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Item Type	Preprint
Authors	Dia, Saidou
Publisher	UNRISD
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Download date	2026-06-25 03:39:59
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/179069

**Radio Broadcasting and New Information and Communication Technologies:
Uses, Challenges and Prospects**

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**English translation of the DRAFT paper prepared for the UNRISD project
Information and Communications Technologies and
Social Development in Senegal**

May 2002

Translated from the French original by Paul Keller
(date of translated draft, February 2003)



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Introduction

Radio broadcasting, while essentially primarily European at its origin, has encountered exceptionally favourable conditions in Senegal and has thus become established over time as not only the most popular means of communication and of disseminating information, but also – due to the oral tradition of the society – the preferred medium of cultural expression among the people. Radio – originally an instrument of colonial government – subsequently came to be used in a variety of ways, gradually taking on a range of “missions” linked to different political, economic and cultural challenges integral to Senegal’s development. The need to consolidate the colonization process strengthened radio’s place at the heart of France’s overseas military-administrative apparatus, which took advantage of the strategic power of “short wave.”

Constraints related to political independence and the requirements of national development subsequently gave radio a popular foothold, thus solidifying its vital importance as a major means of informing and educating the population. In assigning it a major role within the national information system, the authorities provided radio with a unique niche left vacant by the dramatic development of a dynamic but highly elitist written press and the later introduction of television, with its overly urban orientation.

The appearance of local radio stations (private commercial stations, as well as community-based and associative stations) during the 1990s signaled profound breaks with traditional radio and with the national information system. As a result of frequency modulation (FM), broadcast and listening quality improved, producing major strides toward greater professionalism.

Above all, however, the use of new information and communication technologies (NICTs),¹ particularly the telephone (fixed and cellular) and multimedia computers, allowed for the emergence of more user-friendly radio and signaled the advent of greater democratization in radio communication.

Moreover, as a result of the Internet and the satellite radio broadcasting prototype, *WorldSpace*, a growing number of broadcasters have been exploring new visual media – sonic and written – in an attempt to conquer increasingly supranational “virtual communities.” With NICTs, radio, in particular, found new opportunities for expansion and broadcasting using digital and analogue media.

One of the notable consequences of the melding of NICTs and radio has been the emergence of a “new alternative communication paradigm,” a tangible symbol of the people’s desire to appropriate² a technology for disseminating information and culture – a technology with which they feel increasingly identified. Thanks to the telephone (fixed or cellular), listeners moved from being passive consumers to active participants in the new social, cultural and

¹ We borrow the definition of NICTs from Alex Mucchielli (1998): “the various modern devices and applications, such as cable, satellite, the online network and telematic applications that facilitate the circulation of ideas and create a link between data and human beings.”

² Appropriation is used to mean “the capacity to access ICTs and to perpetuate their use.”

political changes unfolding before them. Another effect can be seen in the recent changes within Senegalese society – changes that testify to the gradual evolution of Senegal and its people toward the information and communication era.

The present study examines radio's use of NICTs – at various levels and through different modalities – and analyzes the impact of these different uses on the daily activities of the media, both in regard to listeners and to the role of radio technology within the information system and in Senegalese society as a whole. To this end, both documentary analysis and surveys have been utilized. In addition to academic studies, reports, press files and the testimony of experts and historians in the field of radio and ICTs, use has been made of the gray literature available at educational institutions in the field of communication. These include CESTI (Center d'Etudes des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information) at the University of Dakar, NGOs (such as ENDA) and other specialized institutions, such as the Institut Panos. In addition to recent surveys on radio and ICTs, we also conducted, between June and July 2001, a survey of RTS (Radiodiffusion et Télévision Sénégalaise), private commercial radio stations (*Sud FM*, *Walfadjiri FM*, *7 FM*, *Radio Nostalgie*, *Radio Dunya FM*, *Soxna FM*, *Diamano FM* and *Radio Energie FM*), community-based radio stations (*FM Santé Dakar*), and associative stations.³ This survey examined: the extent to which stations are equipped with ICTs (fixed and mobile telephone, computers and web sites); the modalities and the degree to which ICTs are being used by these stations; the impact of these technologies on daily tasks; and, finally, the constraints stations face in using these different tools.

Radio broadcasting, itself – regarded as an ICT⁴ and whose development shares many similarities with NICTs, particularly the Internet – is an integral part of the analysis undertaken in this study.

The Context: From State-Run Radio to Independent Radio

The birth and growth of radio

As with many African nations, the beginnings of radio in Senegal are intertwined with the implementation, in 1911, of the French West African Radiotelegraph Network, which served as its foundation. This network was succeeded, in 1932, by the TSF colonial station of Dakar, which was operated by a primarily European military staff. However, this could not yet be considered “mass” broadcasting, since private use of the TSF station at the time made it inaccessible to many. At that stage, radio was, practically speaking, a system for transmitting coded messages of a strictly governmental and military nature. Thus, it met the classic profile of a technology “foreign” to Senegal and its inhabitants.

³ These are part of ARPAC: *Radio Oxy-Jeunes* (Pikine), *La Côtère FM* (Joal), *Radio Penc Mi* (Fissel), *Radio Niani FM* (Koupentoum), *Radio Jiida* (Bakel), *Radio Jeeri FM* (Keur Momar Sarr), *Radio Gaynaako FM* (Namarel) and *Radio Awagna FM* (Bignona).

⁴ Because it is a “modern medium that facilitates the circulation of ideas and brings together people and data,” radio can also be considered to be an “information and communication technology” (ICT). See Muchielli (1998).

Radio, in the modern sense of the term, did not appear until 1939, on the eve of World War II, with the creation of the station *Radio Dakar*, which, while continuing to carry out a specialized military function, began disseminating the first news bulletins.

Until 1957, however, and despite rare productions in “vernacular languages,” there were no truly Senegalese radio stations. Radio within French West Africa – such as Radio Saint-Louis, which merely relayed dispatches emanating from the Agence France Presse (AFP) and broadcasts of Radio Paris – carried no coverage of events shaping the political life of Senegal during that period. Moreover, the few radios available on the market were sold on a preferential basis to heads of provinces and private advisers to the governor.

Thus, one can see initial similarities between radio and the Internet. As Sagna states (2001:5-6), “The overwhelming majority of broadcasts were, in conception, inspired by a French perspective, in terms of both their content and their form of dissemination. The audience was limited primarily to the European population and to what would have been referred to, at the time, as sophisticates, while geographically the focus was urban – specifically Dakar.” Moreover, in 1952-53, 27 of the 32 establishments marketing radios were located in Dakar, “a figure comparable to the 12 (out of a total of 13) Internet providers located in Dakar.” (Sagna 2001: 6). Finally, between 1960 and 1964, the number of radios increased from 125,000 to 180,000, due to the elimination of the radio tax in 1962 (Dia 1987: 165). Starting in 1962, radio consolidated its audience, thanks to the 150 collective listening centers established in the seven administrative regions of the country, designed to ensure the population access to entertainment and education.

The beginnings of modern radio broadcasting

Created out of the needs associated with World War II, *Radio Dakar* performed unevenly and had an infrastructure that was of poor quality. Beginning in 1946, however, efforts were undertaken to develop a system for disseminating information via the radio. This “first” in the field of radio impelled the authorities, in 1952, to create in Saint-Louis, which at the time was the administrative center of Senegal, an information service and a radio broadcasting center, thus inaugurating the beginning of local productions.

While radio saw significant developments as an information broadcasting technology following World War II, its accessibility remained limited. The medium was still directed strictly at French speakers: 90-95% of broadcasts were in French and their content was geared far more to engendering “community spirit” than to representing and promoting local culture and civilization. This was true despite the fact that local programs (historical accounts, in particular) were broadcast in local (Wolof, Pulaar, Soninké) or African (Mossi or Bambara) languages.

