

PUBLIC SECTOR MEDIA AND THE CREDIBILITY CRISIS IN SENEGAL:

national television in a socialist
government (1960-2000)

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ABSTRACT – Based on the principles that underlie press freedom and the public service of the media, this article is a critical contribution to what was commonly called the “Senegalese political model”, considered as one of the few models of democracy in Francophone Africa during the first three decades of independence (1960 – 1990). As far as the media are concerned, this research shows that during that period, national television was not actually run more democratically than those of other countries of this part of the continent, then under civil or military dictatorship backed by a single party. Just like Zaire national television under President Mobutu, the Senegalese one was also a formidable tool of propaganda, a “mirror of State” and a distorting prism of the society. As a result, the crisis that stroke the Senegalese postcolonial State at the turn of the 1980s did not spare “its” television.

Key words: Senegal. Socialist regime. State. Public media and society. Press freedom.

A MÍDIA DO SETOR PÚBLICO E A CRISE DE CREDIBILIDADE NO SENEGAL: o caso da televisão nacional sob o regime socialista (1960 – 2000)

RESUMO – Com base nos princípios que fundam a liberdade de expressão e a mídia pública, este artigo pretende dar uma contribuição crítica ao que tem sido geralmente denominado de “modelo político senegalês”, considerado como um dos raros modelos de democracia na África francófona durante as três primeiras décadas após a independência (1960 – 1990). No que se refere à mídia, esta pesquisa visa a mostrar que a televisão nacional não teve, na verdade, um funcionamento mais democrático do que de outros países dessa parte do continente africano e que viviam, na época, sob um regime de ditadura civil e militar suportado por um partido único. Da mesma forma como a televisão nacional zairense sob o presidente Mobutu, a emissora senegalesa também foi uma indiscutível ferramenta de propaganda, um “espelho do Estado” e um prisma que deformava a sociedade. Como resultado, a crise pós-colonial que atingiu o Senegal na virada dos anos 1980 – 1990 acabou por afetar a “sua” televisão.

Palavras-chave: Senegal. Regime socialista. Estado. Mídia pública e sociedade. Liberdade de imprensa

LOS MEDIOS DEL SECTOR PÚBLICO Y LA CRISIS DE CREDIBILIDAD EN SENEGAL: el caso de la televisión nacional bajo el régimen socialista (1960-2000)

RESUMEN – On base en los principios que fundamentan la libertad de expresión y los medios públicos, este artículo pretende ofrecer una contribución crítica a lo que generalmente se ha denominado “modelo político senegalés” considerado como uno de los modelos distintos de democracia en África francófona durante las tres las primeras décadas después de la independencia (1960 – 1990). En lo que se refiere a los medios, esta investigación pretende mostrar que la televisión nacional no tuvo, en realidad, un funcionamiento más democrático que el de otros países de esa parte del continente africano y que vivían, durante esa época, bajo un régimen de dictadura civil y militar apoyado por un partido único. De la misma forma que la televisión nacional zairense bajo el mandato del presidente Mobutu, la emisora senegalesa también fue una indiscutible herramienta de propaganda, un “espejo del Estado” y un prisma que deformaba a la sociedad. Como resultado, la crisis post-colonial que afectó a Senegal a principios de los años 1980-1990 acabó afectando a “su” televisión.

Palabras clave: Senegal. Régimen socialista. Estado. Medios públicos y sociedad. Libertad de prensa.

1 Introduction

The socialist regime in Senegal rose to power along with the country's independence in 1960. The government reclaimed, ideologically, the African cultural values, communitarianism, and humanism, and founded an “authentic” socialism as a project of political development. It sought to distinguish itself from Marxist-Leninist scientific socialism, from Trotskyism and from Maoism, by including itself in the “humanized” African socialism movement created and implemented in other African countries such as Tanzania and its then-President Julius Nyerere (Charles, 1965; Bénot, 1969). Senegal had two presidents during its socialist regime: Léopold Sédar Senghor (1960 – 1980) and Abdou Diouf (1981 – 2000). For two decades (1970 – 1990) Senegal was a model for democracy and social stability in Africa, having gone from a single party system to a “limited multi-party system” in 1974, and then to a “full multi-party system” in 1981, the same year the media sector was liberalized (Diop & Diouf, 1990; Diop, 1992). This contrasted sharply with African politics at the time, which had a large presence of authoritarian single party

systems and were often established following coups d'état, but also by a state monopoly of the press, radio and television (Conac, 1993).

