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To cite this article: Rama Salla Dieng (2025) Racial capitalism and women's horticultural labour in Senegal: neo-housewifisation and the micro-politics of paternalism, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 52:1, 101-128, DOI: [10.1080/03066150.2024.2343332](https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2024.2343332)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2024.2343332>



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Published online: 02 May 2024.



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Racial capitalism and women's horticultural labour in Senegal: neo-housewifisation and the micro-politics of paternalism

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ABSTRACT

The article addresses the social relations of labour in Senegal a decade after the land rush. Based on an intersectional feminist analysis of three farms, the study found that workers' subjugation to patriarchal control in their households and workplace capitalists indicate the emergence of labour control associated with settler colonies of Africa. I argue that strategic alliances between patriarchy and racial capitalism influence the mobilisation and control of labour classes: i) through the subordination of women and younger male workers to farm management through the micropolitics of paternalism; and ii) through new spatial fixation forms of previously mobile footloose labour of women and junior workers staying close to their families for work such that they become a compliant and tied labour force. This occurs simultaneously with an urban exodus to the rural and peri-urban areas where the commercial horticultural farms are located. Class consciousness is stymied so resistance is circumscribed, taking limited, individualised forms.

KEYWORDS

Labour; paternalism; patriarchy; housewifisation; racial capitalism; social reproduction

1. Introduction

The expansion of corporate interests in Senegalese horticulture has created new forms of labour mobilisation and control, which are centred on paternalism, and signify the emergence of settler-colonial patterns in a country with no settler-colonial past. The growth of horticulture, which triggers 'land rushes', has led to a plethora of analyses focused on its promises and discontents (English 2016; Selwyn 2019). The literature also centres processes, actors, and the below-expectation creation of permanent jobs. By analysing the agrarian question of labour and capital, this article seeks to understand the dynamics of agrarian change emerging from land deals (Baird et al. 2019; Cochet 2018; Gyapong 2020; Hall, Scoones, and Tsikata 2015; Li 2011; Oliveira, McKay, and Liu 2021; Ouma 2018; Oya 2013; Torvikey 2021). While many studies have examined the governance of land

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deals and the role of the state (Wolford, Borras, and Hall 2013) as well as acquisition processes and political reactions (Benegiamo 2020; Gagné 2019; Prause 2019), this analysis contributes to the gendered differentiated impact and outcomes of land deals and agrarian change, especially on classes of labour (Baglioni 2018; Borras Jr and Franco 2012; Borras Jr and Franco 2024; Cotula 2013; Cotula et al. 2014; Cousins et al. 2018; Dieng 2017; Dieng 2019; Dieng 2022; Fairbairn 2020; Greco 2020; Hall, Scoones, and Tsikata 2015; Hall, Scoones, and Tsikata 2017; Jha et al. 2022; Jha, Chambati, and Ossome 2021; Marfurt, Haller, and Bottazzi 2024; Mezzadri 2016; Naidu and Ossome 2016; Nayak 2023; Ossome 2021; Ouma 2014; Ouma 2015; Ouma 2018; Pattenden 2018; Prügl, Reysoo, and Tsikata 2021; Scoones et al. 2013; Scoones et al. 2019; Shivji 2017; Stevano 2023; Torvikey 2021; Wolford et al. 2024). Thus, this article examines how selected private horticultural exporters in Senegal mobilise and control labour within commercial farms, village, and households, alongside cultural, religious, and colonial legacies (Bass and Sow 2006).

Based on an ethnographic comparative study of three fresh fruit and vegetable horticultural firms in two regions of northern Senegal (Saint-Louis and Louga), this article explains the importance of recentring the agrarian concept of labour in analysing outcomes of agricultural investments. I explain my theoretical combination of critical agrarian studies perspectives with feminist political economy approaches to present the selected case studies. I propose the concept of neo-housewifisation by revisiting Maria Mies concept of housewifisation to highlight how horticultural labour transforms footloose labour into sedentary labour, re-domesticating it while at the same time encouraging an urban exodus to the rural and peri-urban areas where the horticultural farms are located (Mies 1982). I analyse how corporate employers straddle the domestic and 'professional' lives of workers, using paternalism, patriarchy, racial dynamics, and seniority to mobilise and control wage labour in the household and in company towns. I do so by revisiting Andries Du Toit's concept of 'micro-politics of paternalism' and Blair Rutherford's 'domestic government' (du Rutherford 2001; Toit 1993), which explain the racial, gendered, and classed dynamics. I use the concept of neo-housewifisation to describe the extension of the on-going primitive accumulation from the household to the firm with corporate employers making the company town resemble a household. This is achieved by the mobilisation and control of junior and women workers' labour in Senegal to produce and export crops internationally for the needs of selected European countries – the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands. These local processes, associated with agricultural investment chains, contribute to the successful global restructuring of production and reproduction by virtue of care chains (Dieng 2022). Consequently, they reproduce colonial racial capitalism (Getachew 2019; Koshy et al. 2022; Kvangraven 2022; Pierre 2020; Stevano 2023). Finally, I explain how (in return) wage workers organise themselves to counter and renegotiate their subject positions vis-à-vis these capitalist enterprises, illustrating a shift from 'the weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985) to the 'weapons of the organised' (Kabeer, Milward, and Sudarshan 2013). This article is a call to recentre labour and the coloniality of global production networks in land rush analyses. This is for the purpose of decolonising agri-food systems for sovereignty by interrogating the premises of export horticulture as the novel pathway to industrialisation but also focusing on the social differentiation outcomes of on-going primitive accumulation (Dieng 2023).

By studying up (classes of capital), studying down (classes of labour), and studying through (structures of domination and reactions to them), this article contributes to

the recentring of the agrarian concept of labour. Through life-histories, semi-structured interviews, and surveys, it also debunks single accounts and narratives about the agricultural work performed by female and junior workers in rural and peri-urban areas of Senegal. By using feminist methodologies and mixed research methods, I anticipated that the research participants would be able to re-create their histories by escaping normative narratives and reclaiming agency over their own lives.

2. Bringing labour back at the centre of the land rush and agrarian change debates

Until recently, the land grab debate – often framed within the accumulation by dispossession debate – has focused primarily on the dispossession aspect and less on the reasons; these reasons being why land is being accumulated by capital, how land and labour become capital, and how these dynamics are classed, gendered, racialised and age-based.

Empirically grounded evidence and historical comparative research can help document the shifts in labour mobilisation and control following large-scale land investments. Agrarian transition debates are of relevance in Africa with the centrality of *labour over land* in accordance with Berry's suggestion (Berry 1993). Indeed, the study of wage employment in Africa has been limited by several methodological and ideological biases (Cramer et al. 2014; Oya and Pontara 2015). Nonetheless, various studies have stressed the ubiquitous presence of labour hiring – in smallholder dominated production systems – and segmentation of labour arrangements in rural Africa (Rizzo 2011; Sender, Oya, and Cramer 2006). Therefore, in re-centring labour within the concept of land grabs as on-going primitive accumulation, it is prudent to ask whether different forms of land deals and (racialised) varieties of capital mobilise the labour force differently, and with what outcomes (Hall 2013; Ince 2014; Li 2011; Oya 2013).

