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NGOs as Spaces of Governance: from an ethnography of practice to an ethnography of the constraints on autonomy

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Summary

At the heart of a necessary humanitarian transition in Senegal, the desire for empowerment has been the mainstay of the governance of civil society organizations, and the founding principle of the first NGO consortium in this country. However it is historically challenged by a dependence on a demanding international and national ethical context. The setting up of governance tools, and more particularly of "good governance" standards, has been a permanent source of legitimation and a means of recognition for NGOs. But their insufficient appropriation and survival logic have ultimately undermined the will, possibility and capacity of NGOs to be autonomous and to accompany the populations at the origin of this quest.

Keywords: Senegal, governance, NGOs, autonomy

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Case study of the first Consortium of Non-Governmental Organisations in Senegal

In Senegal, research and studies on humanitarian actors and their dynamics are incipient. The seminar organised in Dakar on November 5th and 6th 2014 by the French Red Cross Fund was the opportunity to recall that there exist few studies which describe the actors and realities of the Senegalese humanitarian landscape, through the prism of the most recent dynamics which have been appearing in the country (Fouquet, 2016). These dynamics reflect a growing will for autonomy and control, as much from the population as from local and national non-governmental organisations. Currently, this sector of a heterogeneous civil society has emerged in the field of humanitarian and social action, reclaiming its place in the management of public and common affairs, demanding reports from leaders, calling for citizenship and the management of the country's affairs by the people. In other terms, it calls for "good governance". It is therefore evolving in a sector which is in constant mutation and the understanding of which requires in-depth study.

Understanding the humanitarian transition currently underway in Senegal is dependent, for us, on a better understanding of NGOs' history, aspirations, practices and functioning. NGOs play a key role in what is known as "local civil society", which has been growing in importance for over a decade. The object of our case study is the first Consortium of non-governmental organisations in Senegal. Our research aims to understand how the Consortium represents itself and applies autonomy, a principle at the heart of the ongoing humanitarian transition, and which nevertheless seems compromised. In order to reach this goal, we asked a series of questions. How is the will for sovereignty and citizen participation carried by NGOs and states in a context where the return to autonomy has become a common demand amongst civil society? What are the means, ambitions and possibilities of the NGO Consortium? And finally, what might be the new look and new configurations of the humanitarian field? All these questions take into account the transformations underway, which are linked to changes in self-funding and NGO governance, with a view to their access or return to a state of autonomy.

Methodologically, we answered our research questions using data from a national study carried out over a 6 month period[1]. The study was built on an ethnographic model of qualitative data collection inside of what we called "the space of governance", and more specifically, at the heart of regional and national committees of the Consortium. The data came from 40 semi-directive interviews, ethnographic observations *in situ* and informal discussions with the members of the

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consortium, heads of associations and NGOs, local politicians and technical personnel, etc. More specifically, we carried out a field study amongst regional committees of the Consortium, in three stages. The first took place in the Centre (Dakar-Thiès), and concerned the social history of NGOs. The second was carried out in the South and South-West (Ziguinchor-Sédhiou-Kolda-Tambacounda). The third and final stage was carried out in the North (Saint-Louis and Louga). The semi-directive interviews with key informants, *in situ* observations and informal discussions allowed us to gather information on NGOs in Senegal, their objectives, organisation and functioning. Using a particularly participative methodological approach, we were able to study all the actors in the humanitarian landscape, from NGOs to associations, decentralised State services and local collectives. The diverse nature of our sample enabled us to recognise the varying ways in which our research was perceived by different actors, beyond the apparent rhetoric of satisfaction. We were also able to gather information about the real functioning of the Consortium: its capacity to function as an interface, to reflect on itself in terms of its objectives, and to find its place in partnership with research and university actors. Negotiations allowed us to better access human and documentary resources, with a view to socio-historicising and socio-graphing the first Consortium of NGOs, in depth, by way of the men and women who compose it, its governance tools and its partnerships (State, NGOs and Grassroots Community Organisations). In this respect, a reasoned choice sampling was defined, on three levels: first amongst the regional committees of the Consortium, in order to understand the functioning of NGOs. Then, amongst local authorities and regionalised State services. And finally, on the community level, with associations, in order to study the relationship between NGOs and local organisations. This sampling was put in place in the different study sites, thanks to the regional thematic clusters (food security, governance, citizenship, etc.). Ultimately, the research allowed us to study the logics linked to autonomy by way of the governance and functioning of NGOs.

The results of the research are presented in two parts. In the first part, we go back to the process of construction of the object of our study, namely the context and principles of humanitarian transition, and the chosen field. We also go over the ways in which we became specifically interested in the principle of autonomy, an ethical principle at the heart of claims to sovereignty by humanitarian actors and organisations. Autonomy requires the actors to "take into account the others' or beneficiaries' capacities to participate in the decision making process concerning them"[2]. In the second part, we demonstrate that this requirement, from the perspective of NGOs, is not new. The socio-history of the first Consortium of NGOs in Senegal allows us to measure the history of the principle of autonomy, which has been updated as a requirement by Western sponsors in a context of increasing scarcity of monetary resources. The second part of this article reveals the institutional and financial constraints which contribute towards compromising the autonomy and empowerment of the Consortium, of its members, but also of the "beneficiary" populations. Finally, as a conclusion, based on examples of the functioning of associations or grassroots community organisations, we sought to consider the perspectives of autonomy and empowerment which might benefit the Consortium and its organisations, both in their own functioning, but also with regard to member organisations and the populations who are supposed themselves to "become autonomous actors".

