

Internal dynamics, the state, and recourse to external aid: towards a historical sociology of the peasant movement in Senegal since the 1960s¹

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The paper presents a historical sociology of the peasant movement in Senegal through three successive periods from its emergence until its internationalisation. The analysis shows that recourse to external aid has been an integral part of the Senegalese peasant movement, in that the movement has developed within a multi-level political space where the government of Senegal and external donors play a decisive role. However, the peasant movement is also a product of its own dynamics and has adjusted its strategies according to the national and international political environment.

Keywords: Senegal; social movement; peasants; government; multi-level; representation of interests; agriculture

When Gentil and Mercoiret considered whether or not a peasant movement existed in Black Africa, they replied in the negative, deciding that ‘except perhaps in Senegal, the initiatives analysed do not as yet represent a true peasant movement sufficient in size, organisational effectiveness and future plans to count within the national balance of power’ (Gentil and Mercoiret 1991, p. 885). Senegal thus appears to have been part of the avant-garde. Yet, during the colonial period and the years following independence in 1960, Senegal’s peasants, although a numerical majority, played a very minor role on the national political scene. Peasant organisations first emerged during the 1970s and a Senegalese peasant movement gradually developed from there.

The Senegalese peasant movement is a social movement in that it is possible to distinguish groups of peasants that are socially mobilised and engaged in a sustained manner in a series of direct political actions oriented around a common objective (Fillieule and Péchu 1993). Its existence refutes ideas of present-day rural escapism (Bayart *et al.* 1992) and culturalist analyses based principally around the alleged docility of the rural world. This article analyses the foundations of the peasant movement in Senegal and the major stages in its stucturalisation from independence to the present day. The aim of this historical sociology of the peasant movement is to assess its different forms of recourse to external aid, approaching the political sociology of extraversion defined by J.-F. Bayart (1996). In particular, it is hypothesised that the peasant movement in Senegal is not simply the product of its own internal dynamics, but that it has also developed

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within a multi-level political space wherein it modifies its strategies according to the national and international political environment.

Analysis of the scientific and grey literature supplied by various actors (non-governmental organisations [NGOs], trade unions and development organisations), supplemented by semi-structured interviews with a number of key figures (peasant leaders and outside observers), helps to shed light on three periods essential to an understanding of the peasant movement. The paper shows that from the emergence of the movement until its internationalisation, Senegalese peasants have been able to take advantage of the differing strategies of national and extranational political actors, whether donors or NGOs. The current analysis also allows for the specification that the dynamics demonstrated here are those of peasant self-emancipation – although constrained by a sometimes unfavourable political environment.

The article begins by examining the political situation of the peasantry from 1960 (when the country gained its independence) until the early 1980s. During this first period, Senegal enjoyed state-to-state budgetary support granted by other (mainly European) countries. The state exercised tutelary power over the rural world via state-controlled cooperatives and so undermined any independent initiative taking on the part of the peasantry. The severe droughts of the early 1970s revealed the ineffectiveness of these development cooperatives during a period marked by greater political openness. In this context, peasant resistance strategies no longer needed to be hidden and gave rise to the first peasant associations.

The second period begins in 1984, the year when Senegal entered into a period of structural adjustment and adopted its New Agricultural Policy. From 1984 to 1996, two organisations – the *Fédération des organisations non gouvernementales du Sénégal* (FONGS), and later the *Conseil national de concertation des ruraux* (CNCR) – used the opportunities offered to them within the international environment to assert themselves as credible interlocutors in the eyes of Senegal's decision makers. The final period begins in the late 1990s when, despite a less favourable political environment at home, the Senegalese peasant movement continued to develop at the sub-regional level and even formed links with its international counterparts.

From the independence of Senegal to 1984: the tutelary role of the state and the emergence of a Senegalese peasant movement

From colonial times onwards, politicians and administrators throughout Africa have tried to manage the agricultural world (Lachenmann 1994). Nevertheless, peasant protests did occur and have since been the subject of numerous social science research studies. The literature concerning forms of peasant protest in Africa is therefore rich and varied.² Studies reveal examples of many different types of 'everyday peasant resistance' (Scott 1986), both individual and more generalised: cunning, sabotage, fraud and concealment. They hypothesise that 'evasive action' of this type formed the principal component of rural defensive strategies (Spittler 1979). More cautiously, Olivier de Sardan and Bayart suggest that peasant protests tended to operate outside power relationships with local administrators or external actors, characterising this as an 'avoidance strategy' (Olivier de Sardan 1995) or an 'escapist' phenomenon (Bayart *et al.* 1992). By placing particular emphasis on the individual and the hidden dimensions of peasant protest, Isaacman (1993) contends that such arguments assume an absence of rebellions, revolutions or other forms of more ambitious mobilisation. It is certainly true that many actions have gone unrecorded and that it is very difficult for researchers to identify the intentions of protest leaders. Furthermore, studies of African peasant consciousness in periods of protest (Amselle 1978, Ranger

1985) and of ‘primary resistance’ movements (Ranger 1968) confirm the existence of collective and public forms of action.³

The case of Senegal seems also to invalidate ideas of an obedient countryside, even if different forms of rural administration considerably restrict peasant capacity for initiative taking. After independence, President Léopold Senghor and his prime minister Mamadou Dia, of the *Parti socialiste* (PS), sought to make a clean break with the trading economy introduced by the colonial regime, instead creating large peasant cooperatives. But the objectives of these cooperatives quickly turned towards control of the rural world, relegating agricultural development to second place. In addition, the dynamism of the Senegalese groundnut-based economy was shattered in the late 1960s. At that time, the groundnut was Senegal’s principal source of agricultural revenue. Between the early 1960s and the early 1980s, however, the price paid to the producer fell by more than 40% in real terms, leading to a savage slowdown throughout the economy. With no independent peasant organisations during this period, initiative lay mainly with the authorities. But the shock of the great drought of 1973/74 fostered the emergence of a peasant movement in Senegal, during a time of growing political openness and democratic inclusion.

