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**Rural-urban migration, the solidarity-based  
economy and informal governance in Dakar,  
Senegal**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and describe the influence of informal networks on the urban socio-economic environment in the Senegalese capital-city, Dakar. Given the government's inability to provide infrastructure, basic services and employment opportunities in the city, peoples' self-organizing attempts are crucial to individual and household survival. Migration brought traditional socio-economic structures from the rural areas into the cities, which lead to the creation of employment opportunities in the informal economy and changes (through 'informalization' and the incorporation of traditional solidarity elements) in the economic and urban system in general. These structures are more successful than formal local authorities in facilitating the productive and reproductive activities of the community.

The thesis will therefore seek to identify the factors aiding and those hindering the implementation of livelihood strategies. It will examine the characteristics that make some socialization networks (particularly the rural ones) more effective in assisting their members than others. By mapping the effects poverty has on the lives of the Senegalese people and their attempts to fight against it, this thesis hopes to identify points where improved collaboration between state actors and citizens can raise the living standards of the least endowed and foster sustainable economic development at manageable costs.

Such explorations of the internal migration and economic development processes do not only provide an interesting research topic for an academic paper, but can also suggest new strategies for national and international policy makers. In an era where living standard disparities and mass displacement within and between states are cited among the most important global issues, affecting all regions regardless of geographical location or income level, this thesis's topic is crucial to the study of international relations. It will provide information on the real barriers Senegal (and potentially other Sub-Saharan countries) faces in its development process. It could therefore contribute to helping development practitioners devise mechanisms for poverty eradication and fostering real growth.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Informal networks are modern social structures that are widespread on the African continent. They are based on the traditional values of solidarity and reciprocity existing in rural areas, which were transplanted to African cities by rural migrants, and which took on new forms and functions as they adapted to the specificities of the urban environment. This literature review will therefore describe and analyze the rural and urban environments, as well as the rural-urban migration phenomenon, in an attempt to provide a context for the origin and evolution of informal networks in Senegal.

### ***2.1 Economic development and the structure of the Senegalese economy***

From a historical perspective, urban development is connected to the diversification of economic activities and output growth generated by the capitalist mode of production. Therefore in order to understand the process of urbanization, a full appreciation of the process of economic development is instrumental. One of the most important evolutions in the history of economic development thought took place in the 1930s, when Keynes was among the first economists to make the case for intervention in the economy in order to solve the problem of unemployment.

The interventionist discourse then spread to other economic areas, in an attempt to identify what factors could trigger and stimulate rapid growth in less advanced economies. In the 1940-1950s, Latin structuralists pointed out industrialization as the main engine of economic growth and argued that low-income countries should focus on developing their industries and substituting imports with locally-produced goods in order to escape poverty<sup>1</sup>. Noting that the process of economic development was not unfolding as fast as structuralists had predicted, Marxist scholars highlighted the fact that neo-colonial power relationships hindered the development of the newly independent economies of the South.

In 1966, in “Modern Economic Growth”, the economic historian Simon Kuznets described the structural transformations Western societies underwent during their process of industrialization and rapid economic growth, and identified some common elements. Almost all industrialized countries experienced declines of the agricultural sector in shares of GDP. That means that, even though there was an increase of agricultural output, its rate of growth was smaller than that of the total national output. At the same time, the rate of industrial output growth surpassed that of the total national output, accelerating overall GDP growth. As household incomes grew, consumers started to purchase more and more manufactured goods, while the demand for food and other

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<sup>1</sup> Khan, “New Developmentalism”, 432

agricultural products remained unchanged (as it is inelastic and varies only slightly with variations in income).

Consequently manufacturing became the most profitable economic activity and investment in the sector reduced price and increased demand for industrial goods. With the expansion of industry came two very important changes in the social structure of prosperous countries: wage labor and, subsequently, urbanization. Employment opportunities attracted villagers to the cities, changing their life pattern and imposing on them a greater reliance on manufactured and processed goods, on money and wages to purchase those goods, and on expanding governmental services that could administrate the complex structure of the economy<sup>2</sup>. This is how development started being equated with economic growth fueled by industries and intricate bureaucracy and, consequently, with city expansion.

During the first decades of development, no distinction was made between economic growth and development. In subsequent years, economists such as Seers (1969), Haq (1976), Sen (2000) demonstrated that the two concepts are not perfect synonyms<sup>3</sup>. In their works they drew on significant evidence that increased economic output did not necessarily translate into improvements in the wellbeing of the populations and decreasing poverty incidence.

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<sup>2</sup> Kuznets, *Modern Economic Growth*, 103.

<sup>3</sup> Khan, "New Developmentalism", 433

In the 1980s the neo-liberal theory was developed, putting a strong emphasis on economic growth and ignoring the conceptual difference between growth and development. It consisted of applying uniform guidelines (called structural adjustment programs) such as trade liberalization, decreasing government spending and decentralization measures in all developing countries that contracted loans with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Even though these programs did not resolve the poverty issue, they are still used worldwide today as the only way to foster development.

A brief evaluation of the Senegalese economy and its development status will be now attempted, using the above-mentioned theories as reference. From 1980 until 2002 “sub-Saharan Africa declined from 3 per cent share of world trade (...) to 0.7 per cent”<sup>4</sup>, because it was not able to adapt to the structural economic shifts that occurred in the global economy in that period, as well as due to the decline in the value of raw materials, its main exports. Although in the last decade the trend has seen a spectacular reversal (with trade increasing by 200% since 2000<sup>5</sup>) which brought economic growth to most states in the area, African countries are very vulnerable to fluctuations in commodity prices and their economies are still fragile. The flooding of African markets with cheap imported products diminishes local production and increases trade dependency and, in some cases, trade deficits.

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<sup>4</sup> Pieterse, *City futures*, 22.

<sup>5</sup> “The sun shines bright”, 82.

Macroeconomic data on Senegal suggests that agriculture, the dominant sector in rural areas, is not very productive: although in 2006, for example, it provided employment for 33.7% of the Senegalese population, it only generated 15% of the value added to the GDP that year<sup>6</sup>. Desertification, deforestation, overexploitation of arable land and lack of irrigation infrastructure are the main causes of diminishing productivity. Most of the country's agricultural production (with the exception of peanuts) is destined to internal consumption and is not even able to cover the internal demand, the state having to import basic foodstuff (such as rice, wheat, etc.). The economic situation in Senegal therefore explains the intensive rural to urban migration process the country is currently undergoing.

The Senegalese economy was made dependent on peanut exportation by the French colonial system. In 1960, when it gained its independence, 80% of Senegalese exports were peanuts, and the cultivation of this market crop employed 87% of the population, constituting the main source of cash for rural dwellers<sup>7</sup>. France imported almost all the crops, and paid for them an artificial price, using it as an incentive for villagers to continue cultivating peanuts instead of reverting to subsistence agriculture. Senegalese exports continued to enjoy this preferential treatment on the French market until 1967.

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<sup>6</sup> The Little Data Book on Africa, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Casswell, "Autopsie de l'ONCAD", 39.

If the newly independent Senegalese state would have managed, as it intended, to transform all the rural savings generated by peanut cultivation into investment in the urban industrial sector (and thus provide incentives for economic diversification), the state of the economy could have been different today. But the gradual impoverishment of cultivated land (due to overexploitation) generating diminishing yields, coupled with periods of severe drought and villagers' increasing indebtedness (they mortgaged their future crops in order to pay for daily cultivation and household expenses) and the corrupt practices of the ONCAD (Senegalese governmental organization controlling the production and commerce of peanuts) precluded the modernization of the agricultural sector. Senegal's economic development started drifting away from the path described by Kuznets in his work: people reverted to subsistence agriculture, the big peanut producers' (marabouts') debt was ignored (due to the preferential treatment this group enjoyed for political reasons) and remained largely unpaid, overall production plummeted and, in 1980, when the debt of the agricultural sector reached 90 billion CFA (\$178,489,800), the ONCAD crushed<sup>8</sup>.

According to the 2011 World Bank's "Little Data Book on Africa" Senegal's exports currently represent 24% of its GDP, and its imports represent 44% of the total product, suggesting that the situation has not improved since 1980. In fact, the country's trade deficit has been steadily worsening: in 1990 it

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<sup>8</sup> Casswell, "Autopsie de l'ONCAD", 47.

was 6.8% of GDP, in 2000 it reached 9.3% and by 2010 it jumped to 20%), mainly due to the increase in imports from 32.2% of GDP 1990 to the 44% 2010 figure.

A sectorial comparison of the Senegalese economy to that in other African economies yields interesting results. The contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP is higher in Senegal than in Sub-Saharan Africa overall (16.6% versus 13.1%), while crop yield and fertilizer consumption per hectare are lower (1,134.5 kg/ha versus 1,296.9 kg/ha, and 2.4kg/ha versus 11.6kg/ha respectively). These figures suggest that agriculture is not very productive in Senegal, that the sector was not modernized and that the overall economy has not made the shift towards modern industrial development (also confirmed by the fact that industry's contribution to GDP in Senegal was 21.7% in Senegal, while in Sub-Saharan Africa it was 29.6%). Paradoxically, Senegal's rural population represents a smaller percentage compared to that of the continent overall (57.4% versus 63%). The majority of the urban population is therefore involved in the service sector, mostly in the informal sector (which, according to the National Statistical Agency in Senegal, represents 54% of the value added to GDP). Senegal is currently very far off from the economic development trajectory described by Kuznets and appears to be distancing itself even more. This is a concerning trend, taking into account the fact that the informal sector, although providing 97% of new employment creation, is the major contributor (91.4%) to poverty in Senegal.

After reviewing the traditional model of economic development and looking at statistical data demonstrating that Senegal is currently not taking that path, an analysis of the socioeconomic phenomena in the country will follow, to map the reasons for Senegal's developmental divergence.

## ***2.2 The rural environment***

In order to understand the dynamics existing in urban areas, it is crucial to analyze rural social interactions, which are the source of the first ones, just as Palmieri found out in his research on the Diola ethnic group: « les dynamiques que je supposais n'exister que dans les quartiers défavorisés de la ville, je les retrouvais aussi sous la même forme et à des degrés divers dans les villages »<sup>9</sup>. The village in Senegal is an environment characterized by the predominance of agricultural activities as principal sources of income, inner ethnic homogeneity and the importance of traditional culture in shaping communal values and personal identities.

Economic activities are determined by the natural cycle of vegetation. The bulk of the cultivation work is done during the wet season, and during the cultivation process the activities are divided by genders. While men work the land, women are in charge of planting the seeds. The tasks are arduous as they involve little technology and entail intensive physical effort throughout the whole

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<sup>9</sup> I found in the villages, in the same form and at different degrees, dynamics that I thought existed only in poor city neighborhoods (Palmieri, *Retour dans un village Diola*, 35).

day. Consequently, villagers have a very strong work ethic and their labor is a crucial part of their culture and identity.

During the dry season, when there is not much agricultural work to be done, villagers get involved in other types of income-generating activities, also divided by gender. Men do commercial work. For example, in Southern Senegal they transport oranges, fish, and other merchandise to Gambia<sup>10</sup>, they sell fruits to Wolof traders from the North who take the goods to Dakar in trucks, or sell the fruits themselves in Ziguinchor (largest city in the Southern area) whenever prices are higher there. Women work in gardens, cultivating tomatoes, eggplants and other vegetables that they then sell.

In the work-intensive environment that characterizes rural areas in the South, when urban migration intensified, shortages in the work force were experienced: “since the 1960s...it is not land that is scarce, but labor to work the vast stretches of land reaching far into the surrounding countryside.”<sup>11</sup> It is not because of lack of arable land that people had to leave their villages and go to the city. So when the migration phenomenon increased in magnitude, the older villagers who stayed behind were left with more work to do, and more and more of the arable land remained uncultivated.

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<sup>10</sup> Lambert, *Longing for exile*, 45-46.

<sup>11</sup> Lambert, *Longing for exile*, 37.

In Central and Northern Senegal the situation is different, due to the fact that the climate is less permissive and land is very arid and threatened by desertification. In the dry season it is impossible to cultivate any cash crops in the whole Sahelian region, because “it is bone dry nine months out of the year”<sup>12</sup>. As a result, historically, the population density was low and villagers in the area have always been semi-nomadic, in contrast with those in the South, undertaking economic activities in more than one location. They were drawn towards colonial cities ever since these were established, and the seasonal urban migration phenomenon began in these areas a long time before it did in the South.

