre (poursuite de l'ouverture du secteur audiovisuel)
Représentants : D. Bailly, Président depuis juillet 2001
Franck Kouassi, Secrétaire Général.

Deuxième institution : OLPED

Identité de l'Organe : Observatoire de la Liberté de Presse et de l'Éthique et de la Déontologie (OLPED)
Siège : Maison de la presse d'Abidjan.
Adresse Postale : 01 BP 1807 Abidjan 01
Téléphone et fax : 2016107 et 203 706 66
Adresse Email et site Web : Non

Statut : association reconnue d'utilité publique créée en septembre 1995 et qui, à l'origine, était une agence de l'UNJCI
Ordonnance du 2 août 2000 : renforce l'instance d'autorégulation qui devient une entité indépendante
Missions :
Aider les médias dans leur gestion des élections pour éviter les dérapages
Faire respecter le code de la déontologie des journalistes
Veiller au respect de l'éthique
Veiller à la sécurité des journalistes
Veiller à la liberté de la presse
Garantir le droit du public à une information libre et honnête
Veiller à la professionnalisation par la formation
Favoriser une prise de conscience collective des journalistes
Rôle préventif en intervenant parfois en amont de la publication d'un article
Séances de travail bimensuel
Définitions de critères d'observation du respect de la responsabilité
Cadre de concertation et d'autorégulation pour faire la distinction entre journalisme et propagande

Capacité de prononcer des sanctions (avertissement et blâme) et de saisir la commission d'attribution de la carte de presse pour demander la suspension ou le retrait de la carte du journaliste, multipliant les manquements répétés et graves à la déontologie.
Possibilités de convoquer un plaignant ou un journaliste mis en cause mais ne pratique pas la confrontation directe.

Représentant : Alfred Dan Moussa, Président.

Analyses et commentaires

Comme on peut le constater, en Côte d'Ivoire, trois instances de régulation et une d'auto-régulation sont mises en place. Il s'agit du Conseil National de la Communication Audiovisuelle (CNCA), de la Commission Nationale d'Attribution de la Carte de Presse des Journalistes (CNACPJP), tous deux institués par la loi de décembre 1991 fixant le régime de l'audiovisuel et de la presse, et de la Commission Nationale de la Presse Ecrite (CNP), créée par la loi de la presse de juin 1999.

Ces organes ont respectivement pour objectifs, le respect des obligations prévues par la loi de la presse, le respect de l'égalité et du pluralisme dans les médias, l'attribution et le retrait de la carte professionnelle de journaliste.

L'organe d'autorégulation est l'Observatoire de la Liberté de la Presse et de l'Éthique et de la Déontologie (OLPED) qui intervient principalement dans l'assistance aux journalistes qui sont impliqués dans la couverture des élections. Elle a la capacité de prononcer des sanctions.

Mali

Première institution : CSC

Identité de l'Organe : Conseil supérieur de la communication (CSC)
Siège : BPE 1856 Bamako
Téléphone et fax : 223 21 12 et 222 83 19
Adresse Email : néant
Et site web : néant
Statut : Instance de Régulation du secteur des Médias et de la Communication fondée en décembre 1994
Affiliation :
Missions et Activités : Rapport sur l'état de la presse au Mali
Représentants : Mamadou Kaba.

Deuxième institution : ODEP

Identité de l'organe :
Observatoire de la Déontologie, de l'Ethique de la presse (ODEP)
Siège : S/C Info Matin, Porte 56 rue 350, Hypodrome,
BP 4020 Bamako
Téléphone et fax 223 82 09, 222 27 99, 223 82 27
Email : stoure@info-matin.com
Email : mthiemoko@hotmail.com

Analyses et commentaires

Le Mali présente un paysage de régulation composé de trois organes. Deux instances de régulation que sont le Conseil Supérieur de la Communication (CSC) fondé en 1994, avec comme mission principale la rédaction de rapports annuels sur l'État de la presse au Mali et du Comité National de l'Egal Accès aux Médias d'État uniquement (CNEAME). Cet organe est chargé de réguler l'audiovisuel au Mali mais aussi de garantir l'accès des citoyens aux médias d'État, notamment en période d'élections. Il y a enfin l'Observatoire de la Déontologie, de l'Ethique de la Presse (ODEP) qui est la seule instance d'autorégulation. Elle est chargée de veiller au respect de l'éthique et de la déontologie au Mali.

Ghana

Institution : CNM

Identité de l'Organe : Commission nationale des médias (CNM)
Siège : Gamal Abdul Nasser Avenue BP T114 Stadium
Téléphone et fax 662 409, 666 325, 666 325
Email : ethel@ncs.com.gh
Statut : Organe représentatif de régulation des médias créé en 1992 par la Constitution
Affiliation : Non

Missions et attributions:
Promotion de la liberté de la presse
Assurer un journalisme de qualité
Protection des médias d'État contre le contrôle de l'État
Assurer l'indépendance de la presse
Assurer l'égalité et la justice en matière d'accès aux médias
Compétences et pouvoir de décision:
Prendre des mesures appropriés pour assurer l'application et le maintien des meilleures normes journalistiques dans la presse, la médiation et la résolution de plaintes portées contre ou par la presse ou autres médias
Établir par voie constitutionnelle les règlements en matière d'enregistrement des journaux et autres publications
Existence d'un comité de plaintes chargé de recevoir et de se prononcer sur des plaintes portées par le public
Représentant : Non précisé.

