

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)
Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods
through Local Representation

From Recognition to Derecognition in Senegal's Forests: Hemming in Democratic Representation via Technical Claims



Papa Faye

From Recognition to Derecognition in Senegal's Forests

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) Research Programme

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). It is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The RFGI activities are focused on 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative is also training young, in-country policy researchers in order to build an Africa-wide network of environmental governance analysts.

Nations worldwide have introduced decentralization reforms aspiring to make local government responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of citizens so as to improve equity, service delivery and resource management. Natural resources, especially forests, play an important role in these decentralizations since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

REDD+ is a global Programme for disbursing funds, primarily to pay national governments of developing countries, to reduce forest carbon emission. REDD+ will require permanent local institutions that can integrate local needs with national and international objectives. The results from RFGI Africa research will be compared with results from collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

RFGI Working Paper Series Editors' Note

**James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot
and Gretchen Walters**

Struggles for control over and access to nature and natural resources; struggles over land, forests, pastures and fisheries, are struggles for survival, self determination, and meaning. Natural resources are central to rural lives and livelihoods: they provide the material resources for survival, security, and freedom. To engage in the world requires assets that enable individuals, households, and communities to act in and on the world around them. The ability to accumulate assets and the ability to access government and market services depends partly on such resources along with the political-economic infrastructure – rights, recourse, representation, markets, and social services – that are the domain of government. Democracy, which both enables and requires the freedom to act, is predicated on these assets and infrastructures. Since the 1980s, African governments have been implementing local government decentralization reforms aimed at making local government more democratic by making them responsive and accountable to citizen needs and aspirations; in many places this has been done through a decentralisation of natural resource governance to local administrations. In order to be responsive to individual, household and community demands, local governments, too, need resources and decision-making powers. There must be a public domain – a set of public resources, such as forests or fisheries, which constitute this domain of democracy, the domain of decisions and services that citizens can demand of government. Natural resources, when decentralized into the domain of local authority, form an important part of the resources of individuals, households, communities and governments, making possible this move toward local democracy.

Natural resources provide local governments and people with wealth and subsistence. While nature is not the only source of rural income, the decentralization

of natural resources governance is a core component of local government reform. However, governance reforms have been implemented in a context broadly characterized by an enduring crisis of the Western economic and financial systems, which in turn has stimulated privatization and liberalization in every sphere of life, including nature. The process has deprived local governments of public resources – depriving individuals and communities of a reason to engage, as a powerless government is not worth trying to influence. Privatization is depriving forest-dependent peoples of their access to formerly ‘public’ or traditionally managed resources. National governments, as well as international bodies such as the United Nations programme, titled the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), further this trend as they collaborate with private interests to promote the privatization of natural resources. The resulting enclosures threaten the wellbeing of resource-dependent populations and the viability of democratic reforms.

The specter of climate change is deepening the crisis of enclosure. A key response to climate change has been the attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing the capacity of forests in the developing world to store carbon, ostensibly for the benefit of the atmosphere as well as the communities who use these forests. UN REDD seeks to pay communities, through their national governments, to conserve their forests as carbon storage. A plus ‘+’ was added to REDD, forming REDD +, to call for improved ecosystems services, forest management, conservation, forest restoration and afforestation to enhance the capacity for carbon storage. Designed on the basis of similar payments for environmental services (PES) schemes, REDD+ has the potential to inject vast new sums of money into local resource use and governance. In the context of fragile local governments, nascent democracies and powerful private interests, such cash inflows result in the commercialization and privatization of forests and natural resources and the dispossession of local resource users. This financialization of natural resources grossly diminishes the scope for democratic natural resource governance schemes. To be sure, the implementation of REDD+ can also learn from and avoid the pitfalls experienced in these PES schemes, especially if they represent local interests in natural resource governance decision making.

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program focusing on enabling responsive and accountable decentralization to strengthen the representation of forest-based rural people in local-government decision making. Since January 2012, the programme has carried out 33 case studies in 12 African countries, with comparative cases Nepal and Peru, to assess the conditions under which central

authorities devolve forest management and use decisions to local government, and the conditions that enable local government to engage in sound, equitable and pro-poor forest management. Aimed at enabling local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management, these case studies are now being finalized and published to elicit public discourse and debate on local government and local democracy. This Working Paper series will publish the RFGI case studies as well as other comparative studies of decentralized natural resources governance in Africa and elsewhere that focus on the intersection between local democracy and natural resource management schemes. Using the concepts of institutional choice and recognition, the cases deal with a comprehensive range of issues in decentralized forest management in the context of REDD+, including the institutional choices of intervening agencies; the effects of such choices on accountability and representation; and the relationships between local government and other local institutions. The series will also include syntheses discussing the main findings of the RFGI research programme.

Based at CODESRIA, and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the RFGI is a three year collaborative initiative of CODESRIA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). RFGI working papers and documents, including the background papers, the RFGI programme description, and the RFGI Methods Handbook, can be found on line at:

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Abstract

'Recognizing' a local institution by granting powers to it (e.g. rights and resources) increases its capacity to respond (its 'responsiveness'). 'Derecognition,' the withdrawal of powers previously given, compromises an institution's responsiveness. However, this paper shows that in decentralized forest management in Senegal such 'Derecognition' is effectively a new category of 'recognition.' As the Senegalese Forest Service supplants and de-recognises local elected governments, these local bodies in turn eliminate committees set up by Forest Department's management projects, thus 'de-recognising' them. Derecognition by the Forest Department draws upon technical claims, while Derecognition by the elected local governments mobilizes political and legal claims. The goals of both kinds of Derecognition are: (1) to gain power over forest resources, and (2) to shape the interactions between people and the environment (henceforth forests). Hence, technical Derecognition is a means by which the Forest Department resists the national decentralisation policy which recognised local governments' right to control forests; whereas political Derecognition is a means by which local governments resist recentralization by the Forest Department.

Key words: project, local governments, recognition, political derecognition, democratic representation, participation, forest decentralisation.

Introduction

‘Institutional choice’ is the act by which external intervening agencies such as projects, NGOs, donors and state or administrative bodies opt to partner with one or another existing or created institution during their interventions (Ribot et al. 2008). Despite decentralisation laws, institutional choice often involves the circumvention of elected local government authorities and the allocation of powers to multiple parallel institutions, thus fragmenting local authority (Ribot 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2011; Larson and Ribot 2004, 2007; Manor 2004; Faye 2006; Lund 2006).

When an institution is chosen, it is ‘recognised’. Here, ‘recognition’ occurs through the delegation of powers and resources by intervening agencies to the chosen or newly created institutions (Ribot et al. 2008). Herein, I use ‘recognition’ in Ribot’s institutional sense, which is different from the recognition of groups or identities as discussed by Taylor (1994), Frazer (1996) and Honneth (1996). When, through institutional choice, public powers and resources are transferred to non-elected actors rather than to those who have been democratically elected to manage public resources, the result is de-concentration or privatization, which weakens elected local authorities (Ribot et al. 2006) without necessarily empowering the customary or traditional institutions.

Important to us here, is the “choice and recognition” model, which refers to ‘recognition’ as the distribution of powers and resources to chosen actors, but provides no conceptual tools for characterizing the *withdrawal* of recognition from a previously recognised authority. In critical and social theories, ‘mis-recognition,’ or ‘non-recognition’ in the sense of Taylor (1994) or Honneth (1996), is simply either the absence of recognition or an inappropriately made recognition, not its withdrawal. We suggest that the term ‘Derecognition’ will best characterize the

act of withdrawing public powers and resources once allocated to an institution – the withdrawing of recognition – and re-allocating these powers and resources to another new fabricated authority. I conceive Derecognition as being in stark contrast to recognition and likewise different from mis-recognition, which describes either the absence of recognition or the existence of an inappropriate recognition. Rather, Derecognition is an affirmative reaction to a prior distributional injury; it is always a form of resistance to exclusion or an attempt to reassert oneself in the scheme of power. The de-recognised authority loses its previous recognition, which had granted it respect, legitimacy and power.

