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KEYTI

Journal Rappé

Use of Senegalese music to raise coronavirus awareness on social media

ABSTRACT

Senegal is a country with a long history of oral tradition, where the griot is the leading figure responsible for the transmission of messages from generation to generation over centuries. They are highly regarded and considered in society as a mediator and advisor through their music or spoken word. As Senegal witnessed the arrival of the first cases of coronavirus, a large number of musicians used social media to disseminate songs raising coronavirus awareness. Following these first initiatives, President Macky Sall met with several acclaimed musicians in the country. This led to the production of a polyphonic song released by the social media platforms of the Ministry of Health and Social Action. This article looks at music as an 'edutaining' and phenomenologically proximate communication strategy to raise awareness about coronavirus and the measures that can be taken to prevent its spread.

KEYWORDS

social media
music
Senegal
coronavirus
edutainment
awareness campaign

1. See appendix for a compilation of these songs.

INTRODUCTION

As Senegal witnessed the arrival of coronavirus cases, musicians started to compose songs raising awareness about the pandemic, disseminating them via social media. Following the first initiatives, President Macky Sall met with several acclaimed musicians in the country. This meeting led to the production of a song titled 'Daan Corona' ('Defeat corona'). Whilst composed by Youssou N'Dour, the song was polyphonic, featuring nineteen other musicians. It was also bilingual, sung in Wolof, the *de facto* largest lingua franca in Senegal with over 90 per cent of speakers, and in French, official language yet spoken only by around 20 per cent of the population (Weidl 2018). The Ministry of Health and Social Action helped to propagate it on social media, where the twenty participating musicians also shared and disseminated it. Within a week, the YouTube song uploaded by Didier Awadi, artistic director of the music video, had reached hundreds of thousands of views, multiplied by further uploads.

During the first wave of the pandemic, the use of songs to raise awareness became the norm. By August 2020, other 22 multilingual corona-themed songs had travelled all over the world along social media.¹ Global media platforms offered coverage about this creative communication strategy (France 24 English, *El País*, Reuters, among others).

This article examines the involvement by Senegalese musicians in the awareness campaign about coronavirus. The study builds on previous research about the role of music in health emergencies, in particular the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014 (Chirinos-Espín 2017). It specifically analyses the defining features of this audio-visual form of communication, designed to be rapidly spread via social media on mobile, small media devices. We suggest that the creative involvement of Senegalese musicians in the awareness campaign about coronavirus can be seen as a form of 'edutainment', which combines education and entertainment. This contributes to the democratization of information, raising awareness of issues that concern the local population. In this article, we suggest that this form of edutainment, consisting of music to be first and foremost disseminated multidirectionally through social media, fosters 'phenomenological proximity' (Adejunmobi 2010). This is a term that Moradewun Adejunmobi applies to cinema, and more specifically Nollywood, that is able to appeal transnational audiences beyond Nigeria. Similarly, coronavirus-themed songs disseminated by social media create a sense of proximity thanks to the historic importance of orality, the respect towards musicians involved, the multilingualism and the familiarity with social media.

RESEARCH SAMPLE AND METHODS

The research sample for this study is composed of three songs and a *Journal Rappé* Special Issue released approximately within the first month of the president's response to coronavirus, that is, from 23 March 2020, when the state of emergency and curfew were announced, to 23 April 2020. These songs are 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus' ('Coronavirus prevention'), released on 19 March 2020; 'Na Fi Jogge (And Xeex Corona)' ('Boot it out [together to fight against corona]'), released on 23 March 2020; and 'Daan Corona' ('Defeat corona'), released on 13 April 2020.

These have been selected for their relevance and wide social media dissemination, involving a range of well-established and early-career musicians.

'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus' was the first Senegalese corona-themed song in Wolof and French. It was created by Y'En A Marre, an activist and social movement launched in 2011 to mobilize Senegalese population about the then Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade's attempt to run for a third turn against the Constitution (Mateos and Bajo Erro 2020: 6–7). Similarly, 'Na Fi Jogge' was characterized for its prompt action, being released on the day in which the state of emergency was announced. Sung in Wolof, Mandinka, Pulaar and French, it features several musicians who have often been involved with social issues, notably rapper Xuman, co-founder of *Journal Rappé*, a rapped television news broadcasting programme. The third selected song is the aforementioned 'Daan Corona', which resulted from the meeting between Macky Sall and several musicians. The selected sample is complemented by a collection of coronavirus-themed songs, listed in the appendix. We also include a Special Issue on coronavirus in *Journal Rappé*, released on 26 March 2020, since this form of screen media relies mainly on music.

