'Beyond Development: Local Visions of Global Poverty',
Workshop #4, "Poverty and its urban niches"
West African Research Centre (WARC)
Dakar, 30 March 2018

This meeting of the Poverty Research Network's project 'Beyond Development: Local Visions of Global Poverty' was organised by Professor Omar Gueye, in collaboration with Dr Julia McClure, and was hosted by the West African Research Centre (WARC). It focused upon 'poverty and its urban niches' in Dakar, Senegal.

The Poverty Research Network workshops have focused upon the specific experiences, problems, and histories of poverty in each of the location. Here the 'local visions of global poverty' were brought into focus by focusing upon the 'urban niches of poverty'. This theme was developed in collaboration with Dr Idriss Bâ. This situational approach to poverty began with a reflection of the way the university itself intersects with poverty. In Senegal since 1968, students have been able to obtain grants and scholarships but these are often used as food subsidies, family allowances or to build homes. The university is therefore a way to climb the social ladder for students from deprived backgrounds, as wealthier students attend private universities or study abroad, but it can also interact with systemic poverty across Senegal. Beyond the university, poverty is experienced in different ways in different urban niches in Dakar. This workshop brought people together from different disciplines and different industries to explore how the spaces of the city interact with and shape the contours of poverty, and to think critically and dynamically about poverty reduction strategies both in the past and for the future. The keynote presentation was given by Keyti, one of Senegal's most famous rap artists, who showed a documentary on rap music in Senegal, which highlighted the importance of the arts, and humanities in understanding and resisting poverty.

Panel 1: Introductory session

-Dr Ousmane Sène, Director of WARC
Dr Sène opened the workshop with a welcome note and explained the mission of the West African Research Centre (WARC), which aims to promote research in and on West Africa, as well as to promote inter-institutional collaborative research. A special note of thanks was then offered to Professor Gueye for having organised the workshop and to his research devoted to trade unions and the May 68 Movement in Senegal. Finally, he offered a preliminary thought to launch the session. Dr Sène began the workshop by raising an interesting question; he commented upon the abject poverty in Western countries, such as France, Britain, and America, and asked if Senegalese people, and in particular the youth, are aware of the extent of poverty and homelessness in Europe, and if they knew, would migration take a different turn?

-Professor Omar Gueye, Introduction to the Workshop
Professor Gueye started by thanking all the participants who responded enthusiastically to the invitation. He then offered an introduction to the workshop, the idea of which started during his time as a fellow at Harvard University between 2012 and 2014, where he was working on a global history project, his own research focusing on the May 68 movement,

which he had already started in Dakar. Dr McClure had the idea of organising workshops on poverty around the world, building upon collaborations started at the Weatherhead Initiative for Global History (WIGH). While organising this workshop, Professor Gueye realised that many people were researching topics related to poverty and keen to join the discussion.

-Julia McClure, Introduction to Global Poverty

Dr McClure introduced the background to the Poverty Research Network and its current AHRC project '"Beyond Development: Local Visions of Global Poverty.' This project has been exploring different marginalised voices, narratives, and spaces of poverty, to pluralise our understanding of the historically constructed nature of poverty and to demonstrate how the global history of poverty can be used to reform the mainstream narrative of development. Workshops have been held in Bangladesh, Brazil, Slovenia and soon in Mexico, and each have locally set agenda. For McClure these workshops have been an opportunity to explore poverty in collaboration with different localities beyond Anglophone West, and often beyond the universities, and to reflect critically upon the relationships between poverty, space, and power.

-Professor Abou Kane, 'Multidimensional Poverty'

Professor Kane presented an economic analysis of poverty, whilst highlighting the point that many aspects relating to the topic cannot be taken into consideration by economics. Nevertheless, there has been an evolution of ideas in relation to poverty amongst economists and a consensus on a definition has emerged as follows, "a situation in which individuals do not possess the necessary resources to satisfy their essential needs." The question that naturally arises is how to define 'needs.' Some economists believe a monetary approach must be adopted to define 'needs' as opposed to one linked to revenue. However, the monetary approach has certain problems as the poverty line is not homogeneous. The economic approach to poverty needs to be expanded in accordance with the multidimensional framework of poverty and understandings of capabilities. For example, the official unemployment rate in Senegalis 12%, which is not representative of problems in Senegal, we must therefore think more dynamically about methodological approaches to poverty.

