

New Information Technologies and the Democratic Process

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In towns, people are used to inflating electoral rolls out of all proportion. Neither the dead nor the absent are crossed off. It seems that General Faidherbe still votes at Port Louis - and four times rather than once, at that. In the bush, the opposite happens: it is the living who are crossed off.

Léopold Sédar Senghor

Introduction

When the State of Senegal acceded to Independence in 1960, it inherited the telecommunication system of the former occupying power. In 1985, the *Société nationale des Télécommunications* (SONATEL) was created to unify the national and international telecommunications which up until then had been run by TELESENEGAL. The public authorities had understood that the development of this sector would lead to the emergence of an information and communication society based on the new technologies.

The government first employed these technologies to gather statistical data for managing public finance, controlling wages, collecting taxes and keeping the population under surveillance. But, as from the second half of the 1990s, it was forced to lift the constraints on the dissemination of information. This process, which led to the “freeing up” of information from political control by the State, came about quite spontaneously. It brought IT and telecommunication tools together with those of the radio, so that information could be distributed without let or hindrance. This situation, however, which was imposed by circumstances that we shall examine later, did not figure in the plans of the ruling class. So official communication policy remained circumspect.

Nevertheless, as from 1994, the emergence of private radio stations invited comparison and, hence, emulation. With the appearance of private FM radio stations using the new information and communication technologies (ICT), freedom of expression took a great leap forward. The public relations company, the press and the documentation services of the ministerial departments - that up until then only used IT for accumulating data - were all undermined. Through the efforts of professionals like journalists who had vowed to struggle for freedom of expression, the democratization of Senegalese society was reinforced. Electoral history shows continual progress towards democracy, in spite of the reticence of those in power. The new ICT devices have played more than one nasty trick on the political actors opposed to honest elections. The Ministry of the Interior was forced to undergo a considerable transformation before organizing transparent, genuine elections in February and March 2000.

This influenced the technical and financial procedures in the development of new ICT. It came to be used by the public authorities in collecting public revenue, more rigorous management of civil servants and greater control over waged workers: in short, it contributed to the modernization of the State, which was seen as part of the democratization of society. This study assesses the efforts made by the Administration to adapt to this requirement for free and widespread dissemination of information. Thus we shall see how the need to collect information, promoted by previous policies based on the cult of administrative secrecy, was able to serve a new purpose: giving out information to the largest number of citizens. This had

a positive impact on the democratic process, particularly as concerns the right to information and freedom of expression.

The first part of this study analyzes the information policy of the Senegalese State through the various stages of its evolution towards the coupling of the computer with telecommunications and later, with radio/television. It also examines the attempt of Abdou Diouf's regime to improve institutional communication, while respecting the specific requirements of the armed forces and national defence. The second part analyzes the changes in the Ministry of the Interior. An examination of questions concerning the electoral rolls enables us to look once again at the polemics of the actors in the democratic game. As for the third part, which concentrates on private and State media, it raises issues relating to the monopoly of distribution and arbitration by the *Haut Conseil de l'Audiovisuel (HCA)* and mentions the election monitoring. The fourth part looks at the lessons to be drawn from the elections during the Internet era. It identifies the shortcomings and weaknesses in the Administration's preparations for the elections and highlights proposals by political actors to overcome them. Finally, we shall examine the relationships of the new regime with the media, the use of the new ICT during the referendum, the 2001 legislative elections and the "general policy" discourse of the Prime Minister.

IT taken to the extreme

The State has given much attention to telecommunications since the federation with Mali broke up in 1960. At a time when the Senegalese were locked into a trial of strength with their neighbours, on 18 August 1960 the Senegalese intercepted two messages from Colonel Soumaré to two companies of the Malian army stationed in the Casamance. He gave the order to return to the capital to maintain public order. These messages had been sent on orders from Modibo Keita, President of the Malian Federation, without the knowledge of the Minister of Defence, Mamadou Dia. President Senghor gave out that it was "these two messages that put us on the alert and made us, in turn, call on our people's militia to resist this show of force." The Senegalese emerged as the winners, as the Republican Guard, which came from Thiès, 75 kilometres from Dakar, were able to resist the troops of the Malian federal army (Ndiaye 1980: p.182)

A *Commission nationale de la télécommunication*, attached to the President's Office, had been created in 1960. In 1972, a *Comité national de l'informatique* was set up. In 1987 it was the turn of the *Délégation à l'Informatique*.¹ The former head of the *Direction du Traitement automatique de l'Information (DTAI)* was appointed head of the new body. It first depended on the Office of the President of the Republic and was then put under the supervision of different ministerial departments.

State policy on the new ICT was spelt out by the President of the Republic and in the Ministries for the Modernization of the State and for Scientific Research and Technology. Official information policy was stifled during Abdou Diouf's regime, because IT, its natural support, was never under the supervision of the Ministry of Communication. Right from the start, State policy on the new ICT never integrated IT tools. In the international political

¹ Decree No. 87-1303 of 20 October 1987, which nominated a *Délégué à l'Informatique*.

context that prevailed at the time, the only concern of the public authorities was that telecommunications and IT should be converted into instruments of sovereignty.

The first task of the *Délégation à l'Informatique* was to coordinate the IT procedures of the administration and the parastatal agencies. Responsibility for the IT framework lay essentially with the *Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et du Plan* which relied on the DTAI apart from the IT centre of the *Direction des Douanes* (CID), which is responsible for Customs, and the Ministry of the Interior through the *Direction de l'Automatisation du fichier* (DAF), responsible for the automatization of the files.

Although the Administration has not completely achieved its objective of “modernizing the State”, there has been some progress. IT as an information tool is used in administering property and people, for managing personnel more rigorously, for following the careers of State employees and for treating waged workers more efficiently. However, the only part of the the public administration to carry out a coherent IT policy is the DTAI and the IT service of the *Direction des Douanes*, which has developed the “GAINDE system”.

IT has been introduced into the structures and procedures by national projects aimed at setting up a data bank on persons (individuals and collective bodies), land and the organizational structure and networks of the Ministry of the Interior, increasing revenues collected by the Ministry of Finance and improving the management of human resources with, in particular, the “Personnel Function Project”, of the *Ministère de la Fonction Publique*.

The first project, based on the Ministry of the Interior and entitled “Project for Regional IT units for Development” (URID) covers the whole national territory. The local outposts of the Administration are natural providers of information and all the administrative authorities - government, prefects and sub-prefects - possess the equipment enabling them to stock the data they collect.

The second project aims at improving the State’s revenues by broadening the base for property taxes and increasing the rate of recovery. This project is making a more comprehensive census of building property, assessing its value by working out what is owed in taxes and identifying the owner among the various occupants. Its work is supported by aerial photography and digital data interpretation.

As for the third project, known as GAINDE (Système de Gestion automatisée des Informations douanières et des Echanges), it was started in 1984 by the *Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances*, with the assistance of the *Comité d'Appui à l'Informatique*. Its latest initiative, the “Personnel Function Project”, has taken up the old dream of automatizing the civil service, which was first encouraged by the *Bureau Organisation et Méthode* (BOM) in the President’s Office. The study was started in 1979, when the *Ministère de la Fonction Publique* was experiencing increasing difficulties in managing its different personnel and the administrative regulations concerning them. It was a question of collecting information on the pay, administration and current management of the personnel from the ministries employing them and incorporating them into one master file. This project freed staff from routine administrative tasks, enabling the State to catch up with a backlog of ten years and take action on administrative decisions about the reclassification and authentication of files in the central filing system. Thus employees were able to get the promotions as envisaged in the career plans of their corporations. Files have been reconstituted and lost documents recovered. At the

same time the service chiefs of the central and territorial administration have been instructed about the importance of efficient management of human resources.