The Senegalese media system evolved between 1960 and 2000 through democratic reforms undertaken by the country's authorities due to pressure from the public, opposition parties and civil society, but it continued to be marked by a "tenacious" state monopoly over the television sector (Fall, 2008, p. 43; Barry, 2013). Consequently, despite the liberalization of the press in the 1970s, and of radio broadcasting in the mid-1990s, Senegal had only one state television channel during this time period. In fact, the highest state powers, in the name of political and social stability, claimed that the television sector, by virtue of its highly sensitive nature and the supposed power of the image, could not be open to independent operators as it would run the risk of provoking "public order problems" or the "destruction of the country". The level of the public's democratic culture was deemed insufficient to allow for the creation of private television.

Law 73-51, passed on December 4, 1973, created the *Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Sénégal (ORTS)*, which operated one national television channel, private broadcasting was considered useless and premature. The ORTS (which became RTS in 1992) had an exclusive monopoly on radio and television broadcasting. This law states that the ORTS is strictly limited to the general interests of Senegalese society, taking into account its different political, social, cultural, ideological, religious and ethnic components.

Nevertheless, between 1972, the year of the official launch of Senegalese national television, and 2000, the year that marked the end of the socialist regime and the first changeover of power, the level of popularity and credibility of ORTS continued to decline. Senegalese viewers, dissatisfied with its operations, lost confidence in TV which led to a crisis in the Senegalese public audiovisual sector (Sy, 2003). This crisis was regularly reported by the growing Senegalese press. Also, in 1989, the *Sud Hebdo* newspaper (Cf. Gaye, 1989) showed that ORTS news vehicles no longer dared display their logo on the main streets of Dakar for fear of being identified and of retaliatory action. In response to the unpopularity of national television, *Le Cafard Libéré* (1988, p. 4) renamed the ORTS "Office de Ragots-diffusion Télé-bidon du Sénégal".

The objective of this article is to present a retrospective study of Senegalese national television as it was under the socialist regime, seeking to shed light on its operations through the following questions:

did Senegalese viewers have “good reasons”¹ for being dissatisfied with national television and losing confidence in it? If these reasons were justified, what would they be? We need to question the political and ideological dynamics of the state monopoly over the national television sector during the socialist regime, both in terms of its manifest operations and its latent operations, in a Mertonian sense of the term².

In short, this study aims to question the operation of national television, a supposedly public medium, over a period of three decades (1972 – 2000). It will use the political and social history of Senegal as a background, highlighting the dynamics associated with public TV in the African context, particularly in Senegal.

After presenting the theoretical and methodological study references (part 1), this article describes the operations of Senegalese television under the socialist regime, revisiting the historical context of this media’s implementation in Senegal (2), as well as looking at its relations with the state and society through discursive and imagery records to, ultimately, try to understand the origin of the credibility crisis that affected Senegalese television (3).

2 Theoretical and Methodological References

Theories on the democratic role of the press state that the press is an essential element for the functioning of democratic societies or ones that aspire to democracy. These theories are embedded in an intellectual tradition that dates back to the Enlightenment of the seventeenth century. Thus, Alexis de Tocqueville understands the American press as a true counter power (Tocqueville, 1840). In contemporary times, this approach was defended by several authors such as Jürgen Habermas (Le Bohec 1997). Michael Schudson is a great representative of this trend. According to him, the democratic role of the media consists of

Providing citizens with fair and comprehensive information that enables them to make wise decisions as citizens; providing citizens with coherent frameworks to help them understand the complexity of the political universe, providing the quality and quantity of information that the public expects according to market laws; representing and speaking for the public and on behalf of public interest to control the government; eliciting empathy and providing an in-depth understanding of the situation of men in the world; providing a forum for dialogue between citizens, going beyond informing them of the current decision-making process, so as to enable them to participate fully in this process. (quoted by LE BOHEC, 1997, p. 121).

