LOCAL TERRITORIES, THEIR POWER AND THEIR ACTIONS: DEVELOPMENT AS A WEAPON FOR PEACE

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Abstract: Focusing on local realities and more precisely on urban contexts, post-conflict reconstruction can use development as an instrument for peace – or even as a *weapon for peace*. At the present time, in an era of non-conventional conflicts, actors can launch development during a conflict. This is especially true when a conflictual situation does not have a precise end. When development works, at the local scale, urban territories are active and central actors. Local territories play a central role in both development and post-conflict reconstruction. This paper focuses on territories, but also on their complex powers in development projects. In fact, in African realities, powers are certainly linked to the "politique du ventre" theorized by Jean-François Bayart, but cannot be reduced only to the unique African interpretation of State power. This paper uses Senegalese examples, raising questions and offering insights from a geographic point of view. Nevertheless, many other examples in a variety of countries fit the proposed analysis. From colonial times, human geography has a long experience in questioning development. French geographers have studied the philosophy of development, have criticized the projects and served as experts in many cases since the 1950s. For decades they focused primarily on rural territories; however, at the present time, they look more to cities, especially capitals. The reason for this shift can be easily identified. Wars take place essentially in capital cities and development starts in the same places.

Keywords: *Urban Geography; Development; Power; Post-Conflict Reconstruction; Local Territories.*

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INTRODUCTION

When does development work? In what conditions does it happen? Why? How? Is one scale more adequate than others? These kinds of questions and others are commonly present in the field, raised by practitioners. Geographers working in sub-Saharan Africa have had to deal with the same preoccupations for decades, since colonial times. Before the word "development" was in use, French geographers talked about *mise en valeur*, the ancestor of development. From that time, geographers have focused on the local scale, considering it as the most adequate and the most likely to succeed. I am going to explore this path.

Many scholars have defined and theorized development. The interpretation that I will follow is Gilbert Rists' analysis (1996). He starts by affirming that development is a Western idea, a Western philosophy born to be used exclusively in non-Western realities. This is already a particular epistemological choice. For Gilbert Rist, development is a group of practices, sometimes apparently contradictory, to insure social reproduction. Development forces the transformation and destruction of physical environments and social relations, in order to increase production or merchandise (goods and services), exchanged by a solvent demand. Defined in this way, development is supposed to improve the quality of life, following the Western representations of this life quality, but it destroys parts of physical and immaterial realities. It is, then, a geographical issue.

Another set of questions that geographers have raised and tried to solve is linked to conflicts and wars. Conflictual situations, studied at first as static and dual confrontations in a fixed and stable framework, have become more complex and difficult to dissect. Political geographers have progressively started talking about "conventional" and "non-conventional" conflicts. Besides the names, the second expression indicates the unpredictable data with which geographers are confronted and that they try to map out.

Even more challenging is to link post-conflict periods and development projects. I will do this all along this paper in five parts, using Senegalese examples. I will start by focusing on conflicts and post-conflict periods. Then, I will show how development can

help. In doing so, I will expose the role that territories have and as a consequence the power that they possess. If territories have a power, it means that powers are not only the traditional attributes of human beings, individuals or groups. After developing what powers exist in current political geography, the last part of the paper will suggest a recent shift to sustainable development, a powerful discourse becoming more and more central in development projects.

CORE ARGUMENT/ESSENCE OF PAPER

Urban spaces, development and conflicts

It is not a major discovery to assert that our planet is becoming more and more urban, with the positive and negative consequences related to this growth. Cities are growing and their density increases with the diversity they condense: in these highly populated environments, urban planning and management becomes strategic. In African countries, planners are confronted with social and spatial issues like slums (Davis, 2006), transportation, segregation, unemployment and so on, not easy to approach. Cities are

the territories of the future, not only for what happens in the cities themselves (they concentrate economic and political power), but also for the consequences that they have in the surrounding areas, such as in peri-urban spaces, knowing that the areas surrounding the cities continue to expand. In the past, geographers used the expression "relations city/countryside" to characterize these processes of interaction between a city and its surrounding region. At the present time, the limits of cities (especially the larger ones) are not clear and fixed as in the past: it is not so evident to identify what phenomena happen in the countryside and what takes place within the city (for example, the building of new housing at the margins of metropolises). City and countryside are not separated: they are a continuum, in which the edge moves with the situations considered (Simone, 2005).

With the cities growing, metropolisation becomes a key phenomenon and large metropolises are central places. Being concerned by development and conflicts, I assert that both these processes start in large metropolises. In fact, the central power is located there; the interfaces with international organisations are there,

too. They concentrate the economic power and the tools used by the actors to build development (research laboratories, private societies). At the same time, being such powerful spaces, they happen to be the places where conflicts take place: conflicts are urban phenomena. They are attacked by the adversary for weakening the counterpart, they are also the place where civil protestation and civil wars start.

