

# Stories of Rural Accumulation in Africa: Trajectories and Transitions among Rural Capitalists in Senegal

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*This paper analyzes primary qualitative evidence from life histories of rural capitalists in contemporary Senegal. Various common themes in the declining literature on rural capitalism in Africa are discussed with reference to the specific individual trajectories of rural farm capitalists in Senegal. The themes include the emergence of rural capitalism in the context of protracted, uneven and gradual rural social differentiation and the various processes that have accompanied it; the condition of 'entrepreneurship' in such changing historical contexts; the symbiotic relationship between different spaces (loci) of accumulation, especially trade, transport and farming and the historical context in which they take place; the crucial but sometimes contradictory role of the state in spurring or constraining rural capitalist accumulation; and the variety of 'idioms of accumulation', which reflect transitions and synthesis between non-capitalist and capitalist forms of labour surplus appropriation at the level of individual capitalists, despite some uniformity in the general logic of capital and the spread of capitalist relations of production and exchange. The paper also discusses the methodological power and limitations of oral narratives as a method to gather evidence on long-term processes of agrarian change and accumulation in rural Africa. Finally, the life histories shed some light on the origins of rural capitalists and show that there is a combination of instances of 'capitalism from above' and 'from below' but that no dominant pattern can be clearly discerned at least in the space of one or two generations.*

*Keywords:* rural capitalism, accumulation, life histories, entrepreneurs, social differentiation, Sub-Saharan Africa, Senegal

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the very heated and productive debates of the 1970s on the prospects and nature of capitalist development in Africa, there has not been much interest or

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progress over the past 25 years in terms of *field-based* empirical research. There is no doubt that much of the field-based empirical literature today is dominated by concerns about poverty and studying the ‘poor’, somewhat understandably given the dimension of the problem and the attention (and money) given by funding organizations. Much attention has also typically been devoted by mainstream studies to understanding peasant communities as *undifferentiated* aggregates or the behaviour and constraints faced by ill-defined average representative farmers.

Interestingly, much of the conventional wisdom (especially mainstream economic literature) on agricultural development evades the characterization of many peasant farmers as (proto) capitalists by calling them *smallholders*, small farmers and so on, while at the same time attributing to them features of *capitalist* entrepreneurs: dynamic (rational) response to economic incentives, profit maximization, capacity to innovate (and apply new techniques), farm intensification, and so on. In a sense the myth of the average (rational) representative farmer, taken to its extreme implications, could amount to a mythical world of countless small-atomized capitalists in a perfectly competitive world.

What happened to rural capitalists, entrepreneurs, accumulators, ‘progressive’ farmers, ‘representatives of capitalist relations of production’<sup>1</sup> and so on? Have they faded with the onslaught of structural adjustment and economic liberalization? Or did they never really exist and were part of the imagery of a Marxist-inspired literature focused on agrarian differentiation and the prospects of capitalist development? Are they particularly difficult to find or even to study?<sup>2</sup> These and other questions are today pertinent insofar as a fuller understanding of the prospects for poverty reduction and rural development also hinge upon the emergence, consolidation and expansion (or not) of rural capitalists/accumulators who may be seen as contributors to spearhead growth, economic dynamism, investment and employment creation in the countryside. Unfortunately the empirical work on rural (agrarian) capitalists in Sub-Saharan Africa is frustratingly scant.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This term appears in Byres (2003, 54).

<sup>2</sup> Leys (1994, 21) rightly points out that a typical contemporary study that ‘had focused only on what is today considered the formal or enumerated sector’ would have captured very little of the process of capitalist development in eighteenth-century Britain. The statistical apparatus used in most official household and enterprise surveys in Africa is probably not adequate to capture various forms of domestic capitalism that do not conform to the usual international parameters that guide survey design.

<sup>3</sup> This is a rather general lacuna in the literature beyond Africa as Pincus (2004, 407) has noted. Generally the work on African capitalism has been wanting in the last 25 years, with some notable exceptions in the form of monographs or essay collections, which have become essential references for anyone interested in the development and nature of capitalism in Africa. These are Iliffe (1983), Sender and Smith (1986), Kennedy (1988) and the collection edited by Berman and Leys (1994). One more recent and refreshing exception is the outstanding scholarly monograph on rural capitalism written by the leading economic historian of Asante (Austin 2005). Berman and Leys (1994) make an important distinction between studies on African entrepreneurship, mostly focused on individuals as opposed to classes (or collective actors), and studies on African capitalism (usually by historians), which mainly developed in the 1970s around the dependency debates. The collection of essays by Ellis and Fauré (1995) and Eckert (1999) are examples of the former from the history and the economic anthropology of African entrepreneurs. Although this distinction is useful, some of the work on individual capitalists cited by Berman and Leys, like Polly Hill’s studies in West Africa (Hill 1970), transcends the individual to a certain extent, even though Hill does not use the term ‘class’ in a Marxist or Weberian sense.

Studying agrarian capitalism in Sub-Saharan Africa has so far been a challenging task, not least ideologically. First, it is often assumed in the literature that capitalism has not really penetrated rural areas in most parts of the subcontinent, especially those without a history of European settlers.<sup>4</sup> Or, even where economies are integrated in a global capitalist economy and agricultural producers are embedded in a global capitalist system, the impression is that the system has integrated 'small-scale farmers' (petty commodity producers) rather than 'agrarian capitalists'.<sup>5</sup> The obvious exception to this general 'impression' is South Africa, which is associated with settler capitalism and not so much with indigenous agrarian capitalists.<sup>6</sup>

The pernicious effects of division within the Left on issues around the prospects and nature of capitalist development in Africa, the stark disagreements emerging from those debates,<sup>7</sup> the impending crisis in many countries from the late 1970s onwards and the neoclassical and postmodern intellectual (counter) attacks since the 1980s, paved the way for a proliferation of studies in which agrarian capitalism and *capitalists* did not feature prominently in article/book titles or as the main focus of research, with some exceptions mostly concentrated in the literature on South Africa. Indeed, this scarcity of relevant material is striking in comparison with what is available on India and Latin America, for example.

Perhaps one problem has been the attachment to rather rigid schemas of capitalist development, which the reality on the ground often disproved.<sup>8</sup> Rural accumulation processes and rural class formation, even when there is a tendency *towards* capitalism, do not map into universal or standard paths that can be replicated and found elsewhere. African capitalism, in this respect, retains its own distinctiveness as a result of the combination of two main factors: first, coinciding with the 'very late stage in the global history of capitalism'; second, the 'special characteristics of Africa's pre-capitalist societies' (Iliffe 1983, 4). Many other authors have shown that mediating structural, historical and cultural factors can easily mould the specific capitalist paths found in different locations at different times.<sup>9</sup> However, while striking differences and historical contingencies

<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless Iliffe (1983) shows that indigenous capitalism developed during and after the colonial period mainly in three sectors: agriculture (largely in the form of export-led 'capitalism from below' – but Iliffe did not use this expression which we find in Byres 2003), trade/transport and, to a much lesser extent, industry.

<sup>5</sup> See Bernstein (2004) on the complex implications of agricultural globalization for processes of social differentiation of the peasantry and the survival or reproduction of 'petty commodity producers'.

<sup>6</sup> This can be verified by doing a simple Google scholar search on 'rural capitalism' in the titles. Only South African material and Polly Hill's pioneer work (Hill 1970) appear as results. See also Wiggins (2000) on the disappearance of studies of differentiation in rural Africa.

<sup>7</sup> On the impasse following the 'Kenya' and 'Tanzania' debates, see Kitching (1985) and Orvis (1993).

<sup>8</sup> See Leys (1994) and Berry (1993). A related problem perhaps is the misinterpretation or misuse of Lenin's and Kautsky's analytical schemas (Sender and Smith 1986; Byres 2003).

<sup>9</sup> See Byres (2003), for example, and his useful taxonomy of historical capitalist paths. Inspired by Lenin's terminology, Byres distinguishes mainly between 'capitalism from above' and 'capitalism from below', but also critically considers the analytical and historical value of alternative paths such as 'merchant' and 'contract farming' paths.

can be easily found in the history of capitalist transformations, this variety is consistent with the common inherent nature and logic of capitalism (and capital accumulation) in various contexts.

This paper brings primary qualitative evidence (based on life histories and a previous baseline survey) from the experiences of emerging (and consolidated) Senegalese *rural* capitalists and accumulators. In Senegal, like in much of West Africa, export crop production was taken up and further developed by indigenous farmers (Hopkins 1973), coordinated initially by colonial agencies and private trading houses (*maisons de traite*) and later in the post-colonial period by parastatal agencies in charge of output procurement and input distribution among other duties. The individual trajectories of accumulation of a cross section of selected case studies help us give texture and details, at a micro level of analysis, to the analytical and more general portraits of rural capitalism in Africa. The key analytical themes in the study of capitalists, entrepreneurs and rural accumulation stories are selectively discussed in section I, which also introduces some of the debates and controversies that may shape the interpretation of actual stories of rural accumulation in Africa. Section II is mostly methodological and discusses the power and limitations of oral histories in the analysis of narratives of accumulation in rural African contexts and beyond. The challenges faced in the fieldwork for this research and the implications for similar kinds of research are also outlined. Section III briefly introduces the reader to some of the salient features of rural-agrarian capitalism in the context of Senegal against the background of wider processes of agrarian and social change there. Finally section IV presents selected material from the life histories of some rural-agrarian capitalists, who were revisited in 2006 after an initial survey had been carried out in 1998–99. The individual narratives are explicitly linked to and organized around some selected key themes, which emerge from the discussion of the literature in section I and the specific features of Senegal's rural political economy discussed in section III. The conclusions summarize some of the main points and venture to extract some analytical and policy implications.

## I. RURAL CAPITALISTS, RURAL ENTREPRENEURS: MAIN THEMES AND ANALYTICAL NARRATIVES

Studying rural capitalism and capitalists in West Africa must start with an appreciation of Polly Hill's pioneer work.<sup>10</sup> Hill (1970), in her seminal work on various forms of rural capitalism in West Africa (in farming, livestock, trade and fishing), questioned conventional wisdom on African farmers and, in addressing the several 'surprises' she encountered when doing fieldwork in rural areas of Ghana

<sup>10</sup> This is despite the fact that Hill never attempted to analyze rural capitalists as a class in a Marxist sense but rather was most concerned with the need to adapt (or debunk) conventional economics for the analysis of agrarian structures and behaviour in a West African context. Austin (2005) considers Hill a 'populist'; an interesting label that partly reflects her tendency towards a form of empiricism somewhat shaped by methodological individualism.

and Nigeria, became particularly interested in understanding various aspects of the lives of 'rural capitalists': where they get their initial capital; how they acquire and expand land; how they mobilize labour; how much they borrow; their savings and investment patterns; and how inheritance works in terms of concentration or dispersion of capital assets. Hill provided some interesting insights as to why some farmers or rural people could be called rural capitalists.<sup>11</sup> Indeed Hill was pioneer in considering 'capital' assets things like land, trees (in cocoa farming), fishing lines, livestock, and so on. Her evidence from Ghana clearly showed a very unequal distribution of these assets and a concomitant unequal distribution of cocoa output in areas where a small group of rural capitalists (of migrant origin) had succeeded in expanding their holdings, often through large-scale land purchases. Our work in Senegal shared similar concerns and the need to uncover the realities of a small class of rural capitalists who, despite their 'invisibility' for national household surveys and most studies of agricultural development, have played a major role in the contemporary processes of social change and rural transformations in Senegal.<sup>12</sup>

One effective way of providing an analytical canvass to the particular stories of a group of individuals in rural Senegal is to consider some of the most relevant and conceptually important *themes* that emerge from the literature on capitalism, especially rural capitalism, in Africa. The literature is obviously vast and this is not a review essay.<sup>13</sup> The selection of themes is not exhaustive and is intended to provide an analytical 'compass' for the analysis of individual trajectories of rural accumulation. For this purpose five *themes* appear particularly important. The first is the extent to which the emergence of rural capitalists is part of a wide process of *rural differentiation* concomitant with the development of capitalism in Africa and elsewhere. Secondly, the significance of 'straddling' as a pattern of accumulation and a form of 'entrepreneurship' can be regarded as one of the key features of 'actually existing capitalism', especially in rural West Africa, where 'entrepreneurs' are still different from the fully-fledged capitalists people often have in mind.<sup>14</sup> The third theme refers to the sometimes contradictory role of the state in nurturing (directly or indirectly) the emergence of these capitalists/

<sup>11</sup> She did not do this from a Marxist tradition, as pointed out by Austin (2005, 26). Austin provocatively labels her as a 'dynamic agrarian populist', who reveals the 'dynamic adaptability' of institutions and techniques of indigenous farmers to new crop expansion and the penetration of capitalism.