As we can see, Michael Schudson is referring to three classical conceptions of the press: the press as free expression, as a forum for today, and as a counter power (4th Power). Freedom of expression and the right to information are an essential principle for free expression of the press, and are upheld by all the legislative and regulatory provisions in force in a state which allow journalists to work independently. The press as a forum for today shows the press as a key device in a democratic public space, in the Habermasian sense of texts that, at first, would imply a free and equitable access to that space, in a symmetry of points of view, in the primacy of rational arguments under the force arguments between an exchange of ideas between citizens and the state and citizens. The press as a counter power refers to the need to limit the other powers (Executive, Legislative, and Judiciary) through media and prevent them from making mistakes that would be detrimental to democracy and the general interest.

However, as it is based on facts, this democratic role must come with a set of criteria that would guarantee what Daniel Cornu (1994, pp. 349-415) calls the credibility of information. In fact, this is a requirement that derives from the very etymological meaning of the act of informing. To inform means to search for and shape facts that are both known and unknown to the public. According to Cornu, the demand for truth as a moral and professional duty is obligatory for journalists as they must account for the facts, but also act as interpreters and narrators. It is at these three levels that the methodological requirements of objectivity and impartiality of credible information are inserted.

It is not objective, according to Daniel Cornu, that all information deals with rational truth (meaning which is rational, which is not?) instead of fact truth, a distinction which he borrows from Hannah Arendt, without reality being based on facts established by a rigorous journalistic investigation. All information implies a “conduct of objectivity” the goal of which, from Cornu’s point of view, is the completeness of the selection procedures. This presupposes, therefore, that journalists refuse to give preference to certain facts in the place of others, following a logic of inducing error.

According to Daniel Cornu, as a method of investigating the truth, impartiality is not just a neutrality which exposes two opposing points of view, content to give “both sides” of the story. He states that impartiality is different from not taking sides: it requires judgment without an a priori. Thus, even impartiality is not guaranteed to the journalist who comments on, explains, or judges events, nor does objectivity apply

to the journalist who observes reality. It is, above all, about adopting a 'conduct of impartiality': it is journalists who need to make their point of view clear so that anyone can know where they stand.

Considering theories on the democratic role of the press and the criteria of credibility of information which should be studied and evaluated, we ask the following initial questions: did Senegalese national television have a real democratic position during the socialist regime? Did it meet the criteria of credibility of information by journalists, practically seen as a *holy* ideal? Were there logics that brought them closer to or further away from this ideal? And what were the orders of these logics?

To answer these questions, we opted for a qualitative method where we conducted a series of interviews with Senegalese viewers and with journalists from national television and other media sectors. The information obtained was supplemented by academic papers written on the press, particularly the Senegalese press.

The following results were obtained based on this theoretical and methodological approach.

3 The genesis of Senegalese national television

The introduction of television in Senegal took place within a newly independent state and was marked by two main events: the launching of an educational television channel in 1963, which was later replaced by a general national television channel in 1972. This genesis profoundly shaped the dynamics of Senegalese television.

3.1 Introducing educational television

The introduction of national television after gaining their independence in the 1960s was an extremely important step for the states of sub-Saharan French Africa. Television was perceived not only as a symbol of power and a sign of sovereignty, but also as an ideological showcase for the parties in power (Dioh, 2009). This is why the states rushed to create a national public television, each of them wanted to be the first to do so. Congo Brazzaville was the first nation to begin broadcasting in 1963. Senegal also started a similar project at that same time, but for political and economic reasons it did not come to fruition (Dioh, 2009, pp. 187 – 188). From a political point of view, this project

suffered as a result of a “fratricidal” conflict that took place in December 1962 between the then-president Senghor and the President of the Council Mamadou Dia, the former accused the latter of a coup d’état due to major differences in terms of the ideological and economic orientation that should be given to the new Senegalese state. Moreover, on an economic level, the state was hesitant about launching a national public television channel which would meet the economic austerity measures that were necessary due to the country’s situation (Unesco, 1974, p.8). This type of initiative was seen as premature because of the numerous economic and social challenges faced by a newly independent state. The priority for French-speaking sub-Saharan Africa at the time was to develop their radio network rather than launching themselves into an unsure and quite expensive television adventure (Dioh, 2009, p. 28).