Analyses et commentaires

Dans les pays anglophones, l'instance de régulation est souvent représentée par une commission ou un conseil pour les médias. Au Ghana, il s'agit de la Commission Nationale des Médias (CNM), du Conseil National pour le contrôle des fréquences et de la National Communication Authority. Cependant, seule la première de ces trois organes semble fonctionner. La CNM est l'organe représentatif de régulation des médias créé en 1992 par la Constitution. Ses missions sont de promouvoir la liberté de la presse, d'assurer l'égalité et la justice en matière d'accès aux médias.

Togo

Première institution : HAAC

Identité de l'Organe : Haute autorité de l'audiovisuel et de la communication (HAAC).
Siège : Lomé.
Adresse postale : BP 4869
Téléphone et fax : 2501678 et 2501679
Adresse Email et site web : Non.
Statut : Créée en juin 1996 et mise en place effective en novembre 1997.
Affiliation : Non.
Missions et Activités : Chargée de garantir et d'assurer la liberté de la presse, le respect de la déontologie et l'égal accès des partis politiques aux médias. Dans les faits, son action depuis sa création a été ambiguë.
Timides mises en garde à l'encontre de la presse privée.
Représentants : Combevi Georges Agbodjan, Président.

Deuxième institution : OTM

Nom : Observatoire Togolais des Medias (OTM).
Siège : Lomé
Adresse postale : BP 60087
Téléphone et fax : 9460036 et 2261300
Email : famuzun@hotmail.com
Statut : Créé en novembre 1999, il est une instance d'autorégulation regroupant les cinq principales associations professionnelles des médias: UJIT, Maison du journalisme, ATEPP,SAINTJOP et SYNLICO
Affiliation : Affilié au RIAM
Missions et Activités : Défendre la liberté de la presse.
Protéger le droit du public à une information libre, complète, honnête et exacte.
Faire respecter le code de déontologie des journalistes.
Dépouillement des journaux.
Suivi des médias audiovisuels.
Publication de communiqués, périodiques sur l'observatoire de l'éthique et de la déontologie dans les médias.
Représentants : Francis Pedro Amuzun, Président.

Analyses et commentaires

Au Togo, l'instance de régulation est représentée par la Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication (HAAC), mise en place en 1997, dont la mission est d'assurer le pluralisme de l'information et de veiller à la liberté de la presse.

L'Observatoire togolais des médias est l'instance d'autorégulation créée en 1999. Il vise la protection du droit du public à une information libre et le respect de la déontologie.

Niger

Institution : Conseil supérieur de la communication (CSC)

Siège : Plateau I, Niamey.
Téléphone et fax : 722356 et 722667.
Email et site web : Non
Statut : Organe de régulation étatique de communication indépendante du pouvoir politique
Autorité administrative
Affiliation : Ministère de la Communication
Missions et Attributions :
Garantir la liberté de l'information et de la communication conformément à la loi.
Garantir l'indépendance des médias publics et privés en matière d'information.
Garantir et assurer la liberté et la protection de la presse ainsi que de tous les moyens de communications de masse dans le respect de la loi.

Assurer la promotion de l'information documentaire.
Garantir l'accès équitable des partis politiques, des syndicats, des associations et des citoyens aux médias.
Garantir l'utilisation rationnelle et équitable des organismes publics de la presse et de la communication par les institutions de la République, chacune en fonction de ses missions constitutionnelles, et assurer le cas échéant, les arbitrages nécessaires.
Veiller au respect de l'éthique et de la déontologie conformément à la charte des journalistes professionnels du Niger.
Veiller au respect des Conventions Internationales sur la communication, ratifiées par le Niger.
Veiller au respect de l'expression pluraliste des courants de pensée et d'opinion dans la presse et la communication audiovisuelle, notamment pour les émissions d'information politique.
Veiller, au niveau des médias, au respect des normes réglementaires en matière de propagande politique, de publicité et en contrôler l'objet.
Fixer les règles concernant les conditions de production, de programme et de diffusion des émissions officielles des organes de communication lors des campagnes électorales.
Superviser la création et la mise en place du Conseil de Presse.
Saisir les autorités administratives et/ ou judiciaires des pratiques restrictives de la concurrence.
Contribuer à la promotion des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication.
Contribuer à la protection des identités culturelles, notamment la promotion des langues nationales dans les médias.
Veiller, dans les programmes des médias nationaux au respect de la morale et des bonnes mœurs.
Contribuer à la promotion de la culture et à la création littéraire et artistique nationale.
Réglementer la publicité par voie de presse.
Formuler des propositions, donner des avis et faire des recommandations à l'attention du pouvoir exécutif et du pouvoir législatif.
Donner son avis motivé et préalable à la nomination des directeurs généraux des médias publics.
Gérer les fonds d'aide à la presse.
Délivrer les droits de retransmission des signaux de radio et de télévision.
Délivrer les autorisations d'exploitation d'un service de radiodiffusion ou autres services de communication privés (signature d'une convention).
Attribuer les fréquences au requérant.
Délivrer et retirer la carte de presse du journaliste professionnel.
Recevoir et statuer sur les plaintes qui lui sont soumises.
Prendre des sanctions appropriées aux manquements à la déontologie par les journalistes (peut se saisir ou être saisi).

Fixer le montant des redevances pour l'exploitation d'un service de radiodiffusion ou de télévision nationale.
Rendre compte annuellement de ses activités dans un compte rendu public.