<sup>12</sup> The literature on rural Senegal has not just focused on smallholders and 'peasants' but large-scale farmers have also been identified. When, however, they have been studied or mentioned, only *marabouts* (religious notables) have deserved such 'privilege'. In my own research I have shown that leading *marabouts* are not the only large-scale agricultural producers in Senegal (Oya 2001, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 2 'Theories and debates' in Austin (2005, 23–33), which provides an excellent succinct summary of competing analytical frameworks on the question of development of capitalist relations and institutions, property and markets in West Africa.

<sup>14</sup> Note that the 'ideal' model of capitalist entrepreneur as a 'wealthy educated employer who runs a large machine enterprise' derives from a superficial conception of capitalism that needs to encompass, in contexts of agrarian transitions, circumstances of 'general wretchedness, comparatively tiny establishments, extremely low productivity, small number of wage-workers' typical of 'peasant industry' as a form of capitalism (Sender and Smith 1986, 79, citing Lenin).

accumulators and at the same time fettering their further development, expansion or multiplication. Fourthly, the variation in patterns or 'idioms' of accumulation is significant among accumulators (of varying degrees of capitalist tendency). One crucial aspect of this variation in rural African contexts is the pattern of labour relations and mobilization that characterizes different classes of rural accumulators and how this pattern changes with shifting economic and policy environments. Finally, much of the literature has centred on the relationship between culture or 'tradition' and the capitalist tendency of certain groups within African societies, in an intellectual tradition that originates from the work of Weber on capitalism and Protestantism.<sup>15</sup>

The first theme is particularly important. Against popular (un)wisdom and the stubborn belief of neoclassical neo-populist writers in the myth of an 'amorphous peasantry' long ago debunked by Hill (1968), rural inequalities and rural social differentiation are quite significant in much of Africa, even *before* the era of neoliberalism.<sup>16</sup> Sender and Smith (1986, 21) provide a long list of rural surveys on different parts of rural Africa, which 'unambiguously demonstrate that some rural entrepreneurs operate extensive tracts of land', often land previously occupied by smaller farmers. A vast literature on agrarian change (in Africa and elsewhere) had been published in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* and is now being published in the *JAC* (Bernstein and Byres 2001). And perhaps there are some signs that also the mainstream literature is picking up the empirical and analytical significance of this phenomenon.<sup>17</sup>

In countries for which there were more reliable statistics by the 1970s, evidence of differentiation and inequality in some countries was compelling, as Gini coefficients for land distribution were in a range between 0.40 (one survey in Nigeria) and 0.81 ('modern' agricultural sector in Mozambique), and 'the concentration of the bulk of non-estate commercial production in the hands of a relatively small proportion of farmers variously called "emergent", "commercial", "progressive" and "capitalist" farmers' was widely documented, especially in countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Zambia and Mozambique

<sup>15</sup> There are other themes not mentioned above, which have mostly occupied analysts of 'African entrepreneurship'. For example, the role of social networks and kinship as both fetters and assets for capitalist accumulation, although the literature tends to stress the constraints posed by significant claims on capitalists' resources by their kin and clientelistic networks (Kennedy 1988, 165–75). Kennedy also mentions some literature on the management qualities of African entrepreneurs and the implications of spreading resources thinly across a wide range of small-scale ventures. Another major theme is the contradictory relationship between foreign and domestic capital in the process of capital accumulation in Africa (Berman and Leys 1994).

<sup>16</sup> This is a point clearly made by a vast literature in the 1960s and 1970s and often stressed by some recent observers (Bryceson 2000; Raikes 2000; Ponte 2002) although they lack sufficient *diachronic* (longitudinal) evidence to prove some of the changes and transformations they see happening in rural Africa.

<sup>17</sup> The interest in heterogeneity, stratification and differentiation of the rural population has recently increased in more mainstream circles. See Jayne et al. (2003) for an example of quantitative evidence of heterogeneity among small farmers, Losch et al. (2003) for a consideration of differentiation as a result of market liberalization, and Dorward et al. (2004) on the importance of rural structures. Part of this work is being picked up by the World Bank, as suggested by initial drafts of the *World Development Report 2008*.

(Ghai and Radwan 1983, 17). The farmers selected in this paper for the collection of life histories were all classified as 'capitalist' according to the criteria I used in the 1998 survey. These criteria included a combination of labour hiring (significant reliance on hired wage labour), investments in means of production (a means of production index), investment in land acquisitions (purchases and capitalist leasing) and investments in training and education.<sup>18</sup> Processes of rural differentiation in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have been protracted, uneven and gradual, and they have been shaped by various other processes, notably the growing commoditization of agricultural production, land and labour, and public investments; the unequal distribution of infrastructure responding to the strategic priorities of colonial and postcolonial administrations; land alienation and settlements; violent conflict and displacements; and opportunities and constraints offered by markets and states as arenas of class struggles.<sup>19</sup>

The emergence of rural capitalists, in some views, is consistent with the relatively low incidence of landlessness in African social formations, which has partly led Berry (1993) to defend a thesis of 'accumulation without dispossession',<sup>20</sup> despite survey evidence of growing polarization and land pressures in the era of neoliberal globalization (Raikes 2000). Rural class formation and differentiation in much of rural Africa are complex processes that do not exactly replicate patterns of social differentiation in other experiences of agrarian transition. Thus there is a complex interaction between class, lineage-kinship and generational relations, which produce outcomes that can be very location specific.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the very coexistence of different forms or varieties of agrarian capitalism from large-scale agribusiness to peasant capitalism, and their shifting fortunes as a result of external and internal dynamics, also underpin differences in the nature of rural capitalist classes and the process of differentiation across countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. In this sense, the heterogeneity among 'rural capitalists' is

<sup>18</sup> See Oya (2004) for a full explanation of this classificatory method. In this paper I generally use the term 'capitalist', although I have made clear in Oya (2004) that these definitions and terms are methodologically problematic and require substantial empirical work in ascertaining adequate and context-specific criteria. In Oya (2004) a classificatory method of large and mid-scale farmers is proposed along capitalist 'tendencies', rather than a stark artificial dichotomy between 'capitalists' and 'non-capitalists'. The battle around terms is not trivial as shown by Hill (1968, 240), who openly dislikes the term 'peasant' and prefers 'farmer'. Thus other authors call 'enterprising peasants' (Guyer 1997, 110, citing Tiffen 1976) what Polly Hill and I, for example, would call small rural capitalists (entrepreneurs).

<sup>19</sup> Some authors focus on the growing differentiation and 'deagrarianization' during the period of neoliberal globalization that has significantly affected SSA in the last 25 years (for example, Bryceson 2000; Raikes 2000; Ponte 2002). In this sense structural adjustment and neoliberalism are interpreted as spurring 'primitive accumulation'. However, other authors (mostly historians) have convincingly documented these processes stretching back to the pre-colonial period (Austin 2005; Hopkins 1973; Sender and Smith 1986).

<sup>20</sup> Berry (1993) thus claims to question a historical materialist approach, which she limits to the 'Lenin model' of polarization and dispossession (Bernstein 2004, 122).

<sup>21</sup> Berry (1985, 1993) has always advanced the idea that class, kinship (social networks) and various sectional interests are not mutually exclusive in Africa and that class differentiation can occur within kinship networks, which shape the incidence of redistribution and kin-related patronage that is frequently observed in the continent. See Bernstein (2004) for a critical view on Berry's thesis.

worth bearing in mind, not least because some are the product of differentiation within a class of small-scale farmers or advanced simple (or petty) commodity producers (ASCP)<sup>22</sup> and differ from those agrarian capitalists emerging from the ranks of landed classes and ‘bureaucratic bourgeoisies’.

The second theme relates analytically to the notion of ‘entrepreneurship’. In some ways many African rural capitalists can hardly be considered ‘entrepreneurs’ in the strong sense, i.e. in Schumpeter’s own terms as revolutionizing the pattern of production ‘by exploiting an invention or . . . an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for products, by reorganizing an industry and so on’ (Schumpeter 1992, 132). In a ‘weak sense’ they may be considered rural entrepreneurs insofar as they negotiate spaces of accumulation and access to resources in ways that put them in a privileged position to increase the productivity and profitability of the various activities they perform.<sup>23</sup> The Africanist literature that has touched upon ‘entrepreneurship’ tends to focus on urban-based capitalists and sometimes businessmen straddling economic sectors but much less on rural capitalists.<sup>24</sup> However, a focus on the ‘individual’ capitalist and the variety of signs of entrepreneurship is useful even in historical materialist accounts that put broader structures, relations and processes at the centre of the analysis of capital accumulation.<sup>25</sup> Generally the idea of ‘entrepreneurship’ is closely associated with that of competition between individual capitalists, who are compelled to reinvest, innovate and compete with one another in order to survive. Therefore, one research question that was considered in the collection of life (business) histories of rural capitalists in Senegal was the extent to which their lives had been driven by the compulsion to accumulate, innovate, compete and reinvest and in which ways their ‘entrepreneurship’ can be revealed from their particular experiences of dealing with competition, constraints, innovations and investment opportunities. In this sense ‘straddling’ as a pattern of accumulation can be seen as a form of ‘entrepreneurial’ behaviour in semi-arid contexts of rural Senegal.

The third theme in this brief review focuses on the relations between rural capitalists and the state. One key question is whether the state was a restraint on the development of (rural) capitalism or not (Austin 2005, 27). From mainstream

<sup>22</sup> See Byres (2003) and Bernstein (2004) for a definition of this class of farmers. For quantitative evidence of stratification and differentiation among so-called small-scale farmers in various African countries see Jayne et al. (2003).

<sup>23</sup> Sender and Smith (1990) rightly point out that the definition and precise identification of ‘entrepreneurial capacities or character’ are hard to pin down in rural African contexts, where a synthesis of pre-capitalist and capitalist social relations tends to be the norm.

<sup>24</sup> See for example the voluminous collection of essays on ‘African entrepreneurs’ in Ellis and Fauré (1995). Most chapters are accounts of entrepreneurs basing their activities and accumulation in urban or non-agricultural sectors.

<sup>25</sup> In a passage, Schumpeter (1986, 556) contends that the personal element inherent in the entrepreneurial function (and in the actors – *dramatis personae* – in the economic process) and essential in capital accumulation are shut out from Marx’s range of vision, as if accumulated capital invests itself almost automatically. However, both Marx and Ricardo did emphasize the importance of entrepreneurship as providing significant returns to capitalist innovators (Schumpeter 1986, 646).



'new political economy' perspectives (e.g. Bates 1981), state intervention in Africa mainly served to promote patronage and waste of resources in rent-seeking, but little is acknowledged of the intended (or unintended in many cases) promotion of capitalist agriculture and agribusiness that these interventions in the pre-adjustment era entailed (Amanor 2005, 58; Rapley 1994; Sender and Smith 1990). This important theme is further developed in section IVc, partly through the prism of the life histories of selected Senegalese agrarian capitalists in this paper.

The fourth (and partly the fifth) theme refers to the variety of patterns of labour mobilization and the role of access to labour as one factor for the emergence of 'capitalist farmers'. This is also related to questions about 'traditional' and 'modern' idioms of accumulation (Cheater 1984), and more specifically to whether polygamy, associated with the former, has constituted an obstacle to further rural capitalist development or not (Iliffe 1983, 36). As Guyer notes, 'large-scale farming is not new in Africa, but with non-industrial technology it was only possible with large-scale labour control' (1997, 106). Iliffe (1983) shows how most of the studies on rural capitalism have focused on the patterns of labour mobilization (from pre-capitalist to capitalist, back and forth) and how these have changed over time as a result of internal dynamics and the effects of the external environment, for example world commodity prices, development of land markets, impoverishment of regions and peasant masses, actions from the state and so on. The stories of accumulation that will be presented in this paper illustrate the critical importance of large-scale labour control and the variety of methods used by the selected farmers to achieve the necessary labour mobilization, as well as their 'innovations' in labour recruitment in response to economic and social changes. A related question is the extent to which the relative failure or slowdown of some rural capitalists is associated with their inability to attract sufficient labour, either kin-related or hired (including migrant labour), and how this leads to a transition from large-scale farming based on 'sons working for their fathers' to a situation in which investments in children's education make 'fathers work for their sons'.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, as suggested by Meillassoux (1978), 'traditional' idioms of accumulation persisting from pre-colonial times have also depended on the persistence of forms of ideological control exercised by rural ruling classes and permeating kinship in the mobilization of local labour. This is a hypothesis that was briefly explored for some of the farmers of our sample, as they held positions of religious power in their constituencies, which, in the Senegalese context, provides access to large-scale labour in peak periods and as part of the symbolism of patronage relations between religious notables/teachers (*marabouts*) and their followers and students (*talibe*). This is an important aspect that also concerns the relationship between culture (ethnicity) and capitalism and, more concretely, between capitalism (and capitalists) and religion.<sup>27</sup> In the African context, Iliffe

<sup>26</sup> See Berry (1985) and section IVd in this paper.