This compilation of 23 multilingual songs and their textual analysis have greatly benefitted from the collaborative methodology in this article, co-authored by screen media scholar Estrella Sendra and rapper and 'journalist' Keyti, co-founder of *Journal Rappé*. Being originally from the south of Spain, based in London and having spent long research fieldwork trips in Senegal since 2015, Estrella's social media network evidenced very early the transnational outreach of this Made-in-Senegal-for-Senegal creative initiative. Keyti's active engagement in social movements and in raising coronavirus awareness from Senegal was key to study these songs in relation to the location of their target audience, Senegalese population. These two positionalities made possible the combination of digital ethnography, a method that has become as relevant as ever in times of pandemic, and non-digital ethnography, with Keyti's participant observation on the field. It also allowed to conduct face-to-face interviews with three Senegalese musicians involved in the chosen songs. These include Dominique Preira, more known as DIP, who was involved in 'Daan Corona' and who had released a solo song about coronavirus on 28 March 2020, named 'Ànd Xeex Coronavirus' ('Together to fight against corona'); Xuman, involved in the *Journal Rappé* coronavirus issue 'Na Fi Jogge' and 'Daan Corona'; and Fou Malade from 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus'.

A brief introduction of the interviewees helps to both contextualize their statements and illustrate the active involvement by musicians in this communication campaign. DIP was born in 1991 in Dakar and founded the rap group Doundou Guiss ('Live to learn'). In 2019, he was nominated for the category of 'Best Rapper of the Year' by the African Talent Awards. He is currently the most popular rapper in Senegal, with over 11 million viewers in YouTube and over a million followers on Instagram. We also interviewed Xuman, a highly respected rapper in Senegal with a long history of social commitment, co-founder of *Journal Rappé*, which sought to engage the youth with serious issues concerning the Senegalese society. *Journal Rappé* released a coronavirus-themed Special Issue on 26 March 2020, presented by Xuman himself. He was also behind the songs 'Na Fi Jogge' and 'Daan Corona'. The third interviewee is Malal Tall, also known as Fou Malade, from Y'En A Marre, a group of journalists and rappers created in 2011 with an aim to mobilize the population against the re-election of the previous president, Abdoulaye Wade. Fou Malade was involved in the making of the first Senegalese corona-themed song, 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus'.

CONTEXTUALIZING CORONAVIRUS MUSICAL MESSAGES WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ORAL HISTORY

Musicians on the African continent, like all over the world, have a long history of engagement with sociopolitical issues (Mateos and Bajo Erro 2020). Musicians have enjoyed their celebrity status to raise awareness about social issues of global scope (Mano 2011: 92). This is also a common marketing strategy known as celebrity marketing, where famous actors and popular public figures from different sectors endorse a product. As Chirinos-Espín puts it, 'songs themselves – when performed by influential artists – can be powerful means of communicating social issues' (2017: 330). Chirinos-Espín suggests that the appearance of celebrities 'can create consumer awareness and favourable attitudes about a product or cause, as celebrities have the public's trust, which is essential in communicating effectively about risk' (2017: 331).

When examining the role of Senegalese music celebrities in the campaign to fight against coronavirus, further factors need to be considered. Senegal is a country with a long history of oral tradition. For centuries, music and the spoken word have dominated the dissemination of information and mediated social relations, particularly through the *griot*, the master of the spoken word, who still enjoys a privileged position in society (Diop 1995). Senegal is also a 'mosaic of languages and cultures' (Tambadou 1994: 23). As mentioned above, whilst French is the official language, just around twenty per cent of the population speaks it fluently. In contrast, Wolof is the *de facto* largest lingua franca, co-existing with a myriad of languages such as Mandinka, Sereer, Pulaar and Joola. A final encompassing significant factor to stress is the postcolonial context. The Senegalese creative response to fight against coronavirus has been perceived by artists as crucial in a country where illiteracy is still challenging to combat (Alpha Sy in Hammerschlag 2020). Colonialism has also led to the marginalization of a large number of regions, as a consequence of an imported French government system.

