

From artist to entrepreneur: Investiture and investment of Senegalese musicians

INTRODUCTION

Reports of culture and development have long fueled regular discussions in Senegal. It is common to hear the artists, setting out, consciously or not, the President poet Leopold Sedar Senghor¹, declaring that culture is the main asset that the country can export properly. "Culture is our oil", they often pound on radio or television in speeches of self-aggrandizement. But if unanimity is made on the importance of the potential that this sector holds the conditions required to be its driving force are lacking. Paradoxes abound. Music, cornerstone of the Arts, produced a few stars whose success is only the tip of the iceberg, the bulk of the creators living in poverty. This gives special meaning to the action of the emblematic figures of Senegalese music that are doing their best to change the deal by exploring the sphere of business in that rough world.

In this study, we shall first examine the routes that lead to such advantageous positions. Then be discussed how, on a field they know very well (the world of music), these actors are coping with to assume a role with which they are unfamiliar (the economic operator). We will also dwell on remodeling the image of the artist arising from this shift. In the final section will be reviewed achievements, failures and challenges arising from these experiences.

This course, based on the observation of mutations having crossed the cultural sector during the past quarter century (1985-2010), also relies heavily on interviews and a review of the press to help to identify the dynamics in various sectors of Senegalese society.

1. From the marginal to the model

The route of the artists who are the headliners of Senegalese music let us see how the socio-economic life has undergone changes over the last three decades. The prestige of the officer, the graduate intellectual and business leader² who symbolized stability and social success have indeed eroded with the lacking of job in the market, the cyclical school crises and the development of the informal (Banegas and Warnier 2001: 5). These figures are replaced on the pedestal of the elite through other profiles that are, among others, the artist, the athlete, the trader. They see their work being sublimated. The musician is no longer the socially awkward character³ and economically unstable⁴. He broke with the image of the parasite whose euphoric benefits hide the harsh reality (Benga 2002: 297) and his occasional careless wasting

¹Leopold Sedar Senghor (1906-2001) has been the president of the Republic of Senegal. He gets his fame thanks to his writings.

²Youssou Ndour often says that his father's will was to see him finish his studies and later become a senior officer "working in an office" so, at the beginning his father did all he could to prevent him from being a musician.

³Its privileged space of show being the dancing bars, café and alcoholic drinking establishments, Music was seen by other people as a world in which alcoholism and prostitution dominated. Hence the reluctance of many parents to see their children begin a career in this domain.

⁴Music did not feed the singer. Seldom were the artists who earn well.

through lavish spending. It provides a new face from the 80s. The evolution of his message and his financial situation makes him more desirable. To better fulfill the role of opinion leader that provides its popularity. He better takes care of his image⁵.

The figurehead of this generation of rupture is Youssou Ndour⁶. The latter was quickly propelled to the front of the stage by his beautiful voice, his musical style⁷ and his devotion to his craft. After conquering the local audience⁸, he began a successful international career crowned with many honors⁹. Thus he has become the No. 1 ambassador of the Senegalese culture in the world¹⁰. The option to stay in Senegal has enabled him to maintain and consolidate his strong emotional core. His aura and influence are regularly resurfacing speculation about his likely entry into politics¹¹.

The second wave is in turn embodied by Didier Awadi¹², one of the pioneers of hip-hop in Senegal. The trigger came from Positive Black Soul he founded in 1989 with Doug Tee. The title of their first cassette, "BoulFale"¹³, released in 1992, was a great success, later became the motto of youth. PBS is the first African rap group to sign with a major company, Island Records¹⁴. The success of these pioneers clicks the trigger. We are witnessing an astonishing explosion of hip hop movement. Some crews were born throughout the country. Some of them are supported by the PBS through compilations. Parallel to the activities of the duo he formed with Doug Tee, Awadi began his solo career in 2002¹⁵. Another interesting thing is the example of Coumba Gawlo Seck¹⁶. Early into the world of music, she is sacred "Golden Voice of Senegal in 1986, during a national song contest. Her

⁵Some bands give up their partnership with cigarettes companies that were among their sponsors for the image they show does not contradict with the message they deliver.

