Strategies of Subversion in Vertically-Divided Contexts: Decentralisation and Urban Service Delivery in Senegal

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Focusing on the case of Senegal under the former President, Abdoulaye Wade, this article examines the impact party politics has on service delivery in urban areas controlled by opposition parties. Senegal’s decentralisation process provided opportunities for the central government to deliberately reduce the autonomy of local government under conditions in which the latter could be held accountable for good service delivery and increase autonomy when local government could be targeted for poor performance – actions manifested through backtracking on political decentralisation, undermining fiscal decentralisation, and augmenting administrative ambiguity. The case offers useful implications for donors involved in decentralisation and urban service-delivery projects in opposition-controlled cities.

Key words: Africa, decentralisation, party politics, service delivery, Senegal, urbanisation

1 Introduction

How does party politics affect service delivery in Africa’s urban areas? This question is increasingly relevant for a broad range of sub-Saharan African countries, which face the confluence of rapid urbanisation, decentralisation, and increasingly competitive multi-party systems. Urbanisation and increasing urban poverty in Africa (see Ravallion et al., 2007) place pressure on local governments to provide adequate services, while elections in many of the region’s democracies have at times resulted in opposition parties entering office at the municipal level. The result, known as vertically-divided authority, can potentially undermine the ability of cities to address key service-delivery concerns due to the central government’s inclination to employ ‘strategies of subversion’.

Subversion often involves tacit moves to undermine established rules, practices and/or power structures and can be pursued by a broad range of actors, including national and local government authorities, civil society and external organisations. In the context of this article, strategies of subversion refer to the tactics used by central governments in the fiscal, administrative and political domains. As described in the Introduction to this special issue, these tactics are aimed at reducing the autonomy of local government, either by

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rescinding resources and removing areas of responsibility, or appointing local authorities rather than allowing them to be elected, when they may be credited with good service delivery. By contrast, when local government can be blamed for poor performance, central governments face a different set of incentives and attempt to increase the autonomy of sub-national authorities. As a consequence, local governments controlled by opposition parties will in theory face a disadvantage in subsequent elections if voters focus solely on their ability to deliver services.

The concept of strategies of subversion contains many commonalities with Poteete and Ribot’s (2011: 440) ‘repertoires of domination’, defined as sets of ‘routine claim-making actions available to actors as they seek to gain, expand, or defend positions of dominance vis-à-vis particular types of other actors’. However, it differs in three interrelated ways. First, strategies of subversion focus exclusively on the actions of elected officials rather than considering acts of domination by state actors, non-governmental institutions and local citizens. Secondly and most importantly, repertoires of domination stress that these various actors are all attempting to retain power, while strategies of subversion ultimately are focused on accountability. In this view, central governments may actually be very keen to cede power in certain domains when it prevents them from being blamed for poor performance. Thirdly, while strategies of subversion do involve making claims, they are also about substantive acts related to financial autonomy and political appointments.

This article examines the manifestation of such strategies, and the factors which exacerbate them, in Senegal. The country has not only one of Africa’s longer traditions of democracy, commencing multi-party competition in 1976, but also relatively extensive experience with decentralisation. In fact, the two localities of St. Louis and Gorée were first granted status as communes in 1848 (Ba, 2007). During the 1960s and 1970s, Senegal created a system of sub-national regions before engaging in its major decentralisation reforms in 1996 (see Ouedraogo, 2003). At the same time, it is currently one of Africa’s most urbanised countries with 42% of the population residing in urban areas and 25% living in the capital, Dakar (ANSD, 2010). Poor garbage collection, sprawling irregular settlements on the outskirts of the city, and the predominance of informal-sector work as the main source of employment have prompted one observer to characterise the capital as ‘a place invaded by poverty, offering today the face of a city knocked to pieces, anarchic and polluted. An urban monster’ (Ghorbal, 2001).

By using a process-tracing approach and interviews with relevant stakeholders, the article demonstrates how addressing urban challenges in Senegal, particularly in Dakar, became especially difficult when a situation of vertically-divided authority prevailed during the tenure of the former President Abdoulaye Wade. Specifically, in the 2009 municipal elections, an opposition coalition known as Benno SiggiSig Senegaal (BSS) swept to power in approximately half of Senegal’s cities, including Dakar. Subsequently, a number of elected mayors were stripped of their authority and replaced by central-government appointees, while inter-governmental transfers to Dakar were also reduced. In addition, the existing ambiguity over administrative responsibilities resulted in clashes between the central and

1. Even before independence in 1960, Senegal had a history of multi-party competition. But from 1960 to 1976, it was essentially a one-party state under Leopold Senghor’s Parti Socialiste.
2. Approximately 76% of Dakarois work in the informal economy, a sector which accounted for 97% of employment between 1994 and 2005 (ANSD, 2007; World Bank, 2007).
sub-national authorities in areas such as urban flooding, trash disposal, and removals of street hawkers. Notably, it was in those areas where the local authorities clearly lack formal responsibilities, such as the water and sanitation sector, that service-delivery performance was less controversial. Such interactions between the government and municipal authorities not only proved detrimental to the urban poor but also posed important dilemmas for the donor community operating in Senegal’s urban sector.

To elaborate on these findings in greater detail, Section 2 of this article discusses the status of decentralisation in Senegal and the potential for strategies of subversion. Subsequent Sections analyse instances of political backtracking on decentralisation, attempts to undermine Dakar’s revenues, and three instances of augmenting administrative ambiguity within the capital city. The final Section concludes by alluding to recent changes under the new President, Macky Sall, and offers policy implications for donors operating in such contexts.

