Digital Revolution and Democracy in Africa: Freedom of Expression Revitalized

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ABSTRACT

The advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has revolutionized the daily lives of Africans, particularly in the areas of governance and politics. The main objective is to show that ICTs have fostered freedom of expression in Africa. Explanatory and demonstrative methods have been used to show firstly that ICTs are socio-political transformers, secondly that ICTs have created the possibility of free expression in Africa, and thirdly that ICTs make democracy and good governance effective in Africa. In politics, ICTs have ushered in a new era of information liberalization, which in turn has led to effective freedom of expression on the African continent. However, it is important to control the use of these technologies if they are to be a lever for democracy and good governance. The political participation of Africans in the digital public sphere requires us to adopt a dynamic approach that accepts a concept that varies in time and space, depending on the means available to individuals at a given moment. The advent of the Internet has profoundly changed the way Africans act and, in a space of a few years, has become an important vector for communication and political action. The revolution brought about by the new electronic means of communication has made relations between members of the community much more fluid.

Keywords: good governance; democracy; freedom of expression; ICTs; social media

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the last century, the world has entered a new era, that of globalization. The advent of this globalization has spawned the expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). These have had a considerable impact on global governance. No government affords to ignore these technologies in the management of its affairs. As far as Africa is concerned, ICTs have had a positive impact on governance, contributing to the democratization process and increasingly enabling freedom of expression. They have enabled the liberalization of information, criticism, and denunciation of the problems facing populations. They are also a means used by opposition parties to counter the monopolization of television channels by the ruling party. With ICTs, expression is no longer muzzled, even if governments try to regulate them to restrict people's freedom of expression.

This contribution highlights the positive impact of the digital revolution on freedom of expression in Africa. It focuses on the following questions: How has the digital revolution contributed to the renewal of freedom of expression in Africa? How do ICTs contribute to socio-political transformation? Finally, how has ICTs contributed to the achievement of democracy and good governance in Africa?

The main objective is to show that ICTs have fostered freedom of expression in Africa. The secondary objectives are to demonstrate that ICTs are factors in political transformation, in the liberalization of expression and information on the African continent, and that better management of these technologies contributes, in the long term, to the achievement of democracy and good governance in Africa.

Using explanatory and demonstrative methods, the aim is to show firstly that ICTs are socio-political transformers, secondly that ICTs have created the possibility of free expression in Africa, and thirdly that ICTs make democracy and good governance effective in Africa.

ICT AS A SOCIO-POLITICAL TRANSFORMER

The history of mankind can be divided into five fundamental periods Antiquity (3300 BC - 476 AD) begins with the appearance of writing and ends with the fall of the Roman Empire. During this period, great civilizations appeared (Egyptian, Greek, and then the Roman Empire). The Roman Empire spread around the Mediterranean. The Romans invaded the Gallic peoples of northern Europe. But from the IVe century, peoples from the east invaded the Roman Empire.

The latter collapsed. At the same time, a new religion was born, Christianity, preached by Jesus of Nazareth. The Middle Ages (476-1492) This period stretches from the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. The people who had invaded the Roman Empire founded barbarian kingdoms. One of these kingdoms, the Franks, dominated Roman Gaul and gave their kingdom a name: France. This kingdom was led by Clovis. With the weakening of the Clovis dynasty (Merovingians), another dynasty took power in France: the Carolingians, including Chariemagne. During this period, a new religion was born: Islam, the religion of the Muslims. It was a period of many clashes between Muslims and Christians, but also one of exchange between these two religions. The Renaissance (15th - 16th centuries) The Renaissance is both a historical period and an artistic movement.

It began in Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries, then spread throughout Europe. It culminated in Mannerism towards the end of the 16th century. This marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Modern Times . Modern Times (1492-1789) This period stretches from the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus to the French Revolution. This period was marked by great discoveries. Europeans explored the planet for several reasons: they wanted to convert the populations of Africa and Asia to Christianity, they wanted to better understand the Earth and its continents, and they wanted to find new trade routes. The Europeans also wanted to dominate the lands they discovered. That's when slavery developed. At the same time, Europe experienced a renaissance in the arts and sciences: the Renaissance. The contemporary era (1789-1914) This period, although called the XXIe century, stretches from 1789 with the French Revolution and the end of absolute monarchy to 1914, the start of the First World War. During this period, a succession of noble regimes culminated in the Republic: The Restoration (1848 to 1830), the July Monarchy (1830 to 1848), the Second Empire (1852 to 1870) and finally the IIIe Republic (1870 to 1914). During the 19th century, France also underwent an industrial revolution. From 1914 to the present day, this period began with the First World War and continues to the present day. It has seen two very violent world wars. Each era is seen as a step beyond the previous one. In fact, from Antiquity based on cosmo centrism, we moved on to the Middle Ages characterized by ethnocentrism. Then, the transition from the Middle Ages, still called the Medieval Age, to the Renaissance was marked by the priority given to man rather than to God, while that from the Renaissance to the Modern Age was an extension of the importance given to man, but above all to reason. Finally, we see the same continuity between the Modern and Contemporary eras.

