

Journalism in the indefinite: A comparative perspective of a soft-retirement activity

Abstract

The international comparative study of journalism as a working activity shows various model of retirement going from a non-interrupted involvement to a complete change. To fight the classical distinction between occupation and profession as Everett Hughes put, the occupational identity goes with the unlimited working activity along the life of a journalist till he dies. While in Cameroon and Africa in general, the model of retirement is similar to the working life, journalists turning out here from resourcefulness to begging, in France to the contrary, a set of changing rules coming from a long process of syndication insure the protection of journalists. If the work of journalists is bound to come to an end in one way or the other, the authors inspired by a perspective based on rudology, acknowledged a Three-scale Theory of Retirement (TSR) which accounts for the relationship maintained by sociological theory of retirement of journalists namely the everlasting model of retirement, the alternative oriented model and the liberal model. These models were articulated with each other to reveal the first category of journalists made up of a dominant group of media managers in public media and administrative companies with a guarantee of remuneration and social positions close to that of the other senior civil service and private sector categories. This first category enjoy a comfortable retirement condition The second category at the intermediate level is those of practioners taking the control of their living activity by creating media organs or acquiring them either. They are worked by a militant and even messianic vision of their activity and are involved in trade union dynamics. Their protection after the working life is then guaranteed by the inequal capacity to find another occupation, sometimes very different from journalism but not so far from communication. The last category is that of those who consider the corporate organizations to be detrimental to free competitions among workers. During their period of activity they were used to do many other activities and petit businesses which they will continue till the death. The authors advocate for a better supervision of the retirement of journalists by the state, the professional and the trade union circles.

Keywords: retirement, everlasting model, alternative oriented, messianic vision

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Introduction

Research on journalistic work has witnessed only a little evolution since Christian Delporte's¹ seminal work on the profession of journalism and Rémi Rieffel's work,² which focused mainly on professional identity. Thought-provoking analyses have been performed as well by Nicolas Kaciaf. Nonetheless, retirement, in relation to journalists, as a study has is yet to gain grounds, due to the general consensus that journalism is a liberal profession, exercised throughout its life cycle. Unfortunately, in all societies, journalists leave their jobs, on a daily basis, as journalists, either voluntarily or involuntarily, and for reasons ranging from personal to legal, motivated by ageing, disinterest, and career shift or retraining. Some opt for retirement, long-term leave or a fall back. Even if not always retirement in the legal sense of the word, any such departure and its underlying reason speaks volumes about the relationship entertained by journalists with their end of professional career. Moreover, the mode of retirement, as a regulatory pulling out from working life, is negotiated, initiated, designed and conducted in a particularly acute point of interest, taking into account the nature of professional activity carried on during working life, and the ability of individuals to prepare themselves to leave or die on duty.

If there is one situation that serves as a culturally assigned social selector, it is indeed retirement. Borrowed from the Western system

of work, retirement is, indeed, justified in law as well as economics, sociology and biology. That notwithstanding, retirement is still subject to different conceptions, shaped by cultures, societies and legal experiences. Retirement practices are as diverse as the national normative and cultural instruments on which they are based. Its philosophical foundations are drawn from social subjectivism as well as the relativism of values. Thus, according to Durkheim, by evolving to diversification of social roles, division of labour has contributed to foster individualism, not only in the perception of interests in work, but also in the relationship between the individual and work. In this regard, a journalist can consider retirement from the view point of individual experience. In reference to Tocqueville, from an indifferent perspective, this conception of retirement defines individualism in relation to the individual's return to himself. It also perhaps unintentionally captures the roots of the unequal relationship to work that has served as the philosophical basis and justification for retirement. The Durkheimian rationality of common sense, according to which the individual would be aware of his or her individuality only in modern societies, is therefore, albeit questionable, the decisive framework for a methodological position capable of helping in the understanding of retirement as a social problem. This poses a crucial problem, the acuteness of which has become even more apparent in recent years, with the discovery of the precarious condition of pensioners in Cameroon. It has also helped to further underline the

paradigms whereby retirement is part of the collective imagination and the difficulty that sociology has in grasping it as an object, namely, retirement as a contemporary value (sanction/reward) in its relationship to work (physical/biological) and to the symbolic order of time (new life/next death). In Africa, where the number of people over sixty years of age has risen, according to United Nations estimates, from around 12 million in 1950 to 52 million in 2005, the ageing process will have begun in 2050. Retirement in its relation to ageing may seem like a distant horizon, but African countries are already facing many challenges as studies show that it is the continent where the rising curve of older people is fastest. But how do we deal with it in its relationship to journalism, the subject of this paper?

First of all, retirement in journalism makes sense in the context of the place given to information in society. While information is indeed studied in information and communication sciences from the stand point of its production, dissemination and organisation, as well as the practices, uses and situations that it generates or that are associated to it, which fall within the professional field of communication in the broadest sense, the notion of retirement does not appear to be an explicit subject of study for CIS, as researchers have little interest in studying the careers of journalists and its repercussions on the professional world.