L'approche sous-régionale

La régulation et la moralisation de l'espace médiatique, de même que la garantie de la liberté de l'information ont été ressenties par les pouvoirs publics et par les journalistes eux mêmes, comme des exigences devant les dérives de certains membres de la profession ou les violations de la liberté de l'information et du pluralisme politique commis par les régimes au pouvoir.

Des dispositifs de régulation et d'autorégulation chargés de veiller à l'observation de règles d'éthique et de déontologie, de protéger la liberté de la presse, tout en conservant leur indépendance par rapport aux pouvoirs publics, ont donc vu le jour.

Le nombre et les fonctions des instances de régulation et d'autorégulation dépendent étroitement du développement des médias. Certains pays disposent de deux instances : une de régulation et l'autre d'autorégulation; d'autres en comptabilisent plusieurs.

Dans le domaine de l'audiovisuel, la principale instance de régulation est la Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication (HAAC). Au Bénin, en Guinée, au Niger et au Togo, la HAAC est une institution reconnue par la constitution, alors qu'au Sénégal, en Côte d'Ivoire et au Burkina Faso, elle est établie par une loi. La principale mission de la HAAC est de garantir l'accès aux médias à tous les groupes politiques ou courants d'opinion, le respect du pluralisme et l'équilibre de l'information notamment en période électorale, mais aussi en temps ordinaire et de veiller enfin au respect de la déontologie. Dans certains pays, la HAAC est aussi habilitée à octroyer des fréquences (comme c'est le cas au Bénin, au Niger) aux radios et télévisions privées, à élaborer les règles régissant le paysage audiovisuel et les codes d'éthique et de déontologie et à contrôler le respect de ces textes par les professionnels. Dans d'autres pays, leurs attributions incluent aussi l'élaboration de la réglementation en matière de publicité, la gestion de l'aide de l'État à la presse privée et la nomination des responsables des médias publics. Dans cette étude, nous avons volontairement privilégié les organes de régulation indépendants puisqu'ils sont les seuls à pouvoir prétendre, du moins sur le papier, à une indépendance vis à vis du pouvoir politique et en principe de tout autre pouvoir l'empêchant de faire correctement son travail (Répertoire des médias en Afrique de l'Ouest 2004:23).

Lorsqu'un organe de régulation des médias est créé par décret, ce statut réglementaire rend fragile, sinon impossible l'indépendance des membres de l'institution. La peur de voir leur statut modifié, à tout moment, ou d'être révoqués de leurs fonctions par un simple décret peut amener ces derniers à éviter d'afficher une grande indépendance. L'exécutif a en effet la possibilité de modifier le texte à n'importe quel moment. L'importance de la question du statut juridique de l'instance

de régulation s'est illustrée à travers la polémique dont a fait longtemps l'objet le Conseil Supérieur de l'Information du Burkina Faso, créé en 1995 par décret présidentiel. Ce statut réglementaire était considéré comme une entrave à son indépendance par rapport au pouvoir exécutif. Certains considéraient même le CSI comme une structure illégale, créé pour servir les desseins du pouvoir politique. D'autres soutenaient avec le gouvernement que le Conseil Supérieur de l'Information avait une base légale, étant donné que sa création était prévue par l'article 143 du Code de l'information du Burkina Faso. Finalement, suite aux soulèvements populaires provoqués par l'assassinat du journaliste Norbert Zongo, le gouvernement a consenti à certaines réformes institutionnelles. Au titre de celles-ci figure le vote de la loi organique du 28 juin 2000, portant réforme du statut du Conseil Supérieur de l'Information par l'adoption d'une loi organique.

Il apparaît donc que le statut législatif est préférable à celui conféré par un décret. C'est d'ailleurs pourquoi certains acteurs politiques se félicitent que le Conseil National de la Communication sociale de la Guinée Bissau, le Conseil de la Communication audiovisuelle de Côte d'Ivoire et le Haut Conseil de l'audiovisuel du Sénégal soient institués et régis par une loi.

Mais là encore, la majorité parlementaire a le loisir de modifier la loi instituant l'instance. Elle peut même abroger le texte si elle estime que l'instance est hostile à ses intérêts politiques. Cette perspective peut aussi émousser la volonté d'indépendance de certains conseillers de l'instance de régulation. Mais lorsque l'organe est prévu par la constitution, la marge de manœuvre des pouvoirs politiques est réduite. Pour modifier la constitution, il faut généralement suivre une procédure contraignante qui exige des votes à des majorités qualifiées.

Au Bénin, les membres de la HAAC sont désignés pour un mandat de cinq ans. La durée relativement longue de ce mandat est un facteur de stabilité générateur de sérénité et par conséquent d'indépendance pour les titulaires. Ella est renforcée par le fait que le mandat n'est pas renouvelable. Cette disposition tranche avec la législation de plusieurs pays de l'Afrique de l'Ouest comme le Ghana, le Niger, le Burkina FASO et le Mali. Dans ces pays, les membres des instances de régulation de la communication audiovisuelle sont détenteurs d'un mandat de deux ou trois ans renouvelables une fois. La possibilité de renouvellement du mandat peut fragiliser l'indépendance des conseillers des dits organes, surtout lorsque la fréquence du renouvellement est rapprochée. Alors que dans le système béninois, qui est très proche de celui de la France, les membres de la HAAC, n'ont pas en principe à craindre de déplaire à ceux qui les ont nommés, ni à chercher à leur plaire, espérant ainsi pouvoir être reconduits dans leurs fonctions. Le caractère non renouvelable du mandat constitue une sérieuse garantie d'indépendance.