SORAFOM and the challenges facing the national channel, Radio Inter-AOF

Colonial authorities in Senegal were quick to grasp the strategic importance of radio in political, social and cultural change. The development of the media was indicative of the distinct backwardness of Senegal – as well as of the other French West African colonies – compared to the English colonies. The opinion of the native populations had come to be of concern to government officials and members of Parliament in Paris, and both in France and in the colonies, the importance of information would become acutely clear. Hence the establishment of the Société de radiodiffusion de la France d’Outre Mer (SORAFOM).

The *Service des PTT du Sénégal*, which had a monopoly on radio broadcasting, gave way to a national radio broadcasting service, under authority of SORAFOM. Thus, Radio Dakar became Radio Inter-AOF and gained a national presence. As a result of this institutional shuffling, radio was transformed into a genuine information tool with an increasingly defined role, run by true professionals.

Such developments allowed Radio Inter-AOF to serve as the major link for French radio broadcasting in Africa, expressing, at the same time, Paris's concept of radio as "a coherent unit" capable of serving as a link between the country where it was being established and the mother country. Until the adoption of the parent act of June 23, 1956, radio broadcasting was strictly "metropolitan."

In 1957, however, the colony's information service was placed under the Ministry of the Interior and Information, headed for the first time by a Senegalese.⁵ This period was characterized by the willingness of the authorities to make radio more accessible to Senegalese and to make information broadcast by radio more African. As part of the same initiative, Decree 59-12 of June 3, 1959 placed radio broadcasting under the direction of the department that was part of the Ministry of Information, Radio and Press. Thus, radio was assigned new missions: "to make others around the world familiar with Senegal and the Senegalese people, to open new horizons to the people of Senegal, and to keep them informed of the activities of the government."

Radio in the post-independence era

As of March 1, 1960, the Ministry of Information was replaced by the Ministry of the Interior and of Radio Broadcasting. Two years later, the information component was placed under an autonomous ministry. This change led to the birth of national and international channels of Radio Sénégal, at a time when the enabling act No. 6524 of February 9, 1965 consolidated the monopoly of State-run radio in broadcasting and information dissemination.

With the advent of television, national radio broadcasting came under the purview⁶ of the Office of Radio and Television Broadcasting of Senegal (*ORTS*). Article 3 of this law sets forth the State's monopoly in the following terms: "public dissemination throughout the national territory in the form of radio or television broadcasting, constitutes a State monopoly assigned to ORTS."

The establishment of the Office of Radio and Television Broadcasting of Senegal (*ORTS*), which followed the creation of national television in 1973, began a period of major change for Senegalese radio:

At the institutional level, the State monopoly over radio and television was consolidated and strengthened, acquiring the status of "State media"; and at the sociocultural level, audiovisual information became a new component in the audience environment, with a consequent disruption of cultural habits and practices.

⁵ This refers to the attorney, Mr. Valdiodio Ndiaye.

⁶ Law 73-51 of December 4, 1973.

The appearance of television led, above all, to adaptations in the cultural role and mission of radio, through programming, while the impact of television – still far from reaching a mass audience – remained limited.

In 1972, a survey (Bureau Organisation et Méthode/IUT 1972) revealed that “radio listenership is particularly strong,” thus confirming the medium’s central place among the population. This widespread audience for radio, representing both domestic and foreign stations, which attract a significant audience, created the conditions for genuine competition with Radio-Sénégal.

Radio Sénégal and competition from foreign stations

In parallel with the redeployment of Senegal’s national radio broadcasting to serve rural populations, radio listening – above all in Dakar – experienced significant competition from certain foreign stations. According to a 1972⁷ survey of 2,733 Dakar residents, more than half of the audience of *Radio-Sénégal* (50.48% of the sample) also listened to foreign radio stations, including a number of African stations -- *Radio Gambie* (33.10%), Radio Guinée (28.55%), Radio Mauritanie (26.27%) and the commercial station *Radio-SYD* (19.61%).

For these stations as a whole, particular types of broadcast appear to account for the audience interest. Radio Guinée, for example, is listened to, above all, for its news (50%), while *Radio Gambie* and *Radio-SYD* draw listeners primarily for their musical programs (84.58% and 90.09%). No discernible trend was identified for *Radio Mauritanie*, with its audience attracted by both its news (30.54%) and its musical programs (34.13%).

Radio-SYD and *Radio Guinée* represent two extreme examples, demonstrating the particular interest of Senegalese listeners in certain stations during 1970-72. *Radio Guinée* attracted primarily young listeners (20-25 years of age) – mostly schoolchildren and older students – seeking “more complete news and more detailed political content.” Conakry’s *Voix de la Révolution* symbolized their revolutionary ideal.⁸ *Radio-SYD* constitutes an example – at the same time paradoxical and original – of competition in radio listenership. While the audience of this pirate station⁹ is relatively small (only 19.61%), its most ardent Dakar listeners are primarily Senegalese (88.4%, as compared to 1.6% of Gambian origin), consisting mostly of young people (55.2% are 20-25 years of age), attracted principally by the musical programs (90.09%).

Thus, at the time radio was being positioned to serve rural populations, competition from foreign stations was presenting itself as a new phenomenon in Senegal’s radio listening environment. Alongside *Radio Sénégal*, a number of stations from neighboring countries were garnering a considerable audience, particularly among Dakar residents. This competition from foreign stations, which provoked deep concern among those in charge of Senegalese radio,

⁷ This survey involved a sample of 2,733 persons, comprising 66.8% men and 33.2% women, of which 90.85% were Senegalese and 9.15% were foreigners, while 86% were Muslims and 11% Christians.

⁸ Particularly after May 1968 – a period of political and union euphoria in the schools and at the University of Dakar.

⁹ The private Gambian station, *Radio-SYD*, has been broadcasting to Senegal since 1970 from a transmitter located off the coast of Banjul and from a tower installed on a ship anchored off the coast of Scandinavia.

caused them to make significant adjustments. In addition to dealing with broadcast interference – particularly from *Radio Guinée* – efforts were made to increase the length of daily programming, with the national channel increasing its broadcasting from 10 to 20 hours per day.

ORTS and its public

From 1973 to 1984, *ORTS*'s public demonstrated – in terms of the different national radio-television simulcast programs¹⁰ -- a rejection of the European cultural hegemony (French, in particular) that was, in the public's view, all too present in the news and cultural programming offered by national radio and television. At the same time, the public demanded more equitable and meaningful representation – through the State-run radio and television media – of the country's different political sensibilities and ethnoregional characteristics.

This not only shows a maturity of public opinion in Senegal, but also demonstrates an attachment to true cultural independence and to the virtues of political democracy, experienced and expressed through the national media, particularly radio. Thus, radio established itself as the most popular medium in Senegal's media landscape.

Radio and other media

Despite a striking proliferation of titles and types of publications, there is no real competition between radio and newspapers. Rather, it is as if a natural complementarity had been established between these two types of media. Newspapers – slower in handling and disseminating news, more elitist and more doctrinal in their mission and their content than radio – seem to have chosen the role of serving as an active and complementary link to radio. This can be seen in the use of common sources of information (the written press and radio draw on the same wire services and the same official press releases), an exchange of each other's offerings¹¹ and a certain complementary “specialization” in regard to regional and sports news, though such news is dealt with more exhaustively in the national daily newspaper than on the radio.

Bara Diouf (former managing director of the daily *Le Soleil*) noted, in the January 12, 1987 issue of that paper, that “while technical progress has allowed for considerable development in the audiovisual realm – to the extent that today one can sit and watch the world scroll by before one's eyes -- this new state of affairs does not in any sense diminish the role of the written word [...] Newspapers are still the major vehicle for ideas, as they are less susceptible than audiovisual media to the eraser of time...”

