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Translocal Development: Italy-Senegal (8186)

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Introduction (377)

In this paper¹ we consider three examples of 'translocal development' involving Senegalese migrants in Italy who embarked on micro-development projects aimed at their country of origin. The involvement of migrant workers/ethnic minorities in such international, or rather transnational schemes, alongside and in conjunction with Northern and Southern local authorities and NGOs, a form of practice largely overlooked by the Anglophone literature, is potentially a valuable route to development. Nonetheless, our examples show that it is far from trouble free, and we emphasise the need for realism in assessing its strengths and weaknesses.

'Translocal' indicates two things. First, it is our gloss (not translation) of the French terms *coopération décentralisée* and *codéveloppement*. In French development discourse, *coopération*/*coopérant(s)* is the usual way of referring to international aid/aid workers. *Coopération décentralisée* refers to policies of decentralising aid practices to institutions below the level of the state ('infra-étatique', Petiteville, 1995: 32), especially to local authorities. Advocates of such cooperation also stress the importance of involving institutions in both North and South, so that all are jointly engaged in an enterprise of *codevelopment*. Secondly, 'translocal' places *coopération décentralisée* and codevelopment in the context of current debates about

¹ The data derive from Riccio's fieldwork (1996-99) in Italy, Senegal and France funded by a Marie Curie Fellowship (Contract n° ERBFMBICT 961586: 'Socio-cultural Integration and Exclusion of Senegalese in Europe: Institutional Practices and Immigrants' Transnational Networks in Emilia Romagna'). The project was supervised by Grillo and the paper also draws on his research and writing on transnational migration and development.

globalisation. Codevelopment is an interesting phenomenon in this regard, but our concern is specifically with development involving transnational migrants ('transmigrants') who are attempting to live their lives 'across borders'. Consequently, our material also touches on long-standing debates about the interrelationship of migration and development.

It is beyond the scope of a this paper to tackle all these issues, and we concentrate on how policies encouraging translocal development might provide space for migrant workers, in countries such as France and Italy, to explore ways of integrating their own (often prior) independent, individual and collective development initiatives (hometown associations, plans to set up businesses etc) with those of national and local governmental and nongovernmental agencies, perhaps enabling them to exploit such interventions for their own purposes. This has been widely discussed in France under such headlines as 'immigrants develop their country' (e.g. Daum, 1993, ed. 1993), but hardly mentioned elsewhere (though see Libercier and Schneider, 1996, Hamilton, 1997, Grillo, 2002). The case studies lead us to emphasise the practical difficulties facing the implementation of such policies, and the complex politics in which they are embroiled.

The Politics of Codevelopment (1773)

Coopération décentralisée/cooperazione decentrata and *codevelopment/codéveloppement/co-sviluppo* signal an orientation towards development (and a strategy and appropriate policies to implement it) which sees conventional development, characterised as state-to-state (bilateral) aid programmes, as inadequate, even counter-productive from an economic and political viewpoint. Programmes and projects, it is argued, should be 'decentralised', their primary movers, and the locus of their activities, not states, but localities: local states and places, the people who inhabit them, and the institutions of civil society (NGOs, associations etc) they have created. In keeping with this populist perspective, proponents of codevelopment emphasise the value of small-scale, micro projects 'codeveloped' in both developing and developed countries, and in language resembling participatory rhetoric in anglophone

development discourse (Libercier and Schneider, 1996: 10) encourage partnership (*partenariat*) between the various actors/stake-holders.

Petiteville, in an excellent overview, considers town twinning (*jumelage*), common throughout Europe and other parts of the world, a pioneering form of *coopération décentralisée*. Often criticised as old-fashioned (Petiteville, 1995: 197), by 1991 twinning agreements and similar projects engaged more than 1600 French municipal authorities. Although twinning does not necessarily involve development (less than a third of agreements were with cities in the South, Petiteville, 1995: 23), nonetheless some 200 concerned Africa alone, while, on the other side, the great majority of Senegalese and Malian towns had twins in Europe (Petiteville, 1995: 228-30). Cuffini, Diarra, and Kébé (1993) stress the importance of such linkages in combatting racism in France and directing the attention of Northern third-world associations to specific projects and places in Africa where they can apply technical expertise.

Many Franco-African twinings involve French suburban municipalities with significant populations of migrants and migrant-origin families living in hostels and public-sector housing schemes, and their associations are often instrumental in instigating them (Petiteville, 1995: 265). Codevelopment circles indeed stress the importance of dialogue with immigrants from developing countries. During the 1980s, many Sub-Saharan African migrants, in France for longer or shorter periods, but maintaining important ties with places of origin, created 'home' village and/or regional associations many of which began to initiate development projects, collecting funds to build places of worship, schools and health centres, or more ambitiously small-scale irrigation schemes. Their legitimate interests in the development process, it is argued, should be recognised and they should be encouraged to become 'development actors', dissolving the developer/developed distinction (Lavigne-Delville, 1991: 196).

