

TELEVISION AND SOCIETY IN SENEGAL: FROM POPULAR FILMED THEATRE TO LOCAL TELEVISION SERIES

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Abstract

This article analyses the relations between television and theatre in Senegal. It starts from the context of the evolution of filmed popular theatre and the dynamics of the Senegalese television field. The major art form of filmed popular theatre was promoted in Senegal in the 1970s to accompany the endogenization programme of television. However, in the early 2000s, with the birth and development of private commercial television, a new product emerged: local television series. The latter, more sensational and emotional, and by attracting more commercials, caused the decline of popular filmed theatre. However, their reception by the Senegalese continues to cause much controversy. Indeed, with complaints from some religious civil society organisations accusing them of perverting society, the audio-visual regulatory body has finally taken control and restriction measures.

Keywords: *Television, Popular filmed theatre, Local television series, Endogenization, Private commercial televisions.*

Résumé

Cet article analyse les relations entre la télévision et le théâtre au Sénégal. Il part du contexte de l'évolution du théâtre populaire filmé et de la dynamique du champ télévisuel sénégalais. Cet art majeur que constitue le théâtre populaire filmé a été promu aux années 1970 au Sénégal pour accompagner le programme d'endogénéisation de la télévision. Cependant, au début des années 2000, avec la naissance et le développement des

télévisions privées commerciales, un nouveau produit fait surface : ce sont les séries télévisées locales. Ces dernières, plus sensationnelles et émotionnelles, et en attirant plus de commerciaux, ont occasionné le déclin du théâtre populaire filmé. Mais, leur réception par les Sénégalais continue à faire beaucoup de polémiques. En effet, avec les plaintes de certaines organisations religieuses de la société civiles les accusant de pervertir la société, l'organe de régulation de l'audiovisuel a finalement pris des mesures de contrôle et de restriction.

Mots clés : *Télévision, Théâtre populaire filmé, Séries télévisées locales, Endogénéisation, Télévisions privées commerciales.*

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to analyse the various complex and ambiguous relations between television and theatre in Senegal. More specifically, it examines the evolution of popular filmed theatre that gave rise to local television series.

Local television series are a genre of theatre that developed with the advent of private commercial televisions in Senegal in the 2000s. It is also this genre that heralded the gradual divorce between national television, the Senegalese Radio and Television (RTS) and its ancestor, popular theatre filmed in the form of drama.

On the theoretical level, even if television in Senegal and in Africa in general has been the subject of several laudatory and apocalyptic publications (A.-J. Tudesq, 1992; M. Silla, 1994, 2008; M. Faye, 2016; S. Sylla, 2020), its relation with the theatre remains one of the poor parents of the scientific literature. Moreover, today we are witnessing a mass production of television series featuring social facts mixed with fiction. These series are also the subject of controversy in terms of both form and content. Television, also, is analysed by scientists as a model of a new art (R. Bretz, 1950). This justifies the relevance of making them an object of scientific study to answer many questions on the logic underlying their production, their

broadcasting by Senegalese televisions and their reception by consumer audiences.

Against the backdrop of cultural and moral controversies, Senegalese public and private television channels are witnessing a radical change in the production and broadcasting of local programmes. Television series are replacing popular filmed theatre. This seems to be a problem. This raises some questions: when we talk about filmed theatre, what exactly are we talking about? When we talk about television series, what are we talking about? Why is this policy of substitution for television series problematic? What are the foundations of this policy of substitution?

The objective of this paper is therefore to examine the evolution of Senegalese popular theatre, the dynamics of the Senegalese television landscape and the advent and development of Senegalese television series which, since 2010, have continued to show themselves as a major product of television in Senegal. Our working hypothesis is that the problem that this substitution poses results from the fact that a minor art (television series) is taking the place of a major art (popular film theatre) in Senegal due to the action of private commercial television stations.

Thus, the issues at stake can only be highlighted by questioning the contents and functions of popular filmed theatre by comparing them to those of television series. This would be two different registers whose interchangeability poses a serious problem for society.

This work is the result of documentary and empirical observation completed by a netnography of popular theatre and Senegalese television series. The documentary work consisted of consulting documents on popular theatre and its evolution in Senegal, on television and on the relations between television and theatre in a broader sense. Interviews with media actors also allowed us to understand the very commercial orientation of Senegalese private television stations and their openness

towards the production and broadcasting of television series. Netnography (M. Mercanti-Guérin, 2009) is a contraction between the Internet and ethnography. It is a tool for collecting qualitative data to understand the behaviour of an online community. Thus, it is an Internet ethnography of Senegalese television series through news sites and social networks such as YouTube that has made it possible to collect diversified points of view of consumers, producers, media actors and actors from civil society organizations on these local television series.

