'We don't want equality, we want to be given our rights': Muslim women negotiating global development concepts in Senegal
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Summary

The article shows how global development concepts are appropriated by women's organisations in Senegal and how their meaning is negotiated with respect to local discourses and practices. It is based on a case study of an NGO campaign for a reform of the national family law, focussing on the concepts of women's rights and gender equality. The tense relationship between Western dominated development discourses and the official politics of women's advancement, as represented by the secular state on the one side, and the norms of local Muslim society on the other, reflect the complex dynamics of glocalisation. Focussing on the strategies of women's organisations on the local level, the aspect of agency is highlighted, questioning thereby the widespread stereotype of the 'vulnerability' of women within Muslim society.

In contemporary urban Senegal diverging visions of development are negotiated by women's organisations, connecting globalised concepts to local discourses and practices. The article describes this process with respect to the concepts of women's rights and gender equality, and their enactment in national legislation, pointing thereby to particularly contested issues in the debates on development within Muslim societies. Adopting an actor-oriented approach the author shows how Muslim women in Senegal are appropriating and 'translating' these concepts into local discourses in order to expand their room for manoeuvre and negotiate women's rights within their own cultural and religious context.

The article is based on a case study in the context of a nation-wide non-governmental organisations' (NGOs) campaign for the reform of the national

family law.[1] The latter has been a battle since its constitution, confronting the positions of the secular state, women activists and religious authorities. Focussing on the activities of a women's NGO at the grassroots level, the author analyses the inter-relatedness of the different positions with respect to their embeddedness in everyday social practices. In the first two sections a short introduction of the general context of Muslim society and mainstream development discourses in Senegal is given, and various forms of local women's organisations are presented to indicate how agency can be developed in relatively autonomous female spaces. It is argued that these spaces are largely disconnected from state promoted development programmes and its politics of 'women's advancement'. The next section turns to the controversial debate on the national family law and its central issues. How the notions of women's rights and gender equality are negotiated by women on different societal levels is described and analysed in the last part.

Through the networking between various actors and their differentiating strategies in the process of negotiating and localising global development concepts the boundaries between the realm of religion, cultural traditions and state promoted modernity are constantly redefined. The case described calls for a consideration of the 'many different modes of practical glocalisation' (Robertson 1995: 40) shaping local society in the process of transformation. Following Robertson's argument, that 'glocalisation can be […] used strategically' (ibid.) the article stresses the aspect of agency, and the diverging logics of action played out in the negotiation of development at different societal levels.

Muslim society and state promoted modernisation: diverging development visions

The religious landscape in Senegal is far from being homogeneous. The dominant forms of local Islam, the Sufi brotherhoods (most important by numbers the Tijaniyya, Muridiyya and Qadiriyya), are internally differenti-

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1 The case study was part of altogether 9 months research in Senegal in 2004 and 2005 for the project 'Negotiating development: trans-local gendered spaces in Muslim societies' financed by the Volkswagen Foundation, directed by Prof. Dr. Gudrun Lachenmann and Dr. Petra Dannecker, at the Faculty of Sociology, University of Bielefeld, and in 2006 as a fellow in the Lise Meitner-programme, including participant observation and interviews with representatives of women's organisations on various societal levels (ranging from international NGOs and state institutions to village organisations and neighbourhood groups).

ated and mutually competing (Villalón 1995: 60ff.).[2] This competition contributes to a sense of religious pluralism that is part of the Senegalese national identity characterised by a diversity of ethnic and linguistic groups. Differentiations according to religious belonging are overlapping with complex social stratifications, including clan and family origin, educational and economic background (ibid. 56 f.). What features of identity actually dominate depends on the concrete context. The 'entrenched system of trilateral relations between the state, the religious elite, and a well-organised religious society' (Villalón 1999: 129) has so far been a guarantee for the remarkable political stability in Senegal, compared to other cases in the region as well as in the broader Muslim context.

On the local level of urban neighbourhoods and particularly rural areas, where in spite of decentralisation state administration has hardly been effective, the sheikhs or marabouts (the authorities of the Sufi orders) play a decisive role for their individual followers. In general the relationship between a spiritual guide and his follower is hierarchical, but nevertheless personal and often quite intense. Many Senegalese turn to their marabout if they are in need of help or counselling, be it in a private affair (concerning family, marriage, sexual relationship or health problems) or in other professional, economic, administrative or political domains. President Abdoulaye Wade, who since his election in 2000, frequently visits his marabout, the khalif of the Murids in Touba, whenever an important political decision has to be made, is a well known although vividly contested example. The public staging of his allegiance to Muridism has been criticised by a range of civil society actors, particularly in the print media.

