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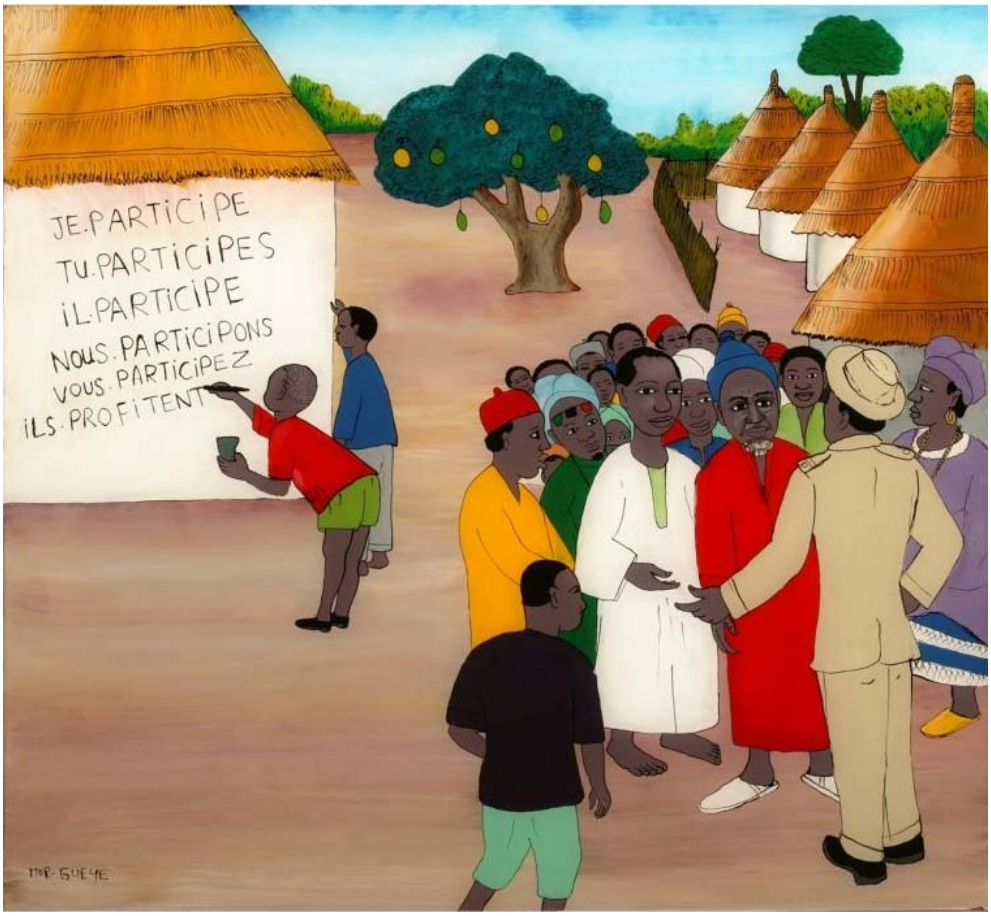

WP # 31

Engendering Exclusion in Senegal's Democratic Decentralization: Subordinating Women through Participatory Natural Resource Management

by

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Cover Image Artist: Mor Gueye

Mor Gueye is an internationally renowned Senegalese artist. At over 80 years of age, Mor Gueye is considered the 'dean' of Senegal's reverse glass painters. This technique, where he paints on one side of a glass pane to be viewed from the other, is popular in urban Senegal. The reverse glass paintings on the cover were photographed by Franklin Pierre Khoury, the art photographer of the Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.

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ABSTRACT

Men and women have different relationships with institutions—international organizations, central and local governments, and traditional authorities—and differential access to resources. In environmental project design and implementation, these differences and power relations are overlooked, however. While the strategies of intervening agencies ostensibly use community participation in natural resource management, such approaches are insufficient for ensuring gender equity. A host of other entrenched locality-specific practices shape gender distribution of voice and material benefits that participatory approaches alone fail to change. This paper demonstrates how the use of village committees to manage natural resources in the Malidino reserve was inconsistent with democratic decentralization principles and its emancipatory objectives. Ostensibly participatory projects that create village committees bestow discretionary power on traditional leaders who are not popularly accountable and have a poor track record of serving women's needs. This paper interrogates how participatory approaches used in the Malidino Reserve shaped the gender distribution of outcomes in decision processes, access to forest resources and land, incomes and economic activities, biodiversity conservation, and in rural community empowerment and social change. Committees constituted by appointment and co-optation of key decision makers are un-democratic. In them, Forest-Service selected leaders are endowed with discretionary power despite lacking popular accountability and having a poor record of serving women's needs. Further, the Forest Service and World Bank's participatory approaches, while formally not gender-neutral, fail in practice to advance gender equity and equality in activities related to the reserve.

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INTRODUCTION

Men and women have different relationships with institutions—international organizations, central and local governments, and traditional authorities—and differential access to resources. In environmental project design and implementation, these gender differences and power relations are inadequately addressed. While the strategies of intervening agencies rely on community participation in natural resource management, such approaches are insufficient for ensuring gender equity. A host of other entrenched locality-specific practices shape gender distribution of voice and material benefits that participatory approaches alone fail to change.

