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Promoting Autonomy: from Ethics to Practice. The case of the Fongs-action paysanne

Kelly POULET

Doctor in Sociology

CURAPP-ESS at the Université de Picardie Jules Verne, Amiens



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Fondation Croix-Rouge française – 21 rue de la vanne | CS 90070 | 92 126 Montrouge Cedex | +33(0)1 40 71 16 34 | contact@fondation-croix-rouge.fr

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Résumé

À partir d'un questionnement sur l'éthique de l'autonomie comme principe fondateur de la fédération des organisations non gouvernementales au Sénégal, l'article montre que la Fongs est entrée dans un processus de légitimation *via* la bureaucratisation de ses pratiques, notamment à partir des années 1990. Cette bureaucratisation, couplée à la création d'autres structures partenaires représentatives permettant de se doter d'outils et de moyens pour être autonome, a permis alors à la Fongs de faire valoir « sa vision paysanne », d'être reconnue dans l'arène publique et peser sur l'édiction des politiques publiques. Enfin, nous verrons que la Fongs et ses membres sont entrés dans une réelle phase de politicisation pour peser sur les politiques publiques ; mais parallèlement et afin de garantir son autonomie, celle-ci s'efforce d'innover économiquement, non pas sans réelles difficultés.

Mots-clés : Sénégal, éthique, autonomie, bureaucratisation

Summary

From a questioning on the ethics of autonomy as a founding principle of the federation of non-governmental organizations in Senegal, the article shows that the Fongs entered a process of legitimization via the bureaucratization of its practices, in particular from the 1990s onwards. This bureaucratization, coupled with the creation of other representative partner structures to equip itself with tools and means to be autonomous, allowed Fongs to put forward its "peasant vision", be recognized in the public arena and weigh on the enactment of public policies. Finally, we will see that the Fongs and its members have entered a real phase of politicization to influence public policies; but in parallel and in order to guarantee its autonomy, it strives to innovate economically, not without real difficulties.

Keywords: Senegal, ethics, autonomy, bureaucratization

Promoting Autonomy: from Ethics to Practice. The case of Fongs-action paysanne

"The role of the Fongs today has been built up over several years. We had to prove our skills because we were mistaken for fools, for imbeciles, we peasants. Today, the peasants have shown their power and Fongs peasants are involved in all of the political decision-making bodies: there has been a whole legitimisation process, from the top right down to the small family farms."

M., member of the Fongs-action paysanne, interview, 2018

In a context where aid beneficiary countries, such as Senegal, are increasingly asserting their desire for sovereignty over actions carried out in their territories, an entire rich and diverse civil society is also expressing its desire for autonomy. In Senegal, a number of social movements, considered by Thomas Fouquet as "the new popular modes of political action"¹, national non-governmental organisations and community organisations are increasingly challenging the asymmetry of international aid, but also the Western-centric bias of humanitarian and development aid. They want to take responsibility for the support of their people, and autonomy - understood as the ability to govern themselves - is at the heart of the project for Senegalese civil society organisations². This goal is incidentally shared by organisations in the West and in the Global South, and in particular by sponsors. Thus, the principle of autonomy lies at the very heart of an ongoing humanitarian transition.³

This research project aims to contribute to the developing body of studies on the dynamics of humanitarian aid and development, which seek to understand the terms of humanitarian transition. In order to understand the new developments and transitions that are underway, it seemed heuristic to focus on a movement that is part of a long history, thereby allowing us to evaluate its evolutions and transformations: the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations in Senegal (the Fongs-action paysanne), which is part of the Senegalese peasant movement⁴ and cannot be overlooked in the historical landscape of humanitarianism in Senegal. A significant number of studies on the Senegalese peasant movement were carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s⁵. These studies analysed the

¹ BAYART, Jean-François. MBEMBE, Achilles. TOULABOR Comi. *Le politique par le bas en Afrique noire : Contribution à une problématique de la démocratie*, Paris: Karthala, 1992. 228 pp.

² BA GNING, Sadio. POULET, Kelly. « Sénégal : de la difficulté pour les ONG à s'autonomiser de l'Etat », *humanitarian alternatives*, n°5, July 2017, p. 61-73.

³ MATTEI, Jean-François. *L'humanitaire à l'épreuve de l'éthique*, Liens qui libèrent (les), 2014. 150 pp.

⁴ LUTRINGER, Christine. *Gouvernance de l'agriculture et mouvements paysans en Inde*, Paris: Karthala, Geneva: Graduate Institute Publications, 2012. 252 pp.

⁵ ENDA. Initiatives paysannes au Sahel. S'organiser pour lutter contre la fatalité. *Études et recherches*, 1985, n°97-98, 130 pp. ; DESCENDRE, Daniel. L'autodétermination paysanne en Afrique : solidarité ou tutelles des ONG partenaires ? Essai d'analyse institutionnelle. Paris : l'Harmattan, 1991. 317 p. ; DUPUY, Claude. Les associations villageoises au Sénégal : fonctions économiques et modalités de financements. *Revue Tiers-Monde*, 1990, volume XXXI, n°122, p. 297-340 ; PRADERVAND, Pierre. *Une Afrique en marche. La révolution silencieuse des paysans Africains*, Paris : Plon, 1989. 336 pp.

movement from the perspective of cooperative movements; as did Gentil⁶, or questioned its very existence⁷. At the same time, there is much existing work on "governance" or "the art and manner of governing in a social and political context that is fragmented and involves various networks"⁸. However, most of these focus on deconstructing discourses and less often on analysing practices. This study, on the other hand, is consistent with the work carried out with Sadio Ba Gning and Alfred Inis Ndiaye⁹ in considering the humanitarian space, and in this case the peasant movement, as a "space of governance"¹⁰ that we propose to study from the basis of an important component of the movement of peasant organisations¹¹: the Fongs-action paysanne, an essential actor of development, that is now recognised by the public authorities. The Fongs-action paysanne, created in 1976, is the oldest entity uniting local and peasant associations in Senegal. From its inception, Fongs-action paysanne established the principle of autonomy as a condition of its action and as a principle of its existence - autonomy from the state in the first instance, which created agricultural cooperatives. By the early 1970s, the latter were in decline; and endogenous initiatives by peasant associations therefore emerged. These associations developed outside of the framework of the State and for this reason, the State remains rather wary of them. The Fongs claims to be a strong rural peasant movement, capable of defending its own interests by and for itself. But while the disengagement of the state has opened up spaces of freedom for peasant organisations, peasant dynamics "require favourable conditions that depend largely on the state in order to be born and consolidated"¹². Like many African associations, they have therefore embarked on a process of bureaucratisation¹³. As a result, peasant representation now influences the State's public policy choices.

Which methods have been chosen, according to which ethical standards and principles, and what are the means used by the Fongs-action paysanne in order to legitimise itself? By means of what practices, including bureaucracy, procedures and intermediaries, has the production and legitimisation of its power taken place? Based on a questioning of the ethics of autonomy as the founding principle of the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations in Senegal, the article shows that the Fongs has entered into a process of legitimisation by means of the bureaucratisation of its practices, especially from the 1990s on. Together with

⁶ GENTIL, Dominique. *Les mouvements coopératifs dans l'Afrique de l'Ouest francophone. Interventions de l'État ou organisations paysannes ?*. Doctoral thesis: social sciences: Paris: Écoles des hautes études en sciences sociales: 1984. 2 volumes, 520 pp. ... *Les mouvements coopératifs en Afrique de l'Ouest ; Interventions de l'État ou organisations paysannes ?*.. Paris: Harmattan, 1986. 269 pp. ... *Organisations coopératives et État ; Afrique francophone (1960-1985). Mondes en développement*, 1988, 61, Volume 16, 113-126.

