

# **Borders and Borderlands Identities: A Comparative Perspective of Cross-border Governance in the Neighbourhoods of Senegal, the Gambia and Guinea Bissau**

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## ***Abstract***

Borders in Africa unfold in diverse appearances besides their being markers of national identity. Added to their being important realms of migration flows, cross-border areas are nests of growing multifaceted insecurity problems among which organized transnational crime is the most topical. While States paradoxically hang on to criticized regional intergovernmentalism, local public authorities, though not necessarily autonomous, engage in local initiatives or modes of “borderland governmentalities”. In the borderlands of Senegal, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia, preceding research reveals how borders appear as spheres of material and symbolic stakes (Tandia 2007, Sindjoun 2002). A sort of “homeland nationalism” stems from identity narratives of the borderlands, a “localism” that yields a “local system of governance” between cross-border State and non-State agents and services in order to supplement the countryside from inter-State anomic diplomacy. Among other questions, we ask to what extent and how local representation of identities and territories produce new meaning/s or perceptions of borders? To what extent and how production of border meaning/s springs from (is linked to, produces and is produced by) cross-border governance? Theoretical analysis of the literature will be leveled with empirical accounts of cross-border governance and community building, through qualitative empirical data (interviews, focus groups and life stories) processed in a socio-anthropological perspective.

**Keywords:** Border – Borderland – Cross border governance – Borderland identity – Border meaning.

## **Introduction**

Encompassing Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau, the term Western Senegambia is particularly referred to here as the western part of Senegambia (Barry 1981, 1988, Sall 1992). This usage of the term is not as arbitrary as it seems. It alludes in fact to the multiple and overlapping spaces and dynamics of the global Senegambian social space identifiable through historical, geographical and social variables; it alludes also to the social space of the specific communities interrelated by networks of clientelism, religious and economic solidarities, configurations which produce conflicting dynamics that can either strengthen national unity or, in the contrary, increase interdependency among the States and their peoples (Sall 1992). As the most integrated sub-regional space of West Africa, its national boundaries dividing peoples seem rather senseless. And yet they are enduring. This is one of the important issues raised in border studies which this paper also tries to contribute to within the thematic of governance.

This reality of national borders as constantly challenged by cross-cutting socio-cultural dynamics is now a common argument, or else a largely documented paradigm in Africa (Bach 1998). Both scholars and policy-makers paradigmatically agree that borders are spaces in which national boundary-lines are diluted by other territorial and identitary dynamics produced out of popular strategies (Unesco 2005). Indeed, this paradigm reconciles the material factors such as economic

and trade patterns and symbolic ones such as political and cultural elements of border life. Identitary logics constitute the common realm of political and cultural dynamics that combine with and reshape territorial or spatial appearances of borders.

In many recent studies of borders as borderlands or regions, identity and territory are the two ingredients of the same process (Wilson and Donnan 1998, Donnan and Wilson 1999, Nyambara 2009, Martineau 2009, Cisse 2007, Tandia 2007). They help redefine borders as borderlands, that is, as spaces of symbolic and material stakes. In a seminal work edited by the Cameroonian scholar Luc Sindjoun (Sindjoun 2004), contributors globally conclude that migrants are particular negotiators of a multiple political identity (Meye 2004, Chouala 2004, Yinda-Yinda 2004), a multinational transnational identity that renders borders porous to them but not meaningless. Even though borders are subject to permanent (re)interpretation in daily practices and discourses, they are not contested or skirted in these transnational territorial and identitary dynamics (Bennafla 1999). The process instead is comparable to a game in which national identity is constantly used in relations of negotiation with other social identifications, ethnic or community. This negotiation process is not only conflictual as Duschenes and Scherrer (2003) state, but also cooperative according to situations and stakes in play. If cross-border or borderland life implies identity negotiation for migrant individuals or communities, the question remains to be asked for sedentary communities. In this vein, Pierre Cisse investigated how socio-cultural solidarities in the sedentary Bobofing community between Mali and Burkina Faso challenged frontier lines through an intense process of identity negotiation in which “ethnic differentiation is more important than national differentiation” (Cisse 2007:31, Asiwaju 1984).

If these works demonstrate the possibility of constructing a communitarian and cosmopolitan collective identity out of multiple identifications, they reveal little of the complex processes of this negotiation. For instance, they remain silent on how these practices could in return (re)produce, reshape and perpetuate those identities. Furthermore, these studies seem to miss the point that socio-cultural and regional solidarities that back those ethno-regional identities cannot be isolated in the construction of collective identities. How they interact, through absorption or rejection, with other forms of belongingness such as national and ethnic identities is not really demonstrated. Moreover, as has been illustrated from cross-border migration (Sindjoun 2004, Meye 2004, Mimche 2007, Ouedraogo, 2007, Oshineye 2009), identity construction entails material concerns borderland actors have to cope with in their border strategies. This issue of the utility of identity construction in borderlands seems to suggest that borderland identity consists also of symbolic foundations and aspirations. A last point to consider from the preceding is to what extent transnational community identities make sense for such collective actions as cross-border governance, and what this could reveal in terms of border meaning.

It would be argued in this paper that, in the considered settings of the Western Senegambia neighbourhoods, ethnic and cultural identities mostly help (re)define borders, throughout cross-border-governance as a collective action for border regulation and cooperation. Most importantly, this trans-boundary governmentality lies more on local identitary constructions and practices of border spaces than on formal legitimacies of local government or else on intergovernmental cooperation. We reach the important point we want to make in this paper, which is that where the failure of national governments to address border issues and borderland daily challenges is acknowledged, identitary constructions processed in the *longue durée* provide the ordinary frames for cross-border governance as a collective action. However, the obviousness

attached to the form and functionality of this socio-historical invention is relativised by differences in terms of *local histories*, of *socio-political trajectories of State formation*, of *socio-economic societal contingences*, both at national and regional levels. The consistency of both the communitarian identity and the collective action it helps to legitimize depend on how these variables behave separately or not. The following questions will be answered: to what extent does the production of cross-border communitarian identities ascribe a particular meaning to borders? To what extent and how do they constitute the legitimising framework for collective actions such as cross-border governance? How do these community identities process with other forms of belongingness such as national and ethnic identities?

The approach here is multi-disciplinary, based on a great deal of theoretical and empirical corpus available in the historiography and anthropology of borders on the one hand, and the sociology and political economy of State formation in Africa on the other hand. This empiricism draws from a mixed epistemology, realist and constructivist at the same time, to interpret actions through their representational frames and their pragmatic assignments in social encounters.

### **Border territories, borderland identity and cross-border governance: theoretical considerations**

The physical or geographical border, or the frontier, which is our concern, here refers to the juridical boundary, a barrier by which criteria of nationality are defined. Thus borders appear as identity markers, exclusive and inclusive at the same time, but also lines of demarcation that sanction the State's sovereignty and authority. Such a schema is not always easily devisable in Africa given the anachronism between the colonial heritage and the dynamics of African societies (Asiwaju 1985). Cultural boundaries of peoples do not tally with conventional political borders of Nation States, and national identities hardly match up with cultural identities (Asiwaju 1984, Unesco 2005). This reality of borders brings us to the issue of borderlands or "border areas" as referred to in the current discourse of African regional integration. This notion is preferred to the extent that it highlights how boundary-lines are subsumed in societal practices of borders. It also enables us to approach borders as territories and spaces of political significance.