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[2] Article by Jean-François Mattei, entitled: "L'humanitaire à l'épreuve de l'éthique", published on the website: http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/jeanfrancois-mattei/lhumanitaire-a-lepreuve-de-lethique.

An Ethnography of a "Space of Governance". The issue of autonomy at the heart of a necessary humanitarian transition in Senegal.

In light of Jean-François Mattei's work (2014), we began from the observation that the potential for profound changes exists in the Senegalese humanitarian landscape, which it is important to study for three essential reasons. Firstly, the humanitarian field of action has broadened over the last 10 years to encompass the field of social action, by conceiving of a path towards human development and a return to the "autonomy" of populations. This engagement with human development, and therefore sustainable development, effectively means that the social and humanitarian sectors intersect: how can we achieve a return to the autonomy of citizens without also working towards a return to better material conditions for them? These two sectors' missions (social and humanitarian) are inextricably linked. Secondly, states which benefit from development assistance are increasingly expressing their will to take back their sovereignty over actions carried out on their territory (Mattei and Troit, 2016). This will to sovereignty is not restricted to states. The actions of NGOs in developing countries in the humanitarian field are increasingly considered as a sustainable solution, from the point of view of both developed and developing countries. It is therefore a question of "autonomy" for local and national actors, autonomy considered as the capacity of governing oneself. Finally, what is commonly known as "local civil society", in all its variety, is growing in importance. This has combined with a strong social demand for participation in public affairs and the management of public goods and rights. These two observations make reference to "good governance", and are therefore, according to Jean-François Mattei, indicators of the "measure" of the transition underway in Senegal, which merits further analysis.

"Good Governance": a common ideal amongst local civil society, in all its diversity?

The concept of "civil society" remains imprecise and vague (Young, 1994). In the 1970s, the term appeared as "an instrument for the analysis of the political development of developing countries" (Planche, 2007:3). A decade later, it had become widely used on the international scene. More recently, the term has taken on a new dimension, with what is commonly known as "the emergence of global civil society" (Planche, 2007:14). Civil society is therefore said to be developing throughout the world, as a form of protest against dominant powers, and revealing itself to be an actor of international governance. The numerous global social forums organised since 2001 illustrate the reality of civil society. In Senegal, these actors may be formally or informally organised, hence the difficulty in grasping the category in its entirety. Local civil society includes neighbourhood associations alongside organisations with international scope. Roughly 12 000 associations and 320 NGOs are registered in Senegal. We can take a census of the international NGOs whose platform of European NGOs includes a number of local groupings of actors. This is the case of the platform of non-state actors and of the NGO group for Development Assistance.

This civil society is also the framework for the legitimation of new social and political engagement. A number of citizens' movements have emerged in Senegal over the last few decades. Examples include the *Luy jot Jotna* movement, the citizens' movement of Penda Mbow and the *Dafa doy* campaign, and the "*Y'en a marre*" movement which erupted on the media, political, social and humanitarian levels in a number of villages in Senegal. Protest movements demanding "a minimum programme of modernity" (Warnier, 2007) campaign for better governance by requesting their place

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in the management of public goods, and call on the population to participate in the country's affairs. By their movements, they inspire citizenship and the implementation of a real participative democracy. These groupings are considered by Thomas Fouquet as "new popular modes of political action" (Bayart, Mbembe, Toulabor, 1992). Their "humanitarian-style intervention is both the sociological stage and its catalyser"[3]. They express a kind of rejection of traditional forms of organisations which make up this civil society.

Nonetheless, in many respects, NGOs also seemed to us to be concerned with practices of participative democracy, and with the reconfiguration of their ethics according to the specific context in which they were operating, a context where local civil society is working towards "good governance". Indeed, since the end of the 1980s, local NGOs, perceived by international development agencies as important elements of "civil society", have become key elements of "good governance" (Atlani-Duault, 2003).

Governance, qualified as a "catch-all" by Laetitia Atlani-Duault, is nevertheless, as she highlights, omnipresent amongst NGOs in developing countries. The concept is used to legitimise a number of programmes and actions in these countries (2005b). According to the author, the first reference to the term of governance appeared, in this field, in 1989, in a report by the World Bank following the negative outcome of the structural adjustment policies of the 1980s (World Bank, 1989). The concept of governance has therefore been operative on the international scene since then. It was taken up by multilateral development agencies (Smouts, 1989), and became a new requirement for donors[4]. According to Laetitia Atlani-Duault (2003), "the current omnipotence of the concept of "good governance" in the United Nations seems to be the latest incarnation of an older concern, inscribed in the functioning of international aid organisations and which has taken on different forms over the course of the last decades: that of the struggle for the "participation" of local actors in their own development, with respect for their own "traditions"" - and therefore of their autonomy. However, anthropological research has shown that the meaning and practices surrounding "good governance" have to be understood in the context of what Bernard Hours (2002) describes as "the humanitarian ideology", which rose from the ashes of the Third World ideology (Atlani-Duault, 2005a).

The United Nations Development Programme describes governance as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels". It specifies that it "comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their disagreements" (UNDP 1997:4). The 2001 national report on human development incidentally recommended the encouragement of better governance through a call for multiform actions concerning justice, civil service, decentralisation, popular participation, information and communication, and the requirement for the government to account for its actions with respect to its engagements[5].

