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THE CHINESE IN SENEGAL AND THE CHALLENGE OF NEW ENTREPRENEURIAL PRACTICES

A dinâmica de mudança no contexto do empreendedorismo chinês no Senegal

ABSTRACT: The focus of this project is on approaches to entrepreneurship amongst local traders, particularly experienced *bana-bana* as a category of transnational traders with strong local roots. The chapter proposes that recent trends in the emergence of new business ventures in West African in general and Senegal in particular are closely linked to innovative models of trading popular amongst Chinese migrants whilst denoting structural effects of Chinese competition on socio-economic arrangements. Attitudinal change amongst Senegalese traders goes beyond strategies of completion or capture for Chinese presence has led, in part, to a decontextualisation of traditional socio-economic roles which has the potential to cause further displacement in pre-existing hierarchical and normative arrangements and ultimately negatively impact resources allocation and redistribution.

KEYWORDS: Senegal; China Africa Relations; Bana-bana trade; Migration-social Norms; transnational- competition.

Amy Niang

RESUMO: O foco deste estudo tem base em abordagem do empreendedorismo entre os comerciantes locais, os particularmente experientes *bana-bana* como categoria de operadores transnacionais com fortes raízes locais. O artigo propõe que as tendências recentes no surgimento de novos empreendimentos comerciais na África Ocidental em geral e no Senegal em particular, estão intimamente ligadas a modelos inovadores de comércio popular entre os migrantes chineses, denotando os efeitos estruturais da competição chinesa nos arranjos socioeconômicos. A mudança de atitude entre os comerciantes senegaleses que vai além das estratégias de conclusão ou captura pela presença chinesa, levou, em parte, a uma descontextualização dos papéis socioeconômicos tradicionais com potencial de causar mais deslocamentos nos arranjos pré-existentes hierárquicos e normativos e, em última análise, impactar negativamente a alocação e redistribuição de recursos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Senegal; Relações China-África; Empreendedorismo *bana-bana*; Migração e Normas Sociais; Competição Transnational.

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Amy Niang¹

Introduction

The study of the relationship between Africa and China has gathered extraordinary momentum in recent years. Nevertheless, the dominant image, both in popular perceptions and some academic circles, is one of an asymmetric relationship between an aggressive, determined and strategic China vis-à-vis passive, and disadvantaged African countries. The latter are seen assuck in a wait-and-see attitude and unable to formulate coherent and strategic policies and therefore condemned to perpetuate the economic exploitation of a continent that was historically a fertile laboratory for all types of imperial domination. In contrast to this view, new perspectives have emerged within research on Chinese-African relations, which lookbeyond economic questions—trade volumes, the appropriation and exploitation of natural resources, trade deficits, bilateral agreements and so on. If cat, there has been a growing interest in the strategies of migration and settlement of Chinese in Africa, as well as various models of integration in destination countries and the resulting microsocial changes (MOHAN; TAN-MULLINS 2009; BOURDARIAS, 2010).

By and large three main areas variously contribute to grounding expanding relationships between China and Africa, namely geopolitics, economic relations and the evolving social dynamic in North-South relations. All three areas can be examined through both visible and less visible transformations produced by the increasing economic activities of Chinese in Africa but also of African entrepreneurs in China.

The growth of the migration of Chinese entrepreneurs into West Africa has coincided with the upsurge of a number of socio-political changes that have been underway throughout the continent since the end of the 1990s. Cities have been swiftly expanding, the youth has become more entrepreneurial and more aware of Africa's potential, and despondency is no longer the sole marker of young people. The latter have become more outward-looking, and impatient to dismantle socio-economic models and structures that they consider conservative, hierarchical and restrictive.

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In recent years, a certain number of studies have attempted to examine the impact of the presence of Chinese migrants in Africa. Even though Senegal, like most of African countries, has experienced exponential growth in terms of trade volume - US\$633 million in August 2013, a 20.8% increase compared with the same period in 2012² - trade is not the only area of import. For instance, the growing interest of Senegalese entrepreneurs for China has had its own repercussions in their business practices, some of these repercussions affect the business environment in Senegal and certain social and professional practices as the paper shows below.

It is also possible to say that the presence of the Chinese in Senegal and the opening towards China has fundamentally restructured not only trade in Senegal, but also socio-professional relations within occupational organisations and networks. Chinese competition, for instance, has weakened the monopoly of Lebanese-Syrians who had already been partially put to test by *bana-bana* traders. *Bana-bana* is a term used loosely to refer to various categories of traders and merchants, from hawkers and itinerant traders to large scale, transnational merchants who ship containers of goods from Dubai, Europe, Thailand, the USA and, more recently and increasingly, China. Traditionally, a second term, *baol-baol*, has been applied with a similar meaning, with the difference that it is applied only to male traders. Both terms imply a disposition for industriousness and resourcefulness in the laborious and tenacious pursuit of profit.³

By having considerable commercial capital and access to formation and networks, and consequently the capacity to import large quantities, to undercut prices and run their trade profitably, the Chinese have been able to establish a strong presence in the Senegalese market (DIOP, 2009, p. 406). Some Senegalese traders have also adopted some of these practices and thus contribute to increasing imbalance in price structuring through the prioritizing of short-term strategies. Despite the fact that they all stock up in China, traders engage in competing strategies that impose a constant readjustment for the different actors involved. In fact, if the ability to import Chinese products in large quantities creates possibilities of appropriation for some, adjustment for others, it also compels a number of traders unable to cope to reinvent themselves for instance by exploring business ventures outside of trade.

²Anadolu Agency. "Senegal's booming Chinese trade", *World Bulletin*, 12 jan.2014. Disponível em:<http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=126794> Acesso em 07 jul. 2018.

³The term *modou-modou* (*fatou-fatou* for females) is sometimes used interchangeably with *bana-bana* in reference to men who leave their village at the end of the rainy season in search of seasonal work or an opportunity to take up peddling to earn some money before the start of the next agricultural season. Malick Ndiaye (1996, p. 24-28) regarded *modou-modous* as "a movement of socio-cultural and economic affirmation of the rural populations of peanut growing regions, a result of the exodus at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s and 1980s towards trade and business in urban areas. Today, there is a gradual semantic shift, which equates *moodu-moodu* with migrants who left looking for fortunes in Europe or America."