Before colonization, villagers in the Sahel region practiced subsistence agriculture, cultivating millet, sorghum and cowpeas. When the French came, they introduced the idea of cash crops: where groundnuts were to be cultivated and sent to be sold in the metropolis. In order to be able to pay colonial taxes, villagers were forced to adopt the new system and expanded the surface of cultivated land by clearing forests and bush areas. As the price of groundnuts increased, agricultural activities were intensified and the same pieces of land were cultivated without allowing the soil to rest and renew, in order to increase production and income. The land surface destined to growing subsistence crops was diminished to accommodate the increasing demand for groundnuts, making

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<sup>12</sup> Rain, *Eaters of the Dry Season*, 35.

villagers increasingly dependent on cash to satisfy their basic needs and re-invest in agricultural production.

These increases in cash flows in the area did not bring capital accumulation, since most people invested the economic surplus they earned into ceremonies and gift offerings, which ensured continuous redistribution of wealth and strengthened social ties. Traditionally, people chose to invest in people, because human networks are a more effective safety net in the case of droughts than are material possessions or any other type of accumulation.

A new merchant class composed of politically influential Muslim trades called 'marabout' in Senegal emerged thanks to the privileges the colonial administration allotted them and the fact that, in their commercial activities, they were able to take advantage of the newly built infrastructure. This class managed therefore to couple economic and political power (most of them were village chiefs) with religious authority (they were Muslim spiritual leaders), and were able to use this clout in establishing businesses in the urban informal economy.

Yet for most people, the fact that population grew due to increased supply of food from intensified agricultural activity, exerting more pressure on the fragile Sahelian ecosystem and decreasing capability to cope with droughts, was equivalent to increased vulnerability and dependency on outside sources of income (which could only be accessed through rural-urban migration).

After Sub-Saharan African countries gained their independence, the increasing degree of monetization of rural life in the Sahel, coupled with severe droughts and with poor management of the agricultural system by local governments generating groundnut cultivators' indebtedness rather than thriving, gradually increased the importance of seasonal migration. This process is self-reinforcing: for example, in Mali, increased out-migration led to rural household experiencing labor shortages on their farms, and becoming increasingly dependent on migrant remittances, therefore generating more emigration.

Therefore, securing urban employment is increasingly important for rural households. The economic structure of sub-Saharan states changed significantly, from an agricultural-based economy to a capitalist economy centered on market exchanges. Linkages to urban areas, allowing for income diversification, are nowadays a key to household survival: "it is those rural households which are most adept at (...) exploiting urban niches, in addition to using agricultural land resources, that are most successful in ensuring household survival"<sup>13</sup>. Urban remittances insure households against climate variations and help procure the industrially-produced commodities, like "trade items (lamps, bowls, fabrics), and construction materials"<sup>14</sup>, that replaced locally crafted objects of domestic use.

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<sup>13</sup> Tacoli, *Earthscan Reader*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Rain, *Eaters of the Dry Season*, 49.

Analyzing people's perceptions of their situation in comparison to that of 'outsiders' can also bring some useful insight into what village life is like nowadays. Rural households cite the availability of natural resources such as land, which assures free food production, free fuel in the form of firewood and free housing as an advantage for living in the village. The reproductive functions of society can therefore be fulfilled with no monetary costs in rural areas. These areas are still under customary law, which entails that all criminal behavior (such as robbery) is absent, that there is no interference with the police, and no bribe payments, which are also cited as advantages of living in the rural area. Being far away from government action also has its negative sides, like the lack of quality infrastructure. Other disadvantages of living in remote areas are the high incidence of disease (malaria) and the lack of good drinking water. Villagers also cite on their list of rural downsides the absence of shops and modern recreational facilities. This shows the aspirations towards modernity, the desire to satisfy their need of entertainment in the urban fashion.

### ***2.3 Rural-urban migration***

Rural-urban migration is a strategy that households apply in order to maximize chances to secure their livelihoods, and it is part of a general attempt of diversifying sources of income. Although migration begins in rural areas and is at first a strategy designed to assure rural household's survival, rural-urban linkages are also crucial for urban households. Because there is only limited reciprocity

between households in the urban area, the most vulnerable households in the city are those without rural links: “Many people in African cities have no viable access to rural land (...) many female-headed households and longstanding international migrants. Such groups might be categorized as being ‘trapped’ in urban areas and may experience absolute destitution”<sup>15</sup>.

Rural-urban mobility is easier today, when young generations have access to “increased flows of information and new employment opportunities”<sup>16</sup> as urban households who migrated longer ago transmit the news and take care of newly arrived migrants from their villages. Despite the well preparedness of migrants and effectiveness of social networks, rural-urban migration generates management issues for local authorities. Besides increasing the urban population, migrants keep the rural lifestyle and strategies of survival in the city. These sometimes lead to improper use, overtaxing and deterioration of urban infrastructure and to conflict with local authorities.

In Senegal the workforce began to leave villages for Dakar in the 1970s due to extreme weather conditions. The first to migrate were the Northern ethnic groups, from the peanut cultivation area. For example, the Wolof Mourides, which have been agriculturalists during the colonial period, began to migrate to urban areas as the land became less fertile. “Mourides tend to migrate in groups,

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<sup>15</sup> Rakodi, *Urban Challenge in Africa*, 486-487.

<sup>16</sup> Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones, *Urban Livelihoods*, 55.

they live in households with other Mourides and gradually create new communities”<sup>17</sup>, keeping their rural mentality and their solidarity in the city. “Il est important, dans ce contexte, que les confréries, malgré leur influence croissante dans les milieux urbains, tirent la plus grande partie de leur soutien et de leur force financière du secteur arachidier.”<sup>18</sup> Mouride trades are very successful at doing business in the city thanks to their communal strategy: the first migrants to come from each village find an economic niche in the city and organize a network to bring their relatives to the city in order to exploit that niche.

Migration from Southern rural areas to Dakar is a somewhat more recent phenomenon. Labor migration to cities was induced by the French imposition of taxes in this previously self-sufficient agrarian society. « L’administration coloniale considérait l’impôt comme un instrument pour contraindre les autochtones à s’insérer dans une économie de marché comme vendeurs de marchandises »<sup>19</sup>. At first villagers were forced to go to urban areas in order to earn the cash necessary to pay taxes and buy imported consumption goods. All youth are expected to go to the city to work.

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<sup>17</sup> Antoine, Bara Diop, *La ville à guichets fermes?*, 326.

<sup>18</sup> In this context it is important that the brotherhoods, in spite of their increasing influence in urban areas, derive their largest share of support and financial force from the groundnut cultivation sector. (Casswell, “Autopsie de l’ONCAD”, 67).

<sup>19</sup> The colonial administration envisioned taxes as an instrument to constrain indigenous people to integrate the market economy as goods’ sellers (Palmieri, *Retour dans un village Diola*, 133).

The migration process begins in school, where children share their aspirations of going to the city, no matter what job they need to take in order to live there. The next step is for them to take a short trip to the city sponsored by their parents who anticipate that it will help them adapt to the urban environment when they will return there to work after completing their studies. But most of the girls leaving during the summer to work in Dakar do not return to the village to continue their studies. They remain in the city to work, where, due to their improper preparation, they find only informal precarious employment in households.

Southern migrants and their relatives who remained in the village form a tight social network. Migrants who are already established in the city help them to adapt to the new environment. Yet, “although such men take responsibility for feeding kin of the descending generation, they also maintain social distance from their financially less secure juniors”<sup>20</sup>. This attitude caused by urban strains sometimes engenders intergenerational conflict and weakens social ties, as younger relatives are considered a burden.

#### ***2.4 The urban environment***

Although the urbanization process in Africa had started before colonization, the continent experienced a boom in city development during the

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<sup>20</sup> Lambert, *Longing for exile*, 149.

colonial period (stretching from 1895 until the 1960s, when the continent was subject to the administration of European powers), due to colonial trade and to foreign investment in developing transportation infrastructure.

In the development literature, rural-urban migration is linked to the structural transformations caused by industrialization (described by Kuznets). Industrialization changes the location of economic activity by raising wages in the urban economy and attracting rural dwellers to the cities. Migration is therefore a process of social adjustment in an economic model in which manufacturing is the main driver of economic growth, and it dramatically increases the urbanization rate. In addition to these pull factors, push factors such as lower living standards and higher vulnerability to extreme weather events (such as droughts) in rural areas also provide migration incentives.

According to this theory, migration flows will occur after the industrialization process starts, and will increase in magnitude with the increase in the demand for labor in urban areas. They will decrease the labor force's involvement in agriculture: "Following the structural transformation, both the share of agriculture in GDP and the share of agriculture in the labor force decline"<sup>21</sup>. Implicitly, GDP growth precedes rural population movements toward urban areas. Yet, as Alain de Janvry and Elisabeth Sadoulet point out in their

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<sup>21</sup> Janvry and Sadoulet, "Agriculture for Development", 1.

paper, in sub-Saharan Africa the share of the labor force in agriculture has declined significantly, without a previous increase in GDP.

This fact contradicts the conclusion Kuznets drew from case studies of Western countries' industrialization, which was that urbanization as a structural transformation is generated by changes in the relative magnitude of economic sectors. On the contrary, in African countries rural-urban migration flows and urbanization occurred in spite of the low levels of industrialization. Consequently, the income lost from the decline in agricultural activities was not replaced by income generated in the other two sectors of the economy. Janvry and Sadoulet explain this anomaly by stating that "Instead of the 'normal pattern' -- whereby sectorial labor shifts following successful productivity gains in agriculture trigger growth and employment opportunities in the rest of the economy --, labor left a stagnating agriculture, weakening the growth potential of agriculture and displacing poverty to the urban slums"<sup>22</sup>.

This unexpected urban growth can be explained by the fact that, although after gaining their independence African countries did not experience economic growth, the rural-urban migration dynamic established during the colonial regime continued. In their first decade of existence "African states performed reasonably well (...). They expedited development" and managed to deliver development

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<sup>22</sup> Janvry and Sadoulet, "Agriculture for Development", 4.

products<sup>23</sup>: they were able to generate enough employment to accommodate the incoming labor force and to extend the infrastructure and services. They carried out, for example, various housing expansion programs, trying to offer decent shelter to all city dwellers, subsidized food prices to avoid urban poverty and offered free healthcare and education. But states started to experience budget deficits, as the generous programs they put into place were not coupled with industry development and economic growth. In order to finance these deficits, governments were forced to contract loans with international financial institutions.

As some African currencies were still pegged to the ex-colonizers' currencies, the Structural Adjustment Programs the International Monetary Fund applied in low-income countries in exchange of its loans severely affected urban areas in African countries. Instead of having a positive national outcome, the severe decreases in government spending dictated by the institution only managed to erode urban benefits and cause urban living standards to plummet.

Another aspect that did not allow 'modern' development was the fact that the traditional social solidarity system, brought in by rural migrants, is present in urban areas in Africa, leading to permanent redistribution of wealth and hindering capital accumulation (the basis for industry and capitalist development).

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<sup>23</sup> Simone, *City Yet to Come*, 7-8.

Faced with such difficulties, people use their creativity to invent survival strategies. For example, they take advantage of the fact that IMF directives included de-regulation and trade liberalization, and use commerce as a way to make a living. This explains the boom in the informal sector in recent years. Survival strategies in the informal sector, sometimes involving opportunistic behavior, hinder sustainable long-term development, which entails the creation of responsible citizenship (being considerate of all other citizens' needs and acting only in ways that do not negatively affect general welfare).

The informal sector includes all economic activities and other household strategies that circumvent or ignore state regulation. It is a direct result of the marginalization and exclusion the poor suffer from in urban areas and of the marginalization of the whole African continent on the global scene. 'Informalization' allows people in urban areas to pull resources together in order to assure household survival, but it requires alternative governance to become sustainable. It can lead to individual autonomy and redistribution of social goods.

The urban poor manage to create in this sector niches where they can use the assets they possess in order to ensure their survival. 'Urban Livelihoods' (pages 10-11) provides a list of assets the poor have at hand and use in their income-generating activities. One of them is social capital (membership in different networks or groups); it is negatively impacted by repeated shocks (which force people to rely on the network too many times), economic crisis and physical

insecurity (violence and crime), and is therefore more fragile in urban areas (due to mobility and heterogeneity) and less available to the poor. It penalizes people who do not belong to any social group. Social capital gives access to political capital (with the possibility of influencing local and sometimes even national policy decision), which is very important in the urban environment, where confrontations with government authorities and state regulations are frequent. Survival in the city depends on the amount of such assets and contacts families possess, and on their ability to generate income from them through different strategies.

The informal sector provides 60% of urban employment in Africa, where the street is the only available workplace for the poor<sup>24</sup>. Activities in the informal sector reflect different degrees of economic capacity and “contain a multiplicity of relations of employment and dependence in which individuals are differently positioned (as employers, employees, apprentices, suppliers, commissioned workers, etc.)”<sup>25</sup>. Entry in the sector, although much easier than in the formal sector, is not completely devoid of difficulties: some of the rich, well-connected informal actors do not encourage newcomers. On the contrary, they prohibit their entrance in associations and restrict their space usage. Consequently, “migrants, poor women, the disabled, the aged, youth and children, often found in the

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<sup>24</sup> Lindell, *Africa's informal workers*, 33.