These projects have helped to civilize the relationships between the Administration and citizens, but they have also reinforced the democratic process. The setting up of a Ministry for the Modernization of the State and giving it to an IT expert, Maged Diouf, symbolized the drive towards IT taken to the extreme.² But the State's IT policy has not coincided with its policy on telecommunications and information. It would in fact be interesting to analyze the reasons why the political decision-makers did not envisage the use of the new ICT in the State media. A document entitled "Senegal's strategy on the information highways" was evaluated by experts brought together by the Ministry for Scientific Research and Technology as a "round-up of prospective projects" and they deplored "the weak institutional mechanisms for taking the necessary action to promote a greater use of ICT in an overall, coherent policy." (Ministry for Scientific Research, 1998: 27).

IT and telecommunications are thus making progress, but separately from one another. From 1960 to the first telecommunication reform in 1985, Senegal had 23,000 telephone lines. The network was old and dilapidated and often broke down. When the State restructured the *Office national des Postes et Télécommunications (OPT)* into two separate companies, the *Office des Postes et de la Caisse d'Epargne (OPCE)* and the *Société nationale des télécommunications (SONATEL)*, it decided to develop the telecommunication sector. In 1989, those formulating State policy only vaguely realized the issues at stake when they forecast "the advent of a communication society, based on the development of information technology, which will make the world still more interdependent and influence ways of life and production..." (*Ministère du Plan and de la Coopération*, 1989: 34).

The magic trio

As a result of the first reform the telecommunications network is now 90 per cent digital. The number of telephone lines has risen from 23,000 in December 1995 to 80,000 and the telephone system has a capacity of 105,200 lines. During this period there was a diversification of services offered, for example, packet data transmission. The quality of the service has considerably improved, with efficiency rates of 50 per cent for local telecommunications, and 45 per cent for inter-urban ones. Telecommunication services accounted for an increase in the Gross National Product, with a regular growth estimated at 2.4 per cent in 1994. During the second reform it was envisaged bringing it up to 3.5 per cent by 2000. In addition, 50 per cent of the village centres were to be equipped with at least one telephone line, with efficiency rates for local telecommunications of 70 per cent and 60 per cent for inter-urban ones. The government has committed itself to promoting the development of a local industry for telecommunication equipment, taking into account the requirements of internal security and national defence.

Opening up to capital investment enabled SONATEL to adapt to an environment that had become competitive. But a large portion of the shares remained in the hands of the State so that it could ensure that the public service tasks were properly carried out. When it gave up part of its share in the capital, the government encouraged the participation of private groups in the monitoring and management of the company. The Telecommunications Code, which

² Decree No. 91-426 of 8 April 1991, nominating ministers.

was voted by the National Assembly on 31 January 1996 (Law No. 96 03 of 22 February 1996) defined categories of monopolies, regulated competition and free competition. The monopoly, conceded to SONATEL by the State, is applied to the fixed telephone network, telex, telegraph and access to the "International". Regulated competition covers electric radio networks, the government having authorized, in 1997, two private operators, ALIZE and SENTEL, to set up a network of mobile radio-telephones, whose mandates spell out the rights and obligations of the contracting parties.

The cellular network ALIZE covers the main towns and autoroutes of Senegal. Reporters working for the private radio *Sud FM* used it during the local elections of November 1996 and it has grown at an astounding rate. The other competitor, which was officially recognized in April 1999, has reinforced mobile telephone capacity. It is a real revolution in the media field as all the political leaders, both those in power and in the opposition, immediately grasped the advantages of this new gadget. The radio journalist is now freed from the burden of having to make direct sound contact which required a qualified technical team using sophisticated equipment. Moreover, listeners can contact the studio and give their views without the risk of being censored.

Officially Senegal has been connected to the Internet since 1996. That year was a turning point as it was after the very controversial elections of November that the political actors, by demanding the setting up of an electoral file on the Internet, brought together this magic trio that played a determining rôle in ensuring the transparency and authenticity of the vote: the private radio, the mobile phone and the computer. In 1997, Prime Minister Mamadou Lamine Loum readjusted his government's plans accordingly, assigning the *Délégation à l'Informatique* the task of establishing, in 1998-1999, a coherent framework for the promotion of the new information and communication technologies.

Three priorities were set: to get IT recognized by the politicians as a priority ; to remove obstacles preventing projects from having a catalytic effect ; and to help private companies operate in an economic environment favourable to their activities. However, the political approach to the rôle of the new ICT has been only partial, as it only calls for "facilitating the connection of the population to the national media (radio, television), taking into account the specific situation of each locality (community and rural private stations)." (*Ministère du Plan et de la Coopération*, 1997: 113). As for the Ministry of Communication, it only intervened on the question to recall "the importance of the telecommunication sector" in a "Declaration on the policy for developing Senegalese telecommunications". The signatories, the *Ministère du Plan et de la Coopération*, as well as the Communication Minister himself, acknowledged that: "the world is evidently going through its third revolution, that of information. One of its characteristics is the convergence between the information technologies, telecommunications and radio/television." However they only recognize the "spectacular upheavals in the world of telecommunications."

The telecommunications tree continues to hide the information forest which underwent a fundamental change with the emergence of private radio stations. Juridically, Senegal was the only country, apart from the Côte d'Ivoire, to retain State monopoly over the radio/television sector. However, while the monopoly status has been largely superseded officially, in practice it continues. Future changes will doubtless find a legal framework within which to operate.

“Sensitive” information

The government’s decision to give priority to data storage is based on its approach to administrative matters that are very often judged secret or, at least, confidential. Following the request of IT professionals, President Abdou Diouf sent out a circular in which he recommended that each ministry set up a press and documentation service, with a journalist and a documentalist or archivist.³ Little has been done to comply, as the heads of the ministries are against giving out some of their administrative acts. And journalists continue to come up against difficulties in getting access to official sources of administrative information. The disinclination to disseminate information from the central administration was stressed by Samb (1998:14): “In spite of these presidential directives, those issued by the interministerial council of 6 August 1993 and the recommendations of the working group on governmental communications, which were handed in to the Minister of Communication on 30 November 1995, there does not seem to be any real communication policy. The working group on governmental communication had presented its conclusions along these lines, but there has been no follow-up.” The report’s observations are depressing: there are no press officers in the Ministries of the Economy and Finance, of Justice, of National Education and, obviously, of the Armed Forces. They are silent citadels. But the situation is hardly better in the ministries that do have press officers. Where these are employed, they are barely informed of the contents of the communications classified as “secret” or “confidential”.

The Senegalese authorities do not trust the press, especially the private press. President Abdou Diouf set a bad example, for he did not give press conferences. Although he often willingly responded to requests for interviews from the foreign media, he did not do so for the national press. In this he was unlike his predecessor Léopold Sédar Senghor who received the press once a year. Under Diouf the government was still considered non-transparent: the Prime Minister did not give press conferences or interviews. Ministers followed his example, refusing to participate in broadcasts open to political actors and civil society.

In the Ministry of the Armed Forces, the *Direction de l’Information et des Relations publiques des armées (DIRPA)*, headed by a colonel, is responsible for all information and communication. The Minister has no press officer, let alone a specific approach to communication. Strictly military information is centralized at general staff headquarters and, after sorting, sent on to the Head of State. Through DIRPA the army has made an effort to communicate with both public and private media. It took the initiative of organizing, on 13 and 14 May, a seminar for senior defence officers on “The treatment of sensitive information by the media”

This seminar was held under the auspices of the President of the Republic and it brought together, apart from the senior defence officers, members of the government, representatives of official bodies, the union of Senegalese information and communication professionals (SYNPICS) and most of the press bodies. At the end of the meeting, a follow-up committee was established to make a round-up of the proceedings. Before the text was approved, SYNPICS withdrew, so as not to exceed its mandate. The journalists were not in favour of

³ Presidential circular No. 28/PR/8 November 1984 and Alain Agboton (1984).