While sensitive to local social dynamics democratic decentralization theorists (Carney, 1995; Crook and Manor, 1998; Ribot, 1999; Smoke, 2000) have failed to incorporate gender as an analytical category into their analyses. Yet to understand the local social dynamics of inclusion and representation, it is essential to be aware of the position of men and women vis-à-vis formal and informal institutions at the local, national, and international levels. Institutions—whether formal state and global rules and regulations or informal social norms and relations of power and authority—serve as channels for access to resources (Berry, 1989). Understanding how institutions work and for whose benefit (Robbins, 1998) is important for a gendered questioning of power relations in natural resource management. Environmental problems too cannot be understood without taking into account the formal and informal institutions (Seager, 1993) that may shape and reproduce relations of unequal power and authority (Rocheleau et al., 1996; Rocheleau, 1995; Leach and Scoones, 1997).

At a policy implementation level too, inequalities and inequities in the division of labor, power, and resources between women and men in societies and between different groups of women within communities have received scant attention in democratic decentralization, development and conservation programs (exceptions are Cornwall, 2003; Agarwal, 2000). In many project interventions, community differences end up simplified, power relationships poorly understood, and gender conflicts avoided or ignored (Guijt and Shah, 1998)—this despite the deep-rooted divisions and widespread lack of cohesion among the various class, gender, ethnicity, and caste groups (Thomas-Slayter, 1992; Agrawal and Gibson, 1999; Brockington, 2003).

In order to address this gap, some scholars are now calling for greater consideration of gender differences in interests, constraints and preferences in development and environmental conservation and for appropriate shifts in analytical methods. Henkel and Stirrat (2001) suggest that better tools are required for an analysis of the whole process of ‘development’: its discourses, institutions and practices, or the ‘anthropology of development’. To better engage with cultural micropolitics of joint forest management, Sivaramakrishnan (2000: 448) calls for new ‘ethnographies of statemaking and political action [which] should focus on procedures that produce the state in contexts of participatory conservation’. Krishna (2003) suggests that there should be an analytical shift of participation downwards to the village level, allowing a better understanding of the processes through which class, ethnic and gender-based dimensions of

marginalization operate. It is time to move beyond the analysis of what occurs during 'participatory' meetings and beyond the use of women's participation in them as an indicator or genuine involvement and empowerment. The public participation of individuals is be negotiated and mediated within households and communities and shaped by prevailing social norms and structures (Cleaver, 2001).

This is not to deny the importance of participatory venues for addressing gender imbalances in development and conservation contexts. Agarwal (2000) suggests that endowing women with bargaining power in community groups may bring about changes in rules, norms, and perceptions, and may be key to creating a critical mass of women with stronger and more confident voices. Women 'would need to move from being absent or just nominal members to being interactive (empowered) participants' (Agarwal, 2001: 1626). 'Engineered spaces of participation' (Williams et al., 2003: 184) become necessary venues whereby marginalized groups can articulate local preferences and opinions. These kinds of spaces can be used to challenge gender roles and promote a female view of public development needs and priorities.

While the above body of development scholarship has provided valuable insights into the impacts of externally driven development interventions on gender and socio-economic relations, many studies share an important omission. Scholars theorizing the relationship among gender and participatory development (Connell, 1997; Cornwall, 2003; Guijt and Shah, 1999; Lennie, 1999; Mayoux, 1995; Mosse, 1994) have not addressed the gendered impacts of local politics. Agarwal (2001) approaches decentralization as an arena for participatory exclusion, but electoral and party politics as they relate to other structures of potential exclusion and marginalization of women do not receive extensive treatment in her work.

The impacts of political relationships in existing social networks as a form of politics are also seldom discussed in the participatory development literature (Williams et al., 2003). This is a surprising omission given the tension between the technocratic approaches of development practitioners and the advent of competitive politics accompanying democratization (Sivaramakrishnan, 2000). In this context, participation can result in political co-optation; it can also mask continued centralization in the name of decentralization (Mosse, 1994; Stirrat, 1997). Projects aimed at increasing public participation or 'decentralizing power' may end up excluding 'target populations' and strengthening elites and local power relationships that the planners may not even know exist (Hildyard et al., 2001). This paper focuses on the discourses of participation at the micro-scale because it allows the perception of how power relations operate through local forms of political patronage (Williams et al., 2003). Natural resource management is shaped by social and political forces and state agencies in charge of forest management, the local elected actors, and village committees. A comprehensive examination of various institutions and their interactions—committees, elected bodies, social structures—and their combined effects on gender is needed.

Scholars differ as to which formal institution is better for good governance and local democracy, often taking an either-or institution focused perspective that neglects extant

social structures that might impact upon these institutions. 'Democratic' decentralization scholars favor elected local governments as arguably downwardly accountable and responsive to local citizens (Ribot, 1995; Agrawal and Ribot, 1999; Smoke, 2000). Those favoring participatory approaches involving other, including non-elected, actors, argue that they can likewise significantly improve the outcomes of development programs under certain circumstances (Esman and Uphoff, 1984; Chambers et al., 1990; Krishna, 2003).

A new trend in the development and environment discourse is emerging moving from the local governments/community-based conservation dichotomy to a stress on partnership between these various actors. Smoke (2003) discusses the important roles that Community-based Organizations and participatory mechanisms can play for making decentralization effective. Krishna (2003) focuses on a more prominent collaborative partnership by showing the utility of both local governments and community-based organizations as they work in partnership.

This paper takes gender as an analytical category, arguing that both participatory parallel institutions (village committees) and local governments (the rural council and its councilors) function in ways that undermine women's ability to collectively address their interests. Senegalese rural communities are affected by both participation and decentralization at the same time and these processes affect and shape each other. In the case of Malidino, there is a combined effect of 'cultural construction' and 'political action' (Sivaramakrishnan, 2000) that determine men and women's participation and representation in village committees and elected councils.