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[3] Interview with T. Fouquet for Grotius International. http://www.grotius.fr/thomas-fouquet-laureat-du-prix-recherche-du-fonds-croix-rouge/

[4] Inspired by the La Baule summit in 1990, the resolution of March 31st 1993 on democracy and human rights and development in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) of May 6th 1994, by the European Parliament on democracy in Africa

[5] These recommendations were reinforced by the new Senegalese constitution of January 7th 2001, which proclaims the right of access for all citizens to the exercise of power at all levels without discrimination, and

"Good governance", which has become a condition for international aid, therefore rests on a number of requirements such as good administration, increased responsibility of leaders and state agents with regard to citizens, and the guarantee of transparency. In reality, this is a redefinition of the role of the state, with the transfer of skills towards individual or group non-state actors acquiring qualities of responsibility and rationality: participation, autonomy, decentralisation (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002). Multiform non-state organisations (associations, neighbourhood groups, national or international NGOs) now contribute to the protection of services which formerly fell under state administration responsibility. The myth of "the State, the market, and civil society" has replaced the 1970s myth of the protective State (Hulmes, Edward, 1997). NGOs have become the foremost actors of this "civil society", qualified as a "sentinel" of political and social management of Senegalese affairs. Civil society, in its heterogeneity, takes on the role of a participative structure, aiming to ensure the necessary responsibilisation of populations for their engagement and participation in public life, by working towards the increased efficacy of citizens, as autonomous actors. Multilateral development agencies have encouraged this position by assigning two main roles to NGOs from developing countries, roles which Laetitia Atlani-Duault defines as follows:

> "The first regulates the relationships between the market, states and NGOs from developing countries. The market and private initiative are considered to be the most efficient mechanisms for a country's "development" [...]. The privatisation of public action is recommended, as well as mechanisms of public management organised in networks. [...]. The State is no longer considered as one of the main actors of public action. It must share this responsibility with the private and non-governmental sectors (Laroche, 2003; Lachapelle, Paquin, 2004). Whilst NGOs in developing countries have been receiving aid from these agencies for a long time, they now seem to be strongly preferred to states for the management of the public sector, which formerly fell under state management.
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> The second postulates that local NGOs in developing countries are the main levers of protest against the power of the state, and should be helped as such. They are supposed to make up, in the words of the UNDP, "the part of society which links individuals to the public domain and to the state, which is to say, the political dimension of society" [...] This is at the heart of a calling into question of state sovereignty." (Atlani-Duault, 2005b)

Laetitia Atlani-Duault's point of view puts into perspective the new liberal world order which reinforces the capacities of the humanitarian landscape. Civil society benefits from increased means which favour the local humanitarian landscape, of which NGOs and citizens' movements are a part, and equips itself with the means to encourage the participative development of populations, by putting their implication at the centre of their action. Of course, a "solidarity without consensus" can occur, built around the keywords of "participation" and "participative development" (Kertzer, 1988; Ferrie, 2003). In this particular context, NGOs and various movements use innovative models of organisation and governance. Already, fractions of civil society like the "*Y'en a marre*"[6] movement have acquired effective means in the field for their autonomy and their independence. They try to favour "good governance" by promoting citizenship, focusing a part of their activism on awareness-raising amongst populations in order to enable them to demand accountability for their actions from

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equal access for all citizens to public services.

[6] This movement is supported by the international NGO OXFAM, a member and partner of the first Consortium of NGOs under study.

political leaders[7].

Based on these observations, it therefore seems necessary to analyse this humanitarian transition by way of the social and political dynamics which are at play in the specific context of Senegal. The NGOs gathered together within the first Consortium of non-governmental organisations are our objects of observation.

Practices and constraints of a "space of governance"

Whilst a number of studies exist on the subject of "governance", or "the art and manner of governing in a fragmented social and political context, made up of different networks" (Boyer, 1990), they mostly focus on the deconstruction of discourses and less on the analysis of practices. Yet we conceived of the humanitarian space as a "space of governance" (Frésia, 2009), which we then sought to study ethnographically. Our objective is to understand the functioning and interactions between the institutions and target populations by identifying the principles guiding the actions and also by confronting them with their operational reality.

The choice of the field of study

Several reasons led us to choose the first Consortium of NGOs in Senegal as a starting point. Created in 1982, the Consortium brings together 178 national, foreign and international NGOs. As an object of study, it is particularly interesting in terms of grasping the stakes and issues of the humanitarian transition underway in Senegal, by means of an analysis of the objectives which the institution gives itself, as well as its functioning and development. Indeed, the main objective of the Consortium is the defense of NGOs' interests by various means, and namely, by the promotion and diffusion of best practices, institutional and operational capacity reinforcement of NGOs, the reinforcement of civil society and its contribution to social transformation; support to local processes of development and decentralisation through the promotion of local actors' participation. For over a decade, the Consortium has been working to equip itself with innovative means to redefine governance and organisational models. Indeed, whilst the Consortium was initially created to meet the needs of dialogue and mutual assistance between NGOs, its functioning has developed over the years and over the course of different objectives and evolving social and political contexts in Senegal. In 1991, the Consortium decided to evaluate its objectives, regulations and structure, having become aware that there were disparities between its functioning and its members' expectations. It therefore became a more democratic, transparent and representative organisation in the service of NGOs, but also of development associations. During another stage (1993-1995), it tried to lay the foundations of its institutionalisation. A

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[7] The *Dox ak sa Gox* (March with your Community) initiative is an example. The *Dox ak sa Gox* project gave itself the objective of favouring a strong citizen participation in public debate, by implementing an Observatory for democracy, represented in every locality. Several activities enabled them to meet this objective: 1) training and capacity reinforcement, namely amongst youth, so that they can exercise control over public policy action; 2) the development of an Internet platform which aims to help populations receive and analyse information on the governance process in Senegal; 3) mobile citizen juries to promote the movement's leaders' capacities for mobilisation. Demonstrations throughout the country thus give citizens from the localities the possibility to express their opinion on local governance, to expose their priorities for a better management of these issues by their elected leaders, and also provide the opportunity to call said elected officials out on any issues.