For these reasons, Senegal opted to launch an educational TV channel in 1962 instead of a national public one. Educational television, established with the support of Unesco, focused on educating adults, including those who were illiterate. In fact, in the early 1960s, the idea of using television to promote education in a developing country was prevalent. Educational television projects were developed in a number of African countries (Kenya, Nigeria, Niger, Sudan), often used as a stopgap measure due to the lack of teachers in these newly independent countries (Maurel, 2011). This policy was inserted in the model of development communication, also referred to as behavior change communication, which was quite prevalent in the 1960s, influenced by theories for the modernization of the south. These theories state that it is possible to develop while almost mechanically disseminating ideas, knowledge and new values, and adopting “good practices” from northern countries and applying them to southern ones, and using mass media to do so (Misse and Kiyindou, 2009). Unesco decided to support this type of project in Africa and was inspired by the role that rural educational radio and television played shortly after World War II in Canada, France and India. This role was considered a positive one by several assessment missions in terms of the economic and social development that occurred in the areas where these media were implemented (Unesco, 1974, pp. 7 – 8).

This educational television project was conducted throughout all of Africa, and Unesco, during its 1962 general conference, expressed its desire to choose Senegal for the pilot project. The agreement was signed on December 7, 1963, and the project was thus implemented: personnel were recruited and trained, technical facilities were built –

thanks to experts and equipment sent over by France and Canada – and national broadcasting was chosen to house educational television. Programming only commenced in 1965. However, due to a very limited broadcasting radius (30 kilometers), having only one broadcaster, and being held up by technical limitations, television only covered the capital city of Dakar and its surrounding area. Viewership was low at the time. Programs were broadcast across ten teleclubs, and were entitled to broadcast weekly programs of short duration. Even though programming was limited to topics such as hygiene and nutrition in the beginning, other subjects were soon included from 1965 to 1966 such as citizenship, domestic economy, religion, game shows and programs produced by the teleclubs themselves (Unesco, 1974, p.18). Educational television was met with some success, as this interview with the president of a teleclub located in the outskirts of Dakar shows:

Television has made big changes here in Pikine. It has helped us raise and provide for our children. Nowadays, we feed them porridge and continue to breastfeed them, so that they do not suffer at the time of weaning. One of the greatest changes occurred at school. Children were not going to class. But as soon as parents began to watch television, they began to understand the importance of education [...]. Everyone here wants to know when television broadcasts will resume, and it is not only women who want this, but also men who watch the programs very carefully and appreciate the changes it has made to their wives [...]. There is so much to learn and television has been the best education we have ever had. (Unesco, 1974, p. 4).

This media, however, was only a short story in the history of Senegalese audiovisual.

3.2 Launching national television

In 1972, the educational television broadcast the Munich Olympics. The Senegalese government decided to change the channel to one that broadcast political information and news in general, “speeding up the infrastructure: the purchase of appropriate equipment and the installation of a station in Gandoul, near Thiès” (Dia, 1987, p.411). The launching of this new national television was regulated under Law 73-51 of December 7, 1973, which transformed national broadcasting by creating the *Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Sénégal* (ORTS), a public administrative institution that grouped radio and television into one entity. The first article of Law 73-51 stipulates:

The *Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Sénégal* aims, by its own means, to respond to the demands and aspirations of the population with respect to information, culture, education, entertainment, and to represent the values of civilization. In this sense, it must be guided by an exclusive concern with the general interests of the collectivity [...].

4 Senegalese television in a socialist government

Officially speaking, national television should provide a public service. However, this goal became impossible to realize because of prevailing political ideologies. Television was thus placed under the exclusive authority of the state, on the pretense of building national unity and meeting the requirements for economic and social development which would lay the foundations for a new independent nation.