⁷ GENTIL, Dominique. MERCOIRET, Marie-Rose. Y a-t-il un mouvement paysan en Afrique noire ?. *Revue Tiers-Monde*, 1991, Volume XXXII, No. 128, 867-886.

⁸ BOYER, William W. Political Science and the 21st Century: from Government to Governance. *Political Science and Politics*, 1990, 23, No. 1, p. 50-54.

⁹ BA GNING, Sadio. POULET, Kelly. INIS NDIAYE, Alfred. Appréhender les ONG comme espace de gouvernance : de l'ethnographie des pratiques à celle des contraintes à l'autonomie, *French Red Cross Fund. Les Papiers du Fonds*, 2017, No.12, 22 pp.

¹⁰ FRESIA, Marion. *Les Mauritaniens réfugiés au Sénégal. Une anthropologie critique de l'asile et de l'aide humanitaire*, Paris, Harmattan, 2009. 379 pp.

¹¹ D. Rahmaton (1991) defines the peasant organisation as "a formal or informal structure which peasants take part in, and the main objective of which is the pursuit of common benefits to be obtained in exchange for common obligations."

¹² MERCOIRET, Marie-Rose. *L'évolution des stratégies paysannes face à la sécheresse dans la zone du CADEF*. Montpellier: Cirad-DSA, 1990, 169 p. 33.

¹³ HIBOU, Beatrice. *La bureaucratisation néolibérale*, Paris : La Découverte, 2013. 326 pp.

the creation of other representative partner organisations which enabled it to equip itself with the tools and means to be autonomous, this bureaucratisation allowed the Fongs to be recognised in the public arena and to influence the enactment of public policies. In this sense, this study is situated at the crossroads between a social anthropology of development (particularly of the peasant movement) and a political social anthropology of bureaucratisation "from below". Here we consider the IHA-CREPOS team's definition of bureaucracy, namely "the systematic use of standards, rules, standardisation and/or categorisation processes that aim to produce and legitimise power." This definition is in line with that developed by Béatrice Hibou in the book *La bureaucratisation néolibérale*, namely "a mode of operation that is based on a systematic use of norms, rules, procedures, codes or categorisations, in short, of formalities".¹⁴

To answer these questions, we will refer, methodologically, to data from a survey carried out over the course of 10 months (between November 2017 and August 2018). The study was based on a qualitative data collection system within the Federation's regional offices. This included data from semi-directive interviews, *in situ* observations and a number of informal discussions with members of the Federation's office, technical staff, member association leaders, and Federation partners, experts and consultants.

Field context and methodological system

To conduct this study, a qualitative social anthropological approach was favoured; this process will be detailed after a presentation of the choice of the field of inquiry. We will substantiate the contingencies which we encountered that may have affected the data collection.

The Fongs-action paysanne as a field of inquiry

Our choice of the Fongs-action paysanne as an entry point for the study was informed by several reasons. Firstly, it is the oldest entity uniting NGOs and local and peasant associations in Senegal. It currently includes 31 member associations from 35 departments across Senegal and 3,000 village groups, representing approximately 120,000 active members in family-owned farms, making it Senegal's foremost peasant federation. Secondly, its history and developments are particularly relevant to understand the challenges of Senegal's ongoing humanitarian transition. Indeed, from its inception, the Fongs-action paysanne has established the principle of autonomy as a condition of its action and as the basis of its existence - an autonomy from the State in the first instance, which had created agricultural cooperatives. The aim of the Fongs was to form a rural peasant movement capable of defending its own interests by and for itself. Subsequently, under the impetus of the national and international context, its practices and actions have been marked by major changes: the development of an integrated project approach, the constitution of its own governance and the partnership conditions it imposes, a period of invention of what it calls a "peasant vision", by and for farmers. This vision is based on a different, sustainable and equitable view of the economy, creating the material conditions for the autonomy of rural populations. To do so, the Federation takes into account the simultaneous need for

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 1.

emergency action (depending on agroclimatic constraints) and sustainable development. Moreover, since 2011, through its associations' and members' invented practices, the Fongs has become a strong proponent of new proposals and has reached an increasing number of state and development actors. Finally, the Fongs operates as a federation, but says it has no hierarchical power over its affiliated organisations. Posing autonomy as a real ethical principle, it states that safeguarding the identity and autonomy of each of its affiliated organisations is a fundamental factor.

The Fongs-action paysanne distinguishes between sovereign bodies and technical implementation bodies. Among the sovereign bodies, the General Assembly defines the broad guidelines of the Federation, deliberates on reports relating to its moral and financial management, adopts and amends the internal statutes and regulations, and elects the Board of Directors. It brings together delegates from all member associations; the Board of Directors ensures compliance with the decisions of the General Assembly, elects the Executive Office, ensures financial control of management through the organisation of external audit missions by accounting firms, organises periodic evaluations of the Executive Office's actions. It is elected by the General Assembly. Among the technical implementation bodies, the General Secretariat is made up of technical services¹⁵ under the management of the elected Secretary-General, who organises the implementation of the annual roadmaps validated by the Board of Directors. The General Secretariat relies on regional offices at the decentralised level. 11 regional offices¹⁶ are made up of the 31 Fongs member associations in the region. Each office is administered by a regional council of associations that defines regional priorities and programmes; a technical implementation unit of at least 5 people is responsible for carrying out activities in the region. A regional coordinator (responsible for the technical implementation unit of the regional office), chosen from among the endogenous activity leaders of associations in the region, is responsible for monitoring and supporting members in his region, and participates in the national steering committee of Fongs programmes.

For this study, we focused on three regional offices: Louga, St. Louis and Thiès.

The reason for focusing on the Fongs, and by extension on this field of inquiry, in order to understand issues of empowerment and legitimisation amongst associations working in humanitarian and development today is that the principles of its own autonomy – with regard to the State and international donors - and the autonomy of the peasant population have been at the heart of its work and ethics since its inception. Thus, it seems to have adopted different methods to guarantee its autonomy and, moreover, to promote it, thereby becoming an entity that is recognised by the public authorities and an influence on policies targeting rural populations.

¹⁵ Technical services refer to accounting and administration, monitoring/evaluation/forecasting of projects and programmes, gender, rural funding, information and communication, and training. Taken as a whole, these services employ 18 people, including five women.

¹⁶ Since 1996, there has been a regional office established at the level of each of the former regions. Despite the creation of 3 new administrative regions, the FONGS has not seen fit to create new offices since the existing system adequately meets their needs.

Methodological diversification for three stages of the study

To understand the functioning, ethics and practices of the federation, the study was made up of three interlocking stages: a socio-history of the Fongs' structuring; the collection of viewpoints around ethical issues relating to the Fongs; and an analysis, by means of interviews and observations, of practices within regional offices, specifically focusing on three of these offices. In this sense, the methodological mechanism consisted of in-depth, thematic, semi-directive interviews, direct but non-participative observation, content analyses, historiographical research, and informal discussions. The different scales (institutions, national and local actors) enabled us to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the evolution of practices, which was then confronted with the ethics guiding the actions of the Fongs and its members.