<sup>27</sup> This theme has been recurrent in the Asian context. See Rutten (2003). See also Ellis and Fauré (1995) and Eckert (1999) for examples in Africa.

(1983) reviewed various historical experiences, concluding that the relationship is somewhat ambiguous, with instances of capitalism driven by religious values and influences (often external via missionaries) and experiences where culture or religion act as fetters on capitalist development (Iliffe 1983, 53).<sup>28</sup> The African experiences of particular 'cultural' traits of capitalists span from the importance of non-indigenous capitalists from Asia or Syria-Lebanon in various West and East African countries,<sup>29</sup> the role of Protestantism and Calvinism among settler farmers in Southern Africa, to the role of churches and religious groups (like Islamic brotherhoods in different parts of the Sahel, especially in Northern Nigeria and Senegal). In Senegal, the paradox emerges in the sense that some rural capitalists (as we will show) started to accumulate on the basis of symbolic ideological exploitation (the power of the *marabouts* vis-à-vis their *talibe*) to eventually turn into capitalists. Moreover, while today some of the most successful *Mouridemarabouts*-entrepreneurs (with business in transport, farming, industry and trade) combine capitalist and non-capitalist forms of labour surplus appropriation (the latter as a manifestation of their ideological and political power), it would be mistaken to argue that they follow 'traditional' idioms of accumulation.<sup>30</sup> The linkages between religious networks and capital accumulation also transcend the Senegalese borders as the *Mouride* diaspora exemplifies.<sup>31</sup>

## II. THE POWER AND LIMITATIONS OF ORAL NARRATIVES WITH RURAL CAPITALISTS

This paper is largely based on oral narratives collected in 2006 from fifteen Senegalese rural capitalists selected from an initial sample of seventy-five large and middle-scale groundnut farmers who were surveyed by myself in 1998. The absence of longitudinal data sources that could be used to explore long-term trajectories of accumulation and processes of rural transformation does not leave many alternatives to the researcher. One-off quantitative surveys are snapshots, which are ill designed to capture long-term dynamics. In fact the inclusion of 'qualitative' questions on changes over time is of very limited use, since it is done in the context of a closed questionnaire that normally begs short answers

<sup>28</sup> Iliffe (1983) does not find significant evidence of the latter. There are some examples in certain countries in which success and prosperous proto-capitalists are associated with witchcraft power, but more fears than resistance seem to emerge. Iliffe also points out that in nineteenth-century England more prosperous villagers would accuse poorer ones of witchcraft against them. He stresses that there is no evidence of organized 'cultural' resistance against African capitalism and that the reason may partly lie in the fact that forms of capitalism or accumulation were already socially and culturally embedded and that a significant degree of pragmatism and eclecticism was exercised vis-à-vis penetration of capitalism (Iliffe 1983, 55), which explains 'how what Marx called the syntheses of capitalist and pre-capitalist elements, so characteristic of rural Africa in this century, came to be formed' (1983, 56).

<sup>29</sup> Various essays in Berman and Leys (1994) argue that failure to consider these as de-facto 'African or domestic capitalists' has biased some of the debates on capitalist development in Africa.

<sup>30</sup> On *Mouridemarabout* farmers and entrepreneurs see Copans (1988, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> See Ndiaye (1998) on the figure and *ethos* of the *Moodu-Moodu* (successful migrant trader in Europe and the USA) as the symbol of the *Mouride* illiterate (transnational) entrepreneur.

to concrete responses. This was confirmed by our attempts to gather this kind of information with a questionnaire in 1998.

Life histories constitute a very powerful research tool if used in combination with other methods such as a cross-sectional quantitative survey or other qualitative interviews. In a context like rural Senegal any written records on the individual lives of rural capitalists are impossible to come by. Thus it was necessary to rely on an old tradition in African historiography: the oral narrative. The use of life histories has become more common in development studies, especially among researchers with training in anthropology and history.<sup>32</sup> Life histories, by the nature of the method itself, are normally limited to small samples, when carried out directly by the researcher.<sup>33</sup> Still, in other studies, the 'purposive sub-sampling of very small numbers of reliable, knowledgeable and friendly informants' has been considered the only practical way of getting reliable and rich information about traders and rural entrepreneurs (Harriss 1992, 141).<sup>34</sup> Moreover, the selected rural capitalists can be seen as 'exemplifying cases' that permit an examination of key social processes (Bryman 2001).

Francis suggested in her research that life histories are 'a flexible research tool which also encouraged many informants to open up far more than in other types of interview' (1992, 93). This insight was corroborated in my own fieldwork, as there was a significant (positive) difference between the quality of the information gathered with the life histories in my fieldwork in 2006 and that coming from questionnaire interviews carried out in 1998. Obviously my re-visit after eight years of absence was greatly welcomed by all farmers in the life history sample, not least because a relationship of trust had already been built up during my long fieldwork in 1998–99.<sup>35</sup> However, apart from the positive effect of visiting again, the respondents seemed much more at ease and willing to talk in the life history format. The interview was also much more enjoyable for the research assistant and myself, and in most cases several hours, meals and teas were shared with the farmers. Moreover, the respondents were more than happy for their stories to be written and published without hiding names.

Another key advantage of life histories is that they can be used to probe the results of previous quantitative surveys by adding longitudinal information. One example relates to the notion of 'scale' in defining the large-middle farmers of my 1998 sample. At that time the definition of scale depended mostly on data on groundnut and grain production since the focus was on farming activities. But the life histories revealed two important things. First, crop production scale fluctuates over long periods of time for an individual farmer, so a single snapshot

<sup>32</sup> For example, see the Chronic Poverty Centre website in Manchester <http://www.chronicpoverty.org/CPToolbox/Lifehistories.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Walker (2006) is an exception in the sense that she used written accounts from other studies on Southern US agriculture.

<sup>34</sup> Francis (1992) also argues that selecting a statistically representative sample for a life-history approach is inappropriate, as what matters is to capture variations in cases and processes.

<sup>35</sup> As Francis (1992) notes, the rapport between interviewer and respondent is absolutely crucial for the success of a life history.

may be insufficient to have a clear idea of longer-term scale patterns. Second, and more importantly, crop production scale is not always closely correlated with overall 'business' scale, i.e. the addition of various activities and their turnover. Many mid-scale producers were involved in various activities, especially in trade and transport, which implied a much larger 'business scale'. Other scholars have pointed out the importance of looking at capitalist farmers in terms of the overall business scale of their economic activities, beyond farming.<sup>36</sup>

This positive experience perhaps masks the challenges involved in doing research about rural capitalists and wealthy farmers. In the Senegalese context, many rich farmers and rural capitalists tend to minimize their 'achievements' and, for example, elude labels such as '*gros producteurs*', 'rich entrepreneurs' and so on. Sometimes, during the first 1998 survey, some mid-scale dynamic farmers preferred to present themselves as simple peasants (*paysans*). Here the existence of 'ideological restrictions' on the idea of accumulating wealth plays a role and leads some actual capitalists to lie and present themselves as simple peasants (Sender and Smith 1990; Iliffe 1983, 54).<sup>37</sup> Another challenge may arise because many of these rural capitalists are also traders. Merchants are particularly reluctant to share information on wealth, business, accumulation and investments, especially if some form of fraud, crime or activity bordering on illegality is at the basis of their 'primitive accumulation' (Harriss 1992, 138). That (accumulation based on crime or fraud) would not be the *general* case in our case studies even though, as we shall see, many of the Senegalese capitalist farmers experienced 'primitive accumulation' through hoarding and selling grain in times when this was officially banned.

Life histories as a method also present challenges that should be addressed. First, life histories may carry their own respondents' biases. As Walker says, '[memory] is the product of a complex alchemy of recall, interpretation, and reinterpretation' (2006, 3). The construction of 'communities of memory' can have an impact in how life histories of a group of similar individual characters are told and thus how narrative patterns emerge, which may be one effect of the creation of a form of 'class consciousness' within this particular group. In this sense, this 'group' or 'class' may delineate the boundaries of a collective or 'community' memory, which may bias their accounts and interpretations of historical events in particular directions. Hopefully the variety of cases selected in this research allows for sufficient dissonance from this 'common' memory to be captured, thereby incorporating nuances, which, in themselves, tell us much about the way individual capitalists change and adapt in a changing socio-economic, political and natural environment. Secondly, the process of collecting oral life histories begs another question related to the issue of researcher 'reflexivity'. This is the extent to which the researcher a priori selects themes and guides the narrative to meet some analytical demands. We do it in this paper to

<sup>36</sup> See especially Patnaik (1990) and Hill (1970).

<sup>37</sup> Some farmers with religious authority (*marabouts*) often preferred to avoid reporting their 'business' activities in the first meetings.

a certain extent. After all, 'a "life story" approach is an intellectual construct whose structure and content reflect the priorities of the researcher and the images the informant projects back into the past, as much as tangible realities' (Francis 1992, 93).<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, one danger of this type of study (individual stories of accumulation and entrepreneurship) is that of reducing classes to individual representatives, a tension clearly highlighted by Fine (1997, 631) in his assessment of Sen's entitlement approach. The solution of this tension is not straightforward, especially if one is interested in the effective reality of processes of accumulation and class formation as they manifest themselves through the lenses of individual narratives. Similar studies in Asia have attempted to 'understand how capitalist relations exert pressures for uniformity' while approaching 'class formation through the analysis of the behaviour of capitalists, and in doing so to stress the importance of human agency alongside cultural and structural factors' (Pincus 2004, 409).<sup>39</sup>

### III. AGRARIAN STRUCTURES AND RURAL CAPITALISM IN SENEGAL: A BACKGROUND

The contemporary rural agrarian structure in Senegal, as in much of semi-arid rural West Africa, is characterized by a dominant presence (in terms of numbers of households/farms) of *differentiated* forms of advanced simple commodity production (ASCP) (or 'petty commodity production') which *coexist* and *interact* with differentiated classes of large farmers (*gros producteurs*) and agribusiness corporations. However, as shown in a previous paper (Oya 2001), the class of larger-scale producers, some of whom lie somewhere between ASCP and capitalist farming categories, controls a disproportionate share of land and especially of marketed output. Arguably their 'business scale' beyond farming is far superior to the bulk of ASCP. This results from a combination of appropriation of more and better land, in some cases in irrigated zones, superior physical means of production, more input intensity (chemical fertilizers) and command of various sources of labour for peak periods. Following the perhaps 'analytically inconclusive' distinction between large-scale capitalist agricultural enterprises employing wage labour and 'peasant capitalism' (Bernstein and Byres 2001, 20), all the capitalist farmers presented in this paper would be part or an offshoot of the latter, bearing in mind that they all hired significant numbers of wage workers and/or labour tenants doing most of the work in their farms and trading/transport business. This does not mean that there are no large-scale capitalist agricultural corporations (or agribusiness) in Senegal. These exist in small numbers but they control some important agricultural sub-sectors. It is the case of sugar and tomato production (for canning), virtually monopolized by two major agribusiness with a mixture of domestic and foreign capital (CSS and SOCAS); and the very dynamic sector of vegetable exports (especially French beans),

<sup>38</sup> See also van Onselen (1993).

<sup>39</sup> Pincus is referring to the excellent study by Rutten (2003).

which is increasingly accounted for by the production (and exports) of a few agribusinesses, which organize their production (mainly) in estates and, to a diminishing extent, in the form of contract farming (Maertens and Swinnen 2007).<sup>40</sup> Thus, apart from the agro-corporations, most rural capitalists like the ones studied here (below) exemplify, in terms of historical agrarian transition paths (Byres 2003), a mixture of capitalism or accumulation 'from above' (wealthy traders, landlords, landed *marabouts* and state bureaucrats) and accumulation 'from below' (via peasant capitalism).<sup>41</sup>

The development of capitalism in Senegal has been mainly analyzed from a *dependency* theoretical angle, if one takes the pioneer work of Amin (1969) as an example, followed by Cruise O'Brien (1979). Most of the emphasis was then placed on the dominance of foreign capital in what was supposed to be the heart of the capitalist economy in Senegal, i.e. the oligopolistic manufacturing and to a lesser extent, mining sector. The collected volume edited by Cruise O'Brien (1979) provides some material in this respect, which shows ways in which France managed to negotiate or 'impose' a smooth transition from colonial dominance to political independence. In fact, it is often argued, the French had allowed a significant degree of political participation to Senegalese Africans but much less scope for African indigenous capitalism in the industrial sector and banking services (Freund 1998, 144). This meant that at the time of Independence entire sub-sectors of the industrial, banking, construction and, in general, 'modern capitalist' sectors were in the hands of foreign capital.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, a new form of intermediate merchant capital class had also developed with the Syro-Lebanese minority, which controlled some segments of the manufacturing sector, tourism and a great deal of trading business before and after Independence.<sup>43</sup> This reality led many scholars to see Senegal as a typical example of dysfunctional dependent capitalism in which a capitalist 'enclave' directly or indirectly dominated by foreign capital coexisted with a large mass of people, especially in rural areas, engaged in non-capitalist forms of production.