Borders are political territories in the sense that they are appropriated spaces, whether by State or by society and its in-groups. In the perspective of cross-border governance they can work as political territories since this peripheral inter-local governmentality contextualises some peculiar constraints and dynamics of the border areas which are "geographical spaces straddling the national territories of two or more countries, where peoples are closely tied up together by socio-economic ties" (Sikasso Seminary 2002). However, the political nature of borderlands on which cross-border governance is based can be revealed in more precise terms. First, cross-border areas are in our settings sub-national territories formed by administrative regions and districts. Second, they are transnational territories cross-cutting State territories. In this case, they appear more as socio-cultural territories, that is the ethno-regional spaces drawn by linguistic and religious boundaries, and homogenous areas in terms of level of development, criteria that altogether bear political significance (Rosière 2007:25). Third, as such, cross-border areas or borderlands harbour decision-making centers such as administrative decentralized authorities and local governments. They imply many decision centers among which are civil society and non-State charismatic decision-makers constituted by traditional and religious nobilities. Beyond their administrative pertinence, therefore, decision centers take part in the structuring and government

of political spaces which borderlands are (Rosière *ibid.*). In this sense, the analysis of borderland identity can proceed from an articulation of notions of territory and identity.

With insights gained from sociological and anthropological theories, political science has shown that territory plays an important role in identity differentiation (Braud 2006:124). It can be inversely assumed that identity is important in the construction and transformation of territories, and even, in their control. For example, it is in the name of ethnic affinities expressed through legends and myths of kinship and alliances that borderlanders convene meetings and demand collective efforts for local initiatives. In these situations, collective action is always assumed to serve the immemorial ties that bound borderlanders and legitimize mobilization. In other words, identities import much in cross-border governance given that collective action and political mobilization aim at inter-local government or management of borderlands as spatial frames and stakes of power and authority. It is in this sense that we would like to treat borderland collective identities as political identities. This line of reasoning can be better understood if it is agreed that socio-political ascription of identities is to differentiate in an exclusive manner or to build a ‘we’ against ‘them’ identity. Identity as a notion, different from identities as forms of belongingness, can be heuristically envisioned as a “force of conflictualisation, or of construction of cleavages” (Duschenes and Scherrer 2003). This definition like those of borders as political territories and borderland identities as political identities means by ‘political’ not something related only to the exertion of power – a traditional angle in political science from which national identity and State territory were strictly and exclusively political, but something relating to conflict. By conflict is meant the Simmelian idea of conflict as the foundation of social order and polity. Cross-border governance is also defined in reference to this conception of what is political, in the sense that governance refers to the conflictual balances of State-Society relations.

These cleavages make the individual in a group to which they claim to belong represent this group as opposed to other identity groups they belong to. They do this through a hierarchisation of the multiple forms of belongingness they identify with (Duschenes and Scherrer 2003). If we follow this reasoning, borderland identity as a communitarian identity proceeds from other identities in a critical context where the necessity is to face contradictions common to territories constituted by borderlands. In this vein, a quite convincing application of this definition of political identity to borderland identity would hold on the following premises.

First, the meaning of this identity production in cross-border governance is to define two kinds of relationships: one between the borderland territories and the global national entity through an enunciation of a politics of autonomy (autonomy of *representation* and autonomy of *action*) towards central governments; another one between the two borderland communities and spaces. Second, a consequence of what precedes, the local communitarian identity, or localism, is not only the vehicle of a feeling of common belongingness, but also functions as an inter-local imaginary which territorialises those constraints and dynamics of interdependency known in the cross-border areas in view of their collective appropriation. Thus, this identity idiom of ‘local citizenship’ constitutes the matrix for action in cross-border governance. It is the publicised representation and experience of border peoples, of the social ties that bind them and of their different roles in the borderland (Adejumobi 2005:22-23). Third, this collective ‘floor taking’ in which particular identities (national, ethnic, confessional, class, etc.) are concealed, is also a collective ‘power taking’ through which cross-border governance is legitimised and worked out as a form of public action, a realm of publicisation of social relationships (Surel and Muller

1998:52). Behind the 'logics of meaning' stemming from borderland identity and cross-border governance lie 'logics of power' which principle is to provoke a unitary dynamic of action. We can therefore infer that the political nature of borderland identity and management lies in the fact that cross-border governance, to a great extent, turns borderlands into public and governance realms.

This is the reason why, as a third step in this theoretical preliminary, the premise that cross-border governance is a political enterprise in both its forms and meanings would be departed from. One obvious reason for that is that, on the one hand, governance as a holistic concept relates to "issues that are necessary to the achievement and reproduction of balanced State-society relations" (Olukoshi, 2006:6), and, on the other hand, borderlands are spaces where those questions are mostly raging, if the problematic of grassroots integration and border management is to be seriously considered in current national and regional policies (Cedeao 2005, UA 2007). In the face of various problems, borderlands cannot but device inner machineries of government or self-reliance strategies.

In the Western Senegambia neighbourhoods that were investigated, strong interdependences have grown up to be genuinely endangered by cross-border problems. Besides erratic intergovernmental relations, borderlands are challenged by the continuous weakening of the security sector, the proliferation of roadblocks, environmental erosion, weakness of local institutions and inaccessibility of central government structures, as well as cross-border trade and its daily share of criminality and insecurity (Tandia 2007, Fall 2003). This is without mentioning the impact of all of this on the social fabric and order of these territories. That is why Cross-border initiatives of the Ecowas and the African Union pledge for a border oriented regional integration and security by making the concept of border region their own. The ECOWAS collaborates with the Club Sahel Afrique de l'Ouest and other NGOs since 2002 to hold seminars and conferences that allow the organization to work out a Cross-border Initiative Program. It follows that the empirical situation of Western Senegambia borderlands calls for a theoretical approach to governance and cross-border governance.

As regards governance, it will also be conceived as a heuristic concept to say that it conveys an epistemological concern which is to understand the alternative forms of regulation that have emerged in a context of social complexity and / or political disillusionment marked by critical transformations of the nation-State. The permanent crisis of the State at all levels, from the local to the global, has diminished the readability of public action (Nabudere 2000, Fawole and Ukeje 2005). Due to crises of legitimacy, efficacy and territoriality (Igue 1995, Sindjoun 2002), in the wake of the crisis of national identity and citizenship (Igue 1995, Bach 1998, Adejumobi 2005), the multiplicity of actors, with growing divergent and almost unmatchable interests, engage in a regime of governability at the edges of the State. The notion of governance appears therefore as a conceptual designation of this new regime of representation and reproduction of the State, or more exactly of the public realm, through the social practices and within the framework of collective action. In other words, it refers to a new governmentality of the State defined as a specific mode of exerting power" (Lascoumes 2004). We used the concept of governance in this way because it helps preclude the ideological significations that sometimes pollute it. More interestingly, it is more useful than government (as in local government) and leadership in recent civil society myths of popular or elite salvaging rule. However, as Goran Hyden observed, the concept should not always and mistakenly stigmatise the imbalance of State-Society relations.

We agree with Hyden when he argues that, “First, the State is rarely the sole harbinger of political power and, second, it is often the public realm, not just the State, that is weak” (Hyden 1995:6). The concept of governance here makes possible the suspension of judgment about the exact relationship between political authority and formal institutions in society. No presupposition is allowable as regards the holder of authority or the possession of political control by any given actor in cross-border governance processes. Concerned in effect with “struggles for the expansion of citizenship, [and therefore with the nature and character of the public realm]” (Olukoshi 2008:6), governance raises the questions of new systems of checks-and-balances between public and private actors, state and societal institutions, the articulation of the rights and responsibilities of citizens individually and collectively taken, the definition and operationalisation of rules of political regulation (Olukoshi 2006). Governance therefore works here as an instrument to apprehend the current transformations in the modes of management of public affairs (Hermet 2003:13, Hermet and Kazancigil 2003:1-14).