2 Decentralisation in Senegal: The potential for subversion

Decentralisation is typically an on-going, interactive, and non-linear process that is driven by actors with disparate incentives. For example, a president and a mayor may both express a rhetorical commitment to improving service delivery. However, each actor will favour a decentralisation structure that provides maximum autonomy but only accords them clear accountability when service delivery goes well. When it proceeds poorly, both actors will prefer more muddled lines of accountability that allow them to shift the blame and avoid punishment by citizens at subsequent elections. Such strategies are easiest in contexts of low education, opaque information, and complex institutional environments, which prevail in many parts of Africa, because citizens may often fail to understand whether local or national politicians are primarily responsible for the quality of service delivery.

These respective and sometimes clashing preferences of both president and mayor become even more pronounced under vertically-divided authority. As highlighted in more detail in the Introduction to this special issue, such preferences result in simultaneous processes of decentralisation and re-centralisation across the political, administrative, and fiscal domains. As Dickovick (2011) notes, presidents typically do not like to decentralise power and prefer to maximise their own power and discretion over national resources. When sub-national authorities, including mayors, are not trusted, then this inclination becomes even more extreme (see Boone, 2003). Consequently, not only do sub-national governments tend to lose important levels of fiscal resources but also face the prospect of being removed from elected office and replaced by agents of the central government. Ambiguity in the area of administrative responsibilities can be less visible than attempts to remove elected officials or to diminish access to fiscal resources, but it is no less detrimental to service delivery. Even under normal circumstances, overlapping administrative responsibilities across different levels of government facilitate the ability of both sub-national and national authorities to lay blame or take credit for various actions (see Rodden, 2004). This ambiguity can be further exploited under vertically-divided authority by giving opposition mayors partial responsibility for activities that they cannot satisfactorily fulfil, given the existing resources and capacity. Alternatively, central governments may gradually encroach on certain local-government domains when opposition mayors are proving too capable at addressing citizens’ demands.
In Senegal, there are a number of features of the decentralisation process that have facilitated strategies of subversion across the political, fiscal, and administrative spheres. Senegal embarked on its most extensive decentralisation exercise in 1996 under the then ruling Parti Socialiste (PS) government, led by Abdou Diouf. The 1996 Decentralisation Laws divided the country into 10 (now 14) different regions, each of which is overseen by both an elected council and an appointed governor. Within each region, the territory was further divided into local collectivities. In urban areas, these collectivities are referred to as communes and are further sub-divided into communes d’arrondissements. Within both entities, there is an elected council, a mayor, and assistant mayors, along with prefects appointed by the central government. In the city of Dakar, the principal body is the conseil municipal (municipal council), which consists of 90 members who are elected for a five-year mandate and who jointly elect the mayor (AFD et al., 2009). Importantly, the electoral law prohibits individual candidates from competing in local elections and instead requires every candidate to possess an affiliation with an established party (UCLG, 2009a).

Political motivations appear to have partly driven Abdou Diouf’s decision to proceed with the Decentralisation Laws in 1996. Specifically, the PS in the mid-1990s was losing its patronage power and experiencing dwindling support in urban areas. By creating a number of new sub-national elected offices, a majority of which were in rural areas, the PS could try to appease traditional political allies and party loyalists (Dickovick, 2005). Moreover, Vengroff and Ndiaye (1998) note that, in Dakar in particular, the PS was feeling threatened by the growing popularity of Abdoulaye Wade’s Parti Démocratique Sénégalais (PDS) and believed that dividing the city into communes d’arrondissements would dilute any future power the PDS would attain.

In the administrative domain, decentralisation law 96-07 of March 1996 stipulated the transfer of nine broad responsibilities, or competencies, to these newly created sub-national entities. These include responsibility for: the public domain; the environment and natural-resource management; health, population, and social welfare; youth, sports, and recreation; culture; education, literacy and the promotion of national languages; investment planning; land management, zoning, and local development; and urban development and housing (Republic of Senegal, 1996). Within the region of Dakar, two inter-communal institutions were also established in 2004: the Communauté des agglomérations de Dakar (CADAK), which encompasses the more urban areas of the city, including the communes of Dakar, Guédiawaye, and Pikine, and the Communauté des agglomérations de Rufisque (CAR), which includes more rural areas. Since decree 2006-1021 of 2006, the communes in Dakar have carried out their responsibility for the collection and removal of household trash through the CADAK/CAR (AFD et al., 2009).

Based on article 58 of Law 96-07, no competency should be transferred to a sub-national government without adequate resources to fund it. Consequently, the government established in 1996 a mechanism for inter-governmental transfers, known as the Fonds de dotation de la Décentralisation (FDD), which is aimed at helping collectivities cover their administrative responsibilities and everyday functioning. Based on law 2007-07, the total amount of money devoted to the FDD should be about 3.5% of the country’s value-added

3. In rural areas, the collectivities are called communautés rurales. Today, there are 150 communes and 353 communautés rurales.
tax (VAT) revenue for a particular year (Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011), although it typically has never exceeded 2.5% of the VAT.\textsuperscript{4}

In reality, since the 1996 decentralisation laws were put into operation, Senegal’s local authorities have never possessed adequate resources to cover the functional responsibilities that have been transferred to them. For instance, the FDD tends to be directed towards three areas – education, health, and youth and sports – rather than towards urban service delivery or the broad area of competencies for which it was intended (see Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011). Although constitutionally mandated transfers offer local government greater security and predictability of planning (see Garman et al., 2001), the rules governing transfers of the FDD are not included in the Constitution, and certain collectivities can receive funds in some years and not others (Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011). The distribution criteria are decided on a yearly basis during a meeting of members from the Conseil National de Développement des Collectivités Locales (CNDCL), which is presided over by the President and the Prime Minister and a broad range of ministers and appointed governors. Since the CNDCL usually meets in January but decisions on distribution may not be made till up to three months later (ibid.), local collectivities may not be able to incorporate these resources accurately before their budget deadline in March.

