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**Fragile convivialities: everyday  
living together in two stateless  
but diverse regions, Catalonia and  
Casamance**

Tilman Heil

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## **Abstract**

Numerous immigrants from Casamance, the southern region of Senegal, currently dwell in Catalonia, the northeast of Spain. Based on anthropological fieldwork in these two sites, I address the regional discourses and practices of conviviality, the process of living together in a shared locality. This parallels and supplements other aspects of Senegalese migrations such as a strong associational life, trading and religious networks, transnational migration patterns, and an economic motivation for migration.

Many of the Casamançais immigrants share a discourse of a specific Casamançais way of *cohabitation* between ethnicities and religions. The local European counterpart is the Catalan model of social integration called *convivència*. My analysis shows, first, that the way Casamançais migrants experience and live conviviality in Catalonia is not fully equivalent to practices and discourses in Casamance. Second, apart from regional references, national and global ones are also meaningful for understanding everyday life. Nonetheless, the regional experience in the Casamance offers at least three important reference points: religious *cohabitation*, multilingualism, and an awareness of internal cultural diversity. They continue to be a relevant framework for contextualising everyday life in Catalonia.

## **Keywords**

conviviality, religious and ethnic diversity, everyday life, neighbourhood, living with difference, Casamance, Catalonia, Senegal, Spain

## **Author**

Tilmann Heil is a DPhil candidate in Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford and a doctoral research fellow at the Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen, Germany

Email: [tilmann.heil@linacre.ox.ac.uk](mailto:tilmann.heil@linacre.ox.ac.uk)

## Introduction

**TH:** Est-ce que tu penses que la cohabitation entre les ethnies est quelque chose spécifique pour la Casamance, ou est-ce que c'est pour tout le Sénégal la même chose?

**Souleymane Biaye:** 'hooooooooooooo c difficile de repondre. g besoin d reflechir'<sup>1</sup>  
(facebook chat, 10/2011)

Numerous immigrants from Casamance, the southern region of Senegal, currently dwell in Catalonia, in the northeast of Spain. Based on anthropological fieldwork in these two sites, I address the discourses<sup>2</sup> of conviviality, the fragile process of living together in a shared locality. This focus makes it relevant to ask how my informants frame the discourses and what they use as reference points. While Souleymane Biaye implied in our recent discussion on Facebook that there was no easy answer to this, I argue that regarding conviviality, the regional perspective – Casamance and Catalonia, respectively – is of particular importance. In the discourses used by my subjects, some aspects of the concept of conviviality were shared with the larger nation-state or broader ways of identification such as Muslim or black, and others were specific to a particular ethnic group or experience in a certain village or town. Nonetheless, the region is a reoccurring meaningful reference point for them. I follow the emic discourse of the Casamançais both at home and abroad who pronounce a specific Casamançais experience of living together in an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous region. In this paper, I focus on Catalonia, yet Casamance is the backdrop for the migrants' perspective, both conceptually and comparatively.

Catalan politics claims a specific approach for its experience of immigration. Several aspects support a regional claim. First, social integration in Spain falls under the authority of the autonomous regions, of which Catalonia is one. Second, Catalans proudly see the Catalan culture, which is the basis for the region's independence struggles, as mixed and cosmopolitan, facilitating the inclusion of foreigners. Third, Catalonia is one of the regions that experienced a lot of immigration, internal at first, followed by the arrival of international migrants, which prompted the Catalan government to be the forerunner regarding social integration policies in Spain (Aja and Arango 2006). Politically, immigration and integration concerns manifested as an integral part of the Catalan national project in the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy of 2006 (Generalitat de Catalunya 2006: art. 138), a development supported by intellectual nationalist discourses (Zapata-Barrero 2009). 'Un pacte per

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<sup>1</sup> French: TH: 'Is the cohabitation between the ethnic groups something specific to Casamance or is it the same for all of Senegal?' SB: 'Ohhhh, this is difficult [to answer]. I need to think about it.'

<sup>2</sup> When I refer to discourses, I see them along the lines of Gerd Baumann's work in Southall on dominant and demotic discourses (1996).

viure junts i juntes. Pacte Nacional per a la Immigració<sup>3</sup>, which followed the Statute in 2009, formulated a regional policy on migration and integration transcending approaches and competencies in other Spanish regions. Based on these facts, one can assume that Catalonia would be a significant reference point for concerns and efforts of living together, and indeed, it featured as an important element in the discussions of Casamançais migrants.

