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Pop Music as e-Civism: Negotiating Change Through Subaltern Voices in Burkina Faso

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Abstract

In 2014, a popular revolution led by a group of underground pop musicians ousted a 27-year regime in Burkina Faso. In attempting to find meaning in how these musicians were able to mobilize millions of people across the country under the banner of *Le Balai Citoyen* (the Citizen Broom), I studied their works before the 2014 revolution. I found that pop music from Burkina Faso represents a subaltern discursive engagement voice whereby lyrics and video frames disseminate a counter-discourse and call for action against government malpractices. By examining the lyrics and video frames as a discursive voice in 40 YouTube music videos from 10 pop musicians or groups of musicians released between 2003 and 2014, I recorded antipathy toward the established power system and placed the provocative lyrics of the selected songs within the larger context of regime change. Pop musicians turned to online platforms to publish and share with their fans because the dissenting nature of their musical messages restricted their access to public media. Their *modus operandis* was a combination of strong coded political messages in local languages or vernacular French with embedded theatrical sketches, which satirize the lavish lifestyles of the leaders and simultaneously portray the misery of the average citizens. Some pop musicians now represent a strong political voice in Burkina Faso and even in the sub-region as they began to network with other afrocentric civil society groups such as Y'en a marre (Senegal), and Filimbi (DR Congo).

Key words: eCivism, Protest Music, Balai Citoyen, Burkina Faso

Introduction

*Ce president là, Ce président là.
Il faut qu'il parte, et il partira. Pianh!
Sam's K le Jah, Ce président là (2010)*

E-civism denotes the idea of expressing one's civic rights through electronic communication technology. The use of YouTube as a communication tool among Burkinabè musicians/social activists to share their protest songs denotes a new way of civic practice. Even so, this use of media happened within a context where media illiteracy was ubiquitous and digital media access was

relatively insignificant due to several challenges including low literacy rates and lack of proper infrastructure in the region (Bidwell, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2005). In such a context, the mobility of independent social movers and their use of social media arouse interest in understanding social change. In this study, I explore how pop musicians (rappers and reggae musicians) from Burkina Faso, acting as independent social entrepreneurs, mobilized people for action and social change through their music. In general, research on Burkinabè music is very rare, and there is no research connecting its musical message and political action. Therefore, the objective of this study is twofold. First, I seek to initiate a conversation in attributing agency and situating the popularity of pop music within Burkinabè political discourse. Second, I want link the resilient social practice of music production and distribution on new media within the context of media censorship, limited access to internet, and social change.

In this study, I ask the following questions: What does the content of Burkinabè pop music inform us about the success of pop musicians in organizing and rallying masses in the Burkina Faso 2014 protest movement? In other words, what is the nature and the meaning of the discourse conveyed by the Burkinabè pop music? While I do not seek to directly link musical message with music consumer behavior and reaction, I probe the content of the music to understand and appreciate its message within the frame of the socio-political context where it was formulated. Also, I must not that this study does not cover all pop music in Burkina Faso. Rather, it focusses on the works of musicians who define themselves as “*artistes engagés*,” a term that signals their commitment to defend a political, ethical, or social cause. To illustrate this study and provide a context, I turn my attention first to socio-technological convergence and social change, and arts as a form of dissensus.

Socio- technological Convergence and Social Change

Perhaps, drawing a parallel between the Arab Spring and the Burkinabè 2014 revolution brings is a good way to get in this study. In fact, in the wake of the Arab Spring, a first wave of scholarly research has attributed an important role to technology-facilitated communication in social change. The literature mostly argued that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) represented a serendipitous tool in the hands of civic networks including civil society groups, NGOs and news media in the forefront battle for democracy (Mudhai, 2013). However, a more nuanced argument, which has emerged in the discourse around the Arab Spring recognized the role of social media but emphasized the idea that existing social paradigms have combined with social media to produce the Arab Spring (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2015; Douai, 2013). This second wave of scholarship challenged the capacity of ICTs alone to enforce democracy (Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2015).