Perhaps the relative powerlessness of indigenous entrepreneurs was exaggerated even though one needs to admit that immigrant minorities were favoured by their superior access to capital and by the colonial authorities for some time.<sup>44</sup> However, the main problem, as suggested by Warren for other contexts, is that 'an exclusive focus on manufacturing industry (especially heavy industry) and the role of foreign capital therein can divert attention from the underlying force of the spread of capitalism from below' (1980, 253). In essence, the stories of rural

<sup>40</sup> Maertens and Swinnen (2007) show interesting evidence of a transition towards estate production as a result of stringent export market quality standards and the reorganization of the sector.

<sup>41</sup> See Mamdani (1987) for a similar use of these terms on Uganda.

<sup>42</sup> The immigration of French (*petits blancs*) and Levantine *immigrés* from lower-middle classes was significant even if not massive in terms of numbers (Kennedy 1988, 32).

<sup>43</sup> See Diop (1985) for a sociological analysis of *broad* class structures emerging from this development path.

<sup>44</sup> Rapley (1994) has convincingly questioned the same line of argument and evidence in the case of Cote d'Ivoire where the presence of French capitalists, also in farming, had been even more prominent than in Senegal.

capitalists provide some evidence of the sort of 'grass roots' capitalist development mentioned by Warren (1980), and others (Rapley 1994; Hill 1970; Austin 2005). These stories can be located in broader processes of agricultural commoditization, well consolidated in Senegal through state and market-mediated mechanisms of resource allocation since the colonial period. They also exemplify processes of adaptation to the crises borne out by the contradictions inherent to the system of accumulation emerging in postcolonial Senegal and subsequently transformed by the turn to neoliberal policies.<sup>45</sup>

During the postcolonial period, there were phases when the government tried to respond to demands from the emerging Senegalese indigenous bourgeoisie<sup>46</sup> through 'indigenization' policies in the 1970s,<sup>47</sup> but bolder measures were taken to create forms of state capitalism through ambitious plans of industrialization, by partly nationalizing large industrial companies (SONACOS – groundnuts and vegetable oil; ICS – phosphate and chemicals), whose plants and equipment remained foreign-owned. According to some accounts, the state created seventy parastatal corporations in the first half of the 1970s, which accounted for nearly 40 per cent of value added in the 'modern' sector and employed a large proportion of 'formal' employees (Diouf 1993, 247, citing Gellar's work). These proactive measures were, however, designed to favour indigenous capitalists to make inroads into the manufacturing and services sector in Dakar. By then, indigenous rural capitalists, as we will see in the individual trajectories below, had already emerged in a variety of activities, especially farming, trade and transport, benefiting from state intervention and reforms in other ways.<sup>48</sup> From the 1980s onwards state policies followed a structural adjustment and liberalization agenda, largely induced by increasing aid dependency, which, together with the dispersion of centres of power and competing demands on the government,<sup>49</sup> led to a short-term, erratic and rather incoherent agricultural and development policy that has exacerbated some constraints on long-term rural accumulation while opening up different kinds of opportunities for some rural capitalists to succeed.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> See also Copans (1980) on long-term historical processes of agrarian change and differentiation in Senegal.

<sup>46</sup> See Diop (1985) for a description of this class.

<sup>47</sup> As manifested in the dispositions contained in the 1972 Investment code, giving special advantages to Senegalese (African) capitalists (Cruise O'Brien 1979).

<sup>48</sup> Capitalist *immigrés* had not invested in farming (except for some enclaves like sugar production in the Senegal River Valley) and, since the takeover of agricultural marketing by parastatal boards (ONCAD), many Levantine business families gradually moved from trading in the rural hinterland to service and trade activities based in Dakar and other provincial capitals, leaving *loci* of accumulation behind.

<sup>49</sup> See Thioub et al. (1998) for examples of new forms of collective action putting pressure on the Senegalese regime.

<sup>50</sup> See Oya (2006) on the political economy of agricultural and macroeconomic policy changes by the Senegalese government and the drift towards greater incoherence and donor-friendly policy stances.

## IV. INDIVIDUAL TRAJECTORIES OF RURAL CAPITALISM

Due to space constraints and the fact that the number of life histories is sufficiently large to constitute a cross section of case studies, one convenient way of presenting their trajectories is by focusing on separate themes and illustrating the variety of trajectories with excerpts from the life histories. Perhaps a better way is to present the full stories of the farmers in a narrative style, but this presentation method is more effective if the number of cases is smaller and the output is a monograph.<sup>51</sup>

Table 1 presents a basic profile of the fifteen farmers, which clearly shows the variety of cases studied, in terms of age, scale of production, dispersion of activities and trends over the previous eight years. There are similarities in the range of other economic activities in which they were involved on a long-term basis or on and off, with trade and transport being the preferred options. This is partly structural as the Senegalese economy has grown (and stagnated) over the past 30 years or so with a significantly growing significance of the service sectors, which partly indicate their relative dynamism but also the decadence of the manufacturing sector, especially after the more 'liberal' industrial policy framework introduced in 1986.<sup>52</sup> In any case the rural capitalists analyzed in this paper, with one exception, have the feature of being almost full-time farmers and having been involved in farming mostly since their youth.

Stories of individual capitalists/entrepreneurs are embedded in the social historical processes of rural and urban class formation, which are historically and geographically contingent. In this sense, some of the large farmers represented in this paper evoke the intersection between two processes. First, there is the long-term and gradual process of reinvention and recreation of power based on inheritance from previous social formations, i.e. the way in which those belonging to traditionally landed classes (*lamaan* and *marabouts*) have maintained their significant power leverage in contemporary rural institutions and structures (for example, cooperatives, rural councils and parastatal boards). Secondly, the reaping of opportunities which market expansion, with or without market liberalization, has created through the emergence of new venues of accumulation for these same farmers, thus of options for accumulation largely based on straddling of economic activities. In short, the accumulation trajectories of these individual capitalists have largely hinged on their ability (and options): (a) to mobilize labour at very low cost; (b) to use surplus to expand the range of activities in order to reduce risk and adapt business to seasonality; (c) to use their political clout to circumvent state regulation in situations where profitable venues of accumulation emerged by breaking the law; (d) to appropriate ever-scarcer

<sup>51</sup> Three good examples of the latter option are the brief stories presented by Guyer (1997) on four mid-scale Nigerian farmers in one of the chapters of her book; the much longer narratives written by Cheater (1984) on small- and mid-scale rural capitalists in Zimbabwe; and the outstanding work on one South African sharecropper by van Onselen (1993).

<sup>52</sup> On the decadence of the manufacturing sector and its implications in terms of system of accumulation see Boone (1992).



Table 1. Profile of the fifteen case studies selected: basic facts and farming trends

	<i>Current age (years)</i>	<i>Current production scale (metric tons)</i>	<i>Cultivated hectares 1995–98</i>	<i>Cultivated hectares 2006</i>	<i>Other activities (in order of importance)</i>
A Fall	70	10 t groundnuts 8 t cereals	40	30	None
F Fall <sup>a</sup>	Passed away	100 t groundnuts 50 t cereals (before death)	130	Greatly reduced after death	Transport and intermediary for parastatal
Loum	60	10 t groundnuts 9 t cereals	37	23	Parastatal employee (regional supervisor level)
Niankha	56	22 t groundnuts 17 t cereals	45	35	Transport, trade and livestock
Diop	48	4 t groundnuts 8 t cereals	14	18	Teacher (primary school)
Ba	55	100 t groundnuts 15–20 t cereals	95	140	Trade, livestock and transport
Seck	63	Ceased farming in 1999	13	No longer farming	Mainly trade
Ndiaye	68	24 t groundnuts 20 t cereals	65	39	Trade and <i>marabout</i> (koranic teacher)
Cisse	56	18 t groundnuts 13 t cereals + sesame and beans	35	30	Livestock, local authority and local politics
Drame	53	50 t groundnuts 28 t cereals	65	70	Transport and trade
Diaw	70	14 t groundnuts 15 t cereals	44	45	Trade
Vilane	47	32 t groundnuts 16 t cereals	28	70	Trade and livestock
Diouf	69	38 t groundnuts 12 t cereals	32	50	Livestock, trade, parastatal employee and local politics
Mbow	53	23 t groundnuts 9 t cereals	28	30	Retrenched public extension agent, livestock
Diallo	52	85 t groundnuts 25 t cereals	134	125	Transport, trade, livestock and local authority/politics

*Note:* The production and cultivated area figures *only* include the plots under the direct control of the farmer principal respondent. Plots were individualized in all the farms reviewed here, so that other men and women within the farmers' households controlled the cultivation and proceeds of their own plots, and, therefore, are not included in these figures. *Averages for full sample of 65 large-middle farmers:* 45 hectares of total cultivated area (under direct control of respondent), 24 tons of groundnut production, 57 years of age.

<sup>a</sup> I had collected a basic life history of F. Fall back in 1998, but he was dead by the time of the fieldwork in 2006. I interviewed his heir, the only son who had inherited his farm, but who could only operate at a fraction of his father's scale, due to his own financial constraints and motivations.

state-created rents (especially access to special contracts and subsidized credit and inputs); and (e) to get privileged access to social infrastructures created by the state.

*a. The Emergence of Rural Capitalists: Origins and Broad Evolution Patterns*

One of the most interesting aspects of exploring the lives of rural capitalist entrepreneurs is their origin. According to the reviews carried out by Kennedy (1988), Iliffe (1983) and Berman and Leys (1994), three stylized facts stand out. The first is that rural capitalism seems to have emerged mostly from the ranks of peasants ('capitalism from below') as a result of farmers' differentiation, and not so much from pre-colonial landowning classes or chiefs. Secondly, a contrast can be made between West Africa, where artisanship and trade provided a significant pool of entrepreneurs for the capitalist sectors (especially in urban areas), and Eastern-Southern Africa where many successful entrepreneurs went through the rite of passage of Western education and formal sector employment (often civil service). Thirdly, many of today's capitalists/entrepreneurs have, however, originated from families that had already previously accumulated some form of economic or political power. Rapley (1994) has done some fascinating work on the emergence of an Ivoirian (non-settler) bourgeoisie in Cote d'Ivoire from the early twentieth century, which transited from a planter class to an urban-based capitalist class with diversified interests in manufacturing, transport and trade. One of the most significant findings was that the 'Ivoirien bourgeoisie was not the pre-colonial dominant class in new clothes' but many of them were 'migrant labourers, [who] went to work on those [French settler] plantations and, having learned the new techniques of production, often created their own plantations after a number of years of labour' (Rapley 1994, 39–40). Hill (1970) also identified migrant cocoa farmers and fishermen as the emerging class of rural capitalist entrepreneurs in other parts of West Africa.

Contemporary rural (African) capitalists in Senegal tend to come from wealthy or powerful families in their areas of origin. It is hard to find examples of today's successful accumulators originating in average or poorer smaller peasant farmers, partly because social hierarchies are rigid in rural Senegal and social mobility is mainly associated with cases of successful international migration. Some of the 'new rich' with rural origins are mostly *Moodu Moodu* who have succeeded in their migration adventures, while other 'rich' people who have accumulated on the basis of economic activities within rural Senegal tend to come from richer or (locally) politically powerful families. Most of the rural capitalist entrepreneurs presented here belong to this second class of accumulators. However, if one goes back further for some more generations, evidence of 'capitalism from below' of the kind captured by Rapley and Hill seems to emerge.

I explored the hypothesis of pre-colonial ruling class origins of the sample of capitalists in Senegal. The collection of stories shows a remarkable diversity of origins, although many came from already prosperous families. A significant group within the fifteen cases studied in depth originated from two different

strands of pre-colonial and colonial ruling classes. First, a few traced back their origins to a class of landlords (*lamaan*) who had access to enormous tracts of land in pre-colonial times and had authority over land allocation in their areas of influence. However, with time many of these properties became significantly fragmented into mid-scale holdings among their descendants, while only in rare cases did landholdings stay concentrated in the hands of a single inheritor. A second former ruling class is that of landed *marabouts*. Four of the fifteen cases were sons of locally (but not nationally) influential *marabouts* and inherited their local 'power' in the form of access to labourers (*talibe* or koranic students) and access to free land in their villages. Five other cases had well-to-do fathers, either large-scale producers who had emerged from the ranks of middle peasants during the colonial times, or traders, transporters or formal wage employees who had built up a business and some assets also during the colonial period. Finally, despite the dominance of these paths among the rural capitalists surveyed, there were also examples of the kind of indigenous rural capitalist that emerged in Cote d'Ivoire from the ranks of a migrant wage labour class, notably the Fall brothers who could trace their origins to a group of 'burkas' (generally known as *navetanes* or seasonal migrant workers working as labour tenants) who had settled in the areas where they migrated and managed to scale up their farming by cultivating free unoccupied land.<sup>53</sup>

Apart from the assets and local 'power' that many of these farmers had inherited, another advantage was that the fixed start-up costs for mid- and large-scale farmers working in the context of the Groundnut basin and with the available (and not sophisticated) technology were relatively low compared with other business ventures, especially transport and even more manufacturing. The stories also suggest that perhaps trade shared this advantage with farming in the initial stages of accumulation as often they could start up some successful trade deals with relatively limited cash.<sup>54</sup> Finally, as suggested by Sender and Smith (1990) on Tanzania, education (of accumulators and their parents) matters. In fact, most of the farmers in this sample received substantial education mostly in the form of koranic teaching (which included also general subjects and numeracy) and some in the French schooling system (the access to which was rare in rural areas during the colonial period, when all farmers of this sample were born). Excerpts from selected life histories help us illustrate the variety of experiences and the inter-generational transmission of accumulation patterns.