“press legislation and regulation of sensitive information”, the direction in which the follow-up committee was heading.⁴

The notion of sensitive information is seen by journalists who believe in freedom to inform as a pretext for censorship. Its very definition has turned out to be a Gordian knot. Djibril Samb, nominated vice-president of the follow-up committee by presidential decree No. 1261 of 19 February 1996, considers that it covers “all categories of assorted information, with a special mention of duties and responsibilities legally involving the possibility of restricting or limiting their distribution, because of the risk of compromising essential democratic values and public or individual liberties, which are not inferior either in dignity or relevance to the freedom to inform.”⁵ After the follow-up committee had concluded its work, it presented its report on the improvement of State communication in December 1998.

After the Diouf regime fell in March 2000, it was impossible to find unanimous agreement on a solution to the issue, which had been defined essentially by the military. Nevertheless some officers were concerned with IT security in the armed forces. They realized that, given the increase in their IT equipment and the importance of protecting certain information, the choice of an efficient security system depended on a well-planned approach to the whole question. This IT security system was organized in pyramidal form, the Ministry of the Armed Forces being at the top, with three levels below it. At the first level is the *Commission de la Sécurité Informatique* (CSI), whose function it is, in principle, to define security policy and the necessary measures to put it into operation. Then there is a qualified expert from the department who manages the security of IT systems and is also responsible for their ratification and monitoring. Next come the heads of the centre, each seconded by an IT security officer who sees to it that the prescribed arrangements are strictly adhered to.

Outside the Ministry of the Armed Forces, IT security lies with the Chiefs of Staff in the different armies. They are represented on the CSI by the head of the office for the transmission and automatic treatment of information. Among the networks, the users of both large and small terminals and micro-computers come under the control of the service chief responsible for the IT security of equipment and its environment. The latter sets up a file for IT security according to the CSI's instructions. Following set criteria, he nominates the persons responsible for looking after the equipment. Between two IT sites, whatever the network used, it is the transmission personnel who are responsible for IT security. In the camps and at the airforce and naval bases, the corps leader designates an IT security officer, who acts as adviser. This officer is authorized to coordinate the activities of the units in this field and to supervise the authorizing of the civil maintenance staff, as well as awareness-raising among the military personnel.

The IT experts in the armed forces closely follow the developments in the new information and communication technologies. They feel that the new developments in the automatic treatment of information entail risks: “it is urgent and necessary to implement a policy for reliable IT protection, so that we are in a better situation in the IT environment of

⁴ For SYNPICS, recognizing the juridical relevance of the notion of sensitive information was tantamount to accepting the reintroduction of censorship in a more subtle form.

⁵ Communication from Djibril Semb to the seminar on “The treatment of sensitive information in the media”, Dakar, 13-14 May, 1995.

tomorrow...” (*Armée-Nation*, No. 25: 35-36). The army preserves its reputation for being clam-like: the lukewarm attitude of the military authorities towards the new ICT is patent.

The Ministry of the Interior and the long march towards electoral transparency

The giant strides forward taken by Senegal in February and March 2000 can only be appreciated when compared with the first elections in the 1960s: the partial elections (the first of the 1960s) held on 30 July 1960 in Saint-Louis, the former capital of Senegal. The town mayor, who belonged to the party in power, *l'Union progressiste sénégalaise* (UPS), which was the precursor of the Socialist Party, presided over the first polling station. He had crammed the voting booths with ballot papers for his own party, amounting to half the total number of voters, after which he systematically refused to open the urns, thus contravening the measures laid down by Law No. 56-425 of 28 April 1956. He called in the police who then expelled all the opposition delegates who were demanding the opening of the urns before the ballots were counted.

At 8.30 a.m., the delegates of the *Parti africain de l'Indépendance* (PAI), which was the strongest political organization in town, were excluded from all the polling stations in direct contravention of the law. During the riots that followed, the delegates were then arrested. Lawyer Fadilou Diop, who defended them during their trial, laid the incriminating evidence on the table: the 15,000 ballots that had been cast by PAI militants. As the electoral college was composed of 25,000 voters, it was soon proved that the UPS had fraudulently proclaimed its victory with 22,000 votes. (Wade, 2000: 68)

Fraud and repression

The presidential and legislative elections of 1 December 1963, won by Léopold Sédar Senghor and his party (UPS), were tragic in a different way. At the end of the afternoon, the national radio had started broadcasting the results of centres where the voting had not yet terminated. The revolts that followed ended up with several people being killed, including some police. (The casualties were more numerous than the 16 deaths and 41 wounded reported by the French newspaper *Le Monde*.) A senior official, Abdoul Baïla Wane, at that time the deputy director of the President's Cabinet, stated, in connection with the referendum held the same year: “When the votes were counted I was astonished to see that in many polling booths the number of “yes” votes was greater than the number of registered voters - I won't say they were more than the actual voters.” After he had expressed his surprise, his superior Jean Collin, director of President Senghor's cabinet, said to him: “It's obvious that you are just discovering these things. I'm used to them. As far as we are concerned, our rôle is just to list the documents and transmit them to the Supreme Court, which will make its judgement...” (Wane, 1999, p. 68)

At the presidential and legislative elections of 25 February 1968 and those of 1973, there was massive abstention at the polls. The balloting took place amongst such political and social turmoil that the authorities were worried and decided that the clandestine opposition should be recognized, in gradual stages. This decision was taken in 1974, with the recognition of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS), the first party to be legally authorized since June 1966, when the PRA-Senegal “merged” with the UPS in power.

In 1978, for the first time in the country's political history and also for the last time as far as President Senghor was concerned, he faced challengers: Abdoulaye Wade of the PDS and Majhmout Diop of the PAI. Wade insisted that he had forced President Senghor into a run-off but the latter had obliged him to negotiate, under pressure from his own father, for it was more honourable for Senghor to be proclaimed winner on the first round. In 1983, 1988 and 1993 all elections were controversial. For the voting on 26 February 1983, the Supreme Court allowed electors to vote without presenting any identification document. In the two following elections, Abdou Diouf's party greatly benefited from the fact that the electoral roll contained a surplus of names registered to receive voting cards so that his party militants were able to vote several times. It was easy to obtain official documents which made it possible to produce the false identity cards that were used in a fraudulent election strategy based on multiple voting.. While it has been difficult to establish the extent to which mayors belonging to the Socialist Party were involved, suspicions have lingered. This corruption of political behaviour was not without unpleasant consequences. In 1983 Cheikh Anta Diop refused to enter the National Assembly to take up the only seat allotted to his party, the *Rassemblement national démocratique (RND)* in protest against the voting irregularities of 26 February. In 1988, the candidate Abdoulaye Wade and his allies were imprisoned even before the results were announced and for several months afterwards there were political disturbances in the country. In 1993 the President of the Constitutional Court, Judge Kéba Mbaye, suddenly resigned and the Vice-President Babacar Sèye was assassinated: all this happened before the results were made public. Only one year previously an electoral code had been adopted by consensus by all the political actors.

These events were to mark the end of the era of the written press being the only media to cover the elections. Private radio stations were at the forefront of the media coverage of the elections of 1996, 2000 and 2001. In 1993 it was the private press alone that stirred up controversy and publicized the contestation of candidate Aboulaye Wade, who refused to accept his defeat, against a background of social turbulence. Abdou Diouf took over power again and the country went from electoral dissent to juridical disputes. Abdoulaye Wade was the prime suspect in the Babacar Sèye assassination affair. But while national radio and television remained discreet on these serious allegations, press headlines expressed outrage. Abdou Diouf was officially proclaimed the winner of the elections without, however, these serious doubts having been dissipated.

The distrust of the Senegalese opposition towards the elections organized by the party in power is a long-standing tradition, starting with President Léopold Sédar Senghor himself before Independence, when he was in opposition to Lamine Guèye. He had declared: "In towns, people are used to inflating electoral rolls out of all proportion. Neither the dead nor the absent are crossed off. It seems that General Faidherbe still votes at Port Louis - and four times rather than once, at that. In the bush, the opposite happens: it is the living who are crossed off."⁶ The problem was thus a recurrent one in Senegalese elections. By a supreme irony it reached its height during the Senghor regime.