4.1 A channel exclusively controlled by the state party

The argument used by most post-independence African governments to justify the creation of single parties and to ensure they remained in power was to eliminate political pluralism associated with “tribalism” and regard it “an attack on public order” (Mahiou, 1969). At this time the right to vote had already been introduced in the French colony of Senegal, as well as in the rest of French-speaking Africa where citizens were already familiar with democratic ideas and practices (Suret-Canal, 1992, p. 66). However, after gaining its independence, then-president Senghor accused the opposition of establishing a strictly subversive and immature entity in the face of the demands for a “responsible” and “constructive” multi-party system. In fact, Senghor faced an ultra-radical Marxist left-wing opposition and a nationalist opposition that believed that decolonization could only happen if Senghor was no longer in power as he was seen as an “apprentice” of French neocolonialism inserted into Senegalese society. Senghor saw this as a hollow accusation and “dispatched” of the opposition parties, thus unifying the Senegalese political camp around his person and his party, the Union Progressiste sénégalaise (UPS, Senegalese Progressive Union, our translation).

In order to maximize the role of the national media, Senegal made substantial use of legal, financial, logistical and human resources to eliminate the independent press which was affiliated with newly

dissolved political parties, and thus establish the hegemony of state media. Its first five-year development plan, which commenced in 1961, states:

The state will allocate 450 million francs, from a total budget of 92.67 billion francs, to the Ministry of Information. Radio broadcasting receives most of the resources, with 335 million towards purchasing a powerful 200-kilowatt transmitter (150 million), reporting and transmission equipment (100 million), and renovating facilities (40 million). The installation of long-range antennas for short-wave transmission is estimated at a cost of 35 million, as well as a regional broadcaster in Saint-Louis for 10 million. A 15 million franc grant will be allocated towards creating an *Office du cinema*, allowing for the purchase of press and photographic material and the installation of a teleprinter connected to Reuters, estimated at a cost of 10 million. The installation and staffing of 28 regional information centers, essential for large-scale education, is expected to cost 75 million, including film projection trucks. In four years, economic repatriation of this budget should adhere to an annual increase: 1961: 52 million; 1963, 128 million; 1963, 132 million; 1964, 138 million. (Paye, 1992, p. 332).

This desire to build an information policy based on the monopoly of state media led the Senegalese public authorities to purchase the *Paris-Dakar* newspaper, renamed *Dakar-Matin*, and later transformed in 1970 to a government daily newspaper under the name of *Le Soleil*. It also strengthened the *Agence de Presse Sénégalaise*, which was created in 1959. Once established in 1972, television eventually became part of this official ideological-media device, consolidating the role of the state in media, allegedly allowing it to control public opinion.

Law 73-51 of December 7, 1973, transformed public media into a single administrative service, shaping journalists into mere administrative agents subject to the same norms governing state employees. State media journalists were thus subject to a duty of confidentiality which, as is well known, is incompatible with the freedom of expression, and underlies the freedom of the press. Journalists had no choice but to accept these rules or resign; the lack of private media companies meant they were unlikely to find work if they did resign. Law 73-51 prohibited the creation of any independent audio-visual vehicle, the penalty for doing so ranging from one month to one year of imprisonment. The *ORTS* board of directors and the steering committee were mostly comprised of members from different ministries and the National Assembly; journalists were a minority. The *ORTS* director general was appointed by the president of the Republic upon recommendation from the Ministry of Information. This placed the director general in a position of power.

4.2 Forms of government loyalty

The different forms of loyalty of television to the socialist government led state media and the government to cause rifts among the public, and the vehicle to be improperly qualified by the government as “public”.

4.2.1 Suffocating the plurality of expression

The Senegalese national television's first form of demonstrating loyalty to the socialist government was the absence of pluralism, illustrated by the systematic and deliberate exclusion of opposition parties and non-conformist voices. On the pretext of preventing the public press from being permanently transformed into a place for campaigning elections, the authorities limited the time opponents were allowed to access television, radio and the *Le Soleil* newspaper, effectively marginalizing these opponents and concealing their opinions and actions in order to produce homogeneous and uncontentious information (Diop, 1995, pp. 355-357). The direct consequence of this ostracism was a lack of arguments and competing debates about the major decisions that affected the country. From the point of view of those who are governed, their exclusion from public media came about mainly due to the lack of visibility given to their concerns, transforming these media into spaces dominated by institutional journalism. This type of one-way system where there are those who govern and those who are governed excluded the majority of the population from political communication. Ultimately, instead of using the media as a tool for exchanging ideas and a medium to establish contact with the public, socialist rulers made it an advertising tool to transform readers, audiences, and viewers into passive receivers of their messages.