Drawing on internal documentary and human resources within Fongs, one stage involved the creation of a socio-history of the structuring of the Federation, in order to grasp its principles since its creation and its dynamics according to the various structural and cyclical issues that have marked its trajectory. To do this, it was necessary to conduct semi-directive interviews with key informants who were members of the Federation's office. We also conducted a historiography of the Federation using archival documents (internal to the organisation) and an extensive literature review of the Federation. The preferred respondents for the sociohistorical enquiry were chosen with regard for the current functional and organisational set-up of the Fongs. We chose resource people from the sovereign bodies, from the technical implementation bodies, and from the General Secretariat of the Federation. We first targeted the city of Thies, where the headquarters of the Federation is located, but also other regions, in particular in the north of Senegal, where the institution has branches with regular activity (Saint-Louis/Louga) based on long-standing, established associations. We then used the "snowball" method in order to target specific people with individual and collective memories of the Federation. The collection of viewpoints on ethical issues relating to the Fongs, by means of interviews, was conducted with Fongs supervisors as well as in the regional offices. These viewpoints focused on the principle of autonomy, perceptions of practices and actions undertaken. Finally, the analysis of practices was carried out within regional offices in the north of Senegal. Meetings and field visits were opportunities to directly observe the practices of Fongs actors. *In situ* observation has the advantage of capturing spontaneous reactions, but also of comparing viewpoints with observed practices. To this we added data from informal discussions, which are indeed a rich source of information.

Methodological limits and constraints

All ethnographic field investigations are subject to specific contextual vagaries. In addition, there may be contingencies related to the political and/or social environment in which the research is conducted, which affect the researcher's pre-planned course of action. "Doing fieldwork" without these unforeseen events would be more akin to an aesthetic narrative reconstruction of reality. Reporting the unexpected, the difficulties, the events that constrain

the study as conceived beforehand is one thing; analysing its causes, possible effects and consequences is another. It is a question of objectivizing the context of the study and its results, as far as possible: these results are strongly linked to this context, to the way in which the study is conducted (its methods) and to the social relations structuring the relationship of the study. We can highlight several difficulties related to the respondents¹⁷.

The first difficulty, which I had anticipated, is specific to the social configurations of the respondents. They are what can be described as "public figures", recognised politically and socially as figures of the peasant movement in Senegal, in the region and/or in the communities of their movement. As such, they are used to solicitations: from journalists and/or partners with whom they work, for example. They are the legitimate representatives of their movements and of the interests of the peasants, and the guarantors of what is said about them. Their responses are therefore well-honed. The first few days of the interviews were significant: the content was often the same as that of the many interviews or speeches transcribed on the Fongs website, given for example at inaugurations or forums. The presentation documents of the movement which we read and analysed ahead of the interviews contained anecdotes and events which came up again during the interviews. An official history is put forward, and these figures are the promoters of it. It is precisely these figures who we chose to be the subject of our investigations. By relying on the "leaders", the Fongs spokespersons and their responses, we gained access to an "enchanted" vision of the Federation, the "great and beautiful history" of the Federation. During the first interviews, respondents told the story that has become official and legitimate. This reflected what we wanted to show: the ethics, values and identity on which the Federation is theoretically based - its *raison d'être*. This enchanted vision, the "peasant vision" on which the very existence of the Fongs is based, is of course interesting to be aware of in order to be able to compare it to the practices and the reality of the daily lives of the member associations in the words of the other respondents. The difficulty with being dependent on the spokespersons of the association is gaining access to other viewpoints, since these leaders of the Fongs influenced the contacts we were able to make. At the end of each interview, they told us who to call, who to turn to next. In spite of the large number of Fongs members and associations, a small group of individuals makes up the core of the Federation, legitimately represents it, and is legitimised to do so. We sometimes went off the beaten track traced by the "leaders" in order to interview other members of the Fongs to whom we had not been referred. Some of them turned to the President of the Fongs: can they meet me? Does the President know me? The endorsement of the leaders, and in particular that of the President, was sometimes necessary, even if it was not required by these leaders, in order for us to speak with some members of the Fongs associations.

Another difficulty that can be encountered with "public figures" is their lack of time. These leaders of associations, far from being "the dominants" studied by Hélène Chamboredon et al.¹⁸ nevertheless have some common characteristics. At times I had the impression that I was "snatching from the respondents their rare and precious time that was being

¹⁷ A more in-depth analysis can be found in the final research report of the study.

¹⁸ CHAMBOREDON, Helen. PAVIS, Fabienne. SURDEZ, Muriel. Willemez, Laurent. S'imposer aux imposants. À propos de quelques obstacles rencontrés par des sociologues débutants dans la pratique et l'usage de l'entretien. *Genèse*, 1994, 16, p. 114-132.

sacrificed".¹⁹ As a result, they tended to answer certain questions in a concise and general way. In addition, there is a certain distrust amongst humanitarian actors with regard to scientists, who are often perceived, as Alice Corbet and Bénédicte Michalon have pointed out, as "theoreticians with no practical sense and disconnected from reality"²⁰. This mistrust can result in being systematically referred to consultants, or "experts" in development, who are considered in many ways to be more legitimate than researchers.

Results

Having presented the qualitative methodology of the research carried out within the space of the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations in Senegal, the aim now is to present the main results of this research, in a second phase. In this sense, based on the sociohistory carried out on the subject of the Federation, we will first set out the ethical principles that led to the creation and affirmed the identity of the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations in Senegal: autonomy was the Federation's *raison d'être*. Moreover, we will analyse how the processes of bureaucratisation disseminated and appropriated by the Federation in order to impose its "peasant vision" may have led to the legitimisation of the peasant movement: in relation to the State, the sponsors, and the peasants. Finally, we will see that the Fongs and its members have entered a real phase of politicisation in order to influence public policy; but at the same time and in order to guarantee its autonomy, the Fongs is striving to innovate economically, and facing real difficulties in the process.

Autonomy : an ethical principle at the heart of the creation of the Fongs-action paysanne

The Fongs-action paysanne, created in 1976, is the longest-standing entity uniting local and peasant associations in Senegal. Indeed, contrary to its name, it brings together peasant associations which emerged in the 1970s. From its inception, the Fongs-action paysanne established the principle of autonomy as a condition of its action and as a principle of its existence.

When the youth emancipate themselves from their elders

Since independence, the Senegalese State had been committed to the promotion of agricultural cooperatives: it wanted to structure the rural environment by mechanising agriculture. The main aim was for nationals to take over the subsector of peanut production, since this subsector had taken off in Senegal in the 1960s. It was in this context that the National Union of Cooperatives of Senegal (UNCAS) was created in 1978. The State was a strong presence in the 1970s and 80s, by means of the Regional Rural Development

¹⁹ PINÇON, Michel. PINÇON-CHARLOT, Monique. Pratiques d'enquête dans l'aristocratie et la grande bourgeoisie : distance sociale et conditions spécifiques de l'entretien semi-directif. *Genèses*, 1991, 3, p.120.

²⁰ CORBET, Alice. MICHALON, Benedict. Collaborer avec des organismes non gouvernementaux pour enquêter sur les camps de migrants et de déplacés. *Le savoir comme enjeu professionnel. Migrations Société*, CIEMI, 2017, p.53-62.