The era of state-controlled cooperatives and the stifling of peasant initiative

The post-independence phase is particularly important in the history of Senegal’s peasant movement, providing indicators which are key to understanding how the movement would later use this period as a counter-model.

The Senegalese government created state or para-state structures with the express aim of fighting the trading economy. Established by settlers and the large trading companies of the time, this form of economy was a legacy of the colonial period. It was based on the groundnut crop and directed solely towards the export market. More than half of rural dwellers depended directly on large trading companies. The objective of the cooperatives was to create conditions favourable to the emancipation of the peasantry and to eliminate the *traitants* or middlemen – private actors, both local and foreign, who played a role in marketing agricultural produce (Ekanza 2006). Along with newly created state bodies such as the *Office de commercialisation agricole* (OCA) and the *Banque Sénégalaise de développement* (BSD), the cooperatives would take over the role of the *service de traite* (marketing, and input management) and so develop the agricultural world. European, and more particularly French, planners were also involved in these initiatives and helped to set up the cooperatives. The rapid spread of peasant emancipation via the cooperatives brought the elimination of the middlemen from marketing and supply networks. However, the cooperative ethos was quickly supplanted by one of state *dirigisme*, greatly limiting the room for manoeuvre available to the peasants. Although integrated into the state development companies, Senegalese peasants were seldom involved in such roles as popularisation, managing inputs and credit, or even marketing. Their job was simply to follow the directions sent out by the technicians and engineers.

The 1960s saw an increasing number of state or para-state companies, among them the *Office national de coopération et d’assistance au développement* (ONCAD) (Caswell 1984), and the *Société d’aménagement et d’exploitation des terres du delta du fleuve Sénégal* (SAED) (Adams 1977). This trend continued during the 1970s: *Société des terres neuves* (STN) looked after the Niayes region; *Société de développement des fibres textiles* (SODEFITEX), cotton growing; and *Société de développement agricole et industrielle du Sénégal* (SODAGRI), rice culture. But the first problems with this type of structure were already beginning to appear. Indeed, in line with the findings of Noumen (2008)

in his studies of self-governing African cooperatives, corruption, inefficiency and management problems were becoming institutionalised.

The development policies implemented in rural areas during the 1960s reinforced this tendency. The main concern of the governments of Switzerland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and particularly France (then the major donors of foreign aid) was to develop policies capable of rapidly securing financial resources for the Senegalese state. External aid financed para-state companies, such as SAED, and the mass enrolment/training programmes they set up. Until the 1970s, development aid flowed almost solely from state to state, via bilateral and, to a lesser extent, multilateral government organisations, such as United Nations (UN) agencies. Compensating Senegal for its political and economic dependency, this significant external support allowed the government to retain control of the cooperatives and so limit initiative taking on the part of rural dwellers.

As everybody knows, around 1962 Senegal had a process of creating institutions via multifunctional cooperatives. The fishing sector too was absorbed into these cooperatives, along with the rest of the rural world. The fishing section was spread across the maritime regions of Senegal, particularly Dakar, Thies, Fatik, Ziguinchoré etc. There were also fishermen upstream and downstream of this system and the government organised them via the village sections. As a branch of the cooperative movement, the village section was in charge. The Senegalese fishermen hadn't been involved in any of this. 'All we're bothered about is fishing,' they used to tell us. (Interview, Semba Gueye, then Secretary-General of *FENAGIE Pêche* [*Fédération nationale des groupements d'intérêt économique de pêche*], and subsequently President of the CNCR, 2002).

Originally conceived as a peasant emancipation movement, the cooperative system gradually became simply an instrument of power (Gagnon 1974). In addition, it marginalised all previous vehicles of popular participation (such as rural councils and rural development centres). The objective of the state cooperatives was no longer to promote peasant development but to supervise the rural world, gaining control of the groundnut-based economy and the potential financial bounty it represented. The *marabouts* played a full part in this process (Diop and Diouf 2002): they were formidable political operators, and were able to guarantee victory to the *Parti socialiste* at a number of elections (Cruise O'Brien *et al.* 2002).

Yet, despite the supervision of Islamic brotherhoods and state cooperatives, the peasants of Senegal seem to have retained some measure of autonomy. As underlined by the testimony of Famara Diedhiou (1998), some peasants apparently took advantage of the lessons taught by the *Maisons familiales rurales* (MFRs)⁴ to exploit local resources independently, outside the cooperative system. Just as they did in Tanzania, the peasants employed resistance strategies in the face of state socialism (Hyden 1980, 1985).