It is true that various laws protect (and limit) the right to disseminate, inform and make information available. Similarly, the policies pursued help to develop access to information and data while defining what can be done with them. At the same time, the field of information appears to be increasingly organized by a few large companies that participate in the structuring of journalistic work. But the normative systems relating to information and communication generally neglect the problem of retirement for those who produce information, even in the most organized societies where it has taken an increasing unionization of the profession before public authorities become concerned on the fate of media workers. In African societies where a majority of journalistic work is carried out within the framework of weakly constituted structures, activities are still drawing trajectories that can still be grasped in processes of rising professionalization, but the said retirement schemes do not specifically concern journalists. Thus, we witness the phenomena of legitimization and professionalization with little concern for the fate of journalists reduced, at best to resourcefulness, and, at worst to begging. However, abundant literature, today describes the professional and sinuous worlds that develop between information and communication professions, in what some call an “atypical”, and which point to certain theoretical categories: professional capital built by “hopping”³⁻⁵ or by the dynamics of market links;⁶ strong rhetoric on knowledge, in the absence of a standardized practice;⁷ a constant and ambivalent quest for an ethical and professional ideal⁸ polysemous and equivocal of job titles;⁹ identification (or “disidentification”) with a professional status;¹⁰ challenging the term “professionalism” and the intersection (*nexus*) of important theoretical and practical questions.¹¹

But few references allow us to think, at constant or new cost, that the work of journalists is destined to come to an end, in one way or another, like any other human activity. The end of work, which remains unthought-of in the sociological literature on the profession or work, is even more so, with regard to the work of journalists.

So how do journalists position themselves at the end of their work in two contexts that are as distinct by geography as they are united by history, namely France and Cameroon? Because the experience of living is on this point rather dichotomous. On the one hand, retirement is the subject of a long and sediment treatment based on texts that

are often reworked and which, as far as journalists are concerned, are structured mainly around age and secondarily around gender and sector of activity. On the other hand, neither the time nor the nature of work or professional trajectories is real determinants for treating it as a specific category of labour law. How then should we envisage retirement and how should we think about it? Three types of questions can be drawn from this central concern:

How do Cameroonian and French journalists view retirement in the generational temporalities of their professional activities, the overlapping of these temporalities and the socio-professional dynamics?

How are the different forms of retirement negotiated in the hybridity of the paths, and more precisely how do different journalistic activities overlap, contaminate and combine with the tensions that these amalgams can generate in their relationship to the prospect of departure?

The present text proposes to show how the emergence of liberal professions in Africa in the 1990s, and, in particular, the invention of journalism as a permanent activity, has been inscribed in the historiography of the State without consideration of the social conditions of exercising this activity, but from the dominant models of Western culture. From the moment when the State’s disengagement from economic activity became the legal framework for treating work, the new regulations had combined two and contrary effects on journalistic activity: on the one hand, it has led to internal differentiation by creating a public sector that is often privileged from the civil service; and on the other hand, it has led to the emergence of a relatively stabilized, but very precarious private sector and a third sector (Pradié, 2006) made up of individuals working in extremely precarious conditions and whose predatory practices have permeated all other sectors. Each of these effects, in turn, had a decisive impact on retirement as a specific treatment of labour regulation and, by ricochet, on social conceptions of the end of work.

Theoretical position of the problem

Following in the footsteps of Pierre Bourdieu,¹² we posit that the professional educational and academic institutions that have served to shape elites in Africa have left, on the sidelines, a large number of individuals united by a sense of belonging to another (same) world and driven by the desire to conquer a parcel of power.¹³ We use this category of journalist as a model for understanding the specific strategies of a class that occupies a more or less assertive place in the space of power, and for quarrelling with the theoretical underpinning of the founding fathers of elite theory, of which indigenization is one of the illuminating symbols of denial. We are concerned primarily with the grounds on which an activity such as journalism is likely to lay claim to a specific, enduring status and expertise. The central axis of our reflection therefore consists in proposing a renewed approach to the counter-elite phenomenon by reversing its axiomatic principle. A submission of the journalistic field to managerial and commercial logics tends to have a set of particularly devastating social effects on the whole activity. Indeed, insofar as pension schemes tend to increase inequalities of status, class social relations push each other towards an extremely individualized approach to activity, in which the paths are lived under the banner of family drama. In this respect, the retirement pathways have, categorically, changed the historiography of journalism, which, in contemporary forms, is inclined towards a classic opposition between elite and mass. Under this artificial typology lies the empirical experience of contrasting paths, the richness of which can be grasped through a multiscale approach. This approach