This paper explores the relationship between the categories of electoral politics, participatory development and conservation, and gender equity. How do institutional choices of village committees and electoral politics affect the gender distribution in decision-making processes? What processes shape gender distribution of voices and material benefits? The paper finds that participatory approaches and decentralization are insufficient for ensuring greater gender equity and equality; moreover, they may be exacerbating extant cleavages.

The case study is based on extensive ethnographic research involving participant observation and interviews. The Malidino reserve is surrounded by ten villages; interviews were carried out mostly in the Dialamakhan village, although additional research was also conducted in some neighboring villages. Dialamakhan village was selected as a research site because the key individual designated as contact official by the Forest Service, the president of the reserve is from Dialamakhan. The first reserve committees were also set up there. All the meetings and the General Assemblies of the ten villages, the Forest Service, the World Bank and the various implementing partners are also held in this village. Dialamakhan's traditional authorities, women's associations, and Rural Councilors are all heavily involved in the management of the reserve.

‘POLITICS OF CHOICE AND RECOGNITION’

Choice of policy and site

The Malidino Biodiversity Community Reserve is part of an Environment/Poverty-Alleviation Energy Program (SPEM/PROGEDE[1]) that was launched in Senegal in 1997 after similar programs were implemented in Mali, Niger, Benin, and Burkina Faso. The Program consists of two main components. The first is the Sustainable Woodfuels Supply Management Component, which entailed the implementation of a community-run forest management system in the periphery of the Niokolo Koba National Park (Malidino reserve is part of this component). The second is the Demand Management and Inter-fuel Substitution Options Component which entailed the modernization of the urban charcoal trade and the reduction of demand-side pressure on the wood-fuels supply system. The World Bank coordinates and manages funds for these projects. The Ministries of the Environment and Industry and Energy, which appoint the Forest Service agents, are jointly responsible for the overall implementation of project activities in the field.

The Malidino reserve with a surface of 10,059 hectare is situated in the periphery of the Niokolo Koba National Park. The reserve is surrounded by ten villages with two main ethnic groups, the Pulaar and the Mandinka. The process of the creation of the reserve began in 1998; it was officially recognized as a Biodiversity Community-based Reserve in 2002. The Forest Service and the World Bank designated the Dialamakhan village as the reserve center mostly due to its geographical location: it is nearly equidistant from the other nine villages surrounding the reserve. The reserve has two main objectives: biodiversity conservation and rural poverty alleviation through income-generating activities and food and material distribution (PROGEDE, 2002; World Bank, 2005).

In pursuing its rural poverty alleviation objective, the World Bank and Forest Service make financial infusions and develop income-generating activities to enable the villagers to better conserve forestry resources inside the reserve. Food and seeds are donated during periods of acute shortage, such as the rainy season. Modern equipment for beekeeping and wildfire fighting is also distributed among reserve managers. Income generating activities relate to the cultivation of vegetable gardens, orchards, tree nurseries, and the collection and selling of fruit and forest products inside the reserve. The World Bank and the Forest Service also initiated the setting up of an animal park, an employment-generating tourist camp, and a new road[2] linking Dialamakhan to the other villages.

[1] PROGEDE is the French acronym of the program, which is well known across Senegal. It stands for Programme de Gestion Durable et Participative des Energies Traditionnelles et de Substitution.

[2] During author fieldwork in the Dialakoto Rural Community in June-August 2007, one could see the beginning of construction of a new road. Even though it took seven years for that pledge to be honored, the populations of Dialamakhan and the villages surrounding the reserve are very happy because it will improve transportation, communication, and will facilitate commerce. It will also facilitate pregnant women’s access to the main hospital. There are also hopes that the tourist camp will be built generating employment.

In 1996 accompanying decentralization/regionalization reforms, the government adopted the local communities law transfering functions to Local Collectivities composed of the Region, the Commune and Rural Communities. Natural resource management is one of the nine functions transfered to local collectivities. A Rural Community is an administrative agglomeration uniting many villages wich belong to the same territory and share common resources (RdS, 1996a).[3] The ten villages surrounding the Malidino reserve are part of the Dialakoto Rural Community. It includes thirty-five villages and is situated in the periphery of the Niokolo Koba National Park, arrondissement of Missirah, Department of Tambacounda.

The concept of Rural Council is often confused with that of Rural Community. The Rural Community refers to a geographic space while the Rural Council is the local government deliberative organ of the Rural Community comprised of Rural Councilors (men and women) elected for five years by universal suffrage and based on party list proportional representation. It is the most-local level of local government and it is in charge of natural resource management and land allocation in the community.[4] The Rural Council drafts a Local Development Plan and issues an opinion on all community development and environmental projects.

There is some conflusion in the various stipulations as to which level of authority is vested with power to manage the Reserve. The Guiding Principles drafted in December 2002 state that the Reserve is 'under the institutional authority of the Rural Community, which transfers through deliberation its management authority to the villages on the periphery of the reserve'. However, in decentralization laws there is no stipulation that the Rural Council should delegate power to the village. The Rural Council is the lowest level of local government. In the village itself, the de facto village head is a chief who is a hereditary figure and is not usually popularly elected.

Participatory approaches and choice of actors

To better implement its objective of biodiversity conservation in the periphery of the Niokolo Koba National Park, the Forest Service was to work in partnership with the local populations. Its philosophy of local participation is summarized as a 'village approach' whereby the locals are responsible for managing the reserve. The villagers are to decide on leadership, the main actors, and the rules based on their social organization, hierarchy and beliefs. The Forest Service proposes the committee structure and framework, and drafts the Management Action Plan; however it may not intervene in the process of leadership selection and rule making. This policy is in line with Henkel and Stirrat's observation that 'by disowning the process they initiate, development agencies thus set themselves up as only 'facilitating'… to avoid the necessity for taking on responsibility for the outcomes of their interventions' (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001: 183).