During this period, the political leaders who were in opposition to the socialist government, such as historian and Pan-Africanist Cheikh Anta Diop, and economist and lawyer Abdoulaye Wade, were not allowed to appear on the news, much less be invited to participate. Non-conformist artists, such as filmmaker Ousmane Sembène, were concealed by Senegalese national television for the same reasons.

Due to the constant propaganda broadcast in support of the socialist government, national television ended up crystallizing all the frustrations of the opposition parties, independent civil society,

certain denominational communities, and a significant portion of the Senegalese public.

4.2.2 Excessive administration of power

Television's second demonstration of loyalty to the government was the excessive administration of power, which appeared by the smallest events and gestures. Thus, projected to be a reflection and barometer of Senegalese society, capable of situating itself among other countries from the rest of the world, the 8pm news broadcast ended up being limited to the head of state and his achievements, his political caravans in the country's interior, and his international trips. Then, to a lesser extent, there were the activities of the prime minister, of other members of government, and of religious groups which, if they wanted to continue to receive benefits from the government, had to cite the head of state in all their speeches or declarations (Sarr & Thiaw, 2002). As journalist Jacques Habib Sycette pointed out, this bias contributed towards building a distorted image of Senegalese society:

There is much political propaganda on national television, fueled by our money and the thankless work of all Senegalese. There is much of the biological and political family of the head of state, a lot of support to some religious groups at the expense of others, a lot of discourse and few visible, tangible results, much religious proselytism in a state that should be impartial, should provide work to all, and in an egalitarian way, and, above all, avoid breaking the balances that govern the nation and the country (everyone having access to a balanced coverage of news and information, fair remuneration for work, equidistance in relation to all religious denominations. (Sy, 2003, p. 27).

4.2.3 Overzealousness of general directors

The third demonstration of television's loyalty to the government lay with the overzealousness of the general directors who were in command of the Senegalese public media. As their positions could be rendered invalid at any time, and / or because of their political proximity with the Socialist Party, the general directors ended up adopting the role of guardians of the pro-government line in public media. Self-flattering and full of power, these directors did not hesitate to appear on national television and state the success and failures of the government and, when necessary, criticize the political opponents. This is how essayist

Mody Niang later describes Babacar Diagne, the Director-General of Public Media under the presidency of d'Abdou Diouf: "He was deeply opposed and personally saw to it that a consistent amount of time was dedicated to covering the opposition. However, he spoke unfavorably and offensively of the qualities of the ruling party" (Diakhité, 2013, 56).

As representatives of the eyes and ears of the state in public radio and TV newsrooms, these general directors played the role of gatekeeper, not in the journalistic sense of the term, but in a political one. In fact, they censored all issues and requests for coverage that did not favor the government and that were formulated by the opposition parties and by social powers not aligned with the government. Kadialy Diakhité, who has spent his entire career as a journalist in Senegal's public media, stated that:

Requests for news and events coverage would be sent by mail or fax directly from the director's office. Only urgent or vitally important requests were made by telephone. These requests were not forwarded to the relevant departments for examination, which in itself was not ideal. In some cases, they ran the risk of being ignored. Management, which clearly did not want to be taken by surprise, sought to exercise a more efficient *a priori* control over the situation, taking into account, of course, what had been requested (DIAKHITÉ, 2013, p. 5).

Because of this feud, Senegalese TV in the 1980s faced a crisis of popular rejection.

4.3 Denying the postcolonial state crisis

In the early 1980s post-colonial Senegal experienced a severe economic and financial crisis due to mismanagement, and was forced to accept a structural adjustment program imposed by the IMF and the World Bank. As the works from Momar-Coumba Diop and Mamadou Diouf (1990, pp. 326-327) show, the crisis first manifested by a sharp decline in the purchasing power of the public, followed by an increase in the price of consumer goods. This translated into a significant rise in unemployment and underemployment as a consequence of the successive deflations of the public and para-public sectors. This multi-sector crisis slowed everything down in Senegal, as described in the following commentary taken from the weekly publication, *Sud Hebdo*:

Disorder and fear of tomorrow is everywhere. They are signs of the times, but also an inevitable social phenomenon. As a result of the economic policy put in place, this strong trend affects

social achievements without necessarily opening new avenues of improvement, it is intriguing even to the most levelheaded person when it does not impose on us the need to investigate and question. (Sud Hebdo, 1988, pp. 4 – 5).