Societies (SRDR) aimed mainly at men. Support for rural women for domestic and production activities was emphasised by the State from 1968 onwards, resulting in the creation of the National Federation of Women's Promotion Groups (FNGPF). Since the end of the 1960s, mismanagement practices, the lack of cooperative education, the co-optation of leaders by the State and clientelism have resulted in peasants' loss of interest in the cooperative movement, and hence its decline. Once begun, this decline contributed to the emergence of endogenous initiatives by peasant associations, outside of the state framework, from the beginning of the 1970s. It was these groups that created the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations in Senegal (Fongs). Several factors contributed to their growth:

"International NGOs, which arrived in the wake of the Great Drought (1972-73); 'peasant malaise', following the decommissioning of producers for state cooperatives, the rejection of the productive framework of SRDRs (Regional Rural Development Agencies) and the State's extractive policies with regard to rural populations; the exodus of young people to cities as a result of the Great Drought. These young people returned to the villages with new ideas and the desire to emancipate themselves from their elders."²¹.

During one of our meetings, the President of the Fongs insisted on this last point, the emancipation of young people from their elders, the emancipation of peasants from the State as father of the nation. The President is also the president of one of these endogenous groups: the Asescaw (the Socio-Economic, Sports and Culture Association for Farmers in Walo).

"At the time, young people did not have access to land, which also led to the rural exodus of these young people. Our parents were the bearers of the land tenure rights; the young people did not have access to them. They were the family workforce. [...] They did not have access to state facilities. They were not listened to in their communities because they were young. Youth associations were established everywhere, outside of agricultural cooperatives. Only these agricultural cooperatives were allowed to work with State corporations. And because the co-ops were run by our fathers and grandfathers, young people didn't have access, they were the family workforce.".

B., President of the Fongs and the Asescaw

In various parts of Senegal, young peasants who had access to school and higher education wanted, for the most part, to free themselves from the guardianship of elders who did not listen to them, and from paternalism. From this intergenerational conflict, which is nothing more than a conflict of power between two social categories: elders and young people, the need for self-organisation was born amongst young leaders of superior intellect, some of whom had emigrated and then returned. State structures were invested by their elders and the State, in its role of patriarch, wanted to supervise the peasant movement without leaving room for autonomy: "the State was the be-all and end-all. The producers obeyed and endured everything that the State brought in," insisted my respondents.

²¹ DE JANVRY, Alain. SADOULET, Elisabeth. *Organisations paysannes et développement rural au Sénégal*. Washington DC. Report for the World Bank. 2004. p. 14.

"At the time, there was the welfare state and everything was subsidised by the State, and in terms of loans the big producers were favoured. In addition, producers with a broader electorate were designated as big producers. All the marabouts were in this lot, all the politicians were in this lot; they could take credit out on behalf of the producers. So, at the end of an agricultural campaign, all the loans taken out by these people became liabilities for the producers because they had been taken out on the backs of the cooperatives that were made up of small producers. Economically, there were difficulties in accessing credit, in accessing a remunerative market. It was in this conflicting socio-economic situation, that was not working well for the producers, that we created this organisation."

M., member of the Fongs, former national treasurer

The cooperatives, which were controlled in large part by local elites and managed by technicians employed by the State, functioned "more as a system imposed on rural producers than as an instrument of their expression."²².

Producers felt that the cooperatives were heading for a decline and that the blame would fall on them, even as they struggled to make their voices heard, in the absence of consultation with existing peasant organisations. Peasant associations that were separate from both state-controlled structures and village welfare associations had existed informally in Senegal since the late 1960s. These were associations that often emerged at the initiative of young people or women (the "powerless" in traditional structures, or social inferiors²³). The oldest is the Ronkh Youth Home. Created in 1965, the Home later became the Socio-Economic, Sports and Cultural Association for Farmers in Walo (ASESCAW).

A first attempt to structure these autonomous peasant associations took place in 1976, when nine of these associations, representing thousands of Senegalese farmers, formed a national federation, in a political context that was unfavourable to autonomous expression.

"We said; let's create our own organisation so that we can make counter-proposals in relation to agricultural policies. So it was in this context that we created our organisation, to take control of our destiny. You had to be self-sufficient. After a few years, almost all of the cooperatives had disappeared and all that was left was the peasant movement."

In 1976, following a meeting of producers, nine peasant leaders²⁴ combined their strength and know-how and set up an Autonomous Peasant Organisation. Respondents remembered these "real leaders", who were politically and intellectually trained.

"They were leaders! Some had immigrated and returned; there were state officials who resigned to organise the Fongs. The first president of the Asescaw was a teacher! The first president of the Fongs was the director of family homes, he left the family homes. And

²² MC KEON, Nora. Watts, Michael. Wolford, Wendy. *Peasant Associations in Theory and Practice*, Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Programme Paper No. 8, May 2004, p. 3.

²³ MEILLASSOUX, Claude. *Femmes, greniers et capitaux*, Paris: Ed. Maspero, 1975. 251 pp.

²⁴ These nine associations were: the Cultural Association for Educational and Social Promotion Assistance (ACAPES); Fatick Regional Farmers Association (ARAF); Kaolack Region Farmers Association (ADAK); Casamance Young Farmers Association, Kolda region (AJAC Kolda); the Socio-Educational, Sports and Cultural Association for Farmers in Walo (ASESCAW); the National Union of Rural Family Homes (UNMFR); and the Casamance Young Farmers Association, Ziguinchor region (AJAC Ziguinchor).

plenty of other leaders! The luck was that these people who had resigned had a good level of French, knew the problems related to agricultural policies, to agricultural programmes, some had worked on them. It was very lucky.”.

Two years later, in 1978, the Federation of Senegalese NGOs was recognised by the State. The latter obliged them to adopt the name Fongs to avoid confusion with its Agricultural Cooperatives, which were the Organisation of Producers. "The State did not want two organisations operating side by side," S., a technician at the Federation, told me.

Therefore, the need for the creation of this Federation cannot be understood outside of the international and national context of the 1980s. S., (President of the Federation of Peasant Associations in the Louga Region (Fapal), and Regional Coordinator of the Fongs in Louga) is clear in his remarks:

"In 1976, when we wanted to set up a federation of peasants' organisations in Senegal, it was the time of the single party, of the single thought. Senghor had said that there was only one organisation that represented all the peasants in Senegal, the National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives. To circumvent this provision, we created the Fongs-action paysanne in 1976.".

Indeed, in the 1970s, against a backdrop of crises related to climate change and ecological issues, but also the process of international change and new countries gaining independence, international humanitarian NGOs began to arrive in Senegal. At the same time, citizens were organising to create national NGOs at a time when political pluralism did not exist. It was a way to organise collectively, to be able to express oneself on the public stage, outside of the frameworks created by the State. Thus, in the early 1980s, alongside democratic openness and emerging pluralism, structural adjustment programmes and the failure of state agricultural policies contributed to the emergence of more organisations wanting to work for development in Senegal. In this context, the aim of NGOs, and especially national ones, was to "make people masters of their own development by making them take charge of their own destinies and, above all, by making them rely on their own strengths". It was also in this context that the first Senegalese NGOs appeared, led for the most part by left-wing intellectuals who were critical of state projects. They tried to promote ideas of solidarity, and political and/or religious ethics, on the basis of the conviction that development must be global, integrated and endogenous.²⁵

Autonomy as a watchword, peasant vision as a principle

From the beginning, the young spokespersons of the Fongs had to prove themselves, and this meant applying the principle of autonomy brandished at the creation of their organisation; this watchword was their *raison d'être*. An autonomous budget, autonomous thinking, partners who accompany them in their thematic reflections - the concept of autonomy comes back again and again, like a leitmotif. Held up as an ethical principle, this watchword was then materialised by the Fongs in the "peasant vision" that became the very identity of the Federation.