[3] The number of villages varies from one Rural Community to another.
[4] Laws 96 - 06 of March 22, 1996, Local Collectivities and the Forestry Code law N°98/03 of January 08, 1998.

Indeed, at the outset of the project, a consultative approach was adopted involving key stakeholders. The Forest Service and the World Bank conducted a series of national and regional participatory workshops between December 1995 and April 1996 to obtain feedback from representatives of civil society with respect to the overall project strategy. Women, youth and NGOs were identified as key participants who were to play a fundamental role throughout the life of the project. A series of Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) were also conducted aimed at obtaining the socio-economic and cultural information for preparing management plans specifically tailored to the local demographics. Special attention was paid to the identification of issues relevant to women, their training and capacity building.

National consultants carried out a preliminary fact-finding mission in June 1998 in eight villages in the Tambacounda and Kolda regions. The plan was to meet local women's groups, NGOs and government officials to assess the needs of rural women and identify the best ways of ensuring gender-sensitive project implementation. Suzanne Roddis, a World Bank consultant in 1998 produced a pamphlet titled 'A Working Report for Taking Gender into Account in the Traditional Energy Sector' to bring the process of gender analysis into PROGEDE's implementation strategies. Social and Environment impact assessment studies were also carried out throughout the lifetime of the project.

The participatory processes in Dialamakhan mainly consisted of Forestry agents contacting village leaders, such as the village chief, the youth leader,[5] (subsequently reserve president and the village rural councilor), some other youth members, the notables, the Imam, and male heads of households. During the meetings, the Forest Service agents discussed the reserve project and explained the expectations of local involvement in the protection of the forest through reforestation and conservation, while also enforcing the ban on tree cutting or agriculture activities. They also outlined the rural poverty alleviation objectives that were to be attained through improved resource management.

Given the reserve's 'common property' status, the Forest Service asked the people of Dialamakhan to form a socially all-encompassing group to manage it. The women's association, around for some thirty years and composed of all the married women in the village, the youth association, in place since 1992, and the village men then set up a special reserve association with open membership. After the community chose the association's leaders, the villagers laid out a formal list of objectives, status, rules, and activities of the association. The document was then sent to the regional governor for approval.[6]

[5] A youth leader is the chairperson of the youth association in the village composed of young men and women between the ages of 12 and 30. He is chosen by his peers through election based on trust and leadership skills. The youth association engages in the village's social, cultural, environmental, and economic activities.

[6] In Senegal all social and economic associations have to be legally authorized by the regional governor in order to have the right to open a bank account and to benefit from government and donor funding. The Governor issues a special deposit slip with a reference number that authorizes the organization's activities.

The Forest Service then initiated the setting up of Village Management Committees and identified the reserve objectives in a special Management Action Plan (MAP). The villagers decided that members of these bodies would be chosen from amongst the villagers in line with the Village Management Committee structure that the Forest Service proposed. The Village Management Committees are the local institutions in charge of the reserve management and enforcement of the relevant regulations. The structure of the committees is proposed by the Forest Service while the villagers chose their leaders and members.

The committees of the reserve management are:

1) *Village Management and Development Committee* (VMDC). The VMDC is to be the interlocutor between the villages and project structures (in particular PROGEDE) with respect to village level activities. The VMCD is composed of an executive board (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and account inspectors), and the forestry, farming, and pastoral sub-committees.

2) *The Surveillance Committee* is mainly comprised of youth and works closely with the VMDC forestry sub-committees to ensure that forest users respect charter rules.

3) *The Wise-men Council* comprised of traditional authorities such as village chiefs, imams, spiritual guides, and notables. It uses traditional forms of conflict management.
   Every village has a VMDC with a president, a surveillance committee and a Wise-men council.

4) *The Inter-villages Management Committee* (IVMC), which federates the different committees of the ten villages. It authorizes the various forms of usage in the reserve, such as grazing and exploitation of non-timber forest products, and is the reserve's central decision-making body. It outlines the reserve's policy guidelines and serves as an interlocutor between the villages and external partners, namely the rural council, PROGEDE, and the World Bank. The reserve president is the coordinator of the IVMC and all the presidents of the VMCDs at the village level. The IVMC is the executive board composed of fourteen representatives from each village; Dialamakhan as the village center has four representatives, one of whom is also the reserve president.

The Forest Service called on the locals to set up a management charter with their own rules and regulations. The IVMC board held meetings to draft the charter. The charter states rules on the reserve administration and monitoring, conflict management, and wildfire prevention and alleviation. It was adopted in November 2002, was signed by all village chiefs, and ratified by the reserve president, the president of Dialakoto Rural Council, and the Forest Service regional officer in Tambacounda. The charter stipulates that 'the IVMC board is the sole decision-maker of the reserve management… the Wise-men council decides on fines imposed on violators… In case the violator refuses to pay the fine he/she is first referred to the Rural Council, which is the mediator, and if an amicable solution is not reached, the Forest Service invokes the provisions of the forestry law against the violator'. Although the charter includes sanctions and prohibitions against

the population, it does not include mechanisms for the populations to sanction the reserve leaders—traditional authorities, political party leaders, and notables.

Between 1998 and 2000 the implementation of the reserve was mainly related to setting up the structure and composition of the committees in Dialamakhan as a pilot site. In 2002, the other nine villages surrounding the reserve expressed a willingness to get involved in the management and to enjoy access to the poverty alleviation supplies in the form of food, seeds, material supplies, vegetables garden and orchard management. The same committee structures were to be set up in every village. All in all, ten villages opted to get involved.