The crisis, with its disastrous social consequences, eventually discredited Senegalese television because of the enormous difference between the real situation in the country and the complacent reports on the government's supposed economic and personal achievements. While viewers wanted to know the reasons for the crisis, television was content to reproduce the official discourse which avoided discussing the crisis directly by appealing to the "deterioration of the North-South trade terms", the "drought", or the "locust danger". In a TV report on the bankruptcy of public and parapublic companies, and the collapse of banking establishments, not one question about the state's management is asked. Instead of explaining to the Senegalese people the real reasons for the crisis, the television continued to feature lengthy releases from the Ministerial Council, the President's agenda for receiving newly accredited ambassadors, or visits by foreign heads of state to Senegal... During the presidential and legislative elections of 1988, the biased coverage of the electoral campaign further reinforced the discrediting of national television. In order to prevent opponents from showing voters the origin of the economic and social crisis, or from expressing their concerns about electoral fraud, national television decided to allocate 15 minutes a day to Socialist Party (PS) advertising, while opposition parties were only given 3 minutes a day each (Diop & Diouf, 1990, p. 313).

The lack of credibility in television was amplified by the appearance of the first private newspapers (*Sud Hebdo*, *WalFadjri*, *Le Témoin*, *Le Cafard Libéré*). Run in part by nonconformist journalists from the public sector, these newspapers advocated independent journalism based on information and investigation. This allowed them to distinguish themselves from official media and from the opinion press affiliated with political parties which had emerged in the mid-1970s. For example, since 1987, *Le Cafard Libéré* has openly questioned the government's responsibility in the devaluation of the local economic and banking fabric, showing a cause-and-effect between the country's economic and financial crisis and the state management of sponsorship. Despite this new discourse made public by *Le Cafard Libéré* and other private newspapers, President Abdou Diouf was re-elected, although he was discredited in the electoral process. In this context, the independent newspapers revealed government's management mistakes as well as their electoral frauds.

This clearly affected the image of national television, considered as an actor of the “hold-up election” of 1988. The opposition parties were not invited to the TV coverage on the first results; only members of the party for the then head of state Abdou Diouf, “neutral” intellectuals, and foreign journalists were invited.

4.4 Reforms to the audiovisual sector in the 1990s

Since the early 1990s, a number of laws have been adopted to reform and democratize the Senegalese radio and television sector in response to the government’s crisis of legitimacy: Law 92-03 of 16 December, 1991, on the creation of a national society called “*Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise*” (RTS); and Law 92-57 of September 3, 1992, relating to pluralism in the radio and television industries. These new laws have modified the missions of the public audiovisual sector. Thus, Article 2 of the 1991 Law stated that:

National society is committed to meeting the needs and aspirations of the public in terms of information, culture, education and entertainment. It has a monopoly on the diffusion and distribution of radio and television programs throughout the country directed towards the public. The association of broadcasters affiliated to the exercise of monopoly shall, if necessary, be the subject of conventions dealing with the reciprocal obligations of the affiliates and of the national society. These conventions shall be approved by decree. National society must be guided exclusively by the general interests of the community. It shall be disseminated across Senegal by produced or co-produced broadcasts, as well as international exchanges of audiovisual production. It contributes to strengthening national unity [...].

This law introduced two key changes. The first was the transition from an administrative public status (financed entirely with state resources) to a commercial establishment that would need to seek its own forms of financing. The second change was the ability for independent operators to launch private radio and television channels, provided they signed an agreement with RTS. Thus, the first private commercial radio channels were created in the mid-1990s (*Sud Fm*, *Walf Fm*, *Nostalgie*, etc.), although television remained a public monopoly.