Au Bénin, l'irrévocabilité du mandat est une garantie essentielle pour l'indépendance des membres des organes de régulation. Cette règle signifie que les membres ne peuvent pas être relevés de leurs fonctions. Ce principe est naturellement plus protecteur que celui du Burkina Faso où les membres du (CSI) peuvent être révoqués en cas de « faute pénale, de faute administrative lourde ou d'insuffisance professionnelle grave ».

Au Nigeria, la révocabilité du mandat concerne tous les membres de la National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). En effet, selon le décret n°38 du 4 septembre 1992, le Ministre de la Communication peut démettre tout membre de la NBC « s'il est convaincu qu'il n'est pas dans l'intérêt de la commission ou de celui du public que ce membre demeure dans ses fonctions ». En consacrant ainsi la révocabilité du mandat de façon aussi large, le système nigérian fragilise naturellement la position des membres de l'instance de régulation. Une telle situation est de nature à décourager toute velléité d'indépendance.

Au Sénégal la question de l'incompatibilité ne se pose pas parce que tout simplement les membres ne sont pas permanents. Chacun conserve sa fonction antérieure et les activités du Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel ne sont que ponctuelles sauf en période électorale pendant laquelle leur présence devient indispensable tous les jours.

Au Bénin l'incompatibilité est assortie d'une obligation d'option : toute personne nommée à la HAAC est tenue de choisir entre le mandat et la fonction de membre de la HAAC. On est donc membre de la HAAC à plein temps, sans possibilité de cumul de ce statut avec toute autre fonction ou mandat.

Au Burkina, les 12 membres du CSI sont désignés, à raison de 4 par le Président du Faso, deux par le Président de l'Assemblée Nationale, deux par le Président de la Chambre des représentants et quatre par les associations professionnelles.

Au Sénégal, en Guinée, au Togo et au Niger le système est similaire.

Certaines instances de régulation comme celle du Mali n'ont même pas l'autonomie de gestion. Le budget du CSC malien est logé provisoirement à la Direction administrative et financière du ministère de la Communication. L'instance se plaint souvent de la lourdeur administrative pour le décaissement des crédits alloués. Une instance comme le Conseil Supérieur de l'Information (CSI) du Burkina Faso qui jouit, aux termes de la loi de 2000, d'une autonomie de gestion (art.32) souffre également des lenteurs dans les procédures de décaissement des crédits alloués (Rapport public 2001). Lorsque l'État burkinabè a connu des difficultés de trésorerie en 2001, il a simplement gelé plus de 30 millions de francs Cfa des fonds votés par l'Assemblée nationale au profit du CSI. Ces différentes difficultés ou contraintes financières constituent autant d'entraves à l'indépendance des instances de régulation de la communication.

Au Niger, l'Observatoire National de la Communication n'est appuyé que par un personnel administratif et technique de 19 agents (tous niveaux confondus). Au Sénégal, il est même difficile de parler de personnel du Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel. « Pour surveiller plus de vingt stations radio, relève le journaliste Mame Less Camara, le HCA ne peut mobiliser que ses propres membres qui sont occupés par leur travail en dehors de l'institution. L'argent nécessaire à recruter des personnes chargées d'écouter les médias sous tutelle et à enregistrer éventuellement certaines émissions fait défaut. Et le journaliste de conclure que le HCA est structurellement programmé pour mourir. Au Bénin, la Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la communication est dotée de vastes compétences. Ses attributions sont si étendues qu'elle couvre aussi bien le secteur de la presse écrite

que celui de l'audiovisuel. Le Bénin partage cette spécificité avec les organes de régulation du Niger, du Burkina, de la Guinée, du Togo et du Ghana. Les instances du Sénégal, Mali et du Nigeria ne sont pas compétentes en matière de presse écrite.

En Côte d'Ivoire, il existe un organe de régulation de la presse (Commission nationale de la Presse), distinct du Conseil National de la Communication audiovisuelle.

La gestion des fréquences et les défis de la convergence

La gestion des fréquences

Sur le plan international, la coordination et la planification des fréquences sont assurées par l'Union International des Télécommunications (UIT), une institution spécialisée des Nations Unies. À l'intérieur de chaque État, ce sont les services de télécommunications qui assurent traditionnellement le recensement, la planification, l'assignation des fréquences et le contrôle de leur utilisation. Et ceci dans le respect des règles fixées par l'UIT. Mais, dans nombre de pays, les services publics de télécommunication ont perdu le monopole de la gestion des fréquences à la faveur de la libéralisation de l'espace audiovisuel. C'est le cas du Bénin où la gestion de ce secteur ne relève plus de la seule compétence de l'Office des postes et télécommunications (OPT), depuis l'adoption de la Constitution du 11 décembre 1990 et surtout de la loi organique n° 92-021, relative à la HAAC. Aux termes de cette loi organique, la Haute autorité (HAAC) participe à l'attribution des fréquences et assure le contrôle de leur utilisation.