The peasants thus benefited from a partial autonomy (Isaacman 1993), which allowed them to escape external constraints and move beyond a position of submission. If the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the peasantry appears greater than that allowed other social classes, it does seem more generally (as organisational sociology emphasises) that any system of action, however constraining, offers an element of autonomy relative to each actor. Bayart goes even further, stressing that 'situations of enhanced political control . . . never completely eliminate interventions by subordinate social groups' (Bayart *et al.* 1992). Thus, despite the context, peasant associations first appeared in the rural areas of Senegal in the early 1970s, the forerunners of the wider peasant movement. These early collective initiatives were deliberately unobtrusive, operating on the margins alongside the big state development companies.

The associative movement in rural Senegal in the 1970s: the early days of the peasant movement

The year of the great drought in 1973/74 certainly favoured the emergence of rural initiatives. The United States and Canada allotted a substantial amount of development aid to West Africa (Coste and Egg 1998), with a particular preference for *grands projets* such as dams, turnkey industries and others. Meanwhile the emotional response provoked by the droughts and famines encouraged a growing number of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Gabas 1989). Use of the term ‘NGO’ requires further clarification: ‘NGOs are often regarded as public interest organisations, however they are in fact a particularly mixed group’ (Mayer and Siméant 2004). In considering their legal status, Dorothée Meyer (2004) shows that as long as international law fails to ‘define NGOs as a single legal entity ... any organisation within the associative sector, in its widest sense, is at liberty to declare itself an NGO’. The term NGO is thus an important indicator of an organisation’s public strategy, but has no relevance as an analytical concept.

The increasing number of development NGOs and their growing presence in West Africa can be explained chiefly by rising standards of living in Europe. These facilitated the emergence of Christian (Siméant 2009), Marxist and even post-materialist movements (Inglehart 1977), all prompted by the activities of the humanitarian NGOs. Thus the 1970s saw a transformation of the aid paradigm, favourable both to the creation and support of peasant organisations in Senegal.

Dependent organisations sponsored by NGOs

In contrast to development through *grands projets*, NGO-led associative initiatives wanted to ‘short-circuit the neocolonial state and dependent local states by addressing themselves directly to the people’ (Hours 1998). These initiatives financed small-scale projects, with the ultimate aim of giving underprivileged populations easier means of access to development. Gentil and Mercoiret describe organisations of this type as ‘Initiative NGOs’, started up not by governments but by overseas NGOs. These NGO-sponsored organisations were thus created in a rather artificial way to respond to individual projects – short-term, limited in scope and financed by European and North American donors. ‘Often arising around micro-projects, NGO-sponsored peasant organisations have developed in a variety of ways: some groups remain very dependent on external support; the project aftermath when funds dry up is painful and the handover process a difficult one. [However] more positive developments exist’ (Gentil and Mercoiret 1991, p. 871). These organisations were born of NGO dynamics and designed to implement pre-defined projects, but at the same time other NGOs were emerging, the direct result of initiative taking within the rural world. And it was among these ‘endogenous’ organisations (Gentil and Mercoiret 1991) that the peasant movement in Senegal was born.

Endogenous organisations at the heart of the peasant movement in Senegal

The peasant organisations linked to the associative movement were the product of local initiative and were independent both of the state and of NGOs. They took the form of peasant organisations, frequently inter-village, sometimes social in character, and often called ‘Foyer’ or ‘Entente’. These organisations first appeared in regions that were not involved in groundnut production; nor were they confined solely to the agricultural sector, embracing instead the whole of the rural world.

Around 10 associations slowly took shape in the wake of the 1973/74 droughts. In the Walo area, ‘*foyers de jeunes*’, initially oriented towards sporting activities, took on a wider role in response to the difficulties experienced by the rural population during the great drought (Lecomte 1998). The *Association socio-éducative, sportive et culturelle de l’amicale du Walo* (ASESCAW) first appeared in this context and later became one of the mainstays of the peasant movement in Senegal. The flight of young people from village to town lay behind the *Association des jeunes agriculteurs de Casamance* (AJAC), founded in 1976 (Cissokho 2009). At a local level, the *Entente de Diouloulou* in Casamance and the *Entente de Bamba Thialène* in eastern Senegal (Cissokho 2009) also set themselves up independently to organise peasant activity and respond to poor harvests. These associations gradually defined their areas of competence and moved into more complex undertakings, particularly in the economic field (marketing, seed provision and so on).

Agricultural production at this time was very limited. The state and its development companies made little contribution to the emergency aid provided to peasants who were still obliged to pay the charges levied by the cooperatives. Peasant discontent grew. The perceived injustice of their situation encouraged peasants to mobilise, and also more highly qualified non-peasant activists with a rural background emerged, such as Mamadou Cissokho (founder of the *Entente de Bamba Thialène*) and Abdoulaye Diop (founder of AJAC), both former teachers. These non-government peasant associations, created as a result of peasant initiative-taking, encouraged rural dwellers to assert their independence and act for themselves. This modest dynamic developed alongside the state development companies and posed a direct challenge to them. Opposition to the top-down dynamic of the big state companies lay at the heart of the political engagement of the peasant leaders of independent associations (Lachenmann 1994).