favors a more detailed observation, by crossing the distribution of professional statuses with the forms of retirement they shape. Three models of retirement thus appear to be indebted to this method, which we shall seminarily name, Three-scale Theory of Retirement, to account for the relationships maintained by sociological theory and with the retirement of journalists. These models are implemented together and comprise three levels of apprehension: at the upper level, the dominant class of journalism (managers in the administration and public media companies, professional reference figures in the private sector), which can be identified through the prism of specific distinctions: Guaranteed remuneration and a social position close to that of other senior civil service and private sector categories; these criteria determine sustainability and permanence in the career, and make retirement a comfortable end to one's work, but do not stop the journalistic activity that it has merely postponed. They constitute what we will call the Everlasting model. At the intermediate level, the first forms of professionalization are taking shape through the control by practitioners themselves of their own work and its institutional organization. Driven by a militant or even messianic vision of the activity and the emergence of new groups inserted in the trade union dynamics, the professional recompositions transgress and straddle the media organs and emerging companies as well as public/private cleavages and professional training. Retirement is being updated in an alternative-oriented model. The last paradigm that we use as an angle comes from the neo-liberal model, which considers corporate organizations to be detrimental to free competition among workers (Dingwall, 2008). In its Cameroonian forms, this vision is part of a redefinition of globalization through a strategy of reformulating the notion of general interest and its reversal to the customer from the public service stance. In the name of the public's right to information, freedom to inform is becoming international and global, while leaning against national regulations, an ideology of regulation, conceived as the sole judge and guarantee of the quality of professional practices and limitation of freedom whose limits can only be woven by journalists. Retirement, here, is an unidentified professional object that can only be grasped by combining complementary approaches from the sociology of commitment, interest groups, public policy analysis and social construction of public problems, or sociology of poverty¹⁴ and of old age and ageing.¹⁵⁻¹⁷

The conceptual scheme on which our scalar perspective is based is rudology. The conceptual content of rudology is characterized by an inverted approach to the organisation of systems from their marginal traces. Recovered by the managerial perspective of garbage, rudological analysis, nevertheless, bears witness to a willingness to think about the nature of things from their edges. In contact with work, the principles on which production activity evacuates its most elaborate forms to its margins are clearly revealed under various variables: loss of value, erosion of consideration, declines are some of the many expressions that describe and accompany retirement in our context. Its forms help us to think of work as an object freed from its organisational anchorage and, to bring it into the economy of competence. In this respect, the retired person is synonymous to rejection, is devalued, and discredited. In order to survive social decline (from the old French word, 'decay', which means to lose value), to escape economic devaluation and to delay physical degradation, he must, in the true sense of the word, rethink himself and his relationship with society. The rudological approach recomposes the relationship of retired journalists as a whole. In particular, the disengagement between paid work in an organisation and the activity carried out in the post-working period gives rise to new relationships in retirement: those of permanence (the pirouette

retirement), coexistence (the glitter retirement) and remanence (the lark retirement). Permanence refers to the fact that a retiree from a public or private body or public administration continues to work as a journalist in the same body (freelancer) or in one or more other bodies (freelance). Professional knowledge then obtains as a pivot around which the retiree's new activities revolve, a cultural capital vested in the retiree's ability to adapt productive practices to the clients' expectations. Coexistence refers to the fact that the retiree's main activity is carried out in conjunction with other more or less related activities, particularly communication consultancy. There is, therefore, a pre-eminence of one activity over another, which implies that the retiree establish a work plan for his activities. Retirement is therefore underpinned by honor and glitters and lived in a rewarding way. Finally, remanent retirement, which signals persistence of the retired person as a human being, but who no longer has any connection with the trade, and like a lark carries out several activities, several species of occupation.

To put these models to the test, the first mode of apprehension around which the reports of retired journalism revolve is of a definitional and comparative nature. It allows us to understand by which legal enunciation journalists are entitled to retirement in France and Cameroon, on the one hand; and by mobilizing historical documentation, how in both cases the legitimization strategies deployed by this group with vague contours, have re-inscribed the diversity specific to its practices of extra-legal rationalities.

Legal definitions of journalist hardly differ between France and Cameroon. If in the latter country the law emphasizes intellectual faculties, training and talent as a condition for recognition of the ability to process information for social communication (Article 46), the French law of 29 March 1935 on the professional status of journalists... Moreover, given the elaborateness of the regulatory and trade union provisions relating to the coverage of retirement in France (no less than four pension funds for employees and managers), the Cameroonian situation is the poorer relation in terms of coverage for retired journalists.