In order to adopt the charter and reserve principles, three general assemblies[7] were held in Dialamakhan with delegations from the ten villages. At the first meeting, delegates talked about the importance of sustainable resources management and agreed upon decision rules regarding biodiversity conservation in the reserve management charter, as had been suggested by the Forest Service. The village delegations were asked to go back to their villages and inform the people about the principles and mechanisms of the reserve and secure their agreement to participate in the project. The second meeting focused on feedback from the villages, the adoption of the charter and establishment of VMCDs for each village. During the third general assembly, village delegates involved in the management of the reserve were invited to swear on the Koran and do the 'Fatiya'—a ceremony held after Friday prayer whereby people are invited to collective recitation of a verse of the Koran. In this particular case, the people were asked to swear to respect the charter and to never set wildfire. There is a strong popular belief that when you swear on the Koran you are bound by your own wows and if you disobey, bad luck will befall you. The charter was adopted in November 2002 and signed by all village chiefs and ratified by the president of the reserve, the president of the Rural Council, and the Regional coordinator of the Forest Service in Tambacounda.

The Forest Service agents involved in PROGEDE and the Rural Council members were always invited to the general assemblies as observers and facilitators; all decisions had to be taken by the villages however. But as Mosse observes, projects influence the way in which people construct their needs, and 'project actors are not passive facilitators of local knowledge production and planning. They shape and direct these processes' (2001: 19). The Forest Service, the reserve president and the reserve committee leaders urged the population to conserve the resources in exchange for a pledge to set up an animal park and a tourist camp on its territory, which would generate employment and improve livelihoods. The officials urged the local people to cease cultivation and abandon their fields inside the reserve.

[7] A General Assembly is an open meeting held at a public space at the heart of the village with delegations from each village composed of the village chief, the Imam, youth representatives, one or two women (generally the women's association president), plus other individuals from the village with a general interest in attending.

Rationale for choice of village committees

The Forest Service thus explained its choice of opting to work with CVGD instead of the Rural Council which by law should have been in charge of managing the reserve (RdS 1996a, 1996b, 1998). First, the politics of choice of the Forest Service and the World Bank is based on the 'village approach', which aims at popular inclusion in decision making throughout the process, from the inception phase, to the actual management of the reserve. Community-based natural resource management is the Forest Service strategy aimed at building a new partnership with the locals residing on the outskirts of protected areas (Ribot, 1995), and formerly locked in conflict with the Forest Service.

Second, the Forest Service claims that Rural Councils are driven by party politics and are more concerned with party matters and electoral votes than people's needs. Says one Forest Service agent: 'The Rural Councilors are not any more legitimate than locally-appointed leaders, who are likewise chosen to represent all people. The Rural Council does not have the financial means to supervise and visit all the villages involved in reserve management activities. There are insufficient numbers of councilors to manage the resources: many villages have only one elected representative, while others have none'.

This statement of a forester is instructive as electoral politics in the locality are indeed perceived to be conflict and patronage ridden, and do little to advance social equity. Other, participatory approaches, however, are likewise no panacea against exclusion as the 'village approach' can reaffirm the power of traditional authorities. It does so by treating communities as if they were ungendered units and community participation as an unambiguous step toward enhanced equality (Agarwal, 1997: 1374). As Cornwall (2003: 1329) reminds us, in the name of participation, the village social hierarchy is not being challenged; rather, existing structures and dynamics of gendered power and exclusion are being reproduced.

The following sections demonstrate how both the village committees and rural electoral politics in the council have had unintended effects on gender equity and representation. Although the project is not specifically gendered in intention, it, together with the effects it has on local political dynamics, has a pronounced gender effect at the local level.

GENDERED PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN VILLAGE COMMITTEES

This section analyses the dynamics of gendered participation and representation in village committees focusing on women's membership, their participation in decision making, how and whether they are consulted in framing the reserve rules and regulations, and their modes of participation in the relevant activities.

Membership in the village committees is in principle open to anyone as long as it meets some basic criteria established by the village community. A villager is designated as a committee member or leader when there is an agreement on that person being 'dynamic,' 'devoted to the village cause,' and being generally an 'activist' type.

The very fact of membership openness however generates opportunities to shape gender distribution of voices in ways that are influenced by traditional hierarchies, social and political institutions. As Cleaver (2001) rightly argues, we need to interrogate the ostensibly participatory fora of socially embedded institutions. What we observe in practice is the nomination of committee members through manipulation, friendship, kinship, ethnicity, and party political patronage.

Gendered composition of village committees

The same individuals who hold leadership positions in village associations and social networks sit as decision makers on the reserve committees and have dual functions of committee members and leaders in the local social hierarchies. The ex-officio members at the decision-making level are the village chiefs, the village spiritual guides or Imams, traditional doctors, 'notables', and presidents of women's associations. All major existing power structures are therefore reproduced in reserve management. In the VMDCs village chiefs hold the reserve presidency and sub-committee memberships (Boutinot, 2004). The IVMC is composed of representatives from each village; however those representatives are traditional male leaders. Out of the fourteen members of the IVMC executive and decision-making board, there is only one woman, the president of a women's association appointed as treasurer. The VMDC in Dialamakhan has twenty members, including five women. The executive committee is composed of two women and five men.