⁶ See the speeches of L.S. Senghor in the debates at the Palais Bourbon, during the session of 10-21 August 1951. Louis Faidherbe, Governor of Senegal (1854-1861 and 1863-1865) died in 1889.

During the 1990s, these political polemics gradually came to focus on the structure of the Ministry for the Interior, which was responsible for managing the electoral rolls. The DAF (*Direction de l'Automatisation du Fichier*) was thus pressured by parties to adapt itself to the changing political scene. It was to become a very useful service, rationalizing the issue of electronic identity cards which facilitated delivery of electoral voting cards, passports and various administrative documents. Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior, by putting electoral lists on the Internet in the interests of democracy and transparency, broke with its tradition of storing data on citizens for the purpose of police surveillance.

But the change was not yet complete. When Abibe Fall, the new director of the DAF (*Direction de l'Automatisation du Fichier*), took up his post in May 1999, he knew that there would be no respite. He would have to reorganize his service to meet the requirements of modernization and transparency if the importance of IT for the electoral arrangements was to be recognized. The DAF, having played a very important rôle in the elections, had been obliged to hand over part of its responsibilities to the *Direction générale des Elections (DGE)*. All programmes used in previous elections were modified. New programmes were to register the new names, changes and cancellations, while fresh equipment was ordered to increase the production capacity of the data processing centre.

The DAF director proceeded to renew IT material and equipment, as well as personnel. He considerably improved relationships with the press, putting into practice his belief not only that information should be given out but also that other peoples' advice should also be sought. In this way he promoted communication with the political actors who, from now on, could "see the transparency in the management of State affairs."

The Ministry of the Interior also decided to set up a *Direction de l'Information (DI)* to communicate to a public with whom relationships had hitherto been fraught with reciprocal distrust. After the enquiry into the highly controversial elections of 1996, the Inspection General of the State had recommended a complete reorganization of the Ministry of the Interior. As a result there was a series of significant actions, like the setting up of the DGE, which was made the responsibility of a State Inspector General. The DGE houses two other bodies, the *Direction chargée de la Formation et de la Communication (DFC)*, whose job is to ensure regular circulation of information about the electoral process through the training of personnel, and the *Direction des Opérations électorales (DOPSE)*, run by a divisional police superintendent.⁷

Abdou Diouf then nominated Army General Lamine Cissé as Minister of the Interior, by Decree 98-48. Under the supervision of Cissé, the armed forces and the police participated in ensuring the security of the polling stations during the elections on 22-26 May 1998. This created a general belief among the public that Cissé had met the challenge of organizing elections that were free, transparent and correct. The necessary precondition for drawing up electoral lists is the identification of the electoral body, composed of Senegalese of both sexes who have reached 18 years of age and in possession of all their civil and political rights, without any of the incapacities spelt out by the law.⁸

⁷ Decree No. 97-1271 of 26 December 1997

⁸ Articles 21 and L28 of laws 92-15 and 92-16 of 7 February 1992 concerning the electoral code (missing end of sentence)

The electoral roll

To establish a reliable list, by Decree 97-176 of 18 February 1997, the Head of State called for an exceptional revision of the former lists. The revision was first planned from 2 May to 31 August, the normal duration for revision, but it was extended to 31 October 1997. By that date there were 85,383 registrations, 64,387 modifications and 80,772 cancellations. But there was no time to give the commission presidents the proper training for their task. This was the reason why many entries could not be used by the DAF and were then the object of “justifiable rejection”, which was addressed to the administrative authority.

Various reasons were given for the low number of registrations compared with the potential number of electors. They included the fact that the rural population gave more importance to their agricultural activities ; that the administrative vehicles were few and dilapidated ; that there was poor representation of the political parties ; that the urban populations were not sufficiently mobilized. Nevertheless the provisional electoral rolls were published on 4 February 1998. The Ministry of the Interior informed the First President of the Appeal Court (by letter No. 677/MINT/DAF of 26 January 1998) to ask his co-operation in promptly handling any appeals by citizens and confirming that the electoral rolls, their revisions and other materials would be put at the disposition of the departmental tribunals. The latter could then take decisions about registration, cancellation and modification. But, out of the 2,335 decisions on registration, the DAF could only authenticate 1,457 cases, together with 26 cancellations out of the 27 decisions requested and 235 modifications out of the 236 requested. Moreover these arrangements could only take into account 881 decisions “because they required registration on voters’ files in which they were already registered”. (Ministry of the Interior, 2000)

At this point the electoral roll was closed at 3,070,512 voters. *L’Observatoire national des Elections (ONEL)*, as well as the different competing lists could receive a complete dossier on the electoral roll, with statistics of the voters by place of vote, polling station, town or rural community. After the cards were distributed, the departmental tribunals of Kaolack and Mbacké decided to reintegrate voters whose names had been cancelled, which brought the overall electoral roll to 3,083,983 voters, to which should be added the 80,844 Senegalese living abroad. In other words the final total of the electoral roll was 3,164,827 voters. But after a final check (the number of record books received by the DAF, the contents of each book, multiple registration and those of minors under 18 years of age on the polling day), the electoral roll was still further modified, through the cancellation of 84,306 multiple registrations and of 1,790 cases of minors that had been wrongly included.

The services of the Ministry of the Interior could then move on to a more advanced stage, which was the production of electoral documents (3,104,000 voters’ cards, lists of the distribution of these cards and attendance lists). This necessitated the lay-out, processing and quality control of lists running into 360,000 pages. The Ministry personnel felt that the time was too short, considering that the cards were to be distributed from 25 March onwards. However, they were able to complete the job with the aid of IT experts from the *Société nationale d’Electricité* (SENELEC), the *Compagnie de Banques de l’Afrique de l’Ouest* (CBAO) and the *Banque internationale pour le commerce et l’industrie du Sénégal* (BICIS).

In spite of the publicity spots, the distribution of the voters' cards was slow. Law No. 98-38 of 22 April 1998 extended the distribution period up until 48 hours before the polling took place. To help the latecomers, regrouped distribution commissions were set up the very day of the elections. Thus the original 1-month period for the distribution of the cards was doubled. The information centres, equipped with IT facilities and terminals and established by the DAF in the prefectures of Dakar and Pikine and at Rufisque, in the stadiums Iba Mar Diop and Demba Diop, were in operation from 9 to 24 May to give advice to some 10,000 people. Putting the electoral roll on the Internet was a major factor in organizing the poll, which was contested from the outset but all parties involved approved the results.

It was also necessary to understand how the vote was geographically constituted by setting up a list of the 4,908 voting districts, with the creation of 8,467 polling stations throughout the national territory. Difficulties encountered were above all due to the fact that the IT system did not take into account the most recent administrative divisions that had created new districts and villages. The staff of the polling stations were trained in voting procedures and techniques in seminars that brought together the administrative and juridical authorities, local politicians like the president of the regional council and the mayor, the heads of different services, two representatives from the departmental election watchdogs (ODEL) and two representatives from each political party and each region.

For the presidential election in 2000, the main issue was the electoral roll that consisted of a general roll including all the Senegalese living within the country and a special roll listing the Senegalese voters who were resident abroad.⁹

Since 1977 the electoral roll had not been reworked or manipulated, apart from normal or exceptional pre-electoral revisions. But the protest against the legislative elections of November 1998 had grown and political parties adopted a consensus that was recognized by Law 99-75 of 11 March 1999 concerning the updating of the electoral roll. This should have enabled the elimination of a large number of voters who unjustifiably continued to be included. The over-estimation of the electorate could be explained by emigration and deaths, demographic events that were not brought to the attention of the administrative commissions authorized to make cancellations. But inflation of the electoral lists has been a fraudulent strategy that pre-dates Independence.

The widespread implementation, in 1992 and 1993, of a national identity card introduced discrepancies in all the information registered in the lists of the national identity cards and in those of the electoral roll. This phenomenon was so pervasive that the differences could not be corrected with the revision of successive electoral lists, nor could they be put right by certificates of endorsement.