<sup>25</sup> Lindell, *Africa's informal workers*, 10.

poorest layers of the informal economy, seem to face particular constraints in organizing and are often excluded from many ongoing initiatives”<sup>26</sup>.

Success in the urban informal economy is therefore most dependent on the available social capital – membership in social networks (which constitute almost an alternative government structure). In Zimbabwe, for example, human capital and family relations are more important resources and ways to find employment than education and training: “Social capital in the form of connections to the right people may mean more than experience for decent-paying jobs”<sup>27</sup>. But not all connections and social networks are as effective or generate similar outcomes. The functioning of social networks is based on common norms (which makes village or faith networks very effective, because people share the same values and understanding), reciprocity (therefore homogeneous networks from the social and economic status point of view are more likely to function well than heterogeneous ones) and trust among their members.

Rural networks are more likely to function in the advantage of the poor because they allow different social classes to network with each other (at least to some extent), while city-based (urban) networks, like neighborhood networks only allow for poor to poor and middle-class to middleclass interactions. Yet in the long run, due to urban constraints and challenges (such as financial issues,

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<sup>26</sup> Lindell, *Africa's informal workers*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Murray and Meyers, *Cities in Contemporary Africa*, 216.

family break up, drug use and crime), all social networks become overburdened, and “the process of falling back on these [social] ties results in a falling into harm, as dependency turns individuals into frequently easy objects of manipulation and blame”<sup>28</sup>. In addition, the effectiveness of urban networks had to suffer from the decentralization process caused by the structural adjustment programs, because it brought a great number of arbitrary decisions in city planning on the part of the city administration, which lead to the loss of a common direction and engendered conflicting interests among urban dwellers.

Due to their geographical proximity to governmental and administrative headquarters and offices, state legislation and especially the politics of legislation enforcement play an important role in the lives of urban communities. In villages customary law has priority over modern state law, but in urban areas there is an overlap and sometimes even open conflict between the two.

In this context, negotiations between state actors and actors involved in the informal economy (which falls beyond formal state control) have a huge impact on the latter’s ability to protect their income sources. The informal sector is disparaged in the governmental and local authorities’ discourse, being perceived as an inferior sector depending on the modern sector and hindering the overall social progress. The real informal sector-state relations, although clearly tense, do not have predictable outcomes. Sometimes the state chooses to chase the traders

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<sup>28</sup> Simone, *City Yet to Come*, 11.

away from the city center for the sake of modernity and avoiding overcrowded traffic. But other times it engages in rent-seeking behavior or even encourages informal trade, for bribes or in order to increase citizens' wellbeing and capture them politically.

Consequently, the boundary between permitted and non-permitted activities tends to be very porous and the political agency of informal sector actors can be crucial in settling the outcome of the interactions with state authorities. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the poor are not passive victims, that they possess agency and can react to a change in their circumstances by applying strategies that could bring them increased prosperity.

The degree of agency the poor possess as well as the amount of political clout that it offers to them depends on their degree of organization. Those making part of extensive informal networks are more likely to be politically influential than those who are not. But membership in such a network is not enough; the type of network and whether or not it manages to convince the state that it constitutes a viable dialogue partner also plays a role in the interaction. For example, the case of Muslim brotherhoods is an exception in Africa; these religious networks achieved considerable political clout, to the extent to which in some states even presidential candidates need their support in order to be elected. But in most countries state authorities disregard informal associations, which are relegated to

the role of mere economic actors and do not possess financial interest for the administration as they do not pay taxes.

Dakar concentrates 52.6% of the urban population of Senegal, and 22% of the total population of the country, while geographically it constitutes only 0.3% of the national territory, with a rate of urbanization of 97.2%. The city generates 55% of Senegal's GDP, contains 83% of the country's modern enterprises, and 94% of national enterprises, comprising 87% of the permanent employment positions<sup>29</sup>. The fact that it concentrates most of the national wealth created development huge development disparities in the country.

The French colonizers chose to fund and invest in the development of the city because Dakar was ideally positioned to sustain the boom of the groundnut trade in the whole of West Africa (and for the construction of port and airport facilities), reason for which in 1902 it also becomes the capital of the Francophone colony.

The city started attracting migrants to work in the construction of the port and airport, simultaneously generating a need of laborers in the tertiary sector, to feed, instruct and provide other types of services to industrial workers; this sector expanded disproportionately to the expansion of the secondary sector, as most labor coming to the city wasn't skilled and couldn't readily find employment on

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<sup>29</sup> Chenal et al., *Quelques rues d'Afrique*, 75.

the building sites. After the Second World War, when the building of the transportation facilities was over, the industry that replaced it (groundnut oil factories, food, textile, shoes and cement industries) could only offer employment to the few existing skilled workers, and not to the mass of unskilled ones. Yet the rural exodus increased between 1960 and 1974; migration flows have diminished gradually since 1988, but until today they continue bringing a significant contribution to urban population growth<sup>30</sup>.

Due to rural-urban migration and endogenous population growth, Dakar is currently facing a 3.5% demographic expansion per year. Virtually no demographic transition occurred in Senegal, the average size of the urban household being 7, as opposed to 9 in rural areas. This population increase is concentrated in the suburbs (popular quarters) and it has always been very poorly managed by city as well as national policies.

Population growth generates the problem of labor market insertion, aggravated by the lack of jobs in the formal sector and the difficulty to access proper training. Consequently, informal trade, food catering, transportation businesses, and related activities, which do not require school diplomas, high skill levels nor much initial monetary investment, are the best sectors for achieving employment rapidly.

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<sup>30</sup> Chenal et al., *Quelques rues d'Afrique*, 67.

Most of the informal activity in Dakar is organized around and dependent on social networks, the majority of which have a rural origin and are therefore a direct result of rural-urban migration. The Mourides Islamic brotherhoods' networks, for example, dominate the trade sector thanks to the longtime relations they developed with customers and suppliers. This extensive network (the Mourides are the biggest religious group in Dakar) is based on the activity of the marabouts who, through their connections, can identify unexploited niches of economic activity, can put in contact people who want to start businesses with people who are interested in financing projects and can provide help with internal and external migration for his followers. In order to conserve his authority the marabout "must ensure that when his efforts don't work, he at least made the relevant connections to other marabout with their own commercial networks, and that it was their responsibility that things didn't work out"<sup>31</sup>.

There are other forms of associations in Pikine, such as women's groups, youth groups (sports and culture), parents' associations, economic interest groups and syndicates. Most of women's groups use saving associations called tontines for financial solidarity: they pool resources together to be able, on a rotating basis, to buy more expensive goods they need in their households. Some associations like 'Pencum Senegal' or 'Pencum Demba' also use their savings and common knowledge for productive investment in fisheries business. In the case of Pencum

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<sup>31</sup> Simone, *City Yet to Come*, 42.

Senegal, the social network gave them visibility even abroad, and allowed them to have access to formal training (in literacy and business); the professionalization of their activity then widened their market, gave them political clout (one of its members became a member of the municipal council) and improved their access to financing.

Yet urban-based associations are not usually that successful. Due to the fact that most people in urban areas have conflicting interests, priorities and contestations and that it is hard for individuals to identify what is best for themselves, it is difficult to bridge trust relationships between them. Those who are most affected by this situation are the youth who were born and lived in the city all their lives and “tend to be shut out of local institutional arrangements and networks that either retain some kind of functional linkages to the home regions of their parents or grandparents or control informal economies in the city”<sup>32</sup>.

Accelerated urbanization led to a rapid deterioration of the environment, due to the improper system for the collection of waste, lack of sanitation equipment, and ground water contamination. As there is no formal waste collection system in the suburbs, dwellers bury their waste, minimizing the land’s absorption capacity and resulting in stagnant water pools after periodical floods.

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<sup>32</sup> Simone, *City Yet to Come*, 33.

With the extension of the suburbs, there is a problem of access to spaces where productive activities are taking places, most of which are situated in the center of Dakar. The poorest section of the population lives the furthest away from the city and has limited access to the resources it has to offer. Commuting from the suburbs to the center is very difficult because of traffic jams. In addition public transportation is overwhelmed (there are not enough vehicles to accommodate all passengers) and the only transportation alternative that is available to the poor is the private, informal mini-bus service. The lack of mobility of poor households living in the suburbs exacerbates socio-economic divides, leading to forms of socio-spatial exclusion and negatively impacting household income.

In conclusion, due to the process of colonization, in Senegal, just as virtually all other countries on the African continent, the urbanization process took place in the absence of industrialization. As the development of the formal urban economy was inhibited by ill-fated historical circumstances and the government lost control over its institutions and its ability to ensure the well-being of the citizens, an informal economic and political system emerged as an alternative, in response to the economic and political crisis in Dakar. The informal sector is based on traditional village interactions (which have suffered slight modifications in order to adapt to the urban environment) and owes its rapid

increase to the rural-urban migration phenomenon, as well as to the gradual impoverishment urban dwellers experienced after the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programs.

Rural and urban areas in Senegal, unlike rural and urban areas in countries following the traditional (Western) path of economic growth, remained culturally and economically integrated (although geographically separated). This is the reason why rural and urban communities exhibit very similar social organization and similar behavior when it comes to survival strategies and economic activity.

As a result, rural-based informal networks replaced governmental authority at the administrative level in urban areas: people choose not to pay taxes to the local government, but to place their money together in saving associations and invest them as needed; they attempt to take charge of the waste collection system and keep their neighborhoods clean; they heed the marabout's advice and ask for his help to find employment and use Islamic brotherhood networks in their negotiations with governmental authorities.

In the research section that follows, the workings of these social networks is analyzed in more detail and the results of their actions are evaluated, in order to determine whether they are effective at undertaking the tasks that they took over from formal governmental institutions.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methods used in this study are sociological observation and on-site interviews with employed individuals and with representatives of organizations working as informal employment recruiting agencies in Dakar. I also collected information on the migration process and the informal sector from mass-media. As AbdouMaliq Simone points out, “it is difficult to carry out sustained and systematic social research in many quarters of African cities, especially where the changes seem most pronounced and the social interaction complex”<sup>33</sup>. Following Simone’s advice, I chose to use the ‘provisional’ as research method: I observed and interviewed the people I came in contact with through my daily activities as a student in Dakar.

My research is limited by the number of interviews I was able to perform (about 10 interviews). With such a small initial base of information, I used my interviews and conversations with the people I met not only as raw material, but also as a starting point for further research in journals and other mass-media sources. I use the information I was provided in identifying other sources of information that would widen my base and allow me to diminish bias and uncertainty when drawing my conclusions.

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<sup>33</sup> Simone, *City Yet to Come*, 15.

#### 4. FINDINGS

All systems of government are based on individuals' willingness to relinquish part of their freedom of self-determination and passing part of it on to a higher authority that they collectively trust. This entity uses that authority to govern and make decisions in the name of the people, but it has the duty to act for the common good and can be held accountable for its actions. Political authority is expected to act as an authoritative intermediary between various individuals or groups of individuals, allowing for the development of more complex social and economic interactions. It has the role of overseeing socioeconomic life and, where necessary, of intervening in order to improve its quality.

Government systems take various forms but, in spite of historical and geographical variability, their basic workings and goals are roughly similar across time and space. In the modern Western world, for example, political authority was and still is based on a social contract between leaders and their states' citizens. The former are responsible for the well-being of the latter, and, if they fail in completing their tasks, they can be held liable for their mistakes on the basis of that social contract.

In Africa, the process of colonization led to the replacement of the pre-existing political structures with western ones, and that of indigenous leaders with foreign leaders who were not accountable to the local populations for their actions and decisions. The social contract held the new leaders responsible for the well-

being of their fellow citizens living in the colonizing countries only, and not for that of the foreigners whose countries they occupied and ruled. Therefore the reliance and accountability relation between authority and citizens in colonized territories was compromised. Although colonizers had the power to impose their political will on the locals, no trust relationship existed in the political process. The colonized people became wary of the foreign leaders who brought with them a new form of government that transformed all indigenous interests into the interests of the colonizers. Most of the occupied people, with the exception of the elites educated in the colonial system, did not feel any duty or loyalty toward a government that did not act to ensure their well-being.

Despite the burst of enthusiasm and hope brought by the replacement of foreign leaders with local leaders when the colonized states gained their independence, the incapacity of subsequent governments to satisfy their citizens' basic needs, along with the corruption of most political leaders, did little to restore people's confidence in western-style state authorities. In Senegal this vacuum of power and accountability is filled by social networks based on traditional values, on religion, or on common experiences of marginalization and exclusion. These networks were formed for socio-economic purposes and now people see their role as mainly economic. Over time, these networks started taking over traditional governmental functions and attributions that formal authorities failed to fulfill satisfactorily.