I use the term ‘Derecognition’ to characterize the withdrawal of public powers and resources that have occurred and are occurring in the Sustainable and Participatory Energy Management Programme in Senegal – a post-decentralisation forest management intervention known as PROGEDE¹ and led by the Forest Department. Indeed, Senegal’s 1996 decentralisation reform legally ‘recognised’ local governments when it devolved to them the power to manage the forests within their jurisdiction. Any circumvention of local governments by state bodies or other intervening agents, to the benefit of other forms of authority, can only be referred to as ‘Derecognition.’ Therefore, PROGEDE has been de-recognising local governments. Likewise, when local governments eliminate the committees created by PROGEDE to exclude them from governance processes, and substitute these with new committees, local governments are also engaging in a form of Derecognition.

Thus in Senegal’s decentralized forest management one should distinguish between two forms of Derecognition: (1) Derecognition of local governments by the Forest Department through the creation of new village-based institutions known as committees (designed to be ‘participatory’), and (2) Derecognition of those project committees by the elected local governments officials. Derecognition by the Forest Department draws upon *technical claims*, while Derecognition by the elected local governments summons *political and legal claims*.

By ‘technical claims’ I mean any regulations and other actions (including the production of narratives about forestry) being used during project implementation in the name of technical correctness as a condition for sustainable forest management and exploitation. ‘Technical claims’ involve the whole ensemble of technical rules inscribed in the Forest Management Plans (FMPs) by forestry agents and experts to shape forest conservation, production (of charcoal in particular) and management of the revenues that flow from decentralized forestry under PROGEDE.

In this respect, technical claims are a set of actions, norms and narratives tucked away in the strategies of domination (Poteete and Ribot 2011), especially in contexts where the ecological ‘additionalities’ of the FMPs that support them

are challenged. For Ribot (1999b, 2013 forthcoming), the plans are more about domination than ecological needs, as these forests are robust and the ecological function of FMPs is more the “imagination of deforestation” than science. Wurster (2010) has also shown that FMPs do not have an ecological consequence: managed and non-managed areas are ecologically identical. Because the technically-based FMPs aimed at gaining formal and material backing from PROGEDE issued from the Forest Department in the name of science and technical expertise, the technical claims are likely to be more powerful than the political claims. Thus, technical claims tend to take priority, as the possibility of diverse viewpoints regarding norms and regulations is constrained by the state, which excludes the potentials of other actors to speak, think and act (Landwehr 2006 cited by Winkel 2011:2).

Management projects' choice and recognition, fabrication, and dismantling of authorities structure representation and power distribution at the rural level. The ability of non-elected actors to respond more effectively than elected actors can discredit those elected authorities (who via election have a formal obligation to be responsive and accountable to their constituents). Although local governments are not automatically responsive when they do have material resources (Ribot 2004a, 2004b), Derecognition of elected authorities deprives local governments of the material resources required for responsiveness. PROGEDE produced new financial flows through the taxation of charcoal production and trade, and the redistribution of those tax revenues. However, as this paper shows, redistribution by PROGEDE disfavors the local governments in many ways. In this respect, Derecognition by the Forest Department is likely to constrain democratic representation, while Derecognition by local governments has chance of favoring it.

Focusing on PROGEDE's implementation, this paper describes the game of recognition and Derecognition in which the Forest Department and local governments are involved, emphasizing the confrontation between technical claims and political counterclaims. It also demonstrates that the expansion of FMPs through PROGEDE's intervention has fostered the Derecognition of local governments, undercutting their attempts at democratic representation.

The paper consists of five sections. After this section, which is the Introduction, Section 2, presents the research sites and the methodology adopted. Section 3 presents an overview of forest decentralisation in Senegal and delineates the case study. Section 4 analyzes the imposition of technical claims that underwrote the Derecognition of local governments in the projects's first phase (PROGEDE I). Section 5 describes the local governments' attempts at democratic representation and their political Derecognition of PROGEDE-appointed committees during

the temporary shutdown of PROGEDE (the inter-phase). Section 6 portrays local governments' resistance to Derecognition by the Forest Department in the second phase of PROGEDE (PROGEDE II), especially after they had acquired knowledge of the political stakes attached to the control of forests and of access-granting institutions. Finally, Section 7 discusses the results and draws out the ecological and practical implications of this game of 'recognition' for theories of development and democracy.

Sites and Methods

The empirical work for this article was mainly conducted in a rural jurisdiction which, for the purpose of this paper, I will refer to as Wulli, in the Eastern administrative region of Tambacounda, about 500 kilometers from Senegal's capital, Dakar. Tambacounda is one of the administrative regions of Senegal in which charcoal has long been produced; this region was therefore of particular interest to PROGEDE,² since their goal was to encourage local production and marketing of charcoal, to: (1) enhance rural people's contribution to the national energy supply and (2) alleviate rural poverty. In order to gain a more robust understanding of certain issues, the research was extended to three other rural jurisdictions: Uul, Gumbee and Nieriko, where the project also intervened. These jurisdictions are home to a majority of Fula and Mandinka (mostly Jakhanke and Soninke) people. In commercial forestry, as this paper will show, the charcoal sector in particular is highly politicized. Therefore, to protect my informants and host communities, I have chosen to use pseudonyms when referring to both actors and locations.

The research took place over an estimated period of 15 months between 2012 and 2014. These more intensive fieldwork periods were however facilitated by 10 months of previous fieldwork in 2004 and 2005, and several weeks of additional fieldwork in 2008 and 2011. The methods used were mixed but mainly involved gathering of qualitative data, using open and semi-structured interviews as well as informal discussions and the collection of biographies. Participant observation took place as I became involved in charcoal activities, project events and daily village life. Where interviewees agreed, I recorded discussions; if not, I took notes. To put my informants at ease, I did not record if the subject was sensitive or if I observed that an informant was fearful of speaking, especially during informal discussions in the villages where I was residing and engaging in participant observation.

I adopted the technique of ‘studying through’ (Wright and Reinhold, 2011), which entails Nader’s (1969) ‘studying up’ – interviewing high-level authorities at the national level – and ‘studying down’ – interviewing local-level actors. Interviewing back and forth between national and local actors served to unveil the discursive consonances and contradictions in the ways that interviewees rationalized both policy and practice.

To explain the underlying ideologies, I draw from the New Institutionalism approach in social anthropology (see Ensminger, 1992; extended in Haller, 2010) to analyze how concepts like ‘sustainability,’ ‘regular charcoal supply’ and so on have: (1) enabled the recourse to technical claims, and (2) consequently legitimized the practice of technical Derecognition.

3

Overview of Forest Decentralisation and Case Study

This section presents an overview of decentralisation and its application in the forest sector. It also presents the case study.

Forest decentralisation overview

In Senegal, since 1996, important public powers have been legally transferred from the State to three levels of local political entities, the Rural Community (RC)³ being the lowest tier of local government. In this paper, Rural Council refers to the governing body that governs the jurisdiction called the Rural Community⁴. The Council is composed of at least 27 elected members (forming the deliberative body) who in turn elect an executive organ composed of a president (the PCR) and two vice-presidents. Senegalese legislature (through Law No. 96-27) assigned the Rural Councils the twofold objective of promoting (1) local democracy and (2) local development.