The activities of such associations, especially those of Soninké-speaking migrants from the Senegal River valley regions of Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, have now been widely documented by anthropologists such as Daum, Lavigne-Delville, Quiminal, and Timera,

though like the studies of codevelopment, their work, with much to say about transnationalism, remains largely unknown outside the Francophone world. During the 1990s, as this research was published, and the linkage between migration and development began to be debated in government circles in France and elsewhere, the Paris branch of the influential Panos Institute (founded in London in 1986), emerged as a catalyst, organising/sponsoring conferences and publications bringing together academics, representatives of development NGOs, the French national and local state, and not least migrant associations. A seminal event was a colloquium in June 1992 on 'Immigration et développement du Sahel' held in Evry, involving *inter alia* nine major associations representing 175 villages, across three countries in the Senegal River valley (Daum ed., 1993). Subsequently many publications, including special issues of the journals *Hommes et Migrations* and *Migrations Société*, have been devoted to analysis of the development role, actual or potential, of such associations, and these have included numerous accounts by activists. In June 1999 Panos organised a further major symposium in Paris on 'Les immigrés, acteurs du développement Nord-Sud?', the proceedings of which were published in *Migrations Société* 12(67). Around this time, the acronym OSIIM ('Organisations de Solidarité Internationale Issues de l'Immigration') began to refer to these associations, and discussion spread beyond France to encompass a network of organisations from several European countries, with major conferences in Brussels (2001) and Birmingham (2002)². Thus, by the late 1990s, the idea of transnational codevelopment advocated by Panos and others was well-established in France, where it received official acknowledgement (Nair, 1997), and had begun to be influential elsewhere (Thiara, 2000).

What distinguishes it from the transnational activities of Mexican or other migrant hometown associations engaged in projects such as renovating churches and mosques, equipping schools, sports centres, or clinics, is that codevelopment involves a variety of local institutions and actors 'here' (regional and municipal authorities, NGOs, and crucially associations, based locally in France but representing particular villages or clusters of villages where migrants originate, with funding from the state,

² See http://www.panosparis.org/migra_MIDEIP.html/

or the EU), and counterparts (local authorities, NGOs, village associations etc) 'there', in the South. ('Here'/'there' echoes the commonly used French expressions *ici/là-bas*.)

The municipality of Saint-Denis, an inner suburb in the Paris region with a large population of migrants from North and West Africa, offers a good example. The municipality, long a bastion of the left, has an agreement with a Malian regional association, 'Association Gidimaxa Jikké', cited as a model of its kind³. Camara (1998), the association's president, places its evolution in the context of the changing patterns of migration from Mali to France over some thirty years (for the background see *inter alia* Daum, 1992, 1995, Lavigne-Delville, 1991, Quiminal, 1991, Timera, 1996). Initially migration involved young males seeking seasonal agricultural work in Senegal, but in the 1960s the direction shifted to Dakar and then France. In this period, other than the return of individual savings to families, there was little input into the wider society or economy except through the construction of mosques. Through the Sahelian droughts of the 1970s families became increasingly dependent on migrant remittances for livelihoods, and this led to the development of savings institutions which provided an insurance for those in France and a channel for resources to enter the local community. From the 1980s onwards, with the failure of state agricultural policies, indeed the 'disengagement' of the state from its poor regions (Lavigne-Delville, 1991: 10), these arrangements became more formalised with the emergence in France of associations more explicitly concerned with local or regional development in Africa. Also influential were the emergence of a new, young migrant leadership, and the relaxation of the French law regulating associations (1981).

'Gidimaxa Jikké' (*Jikké* means 'hope') brings together some 3,000 Malian migrants from the arrondissement of Aourou (24 villages with a population of 45,000 in the administrative *cercle* of Kayes) living mainly in the Seine-Saint-Denis *département*. The Association's activities have included work on irrigation and communications infrastructure

³ In *Le Conventonnement "Ville-Comité De Jumelage"*. Cités Unies France: Paris, www.cites-unies-france.org/html/bibliotheque/pdf/Convention-ville-com-de-j1.pdf/.

(bridges/causeways), health centres, literacy programmes, and training schemes supporting micro-projects in market gardening, dyeing and soap-making. In the 1996 partnership agreement with Saint-Denis, the association undertook to engage 'in parallel' with developments in Aourou and in Saint-Denis. In Aourou, working in conjunction with 'Gidimaxa Jikke local', it would co-ordinate and prioritise projects in water, training, and health, including a pharmacy. Meanwhile in Saint-Denis it would undertake activities with young people and women and in the field of intercultural relations. Notably, the accord emphasises both 'here' and 'there', thus operating in two (or more) worlds (Grillo, 2002), or in/between 'two spaces' (Quiminal, 1993, 1997), providing an excellent illustration of the interface of multiculturalism and development. Indeed, in the text, 'here' (Saint-Denis) comes first, and it is significant that activities dealing with the problems of young people and women are directed towards precisely those groups of considerable concern to the municipality, bearing in mind that Saint-Denis with its public sector housing is very similar to the milieu portrayed in the film *La Haine* (see also Timera, 1996).