⁶Born in 1959 in Dakar, he has begun a professional career since 1974 with the Star Band, an orchestra that performed in the most famous club in Dakar. Five years later, with some artist's friends they founded the "star of Dakar". After intern differences, he left the band and create the "super star" in 1981, band he has lead since.

⁷Youssou Ndour is one of the forerunners of Senegalese modern music also known as mbalax, which basis is the rhythm of wolof percussion.

⁸In the 90s, Youssou Ndour fans club association had the dimension of a real national movement with thousands of members.

⁹After his gold disc in 1994, he was chosen to sing the official hymn at the opening of the football world cup in France in 1998. He is elected the African singer of the century by Folk Roots magazine in 2000. He got a Grammy Award in the U.S.A. in 2005. Time Magazine grade him among the 100 most influential people of the world in 2007.

¹⁰He has been appointed ambassador of Unicef and of many other international organizations.

¹¹When he came back home with his gold disc in 1994, some youngsters among the crowd that followed him until home, shout out happily "President You [Youssou]!"

¹²Born in 1969 in Dakar, Didier Awadi has been interested in Break dance since high school. After he got the baccalaureat, he spent a year at university, and then decided to be entirely in music.

¹³"Boulfale" means in wolof (the lingua Franca of Senegal) "don't care". Through this slogan, "Positive Black Soul" calls for a self affirmation towards youngsters: not accepted to be impressed by the established order, to refuse the fate and to be confident.

¹⁴The contract was about the production of the album Salaam in 1995.

¹⁵He was prized at the contest of international France radio Discoveries in 2003.

¹⁶Born in 1972 in Tivaoune, 100Km from Dakar, Coumba Gawlo Seck is from an artist's family: his father as a police-officer is also a poet, his mother is a singer. She tried to combine studies and music till the last class of high school before she chooses the second way.

first album appears while still in high school. With the sponsorship of the French star Patrick Bruel, she integrated the circuits of international showbiz. In 1998, Coumba Gawlo Seck produced by BMG published her album *YoMalé* whose headlights title "PataPata"¹⁷ released as a single, is crown disc of gold in several European countries.

Success on the international scene and the ensuing financial comfort made the big stars financial backers. Their new status creates expectations in an industry where almost everything remains to be done. Thus, we expect from them, more than words and gestures. To be constant with the ideas they shout out, they swing into action. And by feeding back into show business income from the Western market (Laing 2009: 29), they are positioned, as the first and only investors in the field of music infrastructure by force of circumstances (Arnaud, 2006).

2. The challenge of the artist and the approach of the entrepreneur

Having realized the need to move beyond the simple framework of the orchestra and improve the environment for the creation, Youssou Ndour has gradually built an "empire." It is an inaugural act by establishing the African Society for the Promotion of Music (SAPROM) in 1985. Through this structure responsible to organize shows of the Super Star and manage the equipment (sound system and transport cars), it is a step toward professionalization by allying to himself some skills in the areas of management, accounting, etc ¹⁸.

Then, Youssou Ndour attacked another weakness of Senegalese music, by opening with royalties received from his record company, Virgin (Arnaud 2008: 111) a recording studio in 1991¹⁹. This acquisition helps to break the rule that was for many musicians to record in France. Xippi²⁰ had the advantage to work in a Senegalese atmosphere and lessen the costs. He adds another important link by establishing a manufacturing and duplication of albums. The two entities formed Xippi Inc Company Ndour interested in another part of the music chain; buy with a friend businessman, one of the most famous clubs in Dakar, Thiossane Night Club²¹. He completes the circuit with the creation of a production company, Jololi²², in 1995, after the release of the album titled *The Guide*, including the single *Seven Seconds*, he won a

¹⁷A rerun of a success of the South-african singer Myriam Makeba.