²⁵ Op. Cit. BA GNING, Sadio. POULET, Kelly. « Sénégal : de la difficulté pour les ONG à s'autonomiser de l'Etat ».

"The peasant vision is what the peasant thinks of himself. It's starting with the peasants in order to build something with them. We start from the base and we go back up - it's not top-down. The peasant must be awake to everything that surrounds him, the peasant must no longer be an accumulator, he must also transmit to others. We must not develop ideas at the top to pass them on to the peasants. If things come from them, they will do things, it's immediate. Peasants are not to be dictated to. Technicians and institutions are often there to dictate, but from now on it will be the peasants passing on knowledge to the researchers. That's the peasant vision.".

S., Secretary of Fapal, 2018

The "peasant vision" was built in the 1980s, when the State withdrew. The peasant vision entails starting from the knowledge of those primarily concerned in order to determine the direction of the actions and the proposals of the institutional body. This vision is based on a different conception of economics, a political action that promotes the fulfilment of responsibilities by each type of actor, and a contribution to the rebuilding of Senegalese rural society. This economy is intended to be sustainable and equitable in order to create the material conditions for the autonomy of rural populations who are affected by, and even dependent on, a context which is unfavourable to them. In the 1980s, the Fongs expanded by integrating several peasant organisations from different parts of the country. At the same time, it built up strong political and ideological partnerships with allied international organisations. SOS Hunger became a strategic partner. The organisation funds the Federation on projects developed by peasants. Beyond the funding provided, SOS Hunger also advises the Federation more broadly on its activities. In this way, based on its vision, other international structures came to engage with the Federation, and support it in its thematic, in particular because above all, it acts directly with and for the peasants. This international recognition has led, in part, to the legitimisation of the Federation, and of its peasant vision, at the national level. Thus, from this peasant vision advocated by the Federation that ensures the ethics of autonomy, partnerships could be formed with research institutions, but also with state services. In this sense, the Federation combined support activities for its members in the 1990s with the objective of representing their interests to the public authorities through participation in rural political processes. Also in the early 1990s, it sought to participate in the negotiation of structural adjustment policies for the agricultural sector, but the State did not recognise it as a representative of the rural Senegalese. For its President, "there is no secret", the Fongs has had to show and prove since the 1990s that it was legitimate and invaluable in representing the interests of peasants and of rural society:

"The role of the Fongs today has been built over several years. We had to prove our skills because we were mistaken for fools, we peasants. Today, the peasants have shown their power and Fongs peasants are involved in all of the political decision-making bodies: there has been a whole legitimisation process, from the top right down to the small family farms"

President of the Fongs-action paysanne, 2018

From the second half of the 1970s until the mid-1980s, with the support of a handful of partners, the Fongs conducted training and information activities with its members based on the needs identified in consultation with them. During this period, it acted as an intermediary between its member associations and sponsors for project financing.

Legitimising the "peasant vision", the necessary bureaucratisation of the movement?

The fact that the Fongs entered into this process of legitimisation and recognition in public arenas through bureaucratisation during this period is not insignificant. Indeed, the context of the 1990s was marked by the emergence of "global and international governance" in parallel with that of the "international civil society"²⁶ (Planche, 2007). As such, the participation of the people - as a criterion of "good governance"²⁷ - led the State to involve NGOs in the implementation of public policies. Indeed, sponsors increasingly demanded that the State take grassroots NGOs and community organisations into account, and that the latter be represented in development programmes. Many organisations in Senegal, such as the Council of Non-Governmental Organisations for Development Support (Congad), saw this international governance injunction as an opportunity to institutionalise themselves²⁸. The Fongs was also able to benefit from this, and did not escape the dominant logic of establishing "good governance", justifying its intervention in the political field by technicalising it by means of bureaucratic processes²⁹: training and professionalisation³⁰, adaptation to decentralisation, consultation of experts.

"We had to show that yes we were peasants, but that we knew how to organise ourselves. First, we trained leaders everywhere, peasants who were capable of expressing themselves, of communicating, of structuring their own associations and family farms, of keeping accounts, we had to provide training in the tools of the dominant in order to finally be recognised and able to act according to our vision."

G., member of JIGDIAM, founding association of the Fongs, 2018

²⁶ PLANCHE, Jeanne. *Société civile : un acteur historique de la gouvernance*. Paris : C.L. Mayer, 2007. 160 pp.

²⁷ DUAULT-ATLANI, Laetitia La « bonne gouvernance », nouvelle éthique du développement ? L'expérience des pays d'Asie centrale et de Transcaucasie postsoviétiques. *Autrepart*, 2003, No. 28, p. 165-179. The concept of governance first emerged on the international scene in the early 1990s and has become a new requirement for sponsors. "Good governance", which is now a condition of international aid, is based on good administration, an increase in the responsibilities of leaders and of state agents with regard to their citizens, and a guarantee of transparency. The enthusiasm for good governance is an element that can only be analysed in relation to the calling into question of the role of the state and the transfer of its powers to individual or collective non-state actors, to whom are imparted qualities of responsibility and rationality: participation, decentralisation. See FERGUSON, James. GUPTA, Akhil. Spatializing states: Towards an ethnography of neo-liberal governmentality. *American Ethnologist*, 2002, 29, 4, p. 981-1002.

²⁸ Op. Cit., BA GNING, Sadio. POULET, Kelly. « Sénégal : de la difficulté pour les ONG à s'autonomiser de l'Etat ».

²⁹ OSMONT, Annick. . La "gouvernance": concept mou, politique ferme. *Les Annales de la Recherche Urbaine*, 1998, n°80-81, p. 19.

³⁰ LE NAËLOU, Anne. ONG : les pièges de la professionnalisation. *Revue Tiers-monde*, 2004, 180, p. 727-735.

Thus, from the earliest days of the Federation, the leaders of the movement engaged the peasants in a training process aimed at professionalising their organisation: strengthening organisational, managerial, technical and communicational capacities. To pass on this knowledge, strengthen and sustain the organisation, the Fongs recruited technicians (communication professionals, project managers, etc.). With their arrival, the organisation entered a phase of professionalisation. The federated peasant organisations then became the locations and the means for the dissemination of knowledge and know-how. The techniques of accounting, association management and meeting protocol have often played a positive role in the organisational capacity of peasants at the local level. The organisation became formalised, in regulations and on paper, at the national level, the village group level and the family farm level. However, it should be noted that these techniques were not the result of a process of promoting endogenous knowledge, the reappropriation of writings (their scope and meaning) was only very rarely done³¹. According to the office members whom we met, the recruitment of technicians, who were considered to be the broadcasters of "good governance practices", allowed peasants to assert themselves by speaking out to the public authorities, and to further formalise their structures and adapt to the standards recognised by sponsors and the State. However, the leaders of the movement insist that such practices were necessary in order to account for the views of the peasants and their endogenous knowledge. In this sense, unlike a number of national NGOs or Congad, peasant organisations have not experienced the disruption of the political work undertaken by the Federation by the recruitment of apolitical professionals. The technicians had to remain under the control of the peasants, the only guarantee of the autonomous thought that remained so important to the ethics of the Federation. As S., a technician, says, "Our leaders are the peasants. We are under the direction of the General Assembly of the Federation, which is made up of peasants." The Federation has a rigorous and formal structure, but it is controlled by the peasants. It also supports decentralisation by structuring itself by means of regional offices that have become institutionalised with the reform, even though they have actually existed since the creation of the Federation. In these regional offices, member associations organise themselves and participate in the governance bodies in regional administrations which have been newly provided for by the legislation. Indeed, decentralisation requires citizen participation insofar as it makes it imperative to deal with the local government, which is supposed to be in direct connection with the population. By means of these regional bodies and its regional members, the Fongs is included in local development plans and participatory planning strategies. It can therefore expand its institutional partnerships and demonstrate its members' capabilities.