> year later (1996-1998), the Consortium put in place a code of ethics for NGOs. In parallel, regional, decentralised action committees from the associative movement were created. They brought together actors from different backgrounds. The decentralised committees were described by the Consortium as being spaces of reflection, exchange, experience and information for the implementation of common activities in the field, with a view to contributing to local development. They also played an important role in the promotion of citizen participation through mobilisation and a reinforcement of community projects. In this regard, the Consortium equipped itself with a policy of institutional capacity reinforcement of its members through, for example, the training and harmonisation of points of view on strategic questions concerning local development. These were so many governance tools deployed by the Consortium.

The first activities carried out in the field enabled us to perfect our approach. Indeed, certain questions and statements by the president of the Consortium proved particularly useful in defining the contours of our study more precisely. During the course of an interview, he expressed himself, in the form of an exclamation, on the relationship between civil society and humanitarianism, as follows:

> *"We want to do humanitarian actions, we are also asked to do them, but we end up being ourselves the objects of humanitarian intervention by organisations from Western civil society, whilst the associations find themselves carrying out humanitarian actions informally and by themselves".*

This exclamation of the president gives a sense to our enquiry. Further, it states and questions the place of the Consortium. Is transition really underway in Senegal? If it is, is the Consortium participating in it? What role does the Consortium play, or could it play? Is the president's exclamation the expression of his concerns regarding the future of the Consortium in the face of noticeable change at the heart of civil society and in the face of international requirements, or is it the result of an in-depth reflection on his organisation's relationship to humanitarian action? In any case, the discussion which followed enabled us to take the measure of the real constraints faced by the Consortium, namely those regarding its own sovereignty: sovereignty in the actions undertaken, and the organisation's direction, and sovereignty by means of a return to autonomy and independence on all levels. What emerged from the very beginning of this research was the need to evaluate the Consortium's dependency on international organisations and Western civil society.

For this reason, on January 9th 2016, in the course of the official launch of our study, we expressed to the actors of the Consortium our wish to understand their capacities, possibilities and desire to implicate themselves in the humanitarian transition underway in Senegal. Our discussions reflected the importance, even the necessity, of a transition and a change in the space of humanitarian action, but also the concerns of NGOs. This transition, however, did not seem to be taken into account by all of the international NGOs (a difference in approach between, for example, Caritas and Oxfam UK). Moreover, new configurations arose: international NGOs tended to change direction in their accompanying of populations. They increasingly intervene in the follow-up of public policy, and especially social policies, and fall within a sustainable development approach. From emergency aid and assistance to resilience, the concepts evolve: we no longer speak of beneficiaries, and even less of participants, but of actors. National NGOs, mostly contractors for international

NGOs, are concerned with implementing activities to find the means to carry out their own policies. The current dynamics intrinsically bring forward questions relating to the new kinds of relationships between international organisations, the State, and national NGOs. They specifically address the question of autonomy. How can we accompany populations in becoming "actors" by making them accountable, without having the means to do so? Or rather, how to consider the autonomy of populations without taking into account one's own difficulties in matters of sovereignty, on the choices of policies, and when partnerships depend on international funding? Tarik Dahou (2003) has already clarified that the partnership relationships between NGOs from developed countries and those from developing countries have always been marked by ambiguity, and that often the resources granted by NGOs from developed countries are not used autonomously by those from developing countries, "the former reserving a permanent right of inspection of the objectives".

The first meetings which we participated in led us to take into consideration the respect of autonomy of local actors and that of the organisations involved in forms of partnership-patronage with international sponsors and organisations. These organisations seem to be victims of structural violence on a bureaucratic level, and of international requirements which sometimes even jeopardize their funding. This observation, which is not new, was even at the origin of the creation of the first Consortium of NGOs in Senegal.

Empowerment: a foundational objective brought up to date with the humanitarian transition

The issue of a "return to autonomy", which is at the heart of current humanitarian transition is not, in fact, so recent. The socio-history of the Consortium allowed us to elucidate the transformations in the Senegalese humanitarian landscape and to highlight the fact that autonomy became a necessity at each fundamental period of its restructuration, although the aspiration was stymied and impeded.

Looking back on autonomy as a source of legitimacy for NGOs

In the 1970s, international NGOs were deployed in Senegal for humanitarian reasons, in a context marked by crises linked to natural disasters and ecological problems, but also to the process of transformations at the international level and new countries' accession to independence. Parallel to this deployment of international NGOs, citizens organised themselves to create national NGOs at a moment when political pluralism did not exist. As expressed by one of the "elders" at Congad:

> "The only means of expression [at the time] was the associative movement, and the most capable people in these associative movements had more or less leftist leanings".