Thus, there is not only a severe mismatch between budget deadlines and the CNDCL’s decision on distribution but also a lack of transparency related to the criteria for distributing these transfers, which is problematic for enhancing accountability to citizens. As one expert on local governance observed, many citizens do not realise that part of the money for local budgets comes from the FDD. They therefore believe that if the budgeted funds do not arrive, their local councillor might be at fault for misuse of funds.\textsuperscript{5}

Moreover, there has been no real attempt to increase the authority that sub-national governments have over taxes (Dickovick, 2005). Given that Senegal is a former French colony, it follows the principle of Unicité de Caisse (unified treasury), and therefore all of its tax resources are held under the control of the Ministry of Finance. Thus, many tax-revenue sources for local government are actually collected by municipal tax collectors who are representatives of the Ministry of Finance and then effectively transferred back to the municipality’s account (see Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011; UCLG, 2009a). For instance, as of 2007, Dakar exercised direct control over only 10% of its own revenue (AFD et al., 2009).

Local autonomy over resources is further hindered by the fact that appointed prefects within communes have the authority to intervene in many aspects of the budget-planning process. For example, they are charged with making sure that a balanced budget is voted on by 31 March each year and that obligatory expenses are included in the budget. The prefects can also oppose any decisions taken by local councils that appear to be illegal (AFD et al., 2009).

\section{Subversive strategies across the domains of decentralisation}

The above Section illustrates a number of key factors about Senegal’s decentralisation process. In particular, the original impetus for decentralisation was tied to the political

\textsuperscript{4} Interview with Christian Diou, 10 February, 2011, Dakar. An additional challenge is that most elected officials are not aware of the level of VAT that is collected (interview with Oumar Wade, Ministry of Decentralisation, 7 February 2011). This hinders their ability to determine whether their FDD is equivalent to the targeted percentage.

\textsuperscript{5} Interview with Samba Barry, USAID, 10 February 2011, Dakar.
survival of the central government’s party, local governments face many unfunded mandates, there is little consistency in inter-governmental transfers, and elected local officials possess minimal autonomy over their tax and spending priorities. These conditions were exploited during former President Wade’s tenure, which lasted from 2000 until 2012, in order to discredit pockets of opposition which typically are concentrated in the country’s urban areas.

Indeed, Wade’s wariness about the role of urban-based opposition arose from the fact that urban areas, especially Dakar, were once his main area of support. During his presidential bid in 2000, he campaigned successfully on a platform of increasing jobs and improving water supply that appealed particularly to the urban youth (see Galvan, 2001). Consequently, he won in the second round of elections, with 76% of the vote in Dakar. During his first term, Wade followed the example of many other African incumbents (see Harding, 2010) and began to win popularity in the rural countryside. But frustration with service delivery and rising food prices, among other things, made him increasingly unpopular in his former urban strongholds. Dissatisfaction became particularly intense after his re-election in 2007 and culminated with his being ousted from office in the 2012 elections.

However, were the strategies of subversion witnessed under Wade simply reflective of a broader dislike of decentralisation or specifically a product of vertically-divided authority? A process-tracing approach, combined with interviews with relevant stakeholders, is used in this article to address this question. Process-tracing helps to identify intervening causal processes that contribute to a particular outcome (George and Bennett, 2005). I illustrate here that attitudes towards decentralisation not only varied over time in the country, depending on the popularity of the opposition, but also across space. Areas that became strong bastions of opposition, especially Dakar, were often targeted by the regime much more than those that remained under the control of the PDS. This trend was particularly notable with regard to the regime’s preference for removing elected local leaders from office, which represented a clear symbol of backtracking on political decentralisation.

3.1 Backtracking on political decentralisation

After defeating the long-ruling PS in 2000, Wade was conscious of the role that elected mayors can play in altering the balance of power between local and central government. Tactics used to backtrack on political decentralisation allowed Wade’s government to maintain the façade of supporting decentralisation while manoeuvring to ensure that opposition mayors did not possess too much power.

The first instance of backtracking occurred relatively early during Wade’s tenure after his party, the PDS, gained a majority of seats in the 2001 parliamentary elections. The new government postponed local elections, which were scheduled for November 2001 when elected officials’ mandates were due to expire, until April 2002. In November 2001, a PDS parliamentarian named Moussa Sy proposed dismissing all locally-elected councillors after their mandate expired and replacing them with a special delegation of members appointed by the government until new elections could take place (EIU, 2002; Fall, 2009). The move

6. Data for the first and second round of the 2000 elections were graciously provided by the Ministry of the Interior, 2 October 2008, Dakar.
provoked an outcry from the PS, which comprised the overwhelming majority of elected national politicians, because a majority of the appointed members were to come from the PDS (see Dickovick, 2011; EIU, 2002). When the local elections took place in May 2002, many PDS candidates were in an advantageous position of incumbency because of their appointments during the November–April period. Indeed, the PDS and its coalition partners proceeded to win nine out of the then eleven regions and two-thirds of the country’s rural and municipal councils, including the capital Dakar.