Other bureaucratic procedures are also used, such as expert consultation and the production of statistics on the effectiveness of the movement. These procedures have no other objective than to stage norms that help to produce the power and legitimacy that the Federation continues to need to prove³². Starting in the 2000s, and over the course of the ten years since, the Federation has had to repeatedly deal with the State, which is constantly trying to challenge the legitimacy of the Federation, which it sees as being too critical of agricultural policies. For example, in 2010, the Senegalese State declared family farming to

³¹ THIEBA, Daniel. 1992, « Les organisations paysannes : émergence et devenirs », *Bulletin de l'APAD*, 1992, No.3 [Online].

³² Albert OGien, « La valeur sociale du chiffre », *Revue Française de Socio-Économie*, 5, 1, 2010, p. 19-40.

be statistically insignificant. In response, the Federation carried out a major study, confirmed by the ANSD (the National Agency for Statistics and Demography).

"This study enabled us to tell the government that 63% of what the Senegalese eat comes from family farms. This was confirmed by the ANSD. When you go to the market, 63% of what you buy comes from family farms: fish, vegetables, sometimes rice, oil. We were in possession of an argument allowing us to face up to the State. It was not true, these family farms are important, more so than other farms. Since this follow-up, we have been able to open a few negotiating doors with the Ministry of Agriculture.".

B., President of the Fongs, 2018

Since the 2000s, the Federation has been engaged in capacity assessments and self-assessments in order to develop strategic plans that prove its representation and legitimacy, whilst also marking the main directions of the organisation that define its strategic plans, roadmaps and guarantees of the autonomy of thought of the peasants, according to the members of the Federation.

"When we started, we did capacity assessments, the results pushed us to change our strategy, we did self-assessments and also externally, it enabled us to develop strategic plans. And then the context dictated that we had to show the Senegalese government what family farms represent. The government said that farmers represent nothing, that they only eat up taxpayers' money, etc., how could it say that the majority of its population represents nothing? When all of the statistics prove the contrary, it was necessary to do this work also to tell the State: the needs are no longer the same, change the way you do things.".

B., President of the Fongs, 2018

Since the 2000s, experts and consultants have therefore become important intermediaries to promote the legitimacy of the Federation and its proposals, which in many respects run counter to the programmes developed by the State. However, this is often not enough. In practice, the State appeals to and relies on the Federation when it becomes an international requirement. In 2012, when the government of the day was criticising family farms, the UN declared 2012 the year of family farming. The Fongs then strengthened its alliance with a number of international organisations. In that context, the government was ready to listen to the proposals of the federated peasants.

The Federation's implementation of "good practices" of governance, and in fact its entry into a process of bureaucratisation of these practices and techniques, has had the effect of ushering in its recognition first and foremost internationally. The State, although it regularly challenges the Federation, has had no choice but to work in partnership with this Federation, which has become a real institution representing the peasant movement. Since the main objective of bureaucratisation is to promote the peasant vision, the Federation has increased its appeal amongst peasants and its ranks have grown, with members seeing this formalisation as an opportunity for representation, training, influence and economic self-sufficiency. This is all the more so since, in parallel with its institutionalisation and the imposition of its legitimacy, the Federation has worked to establish other representative organisations to increase its strength and to establish policies for its own autonomy and that of peasants.

"Being autonomous also means reinforcing one's power": the diversification of representative structures, governance from within communities, and economic innovations

Although the Fongs had to enter into a process of institutionalisation through the technicalisation and bureaucratisation of these practices in order to legitimise its organisation and its peasant vision, it also used different strategies to become indispensable and to gain political influence, whilst remaining autonomous. We can identify the creation of the CNCR and the Asprodeb, the political and economic bodies of peasant organisations that respectively enable these organisations to influence public policy and to be economically autonomous. These organisations, which are independent of the Federation, are closely linked to it. In parallel, the same strategy is carried out in the communities: a number of Fongs leaders have organised themselves and become involved in the seats of power in their communities; local peasant organisations are also trying to innovate economically to increase their autonomy and sovereignty.

Politicisation of the Fongs, the creation of the CNCR and ASPRODEB: an influential triptych

It was during the period of structural adjustment in Senegal (from 1984) that the Fongs began to think about its activities and initiatives in a more economic, but also more political way. Beginning in the mid-1990s, there was a dynamic of increased politicisation of peasant organisations (POs) at the national level. An important event led to the idea of the creation of the CNCR in particular. In 1992, Fongs wanted to participate in the negotiation process with the State for the Agricultural Structural Adjustment Programme (ASAP), launched by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The government rejected this request, justifying its decision by the fact that the Fongs was not the only national federation to represent rural populations. Faced with this refusal on behalf of the State, the Fongs consulted and discussed with its members and organised a national forum in Thies in 1993 on the theme of "What future for the Senegalese peasant?", in order to give a wide account of the reflections carried out by the peasants. The Fongs invited all the national federations representing rural society in Senegal to this forum, which was intended to be a national debate: the members of the Fongs, but also the cooperatives set up by the State and the federations of EIGs (Economic Interest Groups), representatives of the government, sponsors, etc. This forum laid the groundwork for the creation of a national PO platform. In the following weeks, agreements were reached between the leaders of the Fongs and those of the other federations; the meetings culminated on the 17th of March 1993 with the creation of the National Committee for Rural Concertation (CNCR) in Thiès by seven national federations of farmers, herders, fishermen, horticulturists and rural women.

"At that moment in the '90s, it was felt that the Fongs could not provide good national representation on its own. The Fongs initiated an approach towards other federations of herders, fishermen, etc., the CNCR was created in '93. But before creating it, having accumulated a lot of experience working with the POs, as the Fongs, we were able to lead activities with them, to train them so that they were able to work together. We funded the

process, we brought in experts who accompanied us, we organised the General Assembly at the Headquarters of the Fongs that we had rented at the time. The Regular Assembly was held in 1993 and the CNCR was born.”.

B., President of the Fongs, 2018

The creation of the CNCR was therefore a response to a logic of political alliance between different organisations of rural society bringing peasants together. The purpose of this union was to address the public authorities with one voice. From 1993 to 1995, the organisations and their members were consulted, and a framework for consultation was put in place in order to build the alliance³³. The CNCR then established itself as a key intermediary for public authorities and sponsors. To achieve this, as an example, the Fongs and the CNCR mobilised expertise similar to that of the public authorities: the use of seminars, symposiums, reports and statistics to build a vision, to promote ideas, etc. Thus, the CNCR is a continuation of the Fongs, it is the political body of peasants at the national level. In fact, as soon as the CNCR was created, the Fongs transferred the national files it had previously dealt with to its care and refocused on the support of its members.