Previous studies confirm that rural wage work is neither new, nor was it simply a result of land deals. Land deals occurred where both agricultural wage employment and labour migration for agricultural jobs was common. Historians have surveyed types of wage employment in the history of labour evolution in Senegambia from the eighteenth through the twentieth century as well as the emergence of workers movements pre- and post-decolonisation in Africa (Barry 1997; Barry 2012; Cooper 1996; Fall 2011; Federici 2012). Studies about forms of agricultural production in the groundnut basin and in the Niayes detailed a diverse set of labour arrangements generated by small, middle, and large agrarian capital (Oya 2001; 2004). In the past decade, the literature on land rushes began to document the change in agrarian outcomes pertaining to capital and labour – especially labour regimes and social reproduction – after a long period of comprehending the nature and dynamics of land acquisitions (Edelman, Oya, and Borrás 2015; Hall 2011; Kaag and Zoomers 2014).

Against this background, Berry's 1993 theory of 'exploitation without dispossession' is particularly useful in highlighting the centrality of rural labour mobilisation. Based on her comparative research on agricultural commercialisation and cocoa farming in Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia, Berry (1993) observes that different classes of labour were mobilised by farmers. Mobilisation was achieved through networks and markets with varying degrees of labour control, which impacted the dynamics of social and rural differentiation. Her line of explanation 'centres labour in the land grab debate' (Li 2011) in line with accounts of growing pressures on land – whether commercial or not – which increases

social differentiation caused by the need for further accumulation of both land and labour (Alden Wily 2012; Anseeuw et al. 2012; Koopman 2012; Peters 2004). This theorisation of exploitation without dispossession echoes that of ‘control grabbing’ (Borras Jr et al. 2012, 402–406). Another interpretation is Harvey Nichols’ revisit of the ongoing primitive accumulation concept to suggest an interpretation that encompasses labour beyond the sole dispossession of land (Nichols 2015). Political theorist Onur Ince (2014) complements the extant theories with his proposal to analyse land grabs by re-placing primitive accumulation in the global genealogy of capitalism, one that situates the conceptual locus of political violence operative in the capitalisation of social reproduction (Dieng 2023). Ultimately, Bernstein offers another dimension of the Marxian concept of ‘peasant dispossession by differentiation’. This is driven by the market imperatives of capitalism to exploit labour, improve productivity, and cut production costs. It is defined as the ‘tendency of petty commodity producers to divide into classes of capital and labour’ (Bernstein 2010, 125).

Drawing on the literature on labour regimes and following Mackintosh’s account of the evolution of estate farming in Senegal in the 1970s, Baglioni (2015; 2018) shows that the development discourse of those decades was based on modernising large-scale farming through scientific methods of production and labour control, especially that of women workers. Social disciplining of labour was exerted via gendered repartition of tasks, jobs, and labour markets. In a nutshell, firms resorted to the spatial disciplining of labour across many sites to strengthen their social disciplining (Baglioni 2018, 121–123).

3. Feminist political economy of relations of production and reproduction

Feminist research has contributed to agrarian studies by questioning largely accepted concepts such as ‘the household’, ‘the economy’, ‘the market’, and ‘the family’, and by drawing attention to labour and its valuation within ‘the market’ and across families. Feminist scholarship has used Luxemburg’s scholarship to emphasise the centrality of ‘non-capitalist modes of production’ for capitalist growth (Dieng 2019; Luxemburg 1951).

Radical feminists critique the ways in which racial capitalist accumulation subjugates female labour and reproduction to preserve the condition of the production and reproduction of labour power:

primitive accumulation ... was not simply an accumulation and concentration of exploitable workers and capital. It was also an accumulation of differences and divisions within the working class, whereby hierarchies built upon gender, as well as ‘race’ and age, became constitutive of class rule and the formation of the modern proletariat. (Federici 2004, 63–64)

These conceptual considerations have an impact on methodology, more specifically the units and levels of analysis. This research goes beyond ‘household economics’ to analyse dynamics within, between, and betwixt households and workplaces. This re-joins Deborah Johnston’s suggestion that participation (especially of women) in wage labour cannot be analysed purely and only ‘within the framework of the “household”, but should be considered through the social, historical and cultural relations which determine relations of production’ (Johnston 1997, 219). Maureen Mackintosh, however, found it more useful to make a distinction between the domestic living unit and the farming unit (Mackintosh 1989, 28–33). Feminist sociologists such Bass and Sow (2006) have examined how Senegalese families are shaped by history, ethnicity and social change with cultural and

gendered norms as well as conjugal contracts shaped by indigenous, religious, and European colonial legacies (Bass and Sow 2006). Senegalese anthropologists such as Momar Coumba Diop (1985; 2012) and Fatou Binetou Dial (2000) have examined the evolution of both Senegalese societies and families historically and in contemporary times, as well as the impact of urbanisation and social differentiation (Dial 2000; Diop 1985; 2012).

The domestic – the sphere of reproduction – is not less important than ‘the productive’ sphere, which supposedly creates surplus value (Federici 2023; Mies 1986; Stevano 2014). A few other political economists have attempted to analyse the linkages between production and reproduction (Meillassoux 1981), but failed to analyse the roots of women’s subjugation and the nature of domestic work which prevents women’s participation in the ‘labour force’ (Katz 1983; Mackintosh 1989). Other feminist theorists, including Selma James, have also contributed to this rich theorisation which she termed ‘unwaged work’ to define the devaluation of reproductive labour before launching the International Wages for Housework Campaign (Dieng 2024; James 2012; Prescod-Roberts 1980). Lyn Ossome, furthering the work of Nigerian feminist Ifi Amadiume, has convincingly argued that analysing land in transition requires the linkage of the sexual division of labour with the cost to households and communities of undervaluing women’s roles in production/reproduction, leading to a shift from the reproduction of labour power to the reproduction of power (Ossome 2021). I make a similar argument that global agricultural investment chains overly rely on invisibilised ‘care chains’ and solidarity networks to subsidise expanded reproduction and the social reproduction of the labour force, thereby sustaining (racial) capitalism (Dieng 2022).

Feminist scholars studying agrarian change have significantly documented the nature of the ‘unpaid care economy’ and sought its recognition against the ‘commodity economy’ (Folbre 2021; Razavi 2011; Gimenez 2005). They have also theorised the notion of ‘cheap labour’, in which Tanzanian feminist – Marjorie Mbilinyi – defines cheap labour as ‘labour remunerated below the level of reproduction of labour power’ (Mbilinyi 1986, 107–108). This concept is further developed by feminists writing on resistance against extractivism (Murrey and Mollett 2023).

An influential concept in this analysis is the concept of ‘housewifisation’, which Maria Mies discusses in her book ‘The Lace Makers of Narsapur’ (Mies 1982). Maria Mies uses the concept of ‘housewifisation’ to describe the process by which women’s unpaid labour in the household is exploited and devalued by patriarchal and racial capitalist systems. It describes how in the nineteenth century Scottish lace makers taught poor Southern Indian women to make lace in their homes, only for the final product to be sold in Western markets (Europe, Australia, and the US). The industry used the labour-power of women as piece workers in the domestic sphere for free, thus enabling industry to accumulate more capital. The concept emphasises the economic contributions of women within the home, particularly in terms of reproduction and the care economy. Theorising women’s labour, Mies argues that women’s work within the household, including activities related to caregiving, maintaining the family, and reproduction, has been historically overlooked and devalued. This unpaid and often invisible labour, according to Mies, serves as a crucial foundation for the functioning of capitalist economies. The definition of women workers as housewives maintains the fictitious illusion that these women are excluded from labour markets, when they are, in fact, ‘wage labourers fully integrated into a world-market-oriented production system’ (Mies, 1982, 126). Mies recognises that

the exploitation of women's labour is influenced by various factors, including class, race, and global economic structures.