In the context of border regions, governance is relevant in a geographical and anthropological perspective. In effect, it makes it possible for them to be viewed as territories on the one hand – what we did earlier – that is scales of action, socio-spatial areas where governmentality is re-invented, and on the other hand, to consider them as symbolic sites and identity centers. Consequently, the concept of cross-border governance is helpful when one wants to pay attention to the symbolic or cognitive dimension of the production of the borderland governmentalities through an analysis of identity constructions that are their legitimising frames. That is why we envisaged cross-border governance as a collective action to be closely related to borderland identities and territories.

In this sense, cross-border governance will be considered as a collective regime by which inter-local problems of border areas are managed and borderlands regulated within and in ambiguous relation to the respective national frames. Used in this sense, its empirical dimensions need to be clearly identified so that the implications in terms of border meaning and transformation can be grasped.

Reference is again made to Hyden whose analytical framework (Hyden 1995) seems to correspond to our treatment of cross-border governance as a political enterprise putting together identity, territories and governance. Hyden theorised some basic dimensions of governance that seem useful to grasp the empirical logics of cross-border governance in the Western Senegambia settings. His schema of the ‘governance realm’ tallies with our view of borders as public realms since cross-border governance and borderland identity aim at a publicisation of social relationships and problem-solving initiatives and possibilities. There are three dimensions for an optimal analysis of governance.

First, he considered the *actor dimension* of governance in which the nature and character of relationships between actors tell something about the degree of publicity in collective actions implied by governmentalities. According to Hyden, two types of relationships need to be considered between actors. On the one hand, *relationships of authority* – authority meaning not that governance relationships are based on domination or subjugation over any one, but on “legitimate power, that is the voluntary acceptance of asymmetrical relationship” (Hyden 1995:10). In this sense, it comes close to a reciprocal relationship. Both imply an underlying normative consensus on rules for the exercise of power” (Hyden 1995:10). On the other hand,

having the advantage of being less discrete, therefore more publicising unlike exchange, reciprocity requires “each to contribute to the welfare of the others with an expectation that they will do likewise” (Hyden 1995:9). A *reciprocal relationship* requires then “broader agreement and consensus on the basic norms of social action” (ibid.). And the condition for this consensual processing is the implementation of an ethic of discussion in deliberative encounters, which therefore stresses the role of borderland management discourses.

Second, it is clear that this jurisdiction of palaver as the jurisdiction of speech (Bidima 1997) and consensus has to fit in a precise governance structure. This is the *structural dimension* of governance relating to the type of political structure implied by governance politics, or else, “the normative institutions created by human beings to pursue social, economic and political ends” (Hyden 1995:10). At this level governance structures are said to be of a mixed patterning. Governance stands on the middle ground that every society is made up of both man-made and institutionalized structures. To put it simply, structures of governance are formal and informal, spontaneous organisations and institutions. In the case of cross-border governance, it will be seen that this hybrid character of governance structures is observable through the presence of social forums monitored by civil society NGO’s or associations, or else deliberative encounters gathering (local)State authorities and traditional powers. It is in this sense that governance structures flourish in a communitarian context, meaning that they could well be found in borderlands where collectivism still dominates patterns of social life which are however not so harmonious as this Tonniesian image of the community may suggest.

Third, Hyden deduces from this a frame of three main component variables from which to read empirical working of a governance regime. Citizen influence and oversight, responsive leadership and social reciprocities should be observable components of what might be termed as the *regime dimension* of governance situations. *Citizen influence and oversight* refers to “the means by which individual citizens can participate in the political process and thereby express their preferences about public policy; how well these preferences are aggregated for effective policymaking; and what means exist of holding governors accountable for their decisions and actions” (Hyden 1995:15).

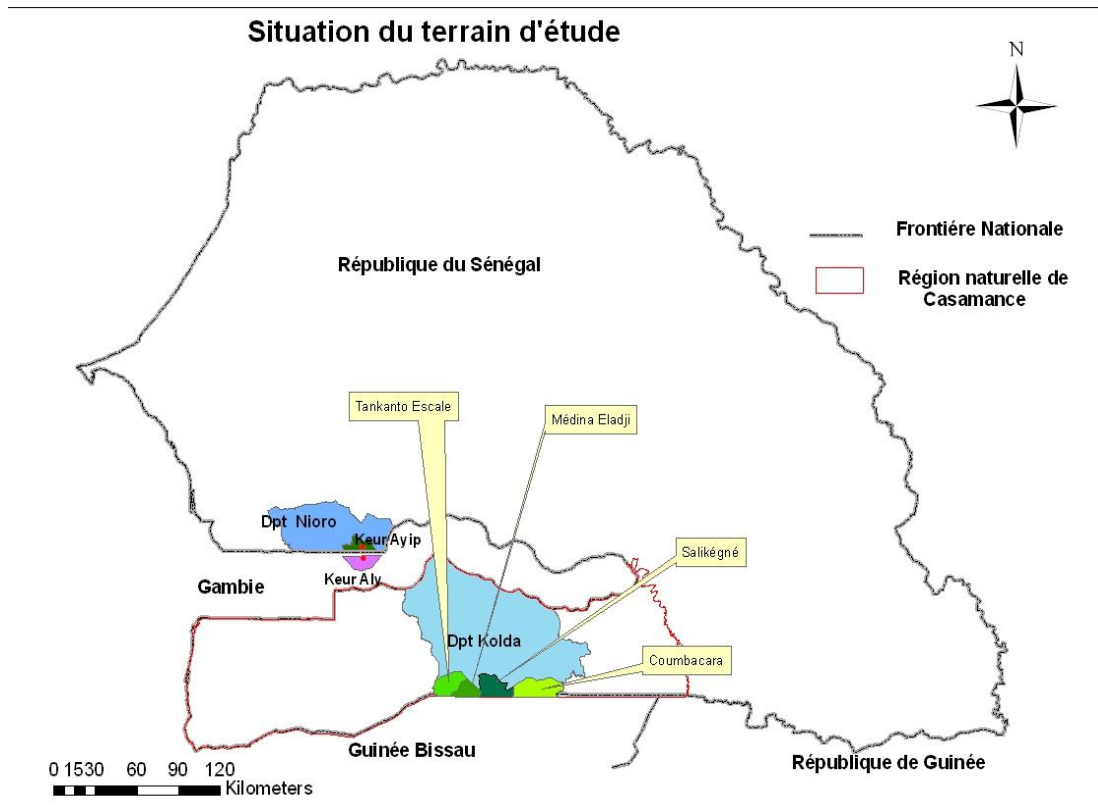
While this rather large frame could be a little bit tight for cross-border settings often marked by State absence, looking at the presence and activity of civil society structures next to local administrative and political powers would be suggested. It should be added that Hyden’s frame was originally drawn for the level of State politics where he proposes governance as better than democracy as a concept to apprehend the changes in the public realm of the contemporary State. In his point of view, therefore, it is still about governors and the governed, while in our sense it is about the looseness or inexistence of a particular holder or central authority, but about a deliberate search for many contributing or decision-making centers, that is what we referred to as legitimacies. In this case of blurred lines between society and leadership, what is important then is legitimisation of this collectivism more than legitimacy of any power-center.