With donors' support, the government of Senegal designed environmental projects to help the newly created local governments oversee decentralisation in the forest sector. Non-gazetted forests within the jurisdiction of each RC are designated as "community forests" (law No. 98-03). Although the legal transfer of powers was made through the General Code of Decentralisation in 1996 (laws No. 96-27 and No. 96-1134), the Forest Code of 1998 states that the 1996 Code is only effective when a FMP is established.

The FMP requires technical knowledge, over which forestry agents claim a monopoly. However, the government of Senegal says that it cannot afford a FPM

(whose minimal cost is at least \$40,000 US) for each rural jurisdiction. The need for such a plan, combined with the lack of resources on the part of the central government, opened up a space for donors to save the day, funding the forest management projects that would expand FMPs.

Case study

Officially launched in 1997 but effectively starting in 1998 with multiple donor funding led by the World Bank, PROGEDE was devised by the Forest Department and the Energy Directorate. PROGEDE seeks to promote local representation and sustainable forest management by encouraging local communities to produce charcoal for use by urban populations, in Dakar in particular. PROGEDE had two official phases: PROGEDE I, which ran from 1998 to 2008 (with an extension to 2008 approved in 2005), and PROGEDE II, which started in 2011 and is expected to run until 2015. There were widespread calls for the elaboration and implementation of FMPs during PROGEDE I and II. PROGEDE I and II were, however, separated by what I call an intermediary period, or ‘inter-phase,’ from 2009 to 2010, when all project activity temporarily ceased.

Crafted with the technical knowledge of Senegal’s National Forest Department, each FMP is composed of documents listing identified resource uses in space and time; technical prescriptions about resource access, especially for charcoal production; distributional rules on power and benefits; and plans for the expenditure of funds. These regulations are called the ‘Technical Prescriptions’ of the FMP. My reference to ‘technical claims’ throughout this paper includes these regulations.

After more than fifteen years of PROGEDE intervention, this study seeks to assess project outcomes, highlighting the politics of recognition which is viewed against triumphant claims of successful decentralisation in Senegal as compared to other West African Francophone countries.

PROGEDE I: Recognizing and Subordinating Committees Through Technical Claims

This section examines the Forest Service's mobilization of technical claims as it went about crafting and recognizing new authorities in Phase I. The Forest Department made community leaders accountable and subordinate to itself, thus, despite forest decentralisation laws, laying the groundwork for competition with the circumvented (de-recognised) elected local governments.

1998 marked the beginning of Phase I of PROGEDE which was headquartered at the National Forest Department and led by forestry officials at the national and regional stations. PROGEDE was, in others words, a state actor, different only in name from the Forest Department. In practice, PROGEDE and the Forest Department were indeed a single entity. The project initiated the development of FMPs, outlining a series of technical prescriptions to guarantee sustainable and 'rational' exploitation of charcoal while maintaining supply to the cities. Among these prescriptions is the rule of 50 per cent, which imposes the cutting of no more than half of the potential tree population in a given parcel. Another technical measure is the zoning of the forest into 'forest blocks', which are further zoned into, parcels or plots. Charcoal production is based on an eight-year parcel rotation to favor natural regeneration. Another rule makes only *combretum* trees (bush willows) with a minimal diameter of 10 cm exploitable. Further, the project called for the substitution of the traditional kiln with the "Casamance kiln," and the creation of firebreaks in order to combat bushfires. Through these technical prescriptions, forestry agents legitimized the imposition of new institutional arrangements and the creation of new forest authorities.

My interviews aimed to uncover the rationale behind the formation of village-based organisations by forestry agents and project officials as the functions of these village-based organisations were organisation parallel to the previously existing

democratic institutions. The then Director of Forest Management and Production defended the idea that none of the Rural Council members and Forest Department staff would be available to implement the FMPs' technical prescriptions. For that job, he reasoned, village organisations were needed. This argument – that locally elected institutions were incapable of implementing FMPs – was recurrent in interviews with high-ranking officials and experts.

It is instructive to note that the domination of local people and resources by National Forest Departments or forestry agents is a long standing condition which had existed in France long before its imposition in West Africa by the colonial powers. Even under the French kings, forestry agents 'technosized' forest management issues to ensure the meeting of the kingdoms' needs and to legitimize the (even) then strict forest surveillance policies (Boutinot 2002; Blundo 2011). Technical claims have historically guided forest management activities. Indeed, Bergeret's 1995 paper tellingly described such policies which were transferred to the colonies as "endlessly self-perpetuating" (see also Ribot 2001a).

The initiator of the first set of village-based committees in the forest sector affirmed that current organisational forms drew from his own Gambian experiences on bushfire-prevention committees. As a temporarily-assigned forestry agent who headed the 1996-97 forest management pilot project (*schéma pilote d'aménagement des forêts*) funded by the National French Cooperation Bureau, this forestry agent organized an exchange visit to The Gambia. The idea was to create organisations that could transfer the power to manage land from Rural Councils to villagers, making that management directly profitable to the village people.

(...). In fact, the State has transferred the management power to the Rural Council but we [the project and forestry agents] wanted villages to profit from that transfer directly. (...). You can see that projects have developed what I have initiated [he said proudly]. I am the one who invented the committees. We called them Village Development Committees. If somebody has told you another story, he lied (Interview with *Lebu Gui*, July 6, 2012).

This declaration highlights the stigmatization of elected local authorities by project staff and forestry agents. Local authorities were said to work not on behalf of their constituents but in their own interests, and those of their political. This interview extract also shows that the project's promoters, mainly forestry agents, used the stigmatization of local authorities to convince people that the project aimed to benefit the people in ways local authorities could not. This was particularly important in places like Wulli, where local people disliked charcoal production (and any form of greenwood cutting), and frequently opposed the migrant woodcutters – Guineans – employed by Senegalese licensed urban

private merchants. In fact, in 1994, some leaders of traditional forest protection organisations within Wulli were arrested for causing physical injury to migrant woodcutters (Faye 2006).

After the completion of PROGEDE's forest inventory, community forests in the jurisdictions of Wulli, Nieriko and Uul were delimited as Tambacounda Region experimental sites. Here, the project carried out the zoning, and took up the creation of committees to manage the forests. First, Village Committees were created and Village Committees that are located around a forest block formed a Block Management Committee. Each forest block had its Block Management Committee. Then, an Inter-Village Committee was also put in place, composed of two representatives (the president and other member) from each Village Committee.⁵

The project hired facilitators and a 'Communication Manager' – *chargé de vulgarisation* – for the on-the-ground work. Both visited villages surrounding the delimited forests, and informed village chiefs of the site of a new project to combat bushfires and promote alternative revenue-generating activities. According to PROGEDE I staff, forest protection and revenue-generating activities were prioritized over woodcutting and charcoal burning for fear of a backlash from local people who opposed these activities. Since the facilitators themselves were from these villages and surrounding locations, they understood how people would react if the project's central (and actual) aims were to be vigorously disclosed.

After people had been deceived into accepting the project without divulging the project's true aims, some committees were created at the village level in accordance with a list of functions and roles already drawn out by PROGEDE staff. During the assembly, villagers were to come to a consensus about the establishment of the committee, but Village Chiefs (claiming to be the descendants of the first settlers) instead designated themselves, their relatives or low-caste persons to enter PROGEDE's structures indirectly (see Faye 2006). Their claims of historical legitimacy inhibited villagers as they could not contradict the Village Chiefs' choices. The Village Chiefs' intrusion in PROGEDE was also a strategic move to reinforce their legitimacy and to increase their power to choose the village committee leaders.