In Casamance, I was most successful at hearing and learning about ways of living together when I used the French key word *cohabitation*. It is not all-encompassing, but shares the discursive field of ways of living with difference with related concepts and key words such as the *dialogue islamo-chrétien* initiated by the Senegalese government, neighbourliness (*voisinage*), *teranga*, and further related terms pronounced in other local languages. *Teranga* I will deal with in the last part of this article as a reference specifically to the Senegalese national identity. The other concepts, however, are specific to Casamance for some Casamançais, whereas others see them as characteristic for the sub-region, or even for all of Africa. Concerning the transnational social field of migration to Europe, spanning Casamance and Catalonia, I argue, however, that the *cohabitation* discourse becomes a regionally specific lens to understanding how Casamançais relate to the fragile process of living with difference, both in Catalonia and Casamance. Thus, the process of conviviality is seen in a different light when its regionally specific aspects are taken into account. It sets it apart from an analysis that starts with a national or ethnic framework.

In Catalonia, *convivència* is key to the emic discourses about living together in a diverse society. In a campaign in 2009 for the current 'Pacte Nacional per a la Immigració', *convivència* was the key term used in the slogan 'Som Catalunya. País de convivència': 'We are Catalonia. Land of *convivència*.' Yet, the policy discourses and papers also speak of interculturalism, social cohesion, pluralism, incorporation, accommodation, and more (Generalitat de Catalunya 2009, 2010, cf. Zapata-Barrero 2009). On the ground, however, people speak of *convivència*. For some, an important historical reference is Andalusia, in which Jews, Muslims, and Christians resided simultaneously during the middle ages (Suárez-Navaz 2004: 191f), yet today Catalans and Casamançais who live in Catalonia use it to refer to the questions of today's living together in the locality. Frequently, Casamançais even use the Spanish / Catalan term to introduce relevant discourses and practices while speaking French.

In this paper I engage with the question of how the regionally specific experiences of living together in culturally or religiously diverse regions cast light on conviviality, the fragile process of living with difference. Rather than doing a study of transnational migration, I engage with a regional comparison that aims to understand specific practices and processes that are part of the lived experience in the sending and receiving locality. In the following, I will first introduce the case of Casamance and the Casamançais in Catalonia. Then I will engage with the concepts and discourses of

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<sup>3</sup> English translation: 'Agreement to live together. National Agreement on Immigration.'

conviviality in both locations. In the third section, I challenge the regionally specific discourse of conviviality using experiences and discourses that are more widely shared among immigrants in Catalonia. I nevertheless conclude that conviviality offers a unique focus on discourses that inform the social practices of a group of migrants shaped by its members' regional origin and the location of their destination, yet also negotiated within the more general context of migration.

### **Diversity in Catalonia and Casamance**

Increased immigration from West Africa to Europe links both Casamance and Catalonia. Spain has been an immigration country for the last three decades, with the numbers of immigrants rising sharply since the beginning of the new millennium. In 2010 immigrants comprised over 14 per cent of the population (Instituto Nacional De Estadística 2011). Within Spain, Catalonia is a primary destination for immigrants and over 1.3 million foreigners currently live here (17.5 per cent of the population). Although the majority of migrants tend to come from North Africa and South America, the number of migrants from Senegal is growing; Casamançais migrants concentrate in certain areas of Catalonia, such as the Maresme and Mataró. Previous studies have mostly subsumed the Casamançais under the Senegambian category used to refer to the equally large shares of Senegalese and Gambian migrants (Kaplan Marcusán 1998, 2007, 2003; Sow 2004, 2005)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> There are numerous links of Casamançais migrants to Gambian ones due to a shared ethnicity. Gambians are clustered in Catalonia (over 14,000 of the 19,000 in Spain), and thus I suggest that many of the approximately 18,500 of the 60,000 Senegalese in Catalonia are Casamançais (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2011). Also, the associational structure of Catalonia suggests that many of the Senegalese migrants are actually from Casamance.

## Map I Fieldsites in Catalonia



West African migration is not a recent phenomenon. Taking the Casamance region as an example, migration is at the heart of a variety of different forms of diversities: ethnic, linguistic, religious, and national. Accounts go back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century when immigrants from the Mali Empire settled in the lands of Casamance River, which had previously been mainly inhabited by the Bainunk ethnic group (Roche 1985: 53-6; Quinn 1972: 482). Equally, the Jola of the lower Casamance were immigrants as well as the Fula of the upper Casamance<sup>5</sup> (Roche 1985: 28-32; Linares 1992: 84-90; Quinn 1971; Bâ 1986: 60-5). Later, Muslim marabouts came to the area with their followers to convert people to Islam (Leary 1971, 1970). The independence movement of the Fula, previously under Mandinka domination, also sparked a lot of movement (Bâ 1986; N'gaide 1999; Quinn 1971). This spatial mobility never really stopped. Traders always circulated, slaves were sold and shipped, migrant labour went to harvest rubber and palm oil and to cultivate the groundnut fields in both Senegal and Gambia to earn their living (Foucher 2002: 64; Mark 1977, 1976; David 1980). Soon, internal migration to the urban centres of Bathurst (today's Banjul) and Dakar started (Hamer 1981;