In addition, peoples’ inclusion and reference on behalf of these governors and other actors should tell us more about citizen participation and oversight. *Responsive and responsible leadership* refers to “the attitudes of political leaders toward their role as public trustees. In particular, it covers their orientation toward the sanctity of the civic public realm; their readiness to share information with citizens; and their adherence to the rule of law” (Hyden 1995:15). At

this point also it is important to simplify by contextualization. We will rather be looking at to what extent leaders or legitimacies involved in cross-border governance pay attention to the stability and openness of the public realm, how they are open and sensitive to popular solicitations and grievances, and in what terms they abide by the rules of consensus and accountability that govern governance situations. This equates for instance to looking at the degree to which they remain concerned with destabilizing issues such as security, crime and trade in borderlands. Last but not least, *social reciprocities* refer to “the extent to which citizens or groups of citizens treat each other in an equal fashion; how far such groups demonstrate tolerance of each other in the pursuit of politics; and how far voluntary associations are capable of transcending the boundaries of such primary social organisations as kinship, ethnicity or race” (Hyden 1995:16). While this last component may refer to modalities of equality, tolerance and inclusiveness between groups in governance situations, we will consider it in the case of cross-border governance to imply the degree of social integration according to which equality, tolerance, and inclusiveness may well be measured. As concerns the issue of voluntary and spontaneous associations, it takes us back to the idea of civil society presence and activity. Nevertheless, a good point to add is that since cross-border governance unfolds in identity guises, matters of transcending socio-cultural boundaries should be envisaged in terms of how governance demands with regards to policymaking are negotiated without exclusionist recourse to these forms of belonging. In other words, it is about how far these identities are tolerated or usefully resorted to in governance politics. In this sense, cross-border governance could be an interesting platform from which governance as a concept of new politics and policymaking could be deemed feasible or not in African (border) contexts.

As far as we are concerned in this study, the dimensions of governance and cross-border governance as delineated above can be traced through a three stage approach. First, we will highlight the modes and the logics of action in cross-border governance, its actors and their legitimacies. Second, we will look at the factors of legitimisation from which derive the meaning of cross-border governance, with a focus on the part played by borderland identity. Third, since it could be part of its meaning, what could be the potential of cross-border governance is a concern we have tried to cope with, which leads us to consider the efficiency of cross-border governance as a regulatory regime of borderlands. An important issue raised here relates to the lessons that can be learnt from the experience of cross-border governance in the context of a double-dynamic of the African State – decentralization on the one hand and regionalization on the other. It will, from the onset, be appropriate to have a short picture of the two main settings that were investigated in the Western Senegambian Space.





**Tandia and Toure, 2009.**

### **Peopling and spatial dynamics of Western Senegambia borderlands**

Actually we have investigated two places (see map), one in the Senegal-Gambia northern frontier, and another in the Senegal-Guinea Bissau border. The first place is the borderland straddling the North Bank Division of Gambia which is the location of the village of Keur Aly (purple color) and the Communauté Rurale of Madina Sabakh in the Nioro department of Senegal where the village of Keur Ayip is located (green color). The second is the trans-boundary space straddling the four Communautés Rurales of the Kolda (degraded green colors) department and the neighbouring Bissau-Guinean area of Citato-Cuntima and Contuboeil in the Regulado of Gabu region. Though both areas boom with cross-border governance dynamics, and relatively share the same spatial characteristics and socio-cultural patterns, the two settings are different in many respects, notably in terms of peopling and cross-border social mobility, migration patterns, local histories, social structuring and integration, political control and stability, and leadership regimes.

#### *The twin villages of Madina Sabakh ancestral brothers on the Senegal-Gambia frontier*

The Gambia-Senegal borderland is made up of the Wolof communities of the villages of Keur Aly (Farafegni North Bank Division of Gambia) and Keur Ayip (Sous-prefecture of Madina Sabakh of Senegal). Formerly compounds, these two villages are like twins for the following reasons. Firstly, they were founded by Aly and Ayip, two brothers whose descent constitute the whole trans-boundary community. This ancestral brotherhood ties justifies the sharing of one cemetery located on the Gambian side, sanitary districts, one market and a coach station on the

Senegalese side. Secondly, as in the Bobofing community studied by Cisse (Cisse 2007), the border as a socio-cultural space is netted with festivals, initiatory, customary and land rituals, confessional events, matrimonial and lineage exchanges, and christening. These practices are instances of the dynamic social mobility and integration of the borderland community. The ethnic homogeneity they mirror is not disrupted by circular or nomad migration flows in the wake of cross-border trade. This integration is reinforced by the common economic activities (farming, trade and cattle-raising), which bring local authorities and notabilities to loosen political control by means of a regime of tolerance. Thirdly, the economic dynamism of the border area, thanks to trade in natural resources, weekly markets, the Gambian ferry of Farafegni, and first staff facilities in circulation, the borderland is more or less firmly rooted in the national territories. As far as the leadership is concerned, the various authorities enter into close relationships: vertical civilities among traditional nobilities and administrators and local councillors have established a cross-border cooperation in all sectors since the early 1980's (Tandia 2007). According to the Sous-prefet of Niore interviewed in August 2007, cross-border cooperation on this northern part of the Senegal-Gambia border has been initiated by one of his (Senegalese) predecessors whose name was Korcka Diallo in 1982, which is not contradicted by his Gambian counterpart of the North Bank Division in Farafegni (Tandia 2007).

Another element that characterises this Senegal-Gambia borderland is that the frequent implication of national authorities to a certain extent in local matters shows the existence of a higher degree of an acceptance of national belongingness among borderlanders.

*The warring and poverty-stricken local communities of ancient Gabu alliances*

The situation is rather different in many respects on the Senegal-Guinea Bissau borderland of Kolda (Senegal) and Sitato-Cuntima and Cambaju (Guinea Bissau). This area is the political territory of ancient Gabu kingdom which reached the republic of Guinea and the Futa Jallon. On the Senegalese side the Fula territory is called the Fouladou, while on the Bissau-Guinean side it is called Gabu. It stretches toward the central part of Guinea Bissau, which relativises the ethnic homogeneity of the community formed by the Fula people, called the Fulas of Gabu (Borshik 2008). Indeed, the ethnic homogeneity is disrupted by the sedentary type of migration flows of central Senegalese farmers, western and central Bissau Guinean Balanta people fleeing political instability and poverty and retrain from fishing Guinean Mandingos and Fulas. This territory is still marked by the liberation wars in Guinea Bissau, the long Casamance 'forgotten civil war' (Sonko 2004, Faye 2005) and the current political instability of the Bissau Guinean State. Poverty and insecurity are concealed in the insecurity system of land mines, cattle rustling, fraudulent trading and growing armed robbery. This situation has severely affected social integration, political control and leadership. First, the state of extreme poverty aggravated by the drying up of the shallows for farming and loss of land – because of land mines –, erosion and criminality, tends to establish a territorial system of wariness and scarcity. The border people are complaining about migrants who make an intensive use of land and forestry, and therefore destroy the fertile wetlands. Fleeing insecurity and/or poverty, these established migrants come from central and western Guinea Bissau and central or northern Senegal, mainly from the ancient Senegalese peanut basin in the Saloum area.

Second, a regime of *laissez-aller* in the development activities such as farming and cattle-rustling, which are the main ones, affects the cultural and socioeconomic solidarities. For

instance, tension and conflict is growing among communities who often resort to violence in fights caused by disagreements over cattle rustling, the drawing of pasture itineraries, or else in land distribution and exploitation. The worsening of the socioeconomic fabric has nurtured a generation gap. Youngsters who have for their great many left school are accused of being irreverent toward traditions as far as cattle raising and farming are concerned. At the same time, they are accused of banditry as they are cited as being in league with cattle rustlers. They in turn accuse adults and old traditional chiefs of being acolytes of the politicians embodied by local councillors and religious chiefs. According to them, States are to be blamed in so far as they remain unconcerned about their situation and the raging insecurity which profits cattle rustlers. Some of them blame poverty and unemployment as being responsible for the suspicions hanging over them. This is mainly the picture in the Senegalese *communautes rurales* of Medina El Hadj and Takanto Escale.