This informant explains why activists from the left were the pioneers of Senegalese NGOs. These activists continued to act into the 1980s, a decade marked by economic and political reform. Following the failure of public policy and the worsening of the economic crisis, the government adopted adjustment programmes and decided to democratise public life. This new context favoured the creation of a greater number of organisations that wanted to work for development in Senegal, and in Africa in general. In this regard, the objective of national NGOs was to "make populations

masters of their own development by making them take charge of their own destiny and especially by leading them to count on their own strengths" (Congad 1999:15), according to one of our informants. Interventions by the first NGOs translated the ideas of solidarity, religious and political ethics, into action. This undertaking was well expressed by a trainer who explained the evolution of the relationship between NGOs and development:

> "It can be said that the paradigm was initially a charitable, humanitarian assistance approach, which brought together actors from NGOs. But then, there was a high approach, what we might now call resilience. There was a need for another approach, other development dynamics in the face of the crises linked to droughts in rural areas. [...] The objective, at first, was to mobilise resources foremost in food aid, or in other specific forms… but very quickly the national organisations in the field realised that food aid alone could not solve the problems of the food crisis, and that what were needed were resilience strategies…"

Very quickly, NGOs realised that their intervention in periods of food crises could not be reduced to the distribution of food, and therefore, to social assistance. Upon entering into contact with populations in difficulty, they rapidly understood the necessity of reinforcing their self-management capacities. For this reason, the principle of autonomy was an important founding objective in the creation of the first Consortium of NGOs and the organisations of the associative movement. It specifically appeared for the Consortium as the foremost source of legitimisation for itself and for Senegalese NGOs.

Indeed, the creation of the first Consortium of NGOs in 1982 did not come from one specific organisation. It reflected the will to meet a number of needs registered by different categories of actors of unequal strength: international NGOs, community associations and the first national NGOs, as well as the State[8]. As an extension of decolonisation, the division between liberalism and communism mobilised development NGOs along an axis which went from charitable apoliticism to political solidarity. These NGOs were convinced that "development must be global, integrated and endogenous". Global because it takes into account the different types of needs amongst populations. Integrated by actions both in urban and rural contexts. Endogenous insofar as it is based on an autonomous project in accordance with the cultural specificity of each society. Since the middle of the 1980s, the ecological and environmental dimension has been added, with the emergence of the concept of "sustainability".

Hence, the approaches of the new development advocated by NGOs led to a plurality of solutions. Amongst these new approaches, we can cite the creation of the Forum des *Organisations Volontaires Africaines de Développement* (FOVAD) in 1987[9]. This promising movement was enhanced by the

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[8] National NGOs were therefore all members in the first Consortium, even though inequalities still existed between them. Indeed, one of our informants took as an example the case of a French organisation which had set up in Senegal, by the intermediary of its embassy. It was able to benefit from a convention with the State and through this convention, the State was able to bring its own contribution by granting exonerations described as "quite particular", but also, according to another study, "diplomatic facilitation, exoneration for investment material, etc.".

[9] In 1987, roughly 100 African NGOs decided to make their actions known and to mutually support each other, by joining together in the Forum des Organisations Volontaires Africaines de Développement (FOVAD). In the course of the 5 years of its existence, FOVAD has set up a network of solidarity with national committees in most African countries. These committees allow NGO leaders to work closely together in order to systematise

Arusha Charter in 1990, which represented an historical moment of "African commitment" for the autonomy of populations and institutions. Let us remember that the objective of the Arusha Charter was to promote popular participation and democratic development in Africa, by taking charge of governance, as one of the Consortium elders highlighted:

> "The basis of the Charter is participative development, and not limiting ourselves to the economic aspects, but also taking the governance dimension into account."

The NGO's implementation of the principle of autonomy was partly influenced by religious (ethical and denominational) thinking, and by political and economic thinking on development. Hence, over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, there were three successive generations of NGOs and projects in a context of humanitarian transition in Senegal. The first was made up of relief associations for disadvantaged populations (droughts), mainly led by international organisations which relied on grassroots community organisations like the *Union pour la Solidarité et l'Entraide* (USE). The first development NGOs came out of this first generation. Umbrella organisations such as the *Office Africain pour le Développement et la Coopération* (OFADEC) and the *Forum pour un Développement Durable Endogène* (FODDE) make up the last generation of NGOs created over the course of these two decades. From relay-NGOs, auxiliaries of Western NGOs, to "left-wing" NGOs, independent executives with pre-established professional qualifications played an important role in the creation of the NGO platform in Senegal. Incidentally, it is not surprising to note that the first president of the *Forum des Organisations Volontaires Africaines de Développement* was equally the first president of the Consortium of NGOs in Senegal.

Moreover, lacking in resources, Senegalese NGOs have been confronted from the start with the question of their own autonomy in the partnership with Western organisations. The efficiency of these NGO's interventions was quickly limited, insofar as they were unable to raise funds internally, thereby remaining entirely dependent on their Western partners. Even then, they had little room for manoeuvre to engage themselves into any planning for their own development. As well as their financial dependency, the institutional weakness was apparent in the lack of means, of qualified personnel, and untargeted interventions which sometimes led to competition between NGOs, and to problems of governance (falsified activity reports, diversion of funds, etc.).