-Idy Bâ, 'Poverty and Its Niches in the 14th and 15th Centuries'

Dr. Bâ presented on the importance of historicising the concept of poverty in order to demonstrate what Guy Bois described as systemic crises from the crisis of the late Middle Ages to the present day. Poverty existed long before global history or global poverty, in Africa, in Muslim countries or in Europe. The approach taken is therefore a history from below or a history of the margins, which facilitates a better understanding of the crises that often affect Africa. Dr. Bâ observed that we should not consider the history of poverty chronologically, and need to be sensitive to different dynamics of poverty at different scales of analysis.

Panel 2:

-Louis Mendy, 'Physical Aggression and Homelessness: The New Paradigms of Poverty in Dakar'

Dr Mendy presented a socio-anthropological perspective of urban poverty and its new paradigms, which are visible today yet did not exist in the 1970s. Senegal has a reputation of rejecting violence, yet in the last three decades, violence has increased. Why? What has changed? A significant problem comes from the rise of homelessness, this in a country where hospitality is supposed to prevail. This modern phenomenon stems from the intersectionality of poverty, physical aggression and homelessness. Physical aggressions do not only target foreigners but also Senegalese people because poverty generates a climate of hopelessness amongst the unemployed youth. The lack of basic needs therefore pushes the youth towards violence in order to acquire basic commodities. This environment of insecurity can result in violence and sometimes even bloodshed. The Senegalese youth sometimes take fishing boats to attempt to reach Spain and others resort to violence. In addition, this youth suffers from unemployment and lack of education which makes them both resentful and unhappy. As a result, this leads them to violence in the form of theft from those who possess luxury goods, either at knifepoint or in more extreme cases resulting in murder, if the victims resist or recognise the aggressors. In sum, the youth turns to crime to support themselves in their socio-economic environment characterised by poverty, lack of education, unemployment and idleness. There is also an intersectionality between the level of education and aggressions, as aggressions and homelessness are rife. Dr Mendy observed that homelessness and violence went against the historical traditions of Senegal, which has historically been known as 'teranga', or land of hospitality. In the last 40 or 50 years poverty has changed the image of Dakar, and the spaces of poverty are changing. In particular, the waterfront has become a niche of poverty President Senghor has attempted different solutions, as new industries such as tourism are changing, and forms of aggression spread. Solutions. The police therefore need to be visible at nighttime, but tackling poverty at its roots is also important. The problem cannot simply be re-located.

-Elhadji Ibrahima Sy, 'Poverty in the Slums'

Mr Sy presented a socio-anthropological urban study on the niche in the Mermoz district of Dakar, known as '*cité garage'* or '*garage slum*.' The aim was to understand why research on poverty provide statistics that do not match the reality on the ground. A visual anthropological methodology was employed, ranging from note-taking and recording to photos and videos. The project focused on the issue of different levels of poverty in the slum in relation to family space, living conditions and the functional relations between the slum in question and neighbouring areas as well as the relations with the government authorities. Each configuration was observed in order to understand how the inhabitants view themselves, this was therefore also a semiological analysis of poverty and wealth. The results demonstrated that this slum is a niche in itself. Walls render poverty invisible, and businesses or wealthy neighbourhoods are built in front of the slum, . On top of this layer of invisibility, the slum is surrounded by layers of middle and upper social classes, who interact with the people from the slums – employing domestic workers and buying handicrafts – but don't

necessarily realise their poverty. The socio-economic living conditions are terrible, illness is widespread, there are no basic public services, there is only one public water source and food is found in the '*gargotes*' (eating huts). This slum is therefore a multi-layered niche of poverty.

-Ibrahima Ndiaye, 'Socio-spatial Inequalities and Urban Mobility in Dakar'