However, following the breakdown of the peanut economy and the ongoing social and economic crisis, the long standing arrangements between the state and the Sufi orders are more and more put into question. This has opened the door for alternative development concepts and discourses brought forward by Islamic reform movements. Their importance has been growing with the declining power of the marabouts in terms of spiritual authority and internal conflicts among the increasingly diversified Sufi organisations. Calling for a transformation of society corresponding to Islamic principles, the Muslim reformers are questioning the secular constitution and openly confronting the state promoted project of modernisation (Loimeier 2000: 183). This confrontation is particularly articulated in the controversy concerning the Senegalese Family Code (which will be treated in more detail below).

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2 Although the adherents of the Tijaniyya outnumber the other brotherhoods, the literature on Senegalese Islam mainly concentrates on the particularities of the indigenous Murid order, its economic organisation and political role (for a recent overview see Loimeier 2006, Cruise O'Brien 2003).

At the same time, the conflict between secular and religious visions of development in the domain of the national family law points to the importance of gender issues for contemporary Islamic movements on a global scale. The significance of the 'woman question', discussed very critically from secularly and liberally oriented feminist points of view (Mahmood 2005: 189 ff.), is also reflected in the common traits of diverse Muslim organisations expanding on the national and local level. Its most visible manifestation is the rapidly growing number of young Senegalese women adopting styles of Islamic veiling which were unusual amongst the previous generation, as expression of a new Muslim identity and habitus (Augis 2003, Cantone 2005).[3]

The state's reactions *vis-à-vis* the diverse Islamic movements are quite ambivalent. While Islamic political parties are still constitutionally forbidden in Senegal, the government tries to enhance its own legitimacy and popularity by staging its alliances with religious authorities during public events well-covered by the national television. At the same time, the few formalised Islamic NGOs which exist are largely excluded from the so-called development community (Renders 2002: 62 f.). The latter is dominated by Western donors, bi- and multilateral development institutions, pushing forward the agenda of poverty reduction.

Female spaces, Islam and the politics of 'women's advancement'

Mainstream development discourse, as represented by the state and documented in the official Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (République du Sénégal 2002), is characterised by a special focus on women, who are seen as the main victims of the economic crisis and classified as one of the most 'vulnerable' groups particularly affected by poverty (ibid.: 35). According to the slogan that there is 'no development without the women' the Senegalese state has promoted 'women's advancement' as an integral part of its nation-building project and development programme. The labelling of women as a 'vulnerable group', however, tends to render women's own spaces and their active participation in economic and social processes invisible (Lachenmann 2001: 85 ff.).

The shortcomings of the politics of 'women's advancement' are particularly striking in rural areas, where the state's development programmes

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3 Research has mainly focussed on the academic milieu, although reformist trends and new veiling styles, which are also manifest within the Sufi organisations (Villalón 1999, 138), are increasingly spreading out in suburban and rural environments (a similar development can be observed in the Gambia, cf. Janson 2005).

concerning women have mainly focussed on constituting 'groups for women's advancement' (*groupements de promotion féminine*). These groups are excluded from large-scale national projects and restricted to small projects in market gardening, animal rearing, cattle fattening or handicrafts.[4] Therefore women's projects have become systematically marginalised with respect to the state's own development projects (Interview Fatou Sow, 16.04.04). Although these politics of exclusion stand in sharp contrast to women's effective participation in agricultural production and the ensuring of food security, they are still perpetuated. As Khadija Doucouré, the director of a women's NGO in the domain of female entrepreneurship, pointed out, actors of the international development community prefer to follow their own agenda rather than consider the capacities and needs of the local female population:

> The problem is that there are organisations, discourses, and contents which are auto-paralysing. They see the woman only in terms of her vulnerability. Finally this destroys any kind of creative spirit, it blocks the women […] but it helps certain NGOs, it helps certain bilateral co-operations, it helps the consultants. I am a consultant myself. It helps everybody. No one has to question oneself, and the same thing is repeated over and over again (Interview Khadija Doucouré, 11.05.2004).

According to Doucouré, mainstream development politics and discourses tend to 'infantilise women' and put them 'in a situation of extraordinary precariousness'. In contrast to this negative image, she emphasises women's agency in organisations where they 'can act independently'.[5] Female spaces based on gender segregation are important because in mixed organisations men tend to control the important posts and 'women do not have a chance' unless they build parallel structures of representation alongside those dominated by men (Lachenmann 2001: 83 ff., Rosander 1998: 160). That the latter is rather the norm was confirmed by the president of another women's NGO:

> Here in Senegal you will hardly find a woman who is not organised, be it in a traditional association, a formalised women's group, an NGO, or an age group. Even within a mixed *daaira* [a religious association, see below] you will find a woman's organisation (Interview Binta Sarr, 08.05.04).