*Diallo Diallo*, today one of the largest capitalists in the area we surveyed and also a local politician, was the fourth son of a prosperous transporter (from a family of peasant Fulani migrants into the Groundnut basin), who had succeeded in working as an intermediary and transporter for French trading houses in the hinterland during the colonial period. His father had also successfully engaged in

<sup>53</sup> This is one of the essential features of historical experiences of 'capitalism from below' (for example, the United States), as explained by Byres (2003).

<sup>54</sup> Guyer (1997, 107) makes a similar point about mid-scale farmers in Nigeria.

the very profitable rice trade, at the time when rice was becoming one of the main staples in urban areas and penetrating rural markets. He was the only son who made it to French secondary school, which in the 1960s was a rarity for most rural children. While still at school he even got a part-time job in charge of weighing farmers' crop deliveries in a rural cooperative of the large state marketing and rural development agency ONCAD. Diallo eventually inherited the most important business activities of his father, especially rice trade and transport, before setting up his own large-scale farm in 1983.

*Diouf* Diouf was born in 1937 of a relatively prosperous farmer, who engaged in many other activities. Diouf's father was the only shopkeeper in his village, and in the 1950s he got a job as a middleman for a company selling vehicles in the region, precisely when the groundnut sector and trade were going through a boom before Independence. Perhaps his privileged access to these jobs and assets was related to his condition as *ancien combattant* (former soldier in the French Army during WWI). This experience and his own noble – landlord – origins (in terms of Wolof pre-colonial caste system) made Diouf's father a notable in his region, as reflected in his role as advisor to a municipal court. He was also relatively educated for the standards of Senegalese people of his generation. Diouf and his brothers went to French school up to pre-secondary level, a rare achievement in the 1940s. As a result of his formal education and his father's influence, Diouf managed to secure a number of relatively well-paid salaried jobs in the railways first and subsequently in various rural development agencies. He started in the colonial *Sociétés de Prévoyance* and continued in the post-Independence rural cooperatives, where he became manager of crop collection points. Since then (the 1960s) Diouf got married and formed his own household by combining his salaried activities (from which he retired in 1992) with middle-scale farming and cattle herding.

*Drame* Drame is another example of a rural capitalist originating from the family of a rich peasant farmer-trader from a *maraboutic* lineage. His father was a *marabout* and perhaps the largest groundnut producer of his district and one of the most known in the province of Kaolack at the time. Like many other *marabouts*, Drame's father managed a large *daara* (koranic farm-school) where he hosted up to 100 *talibe* (usually children and youths up to the age of 20–25), but he never turned into a capitalist farmer, i.e. he always farmed on the basis of non-capitalist labour relations. Drame's brothers died early and he became the eldest and thus inheritor of the *daara* and commercial activities from his father. Eventually Drame succeeded as a large-scale farmer with a constant expansion of production scale and reliance on hired labour instead of *talibe*. However, he accumulated mostly through his investments in transport and his activities as a rice large-scale trader. He gradually acquired several trucks, with which he carried out large-scale trade throughout Senegal and neighbouring countries and provided transport services to other entrepreneurs. In this and other respects Drame's entrepreneurial activities dwarfed his father's achievements.

Loum Loum, born in 1945 and an educated mid-scale farmer, comes from humbler origins. His father was a poor peasant farmer with little access to land and the family broke up when Loum was a child. He followed his mother and was eventually adopted by his elder brother who had become an imam in another village. Despite the lack of support from his father, Loum, encouraged by his elder brother, went to French school after spending a few years in a koranic school, where he excelled. Despite dropping out a couple of times, he developed substantial skills in maths and English. His brother provided him with a contact in Dakar of someone who had set up a small private school and Loum got a job there for a couple of years. However, the school (which was not formally registered) was shut down after an inspection and Loum persuaded some pupils to continue lessons individually. He managed to accumulate some money during this period and eventually opened a small village shop for his father. When he returned to the village, in 1970, he applied for a job as a manager of a rural marketing collection point belonging to ONCAD. Since then he strung together various jobs in the state rural development and marketing agencies/companies (ONCAD, SONAR, SONACOS) as supervisor or mid-level manager in various regions. He started farming on a small scale when he got access to salaried jobs, describing himself as a typical *paysan de dimanche* ('Sunday peasant', or part-time farmer), but he gradually increased the scale of his farming operations, including livestock rearing, on the basis of seasonal and casual hired labour and his privileged access to state-mediated input distribution systems.

*b. Rural Capitalists and the Symbiosis between Trade, Transport and Farming*

The historiography of African capitalism has always emphasized the importance of trade and trade-related activities as a key *locus* of accumulation for rural capitalism. Iliffe (1983, 27) provides some examples of rural capitalism being shaped by the existence of capitalistic sectors of exchange, where indigenous entrepreneurs faced lower barriers to entry. This is particularly the case for African traders engaged in internal commerce, which often thrived under European colonialism.<sup>55</sup> In Senegal internal trade and import-export have traditionally been long-established activities, which at different times and to various degrees involved indigenous and migrant (Levantine and European) capitalists.<sup>56</sup>

There is no doubt that one distinctive feature of rural capitalists in much of Africa is the 'straddling' of economic activities and resulting diversification of income sources and sites of accumulation. This 'straddling', as we shall comment

<sup>55</sup> See Gregoire (1995) on the dynamism of regional trade in the Sahel region during the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

<sup>56</sup> As Boone suggests (1992), accumulation in the sphere of circulation and some forms of rentierism have driven economic development and transformations in the postcolonial period, but it is in my view debatable whether this pattern has necessarily been one of the most important obstacles for dynamic capitalist development in Senegal. As the life histories in this paper suggest, trade surplus has often been reinvested in the expansion of farming scale, acquisition of means of production and certain forms of innovation.

in the next section, also includes access to wage employment and particularly to public sector jobs, which provided the locus of cash and asset accumulation that could feed into the establishment of farms.<sup>57</sup> The combination of different sites of accumulation and their variability over time lends support to the idea that 'entrepreneurship' among rural West African capitalists is mostly evident in the way they mix activities and experiment with new forms of accumulation. This form of entrepreneurial behaviour clearly distinguished the case studies in our sample from other mid- and large-scale farmers or rich peasants. In this sense, Senegalese rural capitalists portrayed here behave as entrepreneurs as they experimented with new activities, took advantage of opportunities for accumulation and sometimes innovated in terms of the linkages made between the various activities that offered a source of short- or long-term surplus.

The role of trade and transport in the accumulation patterns of the rural capitalists presented here is multifaceted, but two forms emerged from most life histories. First, trade and/or transport provided for some farmers an outlet for rather safe surplus reinvestment, which in the short term allowed them to expand their assets' pool. In this sense most of the stories portray a symbiotic relationship between farming and trade, where surplus generated in one activity is reinvested in the other and *vice versa*, depending on the circumstances (mainly profitability and labour availability) of the moment. Secondly, trade/transport for some capitalist farmers constituted the 'turning point' of their accumulation stories, i.e. the experience of some good deals, especially with speculative cereal or livestock buying-selling,<sup>58</sup> gave a boost to their scale of accumulation, thereby permitting a significant expansion of their farms and further diversification in other business ventures, notably transport.<sup>59</sup> One analytical implication of these tendencies is that, contrary to Berry's suggestion that expanded reproduction happens by investment in the sphere of circulation as opposed to in increasing farming scale, productive scale expansion is not incompatible with investments in trade and transport.<sup>60</sup> These patterns also exemplify an important fact, i.e. the reliance on reinvested profits to keep capital accumulation going and the minor role played by (long-term) borrowing in their accumulation strategies.<sup>61</sup>

Three different stories illustrate the symbiosis between trade and farming and their offshoots into transport business. One (Seck) is a trader (from a farmer family background) who has been an 'opportunistic farmer' during his business

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Iliffe (1983, 31), Kitching (1980), Hill (1970), Muntamba (1980). The list of examples of this kind of straddling is far too vast to be reviewed here.

<sup>58</sup> Food markets are well developed in West Africa and have been significant sites of accumulation for large traders, who exploit economies of scale and the wide differences in food prices across localities and seasons. For further examples see Amanor (2005, 60–2), Guyer (1997) and Gregoire (1995).

<sup>59</sup> The purchase of vehicles for merchandise or passenger transport was one of the typical investments at these 'turning points'. Eventually, the success in transport or the sale of vehicles provided significant amounts of money for farming expansion.

<sup>60</sup> See Bernstein (2004) on Berry for this point.

<sup>61</sup> This pattern of reliance on profit reinvestment for expansion is also found among other non-rural African capitalists, as shown by Kennedy (1988, 149).

history, to finally establish himself as a wealthy trader specialized in trade for agricultural-related commodities (groundnuts, cereals, fertilizers, seed, etc.). Another entrepreneur (Ba) is one of the most dynamic large-scale farmers who has also become an established trader with the gradual consolidation of transport assets (trucks) and who has devoted similar efforts to both activities with varying degrees of success.

*Seck* *Seck* originated from a family of prosperous farmers in the rural areas around Kaolack. His father engaged in some small-scale rural trade, at a time when the Levantine migrants dominated this niche in the area. In the mid-1960s his father and himself (he was the eldest of brothers) invested in two vehicles (partly with personal savings and partly through borrowing). The venture was partially unsuccessful but *Seck* remained in the transport sector as a driver working for various transporters between 1965 and 1971, when he managed to save enough to buy his own vehicle, which he used as a taxi in town. This was the 'turning point' for *Seck*, who could become 'independent' and even take his own father as a dependent as a 'son working for his father', but in a rather different fashion from the most traditional of sons providing labour power to fathers in farming. At that time their detachment from farming was obvious. The accumulation story started with the proceeds of the petty transport business, which provided sufficient funds to engage in cereal and groundnut trade, at a time (the 1970s) when at least the former was banned, even if practised by many entrepreneurs. *Seck* therefore became a well-to-do trader during the 1970s and early 1980s, and invested most of his capital in the purchase of three trucks (between 1978 and 1985), whose absence constituted a massive entry barrier into the most profitable business of merchandise transport. Interestingly the period 1977–1983, which saw in general the collapse of the state rural marketing system under the new structural adjustment measures, was the most prosperous for *Seck*, who partly filled the gap left by the state in trade and transport and made substantial money out of speculative trading in cereal markets. *Seck* went back into farming in 1986, by purchasing some large tracts of land,<sup>62</sup> only when his trade-transport business was solid enough so that he could 'experiment'. In fact, a man with 'liberal views', he thought that ongoing agricultural market liberalization would be also good for farming business. He engaged in large-scale farming (20–50 ha, depending on the season) between 1986 and 1999, during which a highly profitable symbiosis between farming and trade developed. However, although farming generated some significant surplus, especially after the CFAfr devaluation in 1994, he decided to stop in 1999, mainly because of labour constraints. In fact, he had acquired a significant amount of land in the 1990s without much financial effort, but he depended completely on hired seasonal and casual labour, the

<sup>62</sup> Land purchases are rare in Senegal (apart from the Senegal River Valley and the peri-urban areas of Dakar), but cash land-leasing and some forms of mortgages have become widespread in the Groundnut Basin. See Oya (2001) on the incidence of capitalist land leasing among large- and mid-scale groundnut farmers.

availability of which fluctuated over time. He could not find anyone ('trustable') in his family to supervise farming operations and he did not have time himself. Seck is, in fact, the only example of an 'absentee farmer' in this sample of stories. The difficulties in managing a farm without time and willing relatives, compounded by the growing crisis in the groundnut sector as a result of liberalization and the withdrawal of state support (credit, inputs, market outlets), persuaded him to cease farming and concentrate on his trade and transport business, which he has finally based in Kaolack with a number of warehouses.