4. Research design and methods: analysing social reproduction labour, livelihoods and on-farm production

The arguments in this article are based on a multi-sited comparative ethnographic study involving corporate investors, horticultural workers, government officials, and local chiefs involved in land deals for horticultural production as well as three different companies in the Senegalese fresh fruit and vegetable sector. My research draws on critical feminist, critical agrarian political economy, and Black geography perspectives, and is based on the following sets of questions: *Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? What do they do with it?* and *What do they do to one another?* (Bernstein 2010; Dieng 2018; White et al. 2012) (Table 1).

I conducted fieldwork on the question of land rushes, labour, and capital in Senegal between 2016 and 2022 using mixed research methods, and in the UK in early 2018, focusing particularly on export fresh fruits and vegetable investments that took place between 2006 and 2012. I conducted over 200 interviews with workers and company

Table 1. Nature of respondents/research activities undertaken.

Semi-structured interviews	2017–2018	2022
Government administrative officers	18	–
Village Chiefs	48	5
International Development Officials	2	–
Rural and Peasant Movements	2	2
Workers' and Unions' Representatives	8	3
Firm 1 Workers	39	20
Non-Firm 1 Workers	19	–
Firm 2 Workers	30	20
Non-Firm 2 Workers (round 1 semi-structured interviews)	17	–
Firm 3 semi-structured interviews	17	–
Total	200	
Surveys	Total	
Firm 1 Staff Surveyed (Including 4 Managers)	68	
Firm 2 Staff Surveyed (Including 4 Managers)	83	
Firm 3 Surveyed (Including 1 Manager)	20	
Total	171	
Focus group discussions	Total	
Firm 1	3	1
Firm 2	3	1
Firm 3	2	1
Total	8	
Group interviews	Total	
Firm 1 Managers	3	1
Firm 2 Managers	2	1
Firm 3 Unionist	1	–
Total	6	
Life stories	Total	
Workers (All 3 Cases)	20+	10
Company Directors	3	2
Capitalists	25+	10

managers of the three selected firms as well as administrative/traditional leaders and government officials. From this sample, I selected 48 respondents to conduct life stories with for depth. In August–September 2022, I conducted follow-up semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and life stories with selected workers and managers of Farm 1 and Farm 2 as well as capitalist investors. Qualitative data from the respondents listed in the table below from 2016-2017 and 2022 interviews were contained in five notebooks, a laptop and two tablets. All the electronic data was saved in multiple locations. The video, photo and audio material were also organised and analysed. This article is based on the analysis of the qualitative data (Table 2).

The geographical focus of this multi-sited research is 34 villages in Saint Louis and Louga, Senegal. The other main socio-economic activities in the villages around Farm 1 and Farm 3 are reported in the table below.

For women in rural settings such as Yamane and Ngalam, these included family farming, cattle herding, selling food or milk, *gawe* collection, etc. In peri-urban or semi-rural areas around Farm 2 such as Diama and Saint-Louis, these included hairdressing, seamstressing, etc. Hardly any of the women worker respondents acknowledged unpaid work in their responses, for these are perceived as normal and carried on conforming to gendered norms. For most of these female daily and seasonal workers participating in rural labour markets, they had to take care of their social responsibilities and household chores first. Some additional jobs, although increasingly rare – such as helping to harvest vegetables (sweet potatoes and cassava mostly) at a neighbour's farm (*gasaanu* or *gasaatu*) – represent in-kind remuneration, and/or are done to demonstrate solidarity with the given neighbour or family. Such activities of community labour combine moral purpose, redistribution, and material security. Whilst they contribute to the production and reproduction of solidarity, these activities tend to disappear with the rise of new lifestyle aspirations and economic hardship, corroborating the idea that there is an increasing tension between working for a wage, working for oneself, and caring for others (Li 2014, 81) (Table 3).

I focus on three case studies for the selected farms:

1. Farm 1 is a Senegalese firm incorporated into a British/South African firm and had one operation site involving six villages. This private investor produced off-season FFVs (fresh fruit and vegetable) for export to UK. Farm 1 was set up in 2011 as a subsidiary

Table 2. Main research sites.

Region	Department	Administrative district	Commune /villages
Saint-Louis	Saint-Louis	Rao	Fass Ngom (4 villages) Gandon (5 villages)
		Ndiaye	Gnit ^a (6 villages) Diama (8 villages)
	Dagana	Mbane	Mbane (7 villages)
Louga	Kebemer	Ndande	Diokoul (4 villages)

^aOften also written 'Ngnith'.

Table 3. Glossary of gendered work in rural and peri-urban Senegal.

Mostly 'female' jobs	Mostly 'male' jobs
Family farming (mostly harvesting)	Family farming
<i>Gasaatu</i> or <i>gasaanu</i> : Taking care of family cattle	Petty commodity production
<i>Ngoos</i> : clearing of the grass	<i>Bay waricce</i> : market-gardening of crops such as aubergines, sweet potato, butternut, cucumber, chili, and peanuts
<i>Mbindaanu</i> : working as a domestic worker (mostly female migrant working in another household)	<i>Njollere</i> : travelling to sell cattle
<i>Sant</i> : working on informal contract for neighbours of family for a short period	<i>Mangi</i> : pastoralists following the cattle while they graze
<i>Gawe</i> : collection of underwater plants by women to make perfume for bedrooms	<i>Bay nawet</i> : cultivation of crops during the rainy season
<i>Sippi soow</i> : bartering milk against money or in-kind products	<i>Bay noor</i> : cultivation of crops during spring
Small-scale trading: food, shoes, perfume and other cosmetics, cloth and fabrics, underwear	<i>Bay nawet ak noor</i> : cultivating crops during both seasons
<i>Bajanu gox</i> : old women community workers visiting sick people and pregnant women	<i>Mbayum dex</i> : irrigated agriculture
Trading with no physical shop, visiting clients at home.	Driving
	Cattle-breeding
	<i>Surga</i> : Wage worker in a farm for wage, food and shelter

Source: Observation, informal conversations and interviews (2017–2022).

of the UK business established in 2010. Farm 1 began its activities in Senegal in 2011 with the installation of the farm and the construction of a canal and irrigation systems near the Lac de Guiers area. Farm 1 sources and grows radish and spring onion to produce the UK winter volume needed.

2. Farm 2 is a Senegalese firm involving French capital which operated across three different sites and involved 12 villages since 2006. This is a private investor that produced FFVs primarily for export to the UK and the Netherlands, but also for the domestic market. This firm produces fresh vegetables mainly. The cultivation of export fresh fruit and vegetable (butternut squash, chilli, sweet potato, sweet corn, green beans, and courgettes) spans from November to May. The other crops – onion, carrots, and peanuts – are produced during the wet season and sold in the local market.
3. Farm 3 is an Indian firm that produces potato for the Senegalese market. This private investor had one project under operation involving five villages and another project that was aborted during the negotiations due to accusations of 'land grab'. Farm 3 was founded in August 2008 (see Table 1).

This comparative logic holds the potential to compare and contrast the case studies around the similarities in relation to how labour is controlled, even if they used different mechanisms.

All three farms rely mostly on temporary work: daily workers constitute over 80% of workers on Farm 1 and almost 90% on Farm 3. Seasonal workers constitute the second majority of workers at Farm 1 and Farm 2, not for Farm 3. All operated with a 6-day week from Monday to Saturday. At all three farms, the majority of day and contractual workers are in the fields, the sorting chains, and in the pack house.