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<sup>5</sup> Since 2008, the natural region of Casamance has been divided into three administrative regions: Ziguinchor, Sédhiou, and Kolda. They correspond in common parlance to the lower, the middle and the upper Casamance, respectively. In my study I deal with people only from the lower and the middle Casamance.

Linares 2003; Lambert 2002; Foucher 2002; Reboussin 1995). After labour migrants started to move to other West African countries, migration to Europe became only the last step in a long history of migration (St. Jacques 2009). Relatively little interest has been paid to the international migration experience of Casamançais in particular. Publications that touch upon it in the Spanish case tend to deal with Gambian places of origin instead (cf. Kaplan Marcusán 1998, 1993), or Casamançais are subsumed under a larger common denominator such as Senegalese or West African. Research that specifically mentions Casamançais migration is rare (Traoré 2006; Zubrzycki and Agnelli 2009). Nevertheless, in Casamance the two processes are equally important: the internal diversification due to population movements and the rather long history of international migration of Casamançais.

By the time the international migration this paper deals with commenced, Casamance had become internally very diverse across a number of different categories. Culturally, a large number of different ethnic groups coexist (cf. Table 2, page 20) and most speak more than just their mother tongue and official language. While the Jola ethnicity forms the majority in the lower Casamance, the middle Casamance is generally understood to be mainly inhabited by Mandinka. Yet, there are many people who ascribe to the Balant, Fula, Mancagne, Manjak, and Wolof ethnicities. Religiously, Casamance is also the region of Senegal that is the most heterogeneous (see Figure 2, page 21). As the figure explicates, all departments of the lower and middle Casamance have a share of between 7 to over 30 per cent of Christians and shares of adherents of traditional religions of up to 35 per cent (Ansd s.a.).

**Map 2 Field sites in Casamance**



The cultural and religious diversity within Catalonia also has multiple dimensions. On the one hand, there was a heavy influx of internal Castilian labour migrants from the south of Spain (Bover and Velilla 2005; cf. Silvestre Rodríguez 2002). Entire new neighbourhoods were built at the time of this immigration, including the neighbourhoods where I conducted fieldwork (Lligadas 2000). On the other hand, the binary coexistence of Castilian and Catalan inhabitants and languages today is complemented by the diversity of origins of international immigrants. In 2008, people from 119 countries lived in Catalonia (Instituto Nacional De Estadística 2009) and the share of Muslim immigrants is at over 33 per cent of all immigrants (Moreras 2008: 18) – nearly six per cent of the total population. In Mataró, my main field site in Catalonia, the diversity is even more pronounced (cf. Table 1). In some neighbourhoods up to 37 per cent of residents are foreign born, of which at least 50 per cent are Muslim (taking the Moroccan population as a proxy). These are the configurations in which everyday life experiences and discourses of conviviality take place.

**Table 1 Population characteristics in selected neighbourhoods of Mataró, 2009**

Neighbourhood (selection)	absolute numbers									shares in %			
	Total Population	Foreign population	Morocco	Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia	China	Senegal	Gambia	Mali	Others	Born outside of Catalonia (%)	Non-Spanish Citizens (%)	Share of Moroccans of all Foreigners (%)	Share of Senegambian of all Foreigners (%)
<b>Mataró, total</b>	122,932	21,001	8,249	2,408	1,830	1,428	1,372	665	5,049	40.1	17.1	39.2	13.3
<b>Cerdanyola</b>	30,516	7,224	3,184	593	652	873	613	190	1,119	50.3	23.7	44.1	20.6
<b>Rocafonda</b>	10,948	3,897	2,193	358	128	196	288	210	524	55.5	35.6	56.3	12.4
<b>Palau</b>	6,957	2,567	1,420	177	62	97	246	183	382	51.8	36.9	55.3	13.4
<b>Molins Torner</b>	5,839	481	147	79	54	5	20	0	176	40.5	8.2	30.6	5.2
<b>Centre</b>	4,168	451	71	99	37	1	11	1	231	23.7	10.8	15.8	2.7
<b>Peramàs</b>	8,061	1,211	209	222	131	69	12	14	332	41.4	15.0	17.3	6.7
<b>Pla d'en Boet</b>	5,358	601	285	57	112	53	50	38	175	44.6	11.2	47.4	17.1
<b>others</b>	51,085	4,569	740	823	654	134	132	29	2,110	40.1	8.9	16.2	5.8