Within this multifaceted context, music embodies a fluid and complex relation between the past and the present. Through its repertoires of languages and rapid spread through digital technologies, music has a great potential to reach a large part of the population, in Senegal, the continent, diaspora and the whole world. That is, it fosters a sense of 'phenomenological proximity', where messages are appreciated by audiences because 'the conflicts they represent and the resolutions they offer are perceived to be experientially proximate for postcolonial subjects' (Adejunmobi 2010: 111).

This makes music a highly efficient sonic form of communication, consequently making information more accessible. It aligns with the historic importance of radio as a means of communication in Africa, more broadly (Gunner et al. 2011). Its popularity is shaped by the link with orality (Mano 2011: 91). Radio enhances community belonging at a local, national and transnational level (Gunner et al. 2011: 1). It is able to reach both rural and urban communities simultaneously, regardless of the access to electricity or the internet. Today, technological innovation has offered a new audio-visual media, even more portable than radio, mobile media technologies, with an increasingly small screen. Senegalese mobile phones exceed the population. It is the norm to have more than one device, which often differ in their provider, to enjoy different kinds of deals or avoid zones of no network. If the estimated population is 16.52 million, the number of phones is over 18 million (DataReportal 2020). The number of internet users on any device is 7.60 million, which constitutes

40 per cent of the total population. Social media uses are about half of such percentage, making 21 per cent of the total population (DataReportal 2020). This context explains the important role of edutainment through music, rapidly spread through social media. 'Popular musicians in Africa do not just entertain their listeners. They also provide "news" through music' (Mano 2011: 91). This informational dimension becomes key in times of crisis, as reflected during the coronavirus outbreak in Senegal.

COLLABORATION: TOGETHER TO FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

Music is a particular form of communication, in that it constitutes a space of encounter, one that is collective and inclusive. '[B]y evoking without referring, [music] has extraordinary power to help people find their deepest selves, bring them together, and feel connected to what feels most important' (Baym 2018: 31). One of the most remarkable characteristics of the creative use of music as a means to raise awareness about coronavirus has been the collaboration. As Nancy Baym notes, referring to music worldwide, '[m]usic has always been about building, sustaining, and reworking social relationships and institutions' (2018: 31). In Senegal, while initiatives have often been led by a single artist, songs have been based on collaboration. This needs to be contextualized within broader forms of collaboration in pandemics such as Ebola and within the context of urban arts in Senegal.

With the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, musicians also joined together to raise awareness about the disease. According to Chirinos-Espín, one of the co-producers of *Africa Stop Ebola*, 36 Ebola-themed songs and music videos were produced, with over 66 million views on social media, and played also on local television and radio (2017: 332). The author distinguishes two main kinds of songs, differing in their aim. Those produced by West African artists based in the continent sought to raise awareness about the disease. These songs are marked by the hybridity of popular genres, including hip-hop and reggae, with an aim of communicating through familiar sounds for the local population. A second kind of songs aimed, instead, to raise funds and were also produced by western artists. In our study, we focus on the first kind of songs, produced specifically by Senegalese musicians with the main aim of raising awareness.

Africa Stop Ebola had the particularity of featuring some of the most famous musicians from West Africa, such as Grammy award winner Oumou Sangaré from Mali; her compatriots Salif Keita and Amadou & Mariam; reggae musician Tiken Jah Fakoly from Ivory Coast, Didier Awadi from Senegal, among others. In line with the multilingualism of coronavirus-themed songs, *Africa Stop Ebola* included French, English, Malinké, Kissi, Bambara, Sousou and Lingala. This aimed to democratize information about Ebola, making it accessible to as much people as possible across the West African region. Like coronavirus, Ebola was a relatively new and unknown disease to the population, with no cure or vaccine, causing uncertainty across the population (Chirinos-Espín 2017: 330). This was reflected in the lyrics, which labelled Ebola as an 'invisible enemy'. The song was quickly praised by the press for its ability to deliver clear and accurate information to prevent the spread of the disease (Chirinos-Espín 2017: 334).