This has a bearing on how we understand such translocal projects. Who are they aimed at and why, and who benefits? It goes without saying there are many different actors with mixed interests and motives, a point emerging strongly from our Italian examples. Petiteville (1995: 200) observes that French local engagement with the Third World followed from victories of the left in municipal elections in the 1970s. In the 1980s, 'mayor-managers' emerged, eager to enhance municipal profiles internationally, and find export opportunities for their industries, and increasingly able to draw on state co-funding. Condamines (1998), Daum (1998) and others, in reviewing French policy, also stress that codevelopment, indeed development policy in general, is often bound up with the politics of immigration. Thus, support given by the hard-line, right-wing (former) minister of the interior, Charles Pasqua, to projects providing employment in Africa for immigrants expelled from France was, in effect, part of a policy of repatriation. Schemes such as 'Le Programme de Développement Local Migration' which embarked on 200 micro projects in Mali (Martin, 1998: 87), were in a cynical view no more than a 'carrot' to migrants who had been refused permission to stay in France (Nédélec, 1998: 92, Farine, 1998, Kamara, 1998). A similar charge was laid against

the left-wing government (1997-2002) for the policies adumbrated by Samir Nair (1997), the 'délégué interministériel au codéveloppement et aux migrations internationales'. While denying that codevelopment aimed to facilitate the repatriation of immigrants, Nair argued that new immigration must be temporary, and codevelopment had a role in ensuring their 'reinstallation' in their countries of origin. Daum (1997: 206) calls such support for 'migration tournante' a 'softer' left-wing version of policies of repatriation which would perpetuate the subordinate situation of sending societies in the international division of labour.

Italy has been somewhat influenced by French experience (Tarozzi, 1998, Campani, Carchedi and Mottura, 1999). Law 49 of 1987, for example, envisaged the intervention of local authorities in development (Petiteville, 1995: 15). Nonetheless, by the mid-1990s, relatively few local authorities had become involved in codevelopment projects (Libercier and Schneider, 1996: 59), and attempts to work through immigrants and their associations have been scarce. Schmidt di Friedberg (2000: 258) draws attention to some regions where NGOs have sought advice from migrants from countries where they have an interest, but this only underlines the restricted nature of the cooperation. A limited number of projects, like those discussed below, have been undertaken by Italo-Senegalese organisations or Senegalese organisations in direct contact with, or supervised by, Italian institutions, with funding from, variously, the EU, national and local state, NGOs, and training organisations. They reveal similar tensions to those observed in France. Diatta and Mbow (1999: 254) remark that the government's 'Commodities Aids' Project' with Senegal examined the possibilities for the voluntary return of Senegalese migrants, while Schmidt di Friedberg notes that the anti-immigrant regional party, the Northern League, encourages NGOs to engage in development with the specific objective of halting immigration. Thus codevelopment becomes all too easily entwined with the politics of racism. The following examples illustrate these and other problems.

Italy-Senegal (686)

Contemporary Senegal is characterised by a precarious economic and social situation and a fragile and complex equilibrium of cross-cutting

cleavages. Like many African countries, it put its economy under the control of the IMF, with little prospect of recovery. Senegalese emigrate mainly for economic reasons and in particular because of the crisis of the traditional agricultural system. Historically, migration has encompassed rural-urban migration in Senegal, internal migration within West Africa, emigration to France, and then to other European countries such as Italy. Early migrants to Europe were mainly from *Toucouleur*, *Serere* and *Soninké* ethnic groups, the last the most numerous in France (Timera, 1996). Migrants to Italy are mainly *Wolof*-speaking, from the north-western regions, and adherents of the Mouride Islamic brotherhood. Such religious brotherhoods are important political actors in Senegal. By relying on relations of personal dependence, and an effective organisation, the brotherhoods, the Mouride in particular, offer a solidarity system well-adapted to responding to situations of crisis. Their financial contributions have also helped make the city of Touba, the site of the Mouride founder's revelation, a major commercial and religious centre, with the largest mosque in Subsaharan Africa.

Senegalese migration to Italy began in the 1980s with migrants coming initially from France and later directly from Senegal. 1989 was the year of Senegalese immigration and of Senegalese internal migration within Italy. Many Senegalese, who had previously worked in the south and islands (Sicily), began moving to the richer, more industrialised north. This involved seasonal migration towards Emilia Romagna, aiming not so much at gaining employment in the industrial sector as at entering the profitable market for unlicensed street selling on the tourist coast. The great majority of Senegalese immigrants in Italy are mainly men migrating as individuals, following the paths shaped by migratory chains, and highly mobile within Italian territory. The proportion of women (10%), growing slowly through family reunions, is lower than in other immigrant groups such as Moroccans (30%).