At Farm 3, women outnumber men in the fields and in the greenhouses. Men outnumber women at the Technique division, at the pack house, and at one of the farms. The large number of female workers in villages nearing the Senegal-Mauritania border might be explained by the dissatisfaction of most young active men with the land deal, the gendered nature of horticultural labour, and the high levels of labour

migration.¹ It is also related to the recruitment of most workers from this village as permanent/seasonal workers. The situation at Ngalam farm can be explained by the fact that the majority of neighbouring villages are *Wolof* and *Peulh* with most young men preferring to work another job than Farm 3 if it is not on a permanent contract. Most young men interviewed thought the proposed salary could not sustain the financial obligations of a household head (*killifë*), and this was more a ‘woman’s job’, demeaning casual wage jobs and relegating female workers to the field, reflecting the gendered nature of labour hiring.

5. The micropolitics of paternalism and racial capitalism in the making of fragmented classes of labour

Paternalism can be a useful conceptual framework to critically examine the set of managerial practices used by companies to mobilise, control, and discipline their labour force. South African agrarian political economist Andries du Toit (1993) analyses the micro-politics of paternalism and defines the latter as a specific way of understanding the relations between farmers and workers who are united in a much more intimate way: the farmer is in the place of the workers’ father (du Toit 1993, 8). This relationship is structured around labour, and working on a farm becomes the equivalent of quasi-kinship: the reliable worker becomes part of a family. A similar extension of the concept of paternalism is that of ‘domestic government’ coined by anthropologist Blair Rutherford to characterise, on the one hand, the rule of the (white) farmer over that of government officials in commercial farms in postcolonial Zimbabwe, and on the other hand, ‘the paternalistic relations between male workers and their families, and between farmers and their families’ (Rutherford 2001, 14).

In the Senegalese post-colony, paternalism is also shaped by race, class, nationality, age, and gender with a majority of junior men and women workers making up most of the lower-paid, unqualified, and less secure types of employment (daily and seasonal workers) and a majority of senior male workers occupying most qualified and secure types of employment in all three firms (see Table 4).

Top managers at the selected farms are white expatriates or investors of a different nationality than Senegalese, who only appreciate the heavy expectation of being the only major company in town: ‘We are the only company, and everyone expects everything from us.’²

According to the workers list provided by the company in 2017, Farm 1 had eight international workers, six of whom held leadership positions (four South Africans, one English national, and one Moroccan national in the summer of 2017) (Figure 1). At Farm 2, there were expatriates in the summer of 2017, half of whom were French. The French staff, all permanent but two, occupied the key leadership positions. Four of the nine African staff (from Comores, Cote d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Guinea, Niger, Congo, and Togo) also held senior positions. According to an interview³ with the Director of Farm 3, the company had a team of 60 permanent workers which included 25 Indian technicians who were described by the manager as ‘costly accountants’. The rest of the 35 permanent

¹To Guinea Bissau, Dakar, and other cities.

²Interview with top manager at Farm 2 in late 2016.

³On 04 July 2016.

Table 4. Labour segmentation in all three farms (according to the type of contract).

Companies	Farm 1	Farm 2	Farm 3
Total number of workers	1146	3289	1145
% Day workers	90%	82%	87%
% Male	12%	45%	–
% Female	88%	55%	–
% Seasonal workers	7%	1.6%	8%
% Male	85%	26%	–
% Female	15%	74%	–
% Permanent workers	3%	16%	5%
% Male	67%	69%	–
% Female	33%	–	–
% Total male workers	19%	–	–
% Total female workers	81%	–	–

Source: Assembled by researcher from the registers of Farm 1 and Farm 2 and an interview with Farm 3 management in 2017.

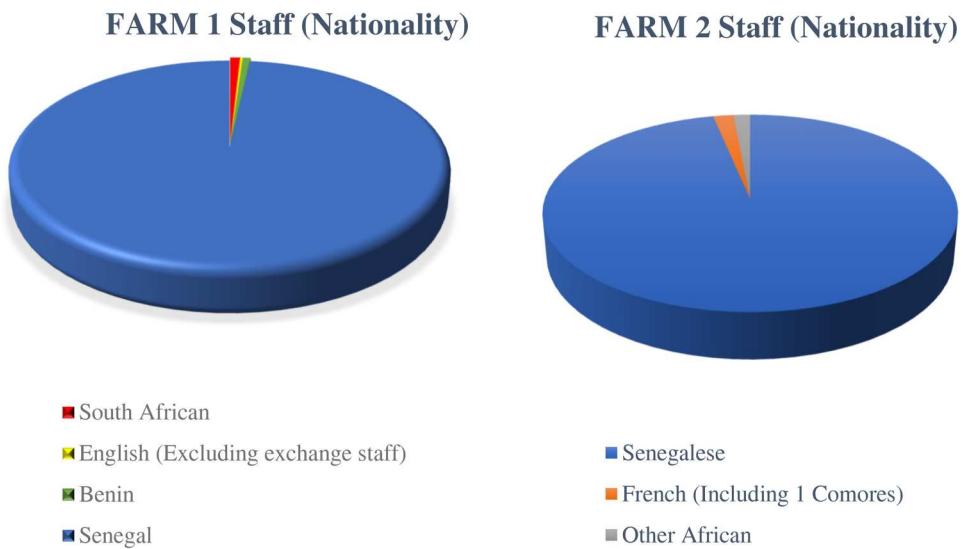


Figure 1. Racial capitalism meets paternalism: a snapshot of the small number of foreign expatriates leading teams of Senegalese workers at FARM 1 and FARM 2. Source: Researcher, from lists of workers provided by companies.

workers were Senegalese. The team also comprised 80–85 seasonal workers and 800–1000 day workers who worked four months each year.

5.1. Paternalism in labour management systems

I found that all three companies presented various traits of paternalism with Farm 1 and Farm 2 being more paternalistic, perhaps because their managers had previously worked as senior farm managers in France, Francophone Africa, and Southern Africa where paternalism was common in firms creating racialised and gendered relations of production and reproduction (du Bolt 2016; Rutherford 2001; Toit 1993). The white South African spouse of one of the two farm directors acted like a mother to her staff despite

her young age. She also used a narrative of ‘enlightenment’, talking about the ‘Christian mission to educate and assist those in need.’ On another occasion, she mentioned believing that ‘as an educator, I sacrificed my time even though it was hot and sweaty, to hear them speak English’ (Interview). This is because the wife of the white master plays a crucial role in the construction of the ‘White European farmer’ and the moral edification of the workers (Rutherford 2001). In addition, Farm 1 senior officials believed they had to help their staff ‘manage their finances’, ‘manage their diet’, ‘not follow the consumerism that TV promotes’, ‘encourage them to invest in the education of their children rather than purchasing goods’, and ‘reduce their addiction to medicines’ (SMGD2⁴). The management system was mostly domestic according to the typology by Rutherford (2001), and later Gibbon and Riisgaard (Riisgaard and Gibbon 2014, 101–102) and sometimes industrial. What does this mean in terms of hiring patterns and wage management?

5.2. Hiring patterns, wage management, and non-wage benefits

Hiring at Farm 1 and Farm 3 was mostly based on personal ties for low-paid jobs (domestic type of management) and largely impersonal, based on merit and qualifications (industrial type), for more skilled and permanent jobs. For other recruitments, the selected candidates were either outsiders or suitably trained and qualified villagers. In the case of Farm 3, the labour management system was mostly domestic as the company was born out of a partnership between two relatives. As for promotion, skills development, and apprenticeship, it was also mostly ‘domestic’ at Farm 3 and Farm 1, and ‘industrial’ at Farm 2. The first two companies based this on a seniority, trust-based promotion, and family approach rather than on formal written rules, as in Farm 2. The managers at Farm 3 were Indian.