How can NGOs manage to negotiate their autonomy and that of populations when they are reduced to "auxiliaries", in the words of an association leader we met in Louga? Constraints linked to autonomy come both from the national and international levels. The analysis and interpretations of the results of our research enable us to evaluate the Consortium's capacity to negotiate its autonomy.

A historically challenged will to autonomy

The Consortium benefited from the international context of the 1990s, characterised by the

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their thinking, approaches and methods, and to improve the communication between them. FOVAD has trained a number of African NGO leaders. It has a quarterly review, "Les Echos du FOVAD", which is a tool for communication, information exchange and experience optimisation between all of the associations involved in development dynamics throughout the world, and particularly in Africa. According to the same informant, the term "NGO" was too "charged", because it was imported from the "West". It was important to "emphasise the volunteer nature of organisations, which is how FOVAD was born".

promotion of "global and international governance", and of "good governance" in particular. It began its process of institutionalisation, then marked by the passage from activism and volunteering to professionalism. The State was incidentally encouraged by donors to take into account NGOs which, thanks to their organisational transformation, could carry out certain policies or public programmes efficiently. A former head of the Consortium explains how NGOs benefited from the support of their partners to intensify their intervention:

> *"The partners said at the time that the NGOs were closer to the populations than the State, and they should be involved in certain big programmes. There it was, it had become a rule, and the State could not tolerate it. But since it was a global demand in the framework of good governance, it had to accept it."*

This is what the State did by adopting the decree 96/103 in 1996, which set out the methods of intervention of non-governmental interventions. The process of adoption of this decree was negotiated between the State and the Consortium, as an informant described it with enthusiasm:

> *"We came out of it with a consensual document, a decree. The president did not change a comma, he signed immediately. It was called the decree regulating the intervention of NGOs in Senegal [...] The sponsors were there to arbitrate and follow the process… [...], but it was so participative. The Congad steered the whole thing and across from them were the State and on the other side the arbitrators, the sponsors."*

Following the second act of the 96-07 law of March 22nd 1996 on decentralisation, modified by the law n°2007-07 of February 2007, the Consortium resolved to extend its representation throughout the national territory, with the implementation of regional committees and thematic networks with activities in terms of animation. Indeed, decentralisation implied citizen participation insofar as it brought up the necessity and above all, the imperative of working with local communities, with a supposedly direct link to the population. The Consortium, by way of these regional structures and members, was supposed to involve itself in local initiatives, local development plans and participative planning strategies. New networks were also put in place to accompany NGOs in developing tools for participative diagnosis. By means of thematic networks and regional committees, the Consortium was able to expand its institutional partnerships with networks and non-member associations, as well as with State structures. It attracted new audiences and further reinforced its legitimacy.

At the beginning of the 1990s, NGOs started to recruit expert personnel (agricultural engineers, trainers, etc.) by means of calls for tenders. This new approach of professionalisation on behalf of NGOs actually corresponded to a need for survival, as an informant explained:

> *"When [the Consortium] launched its call for tenders, it coincided with the period when the programmes of associations and organisations were always boosted by the sponsors and at the time, the sponsors were already beginning to pull back, and I was saying to my friends (laughter), the day you stop getting technical assistance, you'll have no projects left because if the people who are helping us have any trouble they certainly won't be funding us any more! And that's what happened: when technical assistance was pulled out, a lot of organisations disappeared."*

Furthermore, this objective is connected to the organisation's search for efficiency and sustainability. This was the beginning of decline of volunteering in NGOs. The professionalisation of

NGO management indicates a desire to break on the long term with the strong dependence on donors. The creation of an executive administration department at the institutional level, followed by the recruitment of professionals, changed the social basis of the organisation. In parallel, the decision to reinforce the management and technical capacities of their members was taken. Professionalisation created new obligations, namely linked to the recruitment of professionals by contract and the declaration of employees to the social security administration. National NGOs took over certain zones of intervention from international NGOs who attempted to transfer their skills to local organisations before leaving the territory.

The Consortium's final response to contextual issues consisted in defining a code of ethics and putting in place a committee of senior experts whose only mission was to ensure the respect of this code by the members of the Consortium. With this ethical code, the Consortium definitively equipped itself with a framework defining its "values" and the rules to respect in order to be a member: do not discriminate, do not display any visible political orientation, etc. Following the implementation of this code of ethics, the Consortium carried out an evaluation of NGOs, which also contributed to justifying their skills, but also their legitimacy. The ethical code was a response to a multitude of issues: on the global level, as mentioned above, states had to work with civil society in order to guarantee the principle of transparency. But this tool was also a response intended to reassure the Senegalese State, which had allowed the Consortium to equip itself with a framework for intervention. In exchange, the Consortium had to prove its capacity to manage the structure, to avoid undue State scrutiny of NGO affairs.

Hence, from the creation and restructuration of the Consortium to its legitimacy, the question of Senegalese NGOs' autonomy has always been constrained by financial and institutional dependency on foreign countries. Donors always ensured the technical and financial support of the organisation. The programmes were often mainly financed by international NGOs. An NGO like OXFAM UK has financed most of the Consortium's member NGOs. Still today, we noted during the ethnographic study in the field that OXFAM has remained the most solicited partner in the implementation of Consortium initiatives.