This article is divided into two main parts. The first part is an analysis of the tragedy of popular filmed theatre in Senegal. It revisits its golden age from the 1970s to the 2000s, its socio-cultural functions and its impossible marriage with private commercial televisions. This led to its decline. The second part examines Senegalese television series as a social phenomenon. It highlights their relationship with private commercial television, the rise of production companies to the detriment of traditional theatre companies and their reception by the Senegalese public.

1. Filmed popular theatre: the tragedy of an artistic and television genre in Senegal

The notion of popular theatre remains ambiguous. There are several levels of interpretation. However, we can say that it:

responds to a double ambition: on the one hand, to distance itself from theatrical practices [...] characterised by commercialism, entertainment and social exclusion of a large part of the population, and, on the other hand, to broaden the audience base, towards those fractions of society that have difficult access to official theatrical

performance venues, seeking, thus, to bring together in the space of theatrical performance the whole of society (M. Denizot, 2010, p. 9).

Popular theatre can therefore be defined as a public service theatre that deals with general issues by conveying values in line with the socio-cultural realities of the environment. Its marriage with television has given rise to its variant, the filmed popular theatre. The latter retains the format and vocation but the scenes are moved to the screen. This is what later gave rise to the television film. The TV film generally refers to a fictional genre produced by television. It is often a programme telling a story that ends with a denouement.

However, we can say that it is a marriage that has made the relations between theatre and television profound. Indeed, since its inception, television has never ceased to draw on the repertoire of the theatre to fuel its programmes. As a result, the small screen has always been considered a means of communication, creation, promotion and popularisation of artistic works.

Thus, this part of the article deals with the history of popular filmed theatre in relation to Senegalese television. Considered as a tragedy, this history explains the evolution of this artistic and televisual genre from its birth to its decline through its golden age and its socio-cultural functions in Senegalese society.

1.1. An art to endogenize television programmes from the 1970s to the 2000s

Senegal has known television since the early 1960s. Indeed, in 1963, Léopold Sédar Senghor, President of the Republic, had taken a position against the installation of a generalist television. However, soon after, he had agreed with UNESCO, and more precisely in December of the same year, an exclusively

educational television which started its programmes in 1965 with an expert from the same organization. And soon after, programmes on civics were created and developed. After 1969, Senegal was preparing to launch a general public television. In December 1973, taking advantage of the Olympic Games in Munich (Germany), the Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Sénégal (ORTS) was created by law n° 73-51 of 4 December 1973 under the authority of the State. Since then, television has become generalist. And in 1992, Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise (RTS) replaced ORTS.

However, it should be noted that television, being a "new medium" in Africa, was not without consequences for culture. Thus, according to the Malian writer M. M. Diabaté (1985), television had a positive influence on traditional African culture in its early days, by encouraging the association of gesture and speech that gave the impression of attending popular theatre with the songs, mimics, breaths and silences of the narrator (M. M. Diabaté, 1985). He then shows us that popular theatre marked the beginnings of television in Africa and Senegal. This genre was seen as a means of endogenizing television programmes in order to avoid television being "*a Western prosthesis applied to the African brain*" (J.-A. Tudesq, 1992, p. 19).

In fact, in terms of infrastructure and production equipment, we cannot deny that African television remains the result of a transfer of technologies and dependent on foreign suppliers. On the production level, on the other hand, this same domination should not be accepted in view of the risk of a phenomenon of acculturation or deculturation resulting from cultural interference. This is why, faced with a large majority of programmes from American and Western production organisations such as Canal France International (CFI), Canal Horizons, TV5, CNN or the BBC (J.-A. Tudesq, 1999), African leaders had to find a way to stop this 'cultural colonisation' after

the political one. This is how local production was encouraged to supply local television stations.

Senegalese theatre, which was highly developed in the 1970s until the 2000s and therefore presented as a scenic and performing art, has occupied a very important place in society. Thus, we have seen the promotion of popular theatre on national television, RTS, by theatre groups such as *Daaray Kocc*, *Jamonoy Tay*, the *Daniel Sorano national theatre company*, *Bara Yeggo* and more recently *Janxeen de Thiès* and *Soleil Levant*. The latter presented Senegalese reality through genres such as drama, tragedy and comedy.