These various endogenous associations all benefited from external support – initially from *Environnement et Développement du Tiers Monde* (ENDA), *Se servir de la saison sèche en Savane et au Sahel* (Six-S) or *Tiers-monde* (Gueneau and Lecomte 1998), and later from several other NGOs and cooperation bodies – and this was essential to their further development. However, they were not the product of dynamics or finance external to Senegal’s rural world. Positioned on the margins of the national agricultural development policy implemented by the state, so-called endogenous peasant associations appeared throughout the country and went on to form the heart of the peasant movement in Senegal. A context of growing political openness and democratisation in the mid-1970s made this transformation possible.

Modest developments in a context of greater political openness

The associations extended the range of their economic activities (provision of credit, marketing, training and so on) in micro-projects sponsored by embassies and NGOs: some European (French, Swiss, Dutch and Italian), others national (ENDA) or sub-regional (Six-S). Whether formal or informal, the associations remained modest in their ambitions between 1973 and 1976. Their overriding objective was to gain acceptance by the local authorities. Religious leaders and political representatives alike were profoundly mistrustful, fearing that these new associations would encroach upon their power. The development cooperatives also felt themselves under threat and their officials were particularly hostile. However, the associations were not opposed to Senegal’s Islamic brotherhoods, indeed far from it. Mamadou Cissokho explains in his statement (2009, p. 52) that their early thinking made frequent reference to religion, and references to Islam remain common in

Senegalese peasant organisations today. By making this religious element integral to their meetings, and by emphasising the links between their activities and the Koran, the associations succeeded in neutralising the initial hostility of the brotherhoods. This was only possible because their associative dynamic did not pose a direct challenge to Senegal's *contrat social* (Cruise O'Brien *et al.* 2002), based on the mediatory role of the *marabouts*. Likewise, the Senegalese government did not oppose the emerging associations, and occasionally showed some enthusiasm towards their initiatives. The *Parti socialiste* had lost its monopoly on political power after the student protests of 1968 and the strikes of 1973 (Tine 1997). Confronted by popular discontent and peasant unrest, President Senghor made an increasing number of concessions, among them recognition of initiatives of this type. In so doing he ushered in the 'passive revolution' which affected Senegal from 1974 to 1981 (Fatton 1987) and was symbolised by increasing democratisation and the transition from a single-party to a multi-party state.

A number of non-profit organisations developed alongside the Initiative NGOs. Groups of villagers took control of a distinct economic function (marketing, supply, credit) from the government cooperative to which they belonged, and developed a semi-autonomous organisation alongside it. However, these non-profit organisations did not enjoy the same degree of independence as organisations belonging to the associative movement.

In contrast, from 1974 onwards, the young endogenous associations were beginning to get themselves organised. Inspired by the MFRs, twelve associations and several NGOs founded the *Fédération des organisations non gouvernementales du Sénégal* (FONGS). FONGS was created in 1978, and by 1984 was ready to launch a programme of activities and mobilise its members. This was an initiative endogenous to the rural world.

This analysis has demonstrated how relationships between peasant organisations, government and international donors were configured in the years 1960–84. The period saw a transformation in the national political environment, initially hostile to peasant initiatives but more open towards them from the 1970s onwards. At the same time, donors were diversifying their strategies, and direct intervention by European NGOs was beginning to supplement the system of state-to-state budgetary support.

1984–96: the structuring and consolidation of peasant organisations in a multi-level political space

During the 1980s the groundnut economy ran out of steam, state companies like ONCAD collapsed (Caswell 1984) and Senegal went through hard economic times. Corruption, government debt and cronyism provided ample justification for the privatisations demanded in 1984 by the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) of the IMF and the World Bank (Oya 2006). The implementation of these policies in the mid 1980s opened the way to reforms both political and economic, among them the retreat of the state from its agricultural support functions, the dismantling of protection, and the opening up of markets. By promoting decentralisation (already introduced to Senegal with the creation of the *Communautés rurales* in 1972), the SAPs encouraged a drive towards greater participation among local populations. The local thus appeared 'finally (or paradoxically) as a denominator common to both globalisation and decentralisation' (Sawadogo 2001, p. 202). The regionalist bias in development policy evaporated sharply in face of the poor results obtained by the majority of regional organisations. The spread of adjustment programmes and the implementation of decentralisation policies together encouraged the localisation of development aid at the expense of that provided through state budgetary support.

The financial support of donors during this period was crucial, both to the development of the peasant movement and to the continuation of the Senegalese state. When Abdou Diouf (PS) took over as president in 1981, foreign aid allowed him to consolidate his power and so maintain the political stability which characterised the regime of his predecessor, President Senghor (Diop *et al.* 2000). Diouf went on to change the constitution and give official recognition to political pluralism. Foreign aid also helped him to stem popular discontent, but at the same time it reduced the ability of his government to work in relative autonomy towards its own economic objectives. A combination of these different factors (SAPs, decentralisation, and the localisation and development of external aid) transformed the dynamics of the peasant associations launched in the 1970s, and with it the different forms of recourse to external aid.