The functioning of NGOs in a demanding ethical context: humanitarian emergency logics and the palinode of sustainable development

The Consortium equipped itself with governance tools by attempting to put into practice a participative, transparent and "good governance" approach. These three notions have become the backdrop of their humanitarian and development actions. Anxious to attract funding, the Consortium and its regional members found themselves carrying out emergency actions in order to ensure their own survival, and especially their financial survival. In a strongly competitive context, local NGOs effectively owe their economic survival to their polyvalence and flexibility, their capacity to change orientation, field of specialisation or area of intervention, in response to sponsors' changes in direction for development. Indeed, organisation leaders need to be constantly prospecting the local, national and international markets, at the expense of developing strategic plans and acquiring a real professional specificity, apart from adaptability and the capacity to access information (Dorier-Apprill and Meynet, 2005: 27). The NGOs under study position themselves and orient their interventions towards fields where funding can be found. Their priority is above all to benefit from intervention

opportunities in order to survive on personal and institutional levels, even if that means emergency interventions on development issues (food security, education, health, etc.). The NGO aid Consortium is not exempt from this necessity, which nevertheless paralyses its foremost aspirations.

In this regard, it faces structural constraints linked to the economic dependency of its members. Currently, they are solicited for humanitarian work, but find themselves in the position of funding beneficiaries. Indeed, the opportunely emergency nature of NGO interventions calls the role of the Consortium into question. This observation led another leader of a regional committee in eastern Senegal to compare the consortium to a "man with no head (vision), standing on one leg (professionalism), whilst the other is immobilised (community associations), and whose balance should be sought in the redynamisation of the regional committees and the redefinition of its role as an interface".

This vassalage, forbidding all autonomous governance, led the Consortium to develop a series of strategies to manage a triple strain: the necessity of federating international and national NGOs, the submission to the injunctions of international organisations, namely with regards to standards of "good governance", and the will to "take charge of African problems by Africans themselves", with, nonetheless, the support of its partners. There was therefore a necessity to reinforce African organisations on the institutional level, whilst endeavouring to consolidate the support of foreign partners. NGOs are aware that their work is powerless to fix situations whose agendas and objectives are decided "elsewhere", and which involve unequal power relations, since the decisions are made by a handful of Western NGOs with unmatched economic and symbolic capital. Faced with this power imbalance, the strategies of institutional reinforcement and emergency intervention appear as safety nets to ensure the survival of local and national NGOs. The latter resort to manipulating sponsors' perceptions, creating a "paper reality", to use the phrase of Walters Elbers and Bras Arts (2011). One could see resilience strategies in this institutional reinforcement - a concept which has also become a requirement of sponsors (Buffet, 2014; Cotton, 2004). The study of governance in national and regional structures reinforces this hypothesis. Moreover, it allows for an expanded point of view on the logics in question.

The results of the study of regional committees and of Consortium headquarters reveal a crisis of representation and an unequivocable lethargy. More than ever, dysfunctions linked to the organisation's governance are visible and perceived. It appears, indeed, that the previously referenced approaches have been tools of legitimation which have afforded the Consortium recognition from the State, the associative movement, NGOs and international organisations. In truth, the spirit of these initiatives was not interiorised. The tools of governance were developed in response to issues of context, with a logic of survival on institutional and economic levels. The unfrequent use of these tools is reflected in the functioning of the Consortium, and of its regional representatives. The Consortium's presidency, and that of the regional committees, are renewed without the necessity of holding a national or regional general meeting. The code of ethics of 2000 has never been used to regulate the governance of members defying the rules established by the Consortium. The 9 deceased members out of 11 on the ethical committee have not been replaced. These are so many examples illustrating the disparities which exist between the institutional tools of governance and the actual functioning of the Consortium. In the same way, whilst professionalisation is seen as necessary in order to legitimate the Consortium, it has had adverse effects marked by a

loss of associative control over individuals involved in the organisation and over member NGOs in general. The latter are no longer primarily activist in nature, since professionals have been recruited. They have therefore become less adaptable to the principles governing the organisation.

On a regional level, the personalised representation of the Consortium can be seen in the "circumstantial" organisation of committees according the rhythm of calls for tenders (mutualisation or emergency coalitions between NGOs on a given theme, to bid for programmes). It was in this perspective that dynamic networks between Consortium member NGOs and other organisations in the sub-region (Gambia, Bissau, Conakry, Mali, Burkina Faso) have been set up. We can give the example of the "Sadio" network (Sécurité Alimentaire et Développement Institutionnel et Organisationnel), and of RGTA/DI (Réseau Guinéen pour la Traction Animale et le Développement Institutionnel). Hence, members of these networks take part in symposiums which make up spaces of reflection around issues concerning their areas of intervention, such as food security.

Moreover, the regional committees feel abandoned by the Consortium, as evidenced by one of the coordinators of a regional committee in southern Senegal:

> "The Consortium has not capitalised on its members' experience on a national level, though it should be a connecting force for its members, but it has not organised a general assembly since Mathusalem, but then again the Consortium cannot be blamed for everything, it's also important at our level to adapt the principles (the renewal of community organisation instances) to the life of NGOs (professionalism)".