If the bias towards identity in differentiation, stemming from the history of civil rights and highlighted by studies is recognizable in the affirmation of diversity in the professional identities given journalists, diversity in practices remains present in the extra-legal rationalities attached to it. The paradigm in the professionalism of vagueness, elaborated by Denis Ruellan¹⁸ in particular, and, based on a theory of structuralism constructivism in continuity with the work of Giddens is, however, likely to mask the forms of work, in particular, which the profession covers and that can be identified under the distinction finely operated by North American sociology between profession and occupation. The recent emergence of professionalism as an analytical model, proposed by Freidson (2001), underscores the hypothesis of a radical questioning of professional logic, which is caught between a logic of the market under the effect of both neo-liberal offensive and economic globalization, on the one hand, and a logic of organization, on the other. The distinction between organizational professionalism and occupational professionalism, which stems, in particular, from the work of Julia Evetts (2003; 2006), reflects the theoretical maturation of the notion of work diversity around which the retirement of journalists can be thought of at a new cost. Taking up Boltanski's¹⁹ hypotheses on the reproduction of internal differences by journalists and the preservation of a form of unity "not necessarily fictitious", observed by Boltanski, Ruellan underlines a characteristic that is valid in many cases, that of the closure of this professional group in the belief that they have acquired and conquered a professional space.

This critical perspective, which is the reverse of a Mertonian functionalism that offers an in-depth entry into the professional world of the media, shows how the ambiguities of the retirement of journalism are constituted in Cameroonian and French contexts. First of all, it is not perceived as a right, since the heterogeneity of the retirement system prohibits any corporatist or cosmopolitan approach to it. While in theory the elitist model of retirement was supposed to flow to the lower echelons of the media hierarchies, with the media considered as economically subordinate, it is rather a strong discrimination of retirement conditions that obtains.

These dynamics can be seen, in particular, in the cautious regulatory retirement policies

- (1) and the partial retirement conditions for journalists (2).

The colonial legacy of regimes

The term retirement has, in the Cameroonian context, acquired a particular meaning that the specific case of journalists has only accentuated; an elaborate form, quite close to the French model from which it originates and that concerns both public and private journalists; and a local reformulation, which is part of the experience gathered from ageing, of which the inequality of rights to secure access forms the anguishing figure. This form of socializing retirement, indigenizing itself, ends up constituting the dominant image of meaning that makes retirement, considered from an individual stance as terror, experienced as a fatality, another form of death. Here, we consider two types of approaches to pension systems: institutional and top-down retirement, which applies to civil servants and other agents of the public, para-public and private system, on the one hand; and retirement at low tide, one whose normative texts are not likely to account for it, and which is experienced as individual isolation and permeates all the marginal professional practices that it explains and sheds light on in France just like in Cameroon. The specific experience of Cameroon shows how retirement as a form of institutionalization of old age does not resist local ways of tinkering with old age in a context where life expectancy is increasing in a way that is not very visible. This organisation, which serves as a framework for thinking about individual and social marginalities, mobilizes a series of theoretical foundations that it is important to underline.

Although we owe the first attempt to theorize the elite of journalists in France to Rémy Rieffel,² the main reason for this is that sociological analysis has linked elite dynamic to the advent of the State in an almost irremediable way, by making it a specific social group at the heart of the State. The fact that State elite was most rapidly constituted from a capital, based on a State model whose legitimately claimed violence ensured its monopoly may explain this situation. Thus, its place at the top of the ladder where fractions were engaged in competitive struggles for power served as a central paradigm for thinking about a category whose practices have been constantly reproduced historically. The creation of African public services in the 1950s and 1960s on the models of colonial empires led to a reproduction of these models in Africa, importing the different colonial “tops of state” and the professional systems that constituted them. The fact also that journalists in Western societies were, from the outset, associated with the private sector did not help to think of them as an elite corps.

If retirement is the subject, in France perhaps more than in Cameroon, moreover, of a progressive institutionalization that has allowed it to be removed from the marginality of old age, it is because it is part of a certain shaping of a “new life outside the labour market”.¹⁵ A long and slow maturation of the French system

has led to an emergence of several pension schemes often described as a three-tier model: the public sector, according to the three major groups of civil servants and public bodies, hospital and territorial civil services and special schemes (RATP, SNCF); private sector and the autonomous scheme for craftsmen. Far from being a regulatory block imposed on workers, retirement in Cameroon is crossed by cleavages, some of which find their origin in the evolution of French labour policies in force since the colonial occupation. Genealogical historiography highlights two stages in the evolution of journalistic work, which serve as many models of retirement: the administrative model, which stems from 1975, with the creation of the first corps of information officials, until the advent of the corps of journalists in 1988 (1); the second stage, that of the autonomy model, which starts with the creation of the Ministry of Communication and the Union of Cameroonian Journalists until 2000, simultaneously inaugurate a unionization and segmentation of the corps (2).

The everlasting administrative model;

The history of the administrative pension scheme for workers, in general, and, particularly that of journalists in Cameroon, is based on the search for its remote roots, mainly in France. While in French practice, the general scheme has specific provisions only for journalists who work for several employers (a), the Cameroonian model takes the form of a regulation strongly imbued with the French culture of age-based exit from employment, but quite distant from local practices regarding the end of a journalistic career (b).