Rapper Didier Awadi's participation in the collective effort to prevent Ebola through sonic communication is illustrative of the broader collaborative environment of arts and cultures in Senegal. Artists have been organizing themselves to create festivals, with a holistic creative approach, from the

performances to the management and fundraising. Collaboration between artists and cultural actors leading the festival circuit has been a key feature to foster certain sustainability, in a context in which the cultural policy and state initiatives still lack the strength able to keep up with the prolific music and cultural production in the country (Kandé Senghor 2015).

'Daan Corona' illustrates such collaborative environment in the Senegalese cultural sphere. Based on the remix of Youssou N'Dour's 'Xaley Rewmi' ('Our young people'), 'Daan Corona' is the work of twenty artists, including Awadi, Duggy Tee, Xuman, Dip Doundou Guiss or Clayton-Hamilton, or emerging musicians representing the new generation, such as Samba Peuzzi or Ngaaka Blinde, as well as musicians from the Y'En A Marre movement, including Fou Malade or Simon Kouka, and some female voices of Senegalese rap, such as Oumy Gueye OMG, Moonaya or Mamy Victory. 'Unity is our strength' is part of the lyrics, coherently celebrating such collaboration. This is what, according to Dip Doundou Guiss, makes this song particularly powerful.

It was not limited to raising awareness only but there was a communion, a union, to show that we are together [...] This union will maybe make people realize the seriousness of the situation and motivate them to be careful [...] When people unite to fight something, those who see the video or listen to the song, will maybe collectively pay attention too.

(Dip Doundou Guiss 2020)

Similarly, 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus' is collectively copyrighted by Y'En A Marre. It features rappers Malal, Kab 2 Seuss, Aaro, Free Loader, Simon and Kilifeu. Similarly, 'Na Fi Jogge' includes Idrissa Diop, Xuman, Fallou Dieng, PPS, Bouba Kirikou, Adam Sène, Fatim, Khady Diop, Mamy Victory, Fa, Aliou Guissé, Noumoucounda, Bakhaw and Chérif Maal.

EDUTAINING THROUGH MUSIC TO DEMOCRATIZE INFORMATION

Music constitutes a kind of inclusive means of communication thanks to its combination of education and entertainment. Musicians and urban artists have been at the heart of the creative communication campaign to raise awareness about coronavirus in Senegal, with deserved acknowledgement from the president. 27 March 2020 offered a historic image. Macky Sall organized a meeting in his presidential palace with several Senegalese artists, mainly rappers such as Xuman, Awadi and Fou Malade from Y'En A Marre. By then, 119 coronavirus cases had been confirmed in Senegal, eleven people had recovered from the infection, and there were yet no deaths (Bajo 2020). Some of these had been spreading messages in opposition to the president just the year before, through their music, in order to prevent the re-election of the president.

The meeting came after the release of 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus', 'Na Fi Jogge' and the *Journal Rappé* Special Issue, which evidence the source of inspiration that musicians were for the communication campaign by the government. As Fou Malade claims, when Y'En A Marre put together 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus', 'there was no request from the government. It was a responsibility to be fulfilled' (Fou Malade 2020). 'There [in the meeting] we committed to create a song voluntarily so that all benefits would go towards the fight against Coronavirus' (Awadi in Bajo 2020). These musicians asked Youssou N'Dour to join them. Awadi describes the collaboration as 'the fruit of the unity of rap and the world of music' in general as well as 'an assumed exercise of responsibility

and leadership' (Awadi in Bajo 2020). And he adds: 'We have a very powerful enemy called Coronavirus and we must expel it from our country' (Awadi in Bajo 2020). Similarly, Fou Malade claims: 'We are standing together with the state, because right now the common enemy is the pandemic' (Reuters 2020). This understanding of coronavirus as the 'enemy' resonates with the study of *Africa Stop Ebola* mentioned above.