The event-oriented nature of the regional committees (according to the programmes) contributes to the demobilisation of their members, who complain of no longer being supported by the Consortium, often seen as being a competitor. Indeed, there are instances where the Consortium responds to calls for bids on themes which are similar to those of some of its members. In this respect, and reflecting the same issues, certain committees seem to be sustained only by the goodwill of the presidents. It was observed that the committees do not have their own means, nor even their own headquarters. In short, they have no administrative or technical existence to allow them to bring together the members of the Consortium on a regional scale.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to show that the will to autonomy of NGOs in general, and of the first Consortium of NGOs in Senegal in particular, has been historically called into question by a dependency on an ethical context of exacting governance. This will is a foundational principle and a permanent source of legitimation for the creation and evolution of NGOs. It must be remembered that the studied Consortium's capacity for adaptation to the demands of international aid governance and changing funding opportunities has more to do with a logic of survival than a will of reappropriation. In other words, the ethnography of the Consortium's governance practices clearly illustrates the low capacities and possibilities for NGOs to be resilient and to move from a logic of emergency humanitarian intervention to one of sustainable development. As an object of humanitarian intervention in itself, whilst populations redefine themselves as the main promoters of their own quest for autonomy, the Consortium casts disillusion and discredit on its fundamental

missions. This collective actor, which had imposed itself as one of the most active members in a network of non-governmental actors in Senegal, appears to the observer to be profoundly transformed, 30 years after its creation. Innovation or hibernation?

Because of their history and trajectory, NGOs in Senegal have to readjust their interventions in order to reinforce their autonomy. The end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, which successively coincided with democratic transition and political changes in power, represented a parenthesis in a living history of humanitarian transition which can be traced back to the creation of the first NGOs in Senegal. In this way, the Consortium played an important role in anchoring the associative movement. The symposiums which it organised between the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s were privileged spaces for reflection and stimulation for NGOs from the associative movement, for whom the question of organisation empowerment and the autonomy of the population was fundamental from the moment of their creation. The *Cahiers du Consortium* (since 1997), were, in this respect, a tool for sharing and capitalising on relevant experiences for grass-roots development. There was a real intellectual engagement with questions raised by humanitarian transition, foremost regarding agricultural management, citizenship, migration, peace in Casamance, education, health, etc. Moreover, the publication illustrated the activity of thematic networks linked to food security, the protection of women and children's rights, etc. Although the space did not favour autonomous thinking, given the implication and support of financial partners, it was sporadically autonomous. What is left of these dynamics today?

Once the parenthesis closed, NGOs fell into a lethargy which led each one to have interest only in their micro-projects and the network's thematic campaigns is not able to capitalise on the experience of its members who promoted forms of organisation and dynamics of thematic networks which resulted in their own autonomisation and that of farmers' associations. However, the urgent nature of NGO's interventions calls the role of the Consortium into question. It is important for the consortium to innovate in the struggle for autonomy in particular to ensure its survival and that of its members, namely by inspiring itself by practices of the associative movement. Considering this perspective implies starting from what exists already, by capitalising on the experience of its members engaged in real dynamics of autonomisation. Further, the search for self-funding and network collaboration proves fundamental in replacing the Consortium at the centre of the humanitarian landscape. The relationship with the State is in full transformation, as illustrated by the creation of structures for consensus-building and the participation of NGOs and of the Consortium in particular in thematic working groups, namely in the ministries and in the implementation of social public policies. Do these close ties with the State not risk exacerbating the disillusionment regarding NGOs today? Their actions are perceived as having to do with survival, effectively curbing the expression of any autonomous reflection from the populations which they are supposed to represent. The risk is very real, and the studies carried out amongst associations confirm it, if we take into consideration the two following facts: the governance of the associative movement, and the emergence of social movements.

First of all, the functioning of the associative movement showed the capacity of populations to preserve their autonomy or to struggle for it. This movement opens up spaces of resistance and debate where free and flexible partnerships can be established with NGOs and development organisations, for the defense of the interests and values of the populations which they represent. In

this respect, grassroots community organisations remain very distinct from NGOs. Freer and more autonomous in their actions, they don't depend on the funding and requirements of donors with regard to governance. The observational data from the field incidentally shows that the NGOs which grew out of associative movements don't engage in the logics of autonomisation in the same way as those NGOs which were created following the departure of international NGOs. They distinguish themselves in their approach which is community-based (village or neighbourhood), or systemic in NGOs from the associative movement. Hence, the logic of empowerment tends to be "parachuted" when the local NGO is a vector for the implementation of international NGOs' programmes. Regarding this last point, the offer is often not adapted to the demand of the recipients. This discrepancy has been observed between programmes aiming at good governance, political citizenship and requests for intervention of beneficiaries in fields corresponding to regal state missions. In other words the international NGO agenda facilitated by the state defining priority areas doesn't always seem to correspond to that of the beneficiaries with their specific needs.

Moreover, the link which is clearly established between the State and NGOs offers perspectives for NGOs, who must ensure that good political will leads to concrete policies. If so, their existence is threatened by the emergence of social movements defying forms of organisation such as NGOs on the public scene. Protest against political, economic and social governance of these movements is the expression of strong popular aspirations which aim to affirm the necessity of finding alternative models of sustainable and ethical development. Even though NGOs have not been very present in the protest field, regulatory initiatives might be considered. Yet need we be reminded that such actions require means, the only way to favour autonomous reflection? It is necessary to find a balance between the autonomous development of the Consortium and the respect of governance principles. It is a question of breaking with consensual rhetoric and resolving contradictions including the non-participation of populations in programmes, the lack of transparency in the implementation of development projects, the non-use of governance tools in functioning, etc. In short, it is a question of NGOs embracing the spirit of the new social movements, in the sense of Jürgen Habermas (1998), movements whose actions consist in shaking up the established order so as to influence the course of history.

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