However, the contemporary era would come to present itself as a critique of modernity. This modernity is said to have failed to deliver the ideals of freedom and autonomy.

The contemporary era is supported by an artistic, philosophical, and intellectual concept called postmodernity. According to Larousse, postmodernity is a "concept used by certain sociologists to characterize the current state of Western civilization, insofar as it has lost confidence in the values of modernity (progress, emancipation) that have prevailed since the XVIIIe s."

Postmodernity aims to rehabilitate the values that modernity would normally have achieved, given that it is, according to the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, notably Jürgen Habermas, "an unfinished project". This struggle against the disenchantment engendered by modernity leads to "the sacredness of the individual, the cult, the mobility of social practices, the dissolution of the sense of responsibility towards the community".

It also marks the era of digital transformation and expansion. Digital technology, and ICT in particular, has had an impact on people's daily lives. We are currently in a digital age. Indeed, the world is digitalized, and people cannot do without ICT. They now occupy a predominant place in people's lives. ICTs affect the economic sphere, social and intersubjective realities, politics, and so on. With Olivier Martin and Éric Dagiral, we can say that ICTs have been "part of the social, cultural, and political landscape for many years".

But what is ICT? Information and Communication Technologies refer to "the set of tools and technological resources used to transmit, record, create, share or exchange information, including computers, the Internet (websites, blogs, and e-mail), live (radio, television and Internet broadcasting) and recorded (podcasts, audio and video players and recording media) broadcasting technologies and devices, and telephones (fixed or mobile, satellite, videoconferencing, etc.).

They also have a socio-political impact. Indeed, Information and Communication Technologies have contributed to the upheaval of human habits. They have succeeded in integrating the economy with electronic banking, education with telematics, and intersubjective relations with social networks. Digital technology has completely changed people's habits and attitudes. It has transformed the functioning of the public sphere and in particular social and political life.

Today, it's hard to ignore information and communication technologies. They have permeated all human existence to the point where: "in science, in the organization of the state and the city, in social relations, political commitments, choices of love and travel, commercial transactions, the creation of individual identities and collective memory, digital information is omnipresent". Today, through groups, forums, spaces, and lives, citizens debate subjects of common political interest. They can also organize, meet, and demonstrate to make their voices heard.

This approach has been at the root of major social movements such as the Arab Spring. So, to what extent have ICTs fostered freedom of expression in Africa?

TIC AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN AFRICA
Freedom is the state of being free from constraint, acting by one's will, and one's nature. In the political and social sense, the words "free" and "liberty" simply mark the absence of a social constraint imposed on the individual. In this sense, we are free to do anything that is not forbidden by law, and to refuse to do anything that the law does not order. Political freedoms" are those rights recognized to the individual as limiting the power of government: freedom of conscience, individual liberty, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, and so on.

As you can see, freedom of expression is a key component of civil and political liberties. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, refers to the right of every individual to express his opinions, ideas, and thoughts without interference. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right in the same way as freedom of information, as stated in the following terms: "Freedom of expression is a universal right and an element of all democracies. It takes many forms: oral, written, audiovisual, cultural, virtual, artistic, and so on. Freedom of expression encompasses several distinct freedoms: freedom of the press, freedom of the performing arts, freedom of education, collective freedom to disseminate opinions". It is essential to any democratic power because it is linked to human existence and the building of human communities.

Freedom of expression can be found in the concept of public reason as enunciated by John Rawls. Indeed, "this much broader and richer concept includes the possibility for all citizens to participate in political discussions and thus be able to influence choices about public affairs". In other words, freedom of expression is contained within public reason and gives every individual the means to take part in political and public debates.

It should also be pointed out that freedom of expression is linked to human nature. Of all living beings, only man is endowed with language. In other words, language is inherent to man. It is one of our fundamental characteristics. Indeed, expression, or language if you like, is a distinctive feature of man. In other words, man is a logos, a being endowed not only with reason but also with speech. It is these two qualities that distinguish him from other living beings. Hagège supports this view, adding that language is an integral part of human society.