### *The role of the family*

In Senegal, the immediate family is the basic social unit and the core on which all other social relations, and consequently social networks, are built. Even though the immediate family structure is very important in the village tradition, it became even more so for urban migrants in the heteroclitic city environment, where neighbors are not related (in contrast with what occurs in the villages) and where there is significant geographical distance between a family and their closest relatives. People can almost always rely on their parents and unmarried siblings for support. The help of other family members (including married siblings) however, depends on factors such as the income level of the immediate family, on its networking skills and on geographical proximity between relatives.

In order to illustrate the inner workings of a family and the ways its members build their survival strategies together, I will take the case of the twenty three year-old maid working in my host family's house in Dakar. Her mother and her father are immigrants of Bissau-Guinean origin (from the Manjaca ethnic group), who migrated to Senegal with two daughters. Her father had spent a significant portion of his youth in Casamance (Southern Senegal), but, when he brought over his wife, they chose to establish themselves in Dakar, where their two sons and their three other daughters (including the one working in our house) were born. The father worked as a house painter and the mother worked as a washerwoman. The family lived in various suburban low-income quarters, having

to move five times during our maid's lifetime, but always moving together in order to be able to pay the rent by pooling their money.

All children went to school until seventh grade, except for the youngest, who continued her studies (and is currently in 8<sup>th</sup> grade). The girls in the family started working part-time as cooks and maids when they entered fifth grade. None of them was forced by their parents to leave school for work, but each of them decided she had to, seeing that the family was not doing well financially. Now they are all making an effort so that the youngest of them can continue going to school, so that she may be able to find a better job after she finishes. Each of them contributes what they can to the family budget, depending on whether or not they have a job. At the moment our maid is the main contributor: she pays the rent for the one room in which most of her family (her mother, father, older brother who is mentally deranged and cannot work, herself and her younger sister) lives together. She makes 40 thousand CFA per month (approximately 80\$), and pays 15 thousand (30\$) for the rent.

The same rule holds for food: each family member contributes what they can to buy it and prepare it. When our maid returns home for the weekend she is in charge of the cooking. This is an important task, as weekends are the most important socialization moments of the week. It is when relatives, friends and neighbors come to visit, and the family needs to be prepared with enough food to offer all guests to strengthen social ties. An important addition to the family's

endowment was a television set that the maid recently managed to buy with her savings. It constitutes an important asset in the socialization process, as it provides another reason for people to gather at their house. The more resources one possess or the more resources a family is able to pool together, the more successful that individual or household will be in maintaining social relations with more distant family members and neighbors. Family ties are therefore crucial in building the social fabric.

Whenever a woman marries, she enters her husband's family, and her responsibilities shift towards her new household. The maid's older sisters, for example, have married Bissau-Guineans from their ethnic group and moved to their houses in other suburban quarters of the city. Such young couples from low-income suburban families do not usually afford their own housing (her sisters' husbands all work in the construction business, which does not offer them stable jobs), so they continue living in the husbands' family houses. The maid's sisters do not contribute towards any families' income, because they stay at home and raise their children. They are responsible for the house chores in their husband's family, but they can sometimes go visit their parents to help them with their house chores.

It is also worth mentioning that the maid found her most recent workplace through her sister. When her sister quit the job because she got married, she brought her younger sibling to replace her in my host family's house. The maid is

happy in this family because she is treated as member of the family and is allowed to fast and go to church during Lent, while in other families she has been mistreated and disrespected. However, she is not satisfied with the terms of her contract: she is required to do the family's laundry as part of her job, while in other households employers need to bring another woman to do the laundry and pay her extra (15 thousand CFA-30\$- per month). The maid could not renegotiate the contract; she had to accept the conditions because they were set by her sister.

Her example illustrates the fact that strong familial bonds are the precondition for a robust social life, successful economic activity and membership in social networks. Single-headed households, especially women-headed households and small families are therefore in danger of being marginalized, especially due to the fact that they are less likely to have a stable and sufficient source of income that can facilitate networking. Even my host mother, who is part of the middle class, complains that after her husband's death most of the friends and acquaintances that used to come to their house no longer do so and that therefore the size of her network was significantly reduced.

### *The role of Networks*

First, it is important to make a clear distinction between village-based (or 'traditional') networks and urban-based networks. The first category includes migrants' associations and, to some extent, faith-based associations such as the

Mouride brotherhood. Their origin lies in kinship relations and they are characterized by very strong ties between villagers and their family members who migrated to urban areas. In most cases (with the notable exception of the Mouride brotherhood) only relatively recent-date migrants (first and maybe second-generation urban migrants) get involved in such associations. The second category includes women's associations, neighborhood associations and youth groups or movements. They are less structured and more fragile than the first, but they are based on geographical proximity in the city and are therefore more inclusive.

Familial status, along with family income and duration of stay in the city determines the type of networks to which people have access. Relatively better-off immigrants can afford to maintain their rural and ethnic ties for a longer period of time (which brings them important advantages: rural-urban linkages, as mentioned before, allow for largest income diversification and are the best insurance against any type of economic shocks), while less well-off families are forced to invest in urban-based networks which are not as effective as rural-based ones, as they are based on reciprocal relations between less endowed and less homogeneous groups of people. The poorest families suffer from quasi-complete social marginalization.

As mentioned above, the most important feature ensuring the functioning of a society is that of trust. Trust in informal rural-based networks comes from

people's perception that they share the same values, their traditional cultural values, and the same history (their ancestors lived in the same community, facing challenges, obtaining success, suffering defeat or surmounting obstacles together). In urban-based networks traditionally excluded groups such as youth and women take advantage of the flexibility offered by their new environment and of the dissolution or weakening of traditional ties to come together and fight for some of the rights that they were previously denied. They thus build trust relationships on a common history of oppression and marginalization.

In addition to these two 'spontaneous' types of networks, several institutions (mainly religious ones) also managed to group people together and improve their socioeconomic interactions. They gained people's trust by establishing a standard of professionalism and reliability, in contrast to the poorly resource-endowed and corrupt state authorities, through the aid services they provided to certain members of the community. A more in-depth analysis of the different networks' workings will help achieve a better understanding of these social dynamics.

#### A. Rural-based informal networks

The combination and intertwining of traditional familial ties generates intricate webs of customary solidarity. These can be on smaller or more extended scales and have various scopes, degrees of complexity, and amounts of social, economic and political power. I will describe and analyze the workings of a few

examples, starting from less complex and powerful ones and ending with the one that has control over most of Senegal's economic and political activity.

Traditional occupations, which were always transmitted from father to son in the pre-colonial cast system (which has now eroded almost completely), lends oneself very well to the new system of social networks operating in urban areas. This is due to the fact that they are based on the specialization of a few individuals in a particular industry, by transmitting the necessary skills and startup capital from one generation to another. For example, in the traditional shoe-making industry (monopolized by members of the leather-worker caste), a father or uncle owning a workshop teaches his sons or nephews the skills needed in the trade and provides them a space to work within. Or sometimes people from the same village have joint workshops, within which competition is constant but fair, respecting the traditional value of solidarity.

Another result of the fact that the occupation follows the rules of the traditional system is that apprentices are not paid. This gap provides them the incentive to start working on their own and shorten the apprenticeship period. The necessary equipment is rudimentary, so there is no need of great capital financing to get started. Often parents or relatives are those who provide that financing in the form of a loan, as it is hard to get outside credit to open a new business. The production process employs local traditional technologies, adapted to urban circumstances.

The issues these businesses encounter are that equipment is not very efficient, that raw materials are expensive, that there are few market openings and that professional qualification is weak (since young people are rushing to cut their apprenticeship period short and start working for to the market as soon as possible). In addition, competition from cheap imported goods poses a fundamental threat to the existence of the industry.

The number of such caste-based associations is very limited. The most wide-spread form of solidarity in Dakar are ethnic associations, called 'tours de famille', 'Mbotaay', or same-village associations. They are used as means to cope with reoccurring economic crises and overcome the trust crisis that they engendered. These associations often operate through 'tontines', common savings pools that provide access to credit for businesses and domestic expenditures.

One such example is the network of the Guinean Fulani (Peulhs in French), who migrated to the north in an attempt to take advantage of the more generous economic opportunities that the Senegalese capital offered in comparison to other cities in West Africa. They are known to control the cell phone cards trade and to be involved in other types of commerce.

The case of a Guinean businessman who owned a small boutique where he prepared lunch for workers and students in a wealthy neighborhood in Dakar is illustrative of the way the network functions. My interviewee came to Dakar in 1990, when he was 16 years old, where he followed his brother and uncle. One

year later, he was forced to return to Guinea to take care of his sick mother (familial duties almost always taking priority over individual interest in such networks). He only returned to Dakar four years later, after his mother passed away. During his first months in the Senegalese capital he worked as a janitor at a research center affiliated with the University of Dakar, where his uncle was working as a gardener. He still goes to work there when there are jobs available for him. But he noticed that, because of the affluence of workers (employed by the wealthy households of the neighborhood, but not allowed to eat in the respective houses) and students in the area, it would be a good place to start a business. He preferred to start his own business because that way he would not have to wait for his wage at the end of each month. The lack of flexibility with regards to payment timing is regarded as one of the main disadvantages of working in the formal sector. This is due to the fact that people do not generally plan out their spending, but live on a day-by-day basis, and they are in constant need of cash for daily expenditures. At the same time, they do not want to keep important sums of money on themselves or at their house, because it is considered unsafe. Spending almost all the money they earn the very day that they receive is the preferred strategy of the poor.

Needing a financing source for his initial investment in material for his business, he resorted to his brother's help. His brother owned a shop in the city center (Dakar Plateau), and he was able to lend him the money for him to open his own shop. He constructed a booth from cardboard not very far away from the

research institute, and he started preparing and selling egg sandwiches and other lunch and dinner items. At first he sold very little, 5 thousand CFA worth of food per day (10\$), but the next day he sold 6 thousand, and then little by little he formed his own group of customers. The building of friendship and trust relations, as well as and the spread of information helped his business grow.

Now he keeps one of his nephews with him at his shop as an assistant in exchange for food. The boy makes some money on the side by washing cars. The effectiveness of communication between him and the other members of his network is illustrated by the fact that when I came to interview him, he already knew what I was going to ask, and told me his story without me having to ask too many questions: he found out from his uncle the gardener that I had interviewed the women working in the research institute's cafeteria on the same topic the day before.

Although his family was of crucial help to him when he needed to find work in Dakar and when he first established his business, he perceives the task of keeping of family ties as a burden. He states that it is difficult for him to plan ahead for himself and for the growth of his business and think about how much of his profit to save and how much to spend. This is due to the fact that in Africa, if a brother comes to visit you, you are expected to share your meal and everything else with him. His food-selling business provides him with the liquidity he needs, allowing him to survive from one day to another and help his relatives, but does

not allow him to accumulate any capital. This is why he is thinking of leaving to Europe to join another brother he has there. But he is not sure of what is the best thing to do, as he has not been in touch with that brother in five years and does not have sufficient information on how things go overseas.

Some of the conclusions that can be drawn from this example about the working of the network are that it is based both on ethnic solidarity (or mechanical solidarity, where trust is derived from the sharing of a set of traditional values) and individual creativity. Relatives assist newcomers when they first arrive in the city, whether the newcomer is looking for a job or for credit to start his own business. But it depends on him to find a good commercial niche or employed position that suits his needs. And, as part of the network, he are expected to prioritize his duties towards his family over his individual interests, because, in the absence of reciprocity the network would stop functioning. Although the system is designed to help all members, urban-specific financial strains create tension between them, and individuals express their desire to somehow get away from it. It is not hard therefore to imagine that, oftentimes, second or third-generation immigrants do not keep such ties and do not have access to such networks.

Yet it is only such a system that can surpass the legal framework and allow people to use their spirit of initiative and organizational skills to achieve some form of development. It is only the flexible financial practices (such as

giving credit for starting a business or giving out cooking ingredients for credit and without guarantee) of social networks that are adjusted to this type of lifestyle and can sustain informal economic activities. The heavy-handed way in which formal authorities sometimes enforce the lawful usage of public space (as most of the food-booths are illegally placed on public sidewalks) is very detrimental to the survival of such enterprises and to the wellbeing of the people depending on them.

Another very well-established and extensive ethnic network in Dakar is the Diola network, of the dominant ethnic group in the southern part of Senegal (Casamance). It is a very complex organization, with multiple levels of association and branches. Its intricacy comes from the fact that traditionally the Diola ethnicity has been fragmented, geographically separated by the many meanders and branches of the Casamance river, which resulted in strong, distinctive cultures and dialects in every village or group of villages. Despite this fragmentation, they see themselves as a single people, which led to the fact that, after independence, with the advent of the migration phenomenon outside of the Casamance region (mostly into Dakar), the Diolas created a composite network, in which the strongest interactions are among people sharing the same village origin (and within that between members of the same extended families), but which is also characterized by various degrees of solidarity among all people sharing the Diola ethnic background.