The *Daaray Kocc troupe* is a monument of Senegalese theatre. As one of the troupes that opened the way in Senegal, its plays have deeply marked Senegalese society. But it should be noted that *Daaray Kocc* is a dissident of the *Jamonoy Tay group*. *Daaray Kocc* with his scriptwriter Cheikh Tidiane is the initiator of drama on television in the 70s.

The *Bara Yeggo troupe* was set up in 1985 in Saint-Louis. Thanks to Senegalese national television, the troupe became known to the general public. Initially a "radio troupe", *Bara Yeggo* gradually made itself known on television with plays depicting Senegalese reality. Daouda Guissé, the troupe's scriptwriter, recounts that: "*We were visited by the director Babacar Diagne, who asked us to create a script that would interest the Senegalese*". Afterwards, "*I rushed to write the play 'Bara Yeggo' which was a great success*" (<https://news.sen360.sn/culture/zoom-sur-une-troupe-de-saint-louis-plombée-par-les-décès-bara-yeggo-039-039-revient-avec-neexa-da-kka-l-719779.html>).

In the same vein, we can also mention troupes such as *Libidor de Pikine*, founded by the actor Malick Ndiaye, known as "Farathiathial", in 1998 in Pikine (Dakar suburb), and *Janxeen de Thiès* in 1998.

These mythical troupes and their works bear witness to the place that popular filmed theatre or tele-theatre occupied in Senegalese society. This observation made M. Fall (1984) say that theatre was perfectly in tune with the taste of the public "whose appetite for spectacle is never satisfied". But this art form also owes its social legitimacy to the functions it played in Senegalese society.

1.2. An art form with socio-cultural roots

Popular theatre was encouraged to participate in popular education in Senegal. This explains the meaning of the slogan "to entertain, instruct, emancipate and edify". In this connection, in 1965, the Senegalese authorities, with a view to encouraging this genre, set up the Federation of Amateur Theatre, which later became the Senegalese Federation of Popular Theatre and Art. Indeed, despite being presented as a good pupil of the colonial school, Senegal was not the most submissive. For, on the religious, linguistic and cultural levels, Senegalese society had always managed to preserve its values. And the theatre genre has always participated in this conservatism (C. M. S. Diop, 2004). The Senegalese theatre was thus meant to be a mirror of Senegal to reflect the base, the way of life and the ethics of this society, argues M. Fall (1984). This shows that it had to play certain socio-cultural functions such as rooting. For the plays performed and the scenes were in line with moral values and cultural and African realities. By way of illustration, we can take the examples of such plays as "Xandju", "Operation Xamb" and "Lamb Ji".

In "Xandju", a play produced in the 1980s, a touching story of friendship between two young girls of different morals who help each other in all situations is portrayed, as in a folk tale. This play highlights one of the Senegalese realities: the virginity of women in society.

“Opération xamb” is one of *Daaray Kocc's* most popular and famous plays. It tells the story of a young hygiene officer. He is charged by the administration to polish the houses in the old districts of Dakar and has undertaken not to leave any dirt in any shelter. He thus entered the house of a Lebou family, an ethnic group known for its conservatism, and destroyed all the “xamb”, objects from the sacred area, despite the insistence and pleas of the guardian of the tradition. Unfortunately for this young man who sowed the wind and the storm, the "ancestral spirits" fell upon him. In the middle of the night, he was awakened by nightmares which made him ill the next day. To be cured, he has to undergo the ritual of “ndëp” (C. M. S. Diop, 2004). It is a play that deals with the socio-cultural mixtures and religious syncretism of Senegalese society.

As for the play *Lamb ji*, it denounces the cheating and corruption that have taken hold in the traditional wrestling world in Senegal. C. M. S. Diop (2004) tells the story of Babou Faye, a former wrestler who was peacefully retiring in his native village when 'promoters' came to ask him to return to the ring in order to earn more money than his fences would allow and thus prove his talent as the former 'king of the ring' to the young people of the city. A conspiracy from the ring of which he is the victim: a punch broke his arm. Back home with nothing in his pocket, he found himself unable to pursue his braiding business, which was his only source of income.

These were telefilms or teletheatres commonly called "tiyatar" in Senegal, which told stories or facts about society in order to highlight or denounce a practice or reality in vogue in Senegalese society. This "theatre" was therefore intended to educate, entertain and denounce the defects of society, in line with the French classical theatre: "castigat ridendo mores" or correcting morals by making people laugh. However, they had to compete at RTS with Latin American soap operas or

telenovelas and Hindi films which were well received by Senegalese households, especially by women.