¹⁸That initiative was also a way for Youssou Ndour to take up the challenge he had at the beginning of his career. "When I began earning money, after deducting my expenses, I told myself: I am going to look for an office to show to my father that like the lawyers and bank employees, one could be musician and has its own office". Remembers him in an interview given to the magazine *Réussir* (2006, 4: 6).

¹⁹He repurchased and reinforced the first modern studio in Senegal, the Golden Baobab, which was opened by Francis Senghor in 1976, son of an ancient President of the Republic. The second studio in Dakar is Studio 2000 owned by El Hadj Ndiaye, a photographer who turn to be producer (1979).

²⁰The name of the studio means "open your eyes" in Wolof.

²¹The dancing clubs are the only space of the word's music that attracts non-professionals. In the 70s, some businessmen or politicians as Ndiouga Kébé with "the Sahel" and Adrien Senghor with "The Baobab", had tried themselves in the field, but the experiences did not last at all.

²²"Jololi" means "bell" in Wolof.

gold disc (Lahanna 2005: 119). This label dedicated to the promotion of young talent, was also a way to move towards long-term goal of YoussouNdour which was to be produced inside of Africa.

After succeeded to worldwide showbiz, the leader of Super Star is interested in the media and the sector of the technologies of information and communication which are related to musical activities in the late 90's. He sets up with two businessmen the Group Com 7, which had a radio, three newspapers and a printing company in 1998. He also initiated in 2000 a partnership with Hewlett Packard and the National Society of Telecommunications (SONATEL) Joko project which goal was to put the technologies of information and communication at the disposition of young people from disadvantaged communities, training in webmastering and telemarketing, through the introduction of internet access points. Due to some differences with his partners in Com 7, he retired in 2003 and launched his own media company, Future Media Group, today comprises a radio, a daily general information newspaper and a TV Channel.

These different companies are housed in a sort of holding called the YoussouNdour Head Office (YNHO), which replaces SAPROM in the role of the headquarter²³.

Following the example of seniors, Didier Awadi is endowed with the benefits of Postive Black Soul's contracts with Island Records, a facility which guarantees autonomy to the group for the concerts: sound system, lighting and podium. The management of this material is provided by Hyperson, a small businesses (SB). The equation of repeated attacks in Dakar that made the shows more and more risky drives him to create a security agency called Delta Force. To tackle with the lack of studios adapted to hip hop and accessible to small grants, Awadi met one by one the savings he made throughout his travels, the right elements (computer, keyboard, drum machine, software, etc.). In 2001, he settled the Studio Sankara. The effect of these investments began to produce back. The self-sufficiency that offers these structures stimulates Didier Awadi to suppress offices and stuffs installed on the terrace of his family home and he extended its field of intervention. In 2003, with the diversification of activities, become Studio Sankara a phonographic production label, advertising, broadcasting and event producer.

Gradually, Comba Gawlo Seck also built her business. She has established Dakar Rendez-Vous Music, a structure involved in her career and plan with royalties and fees collected from Pata-Pata. The first task was the opening of Djessy night club in 2000, giving the artist the opportunity to meet regularly with her audience²⁴. In the wake of this,

²³ The YNHO includes other structures of social vocation like YoussouNdour's foundation that works in education and health, and Birima that is a system of microcredit without interest destiny to the young entrepreneurs.

²⁴ However the experience was short. The night club was shut near on year of working due to an accumulation of unpaid rent.

Coumba Gawlo launched Sabar label for the production of her albums and the managing of her image and tours. She gradually expanded her business by granting herself a sound system, an editing and digital recording studio.

A review of these types of accomplishments shows that investments focused primarily on the direct needs of the artists in question guarantee them leeway and enhance their performance. Contributing to improving the environment for creation, they also benefit from other artists and participate at the same time to the creation of jobs opportunity for young people operating in various fields of activities. The artist-entrepreneurs, whose stated goal is to pull the economical music out of informal framework, handle it differently according to their background and horizon.