Such testimonials shed light on the awareness that musicians can operate as gatekeepers and acquire a degree of attention needed by the national government in times of crisis. Wally Seck's *mbalax* song 'Digglé, Coronavirus' ('Measures for coronavirus'), released on 25 March 2020, even counts on the appearance of the Ministry of Health. Fou Malade was also approached by the Ministry of Health, proposing a series of awareness campaigns to prevent the evolution of the pandemic. These 'focused on the stigmatization but also on the de-dramatization of the disease' (Fou Malade 2020). However, this collaboration has not prevented these committed rappers to criticize certain measures adopted by the government, for instance, around the problems in the distribution of emergency help to the population through the Force Covid19 Funds (Bajo 2020). What Fou Malade notes is the ability for artists 'to *amplify* the message of government authorities and make it much more credible' (Fou Malade 2020, emphasis added). He is thus referring to the democratizing feature of musical messages.

Musician's agency has also been acknowledged by international institutions, which have been using the songs to raise funds to help fight against coronavirus. UNESCO, for example, launched the #DontGoViral campaign in partnership with the Innovation for Policy Foundation, integrating the song 'Daan Corona'. This aimed to make accurate information about the pandemic accessible using African local languages, delivering creative audio-visual messages, notably songs, and disseminating these via social media. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification also requested Baaba Maal, UN ambassador, to compose a coronavirus-themed song, titled 'Jam Leeli Jam Yo' ('Peace, only peace'), released on 11 April 2020. This was also produced in partnership with the World Health Organization and the Senegalese Health Organization, with the message of staying home and remaining vigilant. Damien Cardona, director of the UN Information Centre in Senegal, claims this has been a democratic communication strategy to ensure 'that the access to information is also democratic' (United Nations 2020), which reinforces the awareness of the inclusion fostered by edutainment.

SHARED FEATURES IN CORONAVIRUS-THEMED SONGS

The release of the songs and music videos demonstrates an ability to creatively respond quickly to this global health issue. This is due to the long history of activism and social movements in Senegal (Mateos and Bajo Erro 2020: 6–7). By 23 March 2020, when Macky Sall declared the state of emergency and curfew, musicians had already initiated their fight through the language they dominated the most – sound. 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus' was released four days before lockdown in Senegal, with 38 cases confirmed in the country. After being heard by the government, filming of the music video was allowed by the Ministry of Health in one of the main hospitals, Fann, in Dakar (Bajo 2020). This ongoing campaign would have taken place 'with or without the call from the President, since the activities had already started prior to the meeting with the President or even with the Ministry of Health' (Sow in Bajo 2020). As

Xuman puts it, 'at all times in Senegal as soon as there are problems, as soon as there is a pandemic or crisis, artists are the first to come forward because songs remain the best way to speak to the masses' (Xuman 2020). 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus' reflects such dimension, when it refers to the virus as a 'global reality' that has 'turn the world upside down'. At the same time, it is framed within a context of distrust among the Senegalese population, among which there was a popular belief that religious leaders would protect the country or that the virus had been created by the West to 'kill more Africans'.

While we have been focusing on artists based in the continent, stressing their active involvement in the cause, many of the musicians have had experiences of international mobility, either touring with their music or through periods of residence abroad. They all share a feeling of rootedness in Senegal, through birth and heritage, which fosters a sense of commitment and responsibility to give back. In short, they are 'rooted cosmopolitans' (Appiah 2005: 241). This became evident in our interview with Xuman, who claims: 'In Senegal most people do not necessarily speak French, many are illiterate and do not have access to certain information so since *we* had access to this information, it had to be shared' (Xuman 2020).

At the same time, these rooted cosmopolitans had already a history of social commitment. For instance, Fou Malade had produced a song with Pacotille about Malaria in 2005 and then worked on cholera (Fou Malade 2020). The songs are polyphonic, even when led by a main singer or song composer. This already implies a sense of collective commitment to act. It further conveys a sense of coherence with the message delivered, which revolves around the idea of staying together, emphasized in the songs. 'This is not a time for division, we need unity to fight against it, empathy and solidarity between us', says Kab 2 Seuss in 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus'.