The link between radio and television is characterized not only by a degree of complementarity, but also by muted competition. The former can be seen primarily in news broadcasts. Thus, Senegalese radio and television draw on the same sources (dispatches from

¹⁰ *Opération wax sa xallat*: a study on media, carried out between May 10 and July 10, 1976 in the regions of Fleuve (today Saint-Louis) and Cap-Vert (today Dakar).

¹¹ For several years, the only daily newspaper of the period, *Dakar-Matin*, included radio and TV program schedules in its deliveries. Moreover, since 1980, the *Radio-Sénégal* Sunday press review figured significantly in the headlines of the main press publications, including the political opposition's press organizations.

the AFP, Reuter's, APS, official press releases¹²), though, in terms of illustrating current events, national television, unlike radio, has a number of assets: live satellite images from *Intelsat* and transmissions from French stations (TFI, Antenne 2, FR3) or private news agencies such as AITV. This complementarity is enhanced by the fact that both radio and television belong to ORTS¹³ and, even more important, are part of the "overall, coordinated programming policy" underlying its organization and operation.

The complementarity between radio and television can also be seen in the allocation of listening hours of their respective audiences. According to an ORTS/*Le Soleil* survey,¹⁴ "the preferred listening hour of the radio audience" is from noon to 2 p.m., while Senegalese television is watched primarily from 9 p.m. to the end of the programming day. According to those in charge of ORTS, "This proves that Senegalese listeners – who give top ranking to radio and television broadcasts -- are particularly attentive to the quality and consistency of information." (Thiam 1985:13). While radio and television news broadcasts complement each other, in terms of their audiences, this is not true with regard to other programs, where a certain sense of competition seems to characterize the relationship between the two media.

According to the same *ORTS/Le Soleil* survey, five out of seven Senegalese prefer to watch television, due to "its being easier to understand and to the sustained attention created by the attraction of the image." (Thiam 1985:12) Television has a fascination and, moreover, is gradually making its way into Senegalese homes, thus gaining ground in competing with radio, primarily in the realm of dramas, films and certain variety shows presented by national television.

The appearance of the small screen in Senegalese homes has generated new patterns, among the public, in the use of the two major audiovisual media. While radio and television operate in a complementary manner – with television showing, in the evening hours, the current events that radio covered earlier – television is becoming an increasingly serious rival to radio in terms of entertainment and cultural programming. However, this is "a complementarity of image and sound, rather than a matter of rivalry." According to those in charge of ORTS, "listening rates remain at a respectable level, because not everyone has a television set." (Thiam 1985:10)

The radio and television audience¹⁵

Among the 500 persons who responded to the questionnaire, 395 had radios (79% of the sample), with 353 of these sets equipped with cassettes. At the same time, 250 persons (50% of the sample) had black and white television sets, while 123 had color televisions (24.5%).

The radio-television audience varies according to the medium. The survey indicates that 5% of the persons questioned watch television either alone or with one other

¹²These press releases were disseminated in their entirety by radio, television, and through the daily, *Le Soleil*.

¹³ Article 12 of Decree 74-94, of January 23, 1974 sets rules regarding the organization and operation of ORTS.

¹⁴ This survey, conducted by questionnaire, was published in the July 21 and July 22, 1984 issues of *Le Soleil*.

¹⁵ This section draws primarily on the results of the 1984 ORTS/*Le Soleil* survey.

person, while the majority watch in groups of six or more (10 to 12) – confirming the fact that collective television viewing is widespread.

This phenomenon is less common with radio, due to the ease with which transistor radios can be acquired and the fact that radios are easier to handle. Nearly 72% of listeners (359 out of 500) listen to the radio every day, as compared to 58% of television viewers (278 out of 500). The vast majority of Senegalese are loyal to national television and radio, with, however, a distinctly greater leaning toward radio. The frequency of listening also confirms the advantage that radio holds: 61% of Senegalese listen to the radio every day, compared to 50% who watch television daily.

The survey showed that 70% of the radio and television audience follow broadcasts in national languages, with a definite predilection for *Wolof*, followed by *Pulaar*, *Sereer*, *Manding*, and then by *Joola* and *Soninké*. These facts confirm the frequent demands of radio listeners and television viewers (Bureau Organisation et Méthode/IUT 1972) and the relevance of the choice by ORTS programmers to institute, as of 1984, a news program televised daily in *Wolof*, the national language, and weekly news magazines in *Sereer*, *Soninké*, *Pulaar*, *Joola* and *Manding*. According to those in charge of ORTS, “ORTS’s efforts to broadcast in national languages have been well received by the public.... Television viewers expressed the wish to see televised news in *Wolof*... such a broadcast, moreover, could have the advantage of contributing to mass literacy, which is a real concern of the government.”¹⁶

For radio, as for television, broadcasts in foreign languages are listened to in significant numbers. Thus, 35% of listeners (177 out of 500) regularly listen to English broadcasts,¹⁷ 9.8% (49 out of 500) listen to broadcasts in Portuguese, and 6% (30 out of 500) listen to Arabic broadcasts.

Beyond the political-institutional effects of reaffirming and strengthening the State’s authority over the audiovisual media, the creation of national television forced Senegalese radio broadcasting to make significant adjustments in its programming – affecting both the form and content of broadcasts, as well as policy regarding the dissemination of information. While the reality of competition from television was not acknowledged explicitly by those in charge of Radio Sénégal, the innovations adopted as of 1980, as well as the policy regarding both programming and information, reflect the desire on the part of national radio broadcasting officials to contain the growing popularity of television, notable above all in Dakar and the other large population centers.

The explosion of FM

In the mid-1990s, private radio stations (commercial and community-based radio) began to appear on the scene. These radio broadcasters – beneficiaries of Senegal’s long and well-established radio tradition – enjoyed spectacular growth. This development was enhanced by radio’s high penetration in both urban and rural areas, along with a favorable competitive climate in which, up to that point, only State-run radio had a national presence. This phenomenon was due, in part, to the fact that, beginning in 1992, Senegal embraced “frequency modulation,” with the consequent gains in listening comfort.

¹⁶ Report of the ORTS/*Le Soleil* survey (1984: 14).

¹⁷ Since the creation of the Confederation of Senegambia in 1981, a televised news program in English is scheduled daily at 7 p.m.

Until the end of the 1980s, however, the FM band remained relatively unused. The first explorations of FM were undertaken by international radio broadcasters: Radio France Internationale (RFI) and Africa No. 1, which, beginning in 1989, leased frequencies from the Ministry of Communication in order to cover the Francophone Summit in Dakar. This experience was repeated in 1992 on the occasion of the African Nations Soccer Cup (CAN 92) in Dakar.

Some years later, RFI and Africa No. 1 received authorization to establish operations in return for paying a licensing fee. Thus, Africa No. 1 offered its programming to Senegalese listeners, while RFI negotiated a contract by which the French channel could broadcast for 18 hours daily, alternating with RTS.

This arrangement satisfied the need for “varied news” – a goal that, for several decades, had been sought by listeners, who were less and less inclined to accept the official news served up by national radio. Indeed, a number of surveys at that time indicated that the news – presented in the form of news bulletins, spoken news, documentaries, news magazines and press reviews – occupied a primary role, not only at the head of international radio programs, but in the concerns of Senegalese listeners.

These transnational radio stations, however, are available only in urban areas, primarily in the capital city of Dakar. In other areas, they broadcast exclusively in French, thus limiting their penetration, given the high number of Senegalese without formal schooling – all of which leaves listeners with the sense that their needs have not been satisfied.

The desire of officials to broaden the media landscape was expressed through Law 92-02 of January 6, 1992, leading to the creation of the Société nationale de la Radiodiffusion et Télévision sénégalaise (RTS). That same year, Law 92-57 of September 3, 1992, confirmed this political resolve. Pluralism in media was solidified on July 1, 1994, when the head of state personally inaugurated the first private radio station, *Sud FM*, created by Groupe Sud Communication, which would extend its network into the north, center, south and south-eastern regions of Senegal. Officials, who were highly cooperative, already viewed the arrival of these first private media as “an enriching element in Senegal’s incipient audiovisual landscape.”