The updating of the electoral roll consisted in counting all the people who had collected their voting cards during the legislative elections of May 1998 and, subsequently, in an exceptional revision of the official texts, with the support of the political parties in the national and regional census and monitoring commissions. Law No. 99-75 authorized the cancellation of the name of any voters who had not collected their cards during the preceding elections. Thus,

⁹ Voters living abroad protested when the electoral rolls were put on the Internet, as it was felt they contained information that could be used for repressive purposes by the immigration services in the countries where they were resident.

out of over three million registered voters during the last elections only 1,781, 761 were left. They formed the “hard core” list, on the basis of which, citizens could avail themselves of the re-registration and modification operations from 2 May to 30 September 1999. The *Front pour la Régularité et la Transparence des Elections* (FRTE), which combines most of the opposition, nevertheless challenged this process, which led to reducing the number of citizens registered in the electoral roll to 2,619,799 voters.

The political will to use the new information and communication technologies is there, even if it manifests itself in different ways. While IT has been used on behalf of the governing elites, it has met with resistance and controversy among social and political forces. The FRTE organized a march on 2 February 2000 at the end of which its leaders presented to the Ministry of the Interior a declaration denouncing a “certain weakness of the administration on the instigation of the Socialist Party”. They castigated the fabrication of false official documents and national identity cards, as well as incomplete coverage of the national territory by the registration commissions for the electoral lists. But the opposition above all distrusted the electoral roll and the “Israeli cards”. They accused General Lamine Cissé of having made a parallel order for making cards, in spite of the order given to the Sanchez printing firm. The explanation of the Minister of the Interior was that “the Sanchez cards could be reproduced identically by a simple photocopy and therefore did not guarantee the reliability of the electoral system. I asked who could make cards that could not be falsified. There was no local company that could do it. A company with whom we work said that it could do it, but abroad, at its headquarters.”¹⁰ There seemed a serious threat to the authenticity of the polling when the opposition revealed the holding and buying of voting cards by members of the Socialist Party. The DAF explained that it could be a question of a double registration. Then the Minister of the Interior tried to reassure the political actors about the security measures ensured by the Israeli card: the word “false” became visible when it was photocopied and also the fact that the words “First name and family name, address” concealing the words “Republic of Senegal” disappeared as soon as one tried to photocopy the original.

Nevertheless, the opposition accused the Minister of the Interior of having manipulated the electoral roll in favour of the Socialist Party to enable its candidate Abdou Diouf to win the election in the first round. The main opposition candidate, Abdoulaye Wade, continued to insist that the cards lacked any guarantee of reliability.

But he did not propose to boycott the elections. He even suggested making corrections to the electoral roll in order to reinstate the names of people who had been wrongly removed. As soon as this was done, Wade proposed associating the opposition with the preparation of a new electoral roll.

The day after the FRTE march, Abdou Diouf addressed the Senegalese people, reminding them of certain regulations and obligations that had to be taken into account if the progress towards democracy was to be consolidated. He promised to do everything necessary so that democratic debate could be calm and respectful of the rights of others, and he invited the competing politicians to do likewise.

The *Front d’Action de la Société civile (FASC)* took a step that helped restore a climate of trust between the protagonists in the electoral process. The Minister of the Interior accepted the principle that the reliability of the electoral roll should be monitored by independent

¹⁰ *Les Cahiers de l’alternance*, June 2000, p.13

experts chosen by the FASC, the ONEL and the FRTE. To facilitate this, he made available technicians, a room equipped with three servers, 15 computers and 15 laser printers, as well as all the necessary consumables. The task of the independent experts was quite clear: to cross check the electoral rolls, the hard core list, the provisional lists, the cancellations, the new registrations, the driving licences, passports and national identity cards.

The expert commission charged with checking the reliability of the electoral roll organized its first press briefing on 21 February 2000. There were some conflicting points in their remarks. The only issue on which there was agreement was “the wish to continue the work beyond 27 February 2000 and to see the definitive electoral lists, by polling stations, prepared in three copies on 24 February and distributed to the FRTE, the ONEL and the Socialist Party, if it so requested...”

Mamadou Diop Decroix, the FRTE spokesman, also identified a number of anomalies that the experts had detected: 1,652,868 out of 2,619,799 voters were registered in the “hard core” list without any reference to identification documents. The electoral roll was not reliable and it was impossible to make it so by 27 February, the date for the first round of voting. In this he was contradicted by the President of the FASC, El Mazide Ndiaye, who felt that the electoral roll could serve the elections perfectly well. The DAF director, returning to the thesis of the two rolls held by the opposition, affirmed “that it has been demonstrated today that there is only one electoral roll, with 2,619,799 voters.” The representative of the ONEL stated that the drawing up of the electoral roll had, on the whole, respected the law. As for the 1,652,868 voters registered on the “hard core” list without references, he found that normal because they were part of the hard core that was the subject of a law which had been discussed and adopted by the National Assembly.

Private media versus State media

The State had maintained its predominance in the media field through its monopoly over radio broadcasting from 1960 to 1994 and another monopoly over radio and television since 1973. The television however very quickly became instrumentalized by political figures in that the projection of their images enabling them to emerge from the anonymity of actors of lesser stature. The authorities therefore banked on a timid opening of television by introducing, in 1991, a pay channel called Canal Horizons, a branch of the French channel Canal +, which did not feature news items. This was also to be the case for the multi-channel MMDS which broadcasts programmes from a dozen international TV channels. At the same time, Abdou Diouf, then President of the Republic, created the *Haut Conseil de la Radio-Télévision (HCRT)*, to monitor radio and television so as to “reinforce democratization and ensure that the basic regulations concerning pluralism in the radio and television are guaranteed by legislation, rather than depending on the directives of a simple decree...”¹¹

However on 1 July 1994 the situation very soon changed with the setting up of the first private radio station by the *Groupe Sud Communication*, thereby ensuring pluralism of opinions. In 1995 the extension of the radio network of *Groupe Sud Communication* was launched. Successively, stations covered the northern, central, southern and south-eastern regions. The second private radio authorized to broadcast was *Dunya FM*, on 24 December 1994, then it

¹¹ Law 92-57 of 3 September 1992 concerning pluralism in radio and television.

was the turn of *Nostalgie FM*, a branch of a French station. It had become something of a tradition, with a positive impact on the democratic process, when two other private stations were set up: *Wal Fadjri FM* of the press group which published a daily newspaper of the same name, started up at the end of December 1997 and then *7FM* (of the *7 Com* group, which publishes the daily newspaper *L'Info 7*). With almost three million receivers, radio has become the king of the media, with the strongest influence on public opinion. *Sud FM* has once again opened up the way by connecting up with Internet. In this it was soon followed by *Nostalgie-Dakar*, the RTS and *Walf FM*, so that they are able to make themselves heard everywhere in the world.

The top authorities of the country have realized that «illiteracy is a major obstacle in the access to communication. It does not encourage the involvement of the local authorities in the decentralized management of development, nor does it facilitate a sense of citizenship. In spite of the efforts that have been made, the literacy campaigns have left a large number of the population outside the field of communication...” This statement did not take into account the changes that were under way: since 1996 there has been a tendency to make communication accessible to all citizens, in all localities and in all languages. It was above all the rôle played by the *Sud FM radio* in the local elections of November 1996 that foreshadowed how radio pluralism was going to contribute to Senegalese democracy by reinforcing the transparency and honesty of the elections.

During the elections *Sud FM* had gone in for directing reporting, with a network of correspondents spread throughout all the regions and giving information from the polling centres. This coverage made it possible to expose the organizational defects of the polling: the late launching of the voting operations, the absence of voting cards for certain opposition parties and the doubtful quality of the indelible ink in a number of centres. Very often reporters had imposed a debate on the practices of the polling centre presidents, such as their refusal to allow the vote to be monitored by representatives of the competing parties, who were frequently expelled from the polling stations.