Generally, the women that one finds in the village committees hold positions that are secondary or marginal in importance. They tend to be leaders of women's associations confined to work in the sub-committees rather than the more powerful decision-making board. Furthermore, the positions that women occupy on the committees are frequently only on paper. Personal interviews with female committee members suggest that women are often unaware of their supposed memberships on village committees. These fictional positions are often created to satisfy donor requirements with respect to gender equality, and they do little to substantively improve women's involvement in key decision-making processes at a local level.

Increasingly, the village committees have become fora for addressing matters of concern to men rather than the broader citizenry. At the same time, the empowerment and the privileging of traditional authorities serve to further inhibit women's participation and representation. Contrast this problematic situation on the ground with the World Bank's upbeat project reporting statement: 'PROGEDE recognized and promoted the role of women within the village structures, and provided substantive capacity development and revitalized all women's groups and associations. PROGEDE gender activities in fact

resulted in some of the project most important social development impacts' (World Bank Report, 2005: 12).

Such a mismatch between local outcomes and World Bank reporting may not be so much representative of a well-known donor impulse to sugar-coat project results (see Baviskar 2005), as it is of the actual faith in the presumption that increasing the number of women in local management structures will promote gender equality. Unfortunately, these misguided policies do little to address fundamental issues of unequal power. Cornwall (2003) rightly suggests that women's opportunities to influence decision making in Village Management Committees will not come from a simple placement of women on the various committees, but will depend on how or whether women represent other women's interests; on whether women so empowered raise their voices and, when they do, whether there is a discernable effect on policy. Increasing the number of women involved may serve instrumental goals such as legitimizing men's interests, but may not change power dynamics. True, having women in Village Management Committees can open space for women's voices to be heard, but such an opening is not sufficient for bringing about substantive change in female positions in the local social hierarchies.

Women's presence in the reserve committees is also based on kinship and friendship. The women are not elected by their peers but are co-opted by male leaders who are their parents, husbands, or friends. The same women who occupy leadership positions within the village associations also sit on the reserve committees. The wives and other female family members of CVGD leaders hold positions of authority over other women. Generally they are also in charge of finances. For example, the mother of the reserve president, considered to be an elder, holds a managerial position on CVGD. She is in charge of finances related to the women's vegetable garden and also of regulating the distribution of food supplies and seeds. As another family head stated, 'it is because she is the mother of the president that she is given the privilege of collecting the money'. The president's wife is the treasurer of the CVGD, and her aunt is responsible for the agricultural committee. These findings resonate with Cornwall's observation that 'the essentialisms that lurk behind well-intentioned efforts to increase women's participation as women are dangerous as well as wrongheaded: these can deepen exclusion while providing reassurance that gender inequality has been addressed' (Cornwall, 2003: 1330). When leaders' wives occupy leadership positions on the committees, they largely legitimize men's decisions rather than giving voice to the concerns of other women.

During the design and implementation processes a meager one or two women per village would be invited by male leaders to participate as passive observers, but not as active decision makers. No women leaders signed the reserve charter at a pubic meeting. This further illustrates the shallowness of their involvement in public meetings and in decision-making regarding the reserve rules.

The political choice of the reserve president

The Malidino reserve documents do not stipulate the role and prerogatives of the reserve president and how he should be chosen. Interviews with local actors suggest that there

was a collective agreement that Gardido[8], a local councilor, should be chosen as the founding president because of his dynamism and devotion to the village interests as the youth leader—he was president of the youth association of Dialamakhan at that time. In addition to being a political leader, he is considered to possess an environmental consciousness due to his prior involvement in reforestation and wildfire alleviation. He also plays a crucial role in the process of getting the villagers to agree to the reserve objectives and to participate in the implementation of the relevant directives.

Local electoral politics and upward links to the national level are crucial factors in understanding Gardido's power base, as well as the general power dynamics involving the various local actors and stakeholders. The reserve president's power is derived from his party political connections and financial incentives emanating from the Forest Service. He has been the first and only elected rural councilor in Dialamakhan for ten years representing the political party, which monopolized national politics since independence in 1960 until 2000, the Socialist Party (PS). When elections were held to the local councils in the 1980s, PS dominance was replicated at a local level as well (Vengroff and Johnston, 1987). Until 1996, when a new decentralization/regionalization law[9] was adopted, elections were held every five years and were based on winner-take-all principle. Only nationally registered parties could present candidates. This explains the predominance of PS rural councilors as the nationally dominant party machine made it nearly impossible for opposition candidates to get elected (Juul, 2006: 832).

The 1996 electoral reform enabled the election of opposition party members based on proportional representation. Furthermore, presidential elections in 2000 ended the PS monopoly with the victory of the opposition liberal party (PDS) candidate (Amundsen, 2001: 51). This first major political change in forty years was replicated at a local level with PDS candidates securing majorities in rural councils in 2001.[10]

In the rural council of Dialakoto[11], which covers several villages including Dialamakhan, PDS won twenty one out of twenty eight seats, while the rival PS secured only five seats. When the reserve was created in 1998, there was only one rural councilor from Dialamakhan, the reserve president. The 2001 local elections returned a second candidate from the village belonging to the now ruling PDS party. Not only does the PDS candidate rely on his party's solid majority in the council, but also on support of the party in power at the national level. One would think that this would provide him with competitive

[8] Fictional names are assigned to interviewees.

[9] The decentralization process was initiated in 1972 with the administrative reform Law No.72.25 which aims to decentralize administrative structures in order to promote rural development and encourage popular participation in the management of local affairs. Implementation began in Thiès in 1972 and in Senegal Oriental (Tambacounda) in 1982 (Vengroff and Johnston, 1987).