This station met with immediate success, due largely to its programs broadcast from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m., bringing together musical shows, informational programs (in French and Wolof), announcements and interactive broadcasts presenting young, new voices. The example of *Sud FM* became a model, and in January 1995 a second station – *Dunya FM* – broadcast its first news, followed by *Radio Nostalgie* (a subsidiary of *Radio Nostalgie Internationale*) and *Walfadjri FM*, associated (like *Sud FM*) with a press group. The public, particularly Dakar residents, with greater access to the range of private radio stations, is discovering the virtues of free expression, through the many interactive broadcasts and the “different” treatment of current events that these stations bring to the scene.

Thus, private radio is having a seductive effect on the Senegalese people, due to the more balanced handling of current events, the speed with which news is transmitted and, above all, the freedom of expression and relevance it brings to analyzing current events.

The appearance of these local radio stations expanded the competition among the audiovisual media and forced official radio broadcasting to share the environment with competing stations, which were largely independent of the State. Moreover, private radio stations introduced a new approach to radio production by inaugurating a truly “local” form of communication, due to the systematic use of national languages and, above all, of NICTs – particularly the telephone and digital programming, known as digital automatic tracking (DAT). Drawing on the resources of the Internet, and using digital and satellite radio broadcasting (typified by the prototype *WorldSpace*), private radio stations are exploring new possibilities in transcontinental transmission, in an attempt to increasingly globalize the communications environment.

The Legal and Regulatory Framework of Pluralism in Radio

Concessions in the audiovisual monopoly

While until now, the State enjoyed a long and exclusive hold on the radio frequencies, the appearance of local independent radio stations,¹⁸ beginning in the 1990s (commercial and community-based or associative radio) led to changes at the heart of the national information system. ORTS, as mentioned above, ceased to come under the direction of the Ministry of Information (which became the Ministry of Communication) and established itself in 1992¹⁹ as the national company, Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise (or RTS). At the end of the 1980s, Senegalese government authorities became aware of the breadth of change within the audiovisual arena, particularly the advent of numerous private commercial FM stations (directly linked by agreement or concession to *ORTS* through the payment of licensing fees) and the inevitable and gradual increase in competition. Hence the need for the State to change the monopolistic system for broadcasting and for the distribution of radio and television transmissions to the public. Public authorities were therefore obliged to provide concessions to these media, covering some or all of their formerly exclusive rights, through agreements established by executive decree.

In November 1993, the Ministry of Communication made public the regulations covering private radio stations. Among the provisions of the document was the obligation on the part of future private radio stations to conform to the “three thirds” rule,²⁰ in order to ensure political pluralism.

In the effort to foster increased pluralism in the media, the State simultaneously established a body – the Haut Conseil de la RadioTélévision (HCRT)²¹ – to monitor and regulate the audiovisual media. This body was responsible for overseeing the process of democratizing these media “so that basic rules regarding pluralism in radio and television would thenceforth be guaranteed by law instead of relying on the provisions of a simple decree.” Some years later, the HCRT was supplanted and replaced by the Haut Conseil de l’Audiovisuel (HCA), in

¹⁸ We use the concept “independent radio stations” in contrast to “State-run radio.”

¹⁹ Law 92-02, of January 1992, dealing with the transformation of RTS into a national company.

²⁰ According to this rule, in terms of political information, private radio has the obligation to devote a third of its time to the government, a third to the parliamentary majority and a third to the opposition.

²¹ Article 3 of Law 92-57, of September 3, 1992.

order to extend the power of that administrative authority to cover all audiovisual media.²² However, the HCRT and the HCA were hard pressed to rebuff accusations of taking positions favorable to the party in power – positions that were therefore damaging to the opposition parties, the unions and other organizations.

The advent of community-based radio

Private radio stations fall into two distinct categories: commercial radio stations “owned by individuals or by private companies, and operated principally for commercial purposes” (AMARC Afrique and IAJ 2000). *Walf FM*, *Sud FM*, *Radio Nostalgie*, *Radio Dunyaa*, *7 FM* and *Diamono FM* belong to this category; and - community-based radio stations operated primarily to promote development by “improving the quality of life of the members of the community” (AMARC Afrique and IAJ 2000). Within this category are stations such as *FM Santé* and *Radio Oxy-Jeunes*, as well as *La Côtière FM* (Joal), *Radio Penc Mi* (Fissel), *Radio Niani FM* (Koupentoum), *Radio Jiida* (Bakel), *Radio Jeeri FM* (Keur Momar Sarr), *Radio Gaynaako FM* (Namarel) and *Radio Awagna FM* (Bignona).²³

Without any official status, since they operate on the basis of a mandate that, to date, has not been officially adopted by the authorities, community-based radio stations face a rather precarious situation, unlike commercial radio stations. Support for these media from NGOs – which serve as principal partners and provide financial support – is often insufficient to sustain the various costs of operation. The results of a survey conducted in 2000 on the radio audience within the Senegalese audiovisual field²⁴ confirmed this fact.

Commercial radio seems to enjoy greater popularity than community-based radio stations – a fact attributable to the proven professionalism and superior financial foundation of the commercial stations. As has been stated by a number of people in charge of community-based stations, “though they do a better job of providing a public service than do the State-run and private radio stations, community-based stations nevertheless lack support, and suffer the strains of meeting operating costs (telephone, electricity, cassettes, etc.), and paying the fees charged by the Senegalese Copyright Office.”²⁵

Nevertheless, the appearance of these radio stations expanded the competitive environment and forced the State-run radio to adapt to existing side by side with competing stations that were more professional and were largely independent of the government. Moreover, due to the systematic use of national languages, as well as of NICTs – particularly the telephone and DAT – these radio stations are fostering a truly “local” form of communication.

Development of the Internet

²² Declaration of intent of Law 98-02 of March 1998.

²³ Since 1999, community-based or associative radio stations are part of the Association de radios et projets de radios associatifs ruraux et communautaires (ARPAC). See the list given in the annex.

²⁴ This survey, conducted by the Senegalese BDA (Bâ Djibril & Associés) from May 17-22, 2000, was based on a sample of 1,000 18-year-olds living in the Dakar region.

²⁵ Read Cheikh Aliou Amath, *Le Soleil*, August 1, 2000.

The expansion of the Internet in Senegal began in the mid-1990s. The official connection, established in March 1996, provided an opening into the world at large and provided access to a vast array of data. In 1997, there were less than 2,500 microcomputers linked to the Internet, out of some 50,000 microcomputers in the country. The same year, a mere dozen web sites were to be found, of which five provided Internet access. The services provided were primarily e-mail and file transfers.

At the same time, Senegalese were seized with an infatuation for this new communications tool. The number of Internauts grew along with the number of cybercafés, which offer more and more opportunities for surfing the Internet for a modest fee (around 1,000 CFA francs). This enthusiasm is confined primarily to Dakar, as the limited buying power of the Senegalese limits the rapid propagation of the “web culture.”

Two other factors should be mentioned in this regard. First, since homes with microcomputers are rather rare, most Internet activity occurs in the workplace or in cybercafés. Second, the population’s low rate of formal schooling, along with insufficient electric service in rural areas, hinders massive use of the Internet. In addition, the expansion of the Internet is highly dependent on the quasi-monopolistic status of the Société Nationale des Télécommunications (SONATEL) in marketing Internet connections. As a result, the fees levied for monthly subscriptions and telephone charges (though they are among the least expensive in Africa) represent a high cost for Internauts. Moreover, there is inequality in access to the Internet, which greatly favors Télécomplus, a commercial subsidiary of SONATEL.