To understand in how far local women's organisations are important not only on the social but also on the level of economic practices, it has to be

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4 Cf. République du Sénégal, Ministère de la Femme, de l'Enfant et de la Famille, Population Council 1993: 14.

5 Cf. Centre Africain de l'Entrepreneuriat Féminin (CAEF) 2001: 15.

considered that the vast majority of Senegalese women are actively partici-
pating in the popular or 'informal' economy, while only a tiny minority are
connected to the formal sector. Women thus generally do not rely on state-
provided social security, but construct their own multi-layered social and
economic networks to cope with insecurity. Often they are active in various
forms of female associations, like age groups, neighbourhood or village
associations, self-help and mutual savings groups. Most of the local organi-
sations are based on kinship, ethnicity, religious belonging, or professional
activity. While on the one hand they are perpetuating and re-enacting exist-
ing social, economic and cultural differences, on the other hand they consti-
tute a dynamic force in actually shaping economic development and social
change. So-called traditional organisations which have evolved in rural
contexts are transposed into urban settings, where they become part of new
social practices. They are often still functioning informally at the heart of
formalised organisations, like mutual savings banks or officially registered
women's groups or NGOs.

The transformational aspect of traditional forms of organisation and
their significance in the reconfiguration of social boundaries can also be
shown with the example of religious associations called *daaira*.[6] With rural
out-migration, *daairas* were established in the urban context as important
meeting-centres and networks (Fall 1994: 298 ff.), satisfying the social needs
of the migrants, helping them to build up economic relationships while at
the same time guaranteeing strong relations with the religious authorities.
Daairas have incorporated some modern administrative structures, such as
the function of a 'president' and a 'treasurer'. Having proven to be an effec-
tive form of social, religious, and political organisation (Fall 1994: 300,
Villalón 1999: 34), *daairas* have in the meantime re-migrated to the country-
side. With the feminisation of migration and the increasing popularity of
daairas among women, the gendered structure of the *daairas* has changed
(Rosander 1998: 159 ff.). Currently most *daairas* are mixed, but the number of
female dominated *daairas* is growing. They are embedded in everyday social
practices and constitute systems of organisation in which social, economic
and religious dimensions are inextricably interwoven (Mbow 1997). The
framework of a widespread and socially accepted religious practice allows
women to develop agency, expand their room for negotiation and redefine
the boundaries of traditional social structures without explicitly putting
them into question.

The characterisation of an association as traditional thus does not mean
that its form and structure of organisation are opposed to the transformation
and 'modernisation' of society. On the contrary, they have to be considered

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6 The term *daaira* (*daayira*, *dahira* or *daira)* is derived from Arab: 'quarter'.

as important elements in the process of social change. This can also be observed in new 'creative "informal" coping practices' (Lachenmann 1998: 9ff.). Following Lachenmann's argument, the notion of 'traditions' refers to specific logics of action, linked to an ideal of solidarity, reciprocity and trust, which are embodied and frequently re-enacted during the important family ceremonies (like weddings, baptisms, and burials) as well as in the framework of religious networks (Fall/Guèye 2002). Women who can rely on these informal social networks are more likely to be successful in linking up with formalised associative structures (Sarr 1998: 26), which are recognised by the state. Referring to an action research project on 'Muslim women and development', Doucouré also points to 'the development potential of brotherhoods' forms of association'.[7]

However, according to the classical model of state promotion women's groups must formalise and register before being able to participate in the programmes of the government or other development institutions. State institutions are reluctant to recognise traditional socio-cultural patterns and forms of organisation as an important potential for development. This attitude is not only manifest in the official discourses and politics concerning economic development, but also in the domain of legal policies and women's rights. Many NGOs share the viewpoint of the government, which holds that the major constraint for women to claim their rights is constituted by local cultural traditions. This argument is all the more popular as it avoids any direct confrontation with the religious powers and does not contradict the position of those who see Islam as an emancipating force in favour of women's rights.