The production of these songs is shaped by a remarkable degree of creativity. They are highly rhythmic, guaranteeing the entertainment while carefully ensuring the creative process was at the same standards of any other songs. This intention was confirmed by Fou Malade, when he expressed that part of the challenge was to manage the balance between delivering accurate health information and keeping 'the aesthetics of the text' (Fou Malade 2020). The 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus' music video was shot in the hospital, with the musicians embodying the role of artists. 'Na Fi Jogge' and 'Daan Corona' stressed the rigorous creative process by showing the musicians in the professional studio, at times intertwined with close-up shots of hands being washed, in the case of 'Na Fi Jogge', and of young strong women by the African Renaissance Monument in Dakar, in 'Daan Corona'. 'It does not make sense to raise awareness just for the sake of it without poetry or musicality', Fou Malade notes. And he adds: 'I always want to keep the artistic feeling, to keep it as hip hop, poetic, with rhymes, and even to have a few punchlines every now and then and to keep a popular flair' (Fou Malade 2020).

The composition of these songs is also characterized by its synchrony with the official health news. They rapidly adapt to the evolution of the pandemic. At the beginning, the focus was on prevention. 'It is all about prevention', 'prevention is better than cure' are some of the lyrics in the first released song, 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus'. 'Let's prevent it, wash hands, avoid gatherings [...] stay at home' are some of the messages in 'Daan Corona'. Then, as soon as the first cases appeared, they were about the importance of not stigmatizing the illness.

Songs have also excelled at adapting specialist health language to music lyrics. This clarity of information is key to allow the democratization of information, making it accessible and inclusive. For instance, in 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus', there is a sort of checklist of symptoms: 'Is your body temperature high? Do you have headaches? Are you coughing? Do you have difficulties breathing?' This has greatly been possible due to multilingualism, since most state-run television and print media are in French (Smith 2019: 202). Fou Malade claims that the problem of the government's language is that it does 'not necessarily get through [...] Even if the message is true, the language it uses does not connect with young people' (Fou Malade 2020). Multilingual songs appear as a way of responding to this information barrier.

This clarity of information aimed to counterbalance misinformation and fake news spread across social media. Xuman attributes the belief in fake news to inefficient management, claiming: 'The crisis was so badly managed at the beginning that people started to doubt and started to listen to those who said that the virus did not exist' (Xuman 2020). Fou Malade claims that 'when the Coronavirus started, many people thought it was an invention' (Fou Malade 2020). These respected and reliable faces explicitly warn against such problem. For instance, in *Journal Rappé: Coronavirus*, Xuman claims: 'Even worse than the Corona, there is the stupidity around the virus. Watch out to the fake news diffused by some social media'.

The composition further relies on repetition, a common narrative technique in oral tales. 'Xeex Corona', composed by artists from Louga, starts by repeating: 'Artists from Louga, together, fighting and winning against Coronavirus'. The songs also integrate religious references, in line with Senegalese music, more broadly (McLaughlin 1997: 560). An example of this appears in 'Daan Corona', when Youssou N'Dour sings: 'In the name of God let's start by asking his blessings. We pray to him'. These features show the adaptation to local sociocultural codes as a strategy to make information inclusive.

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL PROXIMITY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Whilst the use of social media and its contribution to democratizing access to information requires a whole separate in-depth study, the analysis of coronavirus-themed songs would not be complete without a reference, even if brief, to its innovative technologies of dissemination. The media has been shaping both older oral genres and emerging popular cultural forms in Africa for over a century (Barber 2009: 3). Local artists become aware of the potential of technological innovation and efficiently use them to foster a new kind of public (Barber 2009: 13). They have opened the doors for a new kind of audience engagement all over the world, where many activists, local and international, are now followed by hundreds of thousands of Senegalese people. This applies more precisely to the youth, which in Senegal constitutes the majority of the population. Young people are frequent users of social media, but distant from mainstream media (Sall 2017: 2). Social media fosters 'a comfortable place to stay informed' (Sall 2017: 4) as well as to stand together for social and political issues concerning the population, diversifying the points of view and thus challenging the idea of a monopoly of information.

Social media becomes that space where there is a sense of togetherness, realizing the 'phenomenological proximity' (Adejunmobi 2010). The songs have both a local and transnational scope. They deal with global subjects and familiar aspirations among Senegalese people internationally. They are

phenomenologically proximate in that they remind of home (Adejunmobi 2010: 111). Numerous social media posts derive from Senegalese-rooted cosmopolitans such as Youssou N'Dour and Diabel Cissokho.