By consolidating his party at the executive, parliamentary, and now local levels, and facing an increasingly fragmented opposition, Wade had relatively unfettered powers. This situation changed in 2004 when the Prime Minister, Idrissa Seck, was charged with corruption related to a road project in Thiès, where he is now mayor. By dismissing Seck, who belonged to the PDS, Wade created a huge rift within the ruling party. Many of Seck’s supporters soon defected to Seck’s new party, Rewmi. Throughout the country, Wade threw out of office many of the elected mayors who supported his rival, often using accusations of mismanagement as an excuse.7

Then, in May 2008, the government approved a draft decree that would have dissolved ten administrative councils, including those for the municipalities of Thiès and Kédougou. While the government provided no official justification for this move, some PDS parliamentarians claimed that the relevant municipalities were effectively defunct (EIU, 2008b). However, the mayor of Kédougou was Amath Dansokho, an outspoken leader of the opposition Parti de l’Indépendance et du Travail (PIT), and, as already noted, Thiès was the stronghold of the now opposition leader, Idrissa Seck. Members of Seck’s party, Rewmi, subsequently mobilised citizens of Thiès to engage in civil disobedience in order to protest against the removal of their local councillors (EIU, 2008c). Nevertheless, in November 2008, decree 2008-1344 was passed to divide Thiès into three additional communes d’arrondissement, which reduced Seck’s power by creating additional power structures.8

As already highlighted, postponing local elections was another common tactic of the PDS regime. Local elections originally scheduled for May 2007 were postponed until May 2008 on the ground that they would have occurred too close to the legislative elections. Yet, in 2008, the National Assembly voted to postpone the elections again until March 2009 due to the creation of three new regions in the interim. The government claimed that as a result of these changes, some local governments were not organisationally prepared to conduct elections (EIU, 2008a). Given that Wade was losing popularity in urban areas after a series of riots in Dakar in 2007–9 over rising food prices and the forced removal of street hawkers, the opposition believed that such postponements were designed to prevent them from capitalising on the widespread discontent.

When local elections were finally conducted in March 2009, the opposition parties gained control in seven of the country’s fourteen regions. However, the most significant loss for the PDS was in Dakar, which was captured by the Benno Siggil Senegaal (BSS). The BSS is a coalition consisting of 35 opposition parties, the most prominent of which at the time were the PS, PIT, Alliance Forces de Progrès (AFP), and the Ligue Démocratique-

7. Personal interviews with former mayor of commune Dieuppeul-Derkle, Waly Fall, on 25 November 2008; former President of the Senegalese Mayors’ Association, Khalifa Mboup, on 2 December 2008; and the UNDP representative on 18 November 2008.
8. See the Journal Officiel of the Government of Senegal: http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article7217
Mouvement pour le Parti du Travail (LD-MPT). In 13 of Dakar’s 19 communes d’arrondissement, the BSS captured a plurality of votes and a majority of council seats (see Table 1). The elected municipal council chose Khalifa Sall, a member of the PS, as its mayor rather than President Wade’s own son, Karim Wade. In the suburbs of Pikine and Guédiawaye, the BSS was also victorious, capturing the majority of council seats in 15 out of a total of 21 communes d’arrondissement.

To undermine these electoral successes, the government tried to encourage opposition mayors, especially in small communes, to change their party affiliation.9 More overtly, a new round of administrative découpage proceeded in April 2011. Specifically, a number of communes in the regions of Dakar, Fatick, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Louga, and Matam were split into smaller territories. According to the Minister of Decentralisation, the justification for this decision was that smaller territories could bring the people closer to the government (APS, 2011a). Yet the selected collectivities were predominantly those that had been won by the opposition in the 2009 elections (ibid.), leaving Dakar’s mayor, Khalifa Sall, to proclaim that ‘This government targeted those localities won by the opposition’ (cited in Senghor, 2011).

Table 1: Share of votes in March 2009 local elections, Department of Dakar

| Commune d’arrondissement | BSS | Sopi 2009 |
|--------------------------|-----|-----------|
| Bisiuiterie              | 37.9| 29.7      |
| Camberene                | 27.0| ****      |
| Dakar-Plateau            | 34.4| 34.2      |
| Dieuppeul-Derkle         | 45.1| 20.7      |
| Fann-Point Amitie        | 42.5| 20.1      |
| Goree                    | ****| 30.3      |
| Grand-Dakar              | 48.6| 33.4      |
| Grand-Yoff               | 40.9| 20.3      |
| Guele-Tapee-Fass-Colobane| 33.0| 35.0      |
| Hann-Bel Air             | 29.3| 24.3      |
| HLM                      | 28.6| 20.9      |
| Mermoz-Sacre Cœur        | 59.3| 18.2      |
| Medina                   | 41.0| 25.0      |
| Ngor                     | 20.4| 27.0      |
| Ouakam                   | 21.3| 29.7      |
| Parcules Assainies       | 19.0| 25.8      |
| Patte-d’oie              | 41.6| 26.4      |
| Sicap-Liberte            | 50.0| 28.3      |
| Yoff                     | 22.2| 23.2      |

Source: Agence Presse Sénégalaise ‘Senegal-Locales-Résultats-Dakar’.