The Senegalese with whom we are concerned were living principally in two cities, Ravenna and Rimini, in the Emilia-Romagna Region (Riccio, 1999; 2001). In the following section we examine attempts by some migrants, working through Italian institutions, to develop projects to be implemented in Senegal. The first two involved training courses for

future transnational entrepreneurs. Vocational training is often seen as the key to the entry of immigrants into the labour market. Social practitioners and administrators often criticise policies which create reliance on assistance (*assistenzialismo*) favouring instead programmes encouraging empowerment, often via entrepreneurship. Trade unionists also believe that such programmes offer an alternative to repressive measures against unlicensed trading.

Training courses, financed by provincial or sometimes regional governments, are normally held annually. In Ravenna there were courses for builders, metal workers, machinists, (female) tailors, and, after 1997, for house cleaners and marble workers. These latter were targeted, along with metal and hotel workers, following provincial council meetings bringing together the local job centre, the social security service, entrepreneurs' associations, and trade unions, each of whom supplied information concerning demand and supply for labour in these sectors. Although employment is the declared aim of these courses, the promise is seldom fulfilled, and they are often criticised for failing to meet the concrete needs of the labour market: *'It is important to have real training that responds to the labour market demand'*, as a social practitioner in Ravenna put it.

Some Italian sociologists take a celebratory view of the break with *assistenzialismo* and stimulus to entrepreneurship provided by these programmes, and emphasise, too, the transnational potential for immigrants and Italian enterprises in an age of globalization. Minardi (1996) argues that through professional training and the subsequent transfer of entrepreneurial and managerial skills to the country of origin, it is possible to generate connections between Italian and African or Asian small or medium-sized firms, with the potential to enlarge the market for Italian enterprises and to create return flows of immigrants as new managers. An in-depth account of the experiences of those attempting to implement such strategies of transnational entrepreneurship is salutary, showing that things are more complicated and ambivalent than this wishful thinking suggests.

Dak-Fish: A Fish Import-Export Enterprise (1179)

Dak-Fish is an import-export enterprise with eight Senegalese members which has grown from a long-term project involving several institutional actors in Rimini. The idea for an enterprise of this kind originated independently with Ecosea, a centre for training and technical assistance in the fishing sector, which wanted to develop courses for immigrants, and some Senegalese who had received training in this field in 1990, and wanted to undertake a project in Senegal. Both parties contacted a local research institute (ISIR), with long-term experience in immigration issues, and the Rimini reception centre for immigrants, and developed a proposal. Following a feasibility study funded by the Emilia-Romagna Region and undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team of experts, a year-long training programme, including internships on fishing boats, was initiated, financed by the Region, Rimini municipality, and the European Social Fund.

There were many problems. For the ISIR director, who was also the Ecosea course tutor and acted as broker between the Senegalese, Ecosea and the funding bodies, the question of cooperation within the group seemed pivotal. He felt that some of the trainees acted in a *'bossy'* way making group integration difficult: *'I always tell them that to be responsible they have to give more to the group and that the group comes before the individual showing off'*. He added later: *'I was surprised to discover that those who went to a Quranic school instead of a state school are actually more practical and easier to work with. They do not need to show off'*. The latter sometimes assumed a patronising attitude towards the rest. However, life histories reveal that those from rural areas, who speak little Italian, often enjoy the respect of urban migrants, testifying to the ambivalence underlying these kinds of distinctions and typologies. The question of cooperation also pre-occupied the Senegalese: *'every man must rely on one another to achieve something. Someone who believes himself to be self-sufficient, to be enough by himself, will go nowhere'*, said one trainee. But this narrative of solidarity and reciprocity coexists, and may conflict with, another ideal of individual autonomy leading to constant debate.

Many trainees were initially undecided whether to stay longer in Italy, eventually returning to Senegal with more savings, or go back with a job, though these concerns were tempered by a degree of enthusiasm (*'I worked for many years in a garage, but I am happy about the opportunity provided by this project which would allow me to return to Senegal and to my wife and two daughters'*). There were also doubts about the implementation in Senegal. Indeed, one trainee, before leaving for a visit, cautiously said he would take only a brief account of the project to prevent anyone from stealing the idea. The trainer noticed how the Senegalese *'expressed worries about corruption and a state that "eats" everything'*. One of several trainees who dropped out of the course or failed the exam attributed his withdrawal to reservations about the Senegalese end:

'I am very sceptical about it, this is why I left. In Senegal it is very difficult, terrible, there are thousands of people who have been doing the same kind of things [fish import-export] for years ... and when you have a project of any kind someone will steal it anyway. ... This is why I prefer hi-fi and musical production, because I want to invest in quality and originality. In Senegal this kind of trade is controlled by the Lebanese who have a lot of money, but things will change on that score'.

Others, too, expressed their scepticism. *'The informal market will eat them'*, said a Senegalese from Bologna, and an Italian with previous experience in fishing enterprises was certain they would fail: *'It is unthinkable it will work. They did not even negotiate with the Senegalese fishers organisation'*.