Although the Fongs transferred a certain number of powers to the CNCR, and despite the fact that the CNCR is an independent body, the Fongs retained an important place within it: the first President of the CNCR was the President of the Fongs and the President of the CNCR is currently the Secretary-General of the Fongs. The current President of the Fongs is in charge of land tenure at the CNCR. G., a member of the association Jigdiam, itself a member and founder of the Fongs, shed light on these connections:

"I said earlier that it was the Fongs that created the CNCR. [...] we had to find a solution to bring all the peasant organisations together in the face of the State that was not really listening to us, and to create a single organisation to deal with the State. And the Fongs had its strategy to bring all of these organisations together. [...] And I think C., (President of the Fongs at the time) was very smart, because in creating the peasant movement, he also said that we should not take responsibility officially. C. asked the Fongs to withdraw from the governing structures and to stay behind, and today the CNCR works with the programmes of the Fongs, we are now talking about family farming. That is the philosophy of the Fongs. These were slogans, strategies that the Fongs used to attract all of these organisations to the CNCR level. This is really the policy put in place by the Fongs."

Finally, several CNCR member federations, including the Fongs, created mutual savings associations and credit funds during this period. The Fongs had already begun to develop support services for its members who had problems with access to credit and inputs. The Fongs invested in the supply of agricultural equipment and inputs and took out a 4% stake in Senegal's National Agricultural Credit Union, which allowed it to sit on the Board of Directors

³³ MCSWEEN, Nathalie. *L'émergence et le développement de solidarités paysannes transnationales dans l'espace Ouest-africain : une lecture à partir du Sénégal et du Ghana*. Doctoral thesis in: Applied Social Sciences: Université Québec en Outaouais : 2015.

and influence the bank's rural financing policy. This has contributed to the reduction of interest rates on credit for agricultural producers.

The creation of mutual savings and credit associations was also subsequently supported by the "economic arm" of the CNCR, the Senegalese Association for the Promotion of Basic Development (ASPRODEB), created in 1995 by members of the CNCR including the leaders of the Fongs mandated by the CNCR, in partnership with the Association of Rural Council Presidents (APCR). The CNCR and ASPRODEB are separate organisations, but they have offices in the same building in Dakar and share a number of activities. The leaders of the Fongs and the CNCR therefore had to take on the responsibilities and leadership of ASPRODEB. ASPRODEB was originally "created to manage the handover, by the World Bank and the State, of the remainder of the "Small Rural Projects" (PPR) programme, which since the late 1970s had been funding rural production activities aimed at guaranteeing food security."³⁴. Very quickly, however, its purpose became to finance production activities, institutional strengthening activities and any activity contributing to rural development that was initiated by the POs. McSween explains in his thesis that ASPRODEB has been able to manage the "PO Capacity Building" component of the World Bank's Agricultural Services and Producer Organisations Programme (ASPOP I and II) and the FAO's Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). The Fongs had extensive experience of training, and it was the Fongs that took over the training component at the ASPOP (Agricultural Services and Support for Producer Organisations) level. ASPRODEB has therefore entrusted the Fongs with the training of leaders at the local, regional and national levels. ASPRODEB promotes the autonomy of POs through development, especially by means of cooperatives in the mutual savings and credit sector. Amongst the Fongs' PO members, economic initiatives are being deployed in order to promote their economic independence and therefore their autonomy, whilst simultaneously integrating their members into local political decision-making bodies.

"Political representation, economic innovation!": strategies of Fongs member peasant organisations

The two strategies put in place by the Fongs at the national level to promote its influence and financial independence, namely "to be represented politically and to innovate economically", are the two elements guaranteeing its autonomy of thought and enabling an increase in its power to influence the government. The Federation adopted this strategy early on for its POs who, as we have seen before, received leadership training. Thus trained, these leaders have been able to make inroads into the political and decision-making bodies of their communities. The Asescaw, the originator of the Fongs (the current President of the Fongs is also the President of the Asescaw) was undoubtedly one of the first POs to get involved politically in the decision-making bodies of its community in an organised way. The President is also mayor of his municipality. He told us about the beginnings of the Asescaw.

"We had apolitical organisations, but it was said that we were going to get involved in decision-making bodies in order to defend our members in the context of land management. In the meantime, the State had the right to select five designated state councillors from agricultural cooperatives in each rural community. I was the first designated young councillor for the municipality of Ross Bethio. I'm in the Asescaw. I did

³⁴ *Ibid.*

some training. I got involved in development activities, so they said, ha, this kid has been assigned. That was our strategy. And now I'm a member of the decision-making bodies. Because ASESCAW had done the work to claim that these members were getting involved in the proceedings. [...] The first rural communities were 80% run by members of the Asescaw.".

One 20-year member of the Asescaw confirmed: "Our representatives are present on many platforms. We put people everywhere. The Secretary-General of ACESCAW has just been appointed technical advisor to the Minister of Agriculture.".

On the Fapal side, in the Louga region, the same applies. The mayor of one of the municipalities of Louga is one of the leaders of the association, as well as the second deputy. The Secretary-General of Fapal assured us:

"On this town council, I can say that the majority are members of the Fapal, they are all peasants. Our members are now municipal councillors, members of committees. We don't do party politics, we get involved in decision-making bodies so that people do not tell us our dreams.".

Installed in communities' seats of political governance, and acting in the interests of the peasants, the member associations of the Fongs, like their national organisation, then developed economic initiatives for the autonomy of the peasants and of their organisation: autonomy from external funding, in a context of dwindling resource allocation to humanitarian and development organisations.

"Our autonomy is our *raison d'être*, we need safeguards to keep our autonomy intact, just like our members' autonomy at the grassroots level, and that means financial independence. Initially we concentrated on the organisation, on capacity building. The new vision of the Fongs is to say that we will have to strengthen our economic capacity and determine our economic position at the national level. And if we have the economic capacity, we will look for income-generating activities, curb rural exodus, strengthen production capacities and enable these young people to earn a living, to be autonomous themselves. The other point is the financing of activities: we need to be self-sufficient in terms of funding, to create our own financing mechanisms so that we do not have to rely on others. And it could be local financing managed by POs willing to finance certain development actions; a move towards processing units to create added value for our production; marketing our products. Currently, the Fongs is building a store with the aim of selling agricultural products all year round. We want all agricultural products to be found here at the Fongs. We can get organised with internal group purchases to get inputs and eliminate intermediaries and so that it is not too expensive.".