And in the 2000s, we began to see a decline in this genre, which was supposed to be innovative. It was the arrival of television series that even announced a gradual divorce between popular filmed theatre and RTS.

1.3. The gradual divorce between popular filmed theatre and the national television, RTS: Goorgoorlu as the ancestor of the television series in Senegal

However, despite the importance that the national television, RTS, had given to this artistic genre by offering it a fixed time slot in its programmes, on Tuesday evenings, a divorce between the two was gradually observed during the 2000s. This led to a decline in popular filmed theatre (teletheatre) in Senegal, much to the delight of audio-visual producers.

The latter then launched themselves into local television series to make them a new television product. And, faced with the competition provoked by the arrival of new private commercial television channels and the need for innovation, national television progressively started broadcasting series and “Goorgoorlu”, considered as the ancestor of these series, is a perfect illustration.

The series “Goor ak Diekk” or “Goorgoorlu” depicts the difficult daily life of an old man. The series was inspired by the cartoons of TT Fons in the *Cafard Libéré*. It was shown every day on Senegalese national television (RTS) to tell the story of a father who always had to run after the daily expenses, the needs of his children, a sheep for Tabaski, etc. “Goorgoorlu” is a reflection of Senegalese society in its difficulties.

Therefore, it should be noted that the progressive divorce between popular filmed theatre and national television is not the only factor explaining the decline of this genre. In addition, we must also consider the great responsibility of private commercial

television stations which, because of their total dependence on advertising and a media environment that is becoming increasingly competitive, had to move towards innovation. And since popular filmed theatre does not attract many advertisers, other avenues such as local television series have to be explored. This is what made the alliance between popular theatre and Senegalese private commercial television almost impossible.

1.4. The impossible alliance between popular filmed theatre and private commercial television

It is almost a truism to say that popular filmed theatre is in decline in Senegal. The reasons for this phenomenon are also to be found in the liberalisation of the Senegalese television space which, since the beginning of the 2000s, has not stopped evolving with the opening of *2sTV* in 2003. This was followed in 2007 by *RDV* (Radio Dunya Vision) installed by the Excaf Télécom Group and *Walfadjiri Télévision* of the Walfadjiri Group. From this year onwards, the distribution of frequencies has developed and other private channels have been created. We can thus mention *RTS 2* (ex *SN2*), an entity of RTS, *TFM* (Télévision Futurs Médias) of Groupe Futurs Médias (GFM) in 2010, *Africa 7*, *Sen TV*, *Dunya TV*, *7TV*, *ITV*, etc. This shows a good dynamic of private commercial televisions in Senegal.

These private commercial televisions have imposed a change in the television programme schedules. Indeed, with competition, innovation is necessary. And with the diktat of the ratings, the commercial sector has ended up dictating its law. As a consequence, we can note a standardization of offers which does not rhyme with quality. Today, in the Senegalese media, everyone does the same thing.

The socio-cultural role of television and the social responsibility of the media company are therefore relegated to the background. And popular filmed theatre, because of its conservative character and educational orientation, will be gradually replaced

by local television series which have become a real business for television stations. This made the latter a real social phenomenon.

2. The rise of television series: a real social phenomenon

A television series can be defined as a work of television fiction. It often takes place in several parts called "episodes" that complement each other. Today, the television series has become a real television product, especially in Senegal where it has developed rapidly. It is therefore a market in full expansion in this country and has become a real social phenomenon. These television series have succeeded today in displacing local TV films and foreign telenovelas from Senegalese television. Thus, it will be relevant to look at the content of these series, the reasons for their success and their reception in Senegalese society.

2.1. When production companies take the place of theatre companies: television series or the triumph of sensationalism

In Senegal, television series have been very successful. In less than a decade, producers have succeeded in making this genre a real industry. Thus, in place of the great classical Senegalese theatre groups such as *Daaray Kocc*, *Jamonoy tay* or *Bara Yeggo*, we find large production companies such as Marodi, Even Prod, Ok Africa, etc. Faced with this situation, theatre groups, especially the youngest ones, have not been slow to adapt. This is the case, for example, of *Janxeen Production* and *Soleil Levant*, which have also converted to the production of television series.