Without speech, expression, or communication, human communities would not be possible. The foundation of society is linked to the ability of human beings to express their feelings and communicate with each other. That man is a political animal," says Aristotle, "to a greater degree than any bee or any other animal living in a gregarious state, is self-evident. Nature, we believe, does nothing in vain; man, alone of all animals, possesses speech (dialektos). Now, while the voice (phonè) serves only to indicate joy and sorrow, and for this reason belongs to the other animals as well (...), speech (logos) serves to express the useful and the harmful, and, consequently, also the just and the unjust: for it is the peculiar character of man, compared with other animals, to be the only one to have a sense of right and wrong, just and unjust and other moral notions, and it is the community of these sentiments that engenders family and city".

So, any human-centered society will make every effort to preserve freedom of expression because to deprive a person of the freedom to express himself is to deprive him of part of his humanity. Language, like reason, is a feature of man's humanity. Man's humanity lies in logos (reason and discourse). To this extent, to deprive man of language (expression or speech) is to strip him of part of his human quality, to dehumanize him. To deprive man of speech is an inhuman and dehumanizing act. Man's humanity lies in his ability to express himself, to reason, and to be free. A society that deprives an individual of his or her abilities becomes a demeaning society. It does not promote man but rather dehumanizes man. It is important to give everyone the means to express themselves freely, in the knowledge that nature, which does nothing in vain, says Aristotle, has bestowed upon man alone the gift of speech (...). It is this trade in speech that is the bond of all domestic and civil society.

This Aristotelian assertion helps us to grasp the importance of language and expression in the survival and construction of the human family and community. If for Aristotle "man is a political animal", his political nature is also explained by his ability to speak. Speech is not just an association of sounds, but an expression of thought and communication. To this extent, it is a factor of socialization and a bond between men.

Indeed, according to Aristotle, to communicate their needs, passions, and desires to others, men must express themselves. Expression enables people to communicate and come closer together. In this way, society is born of rapprochement. In this context, we can say that language enables social life, not only by being its foundation but also by helping to consolidate it. It is also the foundation of all human society. It is in this logic that Cicero goes one step further when he states: "It is by instructing one another, by communicating their thoughts, by discussing, by making judgments, that men draw closer together and form a certain natural society. Nothing distinguishes us more from beasts: in some, we recognize strength, as in horses and lions, but we never attribute to them equity, justice or goodness, because they have neither reason nor speech".

For Rousseau, the raison d'être of language is to be found in man himself. In truth, "as soon as a man was recognized by another as a feeling, thinking being similar to himself, the desire or need to communicate his feelings and thoughts made him seek the means to do so.

These means can only come from the senses, the only instruments by which one man can act on another. This, then, is the institution of sensible signs to express thought". In other words, language is created by men to express their thoughts. For Rousseau, language and thought are linked. They go hand in hand. It's hard to imagine a man without language.

The Aristotelian and Rousseauist approach help us to grasp the necessity of language for human beings. They prove that human beings seek out the means and create the frameworks to express themselves. Among these means are ICTs, which have renewed expression, especially in Africa. Thanks mainly to social networks, Africans are increasingly able to express their ideas, challenge and criticize decisions, and assert their rights. This was not the case after independence and the early years of multiparty politics.

African political independence was marked by two periods: the reign of the single-party system (from 1960 to 1990) and the multi-party system (from 1990 to the present day). As Kouamé N'Guessan explains: "The first three decades of post-independence Africa were dominated by single parties. Their configuration differed from country to country, but they all rested on the same principle: to make the nation one big family. All interests and contradictions must merge and be managed within this common mold".

In most African countries, the end of the colonial yoke coincided with the advent of single parties. With single parties, the "fathers of independence" hoped to consolidate national unity and cohesion. They argued that establishing political pluralism in newly independent countries would be a serious mistake. It would contribute to disunity, instability, and conflicts of all kinds. For them, pluralism rhymes with crisis, war, and, above all, underdevelopment. To this extent, the single party is the only way to unite populations around common projects and, at the same time, contribute to the continent's development.

In other words, "single-party regimes generally appeared on the political scene soon after independence, when two myths appeared in the language of African leaders: development and national unity. In fact, on the one hand, the introduction of the single party, the abolition of the separation of powers and control over the entire state apparatus were presented as the best way to achieve development". What's more, the introduction of single-party regimes was presented as a way of achieving national unity. (...). The single-party system was seen as more conducive to social cohesion in multi-ethnic African societies than the multiparty system inherited from European colonization, which was presented as a source of division.