I argue that the 2014 Burkinabè revolution could be examined through the lenses of multiples trajectories. While traditional opposition leaders failed to truly challenge the 27-year regime through the electoral process, the civil society movements were able to organize an unprecedented protest and oblige the president to step down. However, unlike the Arab world, which was relatively developed and had media technology, access to internet was comparatively very limited in Burkina Faso. For instance, mobile broadband penetration in Burkina Faso was still at an infant stage. According to a report by GSMA and ITU (2016), mobile broadband penetration in Burkina Faso was 16% by June 2016. Another report indicated that only 1.89 million Burkinabè have access to Internet (Internet World Stats). Further, the limited internet access was compounded with a high illiteracy rate. In fact, a 2015 WHO report found that as of 2012, Burkina Faso recorded the lowest percentage of literate persons aged 15 and over in the world with only 29% of this age bracket being able to read and write in at least one language.

In such a socio-political context whereby access to Web2.0 and its communication innovations remains relatively poor for the majority, the foregoing discussion on new media's capacity to incubate social change calls for an even more nuanced exploration. It would be difficult to attribute agency to new media alone in a context whereby very few participants have access to new media in the first place. Nonetheless, musicians in sharing their music online are performing some sort of civic duty, which is defined in this study as online civism, or e-civism with civism meaning "a devotion of a citizen for his or her country" (Hachette, 2010). Such systematic performance and observation of the attitudes and behaviors of a good citizen in an online forum, e-civism, via politically-charged music message sharing is the object of this study.

To further appreciate the *Artistes Engagés*'s leadership in the 2014 popular revolution, it is important to consider a brief historical context of how regime change worked until then. Since its independence in 1960, Burkina Faso has remained an economically and politically fragile state (Hilgers & Loada, 2013). According to Ouedraogo (2014), since the military mingled with the political affairs by taking power in January 1966, it never left the political stage. President Compaoré's arrival in power in 1987 marked the 5th successful military coup since then. Further, the next 27 years under Compaoré's reign established an apparent political stability, maintained with an internal brutal force, which international media drastically failed to cover (Hagberg, 2002; Coleman, 2013). Additionally, Compaoré successfully kept a respected image abroad (Coleman, 2013; Jaffré, 2010). At home, he allowed the creation of a public sphere with a multiparty political system while simultaneously limiting the potentially subversive character of that public space (Bonnecase, 2015; Hilgers & Mazzocchetti, 2006). Reza (2016) reported that Compaoré was a strong ally of Washington and Paris, whom he allowed access to Burkina as a base for military operations

and surveillance in the Sahara region. This was a good trade for the powerful western governments to pay less attention to his human rights records.

Clearly, the general pattern in regime change in Burkina Faso has been through military coups. As the political opposition remained weak and divided during the Compaore regime, understanding how Burkina Faso was able to break through the spiral of military rule through a popular revolution in 2014 and a transition to a civilian government begs several questions. What has contributed to the political maturation of the protesters allowing them to express their civic right to protest? What sorts of civic technology and educational discourses have framed the dissenting opinions? While these questions cannot be addressed with sweeping generalizations, examining the role of pop music as a subset of the answer can open the discussion for further research.

Art as political dissensus

Art has the capacity to challenge the dominant discourse in ways that ordinary rational discourse cannot. Lithgow (2013) argued that “The aesthetic dimensions of cultural expression provide a way for subjects to navigate competing structures of legitimacy – those that reflect relations of domination and those that reflect relations that resist the effects of power” because “[...] aesthetic experience describes elements of cultural legitimacy that lie outside of the conditions of rational and empirical knowing” (p. 35). Hence, the aesthetic elements of music provide a different paradigm to challenge the authority, which might be impossible in traditional opposition speeches. Therefore, the theatrical representation of the political leaders in the music video serves two major purposes. First, it provides a grammar of signs and images, which constitute a statement of the immediate lived experience of the people, while manifesting the positionality of the artists. Secondly, it plays out the ethos of the viewers and calls for action to reverse the course of the events.

The role of music in social protest is not new and it has been widely documented through history in different places across the world. Music is a literary form which operates at the intersections of the social power structures, identities, and beliefs (Robertson, 2015, p. 67). Because the intrinsic values of music overlap between these important realms of social life, music is often used to solve issues of social, political, and of psychological nature. According to Dunaway (1987), music is one of the most widely known tools for political dissent in history among diverse peoples around the world (p. 268). On the other hand, political leaders also use music and musicians as a form of social control.