Moreover, the actor has ended up replacing the professional comedian. As a result, one of the monuments of Senegalese theatre, Lamine Ndiaye states that:

For the theatre, we say actor and for films, we say actor. The difference is that the actor is already the character. He has been chosen; we have made a journey for the character. For the actor, it's different. It was based on certain technical knowledge. He may not even play the character, but we base ourselves on his technical qualities, on the professionalism he has and his knowledge

(http://www.sudonline.sn/focus-sur-un-art-en-decadence_a_43390.html).

Indeed, in these series, we will now find journalists, musicians, models, and even sportsmen.

Also, instead of the role of socio-cultural roots, Senegalese television series have imposed sensationalism. Thus, from "Un café avec..." to "Infidèles" through "Wiri Wiri", "Mbettel", "Pod et Marichou" or "Maîtresse d'un homme marié", we are witnessing the emergence of productions that have managed to find their place in the daily life of Senegalese. The study of their synopsis will allow us to better understand their content and their differences with the popular filmed theatre that has given way to them on Senegalese television. A phenomenon that has even affected RTS.

The series "Un Café avec..." was launched in 2011 with the opening of *Télévision Futurs Médias* (TFM). Initially presented as a talk show, it was gradually transformed into a series with a director and actors. Thus, starting from an original idea of the star host Boubacar Diallo alias Dj Boub's and a production of the journalist Cheikh Yérim Seck, "Un Café avec..." finally related in four seasons different themes such as marital problems (polygamy, rivalries between co-wives, etc.). However, in some scenes, the series was beyond Senegalese realities. Indeed, with

the use of firearms, luxury cars, life in hotels, frequent use of the French language, easy money, extreme violence, etc., the series "Un café avec..." plunged the viewer into a dream world where money is king.

"Wiri Wiri", this series was a great success in Senegal. Played by professional actors from the *Soleil Levant Troupe* with guest celebrities such as singers and wrestlers, "Wiri Wiri" is the series that has succeeded in dethroning the Latin American televidas in Senegal. Indeed, starting from Senegalese realities, the series deals with many themes such as love, problems of kinship, betrayal, witchcraft, marriage and revenge. Between sadness and happiness, the series remains a masterpiece in terms of themes and acting, which was inspired by classical theatre. However, some scenes were considered a bit out of step with Senegalese socio-cultural values.

Like "Wiri Wiri", "Mbettel" or "Surprise", considered one of the most instructive series, exposes the flaws of Senegalese society. Performed and produced by one of Senegal's classical theatre companies, *Janxeen Production* and *Okay.africa*, "Mbettel" has been seen as a mirror of Senegalese society. Keeping some of the hallmarks of classical Senegalese theatre such as decency and performed by professional actors, the series immerses us in themes such as rivalry in polygamy, betrayal, power struggles between friends, social appearance, the desire to succeed. Above all, it denounces one of the behaviours of mothers who always dichotomise their children according to their economic capital. For the series "Pod et Marichou", she recounts a love story between two young Senegalese. However, the relationship is always shaken by the respective pasts of the two lovers. Themes such as "maraboutage", rape, domestic violence, illicit enrichment and murder are dealt with. Produced by *Marodi*, the series was broadcast on *TFM*.

The series "Maîtresse d'un homme marié" (Mistress of a married man) deals with love, infidelity in couples, revenge, etc. The

script tries to link polygamous marriage and secret love relationships. The script tries to link polygamous marriage and secret love affairs. However, if the theme seems interesting in the eyes of its consumers, the scenes judged sometimes obscene and the language too vulgar and indecent shock some Senegalese. Produced by *Marodi* and broadcast since January 2019 on 2sTV, "Maîtresse d'un homme marié" as its title indicates remains a provocative series by titillating the sensibilities of Senegalese. Indeed, it is a real immersion in the life of some women in their homes between tears, sadness, jealousy, deceit, infidelity, etc. But the particularity of this series is that the actors speak without tongue in cheek.

For the series "Infidèles", it is almost an extension of "Maîtresse d'un homme marié". Indeed, with "obscene scenes" and "pornographic language" according to some of its consumers, the series deals with infidelity in the couple and in the family without any decency. It exposes a social problem that its producers consider to be one of the faults of Senegalese society. And for this, in their view, it is necessary to allow Senegalese to introspect. Thus, with the particularity and originality of its theme, sexuality, and the personality of its actors, the series "Infidèles" is one of the television productions that has attracted more people and provoked more complaints from some Senegalese civil society organisations who think that this series, instead of educating the population, promotes perversion. The series "Infidèles" is produced by *Even Prod* and broadcast on *Sen TV*.