-a/ In France, the latter have the particularity of having a double choice in terms of pension contributions:

- or they choose to contribute within the bounds of a ceiling salary for each employer on a rate equal to 80% of the common rate (i.e., since February 1, 1991, a rate of 5.24% instead of 6.55%);
- or they may, by mutual agreement with the employers, opt for the contribution scheme at the common rate of 6.55% on a ceiling salary, with each employer allocating this base in proportion to the total sums paid. Since 1 January 2003, the salary ceiling has been €2,432 per month. The full pension is therefore capped at €1,216 per month.

The minimum retirement age is 60. There is no maximum age for a full pension (i.e. 50% of the average salary of the best 25 years) after 40 years of contributions. However, the Assedic no longer pays benefits beyond the age of 65. The length of time spent at work in a year is decisive in calculating retirement, it is rather the salary amount.

Retirement as an institution

The average annual salary is calculated over the best 25 years of his career, starting in 2008 without retroactivity, with the salary discounted to reflect price increases. The calculation rate ranges between 25% and 50% of the average salary for these 25 best years. To reach the maximum rate of 50% for an employee who had belonged to several schemes, the employee’s entire career in France and abroad will be added together according to existing agreements (e.g. Belgium, Great Britain, Poland, United States, African countries, etc.). The periods considered as assimilated periods, and therefore taken into account in calculating the pension, are the periods of registration with the ANPE (whether indemnified or not by the Assedic) and the period of military service. In addition, women benefit from two years of additional quarters (8 quarters) per child brought up. Disabled persons may, for their part, obtain their retirement from the age of 60 at the full rate, even if they have not paid for 40 years.

For the pension to be paid, the employee must terminate his activity and break all professional subordination ties with his last employer. The account is then closed definitively. But nothing prevents him from applying for his pension and working again for another employer for an annual income ceiling, calculated on the basis of the hourly SMIC rate, multiplied by 676 (i.e. the number of hours in a quarter). In February 2003, this calculation therefore gives: €4,617 (30,285 F) per year (i.e. €6.83 multiplied by 676). The contributions deducted is then taken as solidarity contributions. The law of 1988 also makes it possible to opt for gradual retirement. In practice, this gives the possibility of continuing to work for the same employer while reducing working hours and thus, receiving a fraction of one's pension. In this case, the employer's agreement is obviously indispensable. There is no automatic retirement: the employee must himself submit a request six months before the chosen retirement date. This means that he can apply as early as the age of 59 and a half. This formality allows the pension to be settled and the regulatory notification to be sent, authorizing the insured to take the necessary steps with the supplementary pension organisations. Journalists who voluntarily leave the company, from at least 60 years of age, in order to benefit from the right to an old-age pension will receive, upon cessation of their activity, in addition to their last monthly payment, a retirement indemnity set according to their seniority as a journalist in the company

When the journalist reaches the age of 65 (or 60 in the event of unfitness for work recognized by the Social Security), the employer may retire him or her pursuant to Article L122-14-13 of the Labour Code, without this decision being considered as a dismissal. Upon termination of his activity, the journalist, in addition to his last monthly payment, receives the retirement indemnity set out in the previous paragraph. This retirement indemnity may not be cumulated with any other indemnity of the same nature, and in particular with the compensatory indemnity set by the collective retirement agreements, applicable to the entire profession, and only the indemnity most favorable to the journalist shall be paid.

In the event of voluntary departure of the journalist from the age of 60, the indemnity is only due, if the person concerned has obtained processing of his pension. In any event, within the same company, the retirement indemnity may be paid only once to the same journalist.

The employer or journalist, depending on whether the retirement initiative comes from one or the other, must respect a three-month notice period. The French system is, therefore, essentially based on the pay-as-you-go principle, with social contributions from working people used to pay pension to the retiree.

-b) In Cameroon, the contemporary forms of retirement take twofold in their concrete application in the history of the country. On the one hand, retirement as the central theme and contingent of public debates, drawing on the professional relations woven during the administrative career and, which are built and reconstructed in the light of the private and against international rules.

First of all, Article 38 of the OHADA Uniform Act on Labor Law (2016) defines retirement as termination of the employment contract by the occurrence of the age of admission to retirement. It can occur at the initiative of the employer or employee. The agreement of both parties constitutes an expression of the common will of the worker and employer to end the employment contract amicably. Occurrence of the term spells an end to the fixed-term employment contract.

However, as far as journalists are concerned, Cameroon had already adopted a regulatory text in the 1970s, Decree No 70/DF/22

of 28 January 1970 to lay down the special status of the corps of information civil servants, which was set up as information inspectors, information secretaries and press clerks, following the example of the corps of civil servants. Decree No 75/769 of 18 December 1975, repealing the previous one, reverts to the agreed appellation of journalist, but creates subordinate bodies of assistants, secretaries and clerks. As in the previous text, journalists are classified according to civil service categories:

A for managerial journalists; B for junior journalists; C for press secretaries and D for press clerks. The former generally perform the functions of conception, direction and control in the field of information (Article 3). Officials in the category of Junior Journalists general perform preparatory, supervisory or important functions in the field of application. Officials in the Press Secretaries Service generally perform specialized executive tasks. Officials in the category of press clerks shall generally perform routine executive duties. The retirement of civil servants is governed by the general provisions of Decree No 94/199 of 7 October 1994 on the general statute of the State civil service, Article 23 of which states that:

(1). Admission to retirement marks the normal end of a civil servant's career and entitles him to a pension paid by the Public Treasury or any other pension fund under the conditions laid down by decree of the President of the Republic. (2). It shall take place: a) *ex officio*, when the civil servant has reached the age limit, regardless of the administrative function he may perform by virtue of an individual or collective act, subject to the provisions of the individual or special statutes; b) or by anticipation.