Among state officials and rights activists this position is very common – a typical example is Maïmouna Kane, founding member of the Association of Senegalese Jurists, former minister for social development, and one of the first female representatives in the Senegalese government. In an interview with a women's NGO network she said:

> Muslim religion, in contrast to what people think, defends the rights of women. It has set up a revolution in relation to the situation women had before. Islam is not opposing itself against progress; in fact it urges us towards science, towards progress (Réseau Siggil Jigeen 2005: 12).

This statement goes along with a critical view on local culture, associated with 'feudal structures' and 'traditional patriarchy'. It does not, however, give an explanation for the intermingling of power relations between the state and religious institutions. And it transmits a certain ambivalence concerning the legitimacy of the secular constitution and Western oriented na-

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7 Cf. Centre Africain de l'Entrepreneuriat Féminin (CAEF) 2001: 15.

tional legislation – is it actually supported by Islam or not? This question has become most acute in the debate concerning the national family law.

The debate on the Family Code

Senegal has ratified all the relevant international conventions for the elimination of discrimination against women and has also adopted laws penalising violence against women. Nevertheless in the national legislation some clauses still exist that contradict the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), ratified without reservation in 1985, as well as the principle of equal rights stipulated in the current constitution voted upon in 2001 (Sow 2003: 75). The contradictions, which are constantly pointed out by women's rights activists and NGOs, mainly concern the Senegalese Family Code. The latter has been hotly disputed ever since it was presented to the public in 1972, constituting the major bone of contention between the feminist movement and various Islamic forces.[8] It has been called the 'women's code' by its opponents, because it strengthened women's legal position, determining conditions for marriage, inheritance and custody, which were formerly regulated by diverging legal practices, including customary, Quranic and French law (Creevey 1996: 297, Loimeier 1995: 197, Sow 1996: 150 ff.).

    The Family Code was intended to establish a unified law to be applied to all citizens, no matter their religious denomination. However, it contains some options for Muslims, to adopt a version of Islamic law corresponding to Quranic dispositions. This concerns for example inheritance (giving daughters one half of their brothers' share) or marriage (dowry is accepted, polygamy possible). At the time of its enactment, Senegal was leading the way in terms of a Western-oriented 'modernisation', compared to other Muslim countries of the West African region (Sow 2003: 72), although it always encountered strong resistance from within. President Senghor, himself a Christian, used the Family Code to strengthen secularism and promote women's emancipation as an integral part of his vision of an 'African socialism'. With the official enactment of the code in 1973 Senghor overruled the objections of various elements of Senegalese society, notably the marabouts (Loimeier 1995: 197 f.). Until now, however, the code has been widely ignored by the population.

    The state, in order to convince its citizens of the need to abandon local legal practices and accept the application of the national family law, used to refer to 'international standards', arguing that these were contradicted by

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8 See Schulz (2003) for the similar controversy over the family law in Mali.

the local 'traditions' (Villalón 1995: 98 f.). Recently, however, this discursive strategy has changed slightly. The government has come to rely strongly on women's organisations and NGOs, who are promoting the code and sensitising the population at the grassroots level. In this context, what is brought to the fore is less the idealised vision of secular modernity, but arguments that refer explicitly to religion, and in particular to Islam, in order to enhance the legitimacy of the national legislation. This changed attitude can be interpreted as a sign of awareness of an increased relevance of religious issues in national politics, where 'everybody is manipulating religion' (Fatou Sow in: Nageeb / Sieveking / Spiegel 2005: 17). It also indicates a situation in which the state is 'trapped' by its own symbolic representations and strategies. Cruise O'Brien has pointed out that 'the state loses more by being ignored or avoided [by its Muslim population] than it does by confrontation' (Cruise O'Brien 2003: 26). However, concerning the claims for a reform of the national family law, the new government refrains from confrontation and seems as reluctant as its predecessors to engage actively in a public debate because this would mean that the legitimacy of secular state power could be challenged not only by local religious authorities but also by women's networks and civil society organisations.

As indicated above, the debate concerning a reform of the national family law has been ongoing. Since the mid-eighties, when the UN women's decade and the newly emerged Senegalese feminist movement strengthened the position of women's organisations, NGOs and trade unions have multiplied their efforts to promote the notions of women's rights and gender equality in public discourse and advance their enactment in national legislation. The discussions heated up when in 2003 a new Islamic association, the *Comité Islamique pour la Réforme du Code de la Famille du Sénégal* (CIRCOFS), was founded, demanding a reform of the Family Code to adapt it more to Islamic law and principles of jurisprudence. Claiming to defend the Muslim identity of the majority of the population, the CIRCOFS called for a restoration of Muslim tribunals (abolished by the Senghor regime) and a modification of several articles of the Code concerning marriage (conditions of its validity and obligations of husband and wife), divorce (legitimacy of repudiation), filiation and inheritance.