For the "fathers of independence", the single-party system was the sine qua non for unity, development, and nation-building. For Félix Houphouët-Boigny, for example, Africans had inherited states rather than nations from colonization, and the birth of the Ivorian nation was a long-term process that would require the unification of all living forces in a single party. A multiparty system would disperse energies and, at the same time, reawaken ethnic and tribal quarrels.

In these one-party regimes, freedom of expression is in most cases a sham. The subtle aim of one-party rule for the fathers of independence is to hold on to power. To achieve this, several strategies are used to retain power. These include "money, information, food distribution, the threat of physical force, jobs, friendship, social rank, the right to legislate, voting and a variety of other phenomena". These strategies, as varied as they are, can essentially be summed up as physical and verbal violence, money, and information.

About the use of force as a means of dissuasion and coercion, the "fathers of independence" resorted to the repressive apparatus of the state, the main ones being the army and the judiciary. The army was used to suppress all forms of protest and dissent. It was responsible for preventing and dispersing demonstrations or any other form of revolt. Sometimes, it would imprison and take the lives of people who opposed the regimes in power. Justice, for its part, was the legal instrument used to legitimize arbitrary arrests and the imprisonment of those who opposed the government. However, the use of justice varied according to the country and the type of authoritarianism, depending on whether it was hard-line or moderate. "Hard-line authoritarianism used justice and the police to kill (...), while moderate authoritarianism used it to frighten".

Pierre-François Gonidec goes into more detail, taking the example of Gnassingbé Eyadéma's Togo, which he classifies as hard-line authoritarianism, and Félix Houphouët-Boigny's Côte d'Ivoire, which represents the moderate wing of authoritarianism: "In Togo, after the 1969 conspiracy, the magistrates who had refused to convict the accused, in the absence of sufficient evidence, had a less happy fate. Thrown into prison, a timely heart attack settled the fate of four of them". In other words, in Eyadema's Togo, magistrates had to follow the President's orders to the letter, at the risk of being assassinated. This shows that in hard-line authoritarian regimes, violence was taken to extremes. Not only was it used to intimidate and dissuade, but it also affected physical integrity and could lead to death. In hard-line authoritarian regimes, the assassination of opponents was commonplace. In such regimes, the role of the judiciary is to protect power by turning a blind eye to the exactions of those in power and to open investigations to remove and imprison anyone who dares to oppose the president.

Conversely, in moderate authoritarian regimes (such as Côte d'Ivoire), death sentences are not always carried out, because heads of state like to use clemency after having frightened opponents and struck public opinion. The ability to grant, and even reward after punishing, is part of the strategy designed to forge the leader's brand image.

Following this assertion, we can say that the function of justice in moderate authoritarianism is to intimidate and rehabilitate the image of the head of state. Prison sentences and death sentences are used to dissuade and incite opponents to withdraw from political life and/or rally to the ruling power. Another facet of the justice system is also highlighted: that of justice as an instrument for reinforcing the president's image by presenting him as a man of forgiveness, peace, and dialogue. To this end, the judiciary used presidential pardons, remissions of sentences, conditional releases, etc., as a means of reinforcing the President's image.

The army and the judiciary were not the only resources used by the "fathers of independence" to retain power. Other strategies include the use of money. The strategy of using money to maintain hegemony and domination translates into the ability to distribute rewards, the use of retributive resources, the distribution of money, administrative posts, foreign appointments, favoritism, and prebendalism. Here, access to state positions and wealth is granted selectively to the regime's clients. The dissident elite is often co-opted by enticing offers, while the elite around the leader may undergo regular rotation designed, on the one hand, to prevent it from becoming powerful enough to compete with the leader, and, on the other, to ensure its loyalty, since losing one's position or finding another show that favors given can be taken back. Essentially, it boils down to the distribution of money, positions, and favors. This strategy is therefore based on the corruption of political players and civil society.

From this point onwards, the single parties instituted a "politics of the belly" and a politics of scarcity. The former consisted of showering those in power and those loyal to the regime with wealth, demonstrating that power rhymes with wealth. The second consists in depriving the population, and especially the opposition, of any advantage. Both policies aim to encourage the population and opponents to join the party.

The third and final resource is information, characterized by the instrumentalization of the mass media (radio, television, print media). As Achille Mbembe puts it, "In the postcolonial, the work of power also consists of entering into a trance to produce fables, (…), to produce a surfeit of prestige, fiction and magic". The "fathers of independence" were concerned about their image. The idea that the Head of State was the guarantor of peace and social cohesion had to be conveyed to the population. A multiparty system and the departure of the president (who was mainly involved in the independence movement) could jeopardize national unity and the nation-building process initiated after independence.