Source: (Ajuntament De Mataró 2010), modified

## Cohabitation and Convivència

A number of my Casamançais informants liked to point out what distinguished them from other Senegalese immigrants. However, this was not necessarily something that Casamançais would immediately declare. It was rather a discourse that emerged once the first layer of generalisation about being African or Senegalese had been overcome. It was part of a more detailed framework of identification and explaining the origins of one's values and norms. For example, some Casamançais said they would never go and sell goods at the beach or on streets as a *top manta*, the Spanish term for the Senegalese street vendors. Others sympathised with Catalan independence and cultural autonomy, drawing a comparison with Casamance. Asked about the living together of different cultures and religions in Europe and elsewhere, their Casamançais socialisation often became prominent. I argue that they claimed a specific competence derived from their regional origin.



I will first explain the two main strands of the argument regarding how the region of Casamance was stylised as the perfect preparation for international migrants. While I leave this discourse mainly unchallenged here, I then turn to the attempts of Casamançais to relate to the discourse of *convivència* in Catalonia.

### **Cohabitation in Casamance**

After my first fieldwork in Spain, I had been given an image of Casamance as a multilingual, interethnic, interreligious, truly cosmopolitan region. As Casamançais, my informants constructed their identity in this way: worldly, open-minded, well-travelled, flexible, tolerant, and multilingual. Indeed, many of them spoke several languages and often claimed to know three to five different ones, while some even stated as many as eight. Others again admitted to really only speaking two languages. What is more, they stated that no one in their region ever critiques someone else for speaking a different language. Language swapping as well as being in contexts in which a language different to your own is spoken was readily accepted most of the time. The most common explanation for this flexibility and openness in dealing with difference was having grown up in the ethnic diversity of Casamance, which fostered my interest.

Repeatedly, my informants explained to me the diverse set-up of Casamance. I was told that Casamance, the south of Senegal, was geographically situated between the Guineas and the Gambia. As a consequence, nationality had a limited significance. Some Casamançais hold Senegalese, some Gambian, and some Guinean nationality. Also, people easily claimed double nationality, or changed it if so required by the specific situation they found themselves in. While there was a growing nationalist Senegalese discourse in Casamance, for many Casamançais official papers like passports and birth certificates were mainly a means to overcome certain bureaucratic hurdles and they were still rarely seen as significant to someone's identity.

Furthermore, there was a sense of autonomy from the Senegalese nation-state in Casamance derived from the region's *de facto* autonomy, which had existed during long periods of French colonial rule and was justified by the natural geographical separation of the region (Foucher 2002: 128-30). Some Casamançais referenced these periods of relative autonomy from the Northern Senegal to explain the felt regional autonomy. They sympathised with the struggle for independence of the rebellion of the *Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques* (MFDC).<sup>6</sup> However, by no means all Casamançais supported the struggle for independence, and certainly not the means by which the MFDC pursued it. If anything, Casamançais widely shared some of the same concerns that were phrased in terms of cultural difference of the south and the perceived negligence of the central Senegalese government. Still, most of the Casamançais disapproved of the violence and some even

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<sup>6</sup> More details on the diverse aspects of the conflict can be found in Evans (2005, 2009) Foucher (2003, 2006, 2009, 2011), de Jong (2005), Lambert (1998), and Marut (1994, 1996, 2010).

presented it as the cause of their migration. As a result, a majority of my interlocutors continued to set their region apart from the north, mentioning the cultural diversity as one of its particularities. Explaining their perceptions of cultural diversity in Casamance, Casamançais recreated the image that emerges from the statistics: the lower Casamance is dominated by Jola, the middle Casamance by Mandinka, and the upper Casamance by Fula. Casamançais legitimised the primary use of one of these languages in the respective area seemingly by the majority situation. Focusing on the middle and the lower Casamance in my work, this domination of one language and ethnic group was particularly salient for the Mandinka areas. However, the statistics show that the Mandinka comprise barely a third of the population. Nevertheless, Mandinka prevailed among all the ethnic groups here, which shows the extent to which these groups had been assimilated, *mandinguisé*.<sup>7</sup> Despite these contradictory dynamics, the tripartite configuration of Casamance into Jola, Mandinka, and Fula became infinitely more complex the more I learned about the region. This complexity was particularly salient in towns like Ziguinchor and to a lesser extent in Sédhiou, which were important reference points for Casamançais migrants.