Third, the complicity of security and administrative officials with the trustees of local migrants and religious chiefs – in trade and land management for example – is also a factor in the conflictual climate (Fanchette 2002). While people do not trust official institutions and reject their counseling, the youth questions the gerontocracy of adults who accuse them of laziness and criminality. In this context, the absence of States on both sides, largely exemplified by the weak integration of the Casamance region in Senegal, and the long history of war of the Bissau Guinean failed State favours civil society and traditional leadership. This situation becomes at the same time the main ingredient that nurtures and reinforces a ‘we feeling’ that strongly questions and seems to reject national belongingness among borderlanders. Among the Senegalese Fulas of the Fouladou or High Casamance, a commonplace phrase is the following: “They [the northerners] are taking away our resources”. A farmer complaining about migrants and local politics said this to us: “We happen to ask ourselves whether we should not have done like our Diola brothers in Low Casamance”, referring to the current irredentism against the Senegalese State. This feeling of being abandoned or underestimated is made worse by lack of infrastructure, and the numerous differentials between countries (currency, political systems, prices and products availability and periodicity) stretches the lines of this territoriality of enclavement, scarcity and wariness.

### **Cross-border governance as a transnational governmentality**

Cross-border governance engages a plurality of actors operating at times in tandem at times separately. Indeed, institutional pluralism set up in the wake of decentralization processes in different countries does not result necessarily in an ideal participation of all actors (Faye 2006:11-12). Depending on contexts, this dimension of governance as a collective action and a regulatory regime will be unequally distributed. The analysis of discourses and practices of the latter will help distinguish between administrative coordination, security cooperation and cultural diplomacy as various and overlapping modalities of cross-border governance.

#### *A local system of administrative coordination*

This first regime is exerted by territorial administration authorities and local councillors, who are assisted sometimes by administrative services and grassroots organisations. It proceeds with a hierarchisation of political actors (local councillors) and administrative agents. This hierarchisation tells a lot about the power authorities implied by governance. On the Senegal-Gambia borderland “besides security services, technical civil servants, local councillors are at the

forefront, but under the close control of territorial administration commissioners”, says a Senegalese sous-prefet. On the Guinea-Senegal borderland local councilors are nearly overshadowed by regulos, the local commissioners. But the structural weakness of these local administrations, notably on the Guinean side, worse than in the Gambian divisions of the North Bank, opens the door for civil society commitment in the management of border problems. This is revealed in the domains covered by this local coordinative regime.

Except the civil society associations fill the gap in the Senegal-Guinea borderland, domains covered by the coordination activities are those in which concerned actors are allowed competence in national armistices. In farming technical services are mobilised by cross-border administrative authorities in the management of land, crops, and their conveying. The difference between the two borderlands should be noted. While on the Senegal-Gambia borderland local councillors are particularly solicited, the Guinea-Senegal borderland is characterised by a loose regulation in this domain. The same is true for cattle-breeding. On the Guinean borderland things are a bit too easy going. As one cattle rearer says, the prevalence of cheaper traditional techniques of animal feeding and branding and the impracticability of a good deal of pasture lands, because of mine bombing, adds to the extreme poverty of border populations so that modern or official devices are overlooked (Arragain and Saillot 2005). As regards forest management, the Gambia-Senegal border is also better regulated. Unlike the relative lack of capacity among their Gambian neighbour, the Senegalese forest division has a special role in this matter. Added to the expertise demanded by the Gambian side, surveillance logistics, and anti-arcadia fight programs are extended to them.

The picture is quite the same between the Senegalese border division and their Guinean neighbours. Instead of administrative and political authorities, popular initiatives are legion and are hardly headed by local councillors who most often get engaged in security issues and farming because of land stakes (Arragain and Saillot 2005:20). Because of the tensions and conflict risks that are lying in wait, security forces are sometimes invited on both borderlands to join in these civil activities even if they are domains from which traditionally they are excluded. However, the particularity of these actors is both their strong presence and their relative autonomy related to the fact that in all three countries their hierarchical authorities are the ministries of defense and security or armed forces. That is why relationships between these architects of cross-border governance form an autonomous framework.

#### *A cooperative security framework*

As already underlined, the two borderlands hold salient differences as far as their political stability and security climates are concerned. But as a whole, their challenges are the same, comprising cattle rustling, drug trafficking, illegal exploitation and trafficking of forest products and most importantly fraudulent trades. Hence cooperation between security forces is an obligation that must be met in order to secure the privileged evacuation-corridors constituted by border areas. As a commander of the Senegalese Gendarmerie puts it, they “cooperate on law and order, keeping trade and traffic control, criminality, and judiciary coordination of some investigations across borders, and most of the time we meet our ends”. Even though they form an inter-local insecurity system, the Guinea-Senegal communities are obliged to resort to vigilante committees or else to popular justice or crime repression (Arragain and Saillot 2005) against criminality and insecurity problems such as nightmarish cattle rustling. This pattern of popular

responsibility in local justice or crime repression has been studied by Saibou (2007) among the Chad-Cameroon border communities against cross-border banditry. He termed them as grassroots modes of policing.

Fortunately, the dynamism of civil society throughout the Mouvement des Jeunes pour la Paix et l'integration (MJPI) alleviates the effects of such challenges as cattle rustling, land and pasture conflicts, mine bombing, fraudulent trading (Chroniques frontalières 2005:7). Thanks to the forums organized by the association around cross-border management, notably security issues that are the core worries, the police sometimes agree to collaborate with others. For instance, for a fee of 500 Cfa the police systematically control the livestock that cross the border in tandem with the vigilante committee. Following the involvement of the youths, many cattle rustlers and forest plunderers have been tracked down and arrested in the Bissau-Guinean villages of Bonco and Fajonquito.

Regulating borderlands as trading spaces is also an arduous task for security cooperation. In the words of a policeman at a checkpoint in Keur Ayip, on the Gambia-Senegal frontier, "Sometimes in between armed forces, the police, the customs, the gendarmerie, Gambians and Senegalese, we are obliged to join forces to face quarrels between policemen and drivers or passengers trailing offenders and so on". Security officers also intervene in conflicts among competing economic actors (merchants and nomad traders called *bana bana*). While on the Senegal-Gambia borderland quarrels among cross border transporters<sup>1</sup> are often settled by security forces, cattle raisers and farmers are frequently reconciled by the MJPI (Arragain and Salliot 2005:11-15). For example when Senegalese transporters erected blockades in 2003 and 2005 to protest against a price increase on Gambian ferry, security forces and local administrators came together as a body of peace makers to resolve minor problems among neighbours that appeared as border disputes between States (Tandia 2007).

The rise in security problems over the years on the Guinea-Senegal border and the growing interdependences on the economically dynamic Senegal-Gambia borderland has brought public approval of cross-border security cooperation. That is why like the administrative coordination regime, security cooperation attracts other types of actors, from civil and military sectors. But this is truer of the Gambia-Senegal border where, except for the Senegalese customs division who are accused of acting in offhand manner, border police, administrative authorities, local councillors and traditional nobilities on both sides partake in the management of forest and natural resources.

#### *A cultural diplomacy of neighbourliness and trans-boundary integration*

Other studies have reported forms of negotiation of peace and arbitration of disputes among contemporary societies, notably on border areas. Following studies by Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson on European Borderlands (Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson 2001, 2003), recent studies in West Africa include the works of Saibou and Cisse, respectively about the Fulani Communities straddling the Chad-Cameroon border and the Bobofing lineage communities on the Mali-Burkina Faso Sikasso area (Saibou 2007, Cisse 2007). These studies highlight the mobilisation

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<sup>1</sup> As was the case during the blockades in 2003 and 2005 by Senegalese transporters who protested against a price increase on the Gambian ferry (Tandia 2007).

of traditional techniques of peace making and socio-cultural solidarities in the reinforcement of social bonds and border integration. They reveal the close relationship between the functioning of these practices and the efficient management of border areas.