3. The casting and the score of the conductor

As unique or main shareholder, artists manage the leadership of the companies they founded. Youssou Ndour is Chairman of Future Media Group and Director General of YNHO, Didier Awadi, General Manager of Studio Sankara and Coumba Gawlo Seck, President-Director General of Dakar Rendez-Vous Music. But they argue, the daily managing is under the supervision of their "collaborators sufficiently responsible and competent." Ndour said, for example, be limited to present his ideas in the Board of Directors, leaving it to specialists to carry them out²⁵. Awadi, aware that there is a big difference between managing a music group and a business manager, rely entirely on the Director General and Deputy CEO²⁶. Coumba Gawlo Seck also recognizes that it is difficult to be both the boss and the artist²⁷. This emphasis on the professional circle expresses the pride of self-made men who have not done extensive studies to employ and rule managers. Youssou Ndour is used to send those who inquire about the operation of its business leaders to the relevant services with emphasis on the fact that they each have the right profile. Didier Awadi says with great confidence that the members of his administration are from the best training schools listed in Dakar²⁸ and its technicians are regularly recycled by experienced engineers. Coumba Gawlo displays the same satisfaction. Her staff, she said, consists of valuable skills in the areas of marketing, management and communication.

These collaborators were not looked for away, regardless of their profile. The family members and friends of the boss still play a leading role in the device. This is fueling speculation as much as family solidarity and loyalty in relationships are basic human values, as mixing between the personal relationship and professional responsibilities can be detrimental to the company. Youssou Ndour tries to reconcile the two sides. He relies on his family (because at

²⁵Interview in *Africa Magazine* (165) 1999: 55.

²⁶Interview with the author (April 2011, in Dakar).

²⁷Interview in *Weekend Magazine* (11) 2007: 56.

²⁸The Superior Institute of Management (ISM) and the African Institute of Management (IAM).

that time music does not allow to attract and to employ people other than artists and sound technicians) but also tries to provide them with training to enable them to shoulder their burdens. Thus, most of his brothers and sisters are facing an early showbiz life²⁹. BoubacarNdour was the first director of the recording houseJololi. He is currently the director of programs inFuturs Medias Television (TFM). Ngonendour led, in turn, XippiInc and Jololi. NdiagaNdour has served as technical director of TFM.

The hand of the family also flats on the business at Awadi's. Indeed, the second person of the company is none other than Mrs. Awadi herself³⁰. His deputy is a former classmate of Awadi³¹ who "has been there since hard times." Didier Awadihastens to add that friendship do not go before work, each of the thirty permanent staff of the structure are judged on their competence. Though among her ten employees, eight are brothers, sisters, cousins or friends, CoumbaGawlo uphold the same rigor.

Although they claim to privilege delegation of power, chiefs remain the decision takers and they are always right when it come to decide. The company reflects their style and ambitions. The configuration and operation mode of Dakar Rendez-VousMusic show that the main motivation of the promoter is less to fruitful investments than to maintain her prestige. The founder of YNHO is not obsessed with profitability; even if his wish is to see his structures become stable and independent in the long run. Above all, he seems to be driven by the desire to pay back what music had done for him at the very beginning, to assume his leadership role and to appear as a builder. The owner of Studio Sankara is not obsessed by the pursuit of profit, but is nonetheless concerned about the financial stability of the company. His motto is "Business is business," but "Businessin another way of doing things"³², that means the equitable exchange³³ with which everyone wins.

4. Businessman or philanthropist? The ambivalence of the ascent

The status of employer does not fail to rebound on the image of the artist. And in most cases, confusion is at the expense of the latter (the artist). Indeed, if the musician is almost unanimous about his talents and rigor, the businessman is, in turn, often pursued by the clamor. Wrongly or rightly, the public sees his hand behind all the actions of his companies. In 2002, when the direction of Joko signed with the mayor of Dakar, a pre-agreement on the establishment of joko clubs³⁴ in the Senegalese capital, a controversy ensued. The partnership

²⁹Ngoné had a sound engineer training at the London School of Audio Engineering. Boubacar has learned audio visual's realization in the U.S. Ndiaga was specialized in sound technique. Aby has chosen to have a career in music. Ibou has learned to handle keyboards and sound arranging.