*Ba Ba*, born in 1951, originated from a peasant family of a well-to-do farmer with four wives. *Ba* was sent by his father to a koranic school for more than fourteen years and this way he became a koranic scholar/master when he was in his mid-twenties. Most of his youth was spent between his mother's house and the *daara* (koranic school). As a result of family divisions he did not inherit any land from his father when he died (*Ba* was only 18 then), but once he established himself as a *daara* master, he managed to attract a significant pool of seasonal labour from *talibe* (disciples/students) living in his area and coming from other provinces. He built up local prestige as a koranic scholar and through this non-capitalist form of labour appropriation and the marrying of three wives (by the age of 29) he was becoming a traditional prosperous non-capitalist farmer. The expansion of farming scale was initially helped by his substantial attraction of students to his school-farm and his ability to negotiate additional plots with local chiefs. He invested part of the surplus in livestock rearing, buying and selling cattle, as well as in acquiring means of production for farming (decorticators, horses, sowing machines, ploughs, etc.). Gradually, he focused on farming and his detachment from koranic teaching forced him to experiment with more 'capitalist' forms of labour and land appropriation, so that his farming became ever more dependent on cash land-leasing and on the hiring of labour tenants (*nave-tanes*) first and subsequently of seasonal migrant wage labourers (*mbindane*) and large numbers of local casual workers for peak operations (weeding and harvesting). By changing his labour hiring practices he further expanded the scale of production and given his status as a respected koranic teacher he had no problems in securing additional tracts of land from the local chiefs and from cash leasing. He had also invested in the purchase of a taxi for passenger transport in 1980 and a couple of motorbikes for his household. The taxi business, even if on a small-scale, has generated a reliable source of revenue, which has been gradually reinvested in transport and farming. However, again the 'turning point' for the scaling up of his accumulation came from his involvement in trade, from 1986. His trade activities were, indeed, made possible by the substantial surplus (through groundnut and cereal production) that his large-scale farming generated and helped by the revenues from his taxi. Despite having already access to the licence of another private trader before 1986 (when cereal trade was highly regulated), the liberalization of cereal markets in 1986/87 pushed him to invest more resources in this activity. Rather than buying trucks he opted for transport leasing in response to specific opportunities, especially in the speculative sale of



cereals during the 'hungry' season in remote markets. In 1993 he moved into the more regulated groundnut trade and became an OPS,<sup>63</sup> thereby benefiting from seasonal credit from the groundnut state company (SONACOS). With the combination of OPS work, cereal trade, large-scale farming and livestock rearing, Ba had become one of the most successful accumulators when we first met him in 1998. He had a couple of warehouses, over 100 ha of cultivated land and he had experimented with new cattle breeds imported from Morocco, making him one of the most innovative cattle owners in the region. When we met him again in 2006, he had consolidated his trade business, especially in cereals, and had expanded into a new taxi venture in Dakar (delegated to one of his sons) and into poultry contracts with a Dakar-based industrialist. Once Ba had accumulated some initial capital from farming and partly cereal trade, the subsequent symbiosis of trade-transport-farming during a time of significant policy changes explains much of his accumulation pattern and the further diversification into new business ventures.

*Ndiaye* Ndiaye, today in his late 60s, also initially accumulated as a farmer-*marabout* on land that he had inherited from his *marabout* father (unlike Ba). He used part of the capital accumulated through mid-scale farming (around 30 tons of groundnuts per year, partly on the basis of non-capitalist forms of labour surplus appropriation) to finance a number of 'adventures' into import business, which he carried out personally by travelling (for short trips lasting up to four weeks) to countries such as Belgium, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Cote d'Ivoire. He explored the commodities that sold better in local markets in Senegal (cosmetics, vehicle spares, clothes, plastic consumption goods, electronic goods – TV, radios, etc.) and made a few trips to establish links and find suppliers. Most of this business consisted of smuggling, which was facilitated by his own effective arrangements with Senegalese customs agents. He was involved in this rather unusual business for a farmer for 20 years (1968–88) and generated a substantial surplus, which he reinvested in the acquisition of farm means of production (tractor, thresher, sowing machines, decorticator, etc.) and vehicles (one taxi and a truck). He used the tractor for his own farm and to provide services for other local farmers, which also generated significant income.<sup>64</sup> During this period (1968–88) the symbiosis trade-farming-transport allowed him to become a very successful accumulator and to look for additional landholdings (which he purchased or rented for cash) even in other regions, with a view to creating additional farming units that his sons would inherit and operate in the future. However, he eventually ceased doing import business (1988) as a result of a number of failed deals in Nigeria, which ended in confiscation of a substantial

<sup>63</sup> This stands for *Opérateur Privé Stockeur*, a kind of licensed private trader working as intermediary between SONACOS, then the parastatal groundnut company, and groundnut producers. This category of trader expanded significantly with the gradual liberalization of groundnut markets from the early 1990s.

<sup>64</sup> Tractors are quite uncommon even among mid- and large-scale farmers in Senegal.

amount of merchandise and therefore heavy losses, for which he was ill prepared. To an extent, he managed to carry on farming on a large scale thanks to the reliable performance of his trade in cereals (mainly local grains), which typically generated a 50 per cent profit rate on the capital invested. His trade in cereals compensated for the losses in the import business in the mid-1980s and led him to concentrate more on farming and intra-national trade. In fact Ndiaye also eventually stopped engaging in the transport business (trucks and taxis) because he realized the profits were not as good as in the past and he had problems with drivers, which resulted in some significant losses in 2003. To a certain extent, Ndiaye blamed his move away from some of the activities that had spurred his previous accumulation on his ageing and the fact that he had 'fewer dependants' now. It is interesting that Ndiaye projected himself as a 'farmer and *marabout*', playing down the importance of trade and transport, which had contributed significantly to his success as a large-scale farmer.

*c. Rural Capitalists and the State: Fettering or Nurturing Indigenous Capitalists?*

Most of the political economy literature on agrarian transitions and processes of capitalist development convincingly stress and demonstrate the often paramount role of the state in leading these processes and/or creating the material and ideological conditions for their development (Byres 2003). The role of the state can be analyzed at the macro level, by looking at the investments, institutional performance, macroeconomic policies and legislation changes initiated by state institutions and political leaders, or at the micro level, by considering the relations between meso- (sectors or sub-sectors) or micro level (individual and firm) trajectories of accumulation and social change and the specific actions of the state in particular historical moments.<sup>65</sup> Another important theme is the extent to which rural capitalists disproportionately benefit from state interventions and connections and the instances of 'political entrepreneurship', i.e. the forms and effects of capitalists' participation in politics. Moreover, as already shown in section IVa, there is symbiosis between access to public sector salaried employment and trajectories of rural accumulation. Some of the rural capitalists portrayed here exemplify a case that is quite typical of rural capitalism in much of Africa: the farmers-state employees. The importance of access to formal state-mediated wage employment for instances of rural capitalist accumulation has been highlighted by previous studies, which not only emphasize the role of access to a stable source of revenue, but also the fact that skills acquired through state wage employment have been used to consolidate or spur different forms of rural entrepreneurship. This paper is thus concerned with some of these relations between the state, politics and rural capitalists. However, it is also important to note the policy contexts in which individual trajectories of rural capitalism

<sup>65</sup> See Sender and Smith (1990) for an example of a detailed study on the specific constraints on rural capitalist accumulation that are related to state interventions, inefficiencies and ideological biases.

accelerate or falter, in order to understand the nature of state-led incentives and constraints on rural accumulation. In this respect, Iliffe (1983, 77) offers a useful taxonomy of relationships between ‘capitalists’ and ‘politicians’. First, some post-colonial regimes were opposed to the emergence of domestic private capital allegedly for being incapable of modernizing the country (for example, Nkrumah in Ghana, Nyerere in Tanzania,<sup>66</sup> the Mali under Keita, Angola, Mozambique, etc.). The second model is that of ‘parasitic capitalism’, where access to state resources and office is turned into private assets, even if not always towards productive uses (the paradigmatic example is Zaire<sup>67</sup>). The third model is one of ‘nurture capitalism’, whereby the state invests to promote indigenous private capitalism (often through ‘indigenization’ programmes) with nationalism at the heart of the model (Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa). These ‘models’ do not necessarily match the experiences of most African countries and indeed some countries have transited from one form to another (for example, Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire or Zambia).<sup>68</sup> It would in fact be difficult to assign Senegal to any one of these models, but, as we have briefly seen in section III, elements of ‘parasitic’ (rentier) and ‘nurture’ capitalism (agricultural modernization, indigenization programmes, subsidies and ‘soft’ credit to capitalists) have been present in a rather incoherent and historically contingent way.

Coming back to the specific case of agrarian capitalists in Senegal, a concrete example of the state-led constraints on capitalist accumulation in *farming* may be drawn from the experience of the years between the 1998 survey and the collection of oral histories in 2006. As it appears from the comparisons between 2006 and 1995–98 cultivation levels, even this sample of *very dynamic* farmers contains a significant number (about half the sample of fifteen case studies included here) who have reduced their farming operations, and one who ceased farming altogether. Indeed, this period has been characterized by a deepening of the crisis in the groundnut sector, coinciding with the full liberalization of the sector and the almost total withdrawal of the state from its long-established support to groundnut producers. The period has also been one of dramatic changes in the way groundnut marketing works nationally and of a very erratic policy stance, especially during Wade’s regime since 2000. The significant lack of support institutions and the erratic policy measures, which have included ad hoc subsidies on farmgate prices (despite the rhetoric of full liberalization prices) and full privatization or liquidation of all former parastatal groundnut agencies and companies, have exacerbated the uncertainty facing groundnut farmers and the credibility of state actions in the future. Most farmers in this study were adamant in suggesting that the new regime had simply decided to abandon support and promotion of groundnut farming and instead was experimenting with other crops (for example,

<sup>66</sup> See also Sender and Smith (1990).

<sup>67</sup> MacGaffey (1994) offers a useful account of the nature and logic of ‘parasitic capitalism’.

<sup>68</sup> On Nigeria see, for example, Williams (1988), who argued that state support provided niches for capitalist farming, without thereby transforming Nigerian agriculture along capitalist lines, by subordinating peasants.

maize, and now bio-fuels) in which most Senegalese farmers had no interest or comparative advantage.

From the life histories, there is no doubt that most interviewed farmers (and their fathers) greatly benefited from the various forms of state support to groundnut production in the past, especially in the 1970s. They also were particularly successful in securing access to inputs (seed and fertilizers) distributed through the remaining state agencies even during the period of gradual liberalization (the 1980s and 1990s) and even during the institutional chaos following the elimination of ONCAD (1979–1984).<sup>69</sup> Despite their connections and their ability to access inputs and means of production (not least their superior availability of cash in order to purchase inputs from private traders), macro and meso-level constraints on accumulation in farming have prevented a further expansion of their landholdings and especially greater investments in intensification and more expensive means of production (e.g. tractors).<sup>70</sup>

Another ‘stylized fact’ that emerges from these stories of rural accumulation is the superior capacity that these rural accumulators have shown in circumventing state regulation and taking advantage of weak enforcement of regulation on internal trade, for instance. This is clear in two examples. First, most rural capitalists in this sample made a lot of money out of cereal trade (especially millet and sorghum), precisely *before* its liberalization in 1986. Existing state institutions before the mid 1980s were more preoccupied with controlling the groundnut marketing system (output and inputs) and did not effectively enforce bans and barriers on internal cereal commerce. To a certain extent food market liberalization was a bogus policy measure. Moreover, state agencies were very ineffective in dealing with localized seasonal food shortages, which became a locus of accumulation for many entrepreneurs with access to means of transport and substantial food storage facilities. Secondly, some rural capitalists in this sample made the most of the institutional chaos of the initial inconsistent liberalization period and the collapse of ONCAD in 1979. They did so by taking advantage of even more weakly enforced regulations and by acquiring assets (especially means of transport such as trucks, and storage facilities), which were liquidated at a fraction of their price in order to address binding fiscal constraints and the emergence of new alternative parastatal agencies in the early 1980s. Three examples serve to illustrate some of the themes and stylized facts mentioned above.

*Mbow* Mbow was born in 1953. His father was a small ‘simple’ farmer (in Mbow’s words) and died soon before Mbow’s birth. Mbow then went to both *daara* and French schools. In the former he also did manual agricultural work for a *marabout*, as did any other young *talibe*. His mother was very influential in

<sup>69</sup> See Oya (2001) on the differential access of large and middle farmers to parastatal distribution systems in the era of liberalization.