Obviously, in Burkina Faso, musicians who praise the elite and the ruling class are among the most popular ones. The success of electronic protest through music owes a lot to its actors' capacity to connect with likeminded musicians and fans from other countries. Music has given them a global mobility casting them as veritable afropolitans. Gehrman (2016) argues that digital mobility is a key element along with mobility between spaces in afropolitanism (p. 61). It is frequent to observe popular musicians from Burkina Faso engage with their peers from other Francophone West Africa through collaborative works, and guest appearance in songs and concerts, which allows them to connect with audiences both online and offline and beyond the national borders. Smockey has collaborated with Senegalese rapper Didier Awadi in writing and producing songs. Such collaborations have allowed Smockey and Sams' K to establish credibility outside Burkina Faso as *artistes engagés* (Frere & Englebert, 2015, p. 303).

In the foregoing discussion, I have attempted to outline that the Web2.0 and the host of communication and information technologies can lean on some specific social paradigms to facilitate social change. In the Arab world, for instance, social media were tactically used by activists to mobilize people. However, Burkina Faso had a different history of a sustained military rule

compounded with limited media access and high illiteracy rates. Yet, the Burkinabè were able to rally behind their pop musicians to protest and oust their long-term president. Since musicians and their civil society movement lead the social revolt, it is important to interrogate their works in seeking to understand the formation of the dissenting public opinion in Burkina Faso.

Methodology

In this study I analyse 40 select music videos of 10 artists or groups of artists who are self-proclaimed politically motivated musicians or “*artistes engagés*”. Some of these pop musicians including Sams’ K and Smockey were the initial creators and leaders of *Le Balai Citoyen*, the civil society movement which openly opposed the government through civic demonstration and called for the resignation of President Blaise Compaoré. Other musicians and groups or duos I included in my study are Sana Bob, Mano, Prince Zoetaba, Faso Kombat, Artists Unis, Collectif Tékéré, Yelen, and Black Marabouts. Also, though I know some of these musicians in person, I opted to use their artist name and not their legal names. With the exception of the group Artists Unis which has female musicians, all the *artistes engagés* in this study are male. This does not necessarily mean that women were not at the forefront of the musical discourse for social change nor does it mean that all the males in the pop music were producing political songs. Nonetheless, from my experience growing up in Burkina Faso, I have little to no knowledge of female musicians in the pop music industry who claim a place among *artistes engagés*.

The songs I studied were released between 2003 and 2014. I chose this period for the following reasons. The year 2003 marked the beginning of a new era of freedom of speech in Burkina Faso with the second revision of the Information Code, which regulated the production and distribution of information in the country. That revised Information Code, somehow, curtailed the freedom of information and impacted broadcasting content. For example, section 89 of the document

previews punishment for the distribution of any content that goes against proper morals and section 90 previews punishment for libelous content (Droit-Afrique). The data used in this study is drawn from music that was produced during the decade following the adoption of that new regulatory code and stops in the year 2014. In 2014 a popular revolution led civil society movements including *Le Balai Citoyen*, which was created by musicians Sams' K and Smockey ousted incumbent President Blaise Compaoré. The selected songs are in languages that I have native or native-like fluency, namely Mooré, French, and Jula. I use my own transliterations of excerpts from the lyrics and I operationalize the lyrics and the theatrical sketches from the music videos as discourse. I came of age listening to underground Burkinabe pop music. Also, even though I was not an eyewitness of the 2014 Burkinabè revolution, I have participated actively in online fora where I interacted with leaders of *Le Balai Citoyen* movement. As I indicated earlier in this paper, my goals in this study include starting a conversation that seeks to interrogates the phenomenon of new media and social change in the Burkinabè context. This study is a starting point for future research and it aims at arriving at a better question than the ones I ask in this study.

The instantiation of the conditions of the people

Half of the songs in this study present themes that represents the musician's views of what it means to live in Burkina Faso. The dominant ones are corruption, unemployment, social divide between poor majority and elite minority, weak education system and health care system, poor state or lack of public goods and infrastructure. For example, Prince Zoetaba in his song *Ting Tang* (2012) paints the daily financial hardship that the city dwellers face when he claims that "*Ouagadougou is wearing sunglasses*". In the local parlance, this means that nothing is working. The only way to survive is to engage in corruption and other morally dubious activities. The themes of representation of the condition of the people are more prominent in the next three examples of music videos. First,

in his song *Rastaman*, reggae musician Sams' K describes what he considers as major difficulties associated with being a Burkinabè.