An increase in the number of cohesive, federated peasant organisations in the context of a ‘humanitarian boom’

The implementation of the New Agricultural Policy (Duruffé 1995) and the catastrophic drought of 1983/84 transformed the rural world. The state cooperatives had provided seeds and work, and the sudden disappearance of these services at first left the peasant associations helpless. However, they gradually learned to take advantage of the space for initiative taking created by access to loans from the *Caisse nationale du crédit agricole* (CNCA). Indeed, privatisation actually favoured the rise of peasant associations and unions of peasant groups. The state also encouraged this dynamic by creating GIE (*Groupe-ment d'intérêt économique*) status. Among other things, this allowed peasants to borrow from the CNCA and thus encouraged initiative taking. In addition, the early 1980s saw a ‘humanitarian boom’, with a sharp increase in the number of humanitarian NGOs, favourable to the funding of short-term projects, at the expense of NGOs aligned with the third-world solidarity movement (Hours 1998).

Coupled with the provision of localised development aid, these opportunities encouraged a rapid expansion in village groups (Mercoiret 2006). By creating a village association or a federation of several organisations, local leaders made local demand for aid visible to donors at a time when the number of humanitarian NGOs was exploding. Development brokers (Blundo 1995), working in the gap between the peasant and development worlds, took advantage of the disintegration of Senegal’s social contract between *marabouts* and state to try to seize the resources supplied through international cooperation. They created peasant organisations, some on a rather vague basis, whose primary objective was to make local demands for aid visible to donors. While FONGS was beginning to develop a broader social project for the rural world, the aims of these brokers were rather more limited, often serving personal objectives of social promotion, and an economic rationale (corruption, and redistribution of funds by the broker to the local population) which differed from that set by the donor. One should not, however, draw too sharp a contrast between development brokers and peasant leaders, in that some of the brokers joined what became the organisation representing all Senegalese peasants; however, their origin helps explain the make-up of the movement. Equally, certain leaders of the peasant movement were not lacking social ambition.

As a national organisation trying to unite the peasant associations, FONGS developed alongside a multitude of organisations sponsored by NGOs. From its creation in 1978 FONGS represented a clear break in the political evolution of the rural world in Senegal. It marked the official birth of a peasant movement which had moved from the local to the national scale. From then on FONGS pursued two objectives. Firstly it got down to the

job of encouraging and reinforcing peasant initiative taking by providing technical assistance (training). But it also fought for a certain concept of agriculture, familial agriculture, and certain values (solidarity, fighting poverty), and argued for them with the public authorities.

An extremely dense and diverse network of aid agencies, international donors, NGOs and centres of research and expertise gradually formed around FONGS. Although more than 90% financed by overseas funding, it still managed to develop as an independent organisation. Aid arrived in particular at the second stage and allowed FONGS to consolidate its internal credibility by building up its economic role. The grip of the state over its development companies and the local difficulties of the rural world had left a strong impression on the leaders of FONGS and similar associations (ASESCAW, AJAC and others). Their aim, therefore, was to acquire a wider range of partners to avoid becoming dependent on particular donors. Their recourse to external aid was twofold, donors providing both financial and human resources. 'Flexible' funding and 'Northern' activists of various types (experts, researchers or project leaders) supported projects determined by the Senegalese themselves. These people were there to encourage the development of peasant organisations at the very moment the state was leaving the field and offloading part of its activities onto the peasants. With little preparation for this turn of events, the latter were particularly grateful for the external aid offered by these 'specialists' in supporting 'Southern' peasant organisations and developed affective relationships with them. As genuine activists, they exercised a decisive influence over the evolution of the peasant movement in Senegal. As Mamadou Cissokho commented:

Ndiougou Fall and I were appointed to set up FONGS. We worked hard to devise and revalidate its first training programme and received financial support from several sources, in particular the Ford Foundation in Dakar, which we knew through the good offices of *Innovations et réseaux pour le développement* (IREN), an international network of NGOs and peasant organisations led by a friend, Fernand Vincent. We ran a workshop to put these documents together. It was led by Loïc Barbedette, a friend to peasants and peasant organisations. Barbedette agreed to come and share the adventure with us, because everyone at FONGS was convinced of how much we needed to get ourselves some training. (Cissokho 2009, p. 67)

By the late 1980s, however, FONGS was threatened by internal crisis. Like most organisations, it suffered from recurrent leadership problems, no doubt exacerbated by the 'politics of the belly' some wished to pursue (Bayart 1989). FONGS also came up against a representation deficit; its 24 member associations gave it only 100,000 members out of the 2.3 million peasants in Senegal. However, by making use of international political opportunities, the leaders of FONGS succeeded in building up their position in the national political arena.

International political opportunities, the emergence of the CNCR and the beginnings of dialogue on the national political scene

At the request of FONGS, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) carried out some work on the agricultural situation in Senegal. On its completion, the FONGS leadership had a suggestion for the Senegalese government and the FAO. They put forward the idea of a forum, to be held in 1993, on the topic 'What does the future hold for the Senegalese peasant?' FONGS used the occasion to invite all Senegal's rural and peasant organisations to participate. This included those who had not joined in order to preserve their independence, such as the non-profits (successors to the old government cooperatives), and organisations created on the initiative of NGOs.

The peasant movement in Senegal initially structured itself around FONGS. It brought together a number of endogenous peasant organisations into a single federation, then gradually tried to gather up other organisations, separate in origin, and open itself up to them. This structuralising dynamic must be understood from a constructivist viewpoint (Boltanski 1982), taking as its subject the historical conjuncture within which the peasants established themselves as an explicit group.