<sup>70</sup> For example, most farmers indicated that it was much more profitable in the short- and long-term to invest in a truck than in a tractor. Tractors were disproportionately expensive for their long-term value in production and the fact that accumulation through rain-fed farming in the Groundnut Basin has become more difficult in the last 20 years has reinforced this view.

sending him and his elder brother to the nearest French school, where he completed primary education and started secondary education. He was used to working on the farm since he was a child. At the age of 19 he was hired as a weigher in his local rural cooperative. Five years later he was hired as an extension agent by SODEVA, the rural development agency set up in the 1970s to accelerate agricultural modernization among groundnut and millet farmers in the Groundnut Basin. He received substantial training in agricultural techniques and especially in the association between crop and cattle farming, in a project that was linked to the successful Agricultural Programme of the 1970s. He worked for SODEVA until this agency was abolished in 1992 and he survived several redundancy measures during the 1980s. While he was an extension agent, he not only learned a lot about agricultural innovations and their applications to the Senegalese context but he also made several useful contacts among farmers in the region, local authorities and other parastatal employees working in rural development agencies. These connections and the skills acquired were invested in his farming activities and, from the 1980s he started to expand acreage by negotiating additional land rights with sympathetic rural councils and put into practice most of the skills he had learned as an extension agent, including experimentation with new seed varieties, different fertilizer combinations for different crops and the use of new basic farm equipment developed by national agricultural research institutes (ISRA). At the same time, he never had any problem in accessing the required inputs for appropriate farm intensification, even during the 1980s when the input distribution systems underwent a serious crisis. When SODEVA disappeared, he managed to secure another job as manager of a groundnut collection point, which belonged to SONAGRAINES, the marketing and provisioning subsidiary of SONACOS, the main groundnut oil industry in Senegal. While keeping his salaried managerial employment, he gradually became one of the most successful mid-scale farmers in our sample, in several respects: input application patterns, yields per hectare, range of crop mixes and labour hiring practices (alternating hired seasonal, casual labour with relatives depending on crop and farm operations).

*Cisse* Cisse, born an orphan without a father, was sent to live with his uncle. He received some education, mostly in koranic teaching which allowed him to qualify as an imam, and partly in a French primary school. After spending most of his youth fishing with his uncle in St Louis and farming during the rainy season for another relative, he finally established himself independently after his first marriage, and in 1976 he started tobacco contract-farming for the national tobacco manufacturer MTA. He managed to set up his own farm and buy the necessary inputs and equipment thanks to the money he had saved as a fisherman. He got his MTA contract by volunteering after a tour organized by SODEVA in the 1970s, which aimed to gauge interest among local farmers to devote some land to tobacco production. He was one of the few in his area who were willing to experiment with a new crop. He was supervised and assisted by extension agents specialized in tobacco farming, who selected Cisse as one of the

*paysans de pointe* (vanguard peasants) in the area. State interventions in the 1960s and 1970s played a very important role in the promotion of a modernized agriculture and the emergence of a class of dynamic innovating farmers. Thus, during the 1970s Cisse became a successful mid-scale farmer with access to a range of skills and input packages that allowed him to significantly increase yields per hectare. Together with his role as imam, he built up a considerable reputation in the area, which eventually paid off in 1977 when he was selected by the notables in the area as president of the local rural cooperative, a position which carried some prestige at that time.<sup>71</sup> He had also got involved in local politics since the 1970s as a local representative of the ruling party (*Parti Socialiste*), and in 1983 was invited to be a rural councillor,<sup>72</sup> a position he has maintained ever since. Not having completed French secondary education became a barrier to further progress in politics, so Cisse remained active mainly at local and district level. However, involvement in politics and access to positions of local (political and religious) power opened doors in terms of timely access to inputs, 'modernizing' innovations, cash, investment projects and a web of connections, which are essential to doing business in rural Senegal. Cisse, unlike other rural capitalists, used these 'political' assets to strengthen his position as a local authority and to improve his prospects as a farmer rather than to diversify into other venues of accumulation such as trade or transport.

*Diallo Diallo's* (see above) relationship with the state was somewhat more complex and contradictory. As we have seen, he had managed to consolidate the trade and transport business he had inherited from his father. In the 1970s, trade activities were largely against existing regulations and attempts by the government to control food marketing. Diallo had been very successful in accumulating from smuggling between Gambia and Senegal (rice and other food items) in the 1970s thanks to his web of connections in local markets on both sides of the border. At the same time he was a parastatal employee in the rural cooperatives and, as such, he had privileged access to timely inputs and seed. During the 1970s his transport business was also further helped by contracts with rural development agencies and especially ONCAD (collection and transport of groundnuts from cooperatives to factory). In this period, he invested surplus in the significant expansion of both his means of transport (for merchandise and passengers) and farming operations. According to his own account, however, he was even more successful in the 1980s and 1990s, not least because having several

<sup>71</sup> This position did not just bring prestige but also considerable leverage in the affairs of the cooperative, which included important decisions such as official credit and input (seed, fertilizer and pesticides) distribution among all farmers within the territorial boundaries of the cooperative. Sender and Smith (1990) provide examples of the importance for capitalist farmers of holding positions of power in rural cooperatives in Tanzania, as a channel to secure scarce inputs and even sometimes for the corrupt appropriation of state resources. In Senegal the abuses within the rural cooperative system partly led to the financial collapse of ONCAD in 1979 (Caswell 1984).

<sup>72</sup> Rural councils in Senegal were local consultative bodies, which also had the prerogative of decisions about land use and land allocations at the local level, according to the existing land law (*Loi de Domaine Nationale*).

trucks and capacity to trade cereals in bulk was a key advantage in the early stages of market liberalization. When state marketing and development agencies started to withdraw from farm support activities, large-scale traders and transporters benefited substantially since they were the only ones capable of *partially* filling one of the most profitable gaps left by the state: bulk merchandise transport and groundnut/cereal marketing. The effects of liberalization in terms of more volatile seasonal and territorial farm and input prices provided a significant opportunity for rural capitalists like Diallo to accumulate substantial surplus in a fairly short term. In the case of Diallo, his increasing economic power, partly favoured by state actions and 'inactions', eventually strengthened his political assets as he became increasingly involved in politics from the local to other sub-national levels. In the 1990s he had acquired significant political clout in the region and was seen by many other rural capitalists as a legitimate representative in their attempts of collective action through the ruling party (PS). Diallo, although he obviously denies any direct financial benefit from his political activities, concedes that over the last ten years these activities had significantly expanded his clientelist network, thereby strengthening his prospects for further capital accumulation in trade, farming and transport.

*d. Idioms of Accumulation and Labour Mobilization*

Agrarian change is also about evolving labour mobilization patterns among emerging rural accumulators and the conditions of labour supply induced by processes of rural differentiation. There are two principal aspects in the study of idioms of accumulation and differences among accumulators in Senegal. The first is the extent to which farmers accumulate with a long-term view that envisages upward mobility within the family and a move away from farming, through investment in the education of their children.<sup>73</sup> Berry (1985) summarizes this idiom of accumulation in the sentence 'fathers work for their sons', which makes the title of her book. These investments may entail the move from one site of accumulation (farming) to another (non-agricultural activities or state employment) and ultimately the emergence of class (vertical) differentiation within kin groups, which, according to Berry (1985, 1993) reflects the mutual interaction between class and other forms of stratification/differentiation (communal, lineage-related, gender, etc.) that appear to be common in West Africa.

Most rural capitalists in our study did invest in the education of their children, some up to the University level, but expressed their serious concerns about the lack of interest on the part of their children in contributing to their farming activities, especially in view of current problems facing the agricultural sector in Senegal. Some had also invested in the migration of one of their sons, a strategy that has become very common among people from urban and rural areas with the necessary resources to finance a migration adventure. Generally most stories

<sup>73</sup> Sender and Smith (1990, 85) on Tanzania, Berry (1985) and Guyer (1997) on Nigeria provide illustrative examples of this practice among rural indigenous capitalists.

suggested that fathers worked for their sons. An exemplifying case is provided by F Fall, who had recently died before my second visit in 2006. Only one of his sons decided to stay in the village to look after a fraction of Fall's farm, whereas many of the assets he had accumulated such as trucks and two tractors were going to be sold by his brothers, who were more educated and worked in the cities. The risk of fragmentation of rural capitalist enterprises and their individual character are features that have been highlighted by several studies spanning various forms of African capitalism.<sup>74</sup> The implications in terms of inter-generational accumulation of wealth and business are significant and relate to the complex question of class formation (Kennedy 1988, 175). Nevertheless, some exceptions in the life histories reviewed here suggest that business fragmentation/partition upon death is not always the most likely outcome. Some of these rural capitalists have in fact a tendency towards involving their family in parts of the business with a view to consolidating what they have built up over time and avoiding a future interruption of activities. Two brief examples illustrate this pattern.

*Ndiaye* Ndiaye always tried to involve his sons in some of the business initiated and invested in new assets with a view of engaging his family. He did so in two different ways. First, he invested in the purchase of land in three different sites in another region of Senegal (Casamance), partly taking advantage of his reputation as a *marabout* and the possibilities that this opens to have easier access to land. After spending some time there as a part-time farmer and expanding the scale of operations every year, he finally delegated these farms to three of his sons in 2001, when the operation had finally consolidated. Secondly, he invested in sending a son to the US (as an undocumented migrant) and when he returned after four years, they used the savings for the purchase of a vehicle that his son would use for transport business in Dakar.

*Ba* Ba, who is polygamous like all the capitalists analyzed in this paper, treats the different 'nuclear households' as independent business units (in his own words) and provides them with funds in order to finance their mid-scale farming and other activities such as shops in villages or in town (Kaffrine), trade with imported commodities for women (textiles and cosmetics) and a taxi in Dakar for one of his sons. He also distributes capital among the sons who get married in order to avoid inheritance problems and to make sure that eventually his own assets are not partitioned at the time of his death. He has carefully selected some of his children to focus on different aspects of his diversified activity portfolio and envisaged a future in which his accumulated wealth and businesses would form the basis for a family-run complex of business connections. Notably Ba was very keen to transfer his acquired skills in trade, farming, livestock-rearing and transport business to his wives and children, and make the latter independent as soon as possible, but he had decided not to invest in their formal (French) education.

<sup>74</sup> See Kennedy (1988, 165–75).



The other differential aspect refers to the dominant forms of labour surplus appropriation by rural accumulators. It has been already noted that large-scale farming in West Africa hinges upon successful labour mobilization, since labour tends to be the binding constraint on scale expansion (Hill 1970; Swindell and Jeng 2006; Guyer 1997). The differences among rural accumulators in this respect lie in the extent to which some rural capitalists have initially accumulated on the basis of non-capitalist labour relations (or not) and gradually transformed them into capitalist ones, through increasing reliance on free hired labour.<sup>75</sup> At the time of the interviews in 1998 and 2006, although all farmers in this sub-sample predominantly relied on wage labour, some tended to maintain certain 'traditional idioms' of accumulation through increasing the number of family dependants, especially more children ('sons working for their fathers'), or the use of extra-economic forms of labour appropriation (notably the work of religious disciples/students – *talibe*).<sup>76</sup> This aspect may be related to the previous one (above), insofar as a farmer who invests heavily in the education of his children perhaps to reach positions of economic or political power at higher levels is unlikely to follow a traditional idiom of accumulation such as increasing the number of wives and children in order to expand the scale of farming production.

Generally, the evidence collected from the survey in 1998 and the life histories in 2006 presents labour relations that have some structural characteristics and significantly shifting patterns. Structurally, the way existing rural labour relations, even in the form of wage labour, are explained by these capitalists reflects the sort of paternalism that is common to rich peasant employers in many parts of the developing world.<sup>77</sup> In fact, these rural capitalists display significant doses of paternalism in their reported relations with *mbindane* (seasonal

<sup>75</sup> The typical non-capitalist labour relations would include: (a) the work performed by religious disciples-students (*talibe*), even though there is an implicit compensation in the teaching, food and accommodation offered by the *marabout*; (b) work performed by unpaid relatives (especially wives, children and younger brothers); (c) 'reciprocal' collective labour (*santaane*). 'Capitalist' labour relations include all forms of hired wage labour (*mbindane*, *sadou*, *firdou*, etc.) and the specific labour tenancy contracts (*navetanes*).

<sup>76</sup> Here I do not cite polygamy as a traditional idiom of accumulation because it cannot be considered a differentiating factor among richer accumulators and farmers. All rural capitalists in this group are polygamous (three or more wives), including those with access to salaried employment and French education. In fact, polygamy is a form of conforming to traditional practices and existing cultural values, for which there can be significant peer pressure. Some farmers reported having married a third or fourth wife as a result of the death of a brother, and according to traditional practice, the widow is remarried to another brother. It does not really reflect a traditional idiom of accumulation in terms of appropriation of the labour of women and their children for farming activities. This was only partially true for few farmers in this category. For different uses of polygamy as a 'traditional idiom' in other contexts see Cheater (1984) on Zimbabwe and Sender and Smith (1990) on Tanzania.