While on the one hand the president of the republic publicly pronounced himself against the project of CIRCOFS, on the other, he did not take measures to develop effective policies on the national or local level. Invoking global development discourses on women's rights and gender equality on the level of national and international discourses, the government left the task of popularising these concepts, and negotiating their meaning with the Muslim population at the local level to women's organi-

sations and networks, like the *Réseau Siggil Jigeen* (RSJ).[9] Following this logic
of action, in January 2005 the Ministry of Family published a policy paper
entitled 'National strategy for equity and gender equality in Senegal'.[10] This
paper was accompanied by two booklets containing an explicit 'religious
argumentation for gender equity' – one formulated from a Muslim, the other
from a Christian perspective. The two texts were intended to articulate a
balanced religious perspective on the issue, that would not conflict with the
government's secular orientation.

At the same time the RSJ, significantly involved in the development of the
strategy paper, started a nationwide campaign for the modification of the Fam-
ily Code. In this context discussions with local women's groups were organised
all over the country, to provide basic knowledge about the Family Code and
formulate arguments for its reform that would reflect the women's own per-
spectives. The central thrust of the campaign concerned the notion of family
authority, advocating a change from 'paternal' authority to 'parental' authority,
acknowledging both father and mother as responsible for the children. An
important strategy in the campaign was the use of religious arguments in fa-
vour of women's rights, elaborated by 'progressive' Islamic scholars, such as
the author of one of the above mentioned booklets, Abdul Aziz Kébé.[11] Kébé is
Secretary General of an NGO called 'Réseau Islam et Population', an organisa-
tion founded at the instigation of the UN Population Fund and one of the few
Islamic NGOs recognised by the state (Renders 2002: 73 f.). It supports the gov-
ernment in the areas of family planning and AIDS prevention, thereby repre-
senting positions (such as promoting the use of condoms) which are contested
and even fiercely opposed by locally established religious authorities. The reli-
gious arguments elaborated by Kébé hence correspond to global development
discourses, but to be effectively communicated and used for the purpose of
women's organisations on a broader societal level they need to be 'translated'
and connected to popular discourses within local Muslim communities. What
follows is an illustration of this process.

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9 In Wolof 'siggil' means 'straighten, raise your head'; 'jigeen' means 'woman'.

10 Stratégie pour l'Égalité et l'Équité de Genre au Sénégal (République du Sénégal, Fonds
des Nations Unies pour la Population (UNFPA/Sénégal) 2005.

11 Cf. République du Sénégal, Ministére de la Famille du Développement Social et de la
Solidarité Nationale, Fonds des Nations Unies pour la Population (UNFPA/Sénégal) 2005.

Women at the grassroots level negotiating their rights

'We don't want equality; we want to be given our rights, because we are giving money ...' – this statement was articulated by the NGO-activist Ndeye Diagne during a discussion with a local women's group in Kaolack in March 2005. Kaolack is the capital of a central region in the peanut basin, particularly affected by poverty. In spite of its difficult economic, environmental and climatic living conditions, the city is known for its dynamism and some very vocal and combatant women's organisations, among them the *Association pour la Promotion de la Femme Sénégalaise* (APROFES), an NGO which is member of the network RSJ. The above mentioned discussion was organised by APROFES and took place in a small courtyard in Medina, a popular quarter of Kaolack. Medina is located around the big mosque, which serves as the centre for the regionally dominant Sufi brotherhood (the Niasse branch of the Tijan order), presided by Imam Hassane Cissé, a sheikh who is known to be very active in supporting local development. He has founded his own NGO with strong bases in various metropoles of the United States and is well connected on a transnational level. At the same time he frequently collaborates with APROFES and other local women's organisations in Kaolack.

Ndeye Diagne, a trained secretary with knowledge in French and English, is a permanent staff member of APROFES. She is in charge of issues related to women's rights, HIV/AIDS-prevention and the NGO's centre for female victims of domestic violence. She is also the local representative of 'Women in Law and Development in Africa', a pan-African network for women's rights. During the campaign for the reform of the family law she coordinated the discussions and supervised the NGO's local agents, who had been trained as legal advisers. The latter work as intermediaries between the NGO and less formalised women's groups from the local communities. The local agents and the members of the women's groups share a similar social and economic background. They have little formal school and religious education (implying in this case, where all the women were Muslim, a very restricted knowledge of the Quran). Most of them secure the livelihood for their families by maintaining various small-scale businesses in the agricultural and 'informal' economic sector. The majority of them live in polygamous households.