The age limit for the official's retirement shall be fixed for each category as follows: (a) categories C and D: 50 years; (b) categories A and B: 55 years. (2). However, by reason of the nature or specific nature of certain duties, the President of the Republic may derogate from the provisions of (1) above. (3). The number of years of pensionable service for the purpose of calculating the pension shall correspond to the number of years of actual service as a civil servant. (Article 124)

Article 125 of the same text provides that an *official who has at least (15) years of seniority may be retired early at his request.*

Whether early or not, retirement appears beyond these normative frameworks, as a legal pirouette, without any connection or with the "culture of ages" that F. Colomb evokes for the French case (2010) and whose servile reception in Cameroon is expressed as a distance from local administrative and entrepreneurial practices. Nor even less so with the "life courses" (Peter Hall) that follow the end of administrative activity. The Cameroonian experience of administrative retirement is, therefore, the fruit of institutional arrangements originating in the administration, but impregnated by the dynamics of a cautious unionization of the State civil service.

Since 7 June 1960, Cameroon has ratified the *Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise*, and since 3 September 1962, *the Convention 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining*; these two conventions were adopted by the International Labor Organization in 1948 and 1949 respectively. Article 21 of the General Statute of the Civil Service provides that: "(1) Civil servants shall enjoy the rights and freedoms accorded to citizens. He shall exercise them within the framework of the laws and regulations in force. (2) He may in particular join a political or cultural association or a legally recognized trade union in order to ensure the representation and defense of his career interests. (3) He shall be obliged to exercise his rights with due respect for the authority

of the State and public order. However, certain functions requiring their holders to be loyal to the institutions of the Republic or to be absolutely politically neutral are the subject of a special text. "The text is, however, more restrictive than those of the former Statute, which refer to a legally constituted trade union. It therefore does not comply with the declaration regime recommended by ILO in its conventions. In addition to being unconstitutional and illegal, the status currently in force does not comply with international labour standards. Another failure, though guaranteed by the 1996 Constitution, there is no law in Cameroon governing exercise of the right to strike for civil servants.

Inequalities in access to retirement

At the institutional level, the unique organisation for the defense of the rights of retired civil servants in Cameroon is AREFOP (Organization of Retired Civil Servants). Its history can be summed up in a few actions that receive very little media coverage: control of the status of its members and the resolutely emotional orientation of its strategic modes of action. It is thus marked by a challenge of the legitimacy of some of its members and, which is based on the fact that according to its executive secretary "some civil servants are reducing their age in order to remain active for as long as possible. And for good reason, finding oneself unemployed overnight and having to live on a pension from now on is not always easy, given the fact that access to rights relating to retirement sometimes resembles a way of the cross". He seems to have given himself a middle line between deconstructing the processes of denaturalisation of a discourse that makes the pensioner a left-behind, on the one hand, and on the other hand, cleaning up the file of his members of "black sheep" and defending the rights of pensioners. Now, these are numerous and include improving the pension, access to bank credit and honor distinctions. Another new proposal, AREFOP intends to allow retired people to recharge their batteries within AREFOP, and little by little, explore ways of retraining, if possible, in order to avoid idleness and live longer. It is with this in mind that the association has begun negotiations with various administrations, "to offer them solutions in favor of retired people from every branch of the State, in a win-win partnership". Otherwise, retirement is, according to the executive secretary, "the surest way to die".

The long-term perspective that contributes to a construction of the retiree's identity is an ideal figure whose conditions of possibility remain anchored more in public policies than in associative commitment.

In France, this story is told in three stages, each of which sees the emergence of one of the organizations studied by A. Lambelet. From 1917 to 1948, when old-age insurance was created, an assistance policy embodied by the private law foundation, Pro Senectute, a veritable parastatal administration, dominated. The 1948-1980 period was one of political struggle over the level of pensions, led by the first organization of retirees (and not for retirees as in the previous one), the Association of the Elderly, Invalids, Widows and Orphans (AVIVO), five in number: an "expert commitment" that makes it possible to develop skills acquired, particularly in the professional world for individuals with an upward social trajectory; a "continuous commitment in familiar territory", extending a long militant career at the trade union or partisan level; an "emotional and deferred political commitment" that revives a family tradition, interrupted during working life due to lack of time; a commitment experienced as a gift, a service to others in order to "exist" and remain active, which the author describes as "properly voluntary" and disinterested; a commitment as a strict beneficiary to maintain sociability and share

activities, which is the work of individuals who claim not to be very politically competent. The "Tamalous" 1, the "old", the idle retirees "who listen to themselves too much" but do not act. We can also see the extreme heterogeneity of the militant ranks, their motivations and profiles - the first three are more present at the national level, the last two at the local level - in the principle of tensions pervasive in the organisations on the shares of the political struggle and recreational activities they take on.