Dr Ndiaye presented a socio-spatial urban approach to poverty in order to underline the close relation between poverty and mobility in urban areas. Walking as a means of transportation is therefore a poverty index whilst automated transport is a wealth index. Poor people are characterised by an exclusive use of walking and are therefore confined to a limited space. Dakar has a 70% rate of people who only use walking as a means of transportation. The poor do not move around much, cover limited distances and predominantly use walking and a limited use of transport. As a result, there is an intersection between social geography and urban mobility. As the objective of this study was to highlight socio-spatial inequalities, the methodology used was therefore surveys on households and individuals through questionnaires, with five variables: the type of accommodation, living conditions, household equipment, poverty and possession of a means of transport. This was a multivariate analysis, with an ascending hierarchical classification and a breakdown of the city into zones. This methodology reveals the heterogeneity of Dakar as poverty is disseminated throughout the city. In addition, the zones emphasise the socio-spatial inequalities in relation to reduced mobility, distance and travel time, and the amount of income and expenses spent on transport. The results suggest a more nuanced understanding of low mobility and transport usage as poverty indices. The absence of mobility is a cause and not a consequence of poverty. The confined spaces which poor people are restricted to therefore maintains them in poverty. Consequently, a good strategy to fight poverty would be to facilitate mobility, which was attempted in the policy of free transport through family security grants.

-Aissatou Diallo, 'Surviving in Informal Work'

Dr Diallo presented an economic assessment on the informal work sector, bringing an optimistic dimension in order to highlight the transversal and transnational characteristics of this sector, which is dominated by men between the ages of 35 and 50. In addition, entrepreneurs in this sector are predominantly from other cities than Dakar, reflecting the rural exodus. Registration and recognition by the state is importance as the state can be a source of funding. While some aspects of the informal sector are recognised by the Chamber of Commerce, this study has demonstrated that the majority of the informal sector is not formally registered due to a lack of information and education. The results also reveal a relation between the informal sector and economic policies of structural adjustments put in place in the 1980s, which generated a severe rise of male unemployment. Subsequently, the destruction of the industrial ecosystem led to an increase of female and child employment in the informal sector in order to provide for families. In addition, climate related phenomena, which have caused a chain reaction of increased migration and therefore increased employment in the informal sector, must also be taken into consideration. In short, the informal sector has become a means of survival to fund migration journeys.

In turn, trade liberalisation has given the informal sector its transnational characteristic. Some case studies have shown how a woman in the informal sector can open a small shop in Dakar, then acquire an informal loan to expand her business and then gradually move on to become an international business woman due to the international dimension of African migration to the West or Chinese migration to Africa. In sum, in the context of large development projects, the informal sector can become a survival strategy but also enable development outside the formal sector.

Panel 3:

-*Dieynaba Ndiaye, 'To Have or Not to Be: The Dehumanisation of the Poor'*

Dr Dieynaba presented a psycho-sociological perspective in the current context of the hyper-marketisation of individuals' lives, where everything can be bought and the poor are dehumanised. In a wealthy society, the market extends into all spheres which causes weakened social and institutional bonds. As a result, solidarity cannot resist marketisation and privatisation. As social worth and standing can also be bought in this context, it is apparent that happiness has become synonymous with the accumulation of wealth; such is the neoliberal message. The marketisation of society is therefore omnipresent, which can also be termed 'market colonialism,' including in Senegal, even though African societies were traditionally spared from marketisation.This context of marketisation leads to the psychological effect of the dehumanisation of the poor. In psycho-sociology it is neither necessary nor sufficient to be a member of society to be considered human. In light of this, different types of dehumanisation are apparent that remove rational faculties or secondary emotions for which rational faculties are necessary, such as shame. Alternatively, the individual is assimilated to an animal which implies viewing the animalised human as irrational. People can also be objectified or mechanised as dehumanisation requires placing a distance with the individual who is therefore rejected and discriminated against. In Dakar, the invisibility of the poor is glaring. There is a distancing from the poor, the wealthy distance themselves from the poor, and the poor keep a distance from the wealthy, so that each group distances itself from one another. Common social constructions of the poor must also be considered, such as the idea of the poor as lazy, which stems from the Western narrative on poverty being linked to the welfare state. Dehumanisation thereby reinforces the idea of self-inflicted poverty. In sum, neoliberalism has produced societies of possession in which everything can be bought, even social status. The poor are therefore systematically excluded and dehumanised.

-*Mamadou Mbengue, Environment and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA)*

Mr Mbengue, executive secretary of ENDA, presented on the importance of collaboration between NGOs and the academic world in order to emphasise the importance of the democratisation of power for all. Even though society has turned humans into commodities, the human must nevertheless be placed back at the heart of the conversation to find a solution to the negative effects of neoliberalism. If poverty still exists today it is because of a local, national, regional and global failure to elaborate poverty alleviating policies.