These and other difficulties awaited Dak-fish in Senegal. In December-January 1996-7, one of the trainees (Modou), went to Dakar to initiate the enterprise. There were various complications: one member failed the medical required for a navigating licence, there were concerns about how the project would be seen by large fishing enterprises, as well as the small boats working out of the port of Dakar, and each time Modou visited the official in charge of procedures for starting a business he emerged with new bureaucratic problems. In such situations, contacts are

vital, and Modou had a friend who worked at the port who could check the grapevine for reaction to their project, and also help find a navigating licence for the trainee who failed the medical. Modou's brother at the Ministry of Finance could also assist. Such networks are fundamental to survival, especially when embarking on this type of economic activity. At the same time, Modou, like other transmigrants, was engaged in all kinds of import-export schemes involving products such as refrigerators, sofas, chairs and other furniture in great demand, an indirect product of migrants' investment in building houses.

Contrary to expectations, however, the first difficulties emerged in Italy, before the enterprise really began in Senegal. During the summer of 1996 it appeared that Ecosea was changing the project. Initially it was agreed that the Senegalese would create their own enterprise linked with Ecosea through a joint distributing venture. In 1996 they discovered that Ecosea expected that the enterprise itself would be jointly run. According to the ISIR director and some Senegalese members, Ecosea wanted to exploit this situation for its own ends as its other branches were in legal and financial difficulties. In the winter of 1996, the conflict seemed resolved on the basis of the original agreement, and the Senegalese worked towards founding their own enterprise, with Ecosea in charge of distribution. It transpired, however, that this was not Ecosea's understanding, and the relationship ended in 1997.

This change of plan caused major disappointment, especially when the enterprise, Dak-Fish as it was now called, was struggling to start up. There were then problems with the EU's Center for the Development of Industry (CDI) which provides start-up funds for entrepreneurial activities.

The withdrawal of Ecosea cast doubts on the scheme, and the ISIR director reported that the CDI required another feasibility study and business plan. The Senegalese wanted to go directly to Brussels to ensure the continuation of the project. *'We will ask for money in all directions, all channels of fundraising, but one finds only a lot of broke promises'*, said the ISIR director. One of these avenues included regional government funding available for those returning to their native countries. After many

months of lobbying, however, the council of Riccione (a commune next to Rimini) put up the money for one part of the project, the boat.

It was a nightmare, and the difficulties encountered often depressed the trainees individually, but, they felt, made the group stronger. Formally, however, the course failed, because although eventually Modou's tribulations in Senegal ended well, on paper at least, at the end of the course the trainees were still in Italy and had not fulfilled one of the conditions agreed by Ecosea, return to Senegal.

Afro-Boutique: A Craft Import-Export Cooperative (707)

Afro-Boutique was an import-export cooperative of ethnic crafts and food with twelve Senegalese members, who took a training course to become import-export entrepreneurs. The course was financed by an EU programme and organised by a regional training institution in collaboration with a consortium of co-operatives normally involved in reception policies towards migrants.

In the early 1990s a social practitioner at the immigration reception centre in Ravenna wanted to explore ways in which the Senegalese could enter the labour market. In fact, the Senegalese showed little enthusiasm for working as builders as trade was their priority. But this demanded much networking with traders' associations to learn about import-export, and initially little happened apart from the initiation of an itinerant ethnic craft fair. This was opposed by the Italian traders' association, which paradoxically has some Senegalese members, and in 1996 was taken over by the Afro-Boutique cooperative shop.

From these first attempts, the project to create an ethnic craft enterprise emerged *'to show that they could trade within the rules'*, as a social practitioner put it, or demonstrate that the *'migrant can become a leading figure in his country'*, said the director of the consortium.. After a marketing survey, and a mission to France to learn from NGOs such as

GRDR⁴ with long experience of advising on transnational projects, the training course started in January 1994. It lasted one year.

The members of the cooperative decided on a flexible organisation able to provide them with different individual options. One of the tutors (Fallou), a long term immigrant with various experience in Italy (trade, intercultural initiatives), explained how one member specialised in high quality traditional crafts: *'He knows the networks and the history and the culture underlying the craft objects and the tribal arts ... he just needs to find the way to express himself'*. Another was responsible for the fair trade goods from an Alternative Commerce centre in Ferrara (and also the Mouride prayer centre). Fallou commented: *'To sell on the beaches may be more advantageous, but it is important to emerge from the informal sector in an attempt to unify economic and cultural enterprise, to let ourselves be known ... for instance in the fairs.* As well as Senegalese or other immigrant sellers (and immigrants generally for food), the cooperative also targetted the Italian market for antiques, and the shop stocked some thirty Dogon statues from Mali: *'these have an artistic but also a historical and cultural value ... at the moment the issue is to find references to get ourselves into the market'*.