What I just said explains why French geographers studying development were in the past especially concerned by the countryside, what was called in African environments *la brousse* (the bush), an expression which does not do justice to the richness of landscapes and social implications. Agriculture and the development of rural societies have been for a long time the key themes (D'Alessandro-Scarpari, 2005). Cities were certainly less studied, always compared to Western urban spaces, to underline that African cities were chaotic spaces, always more difficult to manage with their incessant growth. There is a clear a turning point, a moment and an occasion that signifies this change: it is certainly a symbol, and a powerful one. In December 1978, from the

4th to the 8th, in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) a large international conference took place, entitled "Maîtrise de l'espace agraire et développement en Afrique tropicale. Logique paysanne et rationalité technique" (Mastery of agrarian spaces and development in tropical Africa. Peasant logic and technical rationality). This event gathered European and African scholars (a first public recognition for African schools of geography), French as well as English speakers, and was an occasion to summarize what was known at that time about rural development. It was also the occasion to announce publicly at the end of the conference that a page was turned. From this moment, geographers, always more numerous, were looking at cities and raising new questions, focusing on urban spaces. Plus, to underline this change, French geographers, traditionally more focused on French-speaking Africa and more precisely on the former French colonies, turned for the first time to other African countries: South Africa, Rwanda, Uganda...

Questioning the "post" in post-conflict reconstruction

Conflicts were traditionally considered in political science and

political geography as situations having a precise date of beginning and "an end" easy to identify, at least as a stopping point, when something happens, changing the controversial issue between the two adversaries. This is what was called a "traditional conflict" generally between two opponents, which were more often than not two States. Conflictual situations are much more complex at the present time. African wars are not traditional conflicts any longer. They include a large variety of actors (not only States, but also NGOs, international and continental organisations, terrorists groups...) during the conflictual period (Flint, et al., 2009), as well as in reconstruction strategy and in the related development projects. In these conflictual issues, there is no precise end and periods of calm are followed by war-type events (Kobayashi, 2009).

Casamance, the southern region of Senegal, at the border with Guinea Bissau and Guinea Conakry, is a good example of a non-conventional conflict. Separated from the rest of the country by the presence of Gambia, the capital of Casamance, Ziguinchor, is far from Dakar and from the rest of the country, much closer to neighbouring countries than to the rest of Senegal. From 1982 to today, the region has endured attacks from the rebel movement MFDC (*Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance*) and proportional responses from the Senegalese army, attempting to stop the rebellion and the violence. Nevertheless, 1982 was only the open manifestation of a conflict already latent since colonial times and continuing after independence; in 1982 the conflict become open, the attacks more regular and better organized. Cease-fires, negotiations, attacks and a peace treaty signed in 2004 have had as a unique result that the region constantly vacillates between war and peace. Certainly, some parts of Casamance are more touched and more frequently by the violence than others, because Casamance is not a homogeneous entity, but the feeling of violence is constantly present. In October 2009, six Senegalese soldiers were killed near the village of Sare Boya, confirming the general climate of insecurity. Killings and attacks are frequent, in majority targeted against police officials and the army and never stop for any significant length of time.

This means that, from the 1980s to today, there has never been a post-conflict time.

Following the development theory, the State should still be waiting for the end of the hostilities to start any project. Nevertheless, the Senegalese State has put in place a process of transformation that can be called development, mainly focused on the capital city of Ziguinchor. The conflictual events do not stop this process and the development of the region, even if the transformation is difficult and takes time. The distance of Ziguinchor from the rest of the country is certainly a problem, but not impossible to solve: to get there from Dakar by road is not an easy trip (the roads being impracticable). The other options to reach Ziguinchor are boat (a more than 12 hour trip) and plane, this last option being the shortest and most comfortable. This is the actual situation, but a ground connection without transhipment (commonly called in French *le bac*) has been in place since 1978. This signifies that the physical difficulties are not so insuperable.

Despite these problems, the development of Casamance is on the way and has been accelerated since 2007, showing that this border region is a key area for Senegal, an interface with bordering countries. In fact, the University

of Ziguinchor, the third of the country, opened its doors in 2007 and is growing fast. The university is a key point of this strategy by the State. At the same time, the airport of Ziguinchor was enlarged in 2007. Plus, some projects to improve the quality of the city roads, the water treatment and the streets' electrification are part of a bigger urban plan, going on from the end of 2009. These projects (and others on the way) have a common point: to show that Ziguinchor is not a "big village" any more, but a city attempting to become an important international city, a metropolis.

