

**SOCIAL INNOVATIONS AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN SENEGAL**

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In Senegal, various local development processes led by a multitude of actors are being noted. However, they are not leading to a critical mass of information that can be capitalised and help define their structural features, dominant trends, lessons learned, key success factors or major open questions. Indeed this explains why innovations introduced by the many experiences of local development remain fragmented, poorly recognised by public authorities and not widely disseminated, thus risking early collapse. All of these represent the reason why a National Contest (NC) on innovative practices of local development was organized for the first time in Senegal, contributing to identify, systematise and increase the spread of the most significant experiences at a national and international level.

The articles of this special issue of *Universitas Forum* systematise some of the experiences which emerged during the National Contest launched by the Ministry of Local Governance, Development and Territorial Planning (MGLDAT) through the « *Connaissance Innovatrice et Développement Local* » (CIDEL) Programme. The National Contest (NC) has enabled the discovery of innovative experiences led by territorial actors, in particular local governments and community-based organisations (CBOs), and it has also contributed to the creation of innovative knowledge about the territories. The NC shows that alongside political authorities, several territorial actors deploy innovative development practices in their territories that are waiting to be capitalised, acknowledged, and consolidated in this era in which public policies are increasingly being territorialised. In this process, the engagement of researchers and practitioners has facilitated the de-compartmentalisation of actors and practices and more generally has promoted an effective cooperation between the academic world and public policies.

Innovative local development practices intersect with initiatives aiming at creating wealth, building or taking advantage of opportunities or addressing challenges. They bring added value compared to the previous situation and highlight processes built socially by a multiplicity of actors who can induce a social change on several levels, without prejudice to their outcome. Innovations in local development practices can be appreciated at various levels: territorial revitalization, sustainable development, forms and modalities of organizational management, modalities of regulation, production and distribution of goods and services, the methods of resource sharing, the linking of actors who previously were isolated, the creation of a new markets and new products, changes of positions of power. On this last point, innovations can go as far as renewing institutional configurations either within a territory or within a sector.

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The process of the National Contest is described in detail in the article by Mr. Wade, who coordinated the CIDEL project for the MGLDAT, and of Ms. Pierella who, on behalf of the KIP International School, supported the process. The holding of the national competition informs us that, more than a public policy, local development is first and foremost a practice deployed by territorial actors. The Contest was itself a social innovation, as it brought together previously isolated dimensions and its results are not only an innovation, but also an improvement in terms of the added value generated. Finally, it addressed a more resilient and inclusive development model. The CN was an innovative process of creating knowledge about the territories based on the experiences of their actors, particularly local governments and grassroots community organizations. It provided twenty-eight capitalization reports of local development experiences as well as six documentary videos on the experiences awarded at the national level. As a result, the lack of a critical mass of information about local development practices deployed by territorial actors has been, at least in part, filled in this first edition of the CN.

Indeed, the experiences presented in this issue illustrate the creativity of local actors in addressing the challenges of their territories.

The first experience took place in Kafountine, the largest fishing peninsula in Casamance. Kafountine has a coast with an abundance of fish, but faces serious health and pollution problems due to the daily discharge of fishery waste on a beach that has no system for clean-up operations. Fish waste poses a problem of chronic pollution, foul odour, hygiene, public health and discourages new tourists from coming to the once very popular island. In fact, together with fishing, tourism was the economic activity that generated most revenues and created most jobs. This situation has increased the exodus of youth to urban centres and neighbouring countries. Within this context, the association Afrique-Atlantique, which was already active in cereal processing, decided to invest in the transformation of fishery wastes into fishmeal, used as organic fertilizer, much sought-after by breeders and farmers from Casamance and other regions, but also from the countries of the sub-region. At the moment, the association manages to produce up to 50 tons of fishmeal per month.

The collection of fishing waste has considerably improved the health conditions of Kafountine beach, plus it generated more employment and income for the youth and women recruited for the collection and cleaning operations, fish drying, pressing and bagging. Beyond the prospects for self-employment for members (30 permanent jobs), this activity generates a green economy transforming fishery waste into job opportunities and income. It also provides opportunities of sustainable development for the city, offering a solution for coastal territories suffering from the poor health of their beaches. The association succeeded where many local coastal communities failed to solve the issue of sustainable management of beaches and shores. Furthermore, with the creation of a new ecological product for agriculture and breeding that was previously unknown on that territory, as well as a fishery marketplace, new job opportunities have been created and income has been redistributed. The promotion of healthy beaches and their impact on the living conditions and the tourism destination, the linking of different actors in order to enhance fishery waste recycling, the consolidation of the territory's position in the production and sale of fishmeal constitute significant aspects of this social innovation.

The experience of Sandiara, a small rural town in the region of Thiès in central Senegal, analyses another waste management practice, this time regarding household waste: a highly topical issue

throughout Senegal. This practice revolves around two main entities: a federative association of several women's groups and the municipality as a local public actor. In this small urban municipality a market is held every Saturday producing a significant amount of garbage. In this context, it was the local women's groups that took the initiative to deal with this health issue in their community. Only then the municipality stepped in, which resulted in the establishment of a municipal action plan. Once the alliance between these groups and the municipality was sealed, a steering committee for monitoring the action plan was set up. The social innovation introduced by this committee lies in promoting the co-management of the waste collection system at the neighbourhood level, thus bringing people to care about the local public service.