At the extended family level, solidarity ties are very strong. An illustration of this robust connection is the host family I lived with while in Dakar. My host mother had been married to a Diola politician and they moved together to Dakar as he was part of the government early in his life. As part of the advantages that came with a position in the state administration, they were given a spacious apartment in a middle-class neighborhood (Mermoz). Soon after they moved in, my host mother's younger sisters came to Dakar to finish their education and to find employment. They were the first to be housed by my host family, and 20 other young men and women followed over the years, most of them coming to finish their studies and then moving to other locations in Dakar on their own or with friends or spouses once they found employment and were able to earn their own income. While some of them were not Diola, but were children of my host father's friends (as a politician he made many connections), most were from the same family or same village as my host parents.

As each of them spread throughout the city and established themselves, they started helping other newcomers, either by housing them, or by providing them food or washing their clothes (in Dakar not all quarters or houses have running water). And they started practicing another form of solidarity, adapted to the urban environment: that of a savings association, or 'tontine'. My host mother and her four sisters put some of their savings together, and, on a rotation basis, one of them receives the sum that is gathered in order to invest in more expensive household items (for example my host mother recently bought a set of sofas and

armchairs) or in repairing or renovating their houses or the house of their parents in Casamance.

What I found interesting though, was that they only gathered together to discuss these issues when one of my host mother's sisters, who lives in Casamance, came to Dakar for her medical appointments. I do not know if that happened because all of them needed to be present for the meeting, or because, due to the nature of urban lives and the dispersion of the family in different quarters of the city, the only thing that would bring them all together was the visit of a rural relative. While it is hard to evaluate the exact importance of the rural element in the organization of urban life, it is clear that it is playing a very important role. Familial ties are loosened in the urban environment, and I have not seen my urban-born host siblings and cousins engage in direct social networking strategies the way their parents did, or, at least, they are not attempting to connect to the old network. Although they keep in touch and often visit each other, the nature of their interactions is markedly different from that of the older generation.

The cause of this loosening of familial ties is the fact that keeping them entails a high costs for youth who are dependent on older family members for housing, food and securing employment. In the urban environment it is much harder for young people to become independent economically, as insertion in the labor market requires more time and preparation (pursuing training or higher education) than in rural areas. As a result young migrants end up spending much

of their youth (up until their thirties) in the houses of their relatives and are expected to respect all decisions and listen to all advice their elders are giving. This can become a burden on young adults willing to build an independent life and start their own family. Yet they have no choice but to comply and give in to the social pressure exerted upon them if they want to achieve a good social position and find gainful employment.

Adults housing them also feel burdened, as they need to invest an important amount of financial resources into these newcomers and might, as a result, be very demanding, and leaving little individual freedom to their guests. Another reason why the young generation might want to leave the traditional solidarity system is because it has its weak points: if one important link to the network is broken, that will give the members dependent on that one link a very hard time. For example, when my host father died, my host mother saw most of the family friends and connections leave her and her support base, along with her income decreased significantly.

An important aspect of the Diola network is its social class heterogeneity. While in my host family all the young people have or are pursuing college and graduate degrees and have good jobs in the formal sector, this is not the situation of all Diola migrants coming to the capital city. Young Diola women are especially prone to occupying low-paying, low-status jobs as maids. Historically it has been considered a Diola women's work, but now Manjacas, Fulanis from

the Fouta region and Serers are also in the industry (and even an increasing number of suburb-born, poor urban-dwellers). While in the city housework is mostly considered a degrading activity, unable to provide neither a good salary nor a good social status, it provides female migrants with a rapid insertion into the labor market and a good source of income for their own consumption and for sending remittances to their families that remained in the villages.

One of the women working at the research center's cafeteria provided a good illustration of this migration and labor market insertion process through her life experience. After she finished high school in Ziguinchor (the administrative capital of the Casamance region), she left for Dakar, where she moved with an aunt. Now she is living with a cousin and they collect their money together in order to pay the rent. They were both working as maids in private households. They had found the work through family, because that is the fastest way to get employment. She would like to go back to Casamance when she gets old, but currently there are no employment opportunities as there is no industrial development in the area. Therefore she needs to work and save money in order to pay health care expenses and meat for the consumption of her parents and brothers working in the village.

The social status most new migrants gain when coming to the cities depends on the societal standing of their relatives. Many of the young Diola women working as maids are in that position because their older sisters and

members of their extended family found it to be an accessible economic niche, even though the position presented virtually no social mobility prospects. Yet they are not at the bottom of the social ladder, as their connections provide them with access to decent and safe housing and to a fairly stable source of income. An example of what less well-connected, low-income Diolas have to go through was provided to me by a woman squatting, together with her husband and four daughters, in the basement of the 8-story building my host family lives in.

She moved from a village in a remote area in Casamance to Dakar with her husband. He found a job as janitor in the building (which also provided him with a small apartment), but, upon losing it due to drinking-related problems, he was forced to leave. The young family had nowhere to go, but the tenants allowed them to move into the basement of the building. The woman was forced to find a source of income in order to support her family, and she managed to start a small business by buying vegetables on credit at the market and selling them at a higher price in the backyard of the building. In order to make a profit, she took advantage of the fact that the market is far away and transportation difficult, and therefore tenants prefer to buy fresh produce from her. In this manner she could afford to support her family and send her older daughters to school. The family forgoes expenses in vital areas such as housing, healthcare (probably also food) and clothing in order to do so.

Despite her efforts, seeing her children forced to play in the trash pile, surrounded by mice and lice made me wonder whether it is really worth it for them so live in the urban area as opposed to their village. When she came back with her daughters to Dakar after a one-month stay in her village, the children were unrecognizable: they wore nice clothes, their hair was clean and well braided and they looked much healthier. But after a week they went back to their previous state. This shows that in certain cases, urban poverty is worse than in rural areas, and that limited networking capacity and contact with rural relatives has a significant negative impact of on a person's welfare in the urban environment.

Another drawback of non-membership in a rural network, at least at it is perceived by most people, is that the lack of enforcement of traditional social values can lead to harmful and irresponsible behavior. Part of why the family suffered so much from deprivation was the father's irresponsible behavior: after losing his job due to his drinking habit, he took on a second wife by using his first wife's savings. While in Diola culture it is permitted to have more than one wife, it is very infrequent in the village for men to be polygamous. And the most important factor in deciding if a man should get married at all (not to mention to taking a second wife) in traditional society is his ability to provide for her and their children. Therefore, the general perception is that, if the family were integrated in an ethnic network, their current situation could have been avoided,

as it would have been less likely for the man to take on a second wife if he knew that people around him would have frowned upon it.

The stratification of the Diola network is not only social. The group's level of political engagement also varies among its members. While some of them came to the city for economic reasons and they limit their activities to that sphere, others, especially young students coming from Casamance to Dakar to earn a university degree, are involved in movements for the peace in their war-affected region of origin.

The conflict in Casamance started on the 26th of December 1982 in Ziguinchor (the capital of the area), when members of the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance or MFDC (Movement of Democratic Forces in Casamance) claimed the independence of their region from the rest of Senegal. The national police force was sent to clear the area, but it was met by the violent resistance of the movement, and six policemen were killed in the confrontation. The MFDC insurgents went into hiding, and they have been fighting a guerilla war against the Senegalese Army ever since. While violence and direct confrontation between rebels and military forces are not permanent, alternating with periods of relative calm, the enduring nature of the conflict has stunted the development of the area, made several thousands of victims and forcefully displaced other dozens of thousands of inhabitants.

The causes of the tensions between the people of Casamance and the central government, which ultimately led to armed conflict, are multiple, ranging from economic to political and environmental. But what aggravated the people in the area and led to their radical request is the lack of respect that Northern immigrants and the Dakar-appointed Northerners dominated administration had for the Diola culture and social structures. During the 1970s droughts that severely affected the groundnut cultivation areas, many Northern peasants migrated to Casamance, where, "plus entrepreneurs dans les affaires, [ils] s'enrichissent rapidement en exploitant les précieuses et considérables ressources naturelles du sud du pays, sans tenir compte des traditions et mentalités locales"<sup>34</sup>. The members of the local administration, most of who were appointed by the central government, applied state laws indiscriminately, without taking into account local conditions, destroyed sacred places (cutting down sacred forests, for instance) in order to clear space for construction work and banned certain cultural practices.

Central government attempts for solving the conflict focused on a military solution to the conflict have proven unsuccessful until now. Women and youth groups in the area have been advocating for a broader-based approach to the peace building process, which would take into account the complexity of the situation and its multiple implications. In this context, Casamance-born youth

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<sup>34</sup> « Alternance et Gestion Alternative du Conflit Arme en Casamance ».

residing in Dakar, organized in students' associations based on village origin or in international groups such as Mouvement des Jeunes pour la Paix et L'Integration<sup>35</sup> (M.J.P.I), attempt to bridge communication between Dakar and the Southern part of Senegal.

They collaborate with women's movements such as the Comité Régional de Solidarité des Femmes pour la Paix en Casamance<sup>36</sup> or USOFORAL in land-mines removal initiatives and development projects seeking to alleviate poverty and empower locals and offer training in "conflict prevention, mediation, reconciliation, negotiation and trauma healing"<sup>37</sup>. They also organize and participate in cultural festival and gatherings in their villages of origin. In Dakar, they address political leaders in the hope to induce them to prioritize the Casamance issue. The coordinator of the MJPI, for example, asked the state of Senegal to negotiate a peace agreement with the leader of the guerilla movement in order to put an end to people's suffering.

During the World Social Forum held in February 2011 in Dakar, Diola students from the University of Dakar helped the women of the USOFORAL travel to the capital, and joined them in a peaceful march throughout their campus (where the forum took place), manifesting for peace in their region. On this

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<sup>35</sup> Youth Movement for Peace and Integration.

<sup>36</sup> Women's Regional Solidarity Committee for Peace in Casamance.

<sup>37</sup> « Mouvement des Jeunes pour la paix et L'Intégration ».

occasion, the women addressed the international media with their request for the state of Senegal to recognize the conflict in Casamance and proceed to its resolution. However, their interests appear to be clashing with those of the powerful Northern ethnic groups, especially the Wolofs, who dominate the Senegalese political scene. Therefore, regardless of the Diola network's efficiency, their cause has not advanced much since the country's independence and the conflict has yet to be solved.

The most powerful networks in Dakar (and Senegal in general) are the Sufi Islamic brotherhoods, which won the population's support during the colonial period, when Muslim religious leaders (marabouts) acted as intermediaries between the Senegalese people and foreign authorities, trying to protect their follower's interests by reaching a compromise with French interests. They encouraged the conversion from subsistence agriculture to the cultivation of cash-crops (groundnuts), thus allowing the locals to make a living and the foreigners to obtain a product that they could use in their industrial production. In the process, the marabouts earned the population's trust and accumulated the capital which allowed them to invest in urban business and become prosperous traders after the Senegalese independence. The Mouride brotherhood is the most extensive network, comprising 3 million members worldwide, and constituting 40% of Senegal's population<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Chapman, "The Mouride Brotherhood".

Since its members were among the first to settle in urban areas (Dakar and most of the major colonial cities developed in the land the Wolof had control over previously), the Mouride network controls the most lucrative industries in the capital-city: they possess a monopoly on the commerce with imported goods (since, through political tools, they control most of the foreign trade of the country) and dominate the transportation industry (although they do not have complete control over it). Their economic power gave them tremendous political clout, making their network the most hierarchical one. The head of the brotherhood is the khalife. The founder of the brotherhood, Cheickh Amadou Bamba (1850-1927), was a Muslim mystic teacher who is now considered a saint. The first khalif was his son, Mouhamadou Moustapha. All other Mouride khalifs, up until today, were chosen among Bamba's many sons. Under the khalifes are the cheickh and the marabouts, and under them the other disciples, organized in different socio-professional associations called dahiras.

Their network is very cohesive despite its extensiveness, relying on a form of organization that constitutes a parallel for of administration, a system that could be called 'informal governance'. Its functioning is very similar to feudal political systems, with poor rural dwellers working the land for their marabouts for very low wages, being tied to them by a religious obligation called 'ndiguel', which requires complete obedience and loyalty to the leader. Peasants are convinced that, by listening to their marabout, they fulfill God's Will and will receive divine retribution for it in the afterlife. It is not only rural agriculturalists,

but also urban traders who are subject to the 'ndiguel'. Collecting most of the value produced by the peasants ending the crops, religious leaders invest in the commerce with imported goods, creating a large amount of jobs in the urban sector. The small and large business owners whom they support also have to obey them and pay them a share of the income they earn. The marabouts possess huge amounts of money that they collect from their followers: ""You have rich disciples and poor disciples, says Hadim Mbacke [renowned teacher and scholar]. You have people who work in the government - the president, the ministers - all these people bring you a lot of money. Some people bring you perhaps \$10, others even \$1m sometimes, so he [the khalife] takes from the rich and gives to the poor""<sup>39</sup>. With these huge amounts of money, the cheickhs also afford to sponsor politicians, who consequently become bonded by the 'ndiguel' and make sure that Mouride interests are well defended on the national political scene.