³⁰MaguyHortalaAwadi, Deputy at Sankara Studio

³¹Moustapha Ba, Deputy.

³²Interview with the author.

³³Didier Awadi is also an active member of the world social movement, hence the title of one of his albums, "Unautre monde est possible"(Another world is possible) published in 2004.

³⁴The Joko project had stopped after the establishment of two pilot clubs.

was sealed on the eve of local government elections, the press has suspected a deal between YoussouNdour and PapeDiop, a candidate to his self-succession. The following year the controversy is more violent. Jololi is accused by many musicians it managed before to have sold video clips compilations that their contract did not mention. YoussouNdour made the headlines. This painful experience convinced him to move aside. He appoints an administrator to respond on behalf of the various structures of the holding company so that "the difference could be done between the artist and the businessman." But if this is the moment for the star to be away and to avoid such a «media lynching» dissociation is not done at all. In 2006, when The Observer newspaper edited by Future Media Group, publishes information compromising the son of the President of the Republic, relations between YoussouNdour and high state authorities degrade automatically. His television project had been delayed for two years³⁵.

The separation is also difficult at Awadi's. The entrepreneur shall support the artist who, as a precursor, is required to help the young rappers who walk in his footsteps. So that, most productions of Studio Sankara are for Awadi «social projects», that is to say without any commercial operations. In such case, the author of "Def lo xam" (Do what you got to do) whose only concern was to help, does not sign any contracts with the beneficiaries. However, this does not prevent him from being criticized by other rappers who see him as essentially a businessman and advised him to retire to devote himself exclusively to "what interests him the most," money³⁶. Because of his dual role, Awadi has to fight on both fronts: on the one hand, to hold a candle to his critics by trying to stay on top artistically and to resist against the government towards which he is very critical in his songs, placing business above any suspicion (being perfectly correct)³⁷.

Coumba is not subject to the same pressure because of the reduced size and ambitions of her business. She is more distinguished by acts of charity towards the disadvantaged (donation of medicines to hospitals, gifts to children with mental deficiencies and participation in the construction of classrooms in remote places ...) than in cultural field. The media made believe to a portion of the opinion that these actions were only for a self advertisement. She was severely criticized with Africa for Haiti³⁸, a project she conducted in Dakar with the participation of several African artists³⁹ in March 2010. The media criticized her for initiating this campaign more than for her own promotion than to create a solidarity movement for the benefit of affected populations.

³⁵TFM has been given the right to broadcast in May 2010.

³⁶These critics are often done through songs or the model of clash that means title with which the rappers use to hold their rivals up to ridicule.

³⁷"If you are harsh with the government, wait the government to be tough towards you", tells him in a humorous tone (Interview with the author).

³⁸The project aim was to organize concert and to produce a single which money would be offered to the Haitian people victim of an earthquake.

³⁹Alpha Blondy, Manu Dibango, Ismael Lo, Aïcha Koné, among others.

5. The power of the informal sector : When the *ndaanaan*⁴⁰ lose their voice

Having decided to invest in a sector dominated by the informal, the owners of the pioneer companies in the music industry must face a hostile environment. Because of the notoriety of their founders, these companies are forced to straddle the rules of administration: payment of taxes and payroll taxes (Social Security, retirement, etc.). This orthodoxy is expensive for them in a market shared with producers who fail to meet any of these obligations, having reported no paid staff or equipment to maintain. The government seems little concerned about the stabilization of the cultural sector. It does neither encourage investors, nor repress unscrupulous businessmen. This inertia sounds like an encouragement to fraud⁴¹. Counterfeit products are sold in full sight of everybody. This anarchy asphyxiates producers who can no longer sell a good number of CDs copies⁴².