The role of traditional nobilities, meaning customary chiefs and religious authorities and other patriarchal bodies, has gained recognition in peace studies even when this has not been demonstrated in practice. At play is the laborious but stifling diffusion of the unitary State model and decentralisation. Constrained by their ignorance of the linguistic and technical rudiments of modern institutions and local politics (Blundo 1998), these agents (Bidima 1997) partake in a 'local diplomacy' (Tandia 2007) that verges on concurrence with official structures. They rarely share initiatives with local administrators and their activities remain impervious to any formal coordination. The style of leadership is not monolithic in this case of cross-border governance in the sense that it embraces traditional forms of conflict prevention and management (Saibou 2007, Cisse 2007, Tandia 2007). Limiting themselves to the representational role of the chief local councillor on the Gambia-Senegal borderland, they exert a rather important influence on the local diplomatic activities. Borderlands being spaces of socio-cultural intermixing, unified living environments, and dynamic markets around the *loumo*<sup>2</sup> and transportation, traditional nobilities are regularly engaged to solve disputes where formal settlements are inefficient and their procedures are undesirable (Arragain and Sallot 2005:16). This "catalysis diplomacy" (Ramel 204:879) also ensures peace keeping and peaceful coexistence among cross-border communities. On the Guinea-Senegal border where it is by default the archetypal governance regime, bringing together civil society, MJPI, the youth, butchers<sup>3</sup> and local chiefs, a *diure*<sup>4</sup> or 'mirador of peace'<sup>5</sup>, as it has been named, has become a deliberation spot besides palaver trees. By means of meetings and palavers, cultural diplomacy operates in market places, mosques and coach stations. It should be noted that local chiefs have been the first actors of cross-border governance on the Gambia-Senegal border, and the most solicited ones on the Guinea Bissau border. Local councillors assist just as mediators or facilitators by allocating logistic while civil society coordinates meetings, as it is on the Guinea Bissau border. Since the intervention of local chiefs during the last blockade of April 2005 in Farafegni, authoritarian regulation is less used to manage transportation problems. Administrators and local councillors are not as much depreciated or else opposed as they prevent fastidious procedures, which is an instance of reciprocity as well as of supplementation of the State through cross-border governance.

Only used heuristically and for the demands of methodology, these typologies have all the same been useful to read out in a conciliating manner the diversity of actors and their legitimacies

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<sup>2</sup> A Fulani word meaning the weekly cross-border markets organised in Farafegni (Gambia) on Sundays and twice a week or more in the department of Kolda for the Senegal-Guinea border. They drain huge crowds of merchants and traders in the Western Senegambia Space. All in all, from Dakar to Bissau, actors come as traders, craftsmen, farmers, cattle raisers, and other peoples attracted by cheap and rare goods, notably staple foods.

<sup>3</sup> Given that cattle rustlers sell the livestock to butchers, the vigilante committees collaborate with them for better oversight.

<sup>4</sup> Another Fula word meaning a mirador which is made of bamboo laths among the Fula communities in the Senegal-Guinea Bissau Borderland or wood posts in the Wolof communities of the Gambia-Senegal borderland. It is the symbolic place for "arbitration and settlement of disputes" and can reach a height of 10 to 15 meters.

<sup>5</sup> The Senegalese village of Coumbacara in Kolda and its Bissau-Guinean neighbourhoods, the Guinea Bissau village of Cambaju and the rural councils of Kolda in Senegal are the lieu par excellence of the implementation of cultural diplomacy. Coumbacara and surrounding villages in Guinea-Bissau harbour more than 10 miradors of peace

which are not always conflicting. Instances of overlapping roles among governance actors and the interdependences between cross-border governance sectors, reveal the existence and dynamism of governance realms on borderlands. This has underpinned the way in which the challenges caused by the absence of the State ought to be alleviated by collective border initiatives. This is shown by the fact that the more the State was absent or lacking, as is the case on the Guinea-Bissau-Senegal border, the more civil society commitment was effective. The perceptions and the expectations of one another are indicative of the significance cross-border actors bestow on their collective action which seems to determine the implementation of this (inter)local governance regime.

### **Legitimising Cross-border Governance: between the local and the national**

Given that diverse legitimacies are operating, that their actions and perceptions do not always match up even though they all gain recognition and acceptance, we opt for a consideration of the springs of this recognition, of how they justify their activity, individually and collectively. This is what we mean by legitimisation: the meaning ascribed to their collective action irrespective of their national or local institutional memberships. Given the interpretation of representations, local time and space, in terms African social philosophy (Bidima 1997, Yinda-Yinda 2004), we have identified structuring patterns by which cross-border governance gains legitimacy for plural actors and by which this legitimacy is distributed between them. We insisted on the role of identities, beliefs and expectations (Sindjoun 2004) as well as on the resources by which the role of different actors is constructed. As it seemed important to address the question of whether decentralisation mattered in cross-border governance, we also looked at how it can or cannot appear to actors as a source of legitimisation of this collective action. But more than decentralisation, it is the local trans-boundary identities and histories that form the genuine referential by which cross-border governance is defined. Finally, although to a lesser extent than borderland identity, the local-national dialectics stand out as determinants of the social construction of the role of cross-border governance.

### *Beyond decentralisation: the effects of local institutional pluralism*

Even though decentralisation as a process of State repositioning did not honour the many expectations it had crystallised, mainly in Gambia and Guinea-Bissau where we even doubt its juridical elaboration, it has had the unexpected effect of sensitising on power and authority stakes that were dormant in peripheral territories. Though often awkwardly and incompletely conducted, the transfer of some competences have converted the traditional uneven power relations into interdependent and loose balances of legitimacies, each claiming social acceptance and utility. The coherence of cross-border governance seems to lie on this pooling of traditional and legal-rational “forms of legitimacies” in the sub-national ponds (Lagroye 1985). In this sense, cross-border governance lies more on this pluralistic regime than on decentralisation which refers to the reign of administrators and local councillors who are a type of actor among others in the local scene. If governance regimes on local and/or border contexts owe much to decentralisation, all legitimacies are valorized. On the Senegal-Guinea Bissau border, where the territoriality of wariness and enclavement impedes decentralisation, the absence and deprivation of local institutions, and the friendships between religious and local councillors and administrators (Fanchette 2002) has crowned civil society actors whose legitimacy is rather functional than nominal. In fact, legitimacy counts less than the contribution each actor is able to make in collective action. Realities of poverty and insecurity on the Senegal-Guinea Bissau

border, as well as economic imports of trade on the Senegal-Gambia border unevenly command this state of affairs. Another viewpoint that undermines decentralisation as a robust basis for cross-border governance is the belief among actors on the Senegal-Gambia borderland, that decentralised cooperation has less impact on their problems than cross-border governance (Tandia 2007).