Despite SONATEL’s monopolistic status, the Internet has experienced a rapid expansion. In January 2000, the Internet Software Corporation had 306 servers connected to the Internet, and Senegal had 11,000 Internauts.

Challenges

Repercussions from radio’s use of NICTs

The use of NICTs by radio stations has produced repercussions on radio itself, as well as on its basic functions as an information dissemination technology. Likewise, the emergence of private radio stations has had significant effects on the audiovisual landscape. First, as a technology, radio has moved from being merely an information and communication technology (ICT) to an NICT, due to modern advances such as frequency modulation. Moreover, the telephone, the computer and its applications (particularly DAT) have allowed radio to modernize and become global. Besides the diversification and enrichment of the national audiovisual scene, the appearance of independent radio stations has engendered greater familiarity between radio and its listeners.

This point of view is shared by Diaw (2000): “The birth of the regional station Sud FM has not only enriched the radio listening landscape, but has also provided people a greater familiarity with radio.... It can even be said that it has – in the image of the parent company in Dakar – broken the monopoly of Kaolack radio in the peanut basin. With the myth and the barriers torn down, radio has become commonplace.”

This familiarity produced a break with tradition – a tradition that adopted an overly “folkloric” approach. This brought about more positive relations, not only with the public, but also with the political and governmental authorities, in respect to development issues.

Another effect of the emergence of independent radio stations has been the end of Radio Sénégal’s monopoly as the only radio station and the advent of pluralism in radio. This death knell for monopoly radio has had an important political effect, namely, a greater presence, on the air waves, by the political opposition.

Whether they be commercial or community-based, independent radio in Senegal shares a number of common characteristics:

use of the FM frequency in broadcasting (with a consequent improvement in listening quality);

use not only of French, but, more importantly, of national languages (particularly *Wolof*) in certain programs (e.g., political debates); and

the prominent place given to musical programs, “open antennas” and advertising.²⁶

Moreover, NICTs, particularly the telephone, make it possible to establish rapport with listeners, giving these new media a role in radio that makes radio more local. In addition, the use of computers has enhanced the technological performance of radio, inaugurating the era of digital radio broadcasting. This technological innovation has many advantages. In addition to allowing for mass programming, DAT makes radio production more reliable. This is particularly true of live programming, making it possible to provide acoustic tracking, thus breaking with the analogue and mechanical transmission that characterized radio broadcasting previously.

Challenges of frequency modulation

The transition to frequency modulation, or FM, figured prominently, during the 1980s, among the major political options of Senegalese radio broadcasting officials. This occurred in the context of a dual concern: improving listening quality – particularly in Dakar – and promoting an “alternative radio” dedicated primarily to cultural programming.

For those in charge of national radio broadcasting, the role of Chaîne FM – actually a third channel of Radio Sénégal — was to “create cultural events” and even promote the advent of a “new culture.” Beyond its original nature, the creation of this FM channel led to an official recognition of the anachronisms that had characterized radio at the end of the 1970s. The unabashed reference to European “free radio” is, in this respect, indicative of the desire, among officials of Senegalese radio, to break with a certain outmoded conception of radio.

As of 1992, FM and its liberalization – symbols of the resolve of Senegalese officials to modernize radio, while at the same time improving its quality and making it more competitive in the international arena – served as catalysts for the emergence of private radio stations, inaugurating an important qualitative stage in the evolution of radio.

The new “alternative communication” paradigm

²⁶ The latter characteristic applies much more to private commercial radio stations than to community-based radio.

The sudden upsurge in independent private radio stations, along with the popularity they enjoyed among listeners as a result of their user-friendly method of operation, provides the outlines of a “new alternative communication paradigm.” This paradigm is centered on two issues: first, the sociocultural question of which national languages should be used in radio programming; and second, a political issue that concerns the appropriation of power itself and the new challenges it poses, as well as the role that independent radio stations have played, in recent times, in the national political life.

Among the factors responsible for the influence of independent radio stations is the nearly systematic use of national languages in informational and other programming. More than 70% of the content of programs broadcast by private stations are in national languages, primarily *Wolof*. Paradoxically, the use of national languages on the radio is not new. Well before independence, and after, these languages were used in disseminating new educational magazines. This was the case with “*Diissoo par la radio éducative rurale*,” women’s magazines and various dramas in national languages (“*Makhourédia Guèye chauffeur de taxi*,” etc.).²⁷

However, in giving national languages a central place in their programming, those in charge of independent radio stations reflected, first and foremost, a political choice: namely, the decision to permit these new “local radio stations” to highlight their differences by asserting greater autonomy from official programming policy and, even more important, by encouraging Senegalese journalists to use national languages and eschew the quasi-institutional taboo that, until then, prevented the use of these languages in gathering, processing and disseminating information. Strategically, this new concept brings radio closer to its Senegalese listeners, the vast majority of whom have little command of French.

The nearly exclusive use of *Wolof* in radio programming – regardless of the consensus regarding the use of this language in Senegal – elicits numerous reactions among the public. The recent creation of the stations *Diamono FM* and *Ndef Leng* – which, in addition to broadcasting in *Wolof*, transmit programs in *Pulaar* and *Sereer*, respectively – was part of a dual rationale of renouncing “*Wolof* cultural hegemonism” and demanding a degree of linguistic equity.²⁸ The same is true of the implementation of the *Pulaar* Radio Broadcasters of Africa network and of the diaspora, under the aegis of the Association des Communicateurs Peul d’Afrique (ACPA),²⁹ which, through the 78 radio stations in 36 African countries that comprise it, attempts to rectify the “ostracism” that the various transnational languages suffer at the hands of the State.

One of the heads of this association deploras such linguistic ostracism in the following terms: “In 1996, 66% of the time periods at the national channel were given over to *Wolof*, at the expense of all other languages. The remainder – news updates, announcements and press releases -- was divided among the 11 other languages. There are no sports or health-related broadcasts in *Pulaar* – all due to the country’s linguistic apartheid-type policy.” (Dia 2000)

²⁷ Dia (1987) makes an exhaustive analysis of the use of national languages in Senegalese radio programs before and after independence.

²⁸ In addition to panels in French, *Wolof* and *Pulaar*, the new station, *Diamono FM*, carries political broadcasts in French, *Wolof* and *Pulaar* produced from programs in *Pulaar* and *Sereer* purchased by the Conseil des Organisations non gouvernementales d’Appui au Développement (CONGAD).

²⁹ See *Walfadjri/L’Aurore*, November 7, 2000.

Independent community-based radio stations are an exception, due, primarily, to the relatively harmonious balance they have succeeded in establishing between *Wolof* and the main languages spoken in their broadcast areas.³⁰

Behind this major cultural issue lies the concern and desire of the Senegalese people to appropriate radio – an important tool for communication and interaction, with which they feel increasingly identified.

The emergence of independent radio stations, in all forms, certainly provoked significant changes in the position and role of radio as a technology for disseminating information and culture, thus creating the conditions for the development of “alternative communication” and for establishing greater closeness between transmitter and receiver. However, far from being a panacea, private radio today faces constraints on implementing this paradigm.

These constraints are of various types. First, there is the weakness of radio journalism and the supremacy of musical shows. According to an official at a private station, “not only can any unemployed person proclaim himself a journalist, but certain types of radio programming have disappeared altogether. FM stations that came into being at a frantic pace ultimately faced a grim situation at the production end of the equation, with schedules devoid of news magazines, documentaries or major stories. This genre is dying a natural death. By contrast, the tyranny of disc jockeys and music is exerting itself more and more, only occasionally being superceded by ‘breaking news’.” (Ndione 2000)

Moreover, there is a trend toward standardization. Many listeners confirm the fact that a great many FM stations have nearly identical programs. They indicate that “with a few rare exceptions, programming consist of music, spoken news, debates or other talk-shows dealing primarily with politics.”