The mass media become the preferred instrument for this purpose. They were charged with embellishing the president's image. This led to the birth of public media, essentially national television,

national radio, and the national newspaper. Their "mission is to rally the population around the leader-president, and development declared the great national cause of all young states. They are propaganda organs whose editorial strategies are based primarily on justifying and sublimating the charisma of the chief president". Information is controlled and structured by the government.

To sum up, in this first phase, which was that of the single parties, "the aim was to contain the upsurge of protests, if necessary, utilizing repression that was sometimes underhand, sometimes expeditious, brutal and unrestrained (imprisonment, shootings, dismissal of opponents, introduction of emergency measures, censorship of the press, various forms of economic coercion)". The reign of one-party rule in Africa coincided with the reign of one-track, totalitarian thinking. To this extent, freedom of expression is illusory because it is confiscated. Those who dare to speak out against those in power are either imprisoned or murdered. The media, presented as purveyors of information, are monopolized and manipulated.

From an analysis of the one-party era, we can deduce that freedom of expression, which was supposed to emanate with independence, appears to be an illusion. After years of silence, independence was supposed to give Africans the chance to express themselves, to articulate their ideas and opinions. Unfortunately, "nothing has changed. Exploitation has become more hideous and more effective. Underdeveloped bourgeoisies have been put in place to restore regimes that are content to succeed, without reform, colonial power. Former vassals have been transformed into vassals. Their inefficiency and the fragility of their foundations make them more manageable. Parties and palaces are part of the same necessity".

In other words, this situation characterizing independence in general, if adapted to freedom of expression, could be said to have changed both in substance and form. The colonizers were no longer the ones preventing Africans from expressing themselves, but the Africans themselves. The silence got worse. Africans had less and less right to challenge, and to freely express their ideas. Expressing one's opinions when one opposes the vision of the chief president and the single party could lead to imprisonment or death. As we can see, freedom of expression is more utopian than real.

However, "in the early 1990s, the first attempts at democratization in Africa were greeted with general enthusiasm. Given the context of the 1980s, characterized by the economic and political failure of Africa's authoritarian regimes, democratization was presented as a "second independence for the people", after the independence of states in the 1960s. It was seen as a response to the challenges of governance. (…). In particular, it was seen as a means of ensuring respect for civil and political liberties, putting an end to neo-patrimonial practices, and pacifying the competition for power".

Indeed, a glimmer of hope was seen with the advent of multiparty politics in Africa in the 1990s. It heralded a new lease of life for freedom of expression. Multiparty politics, which began to take shape in the 1990s, was synonymous with political openness in many African countries. Political space was now shared, since since independence it had been accepted that several political parties could exist. Other parties, in addition to the Independence Party, were also allowed to participate in the political game. To this extent, the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety marked the first elections in many African countries. Elections meant that political openness was now the order of the day.

It signaled the end of the monopolization of expression and affirmation, and the beginning of free expression. In fact, with multiparty politics and its corollary, political openness, Africa was beginning its democratization process. From this point of view, freedom of expression should become effective, since democracy, which presupposes the effective participation of the people in the management of power, cannot exist without freedom of expression. This new political horizon was to coincide with the free expression of the people. With this new political order, African populations had the right to express contradictory ideas. No one should be muzzled, imprisoned, or murdered for their opinions. Traditional media such as television, radio, and the written press should ensure this freedom.

However, although there was a slight improvement in the one-party reign, freedom of expression was not as genuine as had been hoped. Contradictory opinions were hardly respected. Freedom of information and expression continued to be restricted. This was because media space was increasingly closed. In some countries, political pluralism went hand in hand with the liberalization of the media (radio and television). There was a semblance of freedom because the so-called state media perpetuated the mission assigned to them in the early years of independence, namely to preserve and embellish the image of the head of state. As a result, many people were arrested for their opinions.

"The improvement in data penetration on the continent has greatly contributed to the diversification (...) of information offerings. It has also liberated the voice of civil society. In an increasingly connected world, governments are blowing hot and cold, torn between the economic prospects of digitalization and the political risks of information that is less and less controllable". In other words, in Africa, ICTs have helped to improve freedom of expression. Indeed, Information and Communication Technologies now offer more opportunities for citizens to express their opinions and ideas. Thanks to ICTs, mainly social networks, citizens can defend their ideas outside traditional media channels. They can avoid censorship.

ICTs thus "present themselves as an instrument of social demands, a means of social and participatory communication, vigilant and critical.