Dans un pays comme le Bénin, c'est l'instance de régulation des médias qui attribue les fréquences et donne, par conséquent, l'autorisation d'émettre ou d'exploiter des stations radios ou de télévisions privées. Ce n'est pas le cas dans tous les pays ouest-africains. Par exemple, en Côte d'Ivoire, au Mali, au Sénégal et en Guinée, c'est le gouvernement qui accorde les autorisations d'usage de fréquences. Les instances de régulation de ces pays ont un rôle purement consultatif. Au Sénégal, les membres ne sont même pas permanents. Ils n'ont pas n'ont plus de pouvoir de nomination ou de propositions à faire à l'exécutif. Au Ghana, la situation est encore différente. La National Media Commission instituée par la Constitution n'est pas associée à l'attribution des fréquences par le gouvernement. Ce dernier avait mis en place un comité national chargé d'élaborer des règlements et des directives pour les radios et la télévisions privées.

Dans certains pays, on distingue l'autorisation de créer, d'installer et d'exploiter une station de presse audiovisuelle (qui est accordée par une autorité) et l'octroi d'une fréquence (qui est de la compétence d'une autre autorité). C'est le cas du Sénégal où le Gouvernement donne l'agrément pour l'obtention d'une fréquence et que le service national des télécommunications donne les fréquences. Au Burkina Faso, c'est le Ministre chargé de l'Information qui octroyait les fréquences et le Conseil Supérieur de l'Information autorisait leur exploitation. Avec la promulgation de la loi no. 51/98/AN du 4 décembre 1998, c'est l'Autorité de Régulation des

Télécommunications (ARTEL) qui assigne les fréquences radioélectriques aux radios et télévisions. Cette disposition est source de difficulté pour le Conseil Supérieur de l'Information qui a pour compétence « de délivrer les autorisations d'exploitation des stations ou des sociétés de radiodiffusion sonore ou télévisuelle ».

Dans la pratique, l'ARTEL demande au CSI de lui transmettre les dossiers des opérateurs qui sollicitent les licences d'exploitation des fréquences afin qu'elle apprécie sur pièce si elle doit ou non accorder les fréquences. Cette procédure revient tout simplement à retirer au CSI ses attributions en matière d'autorisation pour l'exploitation des fréquences. Mieux, elle fait du CSI un simple organe de transmission de dossiers en matière d'attribution de fréquences.

La lourdeur de cette procédure a empêché l'attribution en l'an 2000 des fréquences et la création de nouvelles stations de radio et de télévision alors que le CSI avait déjà étudié et jugé conformes les dossiers des promoteurs.

L'expérience burkinabé montre que le saucissonnage du pouvoir d'attribution des licences est source de conflits de compétences. C'est certainement pourquoi le Bénin a opté pour un système où l'instance de régulation concentre entre ses mains la compétence d'octroyer la fréquence et d'autoriser son exploitation.

Au Ghana, le contrôle des fréquences est assuré par le Ghanaian Frequency Registration Control Board au détriment de la National Media Commission (Tudesq 2002:23). Contrairement à ce schéma, la Haute autorité de l'audiovisuel et de la communication du Bénin, à l'instar de quelques instances de régulation de la communication en Afrique, assure le contrôle des fréquences dont l'assignation lui est confiée, en veillant à l'absence d'émissions irrégulières et en s'assurant du respect par les opérateurs des conditions techniques des cahiers des charges (fréquence, site, puissance, excursion) et des obligations conventionnelles liées au programme).

Une instance de régulation ne peut cependant contrôler efficacement l'usage des fréquences sans disposer des moyens techniques appropriés et une organisation qui lui permette de couvrir convenablement le territoire national. Des équipements de supervision, d'enregistrement, d'analyse, de mesure de fréquence et de champs sont nécessaires pour cette opération. La majorité des instances de régulation de la communication en Afrique ne possède pas ces instruments d'écoute et de contrôle audiovisuels. Lorsqu'elles en sont dotées, le matériel est soit obsolète, soit constamment en panne. Sinon sa capacité de couverture du territoire national est très faible.

Le Conseil national de la Communication audiovisuelle de Côte d'Ivoire ne dispose que d'un petit équipement analogique. Tout ce qui est numérique lui échappe donc. Au Burkina Faso, le Conseil Supérieur de l'Information a signalé dans son rapport public 2001, que les principaux équipements acquis en 1999 sont déjà tombés en panne.

Les défis de la convergence

En dehors de l'Afrique du sud qui a anticipé sur la réflexion et sur l'organisation à mettre en place (en juillet 2000, l'Afrique du Sud a fusionné ses instances de régulation de l'audiovisuel (IBA) et des télécommunications en un organe unique appelé Independant Communication Authority of South Africa « ICASA ») pour appréhender le nouveau développement du secteur de la communication, la quasi-majorité des pays africains attendent d'avoir les conséquences de la convergence à leurs portes avant de réagir. Mieux, contraints de libéraliser leur secteur de télécommunication, les États ouest-africains se sont mis à créer des instances de régulation spécifiques à cette branche d'activité. On a assisté, par exemple, à l'émergence des agences ou des autorités de régulation des télécommunications en Côte d'Ivoire, au Togo, au Burkina Faso, au Sénégal, au Bénin. C'est dire que la plupart des États ouest-africains ont opté pour un modèle de régulation par secteur spécifique ; ce qui revient à créer une instance pour l'audiovisuel, une autre ayant des compétences exclusivement dans le domaine des télécommunications.