The proliferation of radio stations has not produced the anticipated diversity of programs. Rather, there seems to be a trend toward uniformity, with a reduction in the types of broadcasts offered to listeners, who find that “all radio stations are the same, doing and saying the same things.” Yet, at the time they are established, each radio station defines a niche for itself – some choosing a generalist approach, others the musical route. In all cases, however, the journalist is “drowned out by the stardom of the DJ,” as some listeners express it.

Finally, there is the quality of the content of radio programming. In a recent article published by a Dakar newspaper, M. L. Camara states, “The radio monopoly is a source of exclusion and frustration. Since liberalization, tensions seem to have declined, inasmuch as everyone has a forum for self-expression. However, the problems and the preferential treatment given to music are all in the normal course of events.” (Dia 2000). The programming schedules of most independent radio stations are characterized by the oppressive omnipresence – a true “tyranny” – of musical shows. “This tyranny of music is something one must accept, because according to the surveys, the size of the audience is inversely proportional to the number of intelligent broadcasts,” says this journalist. Indeed, music ranks at the top of the different categories, followed by news and other broadcasts. Finally, this journalist states: “If there is no subsidy, if one survives through commercials, one is compelled to insert music.”

³⁰ See the list of community-based radio stations listed in the annex.

The challenges of globalization: WorldSpace, or digital satellite radio

Less than a decade after their appearance in Senegal, private radio stations are exploring satellite transmission, due in large part to the prototype WorldSpace. From Africa to the Caribbean, passing through the Mediterranean Basin, WorldSpace has installed a satellite system, making it possible to receive, worldwide, transmissions from certain radio stations, including Senegalese channels – the State-run radio, Sud FM, Walfadjri and 7 FM.

Through WorldSpace, Senegalese citizens living abroad have also found a convenient means of following current events in their country. Despite the high cost of receivers – 60,000 CFA francs, or the equivalent of US\$100 – WorldSpace has, for some years, been making spectacular gains among Senegalese émigrés.

This digital radio creates the conditions for lively communication by recreating the same system of “collective listening” that characterized radio in its early days. WorldSpace is also democratizing access to information,³¹ competing at times with the Internet and restoring a degree of “social justice.” As indicated by the testimonials of Senegalese living abroad, “These revolutionary receivers rectified a great injustice, since only those capable of navigating the Internet were able to keep informed on what was occurring in their country, in addition to needing a great deal of time for accessing the ‘network of networks’.” (Wade 2000).

The emergence of digital satellite radio symbolizes a qualitative advance for cross-border radio broadcasting and, among other things, allows radio stations – specifically local radio stations – to make major strides toward globalization. However, this communication medium remains, for the time being, a sort of “gadget” accessible only to Senegalese émigrés.

The political challenges

In the colonial period, as well as in present times, radio – dominated by the requirements of consolidating democracy – was instrumental in mobilizing a set of political challenges, which are discussed below.

Radio as a military information transmission system for “strictly administrative purposes” (1911-1950)

In an environment dominated by the deployment needs of the colonial administration and preparations for World War I, the French West African radiotelegraphic network represented a rapid and effective means of communication between France and its overseas colonies. The intercolonial TSF station of Dakar, which succeeded it, established the conditions for receiving news from the press, particularly the news bulletin Havas, as well as news from the colonial broadcasting station of Pontoise, established during the Paris Colonial Exhibition.

The radiotelegraphic center in Dakar provided administrative services, such as: the daily receipt of certain French and foreign radiotelegraphic news to update the French West African

³¹ The unique feature of the prototype *WorldSpace* is its ability to offer listeners a range of frequencies, from AM and short wave to FM.

government;³² and provision of military news – aircraft security, classic territorial military defense and maritime navigation. In addition, it provided monitoring of private TSF stations and radio broadcasts between 1932 and 1938. Beginning in 1933, and due to the development of trans-Saharan air travel, there was an increase in the number of private TSF stations, transmitters and receivers.³³

The control exacted through the collection of taxes and fees³⁴ for use rights was transferred to the inspector of the French West African radiotelegraph network, who was responsible for centralizing information related to private TSF stations and radio broadcasts. Despite its many uses between 1932 and 1938, radiotelegraphy played a relatively limited role in the lives of the Senegalese people. Given the essentially military nature of the system and the strictly governmental use of this medium, the Dakar TSF station was run principally by European military staff. Of the 20 agents at the Senegal radiotelegraph station in 1937, only seven were African. (Dia 1987:57)

Radio and the challenges of social and political emancipation in the colonies

The discovery and control of short wave during World War II would allow the Dakar station to move from the status of a TSF station to that of a true radio broadcasting station and ensure the daily dissemination of news from the overseas news bureau of the Colonial Ministry, and in relay with Paris. This “first” in radio broadcasting led the colonial authorities of Senegal to create an information service and radio broadcasting center in 1952 in Saint-Louis, then the administrative center of Senegal. In the course of the same year, Saint-Louis acquired a 1 kw medium wave transmitter, at the same time that the first reports made and presented by Senegalese journalists were appearing. One example of this was the “Carnet saint-louisien.”³⁵ As of 1954, the Saint-Louis radio broadcasting center relied on a highly versatile team of reporter-journalists, which included several Senegalese.

Moreover, while the vast majority of broadcasts originated in Paris, the Saint-Louis station broadcast local productions.³⁶ In addition to these broadcasts overseen by the station’s permanent staff, there were productions created and presented by outside collaborators.³⁷

With the appearance, in 1952, of the first radio productions, the “colonial TSF” rapidly gave way to modern radio broadcasting using up-to-date production methods. Far from being

³² This news, transmitted by Morse code, was generally decoded and interpreted by a transmission specialist.

³³ At the end of 1934, 177 radios were in existence. These figures are based on the statements of owners of radio sets.

³⁴ In 1938, fees rose to 9,600 CFA francs.

³⁵ Service information (air flights, train departures and arrivals for the Saint-Louis-Dakar route) and perspective on the political, economic, social and cultural life of the administrative center of the colony. This account was provided by Papa Abdoul Sy.

³⁶ The most significant are: “*Saint-Louis Midi*” (a daily, 45-minute news magazine presented by Henri Métro) and “*Le Disque des Auditeurs*” (a presentation “in two voices” by Mrs. Jumaglini and Papa Abdoul Sy).

³⁷ “*Evocations historiques*” (figures from Senegalese history, such as Blaise Diagne, Galandou Diouf, etc., presented by Birahim Gallo Fall) and “*Rendez-vous avec l’IFAN*” (a historical magazine dealing with the research of the Institut français d’Afrique noire, presented by the Senegalese author and playwright Abdou Anta Ka).

fortuitous, this stage in radio's development represented, rather, a significant attitudinal change by France, vis-à-vis its overseas colonies, in the period following World War II. This foreshadowed various challenges that would face radio between 1946 and 1955, during the process of social and political emancipation, both in Senegal and in the other French colonies.

With the implementation of SORAFOM, the status and control of radio changed. Beginning August 1, 1955, the PTT service of Senegal, which until then had been the radio broadcasting monopoly, gave way to a national radio broadcasting service.³⁸ This transfer of powers was accompanied by a subsequent reorientation in the Dakar station's mission. Thus, Radio Dakar became Radio-Inter-AOF and gained federal authority. With SORAFOM, the status of radio was clarified, while its operation was taken over by production agents with stronger professional credentials. Above all, however, through Radio-Inter-AOF, Senegal had, from that point onward, a station which, due to its greater sphere of operation and high-quality transmission, would play a high-level role within the French West African federation.

Radio and the challenges of national development

As of 1962, Radio Sénégal became the most important service of the Ministry of Information and, as a result, enjoyed technical and financial benefits. For the young state, social, economic and cultural development was a political priority of independence.