[They] are used by different actors within society to express their opinions and maintain or reinforce their positions". In other words, ICTs are tools for protest, demands, and taking a stand on burning issues. Deprived the most of freedom of expression in their own countries, citizens, political parties and political exiles are now able to express themselves freely thanks to ICTs. Taking a stand and speaking out are no longer liable to prosecution. They once again enjoy this inalienable human right, participating decisively in the political and social life of their original societies despite their departure. "They can share their ideas on blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and many other services, most of them free of charge". Social networks are becoming privileged and valued spaces, as people can use them as forums for exchanging and sharing ideas.

ICTs "offer the public space par excellence for the exercise of this free expression, but also [they] contribute to the formation of public opinion through awareness of the political, economic, social and cultural issues at stake at all levels of society". In the same vein, ICTs are tools for defending rights. They enable them to denounce the exactions and humiliations to which their populations are subjected. ICTs, especially the Internet, are powerful means of rapidly disseminating information to as many people as possible.

How African diasporas act have been profoundly altered by the advent of the Internet. This "ultimate" medium according to Vandendorpe, has become an important player in the communication and political action of these populations. Indeed, until 2000, the maintenance of socio-political links was mainly evident within associations of Cameroonians, one of whose aims was to "reflect together on the problems and difficulties linked to their stay abroad; to 'relive' certain customs and traditions of the country of origin, and to get to know each other better (by creating) a fraternal community". The majority of cultural and ethnic organizations are abroad, particularly in France. The socialization of diasporas has also taken place within certain associations and political parties represented abroad.

During the 1990s, the socialization of young people from the African diaspora within African political movements and parties represented abroad was reinforced by the emergence of a plurality of political parties, a consequence of the liberalization of political life in Africa. This liberalization was followed by the law on "freedom of social communication" of December 19, 1990. The law on "freedom of the press" in Cameroon was also conducive to the creation of numerous public and private press organs, which were available to the Cameroonian diaspora abroad.

For several reasons, the rumor of the death of the President of the Republic of Cameroon in 2004 can be considered a "historical determinant" when examining the place occupied by ICTs in the political action of Cameroon's diasporas.

In the first place, because of the extent to which, in the space of just 24 hours, it had an impact on all social spaces, both inside and outside the country. Secondly, because it was at this point that the existence of Internet sites as spaces of expression for the Cameroonian diasporas was discovered; and finally, because, following this rumor, which animated Cameroonian public debate both inside and outside national political borders for several days, Cameroonian immigrants themselves declared on the sites "the advent of a new political era". The emergence of the digital space as a public arena for the unfolding of Cameroonian political life truly attests to a "new political era" in Cameroon, particularly in terms of democracy.

According to data from ANTIC, Cameroon's national ICT regulatory agency, there were around 700,000 Internet users in 2008. In addition, the survey revealed that Cameroonian households still have a low level of computer equipment. However, there seems to be an evolution in the political use of the Internet by Cameroonians, according to website observations. To illustrate, 97.55% of foreigners in Cameroon consult the country's political and social news via the Internet. According to one of the surveyors, this has been facilitated by the development of the cyber-press and the online availability of the national print media, which "can easily be found using search engines such as Google". Cameroonians of the diaspora living in France mainly consult the private Cameroonian written press, while the public online press is more rarely read. However, the websites of online newspapers and those of the diaspora communities themselves are also frequently visited.

In this context, they are tools capable of attracting the attention of many people to a certain situation and, in certain cases, sounding the alarm to call for change, to touch people's sensibilities. They are instruments capable of getting many people interested in a hidden fact and stirring the international community. In this digital century, ICTs are powerful vectors of interpellation. The case of the immigrants held in slavery in Libya is a concrete example of the influence of these technologies. But shouldn't we make ICT ethical? Wouldn't this ICT ethic contribute to the achievement of democracy and good governance in Africa?

FOR AN ICT ETHIC FOR DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

Governance remains the major political problem in Africa. It is the cause of the many crises that have shaken the African continent since the accession of African states to independence. Armed conflicts, military-civil wars, and untimely coups d'état are the result of a relentless race for the governance of citizens. Social crises characterized by unemployment, insecurity, poverty, etc. can be explained by bad governance. But what does governance mean? "Etymologically, from the Latin gubernare, to steer a ship. Governance refers to all the measures, rules, decision-making, information, and monitoring bodies that ensure the proper functioning and control of a state, an institution or an organization, whether public or private, regional, national or international".

Governance is a way of exercising authority, whether political, economic, or administrative. It is also the management of a state's resources. This management must be carried out to ensure genuine development for the populations under the control of those in power. The effectiveness of good governance is a prerequisite for Africa's return to democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, and socio-economic development. But what does "good governance" actually mean?