<sup>77</sup> See also Guyer (1997) and Berry (1985). Kennedy (1988) reviews several studies that observe similar 'paternalistic' tendencies among African capitalists in other non rural contexts. This is particularly common in the case of small informal capitalists in urban areas, who invoke social networks to access a pool of very poor and vulnerable workers (often children) hired as unpaid (or very poorly paid) apprentices. Meagher (1995, 274) is surely right when she points out that 'what appears as ethnic or religious solidarity conceals a mechanism of control and accumulation, but one in which the basic antagonisms are ideologically sublimated'.

labourers)<sup>78</sup> and *sadou* (daily casual labourers)<sup>79</sup> in agricultural activities and with other semi-permanent employees in transport and trade activities. Some rural capitalists associate their labour hiring or mobilization practices in terms of status and ‘protection’ (or patronage) typical of rural Senegalese society in which ‘big men’ – for example, rich farmers – claim to meet responsibilities vis-à-vis their ‘communities’ by offering jobs (help?) to their neighbours. Despite the fact that most *mbindane* and *navetanes* are effectively ‘free’ unbound labourers who come and go and may never return to the same employer,<sup>80</sup> the paternalistic attitude of some capitalist employers may reflect the blurred coexistence of capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of labour surplus appropriation in rural Senegal.

Besides the ‘appearances’ and ‘cultural meanings’ of current labour relations, the life histories have revealed various patterns of adaptation and sometimes innovation in response to varying circumstances and scale expansion through changes in labour hiring practices. Some changes in labour mobilization patterns are gradual and long-term, whereas others are temporary and short-lived. Long-term changes can be exemplified by the gradual move from *navetanes* (labour tenants)<sup>81</sup> to *mbindane* (seasonal wage labourers), already documented in Oya (2001). This shift has been mainly driven by increasing land and especially seed scarcity (*navetanes* are paid with land and groundnut seed) on the part of employers and the declining profitability *cum* increasing risk of small-scale farming for the *navetanes*.<sup>82</sup> In fact these gradual changes in labour relations reflect as much employers’ decisions as preferences by workers, in a process highly contingent on the relative bargaining power of both classes, and not simply on the decisions by employers.<sup>83</sup> Short-term recent changes reported in this survey reflect temporary

<sup>78</sup> The *mbindane* (a term that is also used for domestic servants) are usually workers coming from other regions or nearby villages who are young, too poor to farm or come from areas where returns to farm are exceptionally low. They are in fact ‘free’ wage labourers who sell their labour power for a season (6–8 months verbal contracts) and get paid an agreed amount at the end of season (in the range 90,000–150,000 CFAfr) in addition to the accommodation, food and some wage goods provided by the farmer employer.

<sup>79</sup> *Sadou* or casual labourers normally work for a day or half-day depending on the requirements of their employer. They tend to be from the poorest households of the same village and nearby villages, and are often made up of women and young males. They are increasingly employed for peak operations such as weeding and harvesting.

<sup>80</sup> Arguably, however, both *mbindane* and *navetanes* may be bound to their employer at least for the duration of the season since they only receive their final compensation (salary or harvest) at the end of the 6–8 month work period. In my own fieldwork I never encountered any case of a worker leaving the job without compensation.

<sup>81</sup> The *navetanes* or *sourga* were the most common types of hired labour from the colonial period up to the 1980s. They were predominantly migrants (from other regions or countries) and offered their labour services in exchange for a plot of land and groundnut seed. They usually worked in the farm of their employer (and host) three days a week and devoted the rest of the time to their own plots. See David (1980) for a classic work on the history of these labourers in Senegal.

<sup>82</sup> In various interviews conducted with seasonal workers, it became clear that a fixed agreed seasonal salary provided a greater incentive than an uncertain groundnut yield on landholdings of dubious quality without access to appropriate inputs.

<sup>83</sup> Similar instances of protracted and non-violent class struggle with varying outcomes on the nature of labour contracts have been richly documented in Austin (2005), who analyzed the surprising transition from regular wage labour to sharecropping on cocoa farms in Asante between the 1920s and 1940s.

surges in the recourse to more casual (daily) labour, partly as a response to the current difficulty in finding seasonal migrant workers and the growing exodus of young males (relatives) to the towns and abroad. Some employers have had to increase salaries while reducing the number of *mbindane*, while others have kept a core set of 'reliable' *mbindane*, also hired to supervise larger groups of casual piecework labourers. Some have even used 'innovative' labour recruitment methods in light of current labour supply constraints for farming.

*Mbow* Mbow, who had relied on a mixture of *navetanes* and *mbindane* during the 1980s in order to effectively use his land and cash resources, gradually moved towards a total reliance on *mbindane* and local casual workers as he realized that they were more reliable and productive than *navetanes*. Whereas the latter only worked on the farm and for few days in the week, the *mbindane* were available for all kinds of farm work and even to assist in other businesses (trade, livestock rearing, etc.) or as domestic servants if necessary. However, over the last five years *mbindane* have become scarcer and more expensive, or, as Mbow remarked, 'they have learned to value themselves more'. As a result, Mbow had no option but to reduce cultivated land and increasingly rely on the labour force of casual daily workers from his own village and surroundings. Although he was prepared to pay higher wages, he could not find *mbindane* in sufficient numbers and with the required experience. This situation has persuaded him to invest in labour-saving technology, such as tractors, but access to finance for this purpose is severely constrained.

*Vilane* Vilane, who had been expanding the scale of production ever since the early 1980s, had been able to do so thanks to the plentiful supply of *mbindane* from poor families in Northern drier regions of Senegal and neighbouring Mali. He now faces the same constraint as Mbow and has had to significantly increase his working capital in order to pay higher wages and attract youngsters from the nearby town through recourse to his wide social networks among other traders in the same area. But he has even tried innovative recruitment 'methods'. Given the increasing constraints on expanding cultivation, Vilane recently decided to invest a lot of money in the increasingly lucrative business of buying and selling urban plots in Kaffrine. He then lured some local youths to work as 'real estate' intermediaries with the condition that they would also work for some weeks in his farm.

The scarcity of *mbindane* reflects two aspects of new processes of social differentiation and change. First, the growing crisis in rural Senegal seems to have increased the cash needs of poorer families, thus creating potential seasonal workers. Secondly, the scarcity of sufficiently dynamic farmers-employers in a position to offer higher salaries, i.e. current 'reservation seasonal wages', has pushed many labourers to search for alternative jobs in the rural periphery of Dakar, where horticultural production is booming, and to other secondary cities (Touba), which offer prospects for better paid casual work in various activities. Thus accelerated out-migration of young workers in search of better work

conditions and bargaining power has become the main source of seasonal labour scarcity for rural capitalists and is a crude reflection of the crisis that is affecting Senegalese agriculture and particularly the Groundnut Basin.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has presented and analyzed primary evidence collected through life histories of rural (capitalist) accumulators. The individual trajectories have been selectively interpreted around a set of themes that have received significant attention in the literature on rural capitalism, particularly in Africa. The themes discussed include the relationship between the emergence of rural capitalism and protracted, uneven and gradual rural social differentiation and the various processes that have accompanied it; the condition of 'entrepreneurship' in such changing historical contexts, especially the difficulties in defining it and the importance of 'straddling' as a sign of entrepreneurship; in this regard, we have stressed the symbiotic relationship between different spaces (*loci*) of accumulation, especially trade, transport and farming and the historical context in which they take place, particularly in terms of what *loci* provided the 'turning points' in stories of rural capitalist accumulation; the crucial but sometimes contradictory role of the state in spurring or constraining rural capitalist accumulation and the evidence of 'political entrepreneurship' and farmers-state employees, who invested to obtain privileged access to state resources and connections; and, finally, the variety of 'idioms of accumulation', which reflect transitions and synthesis between non-capitalist and capitalist forms of labour surplus appropriation at the level of individual capitalists, despite some uniformity in the general logic of capital and the spread of capitalist relations of production and exchange. The paper also has discussed the methodological power and limitations of oral narrative as a method of gathering evidence on long-term processes of agrarian change and accumulation in rural Africa. Overall, the strengths of this method outweigh its limitations, especially if the researcher makes judicious use of it and relates/draws on analytical stories to inform the actual experiences of the respondents. Finally, the life histories shed some light on the origins of the rural capitalists and shows that there is a combination of instances of 'capitalism from above' and 'from below', but that no dominant pattern can be clearly discerned, at least in the space of one or two generations. Indeed, many actual rural capitalists come from already prosperous families, although it is not the case that a majority originates in 'traditional' pre-colonial (landlord or *maraboutic*) ruling classes. It is necessary to go back at least three or four generations to determine more accurately the extent to which these are examples of accumulation from 'above' or from 'below'.

The paper has shown the various ways in which these accumulators have demonstrated their 'entrepreneurship', by finding new spaces of accumulation, innovating with markets and production relations and reinvesting surplus in a range of economic activities, according to opportunities and constraints. Telling these stories, especially from the perspective of the protagonists themselves,

carries the risk of 'over-celebrating' their achievements, somewhat as Hill (1970) did in her pioneer studies on rural peasant capitalism in West Africa. However, a careful reading of their accounts also shows that (like capitalists elsewhere) they are not just 'nice entrepreneurs' facing enormous constraints, but also 'nasty' ones insofar as they have accumulated wealth by exploiting the labour of poorly paid neighbours and migrants, or worse, the *unpaid* labour of their own relatives and religious students/followers (*talibe*). Their ability to take advantage of 'imperfect' food markets by buying cheap from their poorer neighbours and selling dear in remote and particularly vulnerable locations where hunger periodically hits would not sound 'nice' to anyone willing to celebrate the 'entrepreneurship' of informal capitalists in rural Africa.<sup>84</sup> And yet, this is the tragic side of the dynamism that these rural capitalists project on the rural economy and on the uneven but gradual socio-economic transformations and agrarian transitions that can be seen in rural Senegal and other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

This paper has not focused on the policy implications of the evidence and arguments discussed above. Indeed, a serious discussion of the policy implications of the variety of findings from the life histories would deserve a separate paper. Besides, the sample is small and, despite the fact that the case studies were carefully selected to represent fairly the diversity and commonalities of rural capitalists in Senegal, it may be too adventurous to extrapolate far-reaching policy implications. However, there are some issues related to state intervention and rural capitalism that can be hinted at and suggested for further analysis. First, the role of the state in the circumstances of poor agrarian economies like Senegal is historically critical, in the sense that many of the spaces of accumulation arose as a result of the investments, infrastructure, services and direct employment provided by the state where a domestic capitalist class was still in the making. Secondly, the role of the state vis-à-vis rural capitalists is not devoid of significant contradictions. In fact, the establishment of forms of regulation that cannot be enforced (control over cereal trade and over borders) paradoxically opens up some significant sites of accumulation that some capitalists are ready to tap. In other words, certain forms of state weakness also facilitate the emergence of new accumulators in the sphere of circulation. Nevertheless, the stories of these capitalists seem to suggest that these instances of state weakness tend to promote the kind of 'bazaar' capitalism that remains within the sphere of circulation. This happens despite the fact that, as shown in this paper, merchant capitalists also invest in farming (within limits).<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> In fact, one of the most outspoken respondents in this study said: 'I realize and it makes me sad that I have made so much money as a result of hunger in remote areas of my country, instead of giving the food stocks away'. Personal communication with farmer-trader (life history) in April 2006.

<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the relative success and dominance of merchant capital is not, in itself, a constraint on industrialization. As Iliffe (1983, 66) shows, in Africa and almost everywhere in developing countries, many successful industrialists come from the ranks of large successful traders. The linkages between merchant and industrial capital and the promotion of industry depend, however, on effective state interventions and favourable external conditions to make industrial investment a viable alternative.

Weak capacities to enforce regulation in the past and market liberalization and state withdrawal in the present have contributed to the further development of a 'bazaar' economy in Senegal, where effective incentives for long-term investments in productive activities and especially manufacturing (or agro-industrial enterprises) are scarce particularly for rural indigenous capitalists.<sup>86</sup> The patterns of rural accumulation presented here may reveal partial signs that the Senegalese state is yet to confront the collective action and coordination requirements for a more successful development strategy either towards upgrading and industrialization or to a more competitive primary exporting outcome.<sup>87</sup> However, a more comprehensive set of empirical studies of contemporary capitalism in all areas and spheres in Senegal (as elsewhere in Africa) is surely needed to secure a more informed and less ideologically-driven debate on the prospects for further and more dynamic capitalist development and the realistic role of the state in this respect.

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<sup>86</sup> Virtually all agro-industrial manufacturing is concentrated in the industrial complex of Dakar. Perhaps a recent exception is the CAIT (*Complexe Agro-Industriel de Touba*), a new small groundnut oil crushing enterprise, which was founded in 2005 by a former rural capitalist who eventually settled in Touba, the capital of *Mouridisme*. In a short interview that I conducted in 2006, the founder and owner of CAIT gave a candid account of how for almost 20 years he had unsuccessfully attempted to invest in agro-industry until 2005, mainly due to opposition from within the government ranks.

<sup>87</sup> These requirements are known in some literature as 'Gerschenkronian' and refer to the role of the state in processes of late industrialization and associated trade specialization; which can follow a 'Kaldorian' strategy of a constant upgrading of the value chain towards more sophisticated manufacturing exports; or a 'Ricardian' strategy of primary specialization and diversification along the lines of the New Agricultural Countries (Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, etc.). See Schwartz (2002) for a lucid exposition of these ideas and terms.

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