The decision was so controversial because, when collectivities are divided, the central government appoints a special delegation to administer the new collectivities until the next election. As in 2001, this created an opportunity for the PDS to appoint its own party representatives in areas heavily dominated by officials from the BSS (Dione, 2011a). In one

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9. Interview with Oumar Wade, 7 February 2011.
of the communes targeted for division in Sangalkam, which is located in the Rufisque department of Dakar region, residents rioted over the dissolution of their collectivity and the appointment of a PDS delegation, resulting in the death of one protester at the hands of the riot police (APS, 2011d). When confronted with criticism, the Ministry of the Interior remarked that ‘Every government, depending on its situation and the aspirations of its people, can proceed with administrative sub-divisions at any moment’ (cited in Dione, 2011b).

Overall, the use of administrative découpage, postponing elections, and removing mayors in order to thwart opposition parties from building strongholds clearly suggests that the tenets of political decentralisation were not fully accepted. Instead, the central government tried to sever the main mechanism of accountability between voters and local officials, namely, elections. This tussle between opposition mayors and the central government becomes even more relevant to the delivery of urban services when it also filters over into the area of fiscal decentralisation.

3.2 Undermining fiscal decentralisation

As noted earlier, the transfer of fiscal resources to local governments thus far has been characterised by the prevalence of ad-hoc rules related to the FDD. This often fuelled accusations from the opposition about their treatment by the PDS government. For instance, Moustapha Niasse, who is the leader of the AFP and a member of the BSS, lamented in 2011 that large communes under the control of the opposition received minimal to no resources, while smaller communes obtained large sums because they belonged to the PDS (Mbaye, 2011). The lack of transparency over CNDCL decisions contributes to such suspicion.

Urban areas, particularly Dakar, do face greater population pressures and infrastructure demands than rural collectivities. Yet, as seen in Figure 1, the share of resources allocated to Dakar declined even as the size of the FDD grew over the past decade. In fact, by 2011, Dakar received less than 2% of the total FDD. At the same time, FDD transfers as a share of the population fell precipitously between 2008 and 2009, notably after the opposition BSS gained control of the city. Moreover, Figure 2 illustrates a variety of measures of vertical fiscal imbalance, which refers to the gap between sub-national functions and responsibilities. Whether measured as the share of transfers in sub-national expenditures (see Jin and Zou, 2001), or as the share of transfers in sub-national revenues (Roddan, 2002), Figure 2 highlights Dakar’s low levels of fiscal decentralisation.

Instead, tax revenues comprise approximately 80% of Dakar’s revenues. Yet these revenues are rarely large enough to cover the municipality’s expenditures (AFD et al., 2009). Although reducing dependence on central-government transfers and raising taxes are identified as the goals of elected authorities in Dakar, major constraints to achieving these include the large number of people employed in the informal sector and the limitations on changing taxation laws. Indeed, the central government determines the tax laws and is even responsible for the collection of local taxes. Although sub-national governments can legally borrow from the capital market, this is subject to prior approval by the central government.

10. Interview with Mamadou Mbaye, mayor of Grand Yoff, 15 February 2011, Dakar.
11. Interview with Amadou Moctar Gaye, Ministry of Decentralisation, 17 February 2011, Dakar.
when borrowings reach CFA 100 million. However, with little tax capacity, they would find it difficult to have enough revenue to repay their obligations (Dickovick, 2005).

**Figure 1: Evolution of FDD to Dakar, 2004–11**

Sources: Calculations based on FDD data (Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011; Republic of Senegal, 2011), Dakar FDD and population data (ADM, 2008b; Ville de Dakar, 2010, 2011), and the Grand investment strategy for Dakar.

**Figure 2: Measures of vertical imbalance**

Sources: Calculations based on national tax revenue data from the ADM (2008a, 2010); ANSD (2010, 2011), national expenditure data from the IMF *World Economic Outlook* database, and Ville de Dakar (http://www.villededakar.org/content/ville-de-dakar-compte-administratif-2009).

12. This is equivalent to a little over US$200,000 or approximately £128,000.
While this has consistently limited autonomy for local collectivities, the Wade government also engaged in explicit moves to limit local tax revenue in Dakar. For instance, in 2011, the government prevented the *communes d’arrondissement* in Dakar from continuing to obtain a portion of their revenue from electricity taxes. Thus far, a portion of the tax that citizens paid to the national electricity company, SENELEC, for their electricity was subsequently transferred to the commune mayors in Dakar for them to pay for public lighting in their communities. But many of the PDS mayors in office prior to the 2009 local elections defaulted on these payments. Despite the protests of new opposition mayors that they were not responsible for their predecessors’ defaults, SENELEC, with the central government’s support, decided to stop transferring this tax resource to the communes (AFD et al., 2009). This, in turn, prevented them from fulfilling their administrative responsibility to provide public lighting.

Collectively these actions reinforce one observer’s claim that, ‘In a context where most of the cities are in the hands of the opposition, the State doesn’t have an incentive to help them increase their own resources. There’s not a large willingness on the part of the State in this political context.’ Similarly, an official from the Ministry of Decentralisation noted the accountability-autonomy dilemma for the central government if it allowed collectivities in Dakar to expand their tax base so as to engage in investments rather than just covering maintenance expenses: ‘If I had been in charge of the municipality and then a new municipal administration comes along and is able to solve this issue [revenue mobilisation], then doesn’t this prove that I’m incapable?’