The reference to traditional values and interplay of gender, caste, and age is particularly relevant as most small – to medium-size agricultural businesses in rural Senegal are run like families. However, race and class are also significant governing principles. A respondent reported having heard the white South African director of the farm saying to them, ‘my son will one day lead you in this farm, just as I did’ (Interview⁵). This confirms the predominance of domestic government as a way to manage labour relations. It also denotes the idea that ‘sons work with their fathers’, with the son of the white master educated to be the next leader. Kinship, familial relations, and acquaintance were more important than education and skills in the hiring pattern at Farm 3.

The paternalism of these companies (Farm 1 and Farm 2) was also illustrated by their provision of accommodation, subsidising a cook for their permanent workers, and providing free breakfast for all workers. This is not surprising as on large estates, ‘control of work itself and control of workers’ private lives, including that of their families’ are the two features of labour control (Barral 2014, 240). Since their implantation, plantation companies such as Farm 1 and Farm 3, whose main premises are in the countryside, have established a dormitory labour regime thereby providing accommodation for their workers or covering the cost of accommodation. This is justified by the imperative for the labour force to be readily available in order to be mobilised to perform their duties, but also for surveillance reasons as

⁴27 October 2017.

⁵Summer 2022.

patriarchs-employers extend their powers from the company to the household to the town, in order to control the professional and the domestic spheres of the labour force.

In the selected companies, the various payment systems in place were evidence of the various strategies used by companies to control their cash-flow, and their labourers. Some workers were paid according to piece-rates⁶, which links payment to the productivity of the worker. Instances of this occurred at Farm 1, but not at Farm 2. Each full case was paid 300 FCFA, so a day's wage depended on the number of cases produced. In this system, a very fast and productive worker could easily earn twice as much as a less productive worker. Other workers were paid a 'fixed' daily wage, although this was also performance based to a lesser extent; wages could vary according to whether minimum tasks were performed or not. Daily wages significantly varied according to the type of operation or task and the skills and seniority of the worker.

In Senegal, the minimum wage in the agricultural sector (SMAG) was FCFA 32040 (CFA 182.96 per hour).⁷ The monthly salary of day workers in all three farms ranged from 50,000 to 75,000 in the fields (for non-supervisors). Therefore, in all three farms, wages were relatively superior to the minimum wage. I found that horticultural investors/capitalists resort to using non-salary benefits as mechanisms of labour mobilisation and control, but also as a way to retain those whose work is deemed essential, mostly permanent workers in the leadership of the farms. Non-salary benefits consisted in provision of housing, transportation, catering and hygiene and safety to workers. Farm 2 took charge of the housing allowances of permanent and seasonal workers while Farm 1 provided on-site accommodation to permanent staff and allowances to seasonal workers. All firms provided transportation for their permanent and seasonal workers and often also for day workers from faraway villages. Permanent and seasonal workers were also provided breakfast (Farm 1, Farm 2, and Farm 3) and a company contribution for meals (Farm 2). Day workers, including migrant workers, were mostly responsible for their own maintenance and subsistence costs despite being the backbone of the companies in question.

6. Mobilising and engendering the 'classes of labour': urban exodus of migrant labour and neohousewifisation

Critically examining the discourses of investors and evidence from life stories and semi-structured interviews, I argue that export firms extend their paternalism to villages by making workers dependent on wages in horticulture which consequently leads female workers (on whose labour power the capitalist system's survival depends) to perceive themselves first as housewives and accessorially as workers.

6.1. Urban exodus of migrant labour

Analysing how companies straddle the public and private lives of workers can help explain the fact that the fragmentation and casualisation of horticultural workers is by design, and not by accident. The installation of commercial horticultural farms has significantly contributed to the sedentarisation of previously mobile and footloose local labour.

⁶*A la tâche.*

⁷The Senegalese Direction for labour raised it to FCFA37436 = 213,92 per hour in June 2018.

The arrival of horticultural firms has, in the last decade, attracted urban migrant workers and fixated previously highly out-migrating communities with local workers of all genders travelling to the neighbouring Mauritania, internationally or to the other secondary cities.

As clarified in previous work, most active men whose villages are in the vicinity of Farm 1 and 2 migrated to open shop in Mauritania or work as drivers or in agriculture, while younger women migrated to work as domestic workers or seamstresses. This is the case of Amsatou, now a day worker at Farm 2, who used to travel seasonally to the Senegal-Mauritania border to work as domestic help (including looking after her mother's employer's young children). Such activities performed by migrant women workers reproduce class, cast, and gender-subaltern labour relations in care chains (Dieng 2022). Another respondent living next to Farm 1 also testifies: 'before the company came in the area, our men opened shops elsewhere, left, emigrated and went back and forth. Older women worked leather and made mats, but they were hard to sell. Younger women migrated to the nearby cities to work as domestic help (mbindaan). Now most women, young and old, stay and some men as well' (Interview). Because of the above, the proverbial Senegalese expression that summarises the successful imaginaries and upward social mobility that travelling affords migrants – 'Travelling, making it, succeeding socially, and helping family, extended kin and friends' – is being replaced by another one: 'making it here without travelling', despite the resistance of junior male workers who still aspire to travel abroad.

On the other hand, there is also an urban exodus of young and skilled labour migrants to rural and peri-urban locations of commercial farms. However, the reasons for this reverse labour exodus are diverse. I asked the question, 'why did you chose to come here and work for Farm 2?' in a focus group discussion with two permanent and three seasonal female middle managers aged 24 to 39.⁸ The responses were: 'I have worked far from where I was from, so wanted to return home', 'my training is in line with experience proposed at the farm', 'I wanted to work for a company with social values while gaining some independence from my family and kin', 'I needed a job after my internship'. Despite earning more than the average workers, they seemed to be facing different professional challenges, of having their leadership and skills recognised and accepted because of their gender, age, race, and marital status. Marie recognises that 'working in the office' is more socially valued and rewarded than being 'in the fields', illustrating the social differentiation that also exists 'at the top of the ladder'. Two of them, the youngest, found it difficult to adapt to the company's culture: 'there are too many informal norms you have to adapt to that were not on the job description', or 'having to train White expatriates without being told they are your future supervisor or replacement' (FGD). Despite these challenges, they all reported having acquired new skills, though often the hard way because of patriarchy: 'Men workers doubt our capability and experience. When I gave directives, they would go to other (male, often white or foreign) more senior field supervisors who are below my paygrade, to confirm the instructions'. To counter these, they have developed strategies: 'As a woman, you have to do twice as much and work harder' (FGD).

⁸FGD (08 June 2017).

6.2. Neohousewifisation

Women (and junior men) who make up most of the labour force in horticultural export value chains are the lowest recognised actors in an unfair international division of labour. As workers, they play a crucial role in the reproduction of life and that of labour and capital. Firm managers insisted on the importance of enabling women to settle and stay close to their families, rather than travelling away for greener pastures as footloose labour as in the past. In doing so, company towns perpetuate the image of family farms giving primacy to their female workers' roles as *housewives*. This proximity of work accounts for the reduction of '*noorani*' – the seasonal migration to nearby cities which was dominant before the arrival of export horticultural firms – because why migrate when labour is at hand, 'at the village's heel'; as per the wolof expression 'Si sa wee wu tank' (interviews⁹) (Table 5).