Thus, after a fairly detailed explanation of the synopses of some of the most popular Senegalese series, we can see the particularity of two series, namely "Wiri Wiri" and "Mbettel". In this list, they are the only ones with a title in Wolof. They are also the only ones performed by theatre groups. Moreover, unlike other series that usually speak of an imported cultural reality and use a foreign language, "Wiri Wiri" and "Mbettel"

plunge their consumers into the diverse and rich Senegalese realities in order to enhance them in terms of language and even dress. Denouncing certain faults in Senegalese society, these two series thus pursue a role of education and socio-cultural rooting of popular filmed theatre.

However, it should be noted that beyond the artistic aspect with the scenes, the aesthetics and the acting, Senegalese television series are also a real media business. Indeed, despite the fact that they continue to offend the population, Senegalese private television stations are still more than determined to broadcast them. This is why it is also important to question the economic dimension of this television product.

2.2. More than an art, a media business

With the development of private commercial televisions, the arrival of Internet and the densification of digital social networks, we are witnessing a questioning of the autonomy of the media and a reorganisation of the media industries. In this context, television has become the leading medium for advertising investment. This means that private televisions are often analysed as televisions with advertising funding. And Senegalese private televisions, not being immune to this phenomenon, also find strategies to win important shares of the advertising market without which they cannot survive.

Therefore, we note today a mass production and broadcasting by all Senegalese television channels of what is now called local television series. And with the audience and the publicity they generate, television series constitute a real business for Senegalese private television stations.

To understand such a phenomenon, we must start from the relations between the media field and the economic field. For in the view of P. Bourdieu (1998), the media or journalistic field has a particularity explained by "*its very weak autonomy linked to its thin resistance, with regard to external forces, and*

especially to the commercial pole” (N. Loum, 2005, p. 361). Indeed, television stations are in a quest for ratings. Audience ratings are the key to competition between channels in order to gain the largest share of the advertising market. P. Bourdieu (1998) defines it as:

this measurement of the audience rate enjoyed by the different channels (there are instruments, currently, in certain channels which allow us to check the audience rating quarter by quarter and even, it's an improvement which has been introduced recently, to see the variations by major social categories). We therefore have very precise knowledge of what is and isn't on (P. Bourdieu, 1998, p. 28).

It is therefore important to understand that this calculation of the audience rating is what allows the media to win the trust of companies wanting to show their products and goods, ahead of their competitors. This will force them to focus only on what the public wants. This is tantamount to making the public the king. A journalist, M. A. Ndione, said: *"We are in a competitive framework. When there are several companies, I would say press organs in this case, there is competition, there is this requirement to present an interesting programme for listeners or viewers or readers..."* (extract from the 2017 field surveys). Thus, for each programme area, the media company must be more effective and more interesting. This is what will enable it to get the most viewers, listeners or readers. This is because when the number of viewers increases, the amount of advertising increases. This increases the turnover of the media companies in question. And Senegalese television bosses, knowing today that series attract more audiences and therefore more advertising, will put a lot of effort into broadcasting them.

This is what another journalist, P. C. Sylla, explains to us:

Unfortunately, this is true, because we do not have the means to carry out our mission. In Senegal, radio and television stations are private. They need to pay their bills at the end of the month, to pay their salaries. And to do that, they have to get the money. And the one who pays is necessarily in charge. When you develop a programme, you take into account the business partners. They are the real bosses. It is the business partners who decide. Why are there too many folklores on our television stations? Those who make their programmes need to pay their salaries, but they necessarily look for programmes that can win sponsors (Extract from the 2017 field surveys).

So it is the commercials who order because they are the ones who finance the programmes and the media through sponsorship and partnership. And what interests them is not professional journalism but the folklore that makes the public interested in this offer. Therefore, information will give way to show and entertainment.

However, it is important to underline the part played by the people in this phenomenon, which is often considered as a drift. Indeed, in the functionalist approach, the media are considered as means that free individuals have created to satisfy their needs. Therefore, if Senegalese private commercial television stations make efforts to broadcast series, it is because this is in line with the desires and aspirations of Senegalese society. Thus, E. Katz and P. Lazarsfeld (1955) understood this, and subtitled their famous book on the media-public relationship (E. Katz and P.

Lazarsfeld, 1955) "The part played by people" to show that the public also has a very large share of responsibility in the management of media programmes. This is why we say that the media of a society only reflect the state of mind of its consumers as an extension of their meaning (M. McLuhan, 1964).