In 1993 the movement opened itself up to the whole of the rural world, while continuing to argue for the values (independence from government and donors, familial agriculture as opposed to agribusiness) which had shaped it. The various national federations attending the forum engaged in a series of meetings to agree a number of ‘interpretive frameworks’ for the ‘problem’, suggested by FONGS. These included, for example, ‘recognition of and respect for the state’ and ‘willingness to participate in the consultative bodies set up by the state’.

The *Comité national de concertation des ruraux du Sénégal* (CNCR) was established in the same year, officially bringing together FONGS and other independent peasant organisations. The CNCR successfully consolidated its role in the years to follow, participating in several sets of negotiations between the World Bank and the Senegalese government in 1994, 1995 and 1996. Following its own injunction to seek out partnerships, the World Bank was developing relationships with actors hailing from what it termed ‘civil society’ (Haubert 2000, Offerlé 2003, Roy 2005). ‘Civil society’ as used by the World Bank is a particularly vague and fluid term. However, the Bank considered that it encompassed the CNCR and as such encouraged the Senegalese government to recognise the new body. This localisation of aid, based on the provision of direct support to peasant organisations and NGOs, confirmed the strategic position of international donors and reduced the power of the state. The CNCR took advantage of opportunities offered in the extranational arena to target its actions and become a legitimate interlocutor in the eyes of the government.

The CNCR leaders gradually developed a consultative relationship with government officials: the public authorities recognised the CNCR as a credible and legitimate actor, and in return the CNCR recognised the pre-eminent role of the state in determining agricultural policy. This consultative relationship presupposed the use of an ‘institutional’ repertoire of collective action; for example, ‘the mobilisation of experts close to the public authorities, and the use of symposia and seminars to develop a vision and promote ideas’ (Pesche 2009, p. 142). However, the CNCR had no hesitation in boycotting negotiations with the state in 1996, so signifying its disagreement with government policy (McKeon *et al.* 2004). However, this form of dialogue differed from French-style co-management (Jobert and Muller 1987) in two ways: the public authorities and the CNCR did not jointly manage the sector; moreover, relationships between the *Parti socialiste* and the CNCR were a complex mix, coloured in equal parts by mistrust and self-interest. The numerical and political legitimacy enjoyed by the CNCR, and its growing rural constituency, was a concern to the PS at this time. In response the PS tried to bring the peasant leaders into the party. Some did join, despite the misgivings of members who remained attached to the political independence of their *syndicats*. The remarks of Diery Gaye, Secretary-General of the *Union nationale des producteurs maraîchers du Sénégal* since 1998, make the situation clear:

In the CNCR there’s this real jumble of people with two hats, grower and politician ... and sometimes if there’s a choice and the interest of the party is at stake they prefer to toe the party line, and me, I only speak for the growers ... it’s classic, it happens in any organisation ... as the president of the CNCR said to us, you know the *Conseil des Ministres* meets on a Thursday in Senegal so if you’re an official or are involved with the administration, you

have to check on a Thursday to see whether or not you've been sacked or ... [laughter] ... but I really like him, he says that on Thursdays he doesn't even listen to the radio to find out if he's been sacked ... he has a certain independence. (Interview, February 2009)

The development of the peasant movement in Senegal thus passed through the stage of forming and shaping a representative organisation. The CNCR gradually consolidated its action and structured itself within a relatively stable Senegalese state. The legitimacy of, and pressure exerted by, international actors (NGOs and donors) played a major role in persuading the Senegalese government to recognise the peasant movement, even if any distinction between national and international levels must be qualified, since certain actors could move from one space to the other. Within this political triptych (peasant movement, Senegalese state, international donors), the peasants succeeded in neutralising and absorbing rival peasant organisations. They also came to assert themselves as an essential social group on the national political scene, thanks to the strategic choices made by donors trying to integrate 'civil society' into the political process. Regular institutionalised meetings were scheduled between CNCR officials and the ministries. The CNCR thus took part in two major programmes financed jointly by the World Bank and the government: the *Programme national d'infrastructures rurales* (PNIR) and the *Programme de services agricoles et organisations de producteurs* (PSAOP).

This second period, which ran from 1984 to 2000, underlines the way Abdou Diouf rebuilt the state, ensuring that its continuation provided a political opportunity favourable to the recognition and institutionalisation of the peasant movement in Senegal. However, in 2000, a change of regime modified the relationship between the Senegalese state and the CNCR leaders. In response, the CNCR extended its demands and called on international actors, at the same time developing a sub-regional peasant network.

A change of government and the decline of the peasant movement

Three distinct dynamics simultaneously influenced the evolution of the peasant movement in Senegal from 2000 onwards. The institutionalisation of the Senegalese peasant movement around the state, with the political and/or financial support of NGOs and international donors, was modified following the election of President Abdoulaye Wade of the *Parti démocrate sénégalais* (PDS) in 2000. Simultaneous with this change in Senegal's political system, initiatives launched in the late 1990s by the CNCR in partnership with other sub-regional peasant organisations became a reality, producing a new sub-regional body, the *Réseau des organisations paysannes et des producteurs agricoles* (ROPPA). During this period, the peasant movement extended its political objectives and reached out to extranational actors in order to influence their policies.