The project ruled that membership in the Village Committee was free and voluntary. However, a number of incentives were offered in order to encourage participation. For example, after the creation of village committees, project representatives on the ground announced that only members of the Village Committees and people who participated effectively in project-promoted activities were eligible to benefit from the alternative revenue-generation activities.

Furthermore, on the basis of a partnership between PROGEDE and the World Food Organisation's Senegal office, those involved in market gardening could benefit from food support in hard times during the rainy season. These material incentives helped to boost the interest of villagers in the project activities and engendersupport for the Village Committees.

During my 2004 fieldwork, I noticed that the discourse on bushfires was another motivating factor in villagers' engagement with the project. PROGEDE's ground staff, deployed across all intervention areas, argued emphatically that deadwood amplifies fire: once deadwood ignites it may spread fire to surrounding wet trees and herbs. This discourse, added to material incentives, convinced local people to get involved in the project activities, even if doing so required painful and demanding work, like the clearing of firebreaks. Under the pretext of collecting large amounts of deadwood to fight bushfires and create firebreaks, the project staff cleverly tried to convince villagers to become involved in the charcoal business. Project staff offered villagers training in charcoal production, giving them strategies to access the most lucrative markets – the cities, whose continuous access to charcoal the project was designed from the beginning to ensure.

Continuing its Derecognition of local elected authorities, PROGEDE recognised the Inter-Village Committees as a substitute for local governments in decision-making processes related to forests and their benefits. According to PROGEDE, once the PCR had signed the FMP and the Sub-Prefect approved it, the PCR would have legally delegated his management power to the villagers. However, none of the PCRs were aware of this implication, as it was neither their intention nor was it inscribed in the regulatory part of the management plan. Thus, PCRs continued to claim power over the forest management. The withholding of forest-management power from PCRs was publicly announced only in the Forest Department's circular (note) No. 000209 on January 29, 2009, which was said to complement the 2008 annual decree.⁶

Based on their assumption that PROGEDE procedures ensured the transfer of powers to the villagers, the Inter-Village Committee began signing annual protocols with the National Union of Private Forest Merchants for charcoal production within the managed Community Forests. These protocols allowed private merchants – selected at the discretion of forestry agents – to send their charcoal producers into the Community Forest. The protocols also placed a number of obligations on merchants which must be met before they could obtain the permission to operate within a community forest. However, drawing on technical claims, the Regional Forest Office retained the authority to amend the protocols, arguing that both the villagers' and the private urban merchants' annual

charcoal production quotas should be based on the Forest Office's assessment of production rates during the preceding campaign and on their estimates of the forest parcels' potential production.

The four PCRs I interviewed confided that none of them, nor any of the Inter-Village Committee leaders, ever saw the draft protocols in 2011 and 2012 before being called to the meetings at which these were to be signed. Merchants and cooperatives had, however, received the draft before the meeting and had been given the power to negotiate its terms. The treasurer of a cooperative in Tambacounda, who is also president of the regional private merchants' union, asserted that each cooperative had initially got a quota of 550 quintals in 2010 and 500 quintals in 2011. But after bargaining with the Regional Forest staff, each got 800 quintals in 2012. This is another illustration of the capacity of charcoal merchants to exert pressure on government authorities (see Ribot 1990; Boutinot and Diouf 2007; Ribot and Faye 2007, 2010) and of those same government authorities' willingness to yield to the will of private merchants (with whom they have bribe-seeking relations) while ignoring the needs and demands of the local people below them. While private charcoal producers were given ample opportunity to comment on and propose amendments to the protocols, villagers were expected to simply accept the quotas allocated to them by the Forest Department (i.e. villagers remain in a position of "take it or leave it").

The Inter-Village Committee also gained decision-making power over the distribution of permits (a certificate delivered by field forestry agents to sell charcoal in cities) to local people; the collection of charcoal taxes; and their redistribution among local beneficiaries, including the rural community. A local charcoal tax of \$0.40 US was levied on each sack of charcoal produced within the community forest, equivalent to \$160 US per truckload. The tax revenue was redistributed as follows: 40 per cent (\$64 US) for the rural community; 40 per cent for the village committee of the village to which the truck loaded was closest; and 20 per cent (\$32 US) for the Inter-Village committee.

None of the committee leaders or the members of the local government could change the proportions proposed by the Forest Department and PROGEDE. Interestingly, the Forest Department ruled that the Inter-Village Committee's share could only be spent on 'environmental activities.' The management plan identified the locations and procedures governing expenditure of that share. In PROGEDE I, the fund served to support expenses during the annual delineation of parcels and firebreak clearance: costs for fuel, food and per diems for forestry agents, paint, and installment of forest-side village nurseries.

PROGEDE I provided Inter-Village Committees with other privileges. Inter-Village Committees received and distributed to Village Committees labor materials such as carts, axes, wheelbarrows, and other tools. Furthermore, Inter-Village Committee members benefited from non-material privileges: leaders participated in meetings and in training sessions. Therefore, they got per diems and connections with high-level authorities such as the Directors of the Forest Department and PROGEDE's higher officials, and so on.

This increase in social capital boosted the material benefits committee members received from the charcoal industry: the presidents of the Inter-Village committees became real local charcoal merchants with easy access to production permits; as they had the privilege to cut through the forest to implement firebreaks. The cutting of firebreaks was an opportunity for these presidents to produce charcoal with the wood collected from the cutting operations. It was also a pretext for the local forestry agents to discriminate against the ordinary villagers by allowing the presidents to hire migrant woodcutters while preventing the ordinary villagers from doing so. Two of these presidents were given the privilege to install "legal charcoal stocks" at secondary cities like Tambacounda city, selling charcoal sacks to urban consumers and travellers.

This list of privileges is not exhaustive, but it shows that the Inter-Village Committee became a strong institution; their leaders gained important authority over commercial access to community forests resources, charcoal in particular. Because of the powers and resources and the favoritism they received in PROGEDE I, Inter-Village Committee leaders became subordinated to the project. To maintain their unmerited privileges, they remained upwardly accountable to the Forestry Department and PROGEDE staff, rather than downwardly accountable to the villagers whom they were meant to represent.

When asked to describe their position in forest management, committee leaders responded in Wolof: *Prose moo nu fi tekk wante foore yi lanuy ligeyal*, saying, literally, "We come from project but we are working for forestry agents." This ambiguous position is also reflected in Boutinot and Diouf (2006:1) who entitled their paper "When certain participatory approaches engender ambiguous forms of mobilization of civil society organisations in Senegal".⁷

The phrasing of Boutinot and Diouf's title is very instructive, as it highlights another reason for committee leaders' subordination and upward accountability to forestry agents. Whoever bestows authority determines also the form of accountability. And the way an institution perceives the source of its authority also determines the nature and direction of its accountability. The leaders of Inter-Village committees systematically behaved accountably to PROGEDE staff and

field forestry agents, whom they credited with creating and maintaining their present position. Likewise, most village committee leaders remained subordinate to Village Chiefs who had chosen them.

Committee leaders' subordination to forestry agents and project promoters led them to join forces with the latter – forestry agents in particular – to combat anyone whom they perceived to hold an opposing position. The first of their enemies were PCRs, because the PCRs had become aware of their exclusion from decisions regarding the management and use of community forests. Indeed, there was no institutional linkage between committees and the local governments. Thus, the Inter-Village committees entered into competition with local governments, challenging their authority over forests and keeping for themselves the material resources required for responsiveness. Therefore, PROGEDE I's institutional choices (1) engendered the fragmentation of local authority and (2) led to the Forest Department's de-legitimisation and Derecognition of elected local governments via the imposition and ascendance of technical claims and justifications (Ribot 2004a, 2004b; Manor 2004).