In summer 1996, at a week-long third world craft fair (with products from Senegal, Mali, Guinea, and Pakistan), Fallou talked about unlicensed trade. *'None of the training courses take into account the real expectations of migrants ... for instance numerous Senegalese want to be traders. But the courses are useless if not part of a wider project which allows you also to get the commercial licence, at least for specific products in specific places'*. Afro-Boutique showed a concrete way to proceed. For some members it was indeed an important springboard. For instance Seck joined the board of directors of the provincial confederation of co-operatives. In 1997, however, the other members of the cooperative left Fallou to manage the shop for six months while attending to their own

⁴ 'Groupe de Recherche et de Réalisations pour le Développement Rural dans le Tiers-Monde', URL: <http://www.coordinationsud.org/coordsud/membres/grdr.html>/ See *inter alia* Lavigne-Delville, 1991, Adams and So, 1996, Vallée, 1998.

businesses in Senegal or elsewhere. Thierno, for example, who visited Senegal to see if there were potential sellers and buyers for Afro-Boutique, but also to pursue his own individual trading activity, went to Touba, an important Mouride religious and commercial centre, where he reflected on the difficulties facing Afro-Boutique and the need to develop his own interests. *'The problem is that the earnings are not sufficient to pay everyone. I do not want to abandon the Afro-Boutique project after two years of training and two of work. I would have even been available to work for free but only after securing the subsistence of my family in Touba'*. The lack of co-operation between the different members of the group was stressed by the director of the consortium: *'If you asked, they would answer we are in a co-operative but everyone goes his own way'*. By 1998 the shop was always closed.

Pikine Theatre: An Intercultural Transnational Project (1448)

In Ravenna there have been various 'intercultural' initiatives, as they are called: multicultural parties, rallies against racism, festivals of films from developing countries, photographic exhibitions about immigrants etc. Another field of intercultural initiatives is the school where a theatre company was involved in workshops with pupils and teachers, and in plays. In Rimini a well-known Senegalese band visited classes to talk about African literature, geography, history, rituals, and traditions. The experience of Pikine Theatre should be seen in this context.

The Pikine Theatre grew out of Bel Teatro, the first community-based theatrical troupe formed by Senegalese and Italian actors and organised as a cooperative. Bel Teatro is grounded in the theory of *meticciano*, which emphasises an intercultural 'dialogue', in this instance between Senegalese and local Italian (Romagnolo) culture (Picarazzi, 1997), and which fosters a form of solidarity against racism. Although the company shared these goals, there were internal differences as the account by one Senegalese member, Abdoulaye, testifies.

Abdoulaye, who encountered the company in 1989 when the director, Marco Bassanelli, was seeking replacement Senegalese actors for a play in the local Romagnan dialect. Although he had no experience,

Abdoulaye claimed he was a professional actor and obtained a part. It changed his life. Initially he was not totally committed to the project (*'I still saw involvement with the theatre as a job like others to earn money to send to my family ... my real worries were for example the lack of water at home'*). However, from the beginning he was not just an actor but also a broker between the director and other Senegalese, helping recruit actors among the community in Rimini. They discovered Babacar, who came to Rimini from Rome to work as a street-seller during the season, a brilliant dancer with a very expressive personality, and a griot. Bassanelli cast him as a 'black harlequin' in an adaptation of a Goldoni scenario (*I ventidue infortuni di Babacar Arlecchino*). This play, says Picarazzi (1997: 7),

'raises the questions of Otherness, of the Stranger, of cancellation of identity, of racism, assimilation, and alienation, in its contrasting depiction of the two Senegalese characters: Arlecchino, the universal and easily recognizable symbol of the oppressed, and the assimilated Scapino, the Senegalese innkeeper ... a man from his own country who has made his fortune by taking on all the negative qualities of the white man'.

In 1990 the troupe wanted to make an exploratory trip to Senegal and received an invitation from the Italian embassy in Dakar. This helped with support in Italy from the local government and police, important because the Senegalese actors did not have residence permits. When in Senegal, Abdoulaye had to explain to his father (who was interested in money) what his job meant and why he was returning so soon, telling him that his work was not only about music and dance but socially and politically important. The Italians in the company were very impressed by Senegal, by Abdoulaye's extended family and his father's hospitality. They performed to great acclaim at the National Theatre Sorano and at the University.

In 1991, Abdoulaye went through a *'life crisis'*, wanting to quit. Bassanelli helped him through this, urging him to acquire other skills such as improving his Italian. Like Babacar Arlecchino (his) work has given him the distance and means with which to look back and learn about his

country's traditions and his family's heritage ... synthesizing them into his present day experiences from the perspective of the emigrant' (Picarazzi, 1997: 14). The company went on to perform a play which revisited the traditional stories of *Buky* and *Leck*, the hyena and the hare, and another written in Romagnan dialect and Wolof, which involved travelling to Senegal to collect stories from griots, presenting the figure of the oral narrator of both cultures. Most of these plays concern the African immigrant in Italy, and represent 'a decentering of Euro-centric and hegemonic discourses of nationalism and identity within the context of present-day Romagna' (Picarazzi, 1997: 4).