A change of government and the decline of the peasant movement in national politics

While the 1990s was a fortunate decade for the peasant movement in terms of recognition and internal consolidation, it also saw an erosion in the power of President Diouf, a victim of internal strife within the *Parti socialiste*, a united opposition, and the collapse of the social contract between the socialist government and the brotherhoods (Diop *et al.* 2000). Abdoulaye Wade became president in 2000, and his election seemed to favour the recentralisation of the government around the presidency. Wade's charisma, his diplomatic activity, and the continuing economic growth experienced by Senegal since the middle of the 1990s were also greatly to his advantage. Moreover, transformations in the

aid paradigm also favoured the concentration of power in state hands (Dahou and Foucher 2004). Project aid, allocated directly to associations and NGOs in the 1990s, had energised the ‘civil society’ sector since the 1980s, including the umbrella organisations discussed above. However, in the 2000s, the state recovered some legitimacy in the eyes of donors, at least in the area of budget management, and they implemented a new approach. Reverting to budget support allocated directly to the government, it worked to the detriment of project aid and favoured the concentration of power in the hands of the president. From this perspective, social partners like the CNCR were seemingly perceived more as ‘foils necessary to satisfy the donors than legitimate representatives’ (*ibid.* p. 12).

Despite the prominence of agriculture on the political agenda from 2000 on, dialogue between the CNCR and the government suffered an almost total breakdown. In the words of Pesche, ‘a vision of a dual system of agriculture became more pronounced, with a clearly expressed preference on the part of the new government for agribusiness’ (Pesche 2009, p. 151). In general, the new presidency gambled on the capacity of the private sector and of capital external to agriculture to develop agriculture in Senegal to a point where it could rival competing nations. The CNCR, in contrast, continued to speak up for familial agriculture, directed above all towards local markets and the reduction of poverty. Nor did President Wade trust the CNCR, considering it too close to the *Parti socialiste*, even though some CNCR members do seem to have joined the PDS when the new regime came to power (Pesche 2009). During this period the government encouraged the establishment and/or the revitalisation of peasant organisations which were rivals to the CNCR and officially supported the new regime.

With no prior discussion with the CNCR, the president and his advisors launched a wide-ranging consultation on agricultural affairs in 2002. However, the CNCR was able to take advantage of the disquiet aroused by government proposals (particularly around issues of land law), and of a lack of cohesion among donors, ‘to return in force to the national political scene, develop its policy positions and articulate them clearly as a counter-proposal for a new law’ (Pesche 2009, p. 154).

Yet, despite its re-emergence in 2004 during work on the *Loi d’orientation agro-sylvo-pastorale* (LOASP), the CNCR continued to experience problems with the presidency. Following his re-election in 2007, President Wade continued his divide and rule strategy, trying to maintain his grip on agricultural policy by placing organisations representing rural interests in competition with each other. On 16 January 2009, the government even went so far as to issue a circular suspending any form of collaboration with the CNCR. Although dialogue has since resumed, the Wade regime, in line with its clientelist dynamics, fluctuates between coercion and cooptation with regard to the CNCR leaders (Dahou and Foucher 2004). Until now its deep roots, its vision for the future of Senegalese agriculture, and its ability to pursue the federative dynamics of the rural world have allowed the CNCR to fight off these attempts at destabilisation. However, the power of attraction enjoyed by the PDS, and the financial opportunities it can offer actors within the agricultural sector, have shaken the cohesion of the peasant movement. This change in the national political environment, so much less favourable to the CNCR, went hand in hand with a transnationalisation of collective action within the West African agricultural sector.

Participation in international agricultural debates and the transnationalisation of mobilisation

In the 1990s the peasants of Senegal concentrated primarily on setting up a national movement. In 2000, however, the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)

adopted its first agricultural policy for the whole of West Africa. Peasant representatives were not consulted beforehand, but this development now allowed them to speak at the regional level. In order to negotiate with organisations representing West Africa as a whole, peasants in the sub-region decided in 2000 that they too would join together in ROPPA.

Other contemporary factors also encouraged those representing peasant interests to play a role via ROPPA on the world stage: the increasing influence of financial institutions, the growing liberalisation of world agricultural markets (Boussard and Delorme 2007), and the multiplication of restrictive agreements affecting West African peasants, among them the Seattle (1999), Doha (2003) and Hong Kong (2005) World Trade Agreements, and the European Union's (EU's) Economic Partnership Agreements (currently under negotiation) and the EU-Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Cotonou Agreement (2000).

ROPPA was created following an agreement between the national federations of 10 countries in the sub-region. The roots of this initiative go back to the 1970s and the *Centre d'études économiques et sociales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CESAO). CESAO's work was continued by the NGO Six-S and fostered by a number of initiatives taken by the *Comité permanent Inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel* (CILSS) and the Club du Sahel. During the 1990s, these organisations began to change the way they operated and peasants came to play an increasingly important role. Mamadou Cissokho, then the charismatic leader of the peasant movement in Senegal, created the *Plate-forme des Paysans du Sahel* in 1995 in order to promote dialogue at the sub-regional level. The Senegalese movement showed a degree of maturity and institutionalisation far greater than those of other agricultural movements in West Africa, and this conferred on its leaders a key role in ROPPA. In return, ROPPA helped to consolidate, and sometimes even create, national organisations elsewhere in West Africa, since membership of ROPPA required that each country had an organisation in place.