Cette option ne semble pas assurer l'efficacité et la cohérence de la régulation de la société de l'information dans un contexte marqué par la faiblesse des ressources humaines, matérielles et financières. Il aurait été plus judicieux d'opter pour la création d'un organisme unique, s'occupant à la fois de la régulation de la communication audiovisuelle et de celle des télécommunications. Plusieurs raisons militent en faveur du choix d'un modèle de régulation multisectorielle à la manière de l'Afrique du Sud.

Premièrement, les fréquences utilisées par les deux secteurs sont les mêmes. La deuxième série d'arguments tient compte de l'évolution des technologies de communication. Ce rapprochement des deux univers fonde le troisième argumentaire. Lorsqu'un pays crée deux instances spécifiques pour gérer chacun des secteurs, il sera inéluctablement confronté au problème des arbitrages en ce qui concerne les opérateurs qui exploitent à la fois les services de télécommunications et les services audiovisuels. Par exemple, les activités de diffusion de radio par satellite relèvent-elles de la régulation audiovisuelle ou de la régulation des télécommunications ? Un autre exemple : à quel régime juridique, et partant, à quel organe de régulation les activités d'un opérateur de réseau numérique à intégration de services (RNIS), un réseau qui mêle des services aussi diversifiés que les télécommunications, l'informatique et la communication audiovisuelle, sont-elles soumises ? De ces interrogations se dégage l'idée d'un bloc de compétences qui commande de confier la charge de gérer les ressources des deux secteurs à une seule et même instance de régulation. Une telle option favorise le développement harmonieux des deux secteurs, car elle assure les complémentarités, les communautés d'intérêts et les synergies qui sont aujourd'hui nécessaires dans la gestion du domaine de la communication moderne. L'ensemble de cet argumentaire converge pour suggérer l'idée d'une instance unique pour réguler à la fois l'audiovisuel et les télécommunications. L'adoption d'un tel schéma

induit naturellement une refonte complète des textes régissant les instances de régulation de la communication. Cette réforme porterait non seulement sur la composition, l'organisation et les attributions de ces organes, mais également sur son fonctionnement et son personnel. Pour que cette réforme soit efficace, il faudrait renforcer de manière qualitative et quantitatives les ressources humaines, matérielles et financières des institutions qui en seront issues. Ces réformes seront nécessaires pour les instances africaines de régulation de la communication qui devront gérer cette ère où, le droit électronique succédera au droit de l'audiovisuel (Adjovi 2003:168).

Par-delà le renforcement et la cohérence des instances nationales, un autre argument recommande la non-séparation de l'audiovisuel et des télécommunications en matière de régulation de la communication ; c'est l'accélération des usages transfrontaliers des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication. L'internationalisation de la communication fait que les instances nationales, cloisonnées ou confinées dans leurs activités qui ne relèvent pas directement de leurs compétences. Dans un monde où les technologies de la communication se développent à une vitesse exponentielle, aucun pays ne peut nourrir le rêve de réglementer tout seul son cyberespace. L'époque est dépassée où les pays s'isolaient. Et ceci d'autant que les déréglementations, provoquées non plus par la politique mais par la technique, laisseront le champ ouvert aux grands groupes de communication qui chercheront à imposer leur loi. La régulation a donc « besoin d'un cadre plus large pour faire face à l'internationalisation croissante des marchés et des problématiques. Cette évolution rend plus que jamais indispensables la coopération et le dialogue avec d'autres instances de régulation pour engager une action commune constructive et solide » (Baudis 2002:1).

Créées au début des années 1990, les instances africaines de régulation de la communication disposent encore de peu d'expériences et d'un faible professionnalisme (dans le sens où il leur reste à inventer leurs propres références professionnelles). Parfois, ce ne sont ni l'envie d'agir, ni l'implication des membres qui font défaut, mais le manque d'outils et de références pour intervenir efficacement. Quels critères utiliser pour l'attribution des ondes ? Comment contrôler la violence à la télévision ? Que faire lorsqu'une radio prétendument locale ou communautaire s'avère être le relais d'une radio étrangère, d'un groupe politique ou d'une secte religieuse ? Les problèmes concrets sont multiples, les compétences techniques pour traiter sont encore à construire.

L'idée de créer un réseau des instances africaines est née au fil des différentes réunions organisées entre instances africaines. Le groupe de recherche et d'échanges technologiques (GRET) n'est intervenu que pour faciliter le passage de l'idée à l'acte et aider le dispositif à prendre forme. Créé à Libreville en juin 1998, le réseau a pu rassembler un an plus tard dix-sept instances. Il s'est doté d'un secrétariat permanent basé à Cotonou. Le soutien apporté par le GRET au réseau revêt différentes formes. D'une part, le GRET intervient en appui à l'animation générale du dispositif. Il accompagne notamment le travail d'information, de docu-

mentation et de communication réalisé par le réseau. D'autre part, il joue un rôle d'interface avec les bailleurs de fonds (Allou 1999).

Au total, le Réseau des instances africaines de régulation de la communication doit être maintenu et soutenu pour jouer effectivement ce rôle fédérateur, à l'instance de l'EPRA, la plate-forme des instances de régulation européennes. La nouvelle ère numérique impose cette obligation d'intégration africaine. C'est seulement à ce prix que les instances africaines pourront participer à la prise des décisions internationales (Adjovi 2003:169).