The 'neo-housewifisation' of women workers in the households to be closer to the workplace functions similarly to urban exodus in the villages near the company town, working in the interest of private capital by encouraging women to stay close to their families, such that they become a compliant and tied labour force, rather than migrating. This is illustrated by an interview (SW12)¹⁰ with a 24-year-old seasonal Farm 2 worker sorting potatoes and butternuts. She 'dropped out' of secondary school in 2013 because she became pregnant after marriage. She was obliged to find a job because her husband had a serious condition and couldn't work, and she lived with her son and husband's family. She started as a dayworker in another horticultural farm in 2015, then at Farm 2 as a dayworker. While the job allowed her to cover her and her son's expenses, help her husband and her own parents, she claimed it was still difficult for her to make ends meet. She was not part of any rotating savings group or *tontine* and could not save any money. This illustrates how despite being a worker and breadwinner for her family, she still identified as a *housewife*, embedded in a complex set of redistributive social relations as she became dependent on wage labour.

Women's work is also shaped by dominant gender and cultural norms, defining certain aspects of their social womanhood – which depends on them being perceived as 'good' women or mothers serving the male head of household (*borom kër*) or master of the food (*borom njël*). This is summed up by popular expressions of '*mën sa kër*', '*jonge*', and '*Mokk pooj*', all referring to women's art of pleasing and catering to the emotional and sexual needs of one's husband and family. Based on their patriarchal conjugal contract, women are socially praised and empowered as 'good women' or blamed and socially 'disempowered' as 'bad women' or 'bitches' (Mies 1982, 120–125; Perry 2005, 217). In addition, women do not always equate these relations to their subjugation by/to men as labour effort in terms of being part of a natural order to ensure adequate food production and basic survival of their dependents and themselves.

Within households, expenses are increasingly shared, adding to women's bargaining power. This shift occurs despite the traditional gendered division of labour, and in spite of the social acceptance of men's responsibility for household provisioning. Indeed, traditional gendered norms and roles justified the economic pressure on men to be 'male breadwinners', responsible for covering the daily expenses of the family or *dépense*,

⁹September 2022.

¹⁰20 June 2016.

Table 5. Gendered dynamics of farm labour and the reproduction of patriarchy within commercial farms: Snapshot total day workers at FARM 1 by village in summer 2017.

Village	Workers/team	Gender	Supervisor
Yamane	104	All Women	Male Supervisor
Diagane	41	All Women	Male Supervisor
Ndeymané	52	All Women	Male Supervisor
Maka	49	All Women	Male Supervisor
Ngonake	36	All Women	Male Supervisor
Tidiele Toucouleur	53	All Women	Male Supervisor
Thiarene	41	All Women	Male Supervisor
Keur Aly Sow	51	All Women	Male Supervisor
Yalata	45	All Women	Male Supervisor
Ndogal	24	All Women	Male Supervisor
Golom	43	All Women	Male Supervisor
keur Mangone	16	All Women	Male Supervisor
Dental	23	All Women	Male Supervisor
Diokhor	7	All Women	Male Supervisor
Ndeppy	40	All Women	Male Supervisor
Penene	62	All Women	Male Supervisor
Pre-Pack	35	All Women	Male Supervisor
Cleaning	14	All Women	Male Supervisor
Continental	76	All Women	Male Supervisor
Radish Line	17	All men	Male Supervisor
Trimmers	72	All men	Male Supervisor
Stacking	10	All men	Male Supervisor
Weeding	19	All men	Male Supervisor
Odabe Al Wathiam	–	–	Male Supervisor
Khondental	–	–	Male Supervisor
Total Men	120		
Total Women	909		
Total Day Workers	1031		

Source: Assembled by researcher from workers' registers provided by company management.

while women were socially defined as housewives, rather than recognised as the workers that they are. This shift in roles led men to encourage and approve of women's participation in rural wage labour either at Farm 2 or Farm 1 or on the fields of the male members of their families. In addition, women were also *breadwinners* who took charge of expenses that were previously that of the male breadwinner, leading them to buy food for their family or buy their own household equipment (like furniture or fridges) which are a symbol of emancipation and higher-class status. A 23-year-old Farm 2 worker from Taba Ahmedtou, near Diama, confirmed this:

Before Farm 2, I was staying at home, penniless, waiting for my husband who lives in Dakar to send me money. And I could not ask my aunt whom I stay with. Now even if he does not send me money, I cover my own expenses. When he was marrying me, he did not want me to work, but now that I am helping him, he cannot tell me anything. (Interview SW18, 19/06/2017)

This increase in women's bargaining power due to their 'perceived contribution' partially confirms the empowerment and poverty reduction potential of employment in horticulture (Doss 2013; Kabeer 1997; Maertens and Swinnen 2012). Yet, this might also reflect distress participation in wage employment as studies have shown, explaining why women accept lower wages in off-farm employment: 'where the income potential of their own production is low, where the income generating opportunities off farm are few, or give low returns to labour, and where there is urgent need' (Whitehead and Kabeer 2001, 16).

This tension between the empowering potential of work and its alienating dimensions has been central to the concept of 'housewifisation'. Employers, the new paternalistic father figures, deliberately use neo-housewifisation, not to exclude women from wage work, but to control their labour power better both socially, spatially, and culturally through shared values and social gender norms. In doing so, capitalist patriarchies transpose the values of the family to that of the firm – 'the second family' – through paternalist practices, which are built on values of 'trust' and 'co-development'.

In addition, Farm 1 and Farm 2 follow a common pattern in export horticultural production: that of perceiving female workers as more docile, more conscientious, and with 'nimble fingers' (Elson and Pearson 1981, 93). During a focus-group discussion (FGD) with five of Farm 2's female mid-level managers aged between 24 and 39, they reported having heard their company senior managers say that 'women have a rigor and honesty that men don't have'. As argued by Elson and Pearson, the process through which women acquire more dexterity and docility is not natural but the result of training, which results in the subordination of women to capitalist patriarchies.

Capitalist-patriarchy pretends to concentrate its efforts on 'leaving no one behind' as per the new development zeitgeist of 'inclusivity'. The problem, I argue here, is no women is being excluded from labour as in nineteenth century Scotland or in the Indian society of Narsapur in Andhra Pradesh which Maria Mies describes. Rather the problem lies in the ways in which racial capitalism includes them or rather 'incorporates' them (Hall 2011; Hickey and du Toit 2007) and exploits their labour without formally dispossessing them, while not ascribing the correct *value* to their labour. This value would be, at least, equivalent to the price at which the product of their labour is sold in supermarkets like Tesco or Waitrose. Where Mies described housewifisation as being that of domestic labour for subsistence and reproduction of the household, I describe neo-housewifisation as the company town performing the housework for global value chains by mobilising and controlling junior and women workers' labour in Senegal in order to produce and export crops internationally for the needs of European countries – in this case, the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands. This reflects the ways in which capitalist-patriarchy extends its paternalism to villages making workers dependent on wages in the horticultural commodity chain, and leading female workers (on whose labour power the capitalist system's survival depends) to perceive themselves first as housewives and accessorially as workers. This is especially the case around Farm 1 and Farm 3, which are more rural than the three sites of Farm 2 (more semi-rural/ peri-urban) where women workers are more autonomous. In this sense, these women who used to be footloose labour, are now more sedentary and settled, leading to a more increased domestication than previously. These local processes of neo-housewifisation, domestic government, and rural exodus, established by agricultural investment chains contribute to the global restructuring of production and reproduction which prospers thanks to women's work and care chains while exacerbating social differentiation at the bottom of the value chain.