To open the discussion with the women's group in Medina, Diagne explained the aim and central concepts of the campaign. Her speech was presented in Wolof but some French terms had to be introduced, because they

were difficult to translate, like *égalité de genre*.[12] She said that after mobilising the women, the men should get involved, because the issue concerned men and women equally. Then she underlined the importance of communicating with the religious authorities, to tell them that the campaign was not aimed at 'making politics', and that the women were in fact only asserting their 'rights'. Diagne described how a group of women activists from the RSJ had talked with the highest representatives of the Tijan and Murid brotherhoods to make their intentions clear. The experience of meeting them and being listened to had been empowering: 'To talk with the marabouts directly – that's a good thing!'

With the above cited statement she summarised the arguments of the women's delegation *vis-à-vis* the marabouts. Their claim – 'we want to be given our rights, because we are giving money' – referred to the fact that women have to pay more taxes than men, because the state attributes to the wife the legal status of a single, whereas the husband is considered as the 'head of the family' in charge of his wife and the children. However, the statement could also be understood as a hint that women's financial contributions to their marabouts in the context of *daaira* activities are considerable.[13] This suggestion could be well understood in the everyday context of the women present in the courtyard in Medina, where few people had a formal employment and paid taxes, but everybody was familiar with the economic impact of *daaira*-activities, which are proliferating in the local communities and neighbourhoods.

In the course of the discussion, which was then opened to all the participants and became very lively, many issues were raised that called for a modification of the actual family law: Women are giving birth, but cannot register their children themselves, women participate in the support of the household and care for the education and health of the children, and often as well of their husbands, without being able to assume this responsibility officially; they cannot apply for family allowances, nor for health insurance coverage for their children or their husbands, etc. ... The concept of 'rights' became the crystallising point for the arguments supporting the women's claim for a change. The inequalities and injustices women have to face in their everyday life were exemplified by individual accounts of the difficulties of their position in polygamous settings, their responsibility for securing

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12 Because 'gender equality' is difficult to translate into Wolof, the French term 'genre' was used, whereas 'equality' was mainly paraphrased with the Wolof term 'yemmale' (equilibrate/share/bring into balance).

13 The negotiation power of women organised in religious associations is exercised 'at the backstage'. It is based on the economic potential of their strong translocal and transnational networks and trading relations (cf. Salimata Thiam in: Nageeb / Sieveking / Spiegel 2005: 13f., Salzbrunn 2004: 7).

livelihood for the whole family, facing male unemployment and out-migration, domestic violence and humiliations. Commenting on the examples given, the women concluded that their situation was 'not normal' (Wolof: diaduwul). In this assessment they were referring to a set of locally established cultural norms and values, concerning women's duties and obligations in the framework of hierarchical family structures and gender relations on the one side, and an ideal of social solidarity and a moral economy based on reciprocity on the other.

As already indicated in Diagne's statement, the term 'equality' – quite in contrast to the notion of 'rights' – was introduced with a disclaimer. During the discussion, one of the local agents, Aissatou Mbodj, put it like this: 'When we speak of equality it is not equality, in short, but the equality of rights, because God has created us different'. With this formulation, affirming the differences between men and women as something given by God, she asserted the women's identity as Muslim believers, who do not question God's creation. At the same time she contextualised the notion of equality by limiting its meaning to a discourse on rights and entitlements in the framework of women's position within the family. In a separate interview, where she explained her notion of equality in Wolof, Mbodj said:

> We don't talk of being equal, but we talk of the rights of mother and father concerning the life with the children in the house. [...] It is the woman who is more tired but she is not given the rights that are accorded to the father – this is not normal! (Aissatou Mbodj, 10.02.06).

From her perspective women's rights should correspond to an acknowledgement of their heavy workload, their huge responsibilities and the fulfilment of their duties, which make them much more 'tired' than men. Yet, she accepts that women's obligations and moral responsibilities are different from those of the men – this is why she prefers not to talk about equality.[14]

Although the discussion had been opened with an explicit reference to the national Family Code, these rights were understood as something acquired through women's social and economic engagement in their daily life as wives and mothers, but not as an abstract principle or something given automatically to everybody in terms of citizenship by the national constitution or by the government signing an international convention. During the described event women's rights were thus not discussed in terms of national or international legislation. While the relevant articles of the Family Code

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14 Ulrike Schultz (2005: 10 f.) analyses women's economic practices and the strategies to make their income 'invisible', through maintaining gendered norms according to which the man is the provider of the family and refusing the principle of equality concerning the responsibility for the family income.

were mentioned and the numbers of the relevant paragraphs (§152 and §277) memorised, the concept of legal rights was hardly taken up in the discussion. Rather the term 'rights' was related to customary law, to concrete social practices and a locally grounded logic of reciprocity, characterising the moral dimension of the everyday-life interactions of the participants.