Therefore, it is a diktat of the audience that has caused this mimicry between media outlets. Consequently, the uniformity of programmes observed with the broadcasting of these series by all private Senegalese television channels seems to be a strategy for the Senegalese media, especially in the private sector, to gain shares of the advertising market. This is something that the former director of TV5 and RTS, Mactar Sylla, regrets. For him, *"you can't have 10 minutes of advertising in a 30-minute series"* (https://senego.com/mactar-sylla-on-ne-peut-pas-dans-une-serie-de-30-mn-avoir-10-mn-de-publicite_1110017.html).

This is an observation that we have made on most Senegalese television series. Thus, some viewers exaggerate by saying that the advertising pages that accompany the series, at the beginning, in the middle and at the end, are often longer than the episode to be broadcast. This is why we have considered these television series as a real media business that allows most, if not all, Senegalese private commercial television stations to make a financial fortune.

Moreover, for some time now, we have noted the emergence of private commercial and cultural television channels whose project is to promote Senegalese television series. We can thus take the examples of the Sunu Yeuf channel in the Canal + Senegal package and the Wassa TV channel broadcast in pay mode by digital terrestrial television (DTT) decoders. The question to be asked now is: how are these series received by Senegalese?

2.3. Senegalese society tested by television series

In order to identify the relationship between television, or in general, the media, and society, it is important to know the type of service it is supposed to provide to its audience. Indeed, each function has its own dysfunctions that call into question the deontology and ethics that television must put forward in the production and broadcasting of programmes (J.-C. Bertand, 1999).

The aim here is to show how these Senegalese television series are received by Senegalese viewers. This is why it will be relevant to come back to the moral, cultural or civilisational debate that they pose in Senegalese society. Moreover, in the analysis of the place of these series in Senegalese society, will they be questioned as a danger for society or a reflection of a deep social crisis?

An ethical criticism of Senegalese television stations through the local television series they produce and broadcast focuses on the commercial and economic aspects. Indeed, through these series, one can notice without any mistake that Senegalese private commercial television stations pursue only one function: to make people buy. They are today real vectors of advertising. Very often, they are in a logic of seducing an audience which is fully exposed to their programmes in order to sell it to advertisers thirsty for profits. In order to do this, they try to create a context favourable to advertising: local television series. From then on, they became real entertainment media to ignore the socio-cultural and moral values of Senegalese society. Values refer to a set of *'ways of being or acting that a person or a community recognises as ideal and that makes desirable or estimable the individuals, groups or conducts to which it is attributed'* (G. Ferréol, 2012, p. 297).

This phenomenon has led to a conflict between the producers of these series, television stations, advertisers and a section of the Senegalese population represented by civil society

organisations, religious actors, etc. Senegalese society seems to be a still conservative society. Indeed, the Senegalese public of television series, even if they appreciate them, do not agree on some of the aspects presented. This is why some people advocate an improvement of the contents to avoid offending. For most of them, we are still in a society where modesty is a rule of conduct. So, the taboos are still there.

Others, on the other hand, deplore certain insanities and insults used as language in these series. Mame Makhtar Guèye, vice-president of the Islamic NGO Jamra, considers this to be "*verbal pornography, verbal abuse, obscenity, promotion of adultery, apology for fornication*" (https://www.xibar.net/Senegal-les-series-televisees-a-l-epreuve-des-pesanteurs-sociales-et-religieuses_a79520.html).

This observation had prompted the same organisation to lodge a complaint with the National Council for Audio-visual Regulation (CNRA) to request that the series "Maîtresse d'un homme marié" be censored. And in its deliberation of 29 March 2019, the regulatory body decided that the series "*may continue to be broadcast subject to corrective measures being taken*". And that "*failure to take account of the remarks, in particular by revising the content, could result in the delay of the broadcasting time or the prohibition of the broadcasting of the TV film*" (https://www.xibar.net/Senegal-les-series-televisees-a-l-epreuve-des-pesanteurs-sociales-et-religieuses_a79520.html). This shows how social norms are still strong in Senegal. Thus, Senegalese society, despite its openness to be analysed as a dynamic system, still remains firm on certain cultural and civilisational aspects.

Consequently, the series "Maîtresse d'un homme marié" and "Infidèles", only because of their provocative titles and scenes deemed contrary to the values of Senegalese society, are among the series that have been most in the news in Senegal in recent times. Indeed, with almost erotic scenes sometimes shot in

bathrooms or bedrooms, most Senegalese think that indecency has reached its limits in local TV series.