The empowerment model: alternative-oriented model

Generally speaking, in Africa, the implementation of a pension system places people in a family relationship. Generally speaking, the scarcity and affordability of pensions and family pressure, added to family burdens on older people, lead them to stay in the labour market as long as possible. Some older people still have children to look after and have to take care of their children, not in employment and their children's children. So much so that the late presence of older people at work is forcing many African governments in West Africa, for example, to face demands for transition to retirement at a later age. The 2002 general population census puts the number of families with at least one elderly person in the household at 19% and the proportion of elderly male heads of household at 83.9%, compared to only 6.6% of elderly men living with their children (IPUMS International, 2002, cited by Philippe Antoine, *Vieillir en Afrique, Idées économiques et sociales*, No. 157, September 2009, pp.34-37). In Cameroon, the policy of juvenilization of public employment in the face of an often boisterous demand by young people in a country where they represent 70% of the population, has forced the government to strictly apply the rules governing the retirement of civil servants and public employees.²⁰

It is difficult, under such conditions, to identify alternative ways for journalists to definitely leave the profession in a context where the very nature of end-of-activities is so elusive. The model of professional empowerment, introduced in 1990 after the creation of the Ministry of Communication, in replacement of the Ministry of Information and Culture in 1989, and the National Council for Communication in 1992, and adoption of the Law on Freedom of Communication (Law No. 90/052 on the Freedom of Social Communication), sees two types of segmentation; both vertical and horizontal in the journalistic career: Firstly, the new regulatory provisions impact the profession, by bringing out the second sector of activities, namely the private sector, whose working hours are sinking into social time, as journalists, gripped by economic recession, striving to increase their earning opportunities, increasingly cross the boundaries between the public, structured by time, and the private, often indefinitely; By de-institutionalizing working relationships through the creation of an indeterminate sector of professional activity, the new temporal regime mostly contributes to modify the administrative paradigm by creating a new category of media agents, the so-called Hilton or Sawa journalists, whose relationship to retirement is quite simply improbable. In a context where a kind of occupational professionalism tends to supplant the organizational professionalism promoted by statutory texts, the top group of journalists, the elite group at the end of their administrative career, is undergoing remarkable digital erosion while at the same time gaining access to higher positions in the public and private media and sometimes even in certain commercial enterprises (the admittedly exceptional case of Jean-Claude Ottou at MTN), the Cameroon Tribune (Lebogo Ndongo, Augustin Fogang) and CRTV (Charles Ndongo, Alain Belibi) in the public sector, where many senior positions are created; Mutation, La Nouvelle Expression, Le Jour, L'Anecdote in the private sector) guarantee a comfortable

retirement at one end of the chain. But it is at the same time in this group that the private sphere tends to burst into the public sphere of the profession, and even into the private sphere of the individual. At the other end of the spectrum, the group that entered journalism in the midst of the political and economic crisis of the 1990s, and which operates mainly in the private sector, is experiencing greater precariousness, because of the poverty reigning in the media, many of which are radio and television stations.

As far as journalists are concerned, it is the law of 29 March 1935, which in France allows the shift towards professional autonomy and unionization of retirement, without consideration of the status of independence sought and affirmed by professionals since the appearance of this activity. Two types of codes govern the autonomy of journalists: trade union organization, on the one hand. In France “the profession of journalist is organised around a specific trade unionism, since it is a categorical trade unionism within the framework of the National Union of Journalists (SNJ) founded in mars 1918. This union plays a dominant role within the various joint bodies that structure and define the boundaries of the profession, notably the Commission for the Identity Card of Professional Journalists. From the point of view of trade unionism, says C. Dupuy, this profession is similar to other professions, such as airline pilots or architects”. Trade unions are also platforms for active defense of the rights of retired journalists. On the other hand, they are also active in general care of the resulting ageing of precariousness. In France, retired journalists in journalism do not escape the social categories of ageing: young retirees, very old people, dependent elderly people, elderly people living in institutions and elderly immigrants. In these last two examples, we discover a portrait far removed from the model of the senior pensioner, who is still active and highly integrated into the family. At least, it is admitted that at that age, the individual ended his professional career and left work for good. On the contrary, exclusion and human distress are the daily lot of all retired journalists and others.²¹