"Beyond this general content, Good Governance is characterized by participation, transparency, and accountability. It promotes the rule of law and not of individuals, equal justice for all before the law, and ensures that political, social, and economic priorities are based on a broad social consensus, which ensures that the poor and most vulnerable participate in decisions, notably on the allocation of resources for these development priorities. These components of Good Governance are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Indeed, good governance is based, according to Amartya Senis on democratic principles, respect for human rights, and, above all, the rule of law. Published at the end of the 90s, the concept of good governance belongs to the paradigm of post-modernity. Post-modernity exalts absolute individual freedom and rejects value and the hierarchy of values. To exist, man must be free to decide absolutely for himself, without reference to anyone but himself.

In 1999, good governance became one of the major goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to Amartya Sen, good governance is based on democratic principles and respect for human rights. Good governance is presented as a process of strengthening democracy for the integrated development of states. It generally deals directly with the problems of management, corruption, law, democracy, and the well-being of populations. It presupposes the equality of individuals and the equal distribution of goods. It is the true condition for the development and balance of society. It is through this that man recovers his freedom and his status as a human being. It contributes to improving people's quality of life by allowing them to participate actively in the social and political life of their country. This is why good governance requires democracy.

"What is democracy? It's the greatest possible share of freedom, light, and power given to everyone. What is a democratic government? It is a government which, instead of compressing human freedom, comes to its aid in a thousand ways; which, instead of restricting it on all sides, opens up all kinds of new perspectives; which, instead of placing new barriers in its way, completes the destruction of all those which hindered its progress; which does not direct it, but places within its reach the lights, the resources... It is a government that puts every citizen, even the

humblest, in a position to act as independently and to make as useful use of his independence as the most elevated citizen... It does not force everyone to be equally poor, but puts everyone in a position to become rich with honesty, hard work, and merit".

Democracy, it should be remembered, is understood as "the power (kratos) of the people (demos), hence the regime in which the people are sovereign". It is also a "political state in which sovereignty belongs to all citizens, regardless of birth, wealth or ability". To this end, "the people (i.e. all equal members of society) must be sovereign".

In this light, the concept of democracy as the power of the people, by the people, and for the people makes perfect sense. It should also be added that there are many different types of democracy. These include classical pluralism, in which the emphasis is on the pluralism of social groups and the conflictual nature of their relations; liberal democracy, which seeks to combine democracy and liberalism by insisting on the protection of civil liberties, including against the state; and participatory democracy and deliberative democracy, which emphasize popular participation and the existence of forums for discussion with a view to decision-making.

What's more, freedom of expression is one of the fundamental pillars of democracy. Democracy cannot exist without freedom of expression, especially since democracy is the government of deliberation and discussion. Democracy and freedom of expression are linked. Freedom of expression, which is the right of every individual to express himself or herself without external constraint, in strict compliance with the law and respect for others, and the right of people to make their thoughts, opinions, and ideas known, is indispensable for a society that claims to be democratic. It must in no way restrict the freedom of expression of its members. On the contrary, it must encourage it, since it is the leaven of a society that is essentially democratic. One cannot exist without the other.

Freedom of expression and its corollary, freedom of information, are indispensable in a democratic society based on palaver. Moreover, a democratic, palaver-based society is a community of people whose public and political management is based on palaver. The palaver must be understood as a place for exchange, debate, and discussion. It is a place where men express their ideas, even if they are divergent or opposed, on subjects until they agree or define the norms of public governance. What we have here is a deliberative, participatory democracy, which is good governance. Deliberative democracy does not seek to replace traditional democracy, but rather to improve and inform existing democratic practices.

"The fundamental concept of a deliberative democracy is the concept of the debate itself. When citizens debate, they exchange opinions and discuss their ideas on major public and political issues".

In this form of democracy, communication, and information play a very important role. Without them, this type of democracy collapses. That's why a democratic society needs to expand freedom of expression.

If democracy requires freedom of speech and citizen participation in decisions involving the whole of society, it can only function if citizens are sufficiently informed. In this respect, technology is essential as an exceptional means of information and communication. Indeed, the ability to speak out, previously reserved for politicians, has been democratized thanks to electronic media and newspapers. However, it is important to emphasize that these media have also become a privileged political space for all political parties, whether left or right-wing. Political regimes are increasingly affected by electronic media, as they have transformed modern societies into a global village where everything is known. Political regimes are under pressure from new information and communication technologies, which spread democratic rules and government abuses around the world.