For the first time it was possible for the competent authorities to act effectively against fraud, dysfunctions and deficiencies about which, moreover, national opinion had been informed direct by the private press. The latter did not hesitate to mobilize the protagonists and witnesses in order to refer the matter to the authorities so that they could make good the defects. The dissemination of the results from each polling station by the radio at the same time as they were publicly displayed was a guarantee that the reports from the voting centres were not being manipulated by the officials or the allies of the party in power.

The influence of *Sud FM* was such that the Minister of the Interior, Abdourahmane Sow, who was also a member of the Political Bureau of the Socialist Party, issued a communiqué, before speaking on the radio, acknowledging the imperfections of the voting operations in the centres where there had clearly been turbulence. It was indeed the first time that the Administration recognized its mistakes in organizing an election and took measures to correct them. This dissemination of the information by a private radio, particularly on the Internet, anticipated the policy of the Ministry of Communication and the diffidence of the State media.

The RTS kept the monopoly of radio and television broadcasting and distribution at the national level. Those who wanted to set up a private radio had to submit to a hard and humiliating vetting by the RTS which, incidentally, had the right of access to the broadcasting

equipment of the private radios to check their technical condition, the characteristics of the signals issued and equipment used, the actual power emitted and the protection against possible interference with other telecommunication techniques. This intervention is understandable because of the need to maintain respect for the exclusivity of the frequencies attributed to the FM in order to avoid interference that could disturb the transmissions of the radio stations or upset the control towers of the airports. But, given the competition between the RTS and the radios, it is legitimate to question the wisdom of making this national company the agent of the State. Moreover, the managers of private radios have to transmit their financial documents and accounts to both the Ministries of Finance and Communication, while the RTS has the right to examine the capital of the radios to see if there are any dummy owners or to prevent any foreigner from owing 20 per cent of the social capital. The heads of the private radios see the RTS as both judge and party in the media competition created by pluralism. Also, the penalties that they can incur, particularly through Article 26 of the contracts imposed on programme licence holders, are draconian. This text stipulates that “If one or more obligations of the present contract is not fulfilled, the *Société nationale de radiodiffusion-télévision* can, without any warning, demand the suspension of all or part of the programmes, while awaiting a decision on the disagreement by the Minister for Information.” !

In 1997 such a penalty was imposed on the private radios that had not paid their licence fees. *Sud FM* was thus reduced to silence for several days. The following outcry enabled the private radios to obtain a reduction and the standardization of their licence fee to 5 million CFA francs for the main stations and 500,000 CFA francs for the regional ones. Furthermore, those responsible for the private radios undertook to apply the decision, announced by the Prime Minister Mamadou Lamin Loum in his programme speech, to pay their licence fees no longer to the RTS but to a special account in the Treasury to help build up the *Fonds d'Aide à la Presse* (FAP).

The RTS is also guarantor of the application of Law 92-57 of 3 September 1992 concerning pluralism in radio and television. It tried to acquit itself of the task, for example, by institutionalizing the weekly programme “Political Party Tribunal”, which enabled the different political groups to make their opinions known and also their positions vis-à-vis the questions of the day. Better still, the need to respect pluralism was inscribed in the contracts of those authorized to broadcast radio programmes. Apart from the respect for different ways of thinking, all programmes dealing with the nation’s current affairs have to observe the three-thirds regulations (1/3 of the time for the government, 1/3 for the parliamentary majority and 1/3 for the opposition). This regulation went through several tribulations on the eve of the legislative elections of 1998. The President of the *Haut Conseil de l’Audiovisuel* (HCA) had interpreted the regulation to mean that the private media had to give the same coverage as the State media. This amounted to banning the actual coverage of the campaign by private radio in favour of a simple obligation to broadcast the results and was contested by SYNPICS and the media concerned. The government decided that they were in the right, thereby making the president of the HCA lose face. No-one seemed to remember the outcome of the presidential decree No. 83-138 of 31 January 1983, which regulated the legislative election campaign of February 1983 by giving 21 minutes of broadcasting time to the “majority party” and 21 minutes for the seven competing opposition parties. This text was rejected by the Supreme Court which felt that the division of broadcasting time violated the Constitution that guaranteed candidates equality of treatment in their use of propaganda.

The polling monitors

The dissemination of information on the Internet without any prior control shattered all the authoritarianism and attempts at censorship. Nor could the gathering of information be obstructed for technical reasons, thanks to the mobile telephone which made it possible to contact the different protagonists in a political or social controversy at any time. Previously, a recorded interview could be censored and cut from the tape. Now, the technological revolution introduced the mobile telephone for direct reportage to the private radio studios.

During the two rounds of the presidential elections of February/March 2000, reporters with mobile telephones, in liaison with their respective studios, were able to watch over the electoral process until it was terminated. Thus they acted as monitors over the polling. The experience of *Sud FM* merits recounting. It was the third time that it covered an election. In 1996 its reporters were only able to call the studio from a telephone kiosk or a telephone close to the “covered” polling booth. In 1998 they had mobile telephones and their radio newsrooms had set up an IT network to collect and evaluate the polling results. Forms were thus given out to the reporters who had to fill them in with the statistics from the polling stations they were covering.

The legislative election of November 1998 served as a warning shot to the regime of Abdou Diouf because of the impact of directing reporting. In certain polling stations, like the one at the Berthe Maubert school, where President Diouf traditionally voted, the PS list was beaten by that of the *Union pour le Renouveau démocratique (URD)*. In some strongholds where the party in power had traditionally obtained 100 per cent of the vote, the *Parti démocratique sénégalais (PDS)* made some breakthroughs.

In the *Sud FM* studios, the presidential elections of February 2000 began in the morning by a round-up by the anchor-man who described the electoral scene, recalled the issues at stake, announced the programme and saw that all the correspondents were in place. These were based in Saint-Louis, Thiès, Kaolack, Mbour, Diourbel, Kolda, Fatick and Matam and they could call on reinforcements, if necessary, from the journalists of the *Sud Quotidien* who were also covering the campaigns of the candidates.

The radio presenters were on the look-out for the most important news items in the correspondents' reports and the duplex system enabled a discussion between several people. If they wanted more balance in the information, or to verify it, the commentator could call any correspondent who had not shown up. For the opening of the polling stations, they tried to find out whether all its staff were present, if the ballot boxes were in place and if the supposedly indelible ink was, indeed, indelible.

The interviews started at 10 o'clock. It was the custom to contact the candidates for the presidential elections at their homes, in their car or even at their local polling station. If they had voted, they could give their first impressions and denounce any irregularities. At 11.30 there was another appeal to correspondents to find out the affluence at the urns and in order to do this they had to go back and forth from the polling stations. The telephone lines of each FM radio station were open and the parties called the studios of the private radios to denounce any irregularities seen by the journalists in the voting.

During the presidential election of 2000, the radio described attempts at fraud. Those responsible withdrew, if they had not already been approached by the “monitoring groups” of the opposition, who were attracted to places by reports from the journalists. There was an increase in physical conflicts. At Rifisque, mayor Mbaye Jacques Diop, who on 22 February, had had two of his houses pillaged by Wade partisans, set on Wade’s young brother. Driven back by young people in the opposition, the mayor sought refuge in his house that had been burnt. His car, too, had been incinerated. His fellow citizen and party comrade, Pathé Ndiaye, director of the autonomous port of Dakar, rounded up some fighters armed with machetes. At Kaolack, polling stations were attacked in an attempt to steal the ballot boxes. Caught between two fires, the correspondent of *Sud FM* called out desperately (it was a live recording) when an assailant armed with a machete made towards her. The reply in the *wolof* language from the Dakar studio prevented the worst from happening. “Don’t move ! If he touches you, there won’t be enough ropes in the whole country to string him up !” For the *7FM* it was a baptism of fire. Its correspondents were often surrounded by a mob of voters, full of complaints and accusations. The listeners had difficulty in choosing between *Sud FM*, *7 FM* and *Walf FM*. From this last station, the results from each polling station were reported.