In addition, Law 92-57 of September 3, 1992 on pluralism in the radio and television sector was adopted with the aim of strengthening media pluralism and giving opposition parties access to media. However, even despite this law, access by civil society and any political organization opposed to the ruling party remained rather limited.

In short, these two changes contributed little to strengthening the public service missions of national television: it remained under the political and ideological control of a Party State, despite demands that it be responsible for its own financial autonomy (Faye, 2015).

4.5 The influence of the French organizational and political model

What we have realized is that the history of television in French sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly Senegalese national television, cannot be studied without making reference to the French model. When the former French colonies created their television channels after gaining their independence, they requested technical assistance from France. The *Office of Radio Télévision français* (ORTF), through the *Office of Coopération Radiophonique* (OCORA) was in charge of this mission. The technical assistance they provided involved a number of actions: sending journalists and engineers to carry out technical studies and install the necessary material; training African journalists and television technicians in France; producing the first films and stories for broadcast (Dioh, 2009, pp. 27 – 33).

This transfer of technology and competence also involved the transfer of the *ORTF* legal and administrative model, characterized by an exclusive monopoly of the State in the audiovisual sector, which in France lasted until 1981. This monopoly, inherited as of World War II, was a consequence of excessive centralism and state control over the *ORTF*, limited to a single administrative commercial establishment (Regourd, 2013, p. 3). Its general directors were appointed and removed by the ministerial council as they saw fit. Its journalists and technicians were considered employees who were to remain loyal to the French state to the detriment of freedom of the press. The French government even had a say in what content the news programs would broadcast. At a famous press conference, President Georges Pompidou publicly stated, on June 2, 1970, that television was “the voice of France at home and abroad”:

We have never found the perfect balance for our information. Maybe it's the government's fault. Maybe it's the journalists fault, too! Being an *ORTF* journalist is not the same as being a journalist elsewhere. The *ORTF*, regardless of whether seen or not, is the voice of France. This is how it is seen abroad and also by the public. (Pompidou, 1970).

As African television channels looked to this model for inspiration, the *ORTF* saw its legitimacy being questioned by a large-scale protest against President François Mitterrand taking office (Open Society Institute, 2005: 212).

The *ORTS* and *ORTF* have clear similarities. They both have a state monopoly of the audiovisual sector, the same administrative organization, the same forms of governmental tampering in the sector, and the same rules for appointing and removing general directors. They also share the same crisis of credibility that had led viewers to reject them.

5 Conclusion

Our primary focus was to discuss why Senegalese viewers were dissatisfied with national television as it was run in the socialist government (1960 – 2000). The results of this study revealed the process that led to the disarticulation of national television: although Senegalese national television was allegedly a public media serving the general interests of society, over the 40 years of its existence it held, in fact, an exclusive monopoly of the state, and used it in favor of the socialist government. The reasons why it fell into disfavor among the Senegalese people can be attributed to the following: it suffocated plural expression; it systematically marginalized political opposition and civil society; excessive authority of power; a hypertrophy of images and propaganda vehicled by journalists employed by the government; it transformed the media into a permanent electoral device; its inability to reflect the country's political, economic and social realities; and the lack of criticism and opposition debate. Over time these practices transformed Senegalese national television into one that expressed the views of one single tribe, a tribe consisting of the head of state and his members of government, and of pressure groups with power and all kinds of supporters.

This explains why during the 2000 presidential elections, before the fall of the socialist party, the Senegalese people were convinced that television could not change if there were no political intervention. Later works show that the expected changes promised by opposition parties have not come to light in the last two decades, which shows how difficult it is to get rid of a model whose origins are linked to an old monopoly.

NOTES

- 1 In the *paradigm of methodological individualism*, Boudon defines all social phenomena, regardless of what they are, as being the result of individual actions, actions based on “good reasons”, attributed by the actors according to their context, when they act, when adhering to the value systems of their choices, or issuing certain judgments (Cf. Morin, 2006).
- 2 According to Merton (1965, pp. 102-134), *manifest operations* correspond to operations that are visible, official and formal, but that can be masked by more diffuse, less known *latent operations*. To confuse them is a risk run by sociologists when they study the functions of an individual or an institution as a result of possible discrepancies between the two types of operations.

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