Mr Mbengue highlighted that children are supposed to be an answer to poverty and yet they are the victims of it. Parents often decide to make their children migrate for financial reasons. Most of the children who therefore arrive in Dakar are brought by marabouts who make them victims of human trafficking. As a result, these children are denied access to the most basic social protection, such as health or education, and they do not enjoy the right to most basic of human rights. If the challenge is to tackle social problems, it is worth bearing in mind that once these children arrive in Dakar they themselves become niches of poverty. This situation is at its core a fundamental disrespect of these children's human rights. Admittedly, mobility is a right but above all the state has a duty to ensure the safety and right to life of all citizens. For example, many young girls in Dakar come from the region of Casamance and are victims of human trafficking or of early or forced marriages amongst other things. The lack of supervision of child mobility therefore promotes poverty.

Universities have an obligation to appeal to the consciences of public authorities. There are many NGOs and INGOs in Dakar with whom universities could collaborate to address the question of poverty and the lack of child safety, as well as child poverty in urban areas and their exploitation at the hands of marabouts. There must be a collaboration and partnership between NGOs and universities to raise awareness and offer practical solutions to development policies concerning poverty and child exploitation.

-Mao Wane, 'Child Poverty and Vulnerability'

Mr Wane presented a sociological perspective on the situation of women and children, based on his 20 years of experience working for UNICEF in Senegal, Chad, Mauritania and Mali. Depending on one's field of expertise, there are certain indicators which must be used. Mr Wane works on the question of children who are excluded from the system and need special treatment, such as young girls who are domestic workers, victims of FGM or child marriages, but generally all those children who are excluded from the state essentially do not even formally exist. In order to investigate the issue of child vulnerability, a certain methodology is required to do so. One such method is to gather evidence and use it to compile strategic planning accordingly. It is therefore important to have a theoretical and methodological framework. However, caution must be exercised with regards to research reports that come from certain organisations, such as the World Bank, who in reality create poverty in order to analyse it after, which was the case for instance after the structural adjustments of the 1980s in Senegal. In addition, a causal analysis underlines the causes of these situations but socio-cultural aspects must also be taken into consideration, such as regarding excision, which is not practiced by sadistic people but because it is a social norm. As a result, the theory of social change cannot be successful if people's mentalities do not change at the same pace as the laws. If the notion of female purity is linked to FGM, then men must change as well. Finally, it is essential to understand the fabric of social exclusion as opposed to social cohesion, the latter existed before when children could move without being at risk of kidnapping. Today, the business of almsgiving has become a lucrative one, it is a criminal but easy activity, including in Dakar where children beg and are in stressful situations which can lead them to fight amongst each other to steal one another's money. In such a situation, it is legitimate to question the state's effectiveness. The amount of street children and their subsequent exploitation is the cancer gnawing away at Senegal.

-Wendy Wilson Fall:

Dr Fall presented a socio-anthropological perspective on the importance of rethinking the concept of poverty. Fall noted that we need to consider culture in our conceptualisation of poverty. . For example, are certain patterns and spaces of living always the result of poverty or do they have cultural dimensions? The value of poverty must be considered, and rap music has drawn our attention to this. Poverty is associated with vulnerability and weakness and yet these two characteristics are common throughout society. Poverty must therefore be thought of and analysed for the survival of society at large, not just the poor. The idea that the separation between rich and poor is irreconcilable is wrong because certain social and cultural similarities are cross-cutting and ways in which society can be reunited must be found. Finally, in terms of internal migration in West Africa, Senegal is similar to France or America. Senegal is digesting American influence and is changing through this influence at the same time. Consequently, as less and less people contemplate the journey to Europe, they are increasingly turning to Senegal. Despite many terrifying prospects, there is also much hope to be found, which is why poverty must be reformulated and rethought and the poor must never be pitied.

-Elodie Sellar, 'Continuities in the concepts and practice of colonial and postcolonial development'

Ms. Sellar presented a historical perspective of development, a complex concept which has not been spared from criticisms due to its perceived neoliberal and neo-colonial undertones. The concept must therefore be contextualised in its European colonial history in order to grasp how its meaning has changed throughout the colonial period, hence the importance of historicising development. Instead of being considered as a given, development should be thought of as a set of ideas and practices that linked the metropolitan centres to their colonial peripheries. Indeed, development projects had the capacity to enhance and also enforce the legitimacy of colonial regimes and their postcolonial successors. Understanding this legacy reveals the normative and semantic ambiguities that permeate contemporary development to be untangled because its colonial past echoes strongly till this day.