This is why, besides "Maîtresse d'un homme marié" and "Infidèles", other series such as "Pod et Marichou" or even "Wiri Wiri" have been strongly criticised by the Senegalese. For them, the series incite debauchery. This is what a woman regrets in a comment to one of these series. In comments on the YouTube links of these series, one can note indignations. For example, Tapha regrets the transformation of some celebrities into theatre actors and the use of the French language:

First of all, we see today in all the series, models transformed into actors/actresses, hosts or animators transformed into actors/actresses, journalists transformed into actors/actresses. We need to recruit the pros, the real actors. We have to integrate our culture. We are not French, we are not Wolofs. Other countries use their languages, their cultures in series (comment on Senegalese series).

In the same vein, Cherifail goes on to denounce even the production companies: "*Evenprod, you are really abusing, Aduna ak ay sponsors diaroul lii (the good life and the search for sponsors should not push one to do that! The girls are almost naked...*" (comment on Senegalese series). It is also the same regret for Mister Kalzil: "*This series tries to break our morals. It's quite a shame for our little brothers and sisters who are likely to come across this*" (comment on the Senegalese series). However, while some civil society organisations, especially religious ones, and part of the public think that these series constitute a danger for Senegalese society, others, such as the producers and promoters of these series, think quite the opposite. For them, these series only show what is happening in

Senegalese society today. Therefore, they are a reflection of the social crisis of this society.

Thus, for the scriptwriter and producer of the series "Maîtresse d'un homme marié", their objective is far from perverting Senegalese society. Kalista Sy maintains that: "*We had to show things as they are. We just wanted to invite the Senegalese to introspect by saying to them: this is where things stand. What do you think?*" (https://www.xibar.net/Senegal-les-series-televisees-a-l-epreuve-des-pesanteurs-sociales-et-religieuses_a79520.html).

It is the same opinion for El Hadji Omar Diop known as Pod. The artistic director of the production company Marodi has no regrets about the production of these series. For him, "*there are scenes that we could not not play. I think we didn't shock. We just showed what is happening in Senegal. Everyone knows it, but when you dare to talk about it on TV, it's something else*" (<http://apanews.net/fr/news/senegal-les-series-televisees-a-lepreuve-des-pesanteurs-sociales-et-religieuses>).

So, for them, the series are in their role. It is not a question of perverting or offending sensitivities but of showing things as they happen in today's society. Here, the series are therefore a mirror of a society in moral crisis. But despite these explanations provided by the producers *Marodi* and *Even Prod*, the series "Infidèles", which was at the heart of a major controversy due to many protests, was censored by part of the public. Faced with complaints from all sides, the CNRA finally took the decision on 12 August 2020 to ban the series for under 16s, to broadcast it from 10.30 pm and to review certain scenes deemed indecent. This shows the problems of Senegalese television series. Considered as a minor art, they have ended up taking the place of a major art, popular filmed theatre, with the help of private commercial television.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to analyse the different relationships between television and theatre in Senegal. To do so, we set out to retrace this relationship, starting from the golden age of popular filmed theatre in the 1970s, in a perspective of endogenization of Senegalese television programmes. This art form with its socio-cultural functions was to participate in the socialisation of Senegalese citizens through cultural education and the denunciation of certain faults in society. This was achieved through collaboration between the national television, RTS, and the various theatre groups. RTS had always opened up important time slots for the popularisation and promotion of this art form, which should have the status of an extension of the family.

However, in the early 2000s, with the birth and development of private commercial television in Senegal, popular filmed theatre began to decline in Senegal. Less sensational and less emotional, it could not be a good product for private commercial media that were too dependent on advertising. This is why an innovation was made in the programme schedules of private commercial television stations. With a partnership between the latter and emerging production companies, television series starring celebrities (TV hosts, singers, fashion and modelling professionals, etc.) were produced and broadcast. This marks the beginnings of a new form of theatre that is to replace popular theatre with theatre troupes on the small screen in Senegal. This migration from a major to a minor art form even affected national television, which quickly made room for these local television series.

Moreover, the quality of the form and content of these series is not unanimous among Senegalese consumers and civil society organisations. While some consumers of this product and the producers have defended the TV series, others, professional

actors and some religious civil society organisations have not failed to draw attention to the "very perverse" orientation of the latter, which go against the grain of Senegalese socio-cultural values. These complaints have led the audio-visual regulatory body to put in place certain restrictions and censorship.

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