An important aspect in the context of the campaign was the women's certainty, that the claim for a reform of the Family Code brought forward by the representatives of the NGO does not contradict the Quran. Ndeye Diagne's report of the encounter with the marabouts contributed to this conviction. Furthermore, the women in Kaolack knew that they were not only supported by Islamic scholars in the academic sphere, but also by the influential religious leader of the locally dominant Sufi order, Imam Hassane Cissé. In an issue of the RSJ newsletter dedicated to the reform of the Family Code, Cissé was cited with the following statement:

> The whole society must join this movement which consists in reinstituting the working women's rights. This is a disposition from which the whole society will profit. In Islam the woman has to have the same legal rights as men. The responsibility has to be executed by both parents to the benefit of the child and the woman has the right to aspire to a social coverage by the state (Réseau Siggil Jigeen 2005: 9, translation by the author).

This statement comprises different aspects, that are important elements in the strategy of the campaign for the family law. Brought forward by a sheikh who is not only a locally respected religious authority but also a charismatic cosmopolitan intellectual with an international fellowship, they represent a multiplicity of voices and perspectives, that cannot be identified with the dualistic stereotypes of an either Islamic or Western oriented position. Cissé particularly points to working women and their rights (concerning family allowance, health insurance, etc.), linking the notion of legal rights to the issue of social security. Thereby he legitimises the claim for a reform of the Family Code not only by the Quran but also by essential elements of the national agenda of poverty reduction. Nevertheless he insists on the title of 'head of the family' for men, and argues for a compromise, which would maintain the traditionally established principle of a single authority embodied by the husband. A similar position is assumed by the above cited former minister of social development, Maïmouna Kane. Concerning the articles of the Family Code which define the status of the man as head of the household, she states:

> This doesn't bother me. It would be unjust to say that the woman must be head of the family. In life one has to make 'concessions'. It's like going in an office, where one finds a boss who is embodying the authority, but this doesn't mean that the others are harmed or 'damaged' in their rights (Réseau Siggil Jigeen 2005: 11-14, translation by the author).

The code has indeed always been a compromise. When it was established, several articles concerning, for example, the age of marriage and the prohibition of forced marriages, were quite revolutionary (Sow 2003: 72). Kane explains the historical signification of the Family Code as a tool for the implementation of the state's policy of 'women's advancement', which she posits, could respond to the needs of social and economic change while still preserving one's own cultural identity: 'I think we have our own values and that the women should not try to copy the Western model' (Réseau Siggil Jigeen 2005: 14, translation by the author). And she highlights the ability to make compromises while negotiating women's rights corresponding to a shared moral code concerning the well being of children, of the family, and of the society as a whole as an integral part of Senegalese cultural identity.

It is interesting to compare this position with the attitude of Mouslymatou Ndiaye, coordinator of the National Federation of Groups for Women's Advancement, an organisation closely linked to the state administration, in charge of regrouping all the officially registered 'groups for women's advancement' on a national level. Ndiaye saw the reason for the difficult living conditions of women in the 'backwardness' of local culture, especially in remote rural areas. She emphasised that women's submission was not due to religion: 'Religion is not very restrictive – it is Senegalese culture which has established women's oppression' (Interview Mouslymatou Ndiaye, 14.04.04). Moreover she believed that once the cultural ties were broken (*le lien culturel cassé*), Senegalese women could acquire an 'equal status' as enjoyed by men. In contrast to Maïmouna Kane, as well as the NGO activists and the local women's group in Kaolack, Ndiaye conceived of local cultural traditions as a form of bondage, as a hindrance to women's liberation, and as an unlikely resource in negotiating women's rights.

Conclusion: contextualising development concepts

Women's diverse strategies in negotiating their rights and their partial rejection of the concept of equality reflect the processes of social differentiation, reproduced at the interface of different social agencies and development institutions. In contrast to the notion of equality, the concept of rights seems much more appropriate to deal with the prevailing social distinctions and hierarchies, characterising not only the gendered relations within the family, but also the communication between local, national and global development agencies, as well as between representatives of diverse Muslim organisations and institutions. The distinctive appropriation and use of the two concepts are related to complex and sometimes contradictory identity politics within contemporary Senegalese society. The discursive construct of an 'equality of rights' illustrates the dynamics of glocalisation. Its meaning has to be under-

stood in terms of a constant re-contextualisation, in which the boundaries of established social structures and moral communities are redefined.