The interest of the practice rests above all on the multidimensional aspect of its positive impact. The health of the neighbourhoods has much improved with a remarkable effect on the neighbourhood's image. In terms of health, the reduction of certain diseases made it possible to reduce household expenditure related to medical treatments. Finally, from a social standpoint, the practice contributes to the emergence of a strong civic sentiment and social cohesion, thanks to the participatory approach and the massive involvement of women.

Management of natural resources is another theme around which significant innovations revolve in Senegal. Protected community areas, for example, are set up and managed voluntarily by local communities for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, the preservation of customs and heritage, and for the exploitation of natural resources already present for the general well-being of the community. In Senegal, a legal framework governs protected areas (Law No. 028/2008 of October 29, 2008). The experience of the Sindia Community Protected Area (19 villages) is part of this context and combines sustainable resource management, promotion of gender equality, solidarity economy and poverty alleviation.

The women of this territory face poverty, deforestation and water erosion causing the disappearance of plant species useful for food and pharmacopoeia. They have mobilized with the support of an NGO and government services to build community areas. The women led the local government to sign a local agreement to entrust them with the development of these abandoned lands. This initiative of community forest regeneration has enabled 1,325 women to gain access to land ownership for the first time and has substantially improved their incomes through the production and marketing of local forest by-products. In order to safeguard their savings, the women set up 57 solidarity *calabashes* (rotative microcredit), which, in 2014, made it possible to mobilize savings for a total of 8,417,125 CFA francs. The Sindia women's experience around the protected community area has encouraged the re-emergence of threatened endemic plant species, the emergence of new fruit and medicinal species, the restoration of vegetation cover, the strengthening of environmental awareness on the part local populations and given recognition to the role of women in sustainable local development.

Also on the theme of natural resource management is the article recounting the experience in the municipality of Keur Samba Gueye, in the region of Fatick, concerning the regeneration of the Ndinderleng lowlands. The innovation consisted in the regeneration and the upgrading of the lowland in order to transform it into 500 hectares of land available for rice cultivation as well as market gardening and in the creation of a community natural reserve for ecosystem regeneration. Within this framework a local convention bringing together local communities as well as the different users of the lowlands (nomadic pastoralists, residents, beekeepers, fishers, craftsmen,

hunters, traditional healers) was set up under the name “Convention Locale pour la Gestion Intégrée des Ressources du bas-fond –COGIRBAF” (Local Convention for integrated management of Ndinderling lowland’s resources). At the moment 212 hectares of the lowlands are farmed by rice producers and market gardeners coming from 22 local villages that surround the lowlands.

The experience of COGIRBAF is focused on an innovation that is simultaneously institutional, economic, organisational and ecological. It was made possible thanks to the technical and financial support of the State and international partners, but its success was guaranteed above all by the establishment of a local multi-actor and multi-territory convention and the scope of the organizational mechanism: village committees structured around a management committee, much desired by the municipality. Beyond the regeneration of this former bush, the foundations of a local economic development co-managed by various categories of actors (local elected representatives, local private sector, inhabitants, etc.) and by various territories has been established and this confirms the economic, socio-cultural, socio-political, ecological and ultimately territorial dimensions of sustainable development. We see here a multidimensional innovation that brings an added value from an environmental, economic and social point of view to all the communities that revolve around the lowland.

The experience of the Association of Volunteers for the Protection of the Environment (AVPE) in the Department of Bounkiling (natural region of Casamance in Southern Senegal, bordering Gambia) is another interesting example of joint management of natural resources, which strengthens civic values and a sense of citizenship. Indeed, in this region, abusive logging is an important source of income for people who survive through the sale of timber across the border with Gambia. The experience was spearheaded by a former Senegalese emigrant who, having ascertained that the forest was degraded and threatened, created an association with the mission to improve the living conditions of its local population through the optimal and rational management of natural resources thus protecting their environment and the forest. To encourage the populations of the area to become involved, new income generating activities were established as an alternative to wood harvesting in the forest. The *modus operandi* is the promotion of civic values through information, education and awareness campaigns and appears to be the basic principle of this practice. It is therefore interesting not only from an environmental point of view, but also because of the progress achieved in strengthening civic values and a sense of citizenship, a dimension that is still complex in this border area of Senegal.

The Dayane Pastoral Unit also intervenes in the environmental field and that of rural development. The Pastoral Unit (*Unité Pastorale* – UP) is a group of farmers and breeders living in villages that exploit the same fields, have joint investments and are united by solidarity resulting from neighbourhood and the exploitation of the same natural resources. In the particular case of Dayane, located in the Senegalese Ferlo, the UP covers an area of 60 hectares, includes 13 villages and several hamlets and aims above all to improve the living conditions of breeders and farmers in the area. Indeed, abusive tree cutting, bush fires and conflicts between farmers and breeders are recurrent problems for people in this area. In addition, the UP also has the aim of effectively combating the increased degradation of grazing lands, cultivable fields and forest resources.

