International CMCL'19 Colloquium: Call for papers

The utopia of globalised culture and the reality of local communication practices.
Communication and digital technology in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa.

For almost three decades, transformations in ways of communicating and getting information have occupied researchers who question the production and uses related to internet, computing and mobile telephones. Even if the role played by the digital social networks in the "Arab Spring" has been the subject of much research, Francophone papers on communication together with the development of digital technologies in Africa are still rare (Kiyindou, Kouméalo & Capo Chichi 2015, Chéneau-Loquay 2012).

Between the predictions of McLuhan on the renowned "global village" and the alarmist speeches of Paul Virilio (1993) on the consequences of the universal acceleration of communications, the imaginary world surrounding digital communication seems to impose a vision that crushes cultural diversity. Socio-economic approaches are not left out. Thus, for long focused on the problems of the divide between the economically developed countries and the others (Le Guel 2004), the discussions that followed the report of the McBride Commission (1980) "towards a new, more just and more efficient world information and communication order", often referred to by the acronym NWICO, reveal a very universalist ideological background.

In contrast to these forms of homogenisation of the mediascapes (Appadurai 1996), which affect not only the processes studied, but also the ways of accounting for them, researchers have for long drawn our attention to the inventiveness of everyday life, tactics and poaching (de Certeau 2003). This work must be put to the service of a better comprehension of the uses of communication technologies, usually thought of by their promoters as generic and culturally neutral. However, we must avoid a double pitfall: the exaltation of individual creativity at the expense of the plural collective environments that inform practices; the exclusive focus on these practices to the detriment of peer observation of the constructs (since they are built on the long term and come alive in various media productions, they sometimes clash violently with one another and with those of the observer) and the technical, material and economic conditions of these practices.

In this context, the Symposium entitled "The utopia of globalised culture and the reality of local communication practices" aims to jointly explore the heterogeneity of uses, productions and issues raised by the meeting of globalised technology (Mattelart & alii 2015) that is often Western-centred, with various cultures. The first edition will focus on Francophone sub-Saharan Africa, a multicultural territory where contemporary geopolitical contexts pose particularly vital issues for communications research.

These issues are of interest mainly to the information and communication sciences community, but the contributions of researchers from various cultural and disciplinary horizons will make it possible to tackle this very broad problem of communication, especially digital, in sensitive areas, according to different complementary approaches.

Proposals for papers may fall into one or more of the following areas:

1. Relationships with authoritative discourse

Do digital social networks and the messages circulating on smartphones change the relationship of citizens to information (Traoré 2019), whether it be journalistic (Frère 2016), political, scientific or militant? How are discourses reconfigured from/with digital social networks and online views? Who are the most popular and influential speakers? How are enunciative authority and trust built?

In this area of research, proposals should focus on the ways in which the uses and the productions of digital modes of communication renew and/or amend the classic forms of enunciative authority (institutional and political legitimacy, religious or family authorities, etc.). Proposals could include the observation of practices, the semiological and discursive analysis of the contents of communication, or forms of the articulation of power and the modes of circulation of information.

2. Cultural and creative industries: (re) composition of mediascapes

Whether it is the cinema (Nollywood), mobile applications or even music, tensions arise between homogenisation and heterogenisation processes (Appadurai 1996), that is to say, between the imaginary (social, political, cultural) and globalised socio-economic models on one hand and their local variations — or adaptations on the other hand (Kiyindou 2013).

In this area of research, papers focusing on cultural heritage that mobilises digital devices for their production, distribution or consultation are expected. The objective is to understand the forms of appropriation, diversion, blending and reinvestment of these devices and their contents, both by their producers and their users: what are the strategies for promoting local and/or traditional culture? What are the political strategies underlying contemporary cultural and creative productions? What are the visible foreign or globalised constructs?

3. Cultural identities, social relationships and belonging in mobility

Digital communication devices enable inexpensive, immediate and mobile forms of interaction. Does this help to reconfigure plural forms of belonging and identity in nomadic, diaspora and/or intercultural contexts?

This area of research focuses on the link between mobility, communication practices and cultural identities: how does mobile communication accompany migration (Bensââd 2009)? In distant locations, temporary or lasting, experienced individually or within communities, how are attachment to territory, to traditions, to values of the place of origin and to social bonds with the community built when one is far away (Scopsi 2009)? How do screens react to or revitalise ancestral cultural forms (Bondaz 2012)?

4. Characteristics of languages, forms and formats

How does digital communication find its place in cultural areas where the diversity of languages and forms of expression foster the diversity of cultural identities, where the oral tradition is very much alive and where the relation to written culture sometimes remains a privilege and a tool of power in the hands of the better-off? What devices, shapes and formats are favoured? Conversely, are some forms of communication shocking, forbidden or censored? Are new languages, new forms/norms being invented?

This area of research will host papers that emphasise the study of the material and formal dimensions of digital communication languages (visual, audio, written or oral, iconic, figurative,

alphabetic, etc.) in their relationships with the cultural dimensions and values of the societies in which they are disseminated. Semio-pragmatic, socio-technical or socio-discursive approaches that articulate the analysis of messages with social devices and contexts will therefore be welcome.

5. Epistemological and ethical issues of intercultural inquiry

Scientific knowledge about intercultural communication can meet the interests of technical, practical or emancipatory knowledge, to use the categories previously identified by Jürgen Habermas. However, in all cases, intercultural contexts and processes involve questioning scientific and political norms, theoretical and social frameworks, technical and cognitive operations, which constrain both the subject of observation and the position of the observer (Averbeck-Lietz 2013). Lastly, the understanding of communication processes in multicultural situations cannot be done without an epistemological and methodological reflection on the place, the involvement and the objectives of the researcher in relation to the investigation (Waisbord & Mellado 2014).

In this line of research will be found the communications which choose to reflect on the specific aspects of the work of producing "expert" knowledge in intercultural situations: critical approaches to implicit points of view adopted by scientific works, methodological proposals questioning the necessary heterogeneity of the operations of data collection (observation of practices, analysis of contents, etc.), studies of the actions led by NGOs or by any other type of actors, etc.

Submission procedures and schedule

Proposals for papers in French or English should not exceed 5000 characters (excluding spaces and the bibliography).

July 31, 2019: submission of proposals at https://cmcl19.sciencesconf.org/

September 6, 2019: replies to authors

October 11, 2019: submission of abstracts of papers for publication of the proceedings online
from 19 to 21 November 2019: the Symposium will be held in Lyon.

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