F., member of the Union of Peasant Groups in Meckhé (UGPM), 2018

The Fongs, as we have seen, entered this process at the national level. Locally, a number of economic initiatives are also emerging. In Meckhé, one of the leaders of the UGPM explained that the association is 80% dependent on the external financing of its partners. Faced with this fact, it has defined strategies aimed firstly at reducing expenses as far as

possible: the headquarters of the UGPM, where we spoke with one of the members, belongs to the association, expenses for electricity, water, and purchases of office supplies have been minimised. Next to the member's workspace, I was also able to visit rooms that are rented in order to contribute to the operation of the organisation. The UGPM has also set up a savings and credit cooperative, with the possibility of members borrowing from profits made; a solar workshop that sells solar panels; and the organisation also rents out a room and an office. At the FAPAL level, a workshop has been set up for the manufacture and repair of agricultural equipment, as well as a seed cooperative that markets peanut seeds, and a mutual savings and credit union. The FAPAL set up the mutual savings association, but it is managed autonomously. A protocol has been signed: each year a balance sheet is drawn up, and if there is a surplus, a percentage is paid back to the Fapal. Another protocol exists for the workshop: if there is a profit, 60% is reinvested in the capital account; 20% goes to the management committee; and the remaining 20% goes to the FAPAL. However, the Secretary-General of FAPAL would like to expand its funding base by obtaining the right to file public grant applications. Since associations are not recognised as public utility establishments, they are not entitled to access funds from Senegalese taxpayers. These associations therefore face difficulties related to the bureaucratic process which they have engaged in. For example, at the end of a programme, the foreign partners order audits. One of them recommended that Fapal put staff "on salary" in order to meet the regulations in force, since up until then, Fapal had paid in the form of attendance allowances. "A vicious circle", declared the Secretary-General, because these bureaucratic recommendations generate additional costs and the activities that the association deploys in parallel do not allow it to stretch to the formal hiring of employees.

Conclusion

This study and its conclusions are a continuation of the research conducted with the research team that won the French Red Cross Fund's 2015 call for applications for postdoctoral fellowships on the study of the Council of Non-Governmental Organisations for Development Support in Senegal (CONGAD), entitled: "NGOs as Spaces of Governance: an ethnography of practices in Senegal". For this research, we used an ethnographic approach to investigate the regional committees of the Consortium. From the north to the south, part of this study showed that grassroots community organisations in Senegal wanted to preserve their specificities: in particular, and above all, their autonomy in terms of functioning and governance. Some of them had no plans to become NGOs. The reason given was always the same: the desire not to depend on funding from sponsors and not to be reduced to mere implementing bodies. Some have opted for control by the associative movement over that of international organisations, the State or NGOs. One of the leaders of the Fapal association held up the practices and principles of the Fongs, of which his association was a member, as an example: neither the Fapal nor the Fongs could be "the steed of the West" or even of the State. Congad was beset by reproaches. The peasant leaders highlighted the actions carried out within the framework of integrated programmes, which were developed and managed by the peasants themselves. Guided by a principle, "that of the peasant who takes responsibility and refuses to let people think for him", one of the members of the Fapal then proudly added that "in our vocabulary, we banned the word framework, we banned the word sponsor. The concepts that we have are support, accompaniment and that's partnership, that's the *raison*

d'être of the Fongs and the Fapal." Moreover, the Fongs appears to have transcended the divide between humanitarian and social action: sustainable development is seen as a solution to empower the beneficiaries who have become actors in the projects. Autonomy was seen as an ongoing struggle by the Fapal and the Fongs: autonomy from the State, from the "Western" non-governmental organisations; they declared that they would impose their own conditions. Our interest in the Fongs stemmed from this interview. We felt it was important to compare the two organisations (Congad and the Fongs) in operational terms. Similar methods were used to approach our object of study. At the time of the study, the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations in Senegal was an indispensable entity in the agricultural world, as was the CNCR, which it had created, and which represented more than three million farmers. The progressive visibility of peasant societies on the public stage has been impressive, especially if we look back almost three decades: in 1990, peasants were virtually excluded from any process of development and implementation of agricultural public policies, from the State rural development programmes that concerned them directly. The aim of this study was to understand this evolution by looking at the Fongs-action paysanne's ethical and practical choices. From its inception to the present day, the Fongs has constantly oriented its practices according to the ethical principle that guides its actions, namely autonomy. This autonomy had also been historically claimed by Congad leaders, but in fact it did not apply. It was an ideal to be achieved in a context of resource scarcity. Moreover, the Congad entered into a process of accelerated competition with its members and bred distrust amongst its member associations, which did not feel represented or listened to.

What about the Fongs-action paysanne whose members seemed attached to their autonomy and sovereignty? An autonomy of thought, financial autonomy, autonomy from the State, from which it first emancipated itself by organising itself outside of the reach of its paternalistic gaze. During its first phase, it institutionalised itself by training leaders throughout the territory: leaders of peasant organisations capable of defending a vision that had to be developed, based on this ethical principle of autonomy. It relied on international partners who decided to support the training of leaders and the organisation's reflexive process on what it was, on its vision, on its future and that of all its members, the peasants. The article also shows that from the 1990s onwards, the Fongs entered into a process of legitimisation by means of an institutionalisation of bureaucratic practices: professionalisation, the use of statistics, experts and consultants, audits, symposiums and seminars. These various practices that contributed to its bureaucratisation led to the legitimisation of the Federation in the eyes of the State, which was finally forced to act according to the recommendations of the sponsors and of international organisations in a liberal context where, in the West as in the Global South, POs were held up as one of the solutions for people in the Global South to take control of their destinies. Thus, there was an evolution in terms of State-peasant relations, from instrumental interfaces in the 1980s, when peasant participation was reduced to the approval of agricultural policies developed by state experts, to partnerships based on the recognition of the legitimacy of POs in decision-making processes and programmes for agricultural communities.

However, this recognition has never been entrenched and is subject to variation depending on changes in government, in particular. For example, in 2000, Wade's election as president led to public authorities in Senegal turning away and trying to circumvent or harm the peasant movement in place by creating other peasant organisations that were

friendlier to them. The Fongs, aware of this fact, has constantly, throughout its history, developed strategies aimed at securing its autonomy and increasing its power. It has entered into a process of politicisation and diversification of amicable organisations in order to extend its power: it created the CNCR, a real political organ of the rural movement, which itself created the Asprodeb, the "economic arm" of rural people including peasants, directly benefiting the Fongs and its members. These processes have been used nationally, but also locally. All the member organisations of the Fongs have historically developed similar strategies: the infiltration of political bodies to promote the peasant vision in their communities, the diversification of activities and economic innovations to become financially self-sufficient and increasingly autonomous with regard to external financing. Although its recognition as a public utility establishment has been requested, the Federation and its member organisations do not intend to become dependent on state subsidies. According to the POs, it is therefore necessary to engage in a process of diversification of economic resources that can also contribute to improving daily life and promote the autonomy of peasants. It is therefore important to innovate in the struggle for autonomy in particular, in order to ensure its survival and that of its members, by promoting social entrepreneurship and continuing to fight for recognition as a public utility establishment. To consider this perspective implies starting from the existing state of affairs, capitalising on the experience of its members, who are involved in real empowerment dynamics. The goals of self-financing and network partnerships, particularly transnational ones, are equally fundamental.

This article has opened up new perspectives to help us understand the constraints arising from the bureaucratisation of the movement and to question the logics of bureaucratisation in the context of community organisations, which we have observed as being less inclined to submit to bureaucratic procedures. The aim would be to further analyse the ways in which bureaucratic procedures, practices and techniques have been disseminated and their reception/appropriation by peasants and within family farms, in the daily lives of these non-state actors. What are the different forms taken by bureaucratic processes according to non-state actors, their individual and social configurations and capital? And what are the consequences of these practices, obligations coming from the "top", on processes of empowerment "from below"?

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