### 3.3 Increasing administrative ambiguity

In the area of administrative decentralisation, the already opaque nature of local responsibilities vis-à-vis the central government has become exacerbated in the current context of vertically-divided authority. This can create problems for local authorities which, given Senegal’s multi-layered governance structure, are viewed by the local population as the prime providers of services. As Mamadou Mbaye, the mayor of Dakar’s most populous commune of Grand Yoff, observed, ‘The population does not know the State. For the population, it’s the mayor. When the people have a problem, they go to the mayor.’

There are at least three domains in which the lack of clarity over administrative responsibilities has been exacerbated while the autonomy of local authorities has been simultaneously circumscribed. The first concerns the persistent flooding experienced in Dakar, especially in the poorer suburbs where a majority of the city’s population is concentrated. Much of this region consists of former marshlands, or *ndiayes*, that dried up for a number of years and therefore proved enticing areas to build houses for newly-arrived rural migrants. Over the last decade, however, a series of intense rainy seasons has resulted in serious flooding due to the ground’s minimal absorptive capacity and insufficient drainage (see Fall et al., 2005). In 2009, the flooding resulted in the displacement of 382,000 residents, damaged 130 schools, and rendered 30,000 houses uninhabitable. These

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13. Interview with Matthieu Vasseur, AFD, 15 February 2011, Dakar.
14. Interview with Oumar Wade, Ministry of Decentralisation, 7 February 2011, Dakar.
15. Interview with Mamadou Mbaye, mayor of Grand Yoff, 15 February 2011, Dakar.
floods are estimated to have cost CFA 24 bn in damaged infrastructure and CFA 20.3 bn in economic losses (ANSD, 2010). Moreover, the flooding attracts malarial mosquitoes, while also disrupting the availability of potable water.

One of the key challenges in this regard is the already muddled distribution of responsibilities for managing these floods. While the management of rainwater and the urban environment are *de-jure* responsibilities transferred to the local government, it lacks the resources to invest in and manage the drainage facilities that would diminish the risks of flooding.\(^\text{16}\) While such ambiguity precludes efficient and effective responses to flooding even under normal circumstances, the recent political context is even more disadvantageous to the poor. An official at the Ministry of Decentralisation observed that the lack of clarity in the decentralisation texts could be detrimental in current circumstances:

> When they [local elected officials] were from the same party, they protected each other. But today, the ruling party wants to show to the population that ‘Look, the opposition always said that we never do anything but now they [the opposition] are responsible.’ The opposition, though, has said, ‘No, our responsibilities need to be clarified.’\(^\text{17}\)

Indeed, flooding incidents prior to 2009 rarely generated any confusion over responsibility for the prevention of and response to rising rainwater. Instead, Wade saw the flooding as a natural disaster and, in an attempt to show the government’s competence, responded accordingly (Diakhate, 2009). For example, in 2005, he asked the National Assembly to approve CFA 52 bn for his Plan Jaxaay to create housing for victims of the floods. However, the 2009 floods occurred after the March 2009 elections that brought the opposition to power. Consequently, the spokesperson for the government emphasised that, based on article 129 of the code of the local collectivities, it was Dakar’s local government that was responsible for cleaning the streets and removing all obstacles likely to prevent the evacuation of water. The PDS-appointed Minister of Decentralisation, Aliou Sow, further noted, ‘Elected members of the opposition only have to declare their incapacity to take charge of the flooding in their jurisdiction. They only have to say out loud that they cannot and the government will see what it can do for the benefit of the population’ (cited in Diakhate, 2009: 21). Such statements suggest that local government under the opposition cannot serve the needs of the urban populace, even when it is the lack of funding and co-ordination from the central government that contributes to the local government’s inability to address the flooding problem.

Trash removal constitutes a second domain where administrative ambiguity intersects with political concerns. The collection and removal of household rubbish is one of the responsibilities of the communes because it technically falls under their responsibility to manage the environment and natural resources (Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011). Since decree 2006-1021 of 2006, the communes in Dakar have executed this responsibility through the CADAK/CAR (AFD et al., 2009; Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011). The resources for the management of urban solid waste were placed in an account within the

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16. Interview with Denis Jordy, World Bank, 11 February 2011.
17. Interview with Oumar Wade, Ministry of Decentralisation, 7 February 2011, Dakar.
Ministry of the Environment, with the distribution of these resources under the control of the president of the CADAK/CAR, who is the mayor of Dakar.

However, in May 2010, President Wade proposed a decree that rescinded trash removal as a responsibility of the city of Dakar and of the CADAK/CAR. This occurred not long after CADAK/CAR had for the first time drawn up a strategic plan for the management of solid waste in Senegal’s urban areas. Instead, the decree stipulated that the CFA 10 bn annually allocated for trash removal would remain in the hands of the Ministry of the Environment, with the Agence Nationale pour la Propreté du Sénégal (Aprosen) acting as the executing agency rather than CADAK/CAR (Diame, 2010). The Secretary General of the National Union of Cleaning Workers, Madani Sy, denounced the decision during a strike after the decree was announced: ‘This march was also organised to say “no” to the politicisation of household trash. Currently, the government wants to grant management to Aprosen. We have already worked with this organisation before and know its limitations’ (cited in APS, 2010).