Prior to arriving in Ziguinchor in 2009, the largest city of Casamance, I was prepared for a situation of linguistic and cultural diversity and mixing. On the contrary, the local population in Casamance appeared relatively homogenous to a newly arrived observer, after all, they were nearly all Sub-Saharan Africans. Soon though, I noticed linguistic, cultural, and religious differences. Old men who had immigrated from rural areas greeted in Jola, Mandinka, and other languages; a customer at the corner shop practised his few words in Fula with the shopkeeper; and at the market people bargained in Creole or more often in Wolof. Passing through the neighbourhoods people would constantly switch languages to exchange greetings and ask about each other's families. Both mosques and churches were scattered throughout all the neighbourhoods, and one could find a *féticheur* on a street corner. On a normal day the mosques called to prayer, the churches held services, and the *féticheur* sold *gris-gris* (amulets of protection against various ills). Becoming more familiar with some neighbours and residents of my neighbourhood, I saw how various people in the neighbourhood prepared specific foods and wore special fabrics, which revealed some of the local diversity. Similarly, on the occasion of festive events different ways of dancing were performed.

Amongst all of these markers of diversity, linguistic diversity was particularly pertinent. My respondents took much joy in enumerating the many languages they themselves speak. Those who were particularly eager even tried to impress each other and me by boasting of their multilingual abilities, using synonyms for the same language or naming every minor dialect as well. For example, Mandinka was mentioned as both *Sosé*, the Wolof term for Mandinka, and as Mandinka. Alternatively, they claimed to know Bambara on the basis of understanding some of it due to its

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<sup>7</sup> Linares (1992) dedicates a lot of attention to the effect of Mandingisation on the Jola, describing in much detail the change in the gendered division of labour and social spheres.

similarity to Mandinka, despite the fact that they could not actually speak it. All my interlocutors tried to inhabit linguistic diversity in their own personal way.

In addition to all the languages spoken both in Catalonia and Casamance, my informants kept pointing out the different ethnic groups resident in the respective area along with their diverse cultural and religious practices. Thus, I was also told about the internal religious differentiation among both Muslims and Christians as well as the multiple ways of combining traditional religious practices with those of Islam and Christianity. A very common example in everyday life was people who wore *gris-gris*<sup>8</sup> or had them for their children as well as going to church or attending the mosque. Furthermore, I picked up the internal differentiation among the Jola, the importance of having a particular family name, the diverse origins of the Fula speakers, and many more lines of differentiation.

While I continued to learn about differences, Casamançais themselves did not focus on differentiation alone. They engaged in several forms of unifying discourses and practices.<sup>9</sup> Casamançais exhibited unity in referring to their common place of origin, Casamance, and its convivial resources that orchestrated social differences.<sup>10</sup> For example, the home village of many of my informants in Catalonia was inhabited by both Mandinka and Jola. Famara Badio explained that this difference was experienced in unity. Only after lengthy inquiries were my expectations confirmed that members of these ethnicities actually lived in separate, rather homogenous neighbourhoods. The connotations of my informants' stories were primarily focused on *cohabitation* and unity.<sup>11</sup> While this focus might have been triggered by the presentation of my own research interests, it was too omnipresent to be just a reaction to it, trying to possibly meet my expectations. In the cities, the everyday mixing in neighbourhoods, which *cohabitation* was based on, had many faces, including conflict and misunderstandings. The discourse of *cohabitation*, however, stressed the practices that contributed to peaceful living with difference. Describing Sédhiou, Souleymane Faty said:

[Concerning] the allocation of plots, wherever you go you find a Fula, a Mandinka, another one. One does not say "This person just arrived thus we won't give him a plot." The same is true for the professional sector. There is no work that is only

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<sup>8</sup> Talismans made of a small leather bag containing small ritual objects and possibly Qur'an verses.

<sup>9</sup> See also on processes of Mandingisation in Casamance Linares (1992) and de Jong (2007: 114-27), and general processes of Casamançais unity in 'Comprendre la Casamance' (Barbier-Wiesser 1994). Another very important aspect was ethnic and religious intermarriage (cf. Heil forthcoming). It did not loom large in the comparison with Catalonia, since intermarriage with European partners in Spain was still the exception.

<sup>10</sup> While an argument could be made about the perception of Casamance as the granary of Senegal, in this paper I only focus on the convivial resources.