Conclusion générale

À la lumière des analyses faites ci dessus, on peut constater que les organes de régulation ont des pouvoirs différents selon la volonté politique des régimes de chaque pays. Cependant, il y a des problèmes communs à presque tous les organes étudiés tels que le déficit de moyens financiers, le manque de qualification du personnel, le manque de matériaux de travail sophistiqués, l'inadaptation des législations actuelles en Afrique de l'Ouest et les défis liés aux phénomènes de la convergence. Autre chose que partage la plupart des pays, la relative indépendance des organes face aux velléités de contrôle des pouvoirs politiques. Cela n'empêche qu'il y a des pays qui émergent nettement du lot même si leur pouvoir respectif comporte des limites. C'est le cas du Bénin qui peut se positionner comme modèle de référence, le Niger aussi fait figure de proue. Nous allons donc essayer dans cette conclusion de procéder à des suggestions et recommandations appuyées sur des exemples concrets qui pourront faire avancer l'environnement des paysages médiatiques africains.

Du fait que les instances de régulation sont investies d'une fonction de supervision et de contrôle des médias, elles doivent forcément gérer des conflits d'intérêts. D'où la nécessité de leur donner le droit de prononcer directement des sanctions. Au Sénégal, le Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel n'est pas véritablement investi de ce pouvoir de coercition sur les médias. Il peut leur faire des observations ou adresser une mise en demeure publique aux contrevenants aux lois, règlements et cahiers des charges. En cas de non respect de la mise en demeure, le HCA peut prendre une sanction qui peut être soit un avertissement, soit une suspension d'une partie ou de la totalité d'un programme. Pour ce qui concerne les sanctions graves comme la suspension ou le retrait de l'autorisation d'exploitation de fréquences, l'instance de régulation de la communication au Sénégal ne peut que faire des propositions au Ministre chargé de la communication.

Contrairement à ce schéma, les instances de régulation de la communication au Nigeria, au Bénin, au Togo, en Côte d'Ivoire, au Burkina et au Niger disposent du pouvoir de sanction.

La Haute autorité de l'audiovisuel et de la communication (HAAC) du Bénin fait preuve de modèle parmi les instances de régulation des médias en Afrique de l'Ouest. Elle est en effet dotée de nombreuses compétences et d'une grande liberté d'action. C'est d'ailleurs l'une des raisons pour lesquelles le Bénin a été choisi pour abriter le siège du Réseau des instances africaines de régulation de la

communication (RIARC). La Haute autorité béninoise est, cependant, un modèle imparfait. En effet, bien qu'elle dispose de pouvoirs étendus, la loi l'a dotée d'une indépendance limitée. L'efficacité de son action varie suivant les domaines d'intervention. Si son travail en matière d'attribution des fréquences aux privés et de préservation du pluralisme dans les médias publics comme privés est remarquable, l'efficacité de cette action reste à démontrer dans les domaines de la promotion et de la protection de la déontologie des journalistes, de protection de la sécurité de ces derniers et de délivrance de la carte de presse. Une refonte de la législation sur la Haute autorité paraît nécessaire pour l'amélioration de l'efficacité de cette instance de régulation des médias. Dans le cadre de cette réforme, il convient d'abord de renforcer l'indépendance de la Haute autorité. Pour ce faire, celle-ci doit être dotée du pouvoir de désigner elle-même son président. Elle doit disposer d'une certaine indépendance financière qui lui permette de recruter directement son personnel et de le former dans les domaines les plus pointus de la régulation de la communication. Toujours sur le plan du renforcement des compétences, la HAAC doit pouvoir nommer directement les directeurs généraux des médias d'État et obtenir une compétence pleine et entière en matière de gestion des fréquences. L'expérience a montré que l'avis technique du ministre de la communication qu'exige la loi est de peu d'intérêt. Sur un autre plan, il serait judicieux de réviser la loi pour que la gestion de l'aide de l'État à la presse publique comme privée soit clairement confiée à la HAAC à l'instar du Niger.

La plupart des organes de régulation en Afrique ont des faiblesses congénitales qui sont liées à la nomination de leurs présidents et des autres membres par le Président de la République. Il faut aussi revoir la durée du mandat et faire en sorte qu'il soit un mandat unique de six à sept ans non renouvelables, animé par des conseillers permanents. Au Sénégal, les membres du HCA ne sont pas permanents. Ils ne sont présents quotidiennement que durant la période des élections. Au Nigeria, le Président et les neuf membres du NBC sont nommés par le Chef de l'État sur recommandation du Ministre de la Communication. Au Sénégal, devant l'ardeur de la presse privée et publique, il est impératif de revoir la formation des journalistes. Ce problème se pose d'ailleurs pour l'ensemble des pays de la sous région. Cette bonne formation doit être soutenue par une dotation en matériels performants. Pour garantir la libre concurrence et l'excellence des médias, confier l'attribution des fréquences à une structure autonome comme le HCA, habilitée à recevoir les redevances audiovisuelles et à gérer le fonds d'aide à une presse qui, bien qu'étant souvent privée, n'en remplit pas moins une mission de service public. Concernant la diversité des cahiers des charges des radios privées, leur uniformisation serait salutaire. Quant aux radios communautaires, une plus grande rigueur devrait être de mise, en vue de les doter d'un statut clair. Il est impératif pour l'ensemble des instances de la sous région de se doter d'un complexe audiovisuel avec des équipements et un personnel approprié pour qu'elles puissent remplir efficacement leur mission de régulation. Une organisation décentralisée avec des correspondants régionaux leur permettraient de superviser l'ensemble du pays.