6.3. Dilemmas in women's work, patriarchal (conjugal) contracts and class consciousness

Participation in labour markets and domestic labour is shaped by complex social relations. Most women interviewed highlighted that working hours at horticultural farms are

incompatible with their domestic duties. This interview with a 34-year-old married woman ascertains, 'If you are a single woman, it can work. My husband refused to let me start early. In addition, I did not have anyone to help me with the kids. But once they are old enough, I will return to work at Farm 1'.¹¹ A 27-year-old former worker at Farm 1 said that her husband did not like her working hours, but he let her work because she interrupted her studies for him. When I met with her four months later, she was pregnant and had stopped working at Farm 1 (DW 13).¹²

Even the language used suggested working outside was still not socially accepted: 'I help on my husband's farm, but I also 'steal time'¹³ to work at the company a few days' (Interview 24¹⁴, Farm 1 worker). Another female Farm 1 worker told me in a resigned tone, 'But what can we do? One with family responsibilities cannot complain about her situation' (Interview DW1¹⁵). This illustrates the tension between working for wages and taking part in 'family labour' or helping neighbours as used to be the case in the Saloum and the Gambia. Indeed, collective groups of workers sometimes called '*santaane*' were set up to provide farming labour for other group members without salary, though food and drinks were provided. This tension between profit-making or caring for others causes great frustrations and has been well-described in other contexts.

My interviews with their male family members also suggest they were not very happy with the working hours, and some suggested it did not reduce their expenses: 'I still give her 250 FCFA for breakfast and 250 FCFA for the tea'.¹⁶ Even the Farm 2 night bus driver confirmed issues of trust between husbands and wives due to the working hours as he testifies:

When we wanted to change the organization of work to 3-11pm, it was very difficult, and we had to raise the awareness of husbands. Similarly, for the night harvest shift starting at 3am, we have to collect and bring back everyone to work for safety and because of the late working hours. I was told by the leadership to wait until the head of the family had confirmed that the woman has returned. (Interview SW21, 16/06/2017)

This illustrates how paternalist companies also complied with patriarchal and seniority rules in order, once again, to not jeopardise their housewives-workers labour participation. In most cases, companies also invested in strategies to communicate with the male and senior family members of workers, and took care of the transportation of their workers, which contributed to creating narratives about horticultural wage work as being 'women's work', in addition to the mainstream trope about women's 'nimble fingers' (Elson and Pearson 1981).

Female workers also seek help from relatives or neighbours to be able to participate in wage labour as illustrated by the case of the 29-year-old divorced female worker who resorted to paying a family member to look after her daughter so she could work at the farm (Interview DW6).¹⁷ Consequently, other women are increasingly involved in

¹¹Conversation with a Farm 1 former worker 22/05/2017.

¹²23 July 2017.

¹³Sacc.

¹⁴28 October 2017.

¹⁵02 May 2017 'Borom njaboot xamuli jambatt'.

¹⁶27 August 2020. *Ataya*, the local tea is very respected in Waalo and women, even when they worked, needed to be home in time to prepare tea for their husband and his friends.

¹⁷10 May 2017.

domestic chores, as well as caring for husbands and older men, showing how women's social reproduction activities still shape their participation in the labour market in these areas. This substantiates previous studies, suggesting that in order to combine wage and domestic labour, women reorganise the burden of domestic labour by sharing it with other (mostly female) family members including daughters or co-wives or neighbours. Again, this illustrates that women and children bear the brunt of the absence of public services of childcare. Despite the supposed existence of 41 publicly funded *Cases des tous-petits*¹⁸ as of 2018, the state-funded early childhood programme in Saint-Louis (ANSD 2018, 28), there were none in the areas of research.¹⁹ Only Farm 1's private nursery existed around Yamane and incorporated just a few children from the village (25 on the day I visited). In the areas next to Farm 2, there were far more private nurseries²⁰ as it was less rural than Gnith and Mbane.

In summary, neohousewifisation and domestic government isolate individual workers while jeopardising prospects of transformation of class-in-itself to class-for-itself among working women. Because of the increased flexibilisation of their labour at the bottom of the selected companies' organograms', daily and seasonal women workers' role as the prime labour force driving both local and global horticultural value chains and the backbone of the household economy is invisibilised. It is through this double process of neohousewifisation and invisibilisation that these women workers become cheaper labour: 'labour which is remunerated below the level of reproduction of labour power (Mbilinyi 1986, 107–108). This is, in my analysis, what holds together the exploitation of fragmented classes of women labourers by classes of capital in local horticultural value chains, making them an integral part of on-going primitive accumulation.

7. Un-disciplining workers, troubling the domestic government of the 'corporate family': agency and the weapons of the organised

The disciplining of women workers is nothing new in Senegal (Baglioni 2018; Mackintosh 1989). Female wage workers are asked to conform to paternalistic rules in the workplace: 'do not sit down', 'do not talk', 'the way you tied the onion is not good, re-do it' (direct observation during fieldwork). Agricultural companies create standards and rules for the 'good' female worker the same way the patriarchal conjugal contract asks them to humble themselves. With their allegedly *nimble fingers*, female workers are asked to deliver 'fresh' against a wage.

Despite all this disciplining and control, women and junior men subjected to capitalist-patriarchy and seniority rules find ways to renegotiate their working hours/conditions whenever possible by exercising their agency. Observation and total immersion allowed me to grasp how female workers would deploy an arsenal of strategies to trouble the corporate 'domestic government' and counter their rigid disciplining by resisting as illustrated in the following examples. Some young mothers who were not allowed to bring their breastfeeding baby to the fields, as young children were not allowed in the

¹⁸These were launched in 2000 and were supposed to welcome 0–6 years.

¹⁹The same study distinguishes the *Cases des tous-petits* with other publicly funded childcare programmes, the number of which was 0 in 2015 against 52 private ones (ANSD 2015, 29).

²⁰For instance, there was the nursery of the University Gaston Berger (for staff and students), where I was able to leave my child during fieldwork as I was affiliated with one of the University's research centres.

farms, would either go home during the break or have a family member bring their child to the company gate to be fed. Furthermore, some female workers, especially those in conjugal monogamous relations and young mothers, began shaping their work hours to accommodate their productive and social reproductive duties. This was especially the case if it was their turn to prepare the family meal (*njël*). They would invariably go missing during their break which led the management at Farm 1 to comment that ‘workers lack the basic notions of the culture of enterprise’ (Interview SMP2²¹). Male heads of household, on the other hand, complained that women were less and less careful to prepare meals in time as the working hours of the company took the priority over the temporality of household practices. Similarly, the village became a repository for the older and dependent young family members who could not go to work.

As a response, supervisors became more flexible to keep their labour force, yet still pretending these were ‘exceptional favours’ to workers. This highlights the use of corporate paternalism and patriarchies to control, discipline, and punish labour through salary cuts or temporary suspensions from the farm. The above examples confirm the centrality of negotiability in labour relations, especially when workers resort to subtle and hidden *weapons of the weak* to force the management to officially accommodate their demands (Scott 1985). The companies accommodated such requests while still attempting to perform they are in control. During my second field visit in 2022, there was an increased formalisation of labour representatives at all three farms compared with my first visit in 2016–2017.

The three companies have different approaches to and experiences with workers’ representation and freedom of association. Farm 1 and Farm 2 had workers’ committees. Farm 3 had self-appointed representatives who were assisted by a workers’ union as of November 2017. In general, Farm 1 and Farm 2 seemed to have encouraged firm workers’ committees rather than official union representatives because managers preferred to solve issues internally. At Farm 2, the delegates were free to meet amongst themselves and had a dedicated office allocated to them by the director whom they met with once every month.²² Less than 5% of the interviewed, the majority of whom were experiencing tension with their (mostly White) supervisors, were reluctant to voice their issues to the delegates and opted for meeting the CEO himself to voice their grievances. Both staff representatives²³ interviewed at Farm 2 testified to the ‘cordial relations between the direction and the workers in general as well as the direction and the staff representatives in particular’ (Focus Group Discussion). For these staff, Farm 2 did not need a union yet since the management had always been very attentive to their requests and eager to have an ongoing dialogue.