<i>Je suis un Rastaman, au pays des merveilles</i>	<i>I am a rastaman from a fairyland</i>
<i>Ça vole ça vide les caisses</i>	<i>They steal and empty the safes</i>
<i>En toute impunité</i>	<i>In absolute impunity</i>
<i>Leurs enfants farotent, se lave</i>	<i>Their children show off money in bars</i>
<i>Les chaussures avec du champagne</i>	<i>and wash their shoes with champagne</i>
<i>Rasta au pays de ceux pour qui tout baigne</i>	<i>Rasta from a country where everything is fine</i>
<i>On construit des routes, des ponts, des écoles</i>	<i>They build roads, bridges, schools</i>
<i>qui font deux mois et tout dégringole</i>	<i>that stand for just 2 months and fall apart</i>
<i>Pendant ce temps nos enfants meurent</i>	<i>In the meantime our children are dying</i>
<i>sous les caïlcédrats à l'hôpital</i>	<i>under the cailcedrat trees which serve as hospitals</i>
<i>Rasta au pays de ceux pour qui tout baigne</i>	<i>Rasta from country where everything is fine</i>

Sams' K began the song with the irony that he is a musician “from a wonderland”, and “a country where everything is fine”. This irony symbolizes how hard it is to speak one's mind freely without praising the absolute leaders. However, the song hints that the wonderland does exist, at least for a small minority “who steal from the safes of the country in absolute impunity”. To Sams' K, this glamorous and almost fictional-like country is indeed real, but only for a minority, which is even wasting their stolen money: “their children show off money in bars and wash their shoes with champagne”. On the other hand, the majority of the Burkinabè have to deal with a broken healthcare system which does not even have enough buildings to host its mediocre and ill trained doctors. Consequently, the “children [of the poor people] are dying [in the care of doctors] under the cailcedrat trees, which serve as hospitals”

To further illustrate these two opposed worlds in which the Burkinabè live, the music video features a sketch of a government official dressed in suit and tie in an office. This man is drinking expensive liquor and wiping his sweating face with bank notes, which he then throws away afterwards. At the entrance of the office bodyguards in black sunglasses keep a large crowd at bay. The people in the waiting line are expecting a service from the man in suits. This sketch represents the inefficiency of the public service employees and their disregard for their duties as employees of

the people. It also denotes the inaccessibility of elected officials and their tendency to live and display exuberant lifestyles. That frame is juxtaposed with the one of a dying child, lying flat on a mat under a tree. The doctor who is assisting the child does not seem to know what he is doing because he is hesitant and does not even have appropriate medical equipment.

The second pop song, which highly presents the reality of Burkina Faso is *Diplomé Paumé* (*Graduated but broke*) by the duo Faso Kombat. It is important to note that this group is composed of a Burkinabè national and a Chadian national.

<i>Plus de vingt années d'études.</i>	<i>More than 20 years in school</i>
<i>Tu sais ce que ça entraîne?.</i>	<i>Do you know what that leads to?</i>
<i>Si tu n'as pas d'entreprise frère</i>	<i>When you have no family business</i>
<i>pour poser ton colis?</i>	<i>that will employ you?</i>
<i>L'éducation est comme un train sans pilote</i>	<i>Education has become a train with no conductor</i>
<i>que tout le monde embarque volontier</i>	<i>Everybody willingly boards</i>
<i>Mais pour aller où ?</i>	<i>But, where is the train going?</i>
<i>C'est ça les aléas.</i>	<i>That is the problem.</i>

Dominant themes in the song include unemployment, failure of the education system, and corruption. After long studies, “more than 20 years in school”, graduates have no employment prospective unless they are from the ruling class. In the Burkinabè context, using family ties to get a job is considered corruption and Faso Kombat toys with that when they mentioned that “when you have no family business”. This song was released in 2004 speaks straight to the youth who was mostly unemployed. It highlights how students trained in local schools are condemned to unemployment while blaming the education system for its weakness and lack of vision: “*Education has become a train with no conductor*”. Such a suicidal train denotes the absolute failure of the system to provide training that offers skills and guarantees employability Also the song claims that to get a job involves bribing someone or using family connections. The popularity of Faso Kombat among the youth in Burkina can be attributed to the appealing messages such as the one in this song. This song is a production of Studio Abazon is a music production studio created by rapper Smockey.