1992 saw the birth of the idea of Pikine Theatre. Abdoulaye dreamt of opening a cultural centre in the commune of Pikine to preserve the traditions of music, tales and dance, very widespread informally in the commune, and developing it as a theatrical project. Pikine, a suburb of Dakar, is inhabited by migrants from different villages. '*The village roots need to be rediscovered*', Abdoulaye said, stressing that its multicultural character was an important resource for the project. Networking with other socio-cultural associations in Pikine, Abdoulaye ascertained that the local Foyer of Youth could host the projected activities. Like many Senegalese, Abdoulaye enjoys spending six months in Senegal, six months in Italy, and likes the idea that the theatre could benefit from an exchange between the cultural resources of Senegal and the technical and financial resources of Italy.

When in Italy Abdoulaye used to say '*a lion here can be a sheep there ... the projects that seem easy from here can become almost impossible there*', and acknowledged that it is very difficult to succeed because local people are poor and have needs other than those of leisure or culture. In 1996-7 the project encountered several difficulties, including problems with their Senegalese counterpart (Oumar), and a visit to Senegal was needed to clarify the relationship. Moreover, riots following municipal elections in Pikine badly affected the Foyer where the theatre was supposed to be based. Abdoulaye understood some of the difficulties: '*There are many socio-cultural associations in Pikine which would love to have a space to express themselves and suddenly these "Italians" [migrants to Italy] arrive and have full access to the Foyer of Youth ... you*

can understand that jealousy can spoil all the networking created in four years of work'. Furthermore, critics of the project argued that this kind of cultural activity was secondary to what really mattered, addressing the commune's social needs. Nonetheless, cultural and athletic associations were very important informal political actors in the 1990s in Dakar, promoting and organising clean-up operations and vacation classes for children. They formed part of a social movement known as *Set-Setal*, linking sanitation campaigns with campaigns against corruption (Diouf, 1996), with which Abdoulaye identified the Pikine project.

There were also problems within the company. Babacar was increasingly committed to his own trading businesses in Diourbel and Touba, and his management of a football team. He wanted to be an actor in the project, for the same pay as the others, but not help with management and organisation. Besides this, Abdoulaye himself was under constant economic pressure from his family who were involved as technicians or in providing logistic help, and from neighbours demanding 'their part' of his money. Despite these difficulties, the relationship with the Italian NGO, which supervised part of the project, was going well, and some successes were achieved. Contacts were established with other associations and several successful events were held: concerts of rap and traditional folk and ethnic music, dance competitions, and a theatre workshop.

Oumar, a professional actor and media expert trained in Senegal, was critical of his colleagues' lack of professionalism and excessive family involvement. Unlike other members of the group, he was educated and not a migrant. He was ambivalent about that: proud of staying in his country and contributing to its development, but envious of the migrants' success and the popular respect accorded them in general, and his colleagues in particular. '*All these migrants accept being enslaved by the whites, whereas I know the real wealth (richness) that the African context can imply*'. Oumar approved of the project investing in cultural rather than socio-economic initiatives, something criticised by others, championing his role, because of his knowledge of the artistic environment in Senegal, though recognising that '*we need to be financially sustained by foreign sources*'.

The need to pursue personal (individual and family) interests posed organisational problems for the project, and conscious of the weight that can be represented by family or place of origin, Abdoulaye thought to leave Italy to reshape the networks in Pikine, involving the families themselves and exploring their potential contribution. The unreliability of colleagues, however, and the general lack of a cooperative organisational culture, meant the performance of one play, for which much work had been done on a Wolof version, never took place. Abdoulaye became progressively disillusioned, and when in 1998 Babacar and another actor decided to leave the company and go freelance, the Pikine Theatre project faded away. Despite some successes the initiative had to confront the most important audience, the family in the context of origin, and in the end individual and family demands overcame the demands of collective solidarity.

Conclusion (1044)

Our three cases differ from the village projects undertaken by the Soninké associations in France. They concern small groups of (Wolof-speaking) migrants, more closely connected with the urban than the rural milieu in Senegal, engaging in collective enterprises with varied interests, using whatever funds can be found, while also working independently, keeping their options open, and networking with a multiplicity of Italian and Senegalese partners. Yet all these projects have much in common, including the sheer difficulty of translocal development, and the complex balance of positive and negative factors.

Meillassoux's critique of codevelopment (1990), viewing immigration as part of a global system of dependency, argues that if immigrant workers are exploited in the receiving economy, encouraging productive investment in the sending society will reproduce rather than undermine systems of exploitation. This pessimistic outlook is the other side of the naive optimism of some Italian sociologists. Gardner (1995) rightly contends that although migrants' investments may increase economic polarisation, they can, however, according to the context, produce economic development as well as dependency. We should also

bear in mind that (for better or worse) codevelopment involves partners 'here' and 'there', and has effects in two (or more) societies.