<sup>11</sup> See Lambert (2002), a very detailed account on the possible tensions between neighbourhoods even of one and the same ethnicity.

attributed to such and such an ethnic group, or such and such a nationality.<sup>12</sup>  
(03/2010)

Similarly, Jean-Philippe Djiboune, an elderly Christian Jola in Sédhiou, confirmed that he could choose where to live according to the people he wanted to live close to. He stated that if you had a Jola, a Fula, a Balant, and a Mandinka friend, one being Christian, the other one Muslim, they would settle somewhere where there was enough room for all of them. Even in Sédhiou, the more provincial town in comparison to Ziguinchor, this discourse of mixing prevailed. While there were certain neighbourhoods or parts in both Sédhiou and Ziguinchor that were clearly inhabited by one main group, there were other neighbourhoods that were mixed to an extent that descriptions of them varied widely among my informants. Some even admitted that they did not have an overview of the complexities encountered in such neighbourhoods. While in Sédhiou ethnic diversity disappeared under the layer of Mandinka, the group whose language was primarily spoken throughout the town, in Ziguinchor there was a prevalence of mixed neighbourhoods in which many languages were spoken and permanently swapped.<sup>13</sup>

For the Casamançais in Catalonia, these were examples of the diversity and the mixing in Casamance. In many accounts this reached a climax in the naming of the cemetery of Ziguinchor where both Muslims and Christians were buried next to each other. They thought of this as unique in Senegal.<sup>14</sup> Notably, accounts of religious cohabitation seamlessly became intertwined with descriptions of cultural and linguistic diversity. Rather than separating ethnic and religious identities, this was paradigmatic for a strong discourse of *cohabitation*. This did not imply that there were no conflicts or a complete absence of tensions around religion or ethnic belonging. Rather, this unifying discourse sometimes also glossed over contested subjects such as the perceived domination of the Mandinka, the non-recognition of religious differences, ethnic contestations, or family disputes.<sup>15</sup> However, the discourse of *cohabitation* in Casamance and the values attached to it were the backdrop for experiences of *convivència* in Catalonia.

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<sup>12</sup> French: L'occupations des terres à Sédhiou: Dans n'importe quel quartier, vous allez là-bas, vous allez trouver la maison d'un Peul, la maison d'un Mandingue, vous allez trouver la maison d'un telle. On dit pas: « Ici, ces gens-là ils viennent d'arriver, on va pas leur donner ici ». Donc, dans le secteur socio-professionnelle également. Donc, il y a pas un travail que vous allez déléguer seulement à des gens de telle ethnie, ou a des gens de telle nationalité.

<sup>13</sup> The younger generation increasingly used Wolof throughout Ziguinchor, and I was told that it was gaining ground even in Sédhiou (cf. Heil forthcoming). Compare also Moreau (1994) for the rise of Wolof. However, I did not find the dynamics she described confirmed to the same extent.

<sup>14</sup> Foucher (2005: 381) notes however, that the same claim exists in the north of Senegal, in Joal-Fadiouth.

<sup>15</sup> See also work on conflict-containing mechanisms in the Senegal and Casamance that focus on joking relationships (De Jong 2005; Smith 2010).

## Relating to convivència in Catalonia



Figure 1: We are Catalonia. Country of conviviality.

'Som Catalunya. País de convivència' – in 2009, I was welcomed back to my field site by three posters portraying two people each, of different ages and different ethnic backgrounds. The headlines stated the different countries of birth of either the parents or grandparents of the individuals depicted. Under the main slogan 'We are Catalonia. Country of *convivència*', it said that natives and people who had moved there aimed to construct together a country with a common future, and with equality of rights and duties for all. Catalan was meant to be an integrative element as the language of reception. And finally, the poster stated that in Catalonia diversity was an asset, and that Catalonia was proud to be a country of *convivència*.<sup>16</sup> Despite the many alternative terminologies and more detailed goals of the

Catalan social integration policy, this short statement revealed two key aspects: the importance of the Catalan language and the quest for a strong sense of unity. While this was the only time I saw *convivència* publicly used for an official political campaign, the term was very much part of the Casamançais understanding of living together in Catalonia, and more specifically in the neighbourhoods of Catalan towns.<sup>17</sup>

In Catalonia, the Casamançais lived dispersed, although concentrated in the peripheral neighbourhoods of the towns. These were in themselves very mixed and therefore comparable to Casamançais neighbourhoods. In Catalonia, Casamançais rented flats that were available on the regular housing market, which was different to the concentration that Riccio alludes to speaking of the *dahira* in Italy (1999; 2006; 2002), or Jettinger's account of residential segregation (Jettinger 2009). In Mataró, neighbours stemmed from all over the world. When I asked Casamançais informants to describe their neighbourhoods, their answers most often followed the same pattern:

<sup>16</sup> Catalan original on the poster: 'Totes les persones que vivim a Catalunya, homes i dones, gent que ha nascut aquí i gent que ha vingut de fora, volem construir un país amb futur, amb igualtat de drets i deures per a tothom. Un país on el català sigui llengua d'acollida i, alhora, element integrador. Un país que entén la diversitat com un valor. Una Catalunya orgullosa de ser un país de convivència.'