It was released in an audio cassette version. Therefore, it does not have an accompanying video sketch that mimics the message of the lyrics. However, the song is in both local Mooré and French, which assured the access of the message to many people.

Like Sams' K and Faso Kombat, Smockey too has produced and shared music video on Youtube describing the state of the nation and denouncing malpractices. One of his songs titled *Votez pour Moi* (Vote for Me).

*Un deux trois -votez pour moi
Sur la croix -je serai droit
Quatre cinq six- plus de justice
Je punirai tous mes complices
Sept huit neuf- Remet tout à neuf*

*One two three- vote for me
Hands on the cross, I will be the right man
Four five six - I will provide more justice
I will punish all my associates in crime
Seven, eight nine- I will set everything afresh*

This music video mocks the political speeches during elections and the deceitful and fraudulent nature of campaign promises. The message is passed with a lot of humor. In fact, Smockey pokes fun of the false promises politicians make in order to get elected and the way they organize and memorize their ideas in bulleted points. All along the song, the candidate's promises are presented as in bulleted point: "*One- two -three- vote for me I will be the right man Four five six - I will provide more justice*". In the official music video of this song, Smockey roleplays a politician. He is in the middle of a political campaign and he is laying out his political agenda while distributing cash to the people who attended his rally. But soon after he is elected he has uses trickery and even violence to get his money back.

The legitimization of the government

Smockey is consistent in producing songs with very strong political messages through his career as a rapper. Before he emerged as a cofounder of *Le Balai Citoyen* and a leader of the 2014 revolution, he has released music videos questioning the legitimacy of the government and negating the interest of the government. In the song titled *50 ans de Dépendance (50 Years of dependence)* he opposes the government's decision to celebrate Burkina's 50th anniversary of self-governance in

2010. The major contention in the song is that Burkina has failed to build infrastructure such as roads and bridges, and ports over its 50 years of independence. It posits that if the Burkina is truly independent, the performance of the leadership should be evaluated before any celebration takes place. Smockey wonder whether the government is celebrating “50 years of independence” of “50 years of dependence” since all the “calls are made by France” the former colonizer.

Members of the Burkinabè diaspora has also contributed with music with a strong message that reject Compaore’s legitimacy in power. On such example is Kaboré, a New York—based underground rapper who has been vocal in his music and asking for social change in his native Burkina Faso. In his music video titled *Sig Beene* in Mossi language Mano made a direct call to President Compaore to step down:

<i>Bassnaama ti Nan massa</i>	<i>Step down of the throne while it is still calm</i>
<i>Basnaama ti Nan massa -</i>	<i>Step down from the throne while you still can</i>
<i>Siig beene</i>	<i>Step down</i>

The song also incites citizens to mobilize to force the president out of office. This song is in Mossi, a language that is spoken by the majority of Burkinabè. It is worth noting that Kaboré is a member of Le Collectif Tékré, a Burkinabè civil society movement based in New York, which mobilized against the Compaore regime. Kaboré has been vocal and active on social media. Reggae musician Sana Bob has also participated in the disparagement of the government especially with his song *On n’est pas d’accord (We disagree)*

<i>Id guetta waad pa Niiin</i>	We are watching you as if we don’t see you
<i>Id sindaa waaad pa gomdann</i>	We are quiet as if we can’t speak
<i>Id kelgda waad pa woumdann</i>	We are listening quietly as if we don’t hear all
<i>Id se nan wa lék daare</i>	<i>But the day we decide to speak out</i>
<i>mpa mi hin na yitotoyé</i>	<i>There will be consequences</i>
<i>On n’est pas d’accord,</i>	<i>We disagree</i>

Sana Bob combines Mooré and vernacular French to reach larger audiences. He reminds the leaders that the silence of the people does not mean their agreement with the politics of the leaders and that

“there will be consequences” when the people decides to speak up. As a society with high power distance where authority figures are not questioned, to utter “we disagree” is to make a daring statement. The “id” in Moore and the “on” in French are indefinite personal pronouns denoting a large number. Their use here is special in the sense it denotes a separation of an “us” and an unnamed “them”. In fact, the musician does not call the opposed party’s name but he stresses on an “Id” which are watching and listening without action, but yet in disagreement.