Lark retirement

Evoking the concept of third sector to designate the indefinite or informal space in which the majority of Cameroonian journalists (about 70%) operate in reverse to the use made of it by Pradié, means assuming that the economy of journalism reveals a space in which both the conditions of production and lucrative work of journalists, their status in the ownership of capital, the very nature of their activity and rules governing this activity are far from being stabilized. It is a veritable hood of precariousness where professional and social fragility is accomplished outside or even outside the public sector and on the margins of the profit-making private sector. Historically, this third sector is dependent on the dynamics of corporatist demands, which are fed by various mobilizations and whose contemporary forms tend to be globalised. This third sector is also enlightened by the place occupied by retirement, both as a common concern and as an individual horizon of the possible. If one considers, in particular, that life expectancy in Cameroon is 58 years and legal retirement age for civil servants and public officials is 55, the time between the end of professional activity and death of the individual can be estimated at barely 3 years. Under these conditions, it becomes difficult to think of retirement in the long term. By comparison, life expectancy in France was 79.5 years in 2017 for men and 85.4 years for women.²² By stopping work at 55 or 60, the individual can still expect to live 20 years or more. Lived in isolation and socially as an inevitability and injustice, retirement would appear even more to the Cameroonian journalist as a dead-end, which does not really encourage people to branch off to other practices and which mobilises little socio-political

attention. Few retired journalists, for example, have been retrained, as qualifications and experience do not provide a base for skills and status to remain competitive in the job market. As the added value of age and experience has been severely eroded in the face of the dominant ideology of youthism, the “old journalist”, far from being a recipe for success, appears totally disarmed, faced with the prosperity of the new media, specialised journalism and the Internet, whose layers of specialists in these tools were often born with them. This weakening of the power of older professionals is reflected in a marginality that begins during the active period and continues into retirement.

From this marginality emerges, not the figure of the “solidarity pensioner” evoked by Aimé Marie Guillemard (2002), but that of the “solitary pensioner”, a reject of the ternary distribution of social times and ages and excluded from productive activity. On the fringes of marginality, the difficult articulation between generations also reflects the inadequacy of working time, often foreign to local cultures, with social time, which cannot be reduced to the administrative management of retirement.

Under these conditions, only the model of associative commitment seems to be a credible way out of the isolation of old journalists in Cameroon. In this regard, it would be interesting to redesign the administrative model for managing the retirement of journalists by linking it to currents already formally constituted paradoxically by the administration of managing authors’ rights, which professionals do not really enjoy during their career.

An evaluation of the number of musical artists, visual artists and other creators of works of the mind puts them today at around 3000. If we consider that each one contributes to a collective copyright association at CFA 100 francs a day, around 100 million a year could be redistributed. Moreover, a mutualisation of activities between the arts and journalism would allow each of the two groups to emerge from marginality and give life to a renewed practice of retirement for journalists.²³⁻²⁶

Conclusion

At a time when youth appears as the reference figure for the new managerial discourse, retirement seems to suffer more and more from social ostracism, coupled with intellectual disinterest, in that it remains closely associated to the repulsive image of the old and outdated. In most countries, the elderly, as a whole, do not currently benefit from any public support policy (retirement, access to care, etc.) and their care is based solely on private, mainly family solidarity. But the weakening of family care for retirees, thus appears to be a new trend on the African continent.^{27,28} Although the proportion of retired journalists is still low today, their number is nevertheless increasing and their care decreasing.^{29,30} Analyzing ways in which society treats its retirees by relying on journalists as a socially constituted group, is somewhat adopting the promises of a sociology for assistance relations by extending beyond the formal frameworks of regulation to question the political and cognitive dimension of this relationship. It requires a consideration of the various degrees to which former employees are the subject of legitimate social attention, by adopting more specifically the position of Georg Simmel¹⁴ when he makes poverty a structured and asymmetrical assistance relationship between the right of the helped and the duty of the careers. In the specific case of Cameroonian journalists, this approach is reflected in the distinction of different degrees of mutualisation of pension coverage on the part of pensioners themselves, who both erode the very meaning of the word pension and turn it on its head in a reflexive way on the administrative apprehension of the career, on the one

hand, reflexive return routes on the activity of the functional period and the devices of resourcefulness and resilience in the context of an improvement of the retirement situation through the competence and affinity networks acquired during the active period, and an adaptation to old age as an inevitability, on the other hand. In sum, more than two separate worlds, work and retirement in Cameroonian journalism are part of the same universe of meaning that deconstructs both. A kind of endless work prolongs an infinite retirement into the common finality of the end-of-life itself. For those journalists who can, retirement is not social death, since it constitutes the opening of both sides of work, that of active life and that of the end-of-life. Valorization, recycling and conservation become the modalities of an individual strategy where life is lived on the margins of rules drawn up by society and weaknesses of the policies of states in recession, and unable to deal with the demands for access to public employment from the growing number of young people, and public assistance to the elderly who wish to emerge from marginality. At the present stage, can taking care of these marginalized people through micro-insurance, as proposed by some means, be an honorable way out? That remains to be seen.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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