Derecognising Project-made Authorities While Attempting to be Responsive

This section depicts how, during the two-year temporary cessation of project activity between 2009 and 2011, the elected local governments, using legal and political arguments, in turn de-recognised the Inter-Village Committees whose legitimacy was based on technical claims and institutional arrangements crafted by PROGEDE I. During this ‘inter-phase,’ local elected authorities undid the project’s acts of Derecognition, and recognised new authorities over forests.

PROGEDE I ended with dysfunctional committees operating in isolation from the local governments. The situation worsened in the intermediary phase when funding was no longer available to sustain the ground monitoring of activities by either project personnel or forestry agents. As mentioned earlier, committees were autonomously making decisions about the community forests within the Rural Communities’ jurisdictions, but their leaders were subordinate to field forestry agents.

Also, committee leaders had been appropriating benefits from PROGEDE I to themselves. Almost all of the 24 leaders of the Wulli community forest, for example, had misused the funds collected through the imposition of the local charcoal tax, and retained the equipment PROGEDE had given to villagers for personal use. Those who could prove that they had made investments in their own villages were very rare. Some said they bought a few sacks of cement for the building or renovation of a village mosque, or classrooms. Most declared that villagers had borrowed the money and had not paid it back. Interviews could not bring villagers to discuss the topic; interviewees all said things like: “I am not the right person to talk about how the money has been used or how much it was. Ask the president of the committee; maybe he will tell you!”

But during my stay in one of the Wulli villages, one of my key informants told the story of how he had confronted the villagers who accused him that he had 'eaten' their money. Despite the opposition of the Village Chief, he convened a general assembly. He described this meeting in following terms:

When the people came, the village chief was surprised, and I first apologized for calling a general assembly on his behalf without his approval. Then, I said, 'I have heard rumours that I have embezzled village cash, in complicity with M.C.' I turned to M.C. and asked him if he had ever given me a penny or if I had ever borrowed a single CFA Franc from him. He replied, 'Never!' I told the audience, 'If you want to know about your money, ask M.C. If you are afraid to ask, please shut up!' The next time I hear someone gossiping behind my back and accusing me falsely, I will take him to the police. (Ndaraan,⁸ March 12, 2012).

This quote shows the lack of transparency in the management of money by the village committee leaders, and how ambiguous the relations were between the committee presidents and the village chiefs who had chosen them. In the absence of clear accountability, embezzlement or misuse of money was common.

As the activities of Village Committee presidents depended on material and non-material incentives received during PROGEDE I, when those incentives stopped, presidents just seized for their own use the materials that the project allocated to their village.

Inter-Village Committee leaders did the same. They continued to exercise the powers they had been granted during PROGEDE I: tax collection, signing of protocols with private merchants, allocation of permits, and redistribution of these to villagers, even if Village Committees were no longer functioning. Local charcoal-makers and members of the local governments in Wulli, Uul and Gumbee started accusing the Inter-Village Committee presidents of illegally selling permits that had been officially allocated to villagers, to licensed or informal urban merchants., They were doing so in collusion with some field forestry agents. For example, one president of an Inter-Village Committee who was also the Village Committee president used the four permits allocated to his village in 2009 and 2010 for himself. The fact that no forestry agents complained about it made villagers think that field forestry agents were cooperating with Inter-Village Committee presidents in the receipt of bribes or the illegal sale of villagers' permits.

PCRs also contested the utilization by Inter-Village Committee leaders of charcoal taxes and the related Forest Management Fund. The FMP required that the fund should only benefit the villages near the forest, thus excluding the dominant far-off villages. This resulted in a territorial fragmentation of rural

jurisdiction within the rural community: nearby villages versus far-off villages. Additionally, it led to residency-based claims of belonging, as villages near the forest began to make claims on the forest borders and forest revenues, based on their proximity to it. As a Village Committee could earn 40 per cent of \$160 US per truckload, provided that it could prove that the charcoal came from a forest parcel belonging to that village, it was important for the Village Committee leaders to try to extend the forest space assigned to their village.

In 2010, pointing to the problems caused by the project-made committees, Rural Councils, PCRs, and presidents of the local government Commission for Environment and Natural Resources in particular, invoked decentralisation laws as they dissolved the Inter-Village Committees and replaced them with ad-hoc committees. Ad-hoc committee members were granted some powers, roles and responsibilities by the PCR. Any decision concerning resource use and charcoal production was to be made in the presence of the PCR. Hence, the PCR signed the protocol between private merchants and local people about quota distribution. The presidents of forest blocs, previously managed under PROGEDE I by Block Management Committees, were held responsible for the collection of taxes on charcoal production within their area, as well as for local compliance with technical prescriptions.

To ensure transparency, PCRs required from all private merchants or local producers the delivery of a production report – *constat de production* – that would show that the charcoal to be sold was coming from the community forest, as prescribed by the management plan. Each beneficiary had to bring that production report to the local credit union (*credit mutuel*), and pay the charcoal tax. An account was opened for that purpose. Afterwards, the payment receipt of \$0.40 US per sack had to be attached to the production report, and both were to be submitted to the PCR for signature and to the Local Forest Brigade Officer for countersignature. Only after that could the beneficiary get a permit at the Regional Forestry Office, where he paid the state tax.

The rationale underlying the PCRs' decision to gather the funds collected from the local tax on charcoal in one bank account was as follows:

- There is and should be only one institution responsible for development in the Rural Community, and if it fails to carry out its responsibilities, that institution can be sanctioned through elections;
- Local development will be achieved based on villagers' priorities, as inscribed in the annual budget of the Rural Council, which represents politically all the villages within the Rural Community;

- For these two reasons, a single account – *unicité de caisse* – should be maintained, in accordance with public management law.

All the PCRs interviewed defended the idea that the Rural Community consisted of “one” territory and it must be considered as such. In their view, no matter the argument, there could be no discrimination between villages. Moreover, problems must be addressed based on Rural Community priorities and *not* on the geographical location of villages or on the basis of their participation in a particular project. PCRs also argued that it was contradictory for FMPs to state that taxes derived from charcoal production might be reinvested only in environmental concerns, since the local governments had been funding village nurseries and fighting forest-fires (using funds derived from a variety of activities and sources) before PROGEDE intervened.

Through a circular, PCRs announced the formation of the ad-hoc committees that would supplant the Inter-Village and Village Committees established by PROGEDE I. In Wulli, the ad-hoc committee was composed of:

- The president of the Commission of Environment and Natural Resource Management of the Rural Community as president;
- PCR as supervisor;
- Presidents of blocks as members responsible for ground activities.

Through the ad-hoc committee, the local government decided to reinvest the amount generated in the common good. As the president of the ad-hoc committee argued:

Some of the Village Committee presidents used to say that they had re-invested the collected monies in the renovation of the village mosque. For the Rural Council, it would be unjust to use public monies to fund a private good. It is ‘private’ because when you build or renovate a mosque, no matter its size and beauty, [the mosque] will belong to that village; other villages won’t go there to pray. However, if [the investment] is a main road or a bridge, everyone could use it one day... (*Njabor*, Tambacounda, March 23, 2012).