Sana Bob has also joined a group of artists from Burkina to oppose protest against the government’s decision to stop all investigations related to the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo. In a song titled *Norbert Zongo: Dossier classé (Norbert Zongo: a classified file)*, the group which calls itself, Artists Unis, called for a reopening of the case. To better understand the scope of this song, it is important to consider the context in which it was created and who is Norbert Zongo. In fact, Norbert Zongo is a famous investigative journalist who was assassinated while he was in the middle of an investigation of a murder linked to the president’s brother (Hagberg, 2002). An independent inquiry commission concluded that it was a political assassination, but in 2006 the Burkinabè government decided to close the case and ordered that all investigations be stopped (Eko, 2010). It is within such context that Smockey and Sams’ K rallied many local artists as well as famous international musicians such as Tiken Jah Fakoly and Ismael Isaac from Cote d’Ivoire and Didier Awadi from Senegal to plead for a reopening of the Zongo case and stand against media censorship.

The video opens with the images of someone typing a famous quote of Zongo on a typewriter: “*Pour jouir de sa liberté il faut vivre*”. Simultaneously, one hears the voice of Zongo himself stating what is being written, which can be translated as “In order to enjoy freedom, one has to live first”. As the typing continues on the close-up frame of the paper in the typewriter, a sudden

switch takes the viewer to a TV monitor where a female journalist announces a breaking news: “We just received the confirmation of the death in an accident of Norbert Zongo, the editor of the private newspaper L’indépendant.” Then enter the voice of the musicians come one by one repeating the chorus in different languages. All of this is now alternated with images of the typewriter burning in flame, the calcined car in which Zongo died, and then his grave. The video ends on the declaration of a human right activist defying the government position, then with the sobbing voice of the Zongo’s mother, then the Zongo’s grave: “since they [the officials] said there won’t be any trial case in this case, God will do justice].

The call for action

The call for direct action against Compaoré regime started to emerge around 2010. The following songs not only opposes the government, but they call for action to change, to reclaim power and to overthrow the government, which is no longer has legitimacy. In his music video, *Ce président là (This president)*, released in 2010 in the mix of the national debate around the revision of the constitution which would allow President Compaoré to be candidate for the upcoming presidential election, Sams’ K took a categorical position in calling for Compaoré to leave office. The chorus of the song clearly states that the president has to go and he will go: “*This President has to go, and he will go*”.

This music video was followed by another one in 2012. The song titled *Si tu parles (If you speak out)*, Sams’ K calls all the Burkinabè to speak up, to break away from the fear of getting killed and to join the fight against the Compaoré’s regime. The reference to charismatic political figures such as Sankara, Lumumba, and Che Guevara, helps the musician cast the fight for change as legitimate and absolute. These historical revolutionary figures are respected symbols for the youth. The music video filmed during a live performance hastily inserted close-up photos and graffiti

of Sankara, Lumumba, and Che Guevara. The song also reassures that when many people join the struggle, victory is assured “a thousand ants can make an elephant run.” This means that protesters should not underestimate their power when they are able to unite for the same cause.

When, the protest movement against Compaoré was in its summit in 2014, Collectif Tékré, composed of young Burkinabè migrants in New York released a music video titled Tekré which means change in Mooré. Here is an excerpt I transcribed from the song:

<i>Gooma ne fo, ti fo kawooum gomde</i>	<i>We have talked to you but you refused to listen</i>
<i>Sagla fo ti fo ka woum sagglisse</i>	<i>We advised you, but you rejected our advice</i>
<i>Tinkugra yelam tif loogue</i>	<i>The constitution says you should go</i>
<i>Ti nimbouida yelam tif loogue</i>	<i>The people said you must go</i>
<i>Demokracy pa waa nin ninda yebre ye</i>	<i>Democracy is not a one-man rule</i>
<i>Tond panan sak yanwan ye</i>	<i>We will never accept what you want to do</i>
<i>Burkindamba yikiyan</i>	<i>Burkinabè of all board stand up</i>
<i>Ti mossan lebga tekre</i>	<i>For now is the time to bring change</i>
<i>Il est temps de partir,</i>	<i>It is time to go [fight]</i>
<i>Il est temps, il est temps, je t'en prie</i>	<i>It is time, it is time, I beg you</i>