The opposition, who suspected that candidate Abdou Diouf wanted to hang on to power at any price, managed to survive unscathed the trial of the first round of the presidential election. Abdou Diouf had nearly 41 per cent of the votes while his main challenger mobilized 32 per cent. Feeling that the tide was turning against him, Abdou Diouf accepted, after the first round, to participate in a talk show organized by *Sud FM*. It was too little, too late. Particularly as he had refused a televised debate with Abdoulaye Wade, who had heightened the drama by going to meet him in the RTS precincts, thus showing how the outgoing president was evading the encounter. The president of the HCA intervened several times to try and stop the broadcasting of the results from the polling stations on the FM stations. To no avail. Diouf’s partisans desperately clung to the fiction that the vote of the rural areas would certainly go to him. The first results from Kolda destroyed their illusions: Abdoulaye Wade was the winner in the first seven polling stations . But the second round seemed less popular in the early stages and indeed there were fewer participants than in the first round. However, the general trend, which was relayed by the FM stations at the end of the afternoon, was favourable to Wade. The popular imagination soon associates the winner with those who recount his victory. Thus a radio presenter, making his correspondents repeat the results, did not understand why his listeners accused him of gloating over the air-waves. “In fact, it was to get the information recorded on to the network” was how he explained it.

The Minister of the Interior, who was in his office to “invigilate”, according to established tradition, had the communication director beside him. But the wait was not as long as usual because, according to the first estimates of the *Direction des Opérations électorales*, which were available at 11 p.m., the «president candidate» was in a difficult situation. He lost, with 41.51 per cent of the votes as against 58.49 per cent.

Lessons from the elections during the Internet era

Certain observers have tried to explain the positive impact of the private radios on the democratic process in terms of the quality of the Senegalese media professionals. Thus, for example, the president of the Panos Institute of Dakar believed “that the politicization and trade-unionism of the Senegalese journalists, together with the kind of training they had

received, for the most part at CESTI, were mostly responsible for the contents of the medias.” (Bathily 1998: 8) Others are tempted to present this experience in democracy as an example for other countries. The question remains as to whether Abdou Diouf would have accepted his defeat so easily before the official announcement of the results if the provisional results had not been relayed by the private radios, direct from the polling stations.

In any case, the elections of the Internet era prove that the coming together of certain forces determined to make law and justice prevail can help the progress of democracy. The journalists and most young people watched over the transparency of the polling. Two political observers remarked that “the autonomous organization of the press upset the logic of the political integration of social forces that the ruling class wanted to achieve.” (Diop and Diouf, 1990: 414) Ten years later, Senegal entered into the age of «political change-over”.

In spite of the admiration of international opinion for the Senegalese experience, it suffered from a number of weaknesses. The DAF cited a series of shortcomings in a document produced two months after the elections.

The first concerned the preparation of the “hard core” list: the non-availability of certain lists at the time it was being consulted, the material that was ordered and which arrived after the computerization work had been completed, the lists that could not be published because the deadlines were too short, the lack of information which engendered the distrust of the political parties and suspicion during the quadripartite agreement between the Ministry of the Interior, the FRTE, the ONEL and the FACS. To these problems should be added the fact that the establishment of the “hard core” list has not usually been taken into consideration in the electoral process (which creates a budgetary difficulty) and was not covered by the decree fixing the rates for the extra work involved in the elections.

The second concerned the exceptional revision of the lists which, at the beginning, was unable to include the updating of the electoral addresses. This brought about a number of rejections. “Large villages” like Touba and Médina Gounass, which are not divided into districts, were considered as a “single address”. This was also the case of new townships like Ndoum, created since 1996. At Dakar and Pikine, new polling stations could not be set up before the revision, which distanced certain voters from their polling stations. In the *département* of Oussouye, there was a serious problem of refugees: could it have been possible to change the usual polling places of these people outside their electoral constituency ?

As for the third shortcoming, it concerned the polling stations. As the file of proposals concerning the modification of the electoral roll by the administrative authorities was not properly utilized, there was contestation by the political parties. Moreover, the deadline for centralizing the proposed modifications created problems because it expired during and not after the revision period.

The fourth was about the composition of record books which carried the same number. This created refusals or modifications in the registrations. The record books were badly filled in because of the lack of training of the commission staff. Most of them do not seem to have properly understood the need to mention the voters’ change of address.

As for the fifth, it concerned the consolidation of the electoral roll, which was the most important stage in the technical preparations for the elections. It was envisaged to last 21 days

but it finally lasted only five days. Thus it was hopeless to try and review the cases of multiple registration. It was however possible to eliminate all the perfect duplicates, which numbered 156,998. The difference in treatment between the national electoral roll and the “foreign roll” of those abroad made it possible for the same person to figure twice - which was all the more likely because the foreign roll did not have a “hard core” list. The problem of all those with the same names made it almost impossible to detect what appeared to be duplicates. The cases of the incapacitated were received after the expiry date.

The sixth problem was the treatment of complaints. The deadline of 20 days, which was communicated to the judges, was not always respected. The juridical decisions thus arrived at the DAF after the voting cards were printed. Furthermore, out of the 2,500 complaints received by DAF, only 358 could be treated.

The seventh and last shortcoming concerned the decisions on the number of polling stations. The delay in the response of the authorities was such that there was no time to fix the number of polling stations by place and vote and the number of voters by polling station.

It was a laborious job, drawing up the definitive lists and distributing the voting cards. First there were a large number of lists to be printed in several copies in a very short time, with the risk that the printers could break down. Then the voting card was meant to be white, according to the ministerial decree and it was, in fact, pale blue. And finally, there were distribution problems such as the “disappearance” of voting cards.

There was also the difficulty, in the evening of the polling day, in getting all the results from the witnesses, as the minutes of the administrative authorities were not sent in time to the DAF for the results to be treated. Thus it was impossible to get a rapid impression of how the polling was going.

In spite of the exceptional nature, in the African context, of the two rounds in the presidential elections, they were not perfect. There were delegates of the *Organisme national des Droits de l'Homme* (ONDH), of observation missions from the international *Francophonie* agency and of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), of the Association of African Jurists (AJA), of the *Rencontre africaine des Droits de l'Homme* (RADDHO), of the NGO and ONEL collective. They criss-crossed five out of the ten regions of Senegal and after having visited 256 polling stations they welcomed the neutrality of the security forces, as well as the determining rôle played by the media. Nevertheless they did make some suggestions about the monitoring of the elections, the rôle and function of the HCA, the observing of elections by nationals and the question of political opinion polls. The RADDHO also suggested a reinforced rôle for the Administration, while, to avoid perpetual registration campaigns, the ONDH recommended the automatic registration of those reaching voting age (18 years).

But the organizers of the elections were the most profligate in making proposals and recommendations to improve future registrations. The DAF suggested, together with the Constitutional Council, keeping the attendance lists of the polling for statistical needs and for a possible reconstitution of the “hard core” list before starting revision. It recommended that the updating of the electoral addresses be carried out under two headings: an administrative census of the town districts and villages of Senegal, and the new voting places. It also recommended the generalization of identity cards, as well as a period of one month for the consolidation of the electoral roll and the merging of the national electoral roll with the

“foreign roll” so as to detect double entries. The DAF considers that a period of 10 to 15 days ought to be imposed on the judges for them to pronounce their decisions, which should be produced according to a model to be drawn up. It also thinks that it is necessary to forward the results from the controlling offices to the administrative authorities responsible for monitoring the polls immediately after the end of the polling, enabling the first provisional results to be collected in situ, which would be centralized by the Intranet network of the Ministry of the Interior. It is necessary, too, to upgrade the IT system so that it is more efficient and to purchase printers with a higher throughput rate, as well as more vehicles and motorbikes.