The Wulli Rural Council spent \$2400 US in 2010 and in 2011 for the renovation of two main roads and bridges. Forty truckloads of laterite were purchased, and manual labourers were paid. In Uul, the PCR also formed an ad-hoc committee in 2010, proceeding with village representation. The president of the Environment and Natural Resources’ Commission of the Rural Community was made president of the ad-hoc committee. In Uul, Wulli and Nieriko, the ‘single account’ principle was also applied. The PCR of Uul gave a grant to the former local facilitators of PROGEDE-I and tasked them with the monitoring of technical prescriptions

and forest surveillance. The case of Uul shows that the PCRs were not necessarily against the technical prescriptions in themselves, but against the use of technical prescriptions by PROGEDE and forestry field agents to disempower the Rural Councils. Supporting the facilitators also shifted the pattern of accountability; former project staff and forestry agents become employees of the Rural Community, and, as such, came to be accountable to the ad-hoc committee and the PCR. They were given a total of \$800 US to cover fuel costs. The Rural Council could gain \$1400 US from charcoal taxes. The PCR said that overseeing and controlling forest revenues increased their public revenues while enabling them to create new infrastructures; actions they could not do before and during PROGEDE I.

The Rural Community of Nieriko was the only community within PROGEDE I's Tambacounda intervention area where the Inter-Village Committee survived as an administrative unit with power over forests. But here, too, the committee was renewed and the regulations changed completely. Its president was, above all, a member of the Rural Council. The Nieriko PCR devised a procedure for the collection and expenditure of the local tax on charcoal that was organized as follows:

- The Inter-Village Committee President delivers a receipt upon completion of any transaction;
- The receipt is valid only when the Administrative Assistant of the Rural Council countersigns it;
- Three copies of the receipt are required: one remains with the Inter-Village Committee president, one with the Assistant, and one with PCR;
- The Assistant collects the cash and deposits it in one common account (established at the local credit union).
- Each year, at the end of every forestry-related operation, both parties report to the Rural Council with receipts of taxes and expenditures; a representative of the Regional Forest Department is invited to witness the report.

In Nieriko, at the end of the first year, an amount of around \$20,000 US (10 million FCFA) served to purchase fifty bikes and two motorcycles for forest guards, wheelbarrows and other labor materials needed for fire intervention, and seedlings for the village nursery. To justify why the money was reinvested only in environmental and forest issues, the PCR argued:

If we spent the money elsewhere, forestry agents would have accused us of misuse. The argument that the money generated by the managed forest has to be reinvested in it or other forestry concerns is wrong.... But my purpose was to show them that the committee we have created has done a better job than the one they had. That's why I have personally invited the Regional Forest Officer and the Local Forest Brigade

Officer to attend the accounting meeting. They were amazed by our results and congratulated us publicly. We showed them the receipts of every expense we made; there was nothing they could say (*Ngeew*, PCR of *Nieriko*, December 27, 2012).

Through the new committees, the Rural Councils, PCRs in particular, reclaimed their power over forest management in accordance with their understanding of decentralisation laws. While the project and forestry agents' acts of recognition had installed upwardly accountable institutions, PCRs ensured the new committees' downward accountability while excluding the village chiefs who had entered the game by choosing the former village committee leaders.

However, locally elected governments faced some difficulties both in the process of Derecognition and in the making of a new system of governance. Many people, including Rural Council members and some field forestry agents accused one of the PCRs of the illegal sale of permits. However, in terms of concrete achievements that benefited the people, all PCRs did more, and better, in two years than the project had done in almost a decade of intervention. Many village people acknowledge that PCRs have done better than the former project committees, while the former leaders of these committees and many forestry agents think the PCRs have simply shifted the procedures to ensure their control of revenues generated by forest management.

Whatever argument is true, the reality is that the cash generated from forest uses has increased Rural Communities' budgets and has in some ways contributed to the financing of public investments, that is, the local priorities identified by all the rural councillors in their annual work plan. Beyond the blame game, the PCRs have also tried to create mechanisms to ensure transparency, which were part of social demand at the time. These mechanisms included the establishment of a single bank account for the deposit of forestry revenues, and the creation of accounting instruments, as was done in *Nieriko*. As I have described above, neither *Wulli* or *Uul* can claim to have accounting practices as clear as those in *Nieriko*.

The PCRs' fight to control decisions about forest access and to control forest-management institutions as well as the money at stake is a legitimate one, since money does represent an important force for responsiveness. Like accountability, responsiveness is one of the basic foundations of local democracy. PCRs also think that the control over revenues had provided certain presidents of Inter-Village Committees with unwarranted political visibility (as in the case of *Wulli*, where the Inter-Village Committee president began to affiliate with a political party other than the *Wulli* PCR's, in order to compete with him in the upcoming local elections).

6

PROGEDE II: Local Governments' Resistance to Technical Derecognition

This section shows how local governments, drawing on decentralization laws, use political arguments to counter their technical Derecognition during the implementation of PROGEDE II. The power relations between forestry agents, project officials and local governments have changed. Because of the institutional learning resulting from their engagement since the temporal retreat of PROGEDE, the PCRs and the rural councillors who were on the ad-hoc committees have come to understand the forestry agents' real agenda, and have become aware of the economic and political stakes involved in the control of access to managed forests and the institutions thereof.

PROGEDE made institutional changes in Phase II. Only the National Coordinator was selected among the forestry agents. Most of the Regional officers selected by the project in Phase II have no background in forestry: among them are geographers, pastoralists, sociologists, and development specialists. The project is still headquartered in the National Forest Service. The project activities are still coordinated by a forestry agent selected by the government, but he is compelled by the hierarchical authority structure to obey the Forest Department's General Director. Therefore, the regional forestry officers cannot act as independent experts, as their work is coordinated by the project Director, who is a forestry agent and is accountable to the Forest Department Director. PROGEDE, despite requiring independent local action on the part of project personnel, is a project of the Forest Department, which continues to assert control over its activities on the ground.

The impartiality of the regional officers of PROGEDE II has also been challenged by the PRCs, who view them as promoting the withdrawal of PCRs' authority in matters of PCRs' forest governance. As one of the PCRs said:

The ladies [two of the three project officials at Tambacounda were women] who lead PROGEDE II in Tambacounda do not have a chance of succeeding. They are completely controlled by the Regional Forest Service. It was worse with the former Regional Forest Officer and his Departmental Officer (Chef de Secteur). But even with the new ones, the ladies behave as followers. You know, a project in the forest sector requires a leader who has the same weight as the Regional Forest Officers. Otherwise, they will only implement the methods and objectives of the forestry agents who everybody knows to not like the decentralisation reform (*Ngeew*, PCR of *Nieriko*, December 27, 2012).

Complaining that, despite decentralisation laws intended to put control in the hands of elected local government officials, the project has increased the Forest Department's authority over forests, another PCR added:

The ladies are working for the forestry agents. I told one of them several days ago that once their job is finished, they will replace us with forestry agents, so that they can lead our Rural Communities (PCR of *Gumbee*, December 27, 2012).

For some field forestry agents, the recruitment of experts rather than forestry agents who hold the knowledge is irrelevant. On November 30, 2012, the opening of a long-scheduled national workshop in Tambacounda was delayed for two hours because PROGEDE's so-called experts had not arrived. A field forestry agent, chatting with one of his colleagues who had been complaining about the delay, said: "*Ken munta tari lumu jangul. Danoo xamul nag!*" This Wolof saying means: "No one can relate what he has never heard about! They are ignorant about forest concerns." Forestry agents clearly denied the capacity of the so-called experts (hired by PROGEDE II in place of the forestry agents who did the work under PROGEDE I) to manage a forest management project. In their view, because the 'experts' are not forestry agents, they lack the technical expertise required for this job. Indeed, two of the project officials in Tambacounda were geographers, and the other was a pastoralist. This is another illustration of the fact that forestry agents claim strictly exclusive knowledge on forest issues and were unhappy to see people from other areas of expertise leading PROGEDE II.