For Lazare Poamé, globalization and the widespread use of ICTs, in particular social networks, have given a new lease of life to democracy. ICTs enable the exercise of power by the people, as citizens increasingly influence state management. This has given rise to a new type of democracy - cyberdemocracy. Indeed, cyberdemocracy is a term of American origin (cyberdemocracy) that designates the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The Internet is becoming "a new communication space, inclusive, transparent and universal, which is set to profoundly renew the conditions of public life in the direction of greater freedom and responsibility for citizens". Thanks to ICTs, democracy is enjoying a new lease of life and is becoming more widespread. ICTs make an effective approach that makes democracy the power of the people for the people and by the people since they encourage citizen participation.

However, the quote from Umberto Eco, said that social networks have given the right to speak to legions of imbeciles who, before, only spoke at the bar, after a glass of wine and caused no harm to the community. They were immediately silenced, whereas today they have the same right to speak as a Nobel Prize winner. It's the invasion of the imbeciles. Umberto Eco sums up the danger of ICTs and social networks undermining democracy and good governance. Indeed, by giving everyone the opportunity to speak out and publish information, they do not protect citizens from fake news, the proliferation of insults, threats, and harassment.

Consequently, ICTs need to be made more ethical so that they can play their role as the foundation of democracy and good governance: "the practical science of morals and custom, which discerns between pleasure and pain, good and bad, right and wrong. Ethics educates in the formation of excellence of character through the practice of good habits".

By ICT ethics, then, we mean a set of rules, practices, and recommendations that enable better use of digital tools. Rules can constitute a boundary that users must not cross, a safeguard to preserve moral integrity and make the social networking space viable.

ICT ethics could take the form of laws. Laws that could be introduced by governments, with sanctions ranging from banishment to imprisonment, depending on the act committed. It is also a recommendation against political regimes that would like to control or restrict the use of these technologies and thus limit citizens' freedom of expression. Although we recommend international regulations obliging and prohibiting governments around the world in general, and those in Africa in particular, to restrict access to the Internet in any situation could limit access to the Internet and freedom of expression. If the rules are respected, this would encourage free expression, a guarantee of democracy, and good governance.

Members of the political community inside and outside the country can connect via the Internet. Community sites are increasingly becoming the preferred places for informing people, and they are beginning to be frequently asked to disseminate political opinions and ideas. Most of the information they disseminate is taken from local and pan-African print media.

If democracy is seen as a system of values that promotes the freedom of individuals and their representation on the political stage, it's clear that ICTs, particularly the Internet, have contributed to the political emancipation of Cameroon's diasporas. Blogs and Web 2.0 applications have given them greater political visibility. For these populations, the Internet is a powerful tool for information and political mobilization, as demonstrated by the various calls for cyber mobilizations and online petitions.

However, the rate of participation in online discussion forums is still low, and the digital space is less dedicated to "debate and political decision-making" than it is considered the ideal tool for participatory democracy, putting sender and receiver on an equal footing, unlike radio and television.

CONCLUSION

In Africa, the digital public space is still exploited and reappropriated by all, but governments are trying to regulate ICTs to restrict people's freedom of expression, so expression is no longer muzzled. The main objective was to show that ICTs have fostered freedom of expression in Africa, while the subsidiary objectives were to demonstrate that ICTs are factors in political transformation and the liberalization of expression and information on the African continent and that better regulation of these technologies can contribute, in the long term, to the achievement of democracy and good governance in Africa.

Explanatory and demonstrative methods were used to show that ICTs are socio-political transformers, then ICTs have engendered the possibility of free expression in Africa, and ICTs have engendered the possibility of free expression and democracy, and good governance in Africa. The study shows that freedom of expression is one of the components of democracy and good governance. It is an inalienable human right, as it is one of the fundamental characteristics of the human being. Freedom of expression, however, has a very complicated history in Africa. From the first thirty years of independence to the dawn of multiparty politics in Africa, it was confiscated. The spread of ICTs is gradually making free expression possible on the African continent, and ushering in a new era of democracy and good governance in Africa, offering African citizens more opportunities to challenge, criticize, and demand. However, an ICT ethic is essential for true democracy in Africa. In Africa, the public digital space remains exploited and reappropriated by all classes, which is the exercise of citizenship exclusively reserved for all. It is therefore important that the interconnectivity and linkage of territorial spaces created by modern technologies are networked political solidarities that are emerging in Africa to promote freedom of expression. However, in this context of an interconnected and increasingly globalized world, a path is forged between the internal and the external, the local and the global, the here and the elsewhere.

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