*Localism or the communitarian identity of Cross-border Governance*

The legitimisation of cross-border governance appears in fact as a semiotics of borderland challenges, a gauge of an inter-local order which interdependences – complementarities and differentials/discontinuities – must be managed beyond intergovernmentalism. Thus, by localism is first meant the rhetoric of an identity construction stemming from the relational situation of actors (Braspenning 2002:321), given a commonly shared “grammar of signs and symbols” (Yinda-Yinda 2004:324). Second, it is based on the representation, also inter-local, of the border space in a mood of autochthony. Third, it is related to local time, that is, a conception of events both in the inter-local and national contexts. The local discourse patterns disclose the representation of a communitarian transnationalism (Sindjoun 2002:55-69) that professes the transcending of the juridical boundaries by means of an ethic of tolerance that works as the code of social relations. At the same time, such an ethos represents a pragmatics of the ‘local foreign policy’ as a contextualization of national foreign policies, in due proportion with challenges of the inter-local, which thus becomes a relevant scale where foreign policies can be displayed. Given that “any identity has a territorial expression” (Mbembe 2000:38), this localizing rhetoric of the extra-territorial collective action expresses a conception of the border space as a “symbolic and material resource” (Wondji 2005:17) that makes possible the justification of a collective action beneficial to one and the same community.

On the one hand, the borderland is a social space of secular bonds that have resisted state-national authorship of political identity. The discourse about the brotherhood of the twin villages of the Gambia-Senegal border constructs the socio-cultural space that exports cross-border governance beyond boundary-lines (Tandia 2007). Likewise, the miradors of peace and the cultural celebrations on the Senegal-Bissau borderland aims at “bringing the road”, to borrow a local parlance, drawing a symbolic bridge between the cross-border communities (Chroniques frontalières 2005:10). Identity being a relational material, cross-border governance, which is at the same time a product and an instrument of grassroots integration, articulates an inclusive ‘local citizenship’. First the tradition of brotherhood sanctified in the imaginaries of neighbourliness erases foreignness in favour of a kind of ‘borderland nationalism’. Such a feeling is enforced on the Guinea Bissau-Senegal Fula communities who seem to rebel against a deliberate governmental strategy of enclosure of the High Casamance region (Fanchette 2002). Second, ordinary discourses designate the stranger as a *doomu ndey*<sup>6</sup>, invoking immemorial African maternity (Yinda-Yinda 2004:341) to nullify difference, a nationally endowed otherness. The Wolof community of the Gambia-Senegal borderland opposed to the state-national image of Gambia as an “annoying peanut in the belly of Senegal”<sup>7</sup> that of the “milk and couscous” mixture that cannot be parted but only drunk naturally. Likewise, the Fula community of the Guinea Bissau-Senegal borderland presents cross-border governance “as a federating sphere that transcends all political, religious or national identities” (Chroniques Frontalières 2005:10). Third,

<sup>6</sup> Wolof word used in Gambia-Senegal borderland communities that means a brother of the same mother who is different from the half-brother, that is in traditional maternity, the brother with whom we share a father.

<sup>7</sup> A phrase attributed to former President Abdou Diouf of Senegal by Ebrima Sall (Sall 1991)



the duty of solidarity constructed out of local syncretism that is open to Islamic revelation results in an ethos of palaver and tolerance. In this vein, as noted by the Sous-prefet of Madina Sabakh, “the legitimacy of cross-border governance rests upon the common will of border peoples to live together”. Nevertheless, if localism is the unique coherent legitimating pedestal of cross-border governance, it does not entail a rejection of the persistent figures of State and national identity (Sindjoun 2002, 2004).

*Cross-border governance as a response to the borderland interdependencies and State want*

The intergovernmental relationships between Senegal and its Western Senegambia neighbours are also a pretext for a realist consideration of cross-border governance and its identity foundations. This stance is particularly necessary as this local collective action aims at negotiating a cross-border cohabitation which is not always easy. The attitude borderland communities have toward events between national States reveals a divide of local histories following the lines drawn by intergovernmental relationships and local interdependences.

In the face of cross-border complex interdependencies, the social representation of frontiers as material resources provokes a utilitarian behaviour among actors to their conscious interests. If borderlands are “scenes of international relations, this owes much to their being spaces of important stakes for sub-national actors” (Sindjoun 2002:72), notably economic ones. The tension between local and national temporalities reveals actors that, in addition to the communitarian transnationalism, obey an “identity fluidity” (Sindjoun 2004:12) which enunciates the national, beyond or along with the inter-local. It is clear that differentials in terms of material facilities explain the proneness of Gambian and Bissau-Guinean communities to seek schooling and sanitation in Senegalese local territories or else benefit from inoculation campaigns.

Cross-border governance is undeniably a governmentality that supplements differentials of State want and redistributes complementarities. Nevertheless, it is from another point of view a realm for the reproduction of the State. The escorts of Senegalese supporters after football matches in Gambia as well as the football games and celebrations (festivals, marriage, funerals, initiatory rites) on borderlands are occasions on which the intervention of administrative, political and security agents expresses a “culture of the State” (Meye 2004:183). Likewise, the checkpoint rituals are accepted even if identity papers are not always presented, which is an expression of the idea of national rights and duties and international sovereignty. It appears from what precedes that the ethos of tolerance and solidarity instilled by localism as a transnational legitimating identity is closely linked to the necessity to assume border constraints collectively. Moreover, the enunciation of the inter-State code in cross-border governance proceeds also with a critic of intergovernmental relations as they impinge on border problems when they do not overemphasize them.

Intergovernmental diplomacy is often responsible for some misunderstandings while at the same time inappropriate in its centralism. Consequently, cross-border governance appears as an incomparable mechanism of inter-national regulation to this Senegalese sous-prefet: “Here we want to go fast, by means of facilitation, mediation, and so on. Because when it comes to diplomatic formulas there are things that drag on. Let us take the example of a blockade on the border because a Senegalese passenger has abused a Gambian policeman. Do we have to wait for

the ministry of foreign affairs of Senegal to be informed and that in his turn he refers to the President who calls his Gambian counterpart? That's a bit long and fastidious procedure people could not wait for to attend to their business". What is deducible here is not a negation of the State, but an empirical illustration of governance as a recreation of the public realm and (inter)State governmentality, which thus implies to look at the functional legitimacy or utility of cross-border governance.

### **Cross-border governance as an instrument for trans-boundary cooperation and grass-roots integration**

The preceding analysis on the meaning actors give to their collective action on the one hand and the interest they attach to it on the other, reveals a certain number of expectations they place on cross-border governance. On the satisfaction of these expectations depends what might be termed the social utility of cross-border governance. The analysis of this functional legitimacy through the means, procedures and goals of cross-border governance results in the identification of three types of functions that render it effective. However, there are undeniable shortcomings that relativise cross-border governance in its international and national pretences.

#### *An effective system of social integration and political regulation*

Added to the temporal criteria of longevity of cross-border governance on the Senegal-Gambia borderland, the routinisation of reciprocal exchanges of civilities among actors on both sides and of all legitimacies refers to Hyden's reciprocal relationships as markers of a working governance realm. The functioning of cross-border governance in peacetime and wartime altogether refers back to the idea of responsiveness of leadership. Inversely, their responsibility is doubtful, notably at the Senegal-Guinea Bissau border where political and administrative authorities, and to a less extent security forces, are overshadowed by civil society. The friendship of administrators and religious notabilities on both borderlands in local electoral politics (Sall 1991) also adds doubt to this responsibility. On the contrary, and consequently, citizen oversight is a lifebelt for Senegal-Guinea border peoples, while on the Gambia-Senegal communities of Farafegni and Madina Sabakh, where there is a relative State presence by way of the effectiveness of political and administrative institutions, citizen oversight and influence stays at the stage of approval of cross-border governance. Even though these observations are a basis for empirical validation of the theoretical and comparative approach of cross-border governance, they say little about the practical effectiveness of cross-border governance in its political aspirations. On this question, the analysis has yielded instances where cross-border governance presents virtues in border management, social integration and conflict prevention.