All these projects prove that reconstruction can also take place during a conflict, not waiting for the end of it. Certainly, this is a risky choice, because the newly built infrastructures could be destroyed or damaged by an MFDC attack. Nevertheless, there is a political reason behind this strategy.

Development as a weapon for peace

These local development projects centred on the city of Ziguinchor serve also to the Senegalese State as a *weapon for peace*. In fact, what better argument for the rebellion than to assert that a region,

geographically remote and separated from the rest of the country, is left behind by the central State? During the colonial period, Casamance was a rich and important region, basing its economy on its natural resources, especially agriculture and fishing (Saglio, 2004; Cormier-Salem, 1992). Tourism has been developing too, taking advantage of the luxurious and well-preserved forest, of the traditional villages and of the beauty of the river and of its landscapes. With this activity was created the necessary tourist infrastructures: hotels, bars, restaurants, etc.

Nevertheless, since the 1980s and the 1990s, Senegal developed quickly, thanks to its political stability and to its economic choices. Despite some sectors (like education) in which Casamance has always been competitive (second only to the region of the capital), certainly; Casamance developed more slowly than the rest of the country (Marut, 1999). Casamance was almost left behind as a marginal periphery, when the State was concerned by issues like the creation of the Niokolo Park and other environmental protected areas (parks, reserves), urban planning in Dakar and Saint-Louis, water management, bitumization of the major roads.

As an indicator that Casamance was left behind before 2007: the condition of the road going from Dakar to Ziguinchor, through Kaolack and Tambacounda, one of the major routes of the country, has been worsening sensibly. It was more practicable at the end of the 1990s than in 2007!

This feeling that Casamance was developing less than the rest of Senegal during the last decades helped the rebellion to find a consensus among the people. By pushing development, Senegal is stopping the rebellion by removing one of the best reasons to support it. Development is working as a *weapon for peace*: encouraging local projects, improving the quality of life and increasing State-run projects wanting to introduce the city capital into the worldwide networks. Development is achieved with practical, immediately visible changes, making a real difference in the way people live. Besides the criticism accompanying the actions of the mayor Abdoulaye Baldé and his group, these actions are numerous and recent. These interventions are focused on infrastructures: to finish building the cultural centre, to improve the banks along the river, but also some work done to the city hall, the market and the

bus station. These projects have been realized by the city itself, but with the participation of other actors. Some other projects are directed by other actors, a variety of actors, increasing the number and the types of powers involved in the future of the city.

Urban territories, their power and their actions

In political science, in the study of reconstruction and post-conflict periods, it is common to focus on individual and collective actors and on the powers involved in the process. From a geographic point of view, I make a shift: to focus on territories. It is not only a matter of words and definitions. This displacement brings also a central modification of perspective. It is in fact a theoretical shift with huge academic consequences (the way in which situations are analysed), but also with practical issues (in development management and policy).

In human geography, a territory is not just an administrative and political division of an indistinct space. This is the common vision of a territory. It is a social construction, material and immaterial at the same time, incessantly built and transformed by social

groups and individuals. These social actors develop strategies, perceptions, sometimes attachment or hatred or indifference, but also interests and opposite, often incompatible, visions. This explains why territories are so conflictual: they coagulate different projects and actors defend through territories their interests (Lussault, 2007). Being part of social issues, they can have multiple scales: from the micro-local (a street or a block) to the international (a transborder region), through all the intermediate levels (local, regional, national).

Through the projects and through the social actors involved in them, one can assert that territories are actors themselves: they act the same way human beings do. Once created, they have their own life, their evolution and their end. This vision was inspired by the sociology of science (Latour, 2001), theorizing the existence of non-human actors. Non-humans act in the everyday life of human beings and societies with wide consequences; territories are non-human actors as well. This means that cities, neighbourhoods... act by themselves. Human actors speak for them as "spokespersons". Following that theory, a city acts, as well as any other

territory, and it speaks through the human actors involved in its planning and in the projects transforming it: these processes being conflictual, the city is an actor in the conflicts.

Going back to the example of Casamance, Ziguinchor is not only the scene, a place where something happens, but an active actor in the process of its own transformation. The city itself is acting and bringing changes through several actors (public, private, local, national and international), giving voice to them. These actors become spokespersons for the city: they "give voice" to it.

I use the example of university action. Some projects concern the university directly, but some transformations are larger and involve the city and the broader region as well. In January 2011, the university is launching some calls for projects: to improve the quality of the roads and parking lots inside the campus, to enhance some university buildings. These projects will gather several actors; they will help to reduce unemployment. This is local development and the university is a major actor. The university has its word to say in urban planning; it

participates directly or indirectly in the plan of the city. This is possible because territories, especially urban territories change swiftly and drain other changes (economic for instance, but not only).

