

Sponsorship, Neo-patrimonial Logics and Private/Public Blurred Boundaries: The Senegalese Rural Water System Reform as a Process

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During the 1980's, the Senegalese rural water system was reformed by the "Regefor" (*Réforme de la gestion des forages motorisés ruraux*). This reform was driven with the financial support of several aid agencies. Its aim was to transfer the charges of the water management to the local level. This reform was embedded in the good governance trends which proposed skills and charges transfer as the magic formula to reduce the costs relative to water issues and to allow a larger and "democratic" access to the resource.

My paper will explore the reform implementation in several localities of the administrative region of Kaolack. It will discuss a few ethnographic cases[1] and show how the new piece of law never becomes the only sheriff in town. More precisely, it will deal with private and neo-patrimonial strategies and explain how specific social and political dynamics could make the difference and allow rural populations to have a larger access to the water resource.

The « communities » targeted by the Regefor could be understood as « *semi-autonomous social fields* » (Moore 1978 [2]). This concept challenges the potential effectiveness of any legislation as an instrument of social engineering. In this perspective, water management constitutes a never-ending process governed by norms proceeding from the local arena as well as from the national/global one (state and aid agencies levels). As a matter of fact, local water management appears as an institutional co-production mixing local, state and developmental actors, borrowing the classical public and private dichotomy and requiring a constant negotiation.

The paper will focus on water sponsorship by state-functionaries and businessmen. Locally called « *fil du terroir* », connected to the state and ruling party apparatus, these men constitute an effective *courroie de transmission* between the local and the national and/or global levels. These specific cases shed light on patrimonial logics which are explicitly in opposition to the good governance paradigm. However, these logics allow sometimes a larger access to the water resource.

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[2] MOORE Sally Falk 2000 (1978). *Law as process. An anthropological approach*, 2nd ed. Hamburg : Lit Verlag.