The ravages of unauthorized copying have exposed the weakest link in the music industry: distribution. The album being no longer sold at the market so far, hackers have been responsible to make them available to the costumers by providing them in the street, at all intersections⁴³. The other fact that has contributed to undermining the professional production is the scanning and digitization of music. The passage to the tape in the early 2000s had already confused many actors⁴⁴. The technologies of information and communication have added to the discomfort of production companies. The proliferation of devices and various other media for storing music (hard disk, usb, phone, etc.) have most benefited from the hackers and investors⁴⁵. The speed with which changes occur, oblige all the actors to be up to date. And producers and artists having scarcely faced the shrinking of the music market began to explore seriously the track of the online sales albums and especially for downloading of ringtones' platform. It's about being imaginative or perishes, according to Ngoné Ndour⁴⁶. The Director General of Prince Arts⁴⁷ puts on diversification by creating, on the production side, other dismemberments dedicated to the show and the achievement of telefilms. Didier Awadi shares the same point of view. On the one hand he

⁴⁰Superstar in Wolof.

⁴¹Awadi claims the resignation of the Minister of the Culture for he knew his CD had been widely subjected to unauthorized reproduction the very day it was officially published, without any reaction of public force.

⁴²Most of producers have given up. The artists produce themselves and published only singles, betting on the spectacles.

⁴³In 2007, Jololi tried to develop an independent circuit and the publishing of Alsaama day album of Youssou Ndour, the aim was to put products in some shops and groceries by hiring some travelling salesmen and suggesting to the usual distributors of unauthorized CD to come and have authentic version in advantageous prices. Jololi had also set up its "mobile brigades" made of youth's groups that wandered the town to dissuade salesmen of unauthorized reproductions by pulling away their goods.

⁴⁴In the 90s, a singer like Youssou Ndour could sell till 100.000 cassettes, today, it is hard to sell the 5000. Jololi had not survived from this regime's slot. It stopped its activities in 2007.

⁴⁵The reproductions plant of cassettes Xippi Inc was simply shut.

⁴⁶Interview with the author (April 2011).

⁴⁷After Jololi was shut, Ngoné Ndour set up wither brothers Ibou and Ndiaga, Prince Arts, a more modest dimensional label. As for as she is concerned, though hard could be difficulties, it is not the time to give up, mostly for people who only know music.

invests more in the "smart materials" to ensure a competitive video production, and does not hesitate to get involved in filming commercials to give a boost to Studio Sankara's products.

These parades reveal the precariousness of companies which cause is the absence of real political support for investment. So far the government has little interest in the role of culture in GDP (Gross Domestic Product), its potential contribution to the fight against poverty and national economic development⁴⁸.

CONCLUSION

Despite all the speeches, culture is still struggling to fit into the economic fabric. The government far from creating an environment conducive to the emergence of cultural industries let the sector to the professionals. In some way, this standstill like a delegation of responsibilities obliges the most prominent actors to substitute the government. The artists realize to be transferred the mission to organize their own sector. They must somehow pay the price of fame⁴⁹ by investing in an unfavorable environment, only to give more credit to their profession, tend to perch their followers, or maintain their prestige.

Their achievements are undermined by the rapid changes shaking the world of music and especially by the crisis of disc that exists on the national and international markets. These adventures are, for example, great paradox - Youssou Ndour, who was said to be the locomotive of the music industry in the 90's, is today more associated with his Future Media Group. Almost all of his cultural enterprises went bankrupt. Artist's investors are also proven by the action of a new breed of entrepreneurs who have other kind of trajectories and references. Manufacturers and sellers of unauthorized productions and cable companies⁵⁰ are creating in the shadow legal cultural enterprises, a prosperous cunning and resourcefulness economy.

Ibrahima Wane
University of Dakar

⁴⁸The Department of Culture had sign a protocol with the National Agency of the Statistics at demography. Up to now there had never been official statistics that could allow an economic evaluation of the Culture's sector.

⁴⁹"Siiw du jammiboroom" "Fame is not all restful", a Wolof saying that many artists often use to answer back gossips they are victims.

⁵⁰These people broadcast thanks to unauthorized telecom cables programs of Television and artist productions. These operators have a wide network of subscribers in the Suburbia of Dakar.

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