<sup>17</sup> See my work on neighbourliness (Heil, 2011a).

First, they mentioned the West Africans and other Sub-Saharan groups in detail: Senegalese; Gambian; Malian; Guinean; Burkinabe or Bambara; Saraxolé; Jola; etc. Second, they listed Moroccans together with the Moors, before turning to all other immigrants from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia.

At times, I had to inquire specifically about the latter as well as about Spaniards and Catalans. Part of the reason for this was the higher familiarity with recognising and defining people from Africa, another part of it was the higher identification with being immigrants and the number of practices they shared. Rather than ethnic preferences, I understand the vagueness in naming people from far-flung places as a result of a lack of familiarity with such places of origin. While my interlocutors had passed through a number of African countries before getting to Europe, the rest of the world often remained obscure to them. Accordingly, Mamadou Diédhiou became a bit quiet when it came to naming other nationalities, concluding his description of the origins of people in the neighbourhood by saying: 'I don't know, nearly all nationalities' (11/2010). Consequently, more detailed descriptions of the neighbourhood that went beyond the general remark of seeing a lot of immigrants and thus diversity, highly depended on individual experiences and remained partial and selective, which is in contrast to the familiar diversity encountered in (West) Africa.

While this perception of neighbourhoods often revealed a lack of familiarity with the cultural diversity in Catalonia, it impacted only slightly on the Casamançais discourse of open-mindedness and flexibility. Those most confident in our discussions all claimed to speak Catalan and/or Castilian. While some were really good at speaking many languages, others just spoke some Catalan, but well enough to engage in the floating forms of casual greeting: '*Hola! Bon dia! Com estàs? Tot be.*' Going beyond such minimal knowledge, Abib Drame, a young Mandinka, explained that he went to learn the language because for him communication, which he equated with language learning, was the first thing that mattered if one settles in a new place. To be unable to initiate contact with people was bad, he reckoned. I collected many similar accounts of the need for language learning among my informants, whether they phrased it in terms of a need for integration, communication, or *convivència*. Some referred to Catalan and others to Castilian as the main local language.

In Cerdanyola, I gained the impression that Castilian was spoken more widely than Catalan. However, being exposed to increased numbers of Catalan classes and fewer Castilian ones, accompanied by noticing the increasingly vocal claims of cultural autonomy of Catalonia, most of the Casamançais sympathised with the Catalan case and supported it at least with small gestures like Catalan greetings and claiming to also speak Catalan. This was a very meaningful signal because the more general advantage of knowing Catalan was questionable to some of the highly mobile Casamançais, as Catalan is not spoken outside of Catalonia. The fact of incorporating Catalan into the wealth of languages spoken was a sign of respect for the regional specificity paired with a

minority concern similar to that of Casamançais in Senegal, and the role of Jola, Mandinka, and other even smaller language groups in Senegal.

Seeing the parallels between Catalan and Casamançais languages, however, only went one way, since the Casamançais did not perceive either their languages or other immigrant languages to feature alongside Catalan in Catalonia. Continuing my conversation with Abib Drame, we discussed the diversity of languages and whether it was comparable:

**Abib Drame:** It is however different. Because there, in a village, you find ten languages while here in Spain there are only two languages. **TH:** There is Mandinka, French, etc. in Catalonia... **Abib Drame:** Ah ok, but these are foreign languages. The national languages are Spanish and Catalan. (Mataró, 10/2010)

Abib continued explaining that in a Casamançais village the different languages were all practised alongside one another, even if they were not mutually understood. While he admitted that in his part of Casamance most people spoke Mandinka, paralleling the dominance of Castilian or Catalan, his point was that the other languages enjoyed a greater recognition than in Catalonia. The languages were not divided into national and foreign, but were all equally local. This referred to an everyday understanding in which the existing differentiation into the six codified national languages of Senegal and other not codified languages did not matter.