PROGEDE II began in 2012 with an organisational assessment of PROGEDE I area interventions. In mid-May, a workshop took place at Tambacounda to share the results of the consultancy that would influence the upcoming organisational changes in PROGEDE II. Participants were PRCs, members of both the national and local Forest Services, as well as regional and local administrative authorities. Other environmental project representatives were also invited to share their experiences.

The consultant's report on the assessment concluded that: PROGEDE I's organisational scheme was not unreliable; PCRs had created new institutional forms to supplant the project's Inter-Village committees; and village committees had ceased to function. The consultant did not address the achievements of PCR-driven committees during the intermediary period. The report stated only that, due to the empowerment of Inter-Village Committee leaders, PCRs had lost influence and annulled the Inter-Village Committees to recover authority over the forests (Ndiaye 2012).

The Consultant proposed three organisational models:

- an Association for management of the forest;
- an Executive Board whose members will manage decisions and operating activities, such as local tax collection and the enforcement of technical prescriptions;
- a distinction made between functions of management and functions of control. The elected local authorities' function should be limited to controlling and auditing the Executive Board.

In the end, the proposal brought back many of the features of PROGEDE I, except that, as I will show below, privatization has now been adopted. The newly created organisation is called the Association of the Inter-Village Forest Management Committee. It was established in Wulli and Gumbee according to the following procedure:

- In each village, a "contact group" of two men and two women is nominated;
- In each of the five forest blocks, village "contact group" members will choose five delegates;
- All "contact groups" will form the General Assembly of the community forest of Wulii/Gumbee;
- The 25 delegates of forest block (5 for each forest block; designated or elected from the village contact group members) elect members of the Executive Board of the Association. The Executive Board is the operational body and will make decisions about forest use and management. The board is composed of six members: a president and a vice-president, a general secretary and an assistant general secretary, and a general treasurer and an assistant general treasurer.

By nature, an Association is a private non-lucrative corporation recognised by state administrative bodies. As constituted under PROGEDE II, the Association

legally excludes members of the Rural Council. More concretely, the power to manage the community forests is a public power which, with the creation and empowerment of the Association, has been now moved to the private realm. One of the justifications for the creation of the Association is that it would ostensibly enable a more efficient implementation of the FMPs, that is, of the technical prescriptions that would (the Forest Department claimed) guarantee sustainable forest management.

Project promoters then asked the local governments to appoint two government auditors. Project staff and forestry agents thought that PRCs would be happy to audit the Association. However, the PCR said they preferred the organisational structure of USAID-Wula Nafaa (another management project in Senegal), which recognises the authority of Rural Councils over forests, and has for that reason made the president of the Rural Council's environmental commission head of the managing committees in its intervention areas. The Directorate of the Forest Management and Production Division at the Forest Department responded by saying:

Donors are just accompanying us, but at the end, the Forest Department is responsible for choosing which of the projects is better, or for finding a (organisational) model that mixes the strengths of each. To arrive at that decision, we need to test many models. Let's try this one and see (*Ndeymbili*, Niji Hotel, May 2012).

Opposition to PROGEDE's proposal was obvious. Many conflicts had arisen in the process of creating the Association. On the one hand, the project and forestry agents exhibited intimidating behavior; on the other hand, PCRs resisted by boycotting meetings, sabotaging project activities, citing decentralisation laws, and deliberately deceiving project promoters and forestry agents. In the Wulli and Gumbee cases, PCRs proposed an Association for each rural jurisdiction. The project and forestry agents refused, arguing that the community forest under management straddled the border between the two communities and must therefore have only one (inter-community) Association.

The two PCRs were frustrated, and one, declaring that his opinion didn't "count," boycotted any form of participation in project affairs. The second, instead, sabotaged the Association's opening general assembly. He convinced the delegates of two of the three forest blocks within his rural jurisdiction to boycott the general assembly. This event was successfully postponed, despite the presence of local administrative authorities (the project's National Coordinator and the National Forest Service Vice-Director). The general assembly then took place after the regional project experts had come to an agreement with the concerned PCR, on November 30, 2012.

Concrete attempts were made to intimidate local people and their representatives during the November event. In addition to all the official attendees cited above, the then National Director of the National Forest Service came in person, instead of sending his deputy. He began his opening speech by castigating the PCRs for their oppositional behavior: “We will no longer accept, from anyone, no matter his position, the dissolution of a committee or the exercise of any form of sabotage on the activities of the project.”

In Uul, the project experts and the PCR agreed to implement “contact groups” and appoint the forest blocks’ delegates on December 17, 2012. Then the PCR created a working group to collaborate with project staff and forestry agents in the formation of village contact groups. On December 17, project experts and forestry agents went to the scheduled meeting without informing the PCR and his working group, who were awaiting their signal. The PCR and his colleagues only found out that project staff and forestry agents were going ahead with the contact group formation without the PCR’s input when the village chief called him to say that project staff were already in the village. The PCR rushed to the village and stopped them. He said:

It was intended that we work together. Why are you acting alone? You must stop! The Rural Council has the right to create committees without you [project and forestry agents], but you [project and forestry agents] cannot do that without us [the Rural Council]. (Wacc Bubees, PCR of *Uul*, December 25, 2012).

On December 21, 2012, after the project experts and forestry agents had apologized to the PCR, the meeting for appointing the forest blocks’ delegates finally took place. There, they jointly created the Association.

In Nieriko, where the PCR-driven committee had achieved very important outcomes, local people wanted the former committee president to lead the Association. However, the former committee president was a Rural Councillor, and the project had ruled that Rural Council members were specifically excluded from membership in the Association.

Consequently, before the scheduled meeting, the local government asked the Rural Councillor to resign from his post so that he will be eligible to vie for the presidency of the Association. He did so. At the meeting, the now-dismissed former local government member raised his hand to express his candidacy for the position of Association president. In a proud tone, he explained what happened then: “They said to me: ‘You cannot!’ Then I waved my letter of dismissal, and everybody voted for me. I could see disappointment plainly on their faces. But what new objection could they come up with then?!” (B. C., the Nieriko association

president, December 27, 2012). Weaker actors subtly use legal resources and mobilize political argumentation of the type described above to resist acts of domination by high-level actors, forestry agents in particular.

In sum, technical Derecognition through the implementation and enforcement of technical prescriptions was not as easy to achieve in PROGEDE II as it had been in PROGEDE I; the project's attempt to again de-recognise the PCRs (who had successfully reasserted their authority over forest management during the inter-phase) was challenged on the ground through politico-legal acts and argumentation by the local governments. The stakes involved in the control of access-rights and the institutions that enforce them had become very clear to local people, PCRs in particular. Indeed, PCRs understood that in order to respond effectively to local needs and to secure political visibility for themselves, they needed access to resources and the ability to exercise authority. Therefore, they began resisting the technical claims as much as they could, mobilizing political arguments that are deeply rooted in decentralisation laws, and working to control the revenues flowing from forest-related activities.

Discussions and Conclusion

Decentralisation laws, their implementation and their use in project interventions shape the power relations among the actors involved in natural resources management. Project interventions are negotiated at the level of central government (e.g. the Forestry Service). Negotiating the terms of project interventions at this higher level fosters the allocation of decision-making powers to higher-level actors, consequently granting them the ability to craft institutions and create authorities that run parallel to (and compete with) elected local governments. Therefore, environmental projects that prioritize ‘technical prescriptions’ (requiring the use of outside ‘experts’) end up giving the Forest Department the resources it needs to de-recognise elected local governments.