Mouride success in domestic affairs is due, in addition to their capital and religious influence, to their ability of employ cultural values in their favor. People's perception of what is possible and what is not possible depends on their culture and the living environment. This explains why there are certain differences between rural and urban people's perception of what constitutes a feasible business plan. Rural dwellers might therefore carry on activities that urban dwellers would not deem possible. The fact that they did not have to

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<sup>39</sup> Blunt, "Senegal's powerful brotherhoods".

interact with police and law enforcement authorities in their rural places of residency, they might, for example, start businesses in areas they occupy illegally. If they are fortunate enough to have started such activities in urban areas where state law is not often enforced, they might be able to capture a profitable niche in the market and become successful in their business enterprise.

It seems that this type of vision, which characterizes the functioning of the Mouride network, was one of the things that ensured the success of their traders in Dakar. As the group's roots are rural, and its initial capital was provided by the wealth their leaders accumulated through the cultivation of peanuts in rural Senegal, their business strategies are aggressive and less mindful of formal regulations that are more often enforced in urban areas than in the rest of the country. They manage their businesses « en défiant les règles établies et en ayant un sens bien aiguisé des affaires »<sup>40</sup>. While other rural immigrants coming to the city and attempting to implement similar strategies might not be as successful in dealing with law-enforcing authorities, the Mourides can afford to do so, thanks to the protection their powerful network offers them.

In fact, as a parallel government system, the Mouride network has its own definition of urban space that differs greatly from that of formal authorities, taught in the French school system. This difference in interpretation is most obvious when travelling to the city of Touba, the religious capital of the

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<sup>40</sup> Defying established rules and having sharp business skills (“La communauté mouride”).

Mourides, which was build and is controlled by the brotherhood. The city was funded by Cheickh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke, in 1887, and it is the place where he received a prophetic revelation in 1891. Bamba was the one to trace the first streets of the religious capital, and to explain, in his work "Matlaboul Fawzaini", the philosophy behind its foundation, which is the pursuit of both earthly and after-life happiness. Issuing from this double mission of the city is the central position of the mosque, toward which all roads in the city and the region converge.

Initially a small pilgrimage site with a population of 2000 in 1958, Touba grew to become a booming pole of commerce and economic activity, with a population of around 700,000 in the present<sup>41</sup>. Its demographic growth, just like Dakar's, was triggered by the 1970s droughts, when numerous rural immigrants came to the city, attracted by its philosophy of the pursuit of earthly and divine happiness and Mourides' generosity towards the poor. It is administered by the brotherhood in all aspects: "Touba is an autonomous city state and the brotherhood administers education, healthcare, agriculture, and sanitary and water infrastructure independently and according to their own vaguely socialist principles"<sup>42</sup>. The brotherhood's permissiveness, which allowed many rural immigrants to establish themselves in the city and seek to earn an income through

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<sup>41</sup> Chapman, "The Mouride Brotherhood".

<sup>42</sup> Chapman, "The Mouride Brotherhood".

various sorts of activities and petty trade, encouraged many more to move in. As a result, the city suffers from ‘paupérisation croissante, insalubrité du fait de la faiblesse de l’assainissement, une insuffisance de la couverture sanitaire’<sup>43</sup>. Yet Touba became a model of inclusive urbanization and hope for the poor.

The Mouride’s model of urbanization and their original perspective on what type of activities and behaviors should be allowed to exist in a city was also applied to, and is now obvious in Dakar. The brotherhood controls the largest market in the capital, the Sandaga market, which occupies a large surface area downtown, in ‘Dakar Plateau’. The placement of the commercial stalls hinders the circulation in the already overcrowded city center, greatly delaying buses and private cars. Merchants and customers cross the street getting in the vehicle’s way, which makes the area very unsafe. The general aspect of the market is far from being ‘modern’ (as formal authorities wish the center city would be), with the improvised commercial booths and ineffective waste collection system. Inspired by the religious Muslim collective organisations called “daaras”, developed around each Mouride mosque in Senegal, workers in each shop form a very tight familial cell: “dans chaque magasin mouride, travaillent de nombreux parents du propriétaire, mais qui sont tous liés par le ciment de la foi et de l’appartenance à la même confrérie”<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup>“La communauté mouride”.

<sup>44</sup> “La communauté mouride”.

When the official city government attempted, in November 2007, to move the market to a less crowded quarter, in order to clear the central area, the traders and shop owners rioted and massive protests broke out. “In the morning, citizens burned cars, threw stones and pillaged the mayor’s office in the capital, Dakar. In the afternoon, they ran through tear gas and threw up their arms in defense as riot police beat them with rubber truncheons”<sup>45</sup>. While the government argues that its estimated annual losses of 100 billion CFA francs, the equivalent of US\$226 million<sup>46</sup>, due to the overcrowding of the center provide a very good reason for moving the market to a less circulated area, the traders disagree. They are well aware of the fact that, if displaced, they might not be able to make ends meet, because it is precisely the massive crowds that pass through the market daily that ensure the level of sales they need to achieve in order to feed their families.

Although Dakar’s Governor at the time, Amadou Sy, promised that four new markets will be created to replace Sandaga, “vendors complained the sites were far from the downtown crowds of potential customers”<sup>47</sup>. Although the police arrested approximately 200 people, according to IRIN, people did not give up their claims, strongly convinced that they were fighting for their rights: “I’m not scared of going to prison, because we are defending our right to work. That is our rallying cry ... Our poor relatives in the countryside depend on our labor as

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<sup>45</sup> “Senegal: Poverty at the root of violent protests”.

<sup>46</sup> “Senegal: Poverty at the root of violent protests”.

<sup>47</sup> Tattersall and Ba, “Riots betray unease in W. Africa haven Senegal”.

well”<sup>48</sup> was the declaration a toy merchant gave to IRIN. Ultimately, the traders’ resistance was so powerful that officials had to renounce to their plan. The ‘informal government’ managed to impose its vision of urban space usage.

In addition to having their own perception of urban space, Mourides also have access to the equivalent of a parallel banking system. Most of these banks or lending institutions are also located in the Sandaga market, but they are connected to Touba, Dubai, New York, and all other locations where there is a significant number of Mouride immigrants. These informal institutions are « formes primaires de collecte d'épargne et d'accumulation des capitaux »<sup>49</sup>. The key to their successful functioning, even across huge geographical distances, is the trust relations between Mourides and the solidarity that comes with being part of the network: “If a Mouride trader in New York needs goods, he calls up a fellow Mouride trader in Dubai and orders them. The money is paid in Touba to the trader’s family”<sup>50</sup>. These transactions are facilitated by phone calls, and one can judge of the importance of international communication by knowing the simple fact that each Mouride immigrant spends, on average, 5-30% of his income on international calls<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> “Senegal: Poverty at the root of violent protests”.

<sup>49</sup> “La communauté mouride”.

<sup>50</sup> Chapman, “The Mouride Brotherhood”.

<sup>51</sup> Chapman, “The Mouride Brotherhood”.

Mouride international migrants send to Senegal remittances roughly amounting to \$15-20 million per year<sup>52</sup>. While these sums somewhat contribute to building the country's capital and investing in productive businesses, "much of the wealth generated overseas gets redistributed to poverty stricken rural immigrants who turn up in Touba seeking membership and assistance from the Brotherhood"<sup>53</sup>. This is a traditional practice that has deep roots in the Sahelian region, and it is instrumental in conserving the very existence of the network, which, in addition to religious values, is held together by the shared trust of its members and their assurance that they can count on each other in moments of hardship as well as moments of prosperity.

Mouride khalifs and cheickhs are involved in all aspects of their disciple's lives: "They have to marry people who need to be married, they have to reconcile people, they have to help people to get good health care and many other things"<sup>54</sup>. As the supreme authority in the community, they function as policemen, tax collectors and local officials at the same time. Their duty of reconciling members of the network whenever a conflict arises between them, led to the fact that they also took over the role of courts: "le Cheikh qui a donné son onction lors de la mise en place de la structure, peut intervenir pour régler, mieux que ne le ferait un quelconque tribunal, les différends du moment. Sa parole et son sens de décision

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<sup>52</sup> Chapman, "The Mouride Brotherhood".

<sup>53</sup> Chapman, "The Mouride Brotherhood".

<sup>54</sup> Blunt, "Senegal's powerful brotherhoods"

ne peuvent être contesté, contrairement au tribunal”<sup>55</sup>. Therefore, not only does the brotherhood have its parallel economic system, its autonomously administered capital and its own international financial system, but it also possess its own law and justice enforcement system.

Rural-based social networks are so effective that governmental authorities could probably do very little in order to improve their functioning, but they should intervene to ensure that the outcomes of their actions are not benefiting only the members of the network, but the population as a whole. The local administration should involve informal networks in policy making and implementation, by, for example, including some of their representatives in local councils. Some political actors already use the networks’ influence in their own political interest. If this practice would be transformed in institutionalized collaboration and consultation of all interest groups present in each administrative district, then it would, first of all, insure a more equitable decision-making system that will not leave the interest of so many people out of the public concern as it currently does. Secondly, it would also create more unity of scope in the currently fragmented urban environment. And thirdly, it could avoid, to some extent, the situations in which the most powerful networks have the upper hand in making decisions negatively affecting those in less powerful networks or those who are completely devoid of network protection.

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<sup>55</sup> “La communauté mouride”.

One instance of fructuous collaboration between state authorities and informal authorities can be illustrated through the functioning of the private transportation industry. In Dakar, the public transportation system is overwhelmed by the number of customers and cannot satisfy the needs of the population. Informal actors, among which most are Mourides, have therefore developed a parallel transportation system that is much cheaper than taxis and more affordable even than the public system. They make old minibuses called car rapides – brought in by the French towards the end of the colonial period – available to people for transportation. The owners of the vehicles have put in place an informal training system for drivers, which ensures that the driver gains enough driving and business management experience before being entrusted a vehicle. The trainee is called ‘apparanti’, and his tasks consist of handling the relation with the clients and other drivers.

The uniformity in the buses’ design is ensured by a government directive which required all vehicles operating on the same route to be painted in the same colors and patterns. The informal management system provides predictability in bus schedules and routes. Although they are not numbered like the buses controlled by the municipality, the private buses are therefore recognizable by their distinctive designs and colors, each type of bus having a pre-determined route. Through this color-code system people (even the illiterate) can recognize what final destination each bus has. The informal management of the ‘car rapides’ allows for more flexibility in schedules than the municipality buses. The car

rapides change their routes (again, on a pre-determined schedule) depending on where traffic and transportation demands are higher in different moments of the day. The system also ensures the coordination and cooperation between drivers, so that there are not too many passing by at the same time and that all of them have enough customers to collect money for gas and make a profit from. This system avoids conflicts of interest most of the time.

When this coordination fails however, it can lead to dangerous situations for the customers, as the drivers start racing each other in an attempt to be the first one to arrive to the next passengers waiting at the bus stops and collect as many of them as possible. This attitude can result in serious accidents given the fact that traffic in Dakar is chaotic and vehicles are old and hard to control. It is very important for everyone's safety to drive prudently and at slow speed. And since the police are absent most of the time and do not enforce traffic rules, the existence of these self-regulated 'transportation networks' is crucial in avoiding accidents.

There are times when the interest of the transportation businesses does not coincide with traffic and safety rules. Bus drivers, for example, have the tendency of allowing more passengers to get on board of the vehicles than the capacity of the vehicle would normally allow, which constitutes another safety hazard. In these cases where the profit-maximizing tendency of businesses contradicts the common good, only the intervention of the police can provide an effective

solution. When policemen are present in traffic, they can ensure that such behavior does not occur, because the drivers do not allow extra-passengers on board and even ask the ones that are in excess to get off, in order to avoid a fine. Most of the time however, private vehicles drive at excess capacity, which proves that traffic police are not present on the roads.

In this example, there are two moments of interaction between formal and informal actors. The first one, the government's intervention requiring uniformity in the buses' design was beneficial to all citizens, proving the authorities' knowledge of the informal businesses' functioning and their ability to intervene exactly where they were needed. The second one, the police's lack of attention to dangerous behavior induced by informal businesses' tendency to increase profit, speaks in disfavor of formal authorities. It is a government's duty to ensure the citizens' safety. And knowledge of the informal management systems should enable them to discern the contradiction between private and public interests and provide them with an incentive to address it.