This inequality expressed in relation to the legitimacy of languages also played out in other aspects of everyday life, probably most prominently concerning the Muslim-Christian relations,<sup>18</sup> and it linked to the integration discourse. Casamançais perceived an integration obligation and contextualised their ability to live in a context of diversity within it. Instead of seeing themselves as equals sharing the neighbourhood with other residents, some Casamançais tended to adopt the disadvantaged identity of immigrants that had to integrate, which was attributed to them by the European integration discourse.

Some Casamançais, however, started questioning the other inhabitants of Catalonia and their commitment to *convivència*, noting their inability to speak foreign languages. A Gambian living with Casamançais asked me why the Catalans were so averse to speaking English. ‘Why do they not speak French?’ A common argument among my interlocutors was that the multilingual Casamançais was more apt to engage with the world than the purely bilingual Catalan. Similarly, they noticed that the Latin Americans did not learn Catalan and described a caricature of a Moroccan mother who after decades in Catalonia would speak neither Catalan nor Castilian. Furthermore, the Casamançais stressed their experience of travelling all the way to Europe, which acquainted them with many different countries and cultures.

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<sup>18</sup> The transnational comparison between Casamance and Catalonia concerning interreligious relations is very rich and complex, which exceeds the scope of this paper.

In comparison, it was the working-class Catalans or Andalusians in the peripheral neighbourhoods of industrial towns who had always stayed put and had not seen the world. In the eyes of many Casamançais, the Catalan policy of social integration proclaiming conviviality and the realities they encountered in the neighbourhoods were discrepant. More than the immigrants, it was the Catalans who did not adhere to it. Referring back to their experience at home in Casamance and their migration experience, my informants fairly easily related to the discourse of *convivència*.<sup>19</sup> However, in their eyes, the working-class, immobile Catalan seemed to fail. Pride derived from their own positive attitude towards language learning and their migration experiences mixed with occasional prejudices towards other immigrant groups and feelings of superiority towards working-class locals.

Relating to *convivència* in Catalonia was not a straightforward exercise for the Casamançais. They were fairly good in fulfilling the discourse of sharing Catalan as a common language and more often than not took it as self-evident. Yet the structural situation of being an immigrant in Catalonia also offered a lot of room for challenging the Catalan context. In this situation other ways of understanding the power relations in a migration context as well as the living together in everyday life gained ground. In such a situation, Casamance and its discourse of *cohabitation* only became one reference point amongst many.

## **Generalisation in migration**

In this section I deal with some of the challenges to the Casamançais' specific interpretation of conviviality in both Casamance and Catalonia. Some of the Casamançais discourse can be traced to the speakers' ethnic origins and discrepancies between ethnic affiliations are inevitably part of it. However, in this section I only focus on discourses that related to ways of identifying that did not have Casamance as their reference point. Therefore, they potentially also questioned the experience of living with difference as a common and distinctive denominator for the Casamançais migration experience. In the following paragraphs I first focus on *teranga*, second on a specifically black, and third on a specifically Muslim discourse.

### **Senegalese *teranga***

Casamançais did not only identify as being from Casamance, but also related to the Senegalese national identity and self-representation. Speaking of the living together in Catalonia, a recurrent theme was that of Senegal as the country of *teranga*. *Teral* in Wolof means 'to receive', thus *teranga* means all the practices of receiving a foreigner that go beyond a general understanding of hospitality. It is central to the Senegalese national identity and although it was also lived in Casamance, it

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<sup>19</sup> For this paper, I do not engage with the discrepancies that arise from comparing practices and discourses of living in Catalonia.



supersedes the south and is part of all regions and all ethnicities of Senegal. Yoro Taffa Sambou, who had worked for most of his life in Dakar but was firmly rooted in the lower Casamance, where he held the post of a neighbourhood delegate in Ziguinchor that his father had held before, described the phenomenon as follows:

You know, the Senegal is a country of *teranga*. Go there: the Senegalese loves to do a favour. He loves to benefit his fellow man. This is within the general framework. Wherever you go in the Senegal, you are made welcome everywhere. And he will defend you. If you are staying with someone, if someone wounds you, even if you are wrong, he will not accept that one harms you. ... You find this with all the ethnicities. ... It concerns not only the foreigner, even I, if I go somewhere, [if] I go to a village, it is *teranga*, I am a stranger there. ... This is the strength of the Senegal. You may stay in any house: if the time to eat comes, you will eat. ... You may walk up to someone and say 'I don't know [this place]' – He will accommodate you.<sup>20</sup> (Ziguinchor, 05/2010)

*Teranga* is the hospitality everyone enjoys when s/he arrives as