However, by steering the interest of local actors toward forest governance, and favoring the payment of local forestry taxes that accrue partly to the Rural Councils, these projects indirectly increase elected local government’s attention to the decision-making processes that shape access to commercial resources. This increased attention to forest governance renders processes of (de)recognition more complex. When the Forest Department oversees or manages project interventions, forest management becomes so overly technical that the local governments are excluded simply on the basis of their supposed lack of technical knowledge and skills. In this sense, I perceive the Derecognition of local authorities by the Forest Department as a mechanism of resistance to decentralisation; conversely, local governments’ Derecognition of project staff and forestry agents is a technology of resistance to the Forest Department’s attempts at recentralization.

In Senegal, and especially in the cases studied in this paper, the struggle occurs on the basis of a confrontation between *technical claims* and *political justifications*. For Derecognition of the Forest Department and project committees, PCRs and Rural Councils made serious attempts to be responsive to the communities that had democratically elected them. In this respect, Derecognition of the project committees

by the local governments can be seen as a search for the means to be responsive to local demands and to fulfill the legal and political obligations that decentralisation reforms assigned them to. Like accountability, responsiveness is a key component of local democracy (Ribot 2003, 2004a). It is the first step toward democratization. One can only be democratically accountable when one holds public powers and resources – when one has something for which to be held to account. Therefore, any form of accountability is derived from the holding of public powers and resources. This justifies our position that local elected authorities were looking for the means to be responsive when they sought to control forest benefits by creating a single account and reinvesting the funds in public infrastructure and equipment.

The case of PROGEDE I has shown that, although the project intervention introduced asymmetries between the technical claims of forestry agents and project staff and the democratically-based claims of local elected government, the asymmetries remain as ephemeral as the project. Projects' ephemeral nature dictates a diminished presence on the ground of state structures that gain material resources from the projects' execution; hence, by their very nature, donor-dependent, temporary projects create space for the political (de)recognition of project authorities by local government (the way toward democratic representation).

State actors impose institutional choices that aim to strengthen technical claims, using very sophisticated instruments such as FMPs and the related organisational structure. However, once the value of the resources in question is demonstrated by the intervention, local governments' attitudes and interests vis-à-vis forest governance shift. Then, as shown in our discussion of PROGEDE II, conflict emerges in the processes of (de)recognition, pitting state actors (PROGEDE and the Forest Department) against local elected governments. Of course, (de)recognition by the Forest Department is still more powerful than (de)recognition of the Forest Department by the local governments; but in the near future this power asymmetry could taper off. (De)recognition by the Forest Department diminishes the power of local governments and inflicts political damage on them. In the context of a growing awareness of the material and political stakes, (de)recognition by the local governments could intensify, even in the face of projects that prioritize technical expertise, as has been the case in PROGEDE II for the first time in Senegal's decentralisation experience.

Forestry agents' 'recentralization impulse,' is rooted in their desire to maintain their ability to receive and extort bribes (Ribot and Faye 2010) and affirm their exclusive professional legitimacy with regard to forest issues. Because of these factors, certain field forestry agents have no interest in seeing the Rural Councils be representative. If local governments are responsive and accountable, there is a high

probability that local people will support them; this would compromise the Forest Department's ability to successfully impose technically framed forest governance through PROGEDE-created structures. That is one of the reasons why Forest Service agents act like neo-dictators, following a 'divide and rule' strategy that pits local governments against the organisations created by the project within the jurisdiction that locally elected governments are legally in charge of. This 'divide and rule' strategy is the new institutional pluralism; it is a means of fragmenting the local polity for easy management through 'indirect rule' as committee leaders become subordinated to the forestry service.

Instead of promoting participatory democracy – a “broad participation of the public in environmental and other forms of public decision-making” (Overdevest 2000:686) – upwardly accountable authorities have been fabricated under the guise of participatory project management and forest cover maintenance (sustainability). The village-based committees created by the Forest Service and its projects are merely symbolic; they are tools that enable technical Derecognition of local government while also technically recognizing the so-called participatory organisations. As Benjaminsen (1997) notes, there is even no guarantee that participatory organisations would profit from the project's 'participatory' approach (Moore and al. 2000).

Substantially, there is no difference between upward accountability and subordination as understood by Ribot (2013). Both constitute the over-rule of local authorities by central actors through administrative or technical bodies. Both have a deleterious effect on local politics, which could instead be fostered through democratic decentralisation. In addition, both are made possible by external funding simply because the Forest Department says it cannot be effectively present in the field due to insufficient and underequipped forestry employees who are overloaded with administrative tasks.

Consequently, the Forest Department instrumentalizes forestry projects like PROGEDE by using narratives of sustainability and public service delivery as it argues for funds to enact decentralized improved forest management. Simultaneously, external funding provides an opportunity for government bodies to restrain decentralisation by imposing technical claims. This is not to say that participatory or decentralisation projects do not bring about positive social change (see Dieng et al. 2008 for details on socio-economic impacts). Without the intervention of PROGEDE in Tambacounda, local people might not be deriving revenues from commercial forest activities. Local governments would also not have profited from these activities and would have no incentive to pay attention to the management of the charcoal chain in particular, or to forest governance at large.

However, government officials and project staff engage in a showcase or an ‘on-stage’ performance of success (while hiding patent failures) to fascinate donors, while through ‘off-stage’ practices they subordinate local people and dominate local governments. The first, the performance of success, is exhibited and idealized in official reports, workshops, documentaries, and press releases. The second, the subordination of local people, is smoothly hidden by local Forest Department agents on the ground and justified by the Forest Department through technical claims. Hence, the sporadic visits of donors to project areas cannot provide insights into off-stage activities: they are happy to perceive what they are shown. Having said this, I am not arguing against the funding of environmental projects by donors. I am just fleshing out the political uses and effects of these projects on decentralized democracy, emphasizing the importance of promoting, rather than hindering, the responsiveness of elected local authorities to the long-term sustainability of forest governance and local development.

Democratic decentralisation reforms are critical for the “safeguard of essential ecological functions, the protection of essential livelihood activities, and the economic value of forests at all scales of society” (Ribot and al. 2010:35). After decentralisation reform, there is no way to guarantee institutional sustainability and consistency without the explicit articulation of local governments with participatory organisations – which also means articulating participation with decentralisation (Ribot 2001b). Other reasons for intentionally (and as a matter of policy) engaging elected local authorities in the implementation and benefit-structure of natural resource interventions are the ephemerality of projects and the lack of means or state motivation to uphold pro-rural public services. The struggle between forestry agents and elected local authorities for maintaining control over forest resources does not support sustainability. It is therefore in the interest of democracy to move toward the rule of decentralisation and jettison the rule of brute technical-based power!

Notes

1. PROGEDE: Programme de gestion durable et participative des energies traditionnelles et de substitution.
2. The second phase spanned almost all the East, South, Southeast, and Centre of Senegal as activities on food security and alternative energy were expanded.
3. A Rural Community/Council is not a state-appointed body; it is led by a Council (known as the Rural Council) composed of at least 27 democratically elected members whose job it is to politically represent the villagers. A President (known as PCR) and two vice-presidents (the PCRs) lead the Rural Council, constituting its executive body.
4. Following the promulgation of the law No.2013-10 (December 28, 2013) and the latest local elections held in Senegal last June 29, a Rural Community is now referred to as (rural) commune.
5. The massif of Wulli/Gumbee has five forest blocks, with two in the territory of the Rural Community of Wulli and three in the former Rural Community of Gumbee.
6. The regulatory note that is publicized each year by the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources through the Forest Department to set the rules for commercial forest activities, including charcoal production and trade.
7. “Quand certaines approches participatives engendrent des formes ambiguës de mobilisation de la société civile”.
8. *Ndaraan* means ‘bulldozer.’ It is the nickname which participants in village mutual assistance works (*kille* in Fula) used to tease one of their number who, while a kiln was being made, easily moved very heavy pieces of wood.

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