Excerpt from an essay on the Senegalese Alternance, December 2012

One could ask if the hopes raised by the Alternance were completely exaggerated. Indeed, it is very much to hope for a “moral revolution”. It is a lot to ask for, considering the gridlocked structures and limited flexibility due to the continuing pressure from the Structural Adjustment Programs (Diop et al. 2000, p.178).

On the other hand, the record of the realization of the hopes concerning the consolidation of citizenship is much brighter have a much higher rate of success. The Alternance can indeed be seen as an expression of the ongoing emancipation of citizens. It seems as if the sociological mutations having which caused the decline of the pdigéul were sustainable. The demand of these newly emerged citizens were disappointed, as their demand of “politics as a function of programs”, was disappointed not achieved by the political parties. In this context, the civil society has become an important actor of the political scene, taking over the control function of the Parliament in order to protect democratic achievements.

Going even beyond this further, the movement “Y'en a marre” movement proposes an entire social project. Their ambivalent relation to opposition parties nonetheless raises nonetheless the question of the impartiality of civil society and blurs the lines between civil and political society. Whether this civil society can and will operate in order to build Senegal’s post-Senghorist future, or if it will dash the democratic hopes raised by its engagement (as the liberal regime did), remains uncertain.

The mobilization against the third (or second) mandate of A. Wade and the amount of money spent for on round-table discussions and international conferences arguing for one or another side or another variant nonetheless an interesting picture of the Senegalese democracy today: the constitution seems to be incontrovertible. As analyzed in the first part of this essay, A. Wade used the fundamental law in order to achieve his personal ambitions though frequent modifications. But it seems as if this never juggled the constitution as an institution itself. The upcoming weeks will be crucial in confirming or refuting the existence of this fundamental element of a democratic system in Senegal. It is impossible to anticipate the decision of the Constitutional Council, whose five members were all designated by the President, and there may it might still be still-time for A. Wade to recall his candidature. If, however, the Council will have obliged to settle the question of the validity of his candidature, violent scenarios are possible. Would the M23 call for contestation and transgress the legal boundaries of civil society? Knowing that it would be impossible to present another candidate, would A. Wade and the PDS accept a negative decision? Eleven years after the Alternance, the Senegal is once again at a crossroads…
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