[10] Out of the total of 9196 elected rural councilors, 8,194 are men (89, 1%) and 1, 002 are women (10, 90%) (CAEL, 2002). A threshold of some 30 percent of seats in Parliaments and local councils has been adopted for the incoming local elections in 2008. The Senegalese Council of women (COSEF) tried to go further by proposing a law on full gender parity. It was adopted in 2007 by the Senegalese National Assembly however the Constitutional Court rejected it on the grounds of violation of the constitution.

[11] Dialakoto is a rural community (*communauté rurale*) composed of 35 villages situated in the district (*arrondissement*) of Missirah, region of Tambacounda.

advantage in local decision making both in terms of power and electoral legitimacy compared to the councilor from PS.

However, while the 2000 elections deprived Gardido's party of democratic legitimacy, his 'recognition' as reserve president by external actors—the Forest Service and donors—provided him with alternative sources of power. He then proceeded to turn the reserve into an instrument of his party and patronage, excluding from reserve access and benefits members of the now ruling party and their families.

GENDERED SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EXCLUSIONS

Favoritism and manipulations

Gardido's political affiliation and dependence on the Forest Service explains why when some villagers resist abandoning their lands inside the reserve for biodiversity conservation purposes, their preferences are not reflected in reserve decision making. According to Gardido, 'if we abandon these fields in the reserve we will be conserving the resources in compliance with the wishes of the Forest Service, and there will be additional projects that will benefit the population. I too had fields that were in the reserve and I was the first one to abandon them'. As a man of influence in the village, he 'colludes in translating idiosyncratic local interests into demands that can be read as legitimate' (Mosse, 2001: 21). Says one household head: 'If someone is stronger than you are and demands that you give up something you are obliged to do it. Even if I do not agree to abandoning the land, I never had a choice'. Kodo, one of the villagers who abandoned his land, indicated that the entire village was afraid of Gardido. One interviewee's explained, 'we abandoned our lands contrary to our own wishes and without any compensation', reflecting the experience of many in the village.

Interviews reflect the perception among those involved that the president of the reserve, Gardido, and his relatives are the sole or key beneficiaries of these ostensible poverty-alleviation activities. While some families are partially or completely excluded from food and seed supplies, each individual member of the president's household and those of other families enjoying his favoritism receive fifteen kilogrammes of maize, or millet, three liters of oil, and five kilogrammes of peas per distribution twice a year, at the beginning and the end of the rainy season. The appalling discrimination in the distribution of donor-provided resources helps the enrichment of some families, while impoverishing others: during the rainy season many households feel lucky if they could afford one meal per day, while facing enormous obstacles in obtaining a loan that would allow them to purchase seeds.

The village of Diamalakhan is a rare rural example of traditional authorities collaborating in harmony with political institutional ones. This collaboration is based on mutual exchange of favors benefiting only a select group of local actors. The Dialamakhan village chief was designated by and put forth as a candidate before the Village General

Assembly by the father of the reserve president and other male elders who asserted that he possessed the qualities of a chief. Accordingly, should the reserve president act undemocratically and in ways that are perceived to be unfair, the village chief would not be in a position to criticize or sanction him. Cases of exclusion and marginalization observed in the management of the reserve would not solicit a reaction from the village chief or Imam who are the administrative and religious authorities in the village. As Ndioumry, one critic of the reserve put it, 'the village chief and the Imam are on the same side as the president of the reserve because each time the food and seed supplies arrive they get their share. Therefore they are careful not to criticize anything'.[12] The president and reserve leaders suffer no disciplinary action, irrespective of power abuse. In fact, it is these individuals who set rules facilitating control and the sanctioning of potential dissenters. The village chief, the Imam, and the president of the reserve justify their collaboration by pointing out the significance of the reserve for the community as a whole.

Ethnicity also comes into play in food distribution. The reserve president is from the main ethnic group in the village, the Pulaar. A head of a Wolof family, Kodo, who lived in the village but was not originally from there, was also excluded from access to seed and food supplies. Says the migrant: 'I pay taxes all right so I am part of the village even if I am a Wolof and I migrated here not so long ago. The distribution of food supplies and seeds is done among parents, friends, and family, and between the people who are part of the political party of the reserve president'.[13] As a migrant, he is the only Wolof in the village. Although, the Mandinka and the Pular are the main ethnic groups in the periphery of the Park and while some villages have Mandinka majorities, there are few Mandinka households in Dialamakhan. Members of the Mandinka households that I interviewed likewise complained of marginalization and exclusion.

The effects of men's political rivalries on women's solidarity

These different types of exclusions and marginalization led to the creation in 2004 of a new social and political association, *Balal Alal* which means 'God Help' in Pulaar. The initiator and president of this new association is the newly elected liberal rural councilor. Interviews[14] with individuals who still belong to the reserve association and those in Balal Alal reveal how in one camp people are in favor of the reserve, praise the president and belong to his political party; while in the other one they were very critical of him and belong to the opposition liberal political party, PDS.

This division was reproduced among women—following the lead of their male relatives—splitting the women along the same party lines and fragmenting their traditional solidarity. Women were dragged into these political conflicts as wives of husbands with certain political affiliations. The first and the oldest one of the women's associations called Bamtare, the Pulaar word for development, had been established thirty years back. It was the only women's association to participate in reserve activities and to

[12] Author interview, Dialamakhan, 5 March 2006.
[13] Author interview, Dialamakhan, 5 March 2006.
[14] Author interviews, March-April 2006.

benefit from it financially because of its support to the president of the reserve and his Socialist Party. Because of political conflicts among the reserve's male leaders the Bamtare association, which boasted over fifty active participants, lost over half of its members. The women who ceased to be members because they felt excluded and marginalized rallied around the alternative association Balal Alal, which was created in protest against the reserve president and his political party.