Although the informal networks' functioning is very efficient, formal authorities need to supervise it and act so as to avoid conflicts between public and private interests, as well as between different networks. One of the ways in which authorities could create an environment of cooperation among different groups of interest and avoid confrontations is by adapting, and adopting at the institutional level, a historical practice in West-Africa, the 'cousinage a plaisanteries' or joking

relationship<sup>56</sup>, on which much of the stability of the heteroclitic Senegalese society is based. In pre-colonial West Africa, this joking relationship used to function as an interethnic peace-keeping agreement, probably dating back to the medieval empires of Ghana and Mali. This practice allows members of separate ethnic groups to insult jokingly the values and perceptions that constitute cultural differences between the groups. This does not create conflict because the ‘insults’ are used to bring differences into derision and because there are reciprocal. The ‘cousinage a plaisanteries’ proves that there used to be a culture of compromise between ethnic groups, designed to preserve the peace and advance the common good. Currently, the Goree Institute, a Dakar-based “Pan African civil society organization dedicated to the promotion of peaceful, self-reliant, and open societies in Africa”<sup>57</sup>, is conducting research on the ‘cousinage a plaisanteries’ system. The researchers are attempting to adapt it to modern conditions, in order for it to be implemented as a solution to the violent inter-ethnic conflicts in West Africa. Senegalese authorities might benefit from this research and the possibilities it opens. If they would manage to bring network representative together around a negotiation table and revive the traditional spirit of compromise, socioeconomic outcomes in Dakar and in other urban areas of Senegal could be improved.

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, « Les cousinages de plaisanterie en Afrique de l’Ouest ».

<sup>57</sup> « Goree Institute ».

B. The working of city-based informal networks

Youth born in the city and households who have established themselves in the city a long time ago (second or third generation immigrants) do not have access to rural-based networks, mainly for financial reasons. As the stay in the city becomes permanent – especially for the lower-income groups who cannot afford to travel to their villages, as well as for domestic and international migrants whose villages are very distant – rural ties gradually dissolve. For example, the maid working in my host family's house related in the interview that she does not have access to the social networks of her parents. She was born and raised in Dakar, along with her four brothers and sisters. The family was very poor and she never afforded to go see her parents' village in Guinea-Bissau, nor visit her parents' relatives in Casamance. She was not able to maintain good ties even with some of her aunts and uncles living in Dakar, because the latter did not want to have any contact with less well-off relatives.

When her older brother started showing signs of mental derangement, her mother was able to resort to her relatives living in Casamance. She went in the southern part of the country in search for a healer for her son, and, during her four-year stay, she received housing and food for her and her son during from various members of the family. She herself had to be cautious not to overtax her network and had to move from house to house often because her son's condition irritated her relatives. But her city-born children, who have never met the family

in Casamance, would have never been able to solicit any help from these rural relatives. The focus of their lives is the city, and the little help they can ask for is from people living in their neighborhood, who are part of the same income-group as them.

This becomes apparent especially when examining the relationships such households put energy into maintaining. The maid's family makes a lot of effort in conserving and enforcing their relationships with their neighbors, by inviting them meals and paying them frequent visits. Her mother, even when she was away in Casamance, made sure to send home, through an aunt, the ingredients needed to make the *ngalax*, a traditional Easter dish that all Christians are supposed to share with their neighbors on this special occasion. Religious celebrations are particularly important for the renewal and enforcement of social ties. On such occasions, sharing a dish with your neighbors, regardless of whether or not they are part of the same faith tradition as you, is a social expectation, and even the poorest families spend a great deal of the resources they possess on cooking and distributing food in order to conserve their social relations. But low-income households especially, given that they have only limited means, have to strategize in whom they invest. Therefore the fact that they share with their neighbors and not their extended family members suggests that urban relationships have priority over rural ones for low-income families living permanently in the city.

This is also apparent in their attitude towards the village. Immigrants born in rural areas and coming to the cities to work, even if they spend a more significant part of their life in the urban area, still think about going back to their rural dwellings when they get older. City-born youth, whether they have a positive image of the rural environment (as the maid, who considers people who were brought up in the village as being more reliable and having higher moral standards than urban counterparts), a neutral one or a bad one (as a young Serer cook who was visibly offended when I asked about the rural origins of her father), they do not ever consider the alternative of moving to the village, not even when old age will force them to stop working.

Instead of maintaining rural ties, such households focus their energy on urban connections. Most youth are either part of faith-based groups, sports associations or neighborhood associations. The maid, for example, is part of a neighborhood association regrouping some of the youth in the Malika suburban quarter. The group is composed of people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. It meets on the weekends (since many of the members work in different parts of the city during the week) in a local school's yard. At every meeting each member is expected to bring a 500 CFA contribution (equivalent to 1US\$), which is gathered and kept by a treasurer.

Meetings consist mainly of exchanging news and debating current issues. They are not structured and there is no one formally leading them, which makes

the discussion wander off without a definite direction and often becomes a debates about who does not respect social and moral norms of behavior, and what should be done in order to bring the ‘wrongdoers’ back on the socially-acceptable path. The lack of internal cohesion makes it difficult for the group to get organized. But they do manage, with the money they collect, to prepare social events such as dance parties on the occasion of religious celebrations. These social events address their need to maintain social relations – a task takes up a lot of the group’s energy as members are scattered during the week so maintaining ties takes requires greater energy when there is less time available.

The money they collect on tickets for these parties is further invested in social projects, such as assisting the families in need (but this seems to be more of a desire than substantial support, as the sums of money put in common or raised through social events are not very significant), or collecting the waste covering the streets in their quarter. Neighborhood associations therefore contain a very promising civic engagement component, but, due to all the above-mentioned hindrances, the scope of such actions is limited.

Maintaining social ties through weekly meetings, social events and collective group projects has the advantage of creating an environment of mutual trust and solidarity in the community. Youth can hope to find some support from their friends and their families, when in need. They can hope to receive a meal from a neighbor when they do not have enough money to pay for their own, and

they can hope to be informed about an employment opportunity when they are searching for one. Social solidarity is therefore present in these communities, but much less than in rural immigrant communities or religious groups. This is due to the fact that people have limited financial resources in suburban quarters like Malika (and even though they are willing to share what they have, they do not have much to offer to each other), and because there is a lack of cohesion and no clear common goal for the community to work towards.

Youth networks have a huge potential to bring positive change in the community, due to the energy of their members and their willingness to construct a better society. Thanks to their somewhat more accepting mentality, to their ability to work together beyond ethnic and religious differences, and to their solidarity under the harsh socio-economic conditions, they present the potential of positive social transformation. In fact they have a history of attempted interventions for progress and the change of the status-quo in urban politics. In 1988-89, for example, young people in Dakar initiated a movement called 'Set/Setal', aimed at fighting against environmental degradation and corruption and calling for "cleanliness" and "human investment". During that time they organized themselves and cleaned the streets of Dakar in a few weeks, proving to the local government and all other urban dwellers that it is possible, if people are willing to put some effort, to live in a clean and healthy environment. Yet the action had few lasting impacts, and youth power remains a mostly untapped resource, as there are few attempts to channel the efforts of youth groups towards

sustainable projects. With the exception of a few NGO initiatives that use hip-hop groups to fight against drug abuse and domestic violence, there is little social focus on youth.

Political leaders are aware of the potential contained in youth movements, but most of them only use it to mobilize voters in their favor during electoral campaigns. An illustration of this phenomenon is the heavy involvement of the Senegalese youth rap group Keur-Gui (The House), founded in 1998, in President Wade's election in 2000. The members of the group are adamant social activists, who frequently collaborate with NGOs and militate through their concerts against poverty, famine, cholera epidemics, AIDS and criticizing the current state of their country, which they qualify as "mental colonization". Before the 2000 elections the singers were incarcerated due to their political engagement, yet they persisted in it and contributed to Wade's election by rallying the Senegalese youth to his cause. President Wade managed to win those elections after 26 years in the opposition by targeting his electoral speeches towards the critical mass of young people who desired political change after 40 years of state socialism. His party's slogan, 'soppi' ('change'), highlighted his inclination. The voluntary engagement of the rap group to campaign on his behalf demonstrates his popularity among this previously neglected group of citizens, as well as his acknowledgment that youth action and youth enthusiasm has a huge potential in his country.

Yet, during Wade's two political mandates at the head of the state, the President did little to keep the promises he made to the younger generations. And the youth that successfully supported him in his campaign, had little leverage and was unable to influence the decisions he made while in office, even though his actions went against what he had promised before his election. It was only when his second mandate drew closer to an end that the members of Ker Gui were able to express their dissent towards his regime, which they qualified as "one of the most criminal regimes in the world"<sup>58</sup>. This time, with their enhanced political experience, the rap group created an anti-political movement called « Y'en a marre » ("Fed Up" or "Had Enough"). They invited all « [traditional] wrestlers, street merchants, workers, students, journalists, teachers, rappers and artists »<sup>59</sup> to join the movement, in order to express their frustration with a government that deceived their hopes. They managed to rally a significant percentage of the civil society, including other rappers (such as the Fou Malade group and Simon). They chose the date of March 19th 2011 – the 10th anniversary of Abdoulaye Wade's accession to power – for their first protest against what they called "stolen elections", the President's intent to run a third time, an action that is against the Constitution Wade himself signed during his first mandate<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Ndiaye and Dabo, Interview avec Thiat.

<sup>59</sup> Ndiaye and Dabo, Interview avec Thiat.

<sup>60</sup> "Senegal election run-off".

It would be a mistake to consider that the Ker Gui group is only involved in current events on the political scene. Their struggle transcends their condemnation of political machinations. During the World Social Forum in Dakar, the rappers organized a concert to protest against the poverty that is still present in Senegal. They also held gatherings in the poor suburbs to demonstrate against the frequent power outages, massive unemployment and the increasing prices of basic consumption goods. Their activism led Macky Sall, the newly elected President of Senegal, to declare at the time that the movement was able to articulate the state of mind of the entire Senegalese people: « “Y’en a marre has become a state of being for people here,” he said. “They’ve had enough of the power cuts, the government the impunity” »<sup>61</sup>.

In addition to expressing the citizen’s opinions, the group is also trying to promote a change of mentality and the emergence of a “new type of Senegalese”, more politically engaged and who will dramatically change his lifestyle. Their will to promote positive change is confirmed by the socioeconomic and cultural activities they choose to get involved in. They have created a rap festival in their city of origin (Kaolack), they support other young rappers to produce their own music and they provided young people with motorcycles that they use as taxis in order to earn an income and support themselves. They also built a few henhouses for poor families and are planning on opening a bakery in Fass Beurigot (a town

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<sup>61</sup> Niel - O.T.R.O, “Y’en a marre!”.

situated in the proximity of Kaolack). While they complain of the limited scope of their actions that is due to the financial constraints they are facing, they are proud of their political independence and state that they would refuse monetary assistance for their projects from political leaders, in order to maintain their autonomy.

Nevertheless, the Members of Ker Gui believe that a nationwide change of lifestyle cannot be triggered by personal example and involvement only, but needs to start with a change in leadership. They condemn the ex-President's family blatant lack of solidarity with the Senegalese people: "On peut se souvenir qu'au moment où les populations sont dans les eaux, le fils du président a acheté un avion pour aller vaquer à ses occupations"<sup>62</sup>. They also criticize him for his lack of respect for national institutions and constitutional procedures, without which democracy is impossible. Inspired by youth movements in Tunisia and Egypt, they are aware of the fact that they need to support a change of leadership that would bring to the head of the state a reliable political leader favoring transparency and accountability. As active members of the civil society, they need to collaborate with such a leader in order to implement their ideas and increase the scope of their action.

This manifest need of leadership change is the reason why they were more successful in their political activism and prioritized their "Dogali Plan", intended

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<sup>62</sup> Ndiaye and Dabo, Interview avec Thiat.

to “finishing Wade off”, over their other plans. Tired of political manipulation, they managed to inspire the youth movement to break with the past and support another change of regime. ““Wade degage!” c’est le slogan du mouvement de jeunes, qui ne veut pas de cette election”<sup>63</sup>. This explains why the members of the “Y’en a marre!” movement rallied to the cause of Macky Sall in the second round of the 2012 presidential elections: “They say they know Sall does not have a clean slate but that they can work with him and, in the interest of the country, Wade must be ousted. If Sall lets the country down, then he will be ousted too”<sup>64</sup>. Despite their harsh language, the Ker Gui group emphasized throughout the duration of the anti-Wade protests the need of a ‘peaceful and conscious’ revolt, a revolt that would not lead to the destruction of infrastructure, which would ultimately hurt the poor, and not the political leaders. They highlighted the need for youth and rap groups to avoid corruption and political capture and they encouraged “over one million unregistered voters to sign up”<sup>65</sup>. Should the new and future governments attempt to deepen their collaboration with youth groups, they should encourage them to keep and spread these civic values, in order to create a healthy civil society, capable of fostering real social change.