Trash collectors in Senegal began striking in June 2011 over the lack of salary payments from CADAK/CAR, resulting in the daily accumulation of, on average, 1400 to 1500 tons of trash in the city. The inter-communal body responded that it could not pay the workers because it had not yet received the requisite funds transferred to it each trimester by the Ministry of Finance (Diaw, 2011). Yet, by allowing the trash to accumulate, the central government essentially attempted to demonstrate to Dakarois that the local government was ill-equipped to handle trash removal, adding weight to its initial decree. The proposed nationalisation of trash removal noticeably weakens the mandate of the CADAK/CAR, since solid waste management, along with highway construction and maintenance, is the entity’s main raison d’être.

A third domain concerns the purchase of land in order to provide adequate vending space for street hawkers. As noted earlier, street hawking is one of the main activities in the informal sector. But Dakar’s street hawkers are so numerous that they often spill out into busy streets, and their presence also prevented mayor Khalifa Sall from proceeding with his plans to pave many of Dakar’s sandy streets. The PDS government previously engaged in crackdowns on the street hawkers, notably in November 2008 in preparation for Senegal’s hosting of the Organisation de la Conférence Islamique (OCI). Instead, mayor Sall decided to find new areas around the city where larger markets could be created to accommodate the excessive number of hawkers. This approach promised both to improve the city’s streets visibly and to allow street hawkers to still earn a living.

Yet, when the mayor chose to resettle the hawkers on 4.5 hectares of land in an area of the city known as Cerf Volant, he was told that the central government planned to use the area for other purposes (Gbaya, 2010). Subsequently, the mayor decided that the city needed to purchase its own land in order to have the autonomy to both re-locate the street hawkers and engage in other investments in the near future. The municipal council therefore proceeded to approve the purchase of five different plots of land throughout the city, for a total of CFA 15 bn. The prefect for Dakar, however, claimed that the purchases were not legal and refused to allow them to proceed, claiming that the price being offered for the land was too high (ibid.). Furthermore, President Wade decided to open a judicial inquiry into the purchase, suspecting that Sall aimed to use the purchases to enrich certain party bosses within the PS in preparation for the forthcoming national elections in 2012.
(Bousso, 2010). For his part, Khalifa Sall claimed that he was blocked from achieving the land purchase because the former president ‘did not want the mayor of Dakar to benefit alone from the impact of likely success from this operation [of relocating street hawkers]’ (cited in APS, 2011b). Although Wade ultimately dropped the judicial inquiry, the delay in land purchases caused the mayor to postpone his projects for the city by almost a year (APS, 2011c).

The fight over land allocation certainly emphasised the tension between the central government and the capital city. For example, a UN-Habitat representative noted that ‘In Dakar, if the city wants to buy land to transfer market workers, the state will block that. So, it seems like the state has tried to block the municipality from doing things where there is the opposition.’18 Similarly, an urban expert at the World Bank claimed, ‘If the Municipality of Dakar wants to build something on a piece of land that is public land, the state just says that that land was reserved for something else. The tendency is to stop the initiatives from the mayor, and this has been more notable since the change of government.’19

By way of comparison, water and sanitation remain service areas in Dakar that are well-managed. In fact, almost 92% of Dakarois have access to either internal water pipes or a public tap, while 80% have toilets.20 Importantly, the responsibility for water and sanitation was never transferred to local governments and instead remains entirely in the hands of two state agencies, the Société Nationale des Eaux du Sénégal (SONES) and the Office national de l’assainissement (ONAS). This has precluded administrative confusion in these particular service areas that could otherwise be manipulated for political reasons.

4 Implications for donor assistance

Designing projects that insufficiently reflect existing political realities has previously undermined the ambitious objectives of some donors, particularly in the area of decentralisation (see IEG, 2008: 59). For donors operating in contexts of vertically-divided authority, understanding the political hindrances to improving decentralisation and urban services is particularly critical.21 Although the Introduction to this special issue noted that political hindrances have been a common challenge to donor funding at the local level in other parts of the developing world, the problem is magnified in Senegal by the fact that sub-national agreements with donors require central-government approval (Dickovick, 2005). Clearly, such environments hold important implications for aid modalities. For instance, sectoral budget support for urban services in Senegal is more viable for water and sanitation, where local authorities have not had competencies transferred to them, than for trash collection or urban flooding. Otherwise, budget support could undermine the authority
of locally elected leaders, particularly if they are from the opposition, by according a high level of control to the central government (see UCLG, 2009b).

In Senegal’s urban areas, the most active donors are the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD), which jointly support the Local Authorities Development Programme (LADP). The main objective of the programme is to reinforce the human and financial capacity of local authorities so that they can better exercise the competencies transferred to them. The resources for the programme are lent to the Ministry of Finance, which makes them available to the Agency for Municipal Development (ADM). In turn, many of these resources are transferred to those municipalities which entered into municipal contracts. Such contracts are binding, performance-based agreements between municipalities and the central government, lasting for a period of four to five years (Goudriaan, 2010). The city of Dakar’s municipal contract from 2007 to 2010 was equivalent to FCFA 5.3 bn (AFD et al., 2009).

After the 2009 elections, some of the central government’s own financial contributions to the LADP were not forthcoming and there also was an attempt by the central government to re-evaluate how the LADP operated, despite donor protests. In its implementation and status report, the World Bank noted that there had been delays to the programme because ‘the Government had taken some decisions that countered decentralisation and this has weakened the municipalities and reduced their performance’ (World Bank, 2011: 1).