A survey conducted in 1964³⁹ indicated that, among all media, radio had the greatest impact on the people. Thus, between 1962 and 1970, Radio Sénégal played a major role in supporting various development programs. Between 1962 and 1968, it put the finishing touches on educational broadcasts directed toward both rural and urban women. In the field of agriculture, the broadcast "Diisoo par la Radio éducative rurale,"⁴⁰ from 1968, symbolized an original radio broadcasting initiative in the rural environment. Finally, beginning in 1969, national radio broadcasting, through the CLAD⁴¹ method "for speaking French," assisted in developing French language learning among Senegalese schoolchildren.

Between 1962 and 1964, radio enjoyed a significant proliferation. According to the IFOP/Marcomer survey, radio was, for the majority of Senegalese – 80% of rural inhabitants and nearly as many urban residents – "the number one information medium, the one that provides the most complete and most accurate news." Thus, it surpasses conversation (18% of those in rural areas and 11% of city dwellers) and newspapers – read exclusively in the city (21% of Senegalese). The same survey indicated that daily and collective listening are particularly high: nearly all urban residents and three out of four rural inhabitants state that they listen to the radio "at least occasionally."

³⁸ Placed under the authority of *SORAFOM*, this service immediately began operating in a government building located on the Boulevard of the Republic in Dakar.

³⁹ Survey by the IFOP, in collaboration with Marcomer SA, between March and June of 1964, using a sample of 2,053 men and women over 20 years of age, distributed as follows: Dakar (1,014 persons), other cities (530 persons) and villages (509 persons). Thus, the sample was drawn from the capital and from 10 cities and 109 villages representative of the Senegalese population.

⁴⁰ To learn more about this radio experience, read Dia (1987).

⁴¹ Dakar Center of Applied Linguistics.

This listening rate would combine with particularly favorable conditions for radio, beginning in 1962. First, there was a significant expansion of the broadcasting network, due largely to the fact that a 200 kw transmitter was put into service. This ultimately provided complete and consistent radio broadcasting coverage for the entire territory, while it provided outlying areas – particularly eastern Senegal and Casamance – with improved reception.

Simultaneous with the expansion of the broadcasting network, there was also an increase in the number of radio sets. Estimated at 120,000 in 1960, the total number rose to 180,000 in 1964.⁴² In the concern for improving radio reception conditions throughout the territory and bringing successful informational and educational programming to the rural population, the government completed a national radio broadcasting system to provide for collective listening. In January 1962, 145 listening centers were established throughout the seven regions of the country. Serving as instruments of entertainment and education for the people, these centers symbolized an original means of decentralizing radio listening.⁴³ The aim of this decentralization consisted of implementing the infrastructure necessary to organize a rural radio forum and strengthen the political sophistication of the rural population. Another reason for the interest in these listening centers was the amount of information that could be gathered regarding the effects on the Senegalese people of national radio broadcasting – information that would be the basis for major impact studies.

The use of radio to promote development objectives, however, was central. First, Senegal, like most developing countries, adopted the “audiovisual mode,”⁴⁴ facing, as it was, the many challenges of independence (increased literacy, modernization of the rural population, increased productivity and national integration) and seeking “historic shortcuts for overcoming the lack of development.” (Fougeyrollas 1967: 964). Moreover, more than other media – particularly newspapers – radio enjoys relatively favorable conditions for the transmission and reception of messages: *Radio Sénégal* often employs national languages to address its audience, most of which does not have a good comprehension of French.⁴⁵ Finally, radio is the preferred choice partly because of the lack of trained staff in a country with very low literacy rates. In the wake of independence, it was imperative to find an original means of dealing with the many pressing issues related to economic and social development.

As an ICT, radio is attempting to respond to these needs in several ways: by conceiving – through the production of messages – a new language, in order, as Michel Bourgeois (1978:384) states, to satisfy “the enormous need for dialogue on the part of listeners prepared to become participants in their own programs”; by instituting a collective listening system for educational broadcasts, with the content to be discussed and followed by concrete action; and

⁴² This increase in the number of radios was a result of the elimination of the radio tax in 1962.

⁴³ Responsibility for these listening centers was assigned to teams of volunteers, including – along with teachers – nurses and rural leaders, including senior military personnel in the village.

⁴⁴ According to Michel Bourgeois (1977: 382), “there is a real audiovisual mode, and one can hardly imagine a development program without an audiovisual component.”

⁴⁵ In 1960, 79% of Senegalese over 14 years of age did not understand French, according to the 1978 Statistical Yearbook of Senegal. For women, this rate was 98%. Moreover, nearly 70% of Senegalese lived in rural areas where the illiteracy rate is highest.

by organizing a system to monitor radio listening patterns, using an ongoing feedback mechanism that allows radio stations to reorient and adapt programs based on the opinions and aspirations of their audiences.

As can be seen, the uses for radio at this stage of its evolution as an ICT, in Senegal as elsewhere, are based on what Muchielli calls “a rationale of organizational power and control, along with a practical, knowledge-based approach.” (Muchielli 1998:10)

Political challenges related to independent private radio

The important role of independent radio stations in the advent of “political alternation” in 2000⁴⁶ was made possible by the technique of live reporting and, above all, by the mobile telephone. This NICT allowed private radio stations to engage in “a new way of doing radio.” The impact of these radio stations in bringing about political alternation is made clear by the major role they played in monitoring the regularity and transparency of the electoral process and in awakening a “new citizen awareness,” which they were instrumental in promoting among the Senegalese electorate. Indeed, while some observers attempt to “relativize” their determining role in the “political alternation,” independent radio stations symbolized, to a great extent, a force that helped to guarantee the regularity and transparency of Senegal’s presidential elections of March 2000.

As with national radio broadcasting, local radio stations are demonstrating their effectiveness as an “instrument for the conquest of power and control over institutions,” by ensuring, through live reporting, respect for a certain political orthodoxy.

Private radio stations also served as instruments for shaping a new form of citizen behavior among the Senegalese electorate, by playing a role in increasing people’s awareness. As Samb notes, “Through the many broadcasts dealing with the elections, radio stations managed to clarify the political choices of the citizens in a responsible manner.” (Samb 2000: 44) In providing people of all social strata with “useful” information, these radio stations served as powerful instruments in the development and maturation of opinions. At the same time, they assisted in consolidating the benefits of democracy in Senegal.

This political role was made possible by the exemplary interaction and complementarity between radio and the written press in the voting process, through the strategic importance of the mobile telephone, which facilitated the work of reporters. This interaction and complementarity between private radio stations and the newspapers was demonstrated in the daily press reviews produced by *Sud FM* and *Walfadjri FM*, among others. Moreover, the simultaneous use of French and national languages, particularly *Wolof*, enhanced the impact of these broadcasts on the public.

The strategic role of the mobile telephone produced a “new way of doing radio,” expressed through reporting and other live broadcasts. While the mobile telephone is not a new phenomenon, Senegalese journalists nevertheless utilized it in a way that surprised more than one observer during the presidential elections of February 2000.

⁴⁶ In March 2000, at the end of a two-round election, the political opposition candidate, the liberal Abdoulaye Wade, defeated the socialist candidate Abdou Diouf, who had been in power since January 1981.

For radio journalists, the mobile telephone is an instrument that enhances performance and effectiveness. Mobile telephony changed radio's modus operandi. The additional advantage it provides lies in the lightness of the device. Indeed, its use requires no additional personnel for sound recording. "Even if one loses a little sound quality, one gains in economy of personnel, speed and flexibility." (Wade 2000)

Uses of NICTs by Radio Stations

The different ways in which radio stations use NICTs are determined largely by the stations' technical sophistication – i.e., the technological creativeness and capacities of their staff.