Collectif Tekré warns the president against any attempt to bypass the constitution and calls the Burkinabè to mobilize and remain focused because it is the time for change and there is no going back. The official video features short interviews with protesters in Ouagadougou who were being chased by police. It also includes a lot of still images from the protest front featuring known political opposition figures such as Boukary Le Lion, as well as other civil society leaders such as Sams' K and Basic Soul. The video frames are arranged such that the viewer is lead to believe that the musicians are physically present in the streets of Ouagadougou where the protest is going on. I was in the USA at the time of the release of the video and I remember the enthusiasm that this song brought to Burkina diaspora members, especially the youth in New York and Texas. For the most Burkinabè diaspora members trying to stay abreast of the unfolding event, the discourse of the *artistes engagés* and their music became part of a patriotic hymn, which they share in their social media to show their support to the protest movement.

Concluding remarks

The Burkinabè young people have understood the power of the electronic media as it escapes the invigilance of state power to restrict and control their access to the public space. Sützel (2015), reflecting on the change of the protest space from the street to digital networks, argued that the combination of the traffic of the bodies and the traffic of data assures the efficacy of modern forms of protest. The musicians's choice of YouTube as a platform for sharing might not be guided primarily by the popularity of the medium in the first place given the Burkinabè limited and poor access to Internet. However, this platform allowed them to establish a discourse that is accessible all the time and sharable, hence multiplying the volume of the reach of their message. Wright and Sandlin (2009) have theorized that protest music can be a "facilitator of, and catalyst for, self-directed learning" (p. 135). In Burkinabè pop music, such learning takes an active role of teaching and empowering in the sense that pop music attempts to paint the poor living conditions of the people and project it in the lyrics and the video frames. Further, musicians create content that opposes government and call for action to change the status quo. In times when the legal system has forced news media to self-censorship, pop music stood in defense of freedom of speech. This confirms Hagberg findings that there are two main platforms that legitimize power and politics in Burkina Faso, namely multiparty elections and "the morality of key political actors" (p. 218). In that sense, pop music is a both a moral reference and an active political agent in Burkinabè modern political discourse.

From an aesthetic viewpoint, I can conveniently borrow the concept of *Zombification* from Achile Mbembe to talk about pop music and social engagement in Burkina Faso. Mbembe's zombification denotes the ways state power functions on the basis of banality and vulgarity. I found that in Burkina Faso, pop musicians also *zombify* the established power system with a counter

discourse that challenges state power with the banality and obscenity. In fact, pop music presents a language that grotesquely portrays the dominant discourse and appeals to larger audiences by framing the sufferings of the people side by side with the insouciance of their leaders through words and images. My analysis of Burkinabè pop music echoes with Jacques Rancière's idea that the transformative act of critical art follows a three-process schema: "first, the production of a sensory form of 'strangeness'; second, the development of an awareness of the reason for that strangeness and third, a mobilization of individuals as a result of that awareness" (Rancière, 2010, p. 142). In the lyrics and video frames, I found three important characteristics which are a representation of the condition of the people, a negation of the government's interests, and a call for action to change the status quo.

Overall, between 2003 and 2014, some politically conscious pop musicians from Burkina Faso have produced music videos, which portrayed the social life in Burkina Faso as a two-class system. In that system, a small minority leads and control the economy at the expense of a suffering large majority. Their works also negated the interests of the government as they disparaged and questioned its legitimacy. Further, the music videos called for a direct action to mobilize and protest against the government. The peculiarities of the communication process include a careful choice of languages that speak to the majority of the people. Though most of the pop musicians are educated, they understood that using casual colloquial French and widely spoken Mooré and Diula is the best way to reach the highly illiterate majority. Also, the visual images, the theatrical sketches, constitute an additional communicative element, which helps pass the message.

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