Nevertheless, the municipal-contract approach around which the LADP is oriented represents a sector-wide approach (SWAp). Besides encouraging donor harmonisation, one of the advantages of these contracts is that they help to isolate investments from politics much more effectively than alternative arrangements, by committing the central government to provide loans supported by the donors if the municipal authority engages in certain reforms (Goudriaan, 2010). From a technical perspective, they also encourage longer-term planning because the contracts promise municipalities predictable levels of resources. The disadvantage, however, is that the timeframe of the contracts rarely coincides with local electoral cycles. New mayors are therefore bound to their predecessors’ investment commitments, undermining the authority accorded to them by the voters. In some cities where the party in office changed after the 2009 elections, the authorities have decided not to repay the loans they were given under the contracts. Reimbursement is essential, however, for keeping the agency responsible for managing the loans, the ADM, financially sustainable. Furthermore, the contracts do not appear in local budgets but instead are extra-budgetary transfers, and this contributes to a lack of public transparency (ibid.). Thus, while such contracts might cement relationships of accountability between the central and municipal governments, they need to be carefully designed to also address accountability between elected authorities and local citizens.

The apolitical mandate of many donor agencies, specifically multilateral ones, precludes other interventions from addressing the autonomy-accountability trade-off discussed in this article. However, informal modes of interaction are promising where a

22. Interview with Matthieu Vasseur, AFD, 15 February 2011, Dakar.
23. Interview with Christian Diou, World Bank, 10 February 2011, Dakar.
24. Interview with Matthieu Vasseur, AFD, 15 February 2011.
25. Interview with Christian Diou, World Bank, 10 February 2011, Dakar.
conflict between ruling and opposition party authorities is anticipated. For instance, the World Bank chose the ADM as the administering agency for its urban flooding interventions. Since the ADM is sometimes perceived as close to the mayor of Dakar, officials at the Bank decided to meet separately with all the relevant central-government and Dakar authorities to explain the decision, which in turn reduced resistance because everyone felt s/he was properly consulted.\footnote{26. Interview Denis Jordy, World Bank, 11 February 2011, Dakar.}

Other possible options for bilateral donors include greater funding for local elections to prevent delaying tactics by central governments and transparency initiatives that encourage municipal officials to reveal to the media their annual funding resources from the central government and elsewhere.\footnote{27. Khalifa Sall recognised the importance of this and used a website to keep the public up-to-date about finances and investment plans, as well as obstacles from Wade’s government (see www.villededakar.org).} The latter would show where the central government has imposed unfunded mandates or where instead the local government has simply mismanaged resources. Finally, greater attention is needed to aligning designated responsibilities with the realities of capacity and financing. As an official in the Ministry of Decentralisation observed, ‘The problem here is that people believe that because there are nine competencies, there should be progress in each of them’.\footnote{28. Interview with Amadou Moctar Gaye, Ministry of Decentralisation, 17 February 2011, Dakar.} In reality, most municipalities, including Dakar, can feasibly engage properly in only three of them, namely, education, health, and sports and youth (Gilbert and Taugourdeau, 2011). To avoid false expectations on the part of the public, and to prevent the central government from blaming sub-national authorities for not delivering when the latter cannot feasibly do so, competencies should be added incrementally once local authorities meet certain financing and capacity thresholds, rather than determined \textit{ex-ante}.

\section{Conclusion}

In February 2011, in an unusual demonstration of candour, President Wade admitted, ‘What I’m worried about is that Khalifa Sall will work well and a lot for the Dakarois’ (cited in Thiam, 2011: 6). With presidential elections forthcoming in 2012, the opposition could potentially benefit from showing urbanites how much better it managed Dakar than either the central government or the former PDS mayor. Such fears explained many of the motivations underlying the central government’s strategies of subversion in the political, fiscal, and administrative domains not only in Dakar but also in other opposition-held urban areas of the country. Underlying all of these strategies has been an attempt to limit local-government autonomy where the opposition might benefit and emphasise local-government accountability where the opposition might be blamed.

Importantly, since Wade lost the presidency to Macky Sall in March 2012, attitudes towards decentralisation and the relationship between the national and municipal government have shifted yet again. Sall came to power with the support of the BSS coalition and initially had a closer affinity with many mayors than Wade did. As a sign of the more amicable relationship between the central and local government, Sall announced in April 2012 that he would issue a decree reversing Wade’s \textit{découpage} and reinstating those mayors who were rightfully elected in the 2009 elections (APS, 2012). In addition, he
announced further decentralisation reforms, such as clarifying responsibilities between the collectivities and the state and augmenting the financial and human capacity of local government, to redress many of its existing frailties (Sow, 2012). However, in the run-up to the June 2014 local elections, rifts began emerging in the BSS coalition as President Sall considered backing his Prime Minister, Aminata Touré, for the mayoral position instead of supporting Khalifa Sall’s re-election (APS, 2014).

The Senegalese case supports the claim of Eaton et al. (2010) that partisan and political interests play a significant role in shaping decentralisation processes. The battle between central and local government in contexts of vertically-divided authority is certainly not unique to Senegal or Africa more broadly. Yet the degree of flux in the party systems of these nascent democracies, along with the preponderance of donor interventions, adds extra complexities in a region that is deemed to be majority-urban by 2030 (Kessides, 2006). Finding ways of aligning accountability and autonomy in a manner that is consistent and meaningful for local citizens will therefore be crucial as mayors face increasingly formidable demands for service delivery generated by the region’s continuing urban transformation.

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