Currently, it seems that youth groups such as the ones organized by Ker Gui are limiting the power of even the most powerful networks, the Muslim

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<sup>63</sup> Carayol, “Wade, envers et contre tout”, 34.

<sup>64</sup> “Senegal election run-off”.

<sup>65</sup> Niel - O.T.R.O, “Y’en a marre!”.

brotherhoods: “Il n’y aura pas de ndiguel. (...) De toute façon, ça ne marcherait plus après de jeunes”<sup>66</sup> states the expert on Islam, Mr Abdoul Aziz Kebe in an interview for the French magazine, ‘Jeune Afrique’. The marabouts, the leaders of these brotherhoods, used to indicate to their followers (by using their religious authority – the ‘ndiguel’) for which candidates to vote in political elections, and they were sure that their suggestions would be followed. For the 2012 presidential elections however, they did not issued any ‘ndiguel’, knowing that the youth were not going to follow their advice and fearing that they would lose their influence if they chose a candidate who would not win the race. While their power has been temporarily challenged, it is likely that, once the elections are over, and if national affairs will follow the same trend as before the presidential race, their influence will be restored. This is due to the fact that all the wealth and traditional values, which are the source of social cohesion and stability, come from the rural environment, from which most urban youth are disconnected. Consequently, the young generation has only limited power during peaceful periods in comparison to rural-based networks. And, although young people hold the potential of bringing positive social change, they don’t have the power and resource backing or the direction to push it forth, unless the new government institutionalizes a permanent collaboration with their representatives. Until then, youth groups will manage to challenge political authority only during election time, when the other social groups fear a violent reaction on their part and try to avoid it by pretending

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<sup>66</sup> Carayol, “Le saut dans l’inconnu”, 26.

to search for a solution to their claims and abandoning their claims once a new government is in place.

The city government should identify and encourage, through training and financial assistance, local organization initiatives such as those of neighborhood associations attempting to collect waste and provide a cleaner living environment or those attempting to offer children basic instruction. It is important to support these networks because, despite their fragility, they are more inclusive of traditionally less privileged groups (such as women and youth), which tend to be excluded by networks based on customary law. These urban-based networks represent the promise of positive social change and improvement in the reproductive activities that are so often left behind productive, income-generating activities on everybody's priority lists. Such initiatives are crucial to human development and communal well being in the long-run.

C. Informal survival strategies based around institutions existing in urban areas

Numerous catholic monastic orders have built institutions such as private schools and childcare centers in Dakar. They focus mainly on giving practical education to youth and developing in them skills that are in demand on the market, so that they can secure employment in the formal or informal sector. Through the standard of quality training they have set, they bridge trust between

wealthy individuals and potential employees, leading to employment agreements (in the informal sector).

One such example is the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary congregation. Congregation members came to Senegal to work in hospitals in 1948 and subsequently specialized in pediatrics. In 1955 they founded a center called La Pouponniere, where they treat malnourished babies who have been abandoned by their families or whose families are unable to provide them with a healthy environment in their early childhood. Parallel with this program the nuns offer a formal training course for young women who wish to become nannies. The coursework includes French, childcare, housework and embroidery, as well as working with the children at the Pouponniere center to get practical experience. The course lasts two years, after which the best students are selected and kept as staff at the childcare center, the rest finding employment in private households.

The program is highly selective, with recruitment in Catholic parishes (which means that Muslim women are not admitted) and a mandatory, academically rigorous admission exam. Therefore it is recognized for its high quality training and there is a much greater demand for nannies trained by the center than the number of trainees enrolled. As the program built a strong reputation, young women in search for employment are now asking the nuns to assist them in finding an employer, even though they are not part of the training program offered by the center. The members of the congregation established a

separate recruitment program for them (to which all women, regardless of ethnic or religious background are admitted). Every Thursday they assemble job candidates (they trust the word of mouth to spread the information about these sessions), around 30 people every week. They screen them through a personal interview asking about their age, origin, schooling level, training and work experience.

Then the potential employers, women who asked the nuns to find a maid or nanny for them, come to the center to select the candidates. The sisters recommend them on of their interviewees according to the information they collected on their experience, salary requests and work schedule requirements. Then they put in contact the candidate with the employer and, if needed, mediate the negotiations. In the end, about 5 or 6 women per week manage to get employed, and the rest have to come back the next weeks to be interviewed again. The nuns keep in contact with the families who hired the maids in order to make sure both parts are satisfied with each other. If any problem occurs, families contact the sisters and ask them to mediate the conflict.

The nuns, by choosing to act as intermediaries and the fact that they can be held accountable to some extent when issues arise or can be called upon to enforce the terms of the agreement between employer and employee, solve the asymmetric information problem existing in the labor market in Dakar. They bridge trust between people in an attempt to improve the outcomes of socio-

economic interactions. Being a somewhat centralized service provider, the recruitment center allowed women in search of employment to meet each other and associate. The nun I was interviewing mentioned that the women who met and discussed among themselves at the Pouponniere, managed to increase their bargaining power vis-a-vis their future employers by harmonizing their requirements. While employers are becoming increasingly demanding (for example, requiring maids to spend two full-weeks at the work site and only return home every other week for the weekend), all job candidates require to be allowed to return home every weekend, forcing employers to grant them their request.

Private recruitment agencies are now funded and developed, responding to the high marked demand for reliable housekeepers by mediating negotiations between employers and potential employees. Institutions like la Pouponniere, due to their limited scale, cannot satisfy the huge market demand. Therefore private recruitment agencies are complementing its services. They are asking the Pouponniere for reliable recruits, attempting to tap into the good reputation this institution has already established for itself in order to build up their own reputation and prove they are serious and trustworthy agencies.

Another emerging phenomenon my interviewee pointed out, was that an increasing number of women born in Dakar's poor neighborhoods start searching for employment as maids. Before, house servant was a job reserved to young villagers (coming from various regions: Fatick, Thies, Casamance, etc.), but now

city dwellers, due to limited means to achieve an education, are also starting to look for such opportunities. Consequently, the role of private recruiting agencies might become more important in the future, enabling people who are not part of informal social networks that can attest their probity (for example through sisters or cousins who worked in the household before them and secured them their position when they leave it) to secure employment in spite of their disadvantaged social position. Yet such agencies first need to build a good reputation, something that is far from being an easy task.

The government should play an active role in encouraging such private initiatives aimed at improving socio-economic outcomes. Local authorities could, for example, help increase the enrollment capacity of educational institutions such as the one at the Pouponniere, since they have proven to be instrumental in their trainees' successful search for employment. The government should also provide legitimacy to private recruitment agencies in order to help them build their reputation as trustworthy organisms.

In conclusion, social networks have been very effective at providing numerous services that improved socioeconomic outcomes, such as finding jobs for their members and even creating employment opportunities in some cases, providing housing for rural immigrants and a safety net for people in poverty, sending remittances in rural areas, managing parallel transportation, banking and law and justice enforcement systems, etc. Some of them attempted to clean and

improve the living environment, but others negatively impacted it through their economic activities. Some sought political engagement and cooperation with the state in order to reduce corruption, bring peace in conflict areas and construct a better future for all, but their actions were only partly or not at all successful, because they lacked the financial resources and political leverage to back their initiatives.

Despite their success in the aforementioned areas, and their good initiatives in all aspects of community life, social networks cannot be the only system of governance in Dakar, nor in Senegal in general. There is a need for formal state and local authorities to address some of the issues existing in the informal sector that informal authorities are not tackling well. The first one would be the mediation of conflicts between those who belong and those who do not belong to the networks. Conflicts of interest can occur in various areas, but the most common case consists of an independent person attempting to start a business in one of the network-controlled industries. In this case the networks use their monopoly power to eliminate the competition, and those who do not benefit from the protection of such a group are always at a disadvantage. These dynamics hinder attempts by other groups and individuals to establish businesses that might bring more value added in the long run than network-controlled ones.

Formal authorities need to find a way to make up for the lack of planning and coordination between economic agents in the informal sector that generates a

chaotic environment, encroaching on living space and hindering a more harmonious urban development. They need, however, to take a balanced approach, avoiding the destruction of informal businesses in their attempt to ‘clean’ certain areas, by offering viable business alternatives to the traders they displace. Such decisions should be equitable and transparent, in order to avoid generating resentment in the population and hindering trust relationships from forming with local and state authorities. For example there are numerous traders selling school supplies and food on the streets close to the Universite Cheick Anta Diop, providing affordable academic material and meals to the huge student population. Local authorities decided that some of these should be removed, because they were blocking the way for vehicles. But they left others in place, although they burden traffic on other important roads.

Local governments should be mindful of the fact that marginalized groups experience networking difficulties: women’s groups are not given the political power or the ability to influence political decisions in the predominantly patriarchal Senegalese society; poor people’s neighborhood associations lack the necessary financial means and thus suffer from limited reciprocity; youth groups have no clear common objective and suffer from lack of cohesion and although they want to bring positive change they are not given the opportunity to develop and implement their ideas. They should be aware that the factors weakening these urban-based networks create power differentials between them and rural-based networks. Resource accessibility engenders power differentials among different

rural-based networks also. These inequalities in wealth and influence lead to the outcome that some groups always have the upper hand in decision-making in Dakar and in the country as a whole and that they always manage to safeguard their interests, regardless of whether they coincide with those of all citizens or not. It is therefore crucial for local and national governments to act as mediators among different networks and offset the negative consequences of power differentials.

By basing their actions on cooperation with social networks and on encouraging productive and innovative individual and group initiatives, local and national formal authorities might manage to build a trust relationship with the community, which could provide an incentive for all citizens to cooperate with them and, consequently, pay their taxes. Authorities would then be able to invest in projects that only formal institutions, and not social networks, have the capacity to carry out, like improving the water and sewage system and large-scale infrastructural rehabilitation programs.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As described by Kuznet and other development economists, the capitalist mode of production engenders economic growth through industrialization. Industrialization, through its demand for wage-workers, generates rural-urban migration and urbanization. Although all Western countries followed this developmental path, Senegal, similarly to most Sub-Saharan African countries, did not. The forceful integration of the Senegalese economy into the global capitalist system, through colonization, triggered the rural-urban migration phenomenon, but did not allow for sufficient local industries to develop in cities in order to keep up with the rapid population increase and create employment opportunities for all.

Colonizers also put into place a government system that did not take into account local interests and capabilities. Post-independence governments adopted and perpetuated the foreign power structures that had been imposed on their country, but were not able to finance their expenses and were forced to take on loans. International financial institutions imposed severe political and economic reforms in exchange for these loans, further weakening government's ability to ensure their citizen's well-being. These issues, coupled with the profound corruption that plagued governmental institutions, led to a political crisis.

In a context of deep, perennial economic crisis decreasing significantly the citizen's trust in formal political and administrative authorities, informal networks became a very important feature of the socio-economic scene in Dakar and all throughout Senegal. They link rural and urban areas through the internal migration process, bringing to the city the traditional values of trust and reciprocity, setting the foundation of the solidarity-based economy and constituting almost an alternative form of government. They have proven to be very effective at helping migrants adapt to the urban environment and at creating employment solutions for those unable to achieve formal sector jobs in the city. Yet rural-based networks do have their shortcomings: they tend to exclude outsiders and only promote the interests of its members.

In addition to rural-based networks, urban areas have seen the emergence of urban networks, formed by traditionally marginalized social groups, such as youth and women, and by urban dwellers residing in poor neighborhoods. These networks attempt to take advantage of the urban environment's relative flexibility (as traditional social constraints are not as powerful there compared to rural areas) in order to promote positive social change, such as the creation of responsible citizenship and building a more equitable and corruption-free state. However, lacking financial resources and a clearly-defined common interest, these networks are currently very fragile and their actions have only limited scope.

Due to their ability to represent and protect the interests of various groups of citizens, the informal networks' work and values should be taken into account by city and state authorities in their design and implementation of public policy. Consulting them in policy design and using their help in policy implementation would allow the governmental administration to move away from the inherited interventionist style of administration that is so unpopular and ineffective in Senegal. It would help them build trust relationships with the community, inspire responsible citizenship and, at the same time, mediate the actions and correct the biases that the workings of such networks entail, in order to ensure their outcomes benefit all. In addition, transferring to these grassroots organizations certain administrative duties (and supporting them financially to perform them), like waste collection, transportation, and even young children's basic education would ensure that some of the reproductive activities important for the poor will take place at relatively low costs and with increased efficiency. Future research on informal networks and on the ways of including them in a new governance system is therefore crucial in order to foster harmonious economic and political development in Senegal.

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