On the positive side, in regions abandoned by governments, associations have built mosques, schools and clinics, improved water supplies and instituted irrigation schemes (Diarra, 1998). Moreover, for France, their activities represent, as Daum (1994: 99) observes, a 'totally original strategy', signalling a refusal to break with countries of origin while seeking integration. That is, such migrants declare an intention to live *transnationally*, and for them the distinction *ici/là-bas* is 'very artificial' (Boussetta, 2000: 284). Codevelopment also seeks to overcome the cynicism engendered by conventional development with its pandering to power elite's and corrupt regimes. (As Jaabe So put it: 'I sometimes wish the Caisse Française had simply put the money in [the minister's] bank account, and saved everyone a lot of trouble', Adams and So, 1996: 277). It also addresses the traditional weaknesses of development-oriented twinning agreements (lack of finance and technical skills) by focusing existing funds on specific places (while seeking new sources from national and local government, and the EU), and supplementing technical skills with the resources of experienced NGOs such as GRDR and COSPE⁵ (Petiteville, 1995: 205). On the negative side, codevelopment is no 'panacea' (Petiteville, 1995: 267), but, as Boussetta (2000: 283) emphasises, 'only *one* factor'. Its projects often have only marginal impact (Petiteville, 1995: 89), and many fail. Diatta and Mbow (1999: 247) report that in ten French-Senegalese co-funded projects from the 1980s (market-gardening, fishing, cattle-raising, aviculture, gas station) there were 'enormous shortcomings, linked primarily to lack of proper supervision and assistance ... [by 1989] five were no longer in operation and the other five were virtually bankrupt'.

Further, our cases illustrate the impossibility of treating the development process as if it were unembedded in political, social and cultural contexts, 'here' and 'there'. Codevelopment is frequently prone to ideological and political misuse (cf. Courade, 1998). In Italy it forms part of a transition to migration policies in which the emphasis would be on

⁵ 'Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti', <http://www.cospe.it/>

family integration and the stimulation of autonomy and entrepreneurship. Do these reflect the real demands of immigrants or the logic of Italian planners, politicians, and social practitioners involved in the implementation of immigration policies? There is also a darker side, illustrated by the Mayor of Riccione who, when explaining his tough stand on unlicensed trade, reminded his audience that 'we have even bought them the boat' (in *Espresso*, 29th October, 1997). The financial support of Dak-Fish, together with the extension of the category 'them' from eight entrepreneurs to the whole Senegalese community, enabled the Mayor to present a balanced image of his policy: tough enough to satisfy angry shopkeepers, generous enough to confront anti-racist left-wing or Catholic criticism. Such projects risk feeding 'rhetorics of exclusion' (Stolcke, 1995), while claiming to benefit the excluded. Many projects, perhaps especially those involving training programmes and intercultural activities, may have the laudable symbolic goal of re-presenting the immigrant in the public sphere: Afro-Boutique explicitly sought to provide a real alternative to unlicensed trade. But praising the idealist third worldism of French or Italian municipal authorities and activists (cf. Libercier and Schneider, 1996: 10), or the role of migrant associations as cultural mediators, is 'not without ambiguity' (Petiteville, 1995: 265) if the motives of municipal officials is to return migrants to their home countries.

The importance of context is also illustrated by the internal conflicts experienced in all the projects which reveal the ideology of individual autonomy predominating over that of solidarity and reciprocity. Wolof-speaking transnational migrants in Italy do not have the hometown associations of Soninké in France, whose migration involves communities (for example, in hostels) structured by, and responsive to, village-based lineages. There is certainly a strong ideology of solidarity among co-nationals, co-religionists, and kin, but it is through individual enterprise that transmigrants meet audience expectations in Senegal, and this individual route to economic achievement becomes manifest in the Italo-Senegalese setting. The experience of individual trade thus inhibits some participants from full identification with collective projects. This may have nothing to do with individualism as such, but rather with the fact that social control is ultimately embedded in institutions such as the Mouride brotherhood, and not in co-operatives emerging from interaction with the

Italian context. The transnational petty trader is more likely to make a collective investment through the Mouride, which implements social projects in Touba, and is often a more effective vehicle for social development than those coming out of Italy.

Codevelopment gives rise to problems of control, misunderstandings due to naive expectations, idealisation of partners by both sides, leading to mutual disillusionment, and our cases studies amply illustrate all these ambiguities. Yet at the very least it is no better nor worse than more conventional forms of development (Petiteville, 1995: 222). As Boussetta argues: 'For immigrants the important thing is to engage with transnational associational projects. For now, the focus is more important than the content'. (2000: 284). Thus, although translocal projects often fail (and premature celebration is unwarranted), they are important phenomena, which are likely to be in demand 'here' and 'there' so long as migrants seek to maintain transnational ties with their countries of origin.

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