The new 'National strategy for equity and gender equality in Senegal', promulgated by the government, is partially contradicted by the arguments brought forward by the women's group in Kaolack. They interpret the global concepts of gender equality and women's rights according to local norms of solidarity and reciprocity, translating them into the notion of an 'equality of rights'. This concept does not necessarily imply gender equality, but rather articulates a notion of women's rights based on the recognition of social inequalities. These inequalities constitute the main references for women's negotiation strategies, shaping the everyday practices and forms of organisation, in which women build agency and networks for their social and economic activities. However, these female spaces are largely excluded from state promoted development projects and are marginalised by national and international development agencies, who tend to interpret them as manifestations of 'backward' cultural traditions, that have to be transformed and modernised.

Concerning the position of women's organisations and their visions of development, different perspectives have to be considered. State-promoted structures, globally connected NGOs, and locally grounded networks or associations occupy different social spaces and bring forward divergent ideas of development. To understand their interrelatedness an analysis of the position of the different actors involved in the debate on a reform of the family law is very instructive. In the collaboration of the state with women's organisations like the RSJ or APROFES a kind of division of labour can be observed. While the government officially promotes gender equality to assume its 'progressive' position in the eyes of the international community, it refrains from adopting any concrete policies that could lead to a direct confrontation with local Muslim authorities. This field is left for the NGOs, who join in the strategy; thereby assisting the government in its efforts to avoid a politicisation of religion, such as intended by the CIRCOFS and other Islamic organisations who oppose the secular character of the national constitution and legislation.

Religion, as part of local cultural realities, but also as an element of global cultural flows, plays a decisive role in the processes of negotiating development in Senegal. Yet, the described case shows that women are not only acting according to prescribed religious rules and norms, but also use religion instrumentally. Depending on the context and the women's own social and economic background, they might use a progressive Islam inter-pretation such as the 'religious argumentation for gender equity' or prefer to rely on alliances with traditional Sufi authorities, who know that their female disciples can easily withdraw their social and economic support if their needs and expectations are ignored. Analysing women's diverse negotiation strategies and the way they relate global and local discourses thus allows the

questioning of the current label of women's vulnerability, almost stereotypically applied to Muslim societies in public discourses on a global level.

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Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel analysiert, wie Frauenorganisationen im Senegal sich globale Entwicklungskonzepte aneignen und deren Bedeutung unter Bezug auf lokale Diskurse und Praktiken aushandeln. Er basiert auf einer Fallstudie zu einer NRO-Kampagne zur Reform des nationalen Familienrechts, die auf Frauenrechte und Geschlechtergleichheit fokussiert. Das spannungsgeladene Verhältnis zwischen westlich dominierten Entwicklungsdiskursen und der offiziellen Frauenförderpolitik des säkularen Staates einerseits und den Normen der lokalen muslimischen Gesellschaft andererseits spiegelt die komplexe Dynamik von Glokalisierungsprozessen. Indem die Autorin die Handlungsstrategien von Frauenorganisationen auf lokaler Ebene und den Aspekt der Handlungsmacht hervorhebt, stellt sie das verbreitete Stereotyp der 'verletzlichen' unterdrückten Frau in der muslimischen Gesellschaft in Frage.

Schlüsselwörter

Senegal, Entwicklung, Gender, Frauenrechte, Familienrecht, Islam

Résumé

L'article montre comment des organisations de femmes au Sénégal s'approprient des notions globales de développement et négocient leur signification par rapport aux pratiques et discours au niveau local. Le matériel empirique provient d'une étude de cas de la campagne nationale d'une ONG pour une réforme du code de la famille qui met l'accent sur les notions des droits de la femme et l'égalité de genre. La tension entre les discours sur le développement dominés par les organisations multilatérales et institutions de développement occidentales et la politique de promotion de la femme menée par l'Etat laïque d'un côté, et les normes de la société musulmane locale de l'autre, reflète les dynamiques

complexes de la glocalisation. En mettant l'accent sur les stratégies mises en oeuvre par les organisations de femmes au niveau local, leur pouvoir de négociation et leur potentiel d'action, cet article remet en question le stéréotype répandu de la 'vulnérabilité' de la femme dans la société musulmane.

Mots clés

Sénégal, développement, genre, droits des femmes, code de la famille, islam

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