Extent to which radio stations are equipped with NICTs

Our survey shed light on the technical sophistication of radio stations (State-run and independent) vis-à-vis NICTs. Most important were the telephone (fixed and cellular) and the multimedia computer (word processing, e-mail and Internet). We also analyzed the extent to which they use other related technologies, such as FM and DAT, and assess the constraints these radio stations face in using such technologies.

Fixed and cellular telephone

The radio stations that participated in the survey use two types of NICTs. The reasons most commonly given relate to the "speed and fluidity of information" provided by the fixed and cellular telephone. Direct accounts indicate a particularly strong appreciation for the benefits of the cellular telephone. Concern for "accuracy," "the need for modernity," as well as "user-friendliness" are also mentioned by heads of radio stations as reasons for using telephones (fixed and cellular) in their daily work. This latter quality is strongly emphasized, since – as stated by most respondents – "in order to enliven an interactive broadcast, the telephone is a necessity. This tool brings us closer to the public and allows us to manage our time." Thus, more than half a century after its appearance in Senegal,⁴⁷ the telephone seems today to have found, at the heart of radio stations, a particularly interesting use. In this context, it is worth noting the central role of SONATEL in establishing a high-quality infrastructure and providing effective telecommunications services.

The vocal server

In addition to the fixed and cellular telephone, vocal servers are also used by three private radio stations – Radio Dunyaa FM, Soxna FM and FM Santé Dakar. This rather original communication system allows the stations to draw the maximum benefits from the services offered by the SONATEL network. More fundamentally, however, the vocal server creates and strengthens rapport between the station and listeners – particularly the most deprived – while at the same time helping to "democratize" communication.

⁴⁷ The telephone appeared in Senegal in 1943.

The computer and the Internet

In terms of the prevalence of computers, the survey highlights the many disparities between different types of radio stations. While the State-run radio (RTS) and all of the independent commercial radio stations are equipped with computers, community-based stations vary more in this regard: of the eight community-based radio stations currently in operation, only Penc Mi FM, of Fissel, and Radio Gaynaako FM, of Podor, do not have computers. With the exception of La Côtère FM (Joal) and Awagna FM (Bignona), very few stations of this type use the Internet on a regular basis.

Likewise, among the State-run radio, commercial radio stations and community-based stations, use of the computer varies according to the needs of the stations. Such use depends on the technical requirements related to operational aspects of radio (sound recording, recording of jingles, automating of radio programming), and to administrative and day-to-day operational needs, such as sending e-mail or bookkeeping. Computers are often supplemented by scanners.

The advantages of computers are notable at the technical level and in the administrative sphere. "One no longer needs to go to the post office to send mail," explain several station managers. In the technical realm, sound quality is improved, while the coupling of the computer with sound provides greater programming reliability.

As several users note, "a radio station equipped with DAT can provide automatic programming. Sound editing and tracking are automatic and more reliable. For managers at RTS, computers "free up work space, facilitate information storage and streamline filing." Others believe that the use of computers in accounting provides "greater transparency."

Despite their low use of computers, those in charge of community-based radio stations are no less aware of the advantages they provide. For ARPAC, "the Internet makes it possible to expand the AMARC and *Radios Voix Sans Frontières* networks and increase the possibilities for communicating within the Francophone environment."

While most stations with Internet access are connected out of a desire to increase contact with the world at large and out of a concern for improving "visibility,"⁴⁸ the fact is that the Internet presence of many radio stations has been facilitated by the relative simplicity of the technology and the many advantages it offers. Among these are the economy of making large investments for acquiring and maintaining short wave transmitters, better commercial visibility for local products being launched in the advertising market, and increasing the radio audience. (Camara 1997: 8)

Despite these various advantages, and despite the sometimes novel opportunities offered by the web,⁴⁹ station managers are nevertheless aware of the absolute necessity of attending to sound quality, in order to be able to compete on an equal footing with northern countries.

⁴⁸ Radio officials state: "The need to have an Internet presence relates as much to increasing the audience as to image."

⁴⁹ The presence of *Sud Com* on the web made it possible for Senegalese living in Canada to follow, live on the Internet from Dakar, the funeral of a great religious leader in 1997.

Conclusion

The use of NICTs by radio stations has brought a qualitative improvement in the services they offer, satisfying the need for greater professionalism in press coverage. Use of both the telephone (fixed or cellular) and computers (with its many applications, including DAT) has allowed for greater speed in processing and disseminating news and, finally, has provided radio with greater visibility.

As a result of NICTs, the radio landscape has been able to expand, while radio has become less expensive and less cumbersome. Thus, one might say that it represents “hardware, reduced to its simplest form.” (Diarra 1999:12-13) In short, NICTs – increasingly inexpensive and highly effective – are at the heart of the explosion in radio.

The development of all of the related infrastructure (radio, telephone, the Internet) has been accompanied by a strengthening of institutions and legislative action by the Senegalese government – with one law covering the press and another dealing with telephonic communication. Moreover, SONATEL has played a central role in the implementation of high-quality infrastructure, the provision of effective services and the gradual liberalization of radio frequencies, particularly FM.

With the advent of NICTs, radio is no longer what it used to be. These technological changes also changed radio’s relationship with Senegalese society, drawing closer to the people, who in turn have gained greater freedom. Moreover, it is with considerable relevance that Diarra (1999:12-13) emphasizes that, “In an oral society, radio begins to express the tendencies that we instill in a more open information society.” The convergence between radio and telephone, in particular, has opened up interesting prospects by adding a new dimension to the singularly oral environment. Finally, with NICTs, new platforms for visual, auditory and written expression come into play, creating truly “supranational virtual communities.”

For all of this, radio’s use of NICTs can hardly be said to have brought about an “information revolution.” This situation involves various constraints. They relate, first, to the challenge of accessing knowledge. Radio does not yet meet the needs and expectations of the rural population. In terms of “democratizing communication,” it is as if the people’s attempt to seek a greater voice through radio were being limited to political – to the detriment of other – concerns, most notably socio-economic ones.

The constraints include the absence of proper training⁵⁰ for those using technology tools, such as the computer and the Internet, as well as weak investment in connections and equipment. These constraints are expressed, finally, in maintenance and financing problems, particularly those caused by high telephone costs.

⁵⁰ According to radio station managers, “The use of NICTs requires ongoing training, due to the wide range of technologies to be explored, learned and mastered.” Moreover, according to these people, there are no national training programs in NICTs.”

Annexes

Major private commercial radio stations

Name	Date of inception	Broadcast area
Sud FM	July 1, 1995	Dakar, Thiès, Diourbel, Saint-Louis, Tambacounda and Ziguinchor
Teranga FM	1995	Saint- Louis
Radio Dunyaa	December 23, 1995	Dakar, Thiès, Louga, Mbour, Ziguinchor and Kaolack
Radio Nostalgie	June 7, 1996	Dakar
Walf FM	December 14, 1997	Dakar and Kaolack
7 FM	December 7, 1998	Dakar
Soxna FM	January 12, 1999	Dakar
Diamono FM	October 10, 1999	Dakar
Énergie FM	January 1, 2001	Dakar

Registered community-based radio stations

Name	Date of inception	Location
Radio Penc Mi	June 1996	Fissel (Thiès region)
FM Santé Dakar	December 31, 1998	Dakar
Radio Fréquence Oxy-Jeunes	June 16, 1999	Dakar, Pikine, Guédiawaye
Radio Niani FM	June 2000	Koumpentoum (Tambacounda region)
Radio rurale La Côtière	June 2000	Joal (Thiès region)
Radio Jiida FM	June 2000	Bakel (Tambacounda region)
Radio Jeeri FM	June 2000	Keur Momar Sarr (Louga region)
Radio Gaynaako FM	June 2000	Namarel/Podor (Saint- Louis region)
Radio Awagna FM	June 2000	Bignona (Ziguinchor region)

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