The university is nowadays a powerful territory within the city, a strong actor with growing power. Political scientists studying powers and governance in African countries have focused on State powers. Following these theories, States in Africa are hybrid creations between Western bureaucratic States and African societies who transform them following their own aspirations. African politics are like politics anywhere else in the world. Jean-François Bayart (2006) called the political practice related to the African State *la politique du ventre* (the politics of the belly). This expression refers not only to the necessity of survival, but also to a complex array of cultural representations. The politics of the belly attest to an African trajectory of power, part of a long-term historical development. Political geographers have insisted on adding other powers, as important as State actors and even more powerful, depending on the situations. NGOs, private actors and city councils are example of actors

which add to the panorama of powers. Territories involved in projects have to be taken into account, too, as strategic powers.

In the example of Ziguinchor, the university is a powerful actor of development: it attracts a large population of national and especially international students. It gathers academics and it gives work to people employed in the administration. It helps real estate to increase and more precisely high and middle quality housing, what "foreigners" search for when they come to establish themselves in the city. The university boosts other employment sectors: being located at the edge of the city and public transportation being non-existent, its presence gives more work to taxi drivers. An indicator is the fact that taxi drivers use a fixed fare from everywhere in the city to the university campus: this happens in Senegal only in big cities, like Dakar and Saint-Louis.

Looking again to city planning, water purification is one of the first priorities for the city. The work being done in this sector are done under the direction and the funding of the Office National de l'Assainissement du Sénégal (ONA), the national office supervising the sector. Water purification is a sector in which other actors are involved and powerful: the Agence de Développement Municipal (ADM), but also a private actor, Agetip, in charge of the practical realization of the project.

The ADM is also at the heart of other actions: 11 km of roads to build, the city electrification projects and the current realization of a plant producing pavement, supposed to employ 3.000 people, once active. These actors and these powers are mainly at the national scale, but there are also "hybrid powers", mixing the national with the international scale. From 2008, France and Senegal have signed a protocol of accord to create a Fonds Sociaux de Développment (FSD), certainly acting on the entire State of Senegal, but focusing on Casamance and for some projects, on the "region of Ziguinchor". 1 million euros are assigned to create employment for the young and for the vulnerable parts of the urban population.

From development to sustainable development

Development searches incessantly for new strategies, able to gather together actors and consensus in a globalised world. Discourses are

powerful tools, even for development issues. More precisely, I argue that development can nowadays use sustainable development as an efficient and performative discourse and strategy. In fact, what is sustainable development, if not a powerful discourse to be used by actors to reach their goals?

Focusing on local communities and their resources, and more precisely on their natural resources, development can work and become a reality. One of the key conditions is to give the direction of the projects to local communities: they are active and central actors in development projects. An excellent example can be found again in Senegal, where the association "Nature-Communautés-Développement" has been developed. The philosophy underpinning this international association is the environmental orientation, pushing to conservation, through the mobilization of local communities. Preventing the degradation of environmental and natural resources is a way to protect the existence of local communities and a strategy to avoid the disappearance of traditional systems of production. This, too, is a form of development.

Communities can become aware of these questions and be

involved in these projects, and even direct the projects when they are highly concerned by them. Some parts of the society like younger generations, prominent citizens (*chefferies*) and women have to be central actors, to give more chance to the project to succeed. These projects not only increase awareness, but also improve the economic resources within the community.

Plus, this Senegalese example is focused on peculiar territories: key actors and the key powers of these projects. The *Espace naturel communautaire (ENC)* and the *Réserve naturelle communautaire (RNC)*, new categories of environmental protected areas were created fifteen years ago in Senegal. Both are based on community initiatives, but they can have two different statuses (respectively a protected public area or a village managed space). These new spaces are also new actors in Senegalese development actions and local communities give voice to them. Is this the future of environmental protection in African contexts, at least some of them?

CONCLUSION & POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, I insist again on three central points. First, development

has to look to the local: the history of the concept shows that focusing on local communities and involving them directly, pointing out their own interests in the project, is a key to success. Secondly, cities are the territories to look at: development takes place there and it starts there (with funding and capacities). Thirdly, territories are powerful actors, as important as human actors, but different from them; their peculiar place and action has to be taken into account in projects.

Presently, development is turning progressively to capacity building. This last process can involve development, but does not coincide with it. Capacity building points out the development of internal skills, experience and knowledge within the society concerned. Will this process give birth to *spaces of postdevelopment*, using James D. Sidaway's (2007) expression? This questions the eventual postdevelopment stage, after *development from within*, maybe in the direction of *capacity building development*.

BIOGRAPHY

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