One of ROPPA's first acts was to represent peasant interests in negotiations over WAEMU's agricultural policy. The unprecedented collapse of cotton prices in 2001 also allowed ROPPA to continue its institutionalisation. Indeed, it was on this occasion that African cotton producers became involved on the international scene and appealed to their respective governments (Pesche and Nubukpo 2004). With the help of national and international NGOs, they denounced the unequal position they occupied in world markets, competing with subsidised cotton producers in the EU and the United States. ROPPA allowed West Africans to federate demands which cut across the whole of the agricultural sector and question the conditions of their insertion into international markets. Since then, the West African movement has mobilised at each meeting of the World Trade Organisation to put the issue of the contradictions in world agricultural markets onto the international political agenda.

ROPPA was thus quite prepared to appeal to international and West African leaders, particularly over questions of food sovereignty, an issue close to its heart. Indeed, ROPPA succeeded in making food sovereignty a central objective of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) agricultural policy (ECOWAP) (Fouilleux and Balié 2009). Furthermore, ROPPA's ability to identify the issues and the successes or failures of policy implementation has made it an essential actor on the sub-regional level. However, it has been hampered by the same constraints as other peasant organisations, namely lack of financial resources, leadership tensions, and difficulties of coordination and connection with its 'base'.

Within this context ROPPA has made frequent recourse to external aid. The big international donors have sent consultants to provide expert advice (Tremblay 2003). At the

same time, Senegalese and West African peasants have joined a whole network of national and international organisations, inspired by certain 'Northern' NGOs and the Via Campesina, which link family farmers in Asia, Latin America and Europe, and are constructing with them interpretive frameworks for their problems.

Inserted into a multi-level political space, the peasant movement in Senegal has been in a position of regular interaction with a number of distinct extranational players. Peasant leaders entered into a career (Becker 1985) and needed specific skills to do so (Maresca 1983). Moreover, the international dimension of African agricultural issues made the choice of these leaders all the more important. The profile of the CNCR leaders certainly displays selectivity of this sort, because it seems that the majority were educated to a higher level than other members of their communities of origin. The time-consuming nature of their duties typically takes them away from the fields. They are occupied by national issues and an increasing number of meetings with donors, study courses, overseas training and extranational negotiations. Their underlying motivation can be analysed in some detail. Some look principally to Islam to explain their political engagement, recalling the Christian origins of French agricultural organisations (Purseigle 2004); others place greater emphasis on defending the West African way of life (Cissokho 2009), or are perhaps inspired by the opportunity to become part of the political system. All of them move in international circles, and a study of the cognitive frameworks of the overseas actors they encounter would provide an opportunity for further detailed analysis. However, their membership of an international cause is based above all in the local context (Pommerolle *et al.* 2008) – a context which, since the election of President Wade, has scarcely seemed favourable to the peasant movement.

Conclusion

The historical sociology of the peasant movement, over the three successive periods identified here, has demonstrated firstly that the peasants of Senegal, integrated into a multi-level political space, have been able to develop an autonomous self-emancipation dynamic. From the first independent rural associations of the 1970s to the CNCR and ROPPA, Senegalese peasants have succeeded in initiating and maintaining, with more or less difficulty, a credible autonomous political movement.

The analysis has then gone on to show that the relationship of the Senegalese peasant movement with the state and with international donors has profoundly influenced its evolution. Both state and foreign donors offer a combination of opportunity (financial and political) and risk, most notably when they try to control the evolution of the peasant movement, as contemporary circumstances make clear.

Finally, in contrast to the exceptionalist view taken by some research, the historical sociology of the peasant movement presented here forms part of the decompartmentalisation of the study of peasant protest in Africa. The peasant movement emerged in the 1970s in a multi-level political space where government and international donors played the predominant role. The Senegalese peasantry had *de facto* to organise itself within this multi-centred political space, and recourse to external aid was an integral part of the movement. In Europe and the USA, by contrast, bodies representing agricultural interests took shape primarily within a national political environment (Lowi 1969, Jobert and Muller 1987, Hervieu and Lagrave 1992). However, the accelerating pace of market internationalisation led agricultural organisations to extend their strategies for representation and increase the number of their interlocutors, in particular extranationally. The history of the political representation of agriculture differs profoundly between 'North' and 'South'; so too do the resources at the

disposal of producers and the political configurations within which they operate. However, agricultural movements are part of a multi-level and multi-centred political space and as such demand the decompartmentalisation of research.

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Notes

1. This article was translated for *ROAPE* from the original French text by Margaret Sumner. Email: maggie.sumner@googlemail.com
2. For a discussion of the literature concerning peasant protest in Africa cf. Isaacman (1990).
3. Ranger goes so far as to consider the agents of primary resistance as protonationalists.
4. In the mid-1960s, Senegal's *Ministère de l'enseignement technique et de la formation professionnelle* launched an initiative with methods somewhat different from those of the state development companies: the *Maisons familiales rurales* (MFR), a sort of training organisation for the rural world with the status of an NGO. Structures of this type, inspired by Christian values and close to the social economy, then existed only in France. The ministry, still steeped in African socialism, tried to extend the experiment to Senegal and invited its officials to draw their inspiration from MFRs in France.

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