*Border management* as an effective modality of cross-border governance can be illustrated at two levels. First, the administrative coordination between all civil and military institutions and political councils, very mostly on the Senegal-Gambia border, covers achievements such as facilitation and negotiation of borderland activities and events across constituencies. A Senegalese sous-prefet coined the expression 'cross-border inter-institutional cooperation' to name this dynamic of pooling of structures. "Common sector-based committees" including all types of actors on the Senegal-Gambia borders, and to a less extent traditional nobilities, deliberate on domains ranging from security, decentralized cooperation and environment. Less polyvalent are the vigilante committees and miradors of peace and palaver trees between the Senegal constituencies of Kolda and Sitato-Cuntima or Contuboel in Guinea Bissau. Second, the

control of commercial flows spreading out from the borders is the field of security forces and customs. On both borders, petty annoyance and occasional quarrels between economic operators and the police are reduced to the minimum, while joint operations and forestry guards save the green reserves.

Indirectly accomplished, the *social integration function* of cross-border governance corresponds to the promotion of neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence in borderlands. Given that it alleviates the differentials in play imposed by interdependences, cross-border governance permanently prevents any disruption of local peace and neighbourliness. The use of socio-cultural solidarities and geographic and economic complementarities minimizes the effects of differentials and low intensity criminality. With the benefit of this integrative property, scarcity stricken and wariness Bissau-Guinean communities are progressively relieved of political instability and poverty at home. It follows that the combined effects of border management and social integration result in the curbing of tensions and conflicts that could rise or get poisoned. Concretely, as a cultural diplomacy of neighbourliness and a cooperative security system, cross-border governance operates as a 'preventive diplomacy' that implicates either administrators or local customary and religious chiefs. At another level, structural or permanent prevention of conflict derives from the influence of the promotion of neighbourliness among borderland communities. Effective through its patterns of cooperation, peace, neighbourliness and social integration, cross-border governance presents also some limits it would be inappropriate to lose sight of.

#### *A perfectible governmentality*

As we have already noted, the institutional framework or structure dimension of cross-border governance is man-made to some extent, or else 'informal', and institutionalized to another, that is 'formal'. This equates in its actor dimension to the pluralistic regime of its rule making, deliberative and functioning modalities. Therefore, while institutional shortcomings undoubtedly characterise such a regime of public policy or collective action (Braud 2006), they might result in operational defects.

As concerns institutional weaknesses a first one is related to the absence of a juridical framework (Faye 2006) given that actors do not think they are acting on the basis of decentralisation codes or decentralised institutions, which cannot be denied in the scarcity and wariness Senegal-Guinea Bissau borderland of State want. Even though cross-border governance owes much to local administrators, far more than local councillors, it cannot be implied that it evolves in the realm of the limping decentralisation process, and this is probably the reason why it works. This latter, it has to be remembered, is on the one hand contrary to any legal-rational legitimacy authoritatively overshadowing other legitimacies, and remains on the other an incomplete process (Gellar 1995, Fanchette 2002, Faye 2006). Consequently, a second institutional weakness is the lack of juridical capacity and financial and logistical means. For instance, since domains such as peace, defense and security are not transferred competences in local territories, it follows that no means are planned for them. That is why actors on the Senegal-Gambia borderland admit that they restrain cross-border governance to basic domains such as peace, security, forestry and commercial flows. Other domains such as schooling, sanitation and environmental issues most of the time fall at the discretion of populations and civil servants. On the Guinea Bissau-Senegal borderland, cattle rustling, farming, and markets are the basic

domains that attract much attention. This institutional weakness yields operational hindrances for cross-border governance.

These operational obstacles are of two types. First, the pluralistic regime nature of cross-border governance mingles with the vertical inequalities between actors. As a consequence, some of them are confined or restricted in their contribution. This is the case of traditional chiefs on the Senegal-Gambia borderland whose importance in local politics is at any rate understated (Tandia 2007). This factional participation is inverted on the Guinea-Bissau-Border where civil society overshadows official authorities enmeshed in their friendship politics of survival. Second, the weak capacities of local structures, notably on the Guinea-Bissau Senegal border, mingle with the monopoly of rudiments of local government by political and administrative authorities.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the meaning of borders through the nature and potential of trans-boundary communitarian initiatives, and consequently through the grassroots' regional or inter-national dynamics of self-government. This potential bore interest only when related to national and regional challenges of cross-border and grassroots governance. Given that these dynamics embrace the contours of collective action and implied looking at politics of decentralisation and State transformation, we resorted to governance as a theoretical framework. At another level, in a context where regional integration discourse and politics are oriented toward 'border areas' as a new site of political and institutional renewal of (inter)State dynamics, we thought it appropriate to build on an empirical corpus<sup>8</sup> and attempt a comparative analysis so as interrogate this paradigm that is almost established.

As a first step, this study identified cross-border governance as a new governmentality of inter-local management of borders which stand as political territories and identity scenes of much significance to State dynamics. The three modalities of cross-border action – administrative coordination, security cooperation and cultural diplomacy – engendered the discovery of the pluralistic actor dimension, the public realm and service, and the communitarian structural dimension. This latter opened the gate to the relationship between border space and identity as a framework within which the legitimacy and efficiency of cross-border governance could be appreciated.

It was shown that the legitimacy of cross-border governance stems from the meaning of borderlands, which in turn is given by localism as an identity construct that re-appropriates cross-border complementarities and differential constraints as well as intergovernmental relations of Western Senegambian States. In this respect, the extent to which cross-border governance was not a subversive governmentality opposed to States, neither in its identity nor territorial manifestations, has been analysed. On the contrary, we would like to ask if its relatively important effectiveness does not present is as an identity bridge between orphaned border communities and "weak" States, which would bring borderlands or border areas to stand as territorial girders for intergovernmentalism.

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<sup>8</sup> This paper analyses data from fieldwork during October 2007 in Gambia and August in 2009 and from field reports of the West African Border Initiative (WABI) of the Club Sahel / Afrique de l'Ouest, notably the following: *Chroniques frontalières*, 2005, n°1 (avril), 2005, n°2, (septembre), 2006, n°3, (février) and Arragain et Salliot (2006). The documents are available at <[www.afriquefrontieres.org](http://www.afriquefrontieres.org)>.

A few lessons emanate from the comparative analysis of this study while raising a few questions. First, if national differences in terms of institutional tradition and structural capacity constitute obstacles to cross-border governance as revealed on the Senegal-Guinea Bissau borderland – allusion made to the effects of political instability and lack of national integration – to what extent could cross-border governance be hindered as a potential paradigm for cross-border initiatives on regional integration? One question this throws up is to what extent decentralisation could help bridge the gap and prevent this weakening of cross-border governance by reinforcing its pluralistic regime. This leads to the second set of issues that with relevance at the level of regional politics.

The ECOWAS and the African Union have launched border initiatives in their post Cold War or post-transition renaissance agendas. While the former has opted in its 2006 memorandum for an “institutionalisation” of cross-border governmentalities, the latter is still refining its border program which is not really different from that of West Africa. It was considered that if cross-border governance is successful in diluting national identities and connect national territories and ethnic groups, attention should be given to overcoming the institutional and operational shortcomings that hamper it and yet come from State crisis. In other words, the issue is not that of revising the (inter)governmental reified centering of the State toward an (inter)Society re-centering of governance. Does this not equate to adjusting State transformation or (re)construction to cross-border governance through its two micro and macro dynamics that are decentralisation and regionalism? Will national States make room for the local covenants arrived at on border areas in West Africa? As far as the ECOWAS is concerned, will member States ratify and implement cooperatively and harmoniously the regional covenant on cross-border cooperation?

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