Au total, on peut dire que le paysage des médias en Afrique a connu des évolutions très rapides, parallèlement aux processus de démocratisation politique, grâce à différents facteurs tels la pression pour la liberté d'expression, la multiplication de l'offre internationale de sons et d'images, et les nouvelles techniques et technologies qui multiplient l'accessibilité à l'information. La structuration du secteur et son développement rapide constituent des enjeux économiques, politiques et culturels importants.

Dans ce contexte, le besoin de régulation des médias (définition et respect des règles du jeu) s'avérait nécessaire. Aussi, depuis le début des années 1990, se sont mises en place des instances de régulation de la communication dans la plupart des pays africains. Elles fonctionnent selon différents modèles (francophone ou anglophone) et ont été amenées à intervenir dans différents domaines tels le contrôle des médias publics, la préparation de textes de loi sur la liberté d'expression et d'information, la définition du statut des journalistes, l'attribution des fréquences radio, l'élaboration et le contrôle du respect de cahiers des charges pour les radios et les télévisions, le contrôle du respect de la déontologie professionnelle par les journalistes, etc… avec des taux de réussite mitigés. Cette diversité de résultats s'explique par la variabilité de leur capacité réelle d'autonomie. Certaines sont de simples appendices des ministères de la communication alors que d'autres ont réussi à s'imposer comme de réelles instances indépendantes, qui ont facilité la libéralisation régulée du secteur des médias.

La qualité de leur composition constitue l'autre critère qui explique leur succès différent. La réussite de ces instances nécessite un équilibre entre les différents représentants. Cependant, l'idée fédératrice d'une force de régulation construite sur la base d'un équilibre des pouvoirs en présence est originale mais semée d'embûches. Les instances de régulation sont appelées à jouer des rôles divers : assumer les fonctions de médiation et de communication, définir des règles du jeu, contrôler et arbitrer. De plus, elles doivent bâtir leur légitimité et faire reconnaître leur rôle et leur compétence par les administrations publiques et les médias privés. Ceci dans le but de faire évoluer le cadre institutionnel des médias. Le cadre juridique de départ est également important, au sens où les instances de régulation ont des difficultés à assurer leur rôle dans un contexte où le pouvoir politique et l'État ne respectent pas les principes et les règles démocratiques, et où les professionnels sont mal organisés. Également importante est la personnalité du président de l'instance afin de garantir l'indépendance des instances.

Les instances africaines de régulation de la communication disposent aujourd'hui encore de peu d'expérience et d'un faible professionnalisme, conditions aussi indispensables que l'autonomie pour assurer la viabilité du système de régulation. Ce sont généralement les outils et les références qui font défaut, d'où l'idée d'une mise en réseau des instances de régulation. Dans ce domaine, le Gret dispose de références importantes et d'une bonne méthodologie en animation de réseau. Il a aidé en 1998, la création d'un réseau doté d'un secrétariat permanent et d'une présidence tournante, qui rassemblaient dix-sept instances

en 2001. Le rôle du GRET s'est avéré multiple : contribuer à la qualité de la régulation, la structuration et l'organisation de la profession ; faciliter un partenariat entre les instances du Nord et les instances africaines ; faciliter la coopération, l'échange et l'appui technique ; organiser le dispositif de mise en réseau pour qu'il réponde aux besoins propres des instances africaines en évitant la mise en place d'un transfert technique inadapté ou d'un paternalisme bien pensant ; développer non pas une intervention dans les débats nationaux, mais une activité de lobbying à l'échelle panafricaine afin d'accroître l'indépendance des différents organes ; enfin, favoriser la circulation de l'information et l'échange d'expériences. Dans cette optique, le GRET intervient uniquement en appui à l'animation générale du dispositif, en accompagnant notamment le travail d'information, de documentation et de communication réalisé par le réseau. Il joue aussi un rôle d'interface avec les bailleurs de fonds. Cette logique d'action a plusieurs avantages. Elle situe le GRET dans un rôle de facilitateur, sans risque de se substituer aux acteurs locaux. En effet, toute intervention extérieure pour aider à davantage d'autonomie et d'efficacité pourrait risquer de heurter les principes de souveraineté nationale. D'autres risques peuvent cependant apparaître, notamment celui d'un décalage entre les approches préconisées et les logiques réelles de fonctionnement des instances. Dans ce sens, le travail du réseau sera d'autant plus efficace qu'il développera en son sein des projets concrets autour desquels pourront se nouer des liens entre instances. Une autre condition de l'efficacité de la démarche du Gret est liée à la relation de confiance qu'il doit nouer à la fois avec les instances et les bailleurs de fonds (Allou 1999).

Quelques questions restent encore à débattre. La première concerne la place de l'action concrète dans le réseau et l'articulation avec les bailleurs de fonds qu'elle implique. Un réseau a de bonnes chances de fonctionner lorsque tout le monde y est invité sur un pied d'égalité et lorsque l'interface avec les bailleurs de fonds peut être instauré sans trop de tensions. Les coûts de fonctionnement et le financement du réseau peuvent aussi poser problème car les solutions pour réduire les coûts de manière significative restent limitées et la prise en charge totale du réseau par ses membres sans subvention des bailleurs de fonds s'avère utopique. De plus, une réflexion s'impose sur le rôle des États et sur l'avenir des instances dès lors que celles-ci seront devenues plus efficaces et que les professionnels des médias seront mieux organisés.

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