Thus, the UP tries to offer concrete solutions to the ills that plague the life of the population of Dayane by clearly defining the areas for pastures, crops and passage of nomadic herders. The improved management of space, the definition of clear rules and the delimitation of the areas reserved for the different types of actors operating in the UP's jurisdiction have made it possible to reduce the recurring conflicts between breeders and farmers, but also between nomadic and indigenous populations. This innovative practice on the organizational level derives from the consultation between all the local actors concerned by the envisaged themes. The UP is open to all forms of initiative of the actors that compose it, including in neighbouring territories for the purposes of the transfer of experience. Thus, the UP solves not only the problems of the populations in its area of intervention, but also encourages the feeling of social solidarity and intermunicipal collaboration.

The experience of the Inter-professional Union of Agro-Pastoralists of the district of Rao (UIAPR) allows us to analyse the shift from a family agro-pastoralist micro-enterprise to community entrepreneurship. The experience started in 1989 in Guélakh, a small village of about 200 inhabitants located in the region of Saint-Louis in northern Senegal, essentially formed by peasants and nomadic herders who suffered the drought of 1970s. In the early 1990s, two young people of Peuhl ethnic origin initiated a family microenterprise: an agricultural farm integrating agriculture and sedentary livestock farming. Twenty-five years later, the family microenterprise incorporated villagers and other surrounding lands, giving birth to the *Union Interprofessionnelle des Agro-Pasteurs de l'Arrondissement de Rao – UIAPR* (Interprofessional Union of Agro-pastoralists of the Rao District).

The evolution of the organizational form, the territory of intervention, the participation and the fields of intervention result in the Union currently mobilizing 145 rice farmers, 137 agro-pastoralists, 113 women processors and 60 fishermen. Its main social activities are the construction and operation of a day care, a primary school, a college, a dye shop and a literacy centre. Through its members, the Union operates 40 ha for rice farming and 13 intensive livestock farms in addition to the experiences of poultry farming, fish farming, horticulture, fruit and vegetable processing and dairy processing (cheese).

The last article deals with the production of spiruline algae in Ouonck municipality. In order to address a dramatic situation of food insecurity, the rural commune of Ouonck, in southwestern Senegal, initiated a spiruline production project in 2006, thanks to a decentralized cooperation partnership with the municipality of Bretteville (France).

This initiative is noteworthy not only in terms of health, where very good results were registered, but also at the social and economic levels, having created several jobs at the local level through the spiruline production farm. The experience shows that the commitment and sensitivity of local communities, coupled with the involvement of a plurality of local actors, can (re)set in motion and fuel a beneficial experience for the population from a health, economic and social standpoint. Organizational, economic, technical and social innovations have been achieved through a combination of multiple factors such as: the integration of agriculture and livestock production, support to socio-economic empowerment in lieu of a simple financial support, support for family entrepreneurship by facilitating access to production factors (land, equipment) as well as the commitment to a broader territorial development (reconciling common goods, private goods and

public goods), the sober and humble leadership and investment in any field considered useful and having potential within the territories.

The analysis of these experiences highlights some salient features of local development dynamics in Senegal:

- Innovative experiences take place in many fields of action, from promoting sustainable development or local economic development to managing waste, eradicating malnutrition, promoting local products, improving living conditions and quality of life, strengthening the socio-economic empowerment of women or, again, promoting of territorial governance. The variety of fields reveals the territorial dynamics of local development that are willing to invest in any field considered useful, presents an opportunity or constitutes a constraint for the community;
- Local development remains an endogenous dynamic initiated and carried out by territorial actors rather than a public policy of the State acted out on the territories: this is how territorial development differs from the territorialisation of development;
- The social commitment and the voluntarism of local leaders, social entrepreneurship, the logic of social and solidarity economy, the relationship between the community and socio-economic inclusion, the weaving of social ties beginning with economic mobilisation and the will for of self-determination have indeed enabled these dynamics to resist an environment of constraints, or even to transform them into sources of socio-economic opportunities;
- The local dynamics of development demonstrate that a precarious context does not limit the construction of social innovations. To the contrary, it is particularly propitious to innovation construction with a view to permitting people, communities and institutions to overcome constraints or to profit from and adapt or transform existing innovations. In fact, the innovations created by territorial actors might be organisational, economic, social or even institutional, leading, for example, to a reconfiguration of the local institutional architecture.
- The perspective of socio-territorial innovations reminds us that development is not universal, nor achieved, nor pure, nor unilinear: it is an erratic process proceeding by trial and error and built from inside communities. In any case, the perspective of socio-territorial innovations shows that Africa has nothing to catch up with and that it must take its own development path, on the one hand, while on the other, that territories are increasingly positioned as the spaces and the actors of an Africa that is rebuilding itself.