This chapter considers the extent to which it is possible to speak of emerging practices among Senegalese traders and entrepreneurs in the context of the Chinese presence, or in response to that presence, as a factor of change in an increasingly competitive global context. The Senegalese context is marked by the decline of Senegalese traders' monopoly on the trading market. The chapter therefore focuses on Chinese migration through a lens of changes taking place in the fields of trade, entrepreneurship and social norms.

By and large, three main changes can be associated with the presence of Chinese traders and the growing influx of Chinese products in Senegal. First, the commonly termed bazaar economy has been modified in terms of both rules and positioning strategies. Second, "working procedures in the informal sector" (DIOP, 2009, p. 407) have been affected insofar as a new category of street vendors has emerged, and they tend to operate out of the traditional system of apprenticeship. Chinese traders have found their best allies among these young traders. Third, even if Chinese competition is less important than anti-Chinese mobilisation seems to suggest, the presence of Chinese entrepreneurs serves as an argument for local entrepreneurs in asking the state to regulate the sector. This creates a new dynamic between the state and local entrepreneurs. Given the reasons given above, the presence of Chinese traders has a direct effect on ongoing socio-economic restructuring in Senegal, and also on the formation of civil society. If some of these issues are neither new nor entirely a result of the Chinese presence, they have become more acute as the Chinese have recently invested in other sectors of the Senegalese economy, namely agriculture and steel (GABAS; TANG, 2014), which for some people merely confirms the idea that the Chinese share in the national economy is growing.

This study is based on interviews conducted with Senegalese traders who, in one way or another, are influenced by the presence of the Chinese in Senegal, either through their own experience in China or through importing Chinese products from Chinese partners. Interviews were carried out during the second half of 2012 and in January 2013 with about 20 international traders. Three factors emerged out of the various conversations with traders, and they inform the structure of this chapter. First, there is a dominant, recurring discourse that fuels perceptions and debates about the presence of the Chinese in Senegal. Second, due to the pressure of Chinese competition, in combination with new opportunities available through trading with Chinese products, both small and big Senegalese traders are forced to develop various strategies and to change their entrepreneurial approaches in an increasingly constraining global environment. Third, the restructuring of the economic environment following the entry of the Chinese contributes to the reorganisation of civil society through the activities of professional groups. This last aspect is examined in relation to ongoing public debate in Senegal regarding the

“Chinese question”. I draw a couple of examples from the agriculture and the metallurgy sectors but the focus is on the trading sector.

Taking on the *Terra Incognita*

For many Chinese migrants, Africa is an immense terra incognita, a land of chaos and promise teeming with ‘dangerous’ and incredible opportunities. If Chinese migrants are more diverse and heteroclitic than common accounts of a Chinese ‘invasion’ tend to portray, it would seem that the implantation of many would have to do with declining employment opportunities in the industrial and urban cities of the North-East region of China (DUPRE; SHI, 2008, p. 6). As a result, what marks Chinese migrants in Africa is a notion of entrepreneurship applied to different social categories, fishermen, factory workers, peasants, unemployed, etc, who all become entrepreneurs in Africa (KERNEN; VULLIET, 2008, p. 77; CATTELAINE et al., 2005).⁴ Unemployment and hunger for new opportunities are thus overarching motivations that have also propelled a former urban, middle-class to the shores of the African Atlantic. It is often contended that the overflow of unemployed Chinese produced by policy changes in China was the impetus for trade enterprise in Africa. Some of these prospectors had some experience in import-export, international trade as former employees of Chinese government controlled enterprises; examples of these are found in Senegal. The purpose of this chapter, however, is not to discuss Chinese migration in Senegal per se, but to explore changing practices in entrepreneurship which are possibly driven by the growing presence of Chinese entrepreneurs in Senegal on the one hand, and the growing tendency of Senegalese traders to travel to China for supply on the other. There has indeed been very little attention paid to Chinese entrepreneurship in Africa as a potential catalyst for the emergence of new forms of entrepreneurship amongst local entrepreneurs. In the Senegalese Capital of Dakar, shop frontages bearing Chinese names have become a local staple, from massage parlours to *neem* (spring rolls) shops, from bric-a-brac to hardware stores. If Chinese merchants are very visible in Dakar, their presence in the other regions and rural areas is less common although access to, and consumption of made-in-China goods are no less intense in these areas.

The migration of Chinese in Senegal began in earnest in the early 2000s; it grew from a dozen migrants mostly from the Henan region to reports of the existence of approximately 60 shops in 2003, these increased to 250 in 2011 (DIOP, 2009, p. 410; MARFAING; THIEL, 2013, p. 657). Initially established in shacks or garages, Chinese traders were able to monopolise the

4. For different aspects of the presence of the Chinese in Senegal see; BERTONCELLO; BREDELOUP 2006, 2009; GABORIT 2007; MARFAING; THIEL 2013.

Allées du Centenaire, soon turning it into a Chinese enclave in Dakar and a vibrant commercial centre. Given a high demand for stores by the Chinese traders, the residents of the Allées launched into the frantic construction of canteens, the rental of which became an important source of income and contributed to price increases and to a phenomenon called “canteenisation” in this neighbourhood.

While Chinese traders are very visible in Dakar, mostly in the Centenaire neighbourhood, their presence in other regions is less common, although access to Chinese goods and consumption of “made-in-China” products are no less intense elsewhere. The fact that traders residing in other regions or neighbouring countries are able to source goods directly from Chinese traders in Dakar facilitates the effective spatial penetration of Chinese goods.

Limited attention has been paid to Chinese entrepreneurship in Africa as a potential catalyst for the emergence of new forms of local entrepreneurship. For somewhat adventurous Chinese, Africa constitutes not only a place of opportunity, but also a testing ground for their ambitions abroad.⁵ For these Chinese, success abroad has become a measure of their moral value upon their return to China, in other words of their capacity to accumulate transnational capital.

Some of the Chinese migrants are merely using their business opportunity in Africa for further travel and settlement in Europe or North America as preferred destinations, at least that tends the justificatory discourse as to why they are ‘stuck’ in Africa even though they quickly discover Africa’s great potential⁶ They have limited interest in long-term implantation in the continent and they usually travel without their families. In fact, it is rather rare to see Chinese families with young children in Senegal (KERNEN; VULLIET 2008, p. 78). Since they are usually without their families, their strategy appears to be one of limited settlement rather than a long-term plan. In Senegal it is very rare to see Chinese with small children.