An ideological process has therefore occurred around development. History demonstrates how the narrative of colonial domination has been transplanted into contemporary practices and discourses of development, through a process of reconfiguration from a colonial to a development discourse. As a result, although the political engagements of France in Africa are dictated by the economic challenges of globalisation, the political realities are hidden behind the guise of development. The relations built through development projects and partnerships claim to promote mutual respect between nations, but in reality, they are still based on relations of domination and trusteeship. In fact, the ideology of development which aims to change social practices in order to improve the living standards of Africans tends to perpetuate relations of political, economic and cultural dependence. There is a deep ideological question at play which is constantly covered up by the reinvention of expressions with a pejorative undertone to ones with a more socially acceptable connotation.

In sum, relations of domination have constantly been reconstituted throughout historical events so that the order of such relations has never been overturned. One of the consequences of this is that local development NGOs and their local visions and practices must conform to criteria and models determined by INGOs and their Western funders if they are to access funding themselves, fundamentally undermining local visions of global poverty. As a result, whilst some see development as a humanitarian obligation on which global security depends, others see a neo-colonial project and an abuse of power. In the West African context, the declarations of independence may have produced a political rupture, but the agreements signed between the new states and their ex-colonisers hindered genuine change and enabled a certain continuation under the appearance of development and aid programmes. As Hamadou Hampaté Bâ, the Malian writer once wrote, "The hand that receives lies below the one that gives."

-Cheikh Sène aka Keyti, 'Dund Gu Dee Genn'

The workshop's keynote presentation was given by Keyti, one of Senegal's most famous rap singers. Keyti has explored the way in which rap music can be a tool for protest amongst poor and marginalised groups. Keyti presented a socio-musical perspective to reveal the link between Senegalese rap and poverty. This began with a showing of a video compilation of contemporary Senegalese rap, in Wolof, for the audience to understand the message carried in the lyrics. Discussions on poverty are often a space restricted to academic practice, numbers and analysis, whereas rap is about feelings. Rap can therefore give a human face to poverty and the numbers linked to it.

Poverty is the primary source of rap in Senegal, but also in France or America, because rap is born out of and reflects deprived communities. Most of the time, there is no link between universities and Senegalese rap, which is regrettable because rap has a way of dealing with many interesting subjects in equally interesting ways. Sociologists should pay more attention to the lyrics and the aesthetics of Senegalese rap, which is directly linked to the social changes taking place in the country. Additionally, rap often has an accusatory tone and questions who is responsible for poverty. Although the lyrics reflect the level of education of the rappers, they all blame the state, the system and the wealthy. Above all, the finger of responsibility is pointed to the state. Nevertheless, for rappers with a higher level of education, the West equally as responsible, this accusation stems from the fact that they often have a pan African ideology, such as the Senegalese rapper, Akil. For him, poverty and under-development are directly caused by Western states. Moreover, he refers to Thomas Sankara or Muammar Gaddafi, two figures who are not Senegalese but who are used to expose the grip that the West has on the whole African continent.

Finally, rap actually values poverty and deprived social classes, which is done as a way to pass the message that despite their poverty, they have things that others do not, reminiscent of the American rap song, 'Poverty's Paradise.' In fact, one of the great paradoxes of rap is that one its largest audiences are middle class youths, in both Senegal and the West. By championing their poverty, rappers are able to simultaneously accuse and threaten the state, with the underlying message that they may be poor but they have power. Lyrics filled with threatening tones are very common in Senegalese rap, which today also advocates individualism and the apology of crime. As such, rap legitimises resorting to the sale of drugs or pickpocketing as the only way to survive faced with poverty, unemployment and lack of qualifications. In sum, as they feel attacked by the system in place and poverty, they use rap

to demonstrate that they too have an answer, thereby displaying the extent of the consequences of poverty. Rap also challenges societal values, such as religion or the role of marabouts, which underlines the changes occurring in the mentalities of the Senegalese youth and it would therefore be judicious to pay attention to them. Rap also speaks of the dangers of migration which is often undertaken to regain a sense of dignity which entails leaving their country in order to make money.