Social media has been the space to disseminate not only coronavirus-themed songs but also further multimedia messages through online live concerts from home and socially distancing selfie videos, selfies with masks, use of frames or written messages. Several hashtags have been diversifying the way of accessing this information, for instance, #fagarungirmuccu (#preventionissafety) and #Coronavirus #COVID19sn, on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Xuman also stresses the importance of small concrete actions: 'These small actions can foster much more interest, because people can say: "I saw what you did, it is a good action and I want to do the same thing"' (Xuman 2020). They reinforce the idea of phenomenological proximity mediated via social media platforms and hashtags.

Social media has allowed every musician to become a celebrity. 'Categories of people who would formerly have been excluded from performance altogether now entered the new, mediatized sphere and made a success of it' (Barber 2009: 6). The musicians involved have diverse degrees of popularity, yet feel equally welcome as spokespeople. Social media becomes an inclusive virtual space, a public sphere, where musicians at different stages in their diverse careers have been able to share their contributions, thus encouraging wider audiences to engage through actions of different scopes.

CONCLUSION: EDUTAINMENT IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

The creative response to deal with the coronavirus pandemic in Senegal evidences once more the leading role of popular music in key historic moments in African societies (Mano 2011: 102). This further echoes with Mano's view of popular music as a kind of journalism and, more specifically, edutaining media, building on the emblematic contribution from *Journal Rappé* (Smith 2019). This has excelled in creativity and demonstrated the strong support networks that shape music production in the country. More importantly, it has enabled the Senegalese population to access accurate information adapted to the audio-visual medium in multiple languages. This creative cross-collaboration, not just with fellow artists but also with political and institutional figures, has led to a resignification of the concept of activism. This is why the phenomenon has, instead, been examined here through the lenses of edutainment, inspired by Smith's recent work. We hope this angle will contribute to rethinking activism within the African context, which is the expression of a creative body of socially committed individuals willing to be proximate to each other. Borrowing Adejunmobi's term, we have characterized this proximity as phenomenological, emphasizing its democratic dimension. Musical messages have fostered an inclusive communication model, coherent with the long oral history, based on mutual respect, multilingualism as well as performed through a familiar technology – social media. We hope this article will invite further research on the way in which this offers an inclusive and accessible space, thus contributing to the democratization of information.

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APPENDIX: LIST OF COVID-19-THEMED SENEGALESE SONGS (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

1. 'Corona', Jaaw Ketchup, 3 March 2020, Wolof, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QerwT28llhw>. Accessed 3 March 2020.
2. 'Fagaru Ci Coronavirus', Y'En A Marre, 19 March 2020, Wolof and French, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06YbY1MLp4A&feature=emb_title. Accessed 19 March 2020.
3. 'Na Fi Joge (And Xeex Corona)', Xuman and others, produced by Natty Dread Edutainment, 23 March 2020, Wolof, Mandinka, French and Pulaar, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaHMbyAjCFc>. Accessed 23 March 2020.
4. 'Coronavirus', Clayton Hamilton, Awadi and others, 25 March 2020, English, French and Wolof, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b5kHnHznh4>. Accessed 25 March 2020.
5. 'Digglé, Coronavirus', Wally Seck, 25 March 2020, Wolof and French, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4seOucz4Bps>. Accessed 25 March 2020.
6. 'Stop Corona', Cherifou & Job Sa Brain and others, 25 March 2020, Wolof, English and Pulaar, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EAo8rgBVp4>. Accessed 25 March 2020.
7. *Journal Rappé: Coronavirus*, Xuman, 26 March 2020, French, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbOzht5LOro>. Accessed 26 March 2020.
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Keyti is one of the pioneers of Senegalese hip-hop music. In addition to his activities in the music scene, Keyti has been organizing conferences and panels, discussing the sociopolitical impact of hip-hop on young people in his homeland. Keyti became known to Senegalese audiences in 1998 with his group Rapadio after they released their first album *Ku Wéét Xam Sa Bop*. In October 2012 he co-founded *Journal Rappé* ('Rap journal') along with Xuman.

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