Senegal under Wade: Power and the press

After the election in February/March 2000, with the new regime Senegal was headed for a system of political change-over. The rôle of the press was no longer blown up as it was during the crucial elections of February and 1 March 2000, during which some 60 journalists from the private radios informed the whole world about what was going on in the elections, unravelling the plots of the swindlers, case by case. In taking power, the old opposition took over the television and the new president used the magic box as his predecessor had never done. As this had to be the mirror of reality, the organized militants within the departmental federations of the PDS were received in the palace of the Republic, while the old “penitent” adversaries came to eat humble pie.

As soon as the new Head of State took up his functions, the question of access to the source of information was posed in a new way for radio and television. This was the reason why the President created a unit to fulfil his communication requirements, which was entrusted to RTS journalists and assigned with a radio/TV team whose job it was to cover the events at the “Palace”, as well as the activities of the Head of State. This new structure took over from the RTS, which contented itself with broadcasting the reportages of the President’s new communication unit.

The correspondents of the private radios, who do not have a permanent access to the “Palace” are neither informed nor associated in the covering of the official activities of the President of the Republic. As they are not able to record his declarations live, their information about him is second-hand. In fact, these are not very convincing when the official information is being disseminated by RTS.

Now the “Palace of the Republic” is in the forefront of the news. It is there that President Wade receives the militants of his party in a meeting-like atmosphere. When this “high society” cannot be held in the President’s apartments, the meeting is held outside the main façade, in the forecourt or the gardens. The “Palace” is thus an obligatory stop-over for the “enemies” of yesteryear: those political “nomads”, the “transhumants”, mainly the dignitaries of the party that had held power and who came to sign their surrender in all transparency. The cameras of the President’s communication unit are always busy.

In fact Abdoulaye Wade has not hesitated in reining in the press, by fixing limits to the gathering and disseminating information from Casamance, where rebellion has been raging for 18 years, led by the *Mouvement des Forces démocratiques de la Casamance (MFDC)*. A press conference called by the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Communication gave the latter the opportunity to drive home the lesson by citing all the legal articles that permitted withholding information that damaged national unity. In a field where the former

president had exercised a certain amount of discretion, seeking consensus with the journalists and introducing the “sensitive information” terminology, his successor pulls no punches. He means to use the repressive measures available in the Senegalese penal code to attain his ends. But SYNPICS is not letting him get away with it: its National Executive Bureau (BEN) has condemned these intimidatory measures that represent a step back for democracy.

The other field given priority in the propaganda of the new President of the Republic was the constitutional referendum. To cut short the polemics resulting from the publication of the draft constitution, he presented and defended it for three hours in a live broadcast from the Palace of the Republic, during a televised programme initiated by that part of “civil society”, known as the Civil Forum. All those who wanted to participate in the programme could call President Wade on a free line. The purpose of the broadcast was to convince the Senegalese of his views against the political polemicists, the critical journalists and the sceptical intellectuals.

Only the television was used for this purpose. Why was it chosen when its public is far smaller than that of the private radios ? There were two main reasons. Television guaranteed a spectacle from which he had been deprived too often in the past, while he knew how to present himself to maximum advantage. And then his calculation proved correct because, by professional reflex, the presidential talk show was very well covered by the private radio stations connected to public television, with an unprecedented synchronization of the networks of the RTS, *Sud FM*, *Walf FM* and *Oxy-Jeunes*, the community radio established at Pikine. Abdoulaye Wade held a convivial conference - without the questions of the journalists that had become insupportable - at the same time as being widely disseminated.

In fact the constitutional referendum was the least controversial of all the consultations with the electorate in the whole history of Senegal. Particularly because, in a free interpretation of Clause 2 of Article LO 119, Babacar Kébé, President of the HCA agreed wholeheartedly with the Decree 2000-999 of 13 December 2000 (modifying that of 10 December), which “did not envisage regulations in favour of political tendencies wanting to participate in the referendum electoral campaign...” As the dissident voices were inaudible the referendum ended up by being a veritable plebiscite for the Head of State. But it was the legislative elections of 2001 in which he was to use television for his own political profit. The law having forbidden him to make a campaign for his party, he contented himself with figuring as a silent image in all the programmes of his party, as well as appearing in the official list of the *Coalition Sopi* beside its leader, who was the director of his cabinet. Wade’s ubiquitous image against the sound background of a famous Pape and Cheikh song, begging people not to “upset the boat” (the Senegalese nation), embodied the stability of the country and the Senegalese electorate was asked to reinforce it. The result was guaranteed: the presidential party obtained an absolute majority.

Nevertheless the obvious taste of the new governing elites for the the magic of television risked upsetting the privatization process that had begun under the old regime at snail’s pace. The State had indeed conceded, in September 1998, its monopoly on the MMDS network to two private operators, *Canal + Horizons* and *Excaf Télécom*. It has just authorized *Delta 2000* to exploit the MMDS system at St. Louis where *Excaf Télécom* is already operating. The new television situation in that town is dominated by rivalry between these two operators. This took a new turn with the scrambling of *Excaf Télécom*’s multi-channels. This was only a palliative remedy for the need, often recognized, to put an end to the television monopoly of the RTS and to give frequencies to other actors. Senegal is now waiting for the arrival of *La*

chaîne africaine (LCA), a subsidiary of *Groupe Sud Communication*, which already operates in France and can be picked up throughout the world. A presidential directive has requested the government to facilitate its coverage of the national territory. As pluralism in the public media has not been reinforced, the decision to privatize the television alone could reassure people that the new regime will maintain their declarations about respecting freedom of information.

The Ministry of Communication was not up to meeting the technological challenges involved in controlling the public service and it was dissolved when there was a ministerial reshuffle following the elections of April 2001. In fact the *Direction de la communication* was not even connected to the Internet. This delay showed how little importance was given to this ministerial department mastering the new ICT, even if its old “occupier” liked to show that he was moving with the times, coming into ministerial council meeting with a lap-top computer. However, as far as policy was concerned in that sector, he only amplified the errors made during the previous regime. Thus, in a press conference held on 16 October 2000, he announced the revocation of the licence accorded, on 3 July 1998, to SENTEL to exploit the public network of the mobile radio telephones (GSM). According to the old “occupier” of the ministry, revocation procedures were carried out on 29 September, following numerous shortcomings in applying the convention between the State of Senegal and the company. The licence was to be auctioned to those interested in taking it up (including SENTEL) on the basis of a new convention, which was to be spelt out in the forthcoming tender.

However, the following day, in a paid publicity announcement in the local newspapers, SENTEL denied, point by point, the remarks by the Minister. It maintained that it had met all its commitments. The polemic went no further. But the suspension of its licence does not seem to have had an adverse effect on SENTEL’s revenues.

Three months after the revocation of the SENTEL licence, a local satirical newspaper joked about the heavy silence that hung over the improbable auction sale that had been promised. The intervention of the President Wade’s juridical counsellor in managing the SENTEL dossier raised - and still raises - the problem of the separation of powers in the new regime. It also leads to speculation, as far as international law is concerned, on the relevance of certain juridical acts that could worry potential investors.

The “alternative” regime set up an *Agence de régulation des télécommunications (ART)*, responsible for managing and monitoring the radio and television frequencies and established a *Direction générale de l’informatique de l’Etat*, attached to the Office of the President of the Republic. Some political parties believe that, because of this, the Head of State, controlling the *Direction de l’automatisation du fichier (DAF)* and therefore the electoral roll, could gain advantage from this privileged position in future elections.

It is premature to conclude that this institutional rearrangement will endanger the transparency and honesty of future polls. The new ICT were acknowledged in the General Policy Declaration, when Prime Minister Mame Madior Boye recognized that the upheavals caused by these technological inventions “require new responsibilities like good governance, transparency in the relations between the executive and the legislative, the modernization of management and governmental structures.” The political class and civil society have to wait on these words to know what cause will be served by the new information and communication technologies under the regime of Abdoulaye Wade.

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