Farm 1 had tried many times to interfere with the elections by dismissing the list submitted by the workers, pretending that some candidates were too political or that the designated female candidates could neither read nor speak French and replacing them with others that the director got on well with. Many suggested that the main problem

²¹26 October 2017.

²²Most educated staff members know who their delegates are and almost all of them trusted them to represent them well, and/or have seen their issues addressed when voiced by them.

²³One of them (local) confided experiencing growing tensions with the Senegalese head of his direction during our first interview testified during the second interview the problem was solved and he was transferred to another division. Another (local) staff who was experiencing tensions with a French supervisor was thinking of leaving the farm as the issue was not solved.

with the candidates was their personal affiliations to some key social influencers: the wife of a religious leader who is very critical of Farm 1, the wife of the mayor who gave the land, the son and nephew of two of the village chiefs. As for the criteria of French-language proficiency, most of the day/workers or seasonal staff having a low level of French school education meant candidates would mostly originate from the central administration and not the majority of supposedly 'less educated' day workers. Certainly, there were other constraints on day workers if representation required a minimum time in the company or minimum contract terms, which is the case in some legislations.²⁴ With regards to Farm 3, it did not respect the Senegalese Labour law, according to a union meeting I attended in the last trimester of 2017. Those meetings were held in the *Sous-prefect's* offices. According to the workers' representatives (elected by the staff and yet to be recognised as such through the affiliation to a union), the areas of concern were hygiene and security, medical cover, salary as well as gender equality.

This situation reflects the diversity of practices and experiences in relation to freedom of association depending on the type of certification that export horticultural farms held, the 'visibility' of their company, and subsequent relationships with the labour authorities. Farm 3, for instance, operated more to the standards of a local company.

8. Conclusion

The main objective of this article was to explain some agrarian transformations to the social relations of labour over a decade after land deals for commercial horticultural farms were signed and companies started their operations in rural and peri-urban Senegal. This article centres labour and its relation with capital in the land rush debate (Li 2011; Oya 2013). The evidence presented highlighted the ways in which neoliberal capitalists straddled the private and working lives of women workers to their advantage, thereby bringing to the fore a central contradiction between the emancipatory and alienating dimensions of women's participation in horticultural labour. This article demonstrated how the micropolitics of paternalism (du Toit 1993) buttressed the strategic complicities between formal (wage payment, recruitment) and informal labour management systems (patriarchal, paternalistic and seniority norms). This is done through the domestic government (Rutherford 2001) of horticultural farms based on collusions between paternalism and patriarchy which eventually restructure production and reproduction locally and globally.

In considering workers first and foremost as 'housewives' to pay them minimum wages while also benefiting from the reserve of labourers who migrated from urban areas, the selected commercial farms undermined female workers' class consciousness and minimised their power to organise from a *class in itself* to a *class for itself*. In addition, company managements were keen on solving labour problems 'internally' rather than with trade unions, so as to keep control over women workers and curb their potential resistance. Essential parts of corporate strategy such as formal and informal labour management systems enable a process of neo-housewifisation to fixate

²⁴Yet the day workers are not always less educated, depending on the geographical area they originate from and family background. If Farm 1's certainly are, Farm 2's majority are mainly made of graduate students or at least A Level-holders who were coming to Farm 2 while waiting for better professional opportunities.

previously mobile and footloose labour through the collusion of the micropolitics of paternalism, patriarchy, and racial capitalism. This 'neo-housewifisation' serves the interest of private capital by encouraging them to stay close to their families rather than migrating as they used to, such that they become a compliant and tied labour force. Because of the increased flexibilisation and casualisation of their labour, women horticultural workers' role as the prime labour force driving both local and global horticulture value chains (while still performing essential work in households and in the community) is *invisibilised* through the naturalisation of their work in horticultural farms and at home. As a result, this neo-housewifisation obscures the real extent of women (and junior men) workers' contribution to capitalist social reproduction (Mies 1982).

I argue that this transposes the logic of the 'domestic economy' to that of the market: firms have re-invented themselves as a new 'family' along cultural, religious, and colonial legacies. In this corporate familial reconfiguration, racial capital-patriarchies mobilise and control wage labour in order to reproduce labour markets while depreciating the value of labour with the fallacious objective to 'leave no-one behind'. Globalisation and the racial capitalist outsource 'fresh' by extending its domain from the household to the farm with corporate employers making the company town resemble a household. This is done through mobilising and controlling junior and women workers' labour in Senegal in order to produce and export crops internationally for the needs of the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands, while reproducing colonial logics of exports. These international agricultural investment chains prosper thanks to the social reproduction of labour power (Ossome 2021). They also shape the gender, class, and race of power hierarchies and therefore contribute to the global restructuring of production and reproduction as a form of neocolonial extractivism and imperialism (Getachew 2019; Koshy et al. 2022; Kvangraven 2022; Pierre 2020; Stevano 2023). Finally, I explain how, in return, wage workers exercise their agency by using a diverse repertoire of resistance and organising themselves to defend their rights to counter and renegotiate their racialised and gendered subject positions vis-à-vis these capitalist enterprises illustrating a shift from 'the weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985) to the 'weapons of the organised' (Kabeer, Milward, and Sudarshan 2013).

It is crucial, therefore, to examine the decolonisation of agri-food systems (Dieng 2023) by rethinking the legacies of colonial, racial, and patriarchal production systems that are based on the extraversion of the Senegalese economy. While export horticulture and agro-processing have been presented as a promising pathway for industrialisation in a context of jobless growth, the question is how to make these rural labour markets fairer to women and junior male workers at the bottom of global production networks. To do this, it is urgent to make sense of the many ways in which workers exercise their agency by resisting (as they do) their labour control through unionisation, sharing of experiences, and renegotiating their working conditions. This 'making sense' is especially urgent within the context of emergence of forms of labour control usually associated with settler colonies of Africa. Above and beyond, reimagining sovereign futures and breaking the vicious cycle of producing more and exporting further is essential, after over 500 years of extractivism, to make sense of why we produce what we produce, how, and who benefits the most from it.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers and the editors of the Journal of Peasant Studies in particular Professor Ruth Hall for their substantial and generous comments on this article which contributed to make it better, and Professor Jacobo Grajales and Jaqueline Morse. I also wish to thank Professor Carlos Oya for his rich guidance and comments as well as Drs Leandro-Vergara Camus and Matteo Rizzo, all at SOAS. This paper has also greatly benefitted from the initial reviews of Professor Shapan Adnan and the reviewers of the 2020 JPS Writeshop in Critical Agrarian Studies and Scholar-Activism which took place online during the pandemic. Thanks to Hazel Gray for forwarding me the writeshop call and encouraging me to apply. The archive produced by feminist and decolonial scholar-activists and theorists of social reproduction has enriched this work, so thank to all the inspirational feminists for their ground-breaking work. Finally, I am thankful to the Mo Ibrahim Foundation for Governance and Development in Africa for funding the first fieldwork for this research (2016-17) and the Centre of African Studies Edinburgh for funding the second leg of this research. I am grateful to the Institute of Advanced studies of Saint-Louis, Senegal, and the Institute of Advanced Studies of Edinburgh for welcoming me during my sabbatical research in 2022.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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