Some women were excluded from the food and seed grants and income generating activities by women leaders or their peers from Bamtare. According to female leaders of Bamtare, in order to benefit from the food and seed supplies, women must be active in both the maintenance of the shared orchard and the vegetable garden, and in wildfire fighting activities. Although some women physically cannot participate in these activities due to an overload of domestic work, they are denied access to vital resources.

These forms of exclusion show that the gender problematic does not only imply power relations between men and women, but imbalances in power relations among women as well. The fact that women's associations are looked upon as homogeneous groups with no differentiations obscures a finer appreciation of power relations among women along caste, class, ethnicity, age, and political party lines. At the very least, these facts merit a dis-aggregation of the category of 'women' or 'women's associations' because women who are part of the respective groups do not share a same gender identity. Giving voice to elite women who may have little interest in their 'sisters' can deepen the gendered exclusion of others, notably younger, poorer women (Cornwall, 2003). Donor perceptions of women's associations as homogeneous groups enable elite women to use the public domain to gain power over resource use and access.

How family pressures become superimposed on, and exacerbate, extant political cleavages is well illustrated by the confession of Souko Debbo,[15] one of the association members: 'I am not a member of the Bamtare association which is affiliated with the reserve because my husband did not want me to participate. He asked me to participate in the new women's association affiliated with PDS. I have no regrets because I am proud to follow my husband's orders. Without my husband's authorization I do not participate in any political or association activities'. A male head of a family echoed these sentiments: 'Here, according to our traditions, wives blindly follow their husbands'[16]. As a result of these political divisions, the reserve has been helpful to one political party and a minority of families affiliated with it, while excluding others. The political conflicts have destabilized the committees, forcing out opposition members, and leaving only ruling party affiliates among the remaining members.

Debbo, a woman who holds the position of account inspector of Bamtare, attempted to set up a system of control of treasury funds. The other female leaders expelled her from the association and activities of the vegetable garden. She was also excluded from receiving food and seed donations. Other women resigned from reserve activities as a show of disagreement and frustration with their discrimination and marginalization. Most

[15] Author interview, Dialamakhan, 8 March 2006.
[16] Author interview, Dialamakhan, 7 March 2006.

of the Mandinka women no longer want to belong to the main women's association because of fundamental disagreements over its modus operandi. These forms of resistance and control are akin to what Fraser (1987) qualifies as 'unruly practice'. The latter highlights the ways in which rules, norms and practices that characterize different institutional arenas can be subverted, ignored or bypassed in explicit and implicit instances of resistance by less-powerful social actors. Although, as Ntsebeza (2005) argues, rural residents dependent on hereditary traditional leadership are not citizens but subjects, one could also argue that rural people—men and women—are not passive agents, and their resistance demonstrates their claims to rights and citizenship

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how parallel local institutions, as they relate to party and electoral politics in local councils, have served to reproduce inequity and exclusion by privileging the social and cultural rules and codes through which power relations operate in the rural communities surrounding the Malidino reserve. These findings dovetail with a growing body of scholarship on the socio-economic, cultural, and gendered impacts of government initiatives and development projects (Kothari, 2001; Agarwal, 2001; Mosse, 2001; Hildyard et al., 2001; Cleaver, 2001; Henkel and Stirrat, 2001; Hildyard et al., 2001; Sivaramakrishnan, 2000: 433; Wright and Nelson, 1995:6).

But, this paper also brings in a hitherto under-theorized and under-researched dimension of the study of the gendered effects of externally-driven interventions, namely rural electoral and party politics. This omission in extant literature is surprising considering the significance of the advent of competitive politics for local social fabrics (Crook and Manor 1998). Studies of democratic decentralization do highlight the impacts of the changing institutional and political landscapes on local societies, but mostly as they concern representation in local councils or participation in local elections. As with participatory approaches discussed above, such analyses often employ simplistic measures of change, such as increased numbers of women or other marginalized groups in elected bodies or their turnout numbers. Very few scholars have conducted process-tracing, micro-level type of analysis dissecting the combined effects of various types of government and donor interventions on authority and power, on social, cultural and gender power dynamics in the context of emerging competitive politics.

This study has shown that parallel institutions have reproduced and deepened extant social hierarchies in the rural communities surrounding the reserve. At the same time, government and donor interventions provided alternative sources of power and authority to those deprived of legitimacy in the context of electoral politics. Resources that came with such authority as presidency of the newly created reserve and chairmanships of various committees by far surpassed those of newly elected, but effectively powerless with regard to conservation, rural councils. The new resources were used to channel patronage and punish political opponents. Not only did these dynamics fail to rectify extant inequalities between and among women, but they served to deepen them generating resistance among women. It is unclear whether such resistance, however

creative, would help overcome the inequalities and inequities inherent in Senegalese rural societies and built into projects. Structural change may be needed and external interventions tailored accordingly in ways that are systematically biased in favor of those that are marginalized (Agrawal and Gupta 2005).

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WRI's Institutions and Governance Program addresses the social and political dimensions of environmental challenges, and explores the equity implications of alternative environmental management regimes. IGP aspires to inform environmental policy arenas with analyses of why apparently sound technical and economic solutions to environmental problems often fail to be implemented, and to generate and promote ideas for how constraints to such solutions can be lifted. The program's principal, although not exclusive, focus is on developing and transition countries, and the representation of the interests of those countries in global environmental policy areas. For more information, please visit http://www.wri.org/governance.

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