While it would be incorrect to speak of a “Chinese community” in Senegal, given the heterogeneity of its members, the fact remains that a majority of the first private Chinese entrepreneurs were linked, in one way or another, to the China Henan International Cooperation Group Co., Ltd (CHICO, also known as the Henan Construction or Henan Guoji) through a limited network. The link with Henan Guoji is an important detail; Chinese competitiveness is partly based on the resources and possibilities available within these networks, financial as well as social – an argument often used by Senegalese traders, according to which ‘kin’ solidarity within these networks can considerably reduce transaction costs for the Chinese.

5. For trajectories of Chinese migrants, see: Ma Mung, 2000.

6 This is a common justifying narrative put forward by some to explain why they are “stuck” in Africa.

Despite of the absence of natural resources, the particular attractiveness of Senegal lies in relative political stability, low market-entry requirements, weak state regulation and a trading culture well rooted in the national economic structure.

In contrast to neighbouring Mali, where the Chinese tend to be less conspicuous because of their longer history of presence in Bamako, Sikasso and Segou, as well their involvement in a variety of activities beyond trade, such as construction, hospitality and services (DUPRE; SHI, 2008), the Chinese presence in Senegal is relatively recent and is marked by a certain discontinuity. Recently, however, alongside the increasing activities of Chinese companies in Senegal in small-scale agricultural industries, steel production, etc., small- and medium-scale Chinese entrepreneurs have also slowly ventured into new sectors. According to the Chinese ambassador to Senegal, Mr Xia Huang, there are around 30 such companies.⁷ That said, Chinese public enterprises have been doing business with Senegal since the 1980s. Since resuming diplomatic relations, the two countries have signed a number of cooperation agreements in the field of infrastructure and development. Chinese companies have won a number numbers of tenders in construction, energy, mining exploration and infrastructure planning; one section of the toll highway is the result of collaboration between CHICO and Jean Lefebvre Sénégal (JLS). In addition, the Grand Theatre and the Thiès-Touba highway were also be built by the Chinese CRBC, as is the Museum of Black Civilisations and the National Wrestling Arena (PAURON, 2010). At any rate, Chinese migration tends to be shaped by, and it fits into the architecture of existing relations.

The Chinese factor in question

Studying perceptions of host communities on the Chinese presence in Africa can provide useful accounts, albeit with a number of limitations, about the nature of interactions between Africans and Chinese. One may be tempted to dismiss these accounts as false or incorrect, but they should be taken seriously, not least because of the impact they are likely to have on the choices and orientations of the actors concerned. After this preliminary exercise however, it is important to go beyond perceptions and to interrogate the configuration of current practices and the dynamics of change. This section attempts to do that by tracking the ways in which Senegalese traders and entrepreneurs integrate the “Chinese factor” into their entrepreneurial practices. Perceptions of Chinese in Senegal are oddly similar to those captured in studies undertaken in Benin and Mali, even though the historical and social contexts differ (KERNEN; VULLIET, 2008). Popular perceptions of economic imbalance and unfair terms of competition

⁷Anadolu Agency. “Senegal's booming Chinese trade”, World Bulletin, 12 jan. 2014. Disponível em: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/?aType=haber&ArticleID=126794> Acesso em 07 jul. 2018.

are reinforced as much by the lack of clear national frameworks as they are by the entrepreneurial techniques deployed by Chinese traders in their bid to capitalise on the African boom.

In popular discourses, Chinese entrepreneurs are portrayed as inclined to isolation, physical and cultural separation, the maintenance therefore of cultural and spatial segregation from their host communities.⁸ Chinese hire young Senegalese as helpers in their shops, as translators, messengers, and handymen; exchange with young African employees in Chinese shops are however limited to a strict minimum. Chinese presence elicits great existential unease, which in turn feeds all sorts of myths about Chinese migrants, one more extraordinary than the other. While there are more or less objective explanations for the Chinese preference for isolation, this conservatism tends to perpetuate a familiar pattern of the Chinese forming ethno-economic enclaves which continue to thrive even after their relative integration into the host countries (KAPLAN, 1998; KAPLAN; LI, 2006). The Chinese presence in African cities tends to modify the demography and urban landscapes, but also to impose a form of subjective, social and psychological adjustment among Africans. For example, some of the traders interviewed did not hesitate to make reference to “Chinese manners” being different from European, Moroccan or other “migrants” manners, and to argue that “the Chinese have a different culture”; these comments are revealing of prevalent stereotypes.⁹ Social relations between Chinese and Senegalese are limited to economic transactions between sellers and buyers or exchanges between employer and employee.

The observations above would indicate that *Chinamarket* is a space of *exchange without interaction* in which both Chinese and Senegalese partake as sellers, consumers and social actors. This space becomes an experimental ground for the exploration of strategic opportunities for a pragmatic youth, albeit pointing to an innovative impetus that is largely over-determined by a great degree of survival. The Chinese presence is thus lived differently by different social actors, provoking different reactions depending on experiences, needs and positioning. It is therefore welcomed by some as a mine of opportunity and rejected by others as a rampant form of colonisation.

The owner of a shop in the busy Sandaga market remarked that his greatest concern was “the cunning ways of the Chinese in overcoming obstacles that we are unable to overcome when it comes to sourcing cheap goods”.¹⁰ This is a grievance that echoes the complaints of the largest network of traders in Senegal, UNACOIS (National Union of Traders and Industrialists in

8. Examples of other somewhat caricatured representations of Chinese behaviour can be found in the documentary “The Colony” by Brent Huffman and Xiaoli Zhou, produced in 2010.

9. Interview with Dia, 12 August 2012.

10. Interview with B. Seye, 13 August 2012.

Senegal). UNACOIS has repeatedly campaigned against the Chinese presence and competition, in 2002, 2004, 2008 and, most recently, in 2011 (CORREIA, 2011). On this last occasion, the members of UNACOIS united with Lebanese-Syrian traders as well as the federation of entrepreneurs to protest against the state's passivity towards "the Chinese invasion" (MARSAUD, 2002). They condemn the "parasitic" nature of Chinese settlement and their annexation of the Allées de Centenaire, given strategic position and infrastructure, without contributing to urban renewal. For members of UNACOIS, the Chinese approach to trade is opportunistic and volatile.¹¹ While, like other traders, they are motivated by profit, the Chinese are not necessarily concerned about contributing to the development of the country – an argument that could be equally used against Senegalese traders.

While the discourse on Chinese "unfair competition" has become familiar and widespread and in some ways indicates real and legitimate anxieties that the Chinese may eventually control the market and the broader economy, it also comes from entrepreneurs who have long benefited from considerable margins by selling products of variable quality purchased in China. For example, Marfaing and Thiel (2014) elaborate a counterargument to the common anti-Chinese discourse in West Africa. Using available statistical data, they show that although there has been considerable increase in the import of Chinese goods in Ghana and Senegal, the large proportion of Ghanaian and Senegalese traders involved in the importation of Chinese goods—a trend that predates massive Chinese presence in the region—allows a more nuanced view of the real impact of Chinese competition.

Given the low development of the manufacturing industry in Senegal, Chinese competition tends to affect essentially the price of imported goods rather than the national industrial production itself. One important consequence of the development of the informal sector in Senegal has been the significant decline in output of the manufacturing industry. Thus informality, rather than the Chinese presence, would tend to be an explanatory factor to an importation-based trade relatively to industrial development. The only sector thus far unaffected by manufacture decline has been the production of traditional arts and crafts, including small scale, manual shoes and cloth making. However, the example of *dallu ngaay* admittedly serves as a cautionary tale against the sort of damage that can be done even to the most valued arts and crafts by the mass-reproduction of local artistic work. The cobblers of the village of Ngaye Mekhe in Central Senegal have perfected the art of making pointy-toed leather slippers for generations.¹² These slippers, once favoured by Senegalese kings and aristocrats, have become an essential fashion accessory for Senegalese men. It took the Chinese a few trips to Ngaay

11. Interview with M. Thiam, a member of UNACOIS, 23 January 2013.

12 *Dallu Ngaay* are leather shoes made in Senegal (CHINOIS, 2012).

Mekhe to study the design and the making of the shoes and a few months to swamp the Senegalese market with plastic versions of the *dallu ngaay* (Le Monde 2012; Inquirer 2012).¹³ As a result, this traditional craft has experienced rapid death. This has unarguably become so common a story across West Africa and the rest of the continent that the cobblers' lament is not just a matter of the usual accusation of 'unfair competition' through price cuts and dumping strategies levelled against Chinese entrepreneurs. Equally when it comes to retail, strong Chinese competition has pushed many Senegalese retailers out of the Centenaire or out of business, the same way Ghanaian manufacturers of the traditional *kente* cloth have been put out of business or that a quarter of Nigerian manufacturing industry has been eviscerated by Chinese competition; such figures make the story of the 1500 Senegalese *baboosh* makers under threat of decline a trifle. Nonetheless, the foundations of this local craft have been shaken. As a response to the artisans' protests, the Senegalese government promised in 2014, to give up to 15% of public sector procurement to the craftsmen who make these leather shoes to mitigate the lack of demand created by Chinese competition.¹⁴

Similarly, the peanut processing sector objected to the Chinese acquisition of a large share of the production of peanuts, the main agricultural product in Senegal, and the reduced market share of local oil mills. In this sector too, views are divided. On the one hand, industrialists and private storage operators (PSOs), whose role includes supplying local industries in oilseed products and seed stock, and who employ tens of thousands of workers, object to the Chinese traders. On the other, the CCPA¹⁵ highlights benefits that producers can gain from an appreciation of the purchase price.¹⁶ This scenario, in which the democratised access to cheap Chinese products makes many happy, but at the same time makes life difficult for small entrepreneurs and threatens jobs, has become familiar.

In January 2013, the Senegalese government suspended the export of iron and granted the Chinese foundry SOMETRA (Metallurgical Society of Africa) a monopoly on collecting scrap metal, which had until then been done by small companies employing an average of 12 people and hundreds of regular and occasional pickers. The Senegalese Union of Scrap Metal Dealers,¹⁷ rallied around a denunciation of the loss of 7,500 jobs and around CFA52 billion (LÔ, 2013). It organised protests and sit-ins and demanded the repeal of the iron export ban. This story came to

¹³ Inquirer. In "Senegalese shoe capital, Chinese not welcome", *Inquirer*, 2 August, 2012. <http://business.inquirer.net/74727/in-senegalese-shoe-capital-chinese-not-welcome>.

Le Monde. Un village sénégalais en guerre contre les contrefaçons chinoises. *Le Monde*, 7 August, 2012.

¹⁴ Le Soleil. Mékhé – Commande publique: Les artisans se concertent avant leur rencontre avec Macky Sall. *Le Soleil*, 18 November, 2014. <http://thisinfo.com/mekhe-commande-publique-les-artisans-se-concertent-avant-leur-rencontre-avec-macky-sall/>.

¹⁵ Cadre de concertation des producteurs d'arachides, an organisation that unites peanut producers in Senegal.

¹⁶ According to Bintou Bathily (2013), Chinese buyers would have acquired more than 50,000 tons at FCFA270 compared with the official price of FCFA190.

symbolise anti-Chinese feeling in Senegal. While the complaints of shoemakers mentioned earlier cannot be treated the same way as traders' accusations of unfair competition and dumping practices against the Chinese, it nevertheless shows, as does the example of the foundry, that, despite there being various other sources of tension, attention tends to focus on the Chinese factor.

This said, In Africa in general and West Africa in particular, the problem of Chinese competition and the low competitiveness of African entrepreneurs has to be appreciated at two levels. On the one hand, Chinese competition has forced African entrepreneurs, traders in particular, to come up with innovative ways of remaining in business despite lacking the sort of financial and human resources available to Chinese (Interview with D. Diagne, November 5, 2012). On the other hand however, Chinese traders are stifling business opportunities for millions of petty traders and retailers who rely on very meagre profit to feed their families. As long as Chinese traders stuck to wholesale trading, hawkers and petty retailers were happy to be the agents of cheap Chinese goods. As poor Chinese migrants are increasingly going into retail, thus reducing opportunities in the informal private sector at different levels, their activity is seen as directly encroaching upon the livelihoods of millions Africans.

Given the monopoly of UNACOIS members on the import-export and retail sectors, it is not too difficult to see why they fought a fierce campaign against the favourable terms granted to Chinese entrepreneurs by the Senegalese government. A recurrent argument against the Senegalese government's China policy has been its lack of strategic thinking on the pros and cons of encouraging the implantation of Chinese entrepreneurs given that such implantation does not necessarily translate in industrial development, job creation or other substantive contribution to the national economy.

From the perspective of Senegalese entrepreneurs, the competition of Chinese businesses only serves to reduce their ability to do well in the only sector that has been experiencing some degree of success, a sector in which they have been able to secure relatively high margins for many years. Paradoxically, Senegalese retailers concerns are less to do with Chinese products than they are to do with Chinese traders given that for a very long time, they have been importing Chinese merchandise from Bangkok, Hong Kong or via Dubai and New York.¹⁸ When prompted about the ambiguity of their position, they remark that their particular niche in Chinese products importation has always been the 'higher quality range' products, thus sharply contrasting with 'the avalanche of junk' that currently prevails. However, Senegalese traders' concerns are at cross-purposes with a large number of consumers that are happy to be able to

17. Otherwise known as Le Syndicat des ferrailleurs sénégalais.

¹⁸ Interview with Dia, November 8, 2012

afford toys for their children, cheap furniture and decoration for their houses and cheap clothes and accessories. This at least is the line of argumentation of the Senegalese Consumer Association, ASCOSEN whose defence of consumer freedom would coincide with a democratized access to goods enabled by Chinese competition.

A difficulty for UNACOIS members resides in the fact that whilst Chinese import and sell the lowest quality of goods, they have also been involved in the import of ‘higher quality’ products such as furniture, bedroom suites, quality shoes, etc, an area which has always been the preserve of transnational Senegalese traders. Behind the trade union members’ arguments that Chinese competitors cheat the state taxation system and immigration regulations, cared little about national economic development and “undermined the social and cultural values of the Senegalese”,¹⁹ looms a more profound malaise which has to do with the very disarticulation of the training and skills development structure within Senegalese trading guilds (MARFAING; THIEL, 2013). For Chinese competition has enabled the emergence of a generation of young trade entrepreneurs who become somewhat exempted from the ethical obligations that come with membership in the guild. There is a clear conflict of jurisdiction between on the one hand, a training model that has produced generations of petty traders embedded in, and obliged to an extensive family and social network and the possibility to acquiring some of these skills and additional ones through interaction, or under the influence of Chinese traders and entrepreneurs. Integrally related to the argument above is growing, greater informality within an already ‘informal’ but well-structured employment system in the sense that the number of young hawkers has grown steadily since the arrival of the Chinese.

Whilst such mutation affects employment possibilities only at the margins, conceptually it injects a level of increased precariousness in the trading activity. As a result, the free ‘circulation’ of new entrepreneurial practices comes to undermine a conservative system whose operative rules of seniority and experience, funding resources and trust capital have always favoured old traders, fathers and uncles at the expense of young apprentices and social dependants. In the end, the strong opposition of the Senegalese traders’ guild to Chinese counterparts has to be understood within a particular context of the partial dismantling of a structured system by business practices that threaten the moral authority of elder entrepreneurs as repositories of business knowledge and acumen and as the guardians of socially-sanctioned moral conduct more broadly.²⁰

The street vendors who buy products from Chinese traders generally manage to make decent profits; they as “local relay teams whose dynamism, mobility and knowledge of the

¹⁹Interview with M. Thiam, Unacois member, January 23, 2013.

terrain facilitate the sale of their products” (DIOP, 2009, p. 407). They constitute by far the most important segment of the trade sector, with an increasing number of young people from urban outskirts being attracted by new possibilities offered by the Chinese presence in the city. This trend however destabilises strategies previously developed by *bana-bana* in a bid to retain control over the trade sector.

Chinese competition thus challenges, beyond the prevailing discourse, a number of power relations that have thus far structured intergenerational succession, maintained the monopoly of a conservative business class, and ultimately controlled the training and promotion system outside formal structures. The code of conduct that structures the informal sector subjects novices to strict norms, which are intended to make them into respectable members of the sector. Thus a number of explicit and implicit rules preside over the creation of capital and networks, knowledge of the market and the economic environment, relationships between business people, relations with state agents and municipalities, the management of supply channels, and the fostering of trust, all of which have been essential to the enduring success of the sector. Any disruption in this carefully ordered system destabilises structures of obligations towards extended family and social networks.

From *bana-bana* to transnational entrepreneurs

Despite the numerous administrative and immigration barriers, and despite the fact that most of them tend to have a low level of schooling, *bana-bana* have always been venturesome entrepreneurs willing to seek opportunities far and wide. Women *Bana-bana* for instance have, since the 1980s, cruised West and Central African capitals, selling goods from Senegal and purchasing goods from these countries for resale in Senegal and elsewhere in the region.²¹ *Bana-bana* tend to be ‘opportunity entrepreneurs’, in other words people who have a knack for business and the ability to spot lucrative openings. Opportunity entrepreneurs tend to react to ‘pull factors’ which are best exploited where there is a constant desire to explore and expand, a capacity for independent initiative and a willingness to fully invest personal skills and the ability to pursue opportunity and profit (NWANKWO 2005; ZALI et al. 2013).

The *Bana-bana* in this chapter focus upon a dynamic and industrious traders willing to travel half the world in pursuit of profit and new business opportunities. They are associated with a vibrant tradition of adaptability and creativity in business matters. In the Senegalese context,

20. One of the traders interviewed said, “The elders are a professional repository of the knowledge and the morality of the sector, and therefore guarantee the orthodoxy of the group”. Interview with A.S. Dia, 12 August .2012.

²¹ Similar to the *mama benz* known for their role in the emergence of a very dynamic informal and commercial sector in Togo.

these traders are mostly young men in their thirties or above and women in their forties and fifties. What they have in common is a transnational trajectory that have often taken them to Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia and other parts of the continent before they began exploring Dubai, Europe and China. As one female trader explained: “It was on my way to the Emirates when I realised that I could double or triple my margins on all the furniture I have been importing from Dubai if I made a trip to factory-cities like Guangzhou.”²² Her trade has become so prosperous that she goes to China once every three months. “I sell to the Lebanese wholesalers, by the 40-foot container that I bring, and it takes me only a week to sell it.”²³ She is among hundreds, if not more, of Senegalese traders who have embarked on their Chinese adventure.

The presence of Chinese investors does not, however, seem to have motivated Senegalese entrepreneurs to venture into production any more than they did in the past, or to establish collaborations capable of developing a sound local industry. In general, there are few examples of Chinese and Senegalese traders who have diversified their activities and turned to manufacturing or other similar activities, as has been in the case in Nigeria or Mauritius.

There are few little known examples, such as the non-representative case of Ouyang Riping, a Chinese entrepreneur who has moved from selling agricultural products into trading in sesame at a rate of thousands of tons per year, and in sesame oil. He even succeeded in persuading villagers to change from growing peanuts to sesame. There is also Yang Dong, the head of Sanguel company that operates in the north of the country in the Fouta region. He buys peanuts from peasants and shells them before selling them on to Malaysia, the Philippines, Russia and particularly China, where there is a great demand for peanut oil.²⁴ In the past decade, investment procedures in Senegal have been relaxed in line with the government’s desire to create a more liberal environment, although other factors continue to constrain direct investment. However, the erosion of state control over the formal sector has not translated into a parallel strategy for the informal sector, even though this has led to a loss of tax revenue.

The portraits below present a sample that indicates the diverse trajectories of transnational *bana-bana*. These entrepreneurs integrate the Chinese factor into their business in explicit or implicit ways. Nowadays, it is contact with China that enlarges their geographic and economic horizons; Chinese competition makes them aware of the need to adapt in a global context that imposes its own capitalist logic. Like their competitors, they have adapted their trade to the risks of consumer trends. They seek to rationalise their costs by sourcing from suppliers in China and elsewhere, and increasingly by moving towards informal and entrepreneurial

²². Interview with N.F. Ndiaye, 16 August 2012.

²³. Ibid.

dynamics, defined less by concerns to conform to traditional norms governing the trade sector and more by the quest for profit.

Portrait 1.

D.M. Fall is a 55 year old businesswoman who has been active in importing manufactured goods for the last 15 years. She has travelled to China about 40 times. She says she started her career as a businesswoman in textiles as the owner of a sewing workshop where she employed 10 sewing machinists making sheets and blankets. Her workshop, however, did not survive the loss of her customers, the majority of whom preferred to buy sheets imported from China, and her small sewing business went bankrupt. After this experience, D.M. argues that her philosophy from now on consists of “do like the Chinese”, that is, rely on importing cheap products and selling them to distributors.

D.M. does not have a fixed shop, but only a warehouse from which she supplies vendors based in various markets: Pikine, HLM, Thiaroye, Keur Massar and others in Dakar. She also explains how she manages her supplies.

She takes samples of bags bought in Europe or Dubai, to markets in Yiwu in Zhejiang to show to her contacts, who subsequently copy the bags in large quantities and at low prices, a practice that she observed among the Chinese traders at home. The market in Yiwu is an impressive hub for showcasing and supplying new products. D.M. says that Chinese companies and factories have stands where they present samples of their latest production; they also take orders from traders from the whole world, some of whom come with their own samples and designs, which they want to be copied. D.M. also notes a recent tendency among some of her large-scale trading colleagues to buy directly online. Even though she has not tried this herself, the Internet makes it much easier for traders to re-stock without having to travel to China. This obviously requires a sustained investment in relationships of trust.

Portrait 2.

SKM Sylla is a young trader in his thirties who lives in Medina, a dynamic and lively district adjacent to Dakar city centre. He owns a wholesale business in Sandaga, in the heart of the city on Emile Badiane Street. Sylla is originally from Touba, a holy city of Senegal and also a large commercial centre. He started his trading career as an apprentice in his father’s shop.

24. See, for example, Jalons, 2009.

After managing to save FCFA100,000 over the several years of his apprenticeship, he started to travel to Mauritania to buy lentils and other cereals to be resold in markets in Dakar.

He then invested in the sale of shoes, cosmetics and ready-to-wear clothes, which he imported for sale in Senegal and Mauritania. After a few years, he launched into trading in jewellery and women's accessories in Guinea-Conakry in order to widen his horizon. Guinea proved to be a rather lucrative market and he made profits of up to FCFA5 million over two to three years. Thinking of investing in a new niche, he consulted his brother, also a trader, who suggested combining their capital in order to jointly launch the import of products from Dubai, which was then a prized destination for large-scale Senegalese traders. They invested a total of FCFA18 million together. After three successful ventures in Dubai in collaboration with his brother, Sylla decided to start again alone.

It was not until 2010 that he started to travel to China. Sylla says that his decision to visit China was motivated by his hope and desire to increase his profit margins. For Sylla, the first trip to China was intimidating but full of adventure. With the help of a Senegalese contact, an intermediary, a little bit of English and a pocket full of dollars, he managed to navigate the maze of the Chinese markets. Sylla spends an average of FCFA20 million on ready-to-wear clothes and other goods, depending on market trends, which makes him a medium level *bana-bana*, but one with big ambitions. Since he started to travel to China, his business has expanded. He has visited China seven times and intends to continue to explore what Chinese factories have in store for him.

As with many of his colleagues, his transnational trajectory led him first to Mauritania, Guinea, Tunisia, France and Dubai, and then to China. Like the majority of his colleagues, Sylla thinks that “the Chinese do not bring us much” and that their aggressive competition is a problem for Senegalese traders. He adds that “the Chinese don't eat our food, do not use our taxis to get around but rather use their bicycles, in short, they do not participate in the economic development.”

However, Sylla says he has learnt a lot from his travels and his experiences in China.

The Chinese have effective methods; they know how to attract customers. I admire the fact that they have a lot of respect for their work; they are well organised and very disciplined. Despite the language barrier, they are able to play an important role in the economy of our country. There are qualities to adopt, especially in the area of customer service.

From what he learnt during his various trips to China, Sylla expressed his great astonishment at the level of exceptional economic development that China was able to accomplish in such a short time, but he deplores the old methods followed by traders of his father's generation, because he thinks “things are moving fast and they are left behind”.

Portrait 3.

A.S. Diais a 29 year-old trader from the city of Touba in Central Senegal. He has a store on Emile Badiane Street in the bustling Sandaga market. His career as a trader started in 2000. He was then a shop attendant in a hardware store that belonged to his uncle. After 10 years of apprenticeship, he was able to open his own hardware store which he later sold in order to move to Dakar. Sandaga opened a broader customer base and the possibility for diversification for Abdou Salam. His successful household appliances business led him to envisage sourcing his supplies directly from China where his previous suppliers bought their merchandise. With only CFA 5million loaned from a bank, he first went to Dubai.

This first trip was an eye-opener for him, not just in terms of the business opportunities it afforded, but also as a centre of learning for budding traders. The sheer amount of money traded, the diversity of sellers and buyers flocking from all over the world, the range of goods traded, from mobile phones to gold, fridges to farming equipment; the business prospects for bold entrepreneurs were overwhelming. The move to China was partly informed by lower customs fees. Abdou Salam buys his supply from Guanzhu with the help of a paid guide.

Now that he has become an established importer, he is able to place his order by phone before travelling to China. These days, he spends an average of 25million CFA a trip. He has been to China 8 times. He has very little contact with Chinese traders in settled in Senegal although he keeps a close eye on business trends amongst these, given their capacity to identify potentially popular products.

Like his colleagues, he sees Chinese traders' contribution to Senegalese economic development as marginal, if not inexistent, their only virtue being 'their capacity to produce fake copies of everything'. As far as his views on older merchants are concerns, he sees himself as operating outside their traditions even though he was inducted into his profession by his uncle as is commonly the case with many young traders. He thinks they must innovate and become more proactive.

Portrait 4.

M. Leye is a 35-year-old young man living in Cite Fadia. He holds a stall in Sandaga market, on Galandou Diouf Street. He started as a small trader selling cosmetics in Guediawaye, in the outskirts of Dakar, buying from wholesalers in the city. After 7 years of doing this, he left

his store to his brother and started supplying products to hardware stores as a semi-wholesaler. 2 years of mobile business earned him enough, 7 million CFA, to travel to Dubai in 2006.

His commercial strategy has since then consisted of increasing his stock over several days even if this considerably reduces his profit margin. After seven trips to Dubai, Leye decided to broaden his horizon by attempting adventure in China. It was the right thing to do, since he succeeded in developing a network of useful contacts in a very short time. He had heard of the extraordinary variety of products of various qualities and the size and supply capacity of factories around Yiwu and Guangzhou. Instead of a single quality, it was now possible to choose between three or four different qualities of the same product.

This possibility was a very useful discovery as it allowed him to better position himself in relation to Chinese and Senegalese competition and to reorient his business accordingly. Leye has travelled to China more than 15 times and he has also been able to establish business relationships with Chinese producers and suppliers. He is convinced, that thanks to the Chinese “the barriers have been broken” for the youth who start up in trade and even for people who do not want to trade, let alone for those who would never consider travelling as far as China with relatively little money. Leye highlights, however, that he does not maintain any relationship with Chinese traders in Senegal and thinks that “the government should deal with the Chinese problem because they take from us without giving anything in return”. Nevertheless, he says that he has learnt a lot from Chinese business ethics. “They [the Chinese] worked hard to develop their country; their women, children all work in their businesses or companies. Children help in packaging items. If only the Senegalese had a similar mentality and commitment.” As an entrepreneur, he thinks he has acquired a lot of useful experience and he wants to keep an open mind regarding the business world and how to do business.

On the diffuse circulation of entrepreneurial practices

The portraits of the traders presented above allow to an extent to grasp the complexity of the condition of trade-entrepreneur in an increasingly globalised world. On the other hand, even though it is not possible to establish a causal link between changes in the entrepreneurial practices of Senegalese business people and Chinese presence, it is not difficult to see that competition between the Chinese and the Senegalese forces the latter to reinvent themselves or simply to better position themselves in the market. The Chinese presence hangs as a backdrop to public debates and changes in entrepreneurial practices. The possibility for Senegalese entrepreneurs to source merchandise directly from China and to navigate the maze of large supply centres makes them important actors in capitalist markets. Ultimately, both the

Senegalese and the Chinese are confronted with the same challenges and contradictions of a globalised world, which impose on them the same model, based on the quest for profit. In this sense, the binary division often presented by Senegalese traders is rather simplistic and obscures certain complexities: this discourse is a façade that does not avoid the need to reposition, which has become a question of survival.

There is growing eclecticism in models of social and professional success and realisation. In so far as shifts in business practices are concerned, this chapter builds on a conceptual frame often invoked in the literature on the informal economy such as shifts in business attitudes both as survival and strategic approach to competition and precarious business environment. If adaptation is typical amongst highly flexible entrepreneurs, the way it occurs and is enabled, in the West African case, is a function of complex, multi-layered business environments that are being deeply shaken by transnational forces.

This chapter has attempted to address a crucial question in relation to the diversification of the very concept of *bana-bana* or entrepreneurial spirit in the trading sector in the context of competition between Senegalese and Chinese traders, where the latter have the advantage of a certain entrepreneurial efficiency, better economic and social capital in China where the two groups source their stock, and greater control over supply networks in China. Given the rapid expansion of Chinese investment in parastatal and private companies, in construction and infrastructural work, in the hotel business, in import and export activities and a whole range of activities spurred by strategic diversification, Chinese investors and traders have come to influence the macro as well as the micro-economies of African states.

As images of China amalgamate and proliferate to construct versions of a China that is fast-moving, enigmatic and at the same time attractive with a million promises, Chinese are perceived as both the conveyors of the admirable power of a global rising player and at the same time the alarming avatars of a destructive economic power. There is, by and large, a very ambivalent attitude towards Chinese ‘profit-centred outlook’ across the continent. (SAUTMAN, 2006, p. 8). The actual socio-cultural changes wrought by Chinese presence in Africa are an area that is however crying for further exploration.

A hypothesis put forward in this chapter is that the Chinese factor is an important driver of change and that competition has an undeniable impact on the ways Senegalese entrepreneurial traders develop their strategies to capture markets and to rationalise costs. In a way, internationalisation has awakened their dormant talents and a certain readiness to take risks. Above all, it has enabled them to enhance their ability to identify market trends. Chinese competition may have deprived Senegalese and Lebanese-Syrian traders of parts of the domestic

market, it has certainly forced them to diversify their supply channels, widen their range of goods and target specific clientele.

This market restructuring seems inevitable, especially since small traders at the bottom have to face competition from *tabliers*,²⁵ who source their stock directly from Chinese wholesalers (KERNEN; VULLIET, 2008, p. 86). This democratisation of the right to trade is not to the liking of those who are attached to shop trading. However, because they have been exposed to trading constraints on the global level, their discourse on the Chinese serves mainly as a release valve to vent a number of difficulties whose origins may lie elsewhere.

I have suggested above that there is a form of diffuse transnationalism applied in the way in which trade between the continents has created a form of new mentality and immersion in a world of possibilities. It is possible to conceptualise this transnationalism as a moral economy in which interactions do not necessarily take place in a regular or direct way, but constitute a framework within which ideas and practices circulate and are generated by transnational entrepreneurs with different backgrounds and experiences. This argument tends to complement rather than to oppose ideas according to which the Chinese presence and the trade in Chinese products merely bring to light strategies that have always marked commercial activity. While the diversity of the importers of Chinese merchandise into Africa shows various levels of ingenuity and adaptation on the part of African entrepreneurs, recent strategies in ways of procuring merchandise, creating niches, retaining clients, marketing, and so on, seem to indicate a sort of mutual enrichment driven by the competitive environment. According to an expert on the subject, “many Africans constantly refer to the work ethic of the Chinese, so I am not surprised that the Chinese inspire others in Africa”.²⁶ This ethic is described as a professional approach coupled with great frugality and total devotion to profit.

One trader I asked about his interaction with Chinese entrepreneurs and how his trips to China influenced his way of doing business confirmed that seeing other ways of doing things always inspires and challenges work habits, and that in general the new economic environment “revealed new entrepreneurial qualities [in him]”.²⁷ These qualities develop more or less as traders are confronted with the complexities of negotiation and transaction in a foreign country and in a foreign language. Another trader said he was impressed by the “independent and adventurous spirit of the Chinese”. He gave the example of one Chinese he knew “who had travelled to many African cities, to Douala and Abidjan to prospect before settling in Dakar,

25. The term *tabliers* here refers to vendors running their business in a public space using tables to display their goods.

26. Correspondence with Adams Bodomo, 16 November 2012.

27. Interview with A.S. Dia, 12 August 2012.

even though he had never been to Africa before”.²⁸ Mobility as a means of learning was often referred to by the traders interviewed, especially those whose journeys had taken them to Mali, Mauritania and other neighbouring countries before they embarked on a more transnational adventure to Dubai and China. Though travel experience, they have acquired new knowledge and know-how, and are constantly presented with new opportunities to refine their talents through encounters. This trader also added that, thanks to the success of the Chinese in Senegal, and Senegalese importers, internationalisation has become a horizon of aspiration for young traders, whatever their situation.

Beyond the divergences of views on the actual impact of the Chinese presence on the local economy, it is clear that Chinese and Senegalese entrepreneurs operate within the same moral economy and that they have more in common than the prevailing discourse might allow us to think. Both groups are capitalising, each in their own way, on the extraordinary boom in manufacturing production in China and on the growing demand for everyday consumer products in Africa. They operate outside state support frameworks and rely on their creative capacities to navigate the uncertainty of the market, access to capital and constraints of business environment. The transnational forces at work in the democratisation of information, access and business opportunities are simultaneously hampering the possibility for maintenance of pre-existing structures of production, reproduction and redistribution of key social resources.

When asked whether they have envisaged moving into manufacturing or industrial sectors or why they have not done so, Senegalese traders invoke the sheer bureaucratic nightmare that discourages from registering businesses. When pushed further by pointing that despite the very valid challenges highlighted, Chinese entrepreneurs have been able to move into construction, resource exploitation (fishing) and the provision of services, they are quick to list the knowhow, the financial, human and technological resources at the disposal of the Chinese and which give them a competitive edge in an unevenly regulated environment. However, beyond trade, the entrepreneurial qualities described above do not seem to have been adopted by local entrepreneurs in pursuit of new opportunities by investing in manufacturing or industrial production. One aspect often highlighted in the literature about entrepreneurial practices relates to the potential of the “development of complementary but nevertheless distinct cultures of innovation (KOHNER, 2010, p. 6). While this configuration is most likely to develop in the context of markets characterised by specialisation by different groups, there is a demonstrated tendency, as the Senegalese example shows, towards the process of integration remaining conservative, even if it shows all the signs of innovation and adaptation. In spite of the

28. Interview with Fall, 10 August 2012.

innovative movement driven by the internationalisation of entrepreneurs, they do not seem to want to systematically extend the transfer of their know-how into other domains.

The apparent reluctance of African traders in general and Senegalese in particular, to invest in the industrial sector needs to be explored further, regardless of the impacts of the strategies of the Chinese entrepreneurs on the local market. Although the entry into the peanut market by Indian and Chinese entrepreneurs is causing great concern for local oil mills, it has enabled farmers to sell at higher prices since market liberalisation in 2010 (LE POINT, 2013). Local oil mills operators fear the possible effect of the proximity of Chinese entrepreneurs to the peasants and villages with which they work. As in the example of the foundry mentioned above, competition has enabled direct links between foreign entrepreneurs and local producers.

Ultimately, anti-Chinese sentiments are to be attributed to an instinct to preserve a model of segmentation based on socio-cultural values. The situation of the informal sector is inherent in certain dysfunctions linked to a transition of the primary sector to a poorly initiated tertiary sector. The effects of diffuse transnationalism mentioned above that operates on the level of entrepreneurs, are generally felt in opportunities created for small retailers and peddlers, who would otherwise require formal training or considerable initial capital. In the same way, the integration of the Chinese into the local economic fabric tends to decontextualise the realisation of normative economic and social roles, and also displaces traditional trade models. The Chinese thus disrupt procedures for entering into the workforce and modes of socialisation recognised in the sector. For the most conservative amongst business people, new opportunities presented to the youth have a positive effect on them, but the potential to displace existing structures of solidarity and support also constitute a certain danger.

Innovation as a way of coping with new constraints

It is clear that over 15 years after the beginning of the migration of Chinese entrepreneurs in Senegal, it is perceptions, rather than actual facts, that govern the reactions and responses of entrepreneurs and other actors. Access to Chinese merchandise influences consumers and traders and somehow regulates microsocial changes. The transformation of processes for entering the workforce mentioned in this chapter is only one example among many.

If Senegalese traders readily acknowledge that Chinese entrepreneurs can serve as models for aspiring entrepreneurs, it remains to be seen whether the trend amongst Chinese entrepreneurs to diversify their business from trade to manufacturing and investment in farming and other areas of production will also become a practice amongst Senegalese entrepreneurs. The latter have been criticised for their lack of commitment to development in the sense that they

limit themselves to high profit yielding investment such as real estate rather than invest in the productive economy more likely to create jobs and contribute to national economic development.

Democratised access of cheap Chinese goods for both traders and consumers affects individuals and modulates change at the micro-level. The impact of the current opening on societal values and economic practices might in fact be more important than the more visible outcomes of big Chinese investment in Africa (roads, dams, airports, railways, etc). For opponents of the Chinese presence, the partial disintegration of professionally and socially recognised attitudes is only the manifestation of a deep crisis of state governance and national economic policy. The shift from clientelist style relations between state and groups of *hommes d'affaires* in a context of reduced state control on the economy prefigured much uncertainty for Senegalese entrepreneurs already in the 1990s.²⁹ The Chinese presence reorganizes what could be termed derivative social practices such as those that regulate business ethics, and existing modes of productions, circulation and redistribution of resources, as already shown by Thioub, Diop and Boone (1998). The Chinese presence thus reorganizes what could be termed derivative social practices such as those that regulate business ethics, and existing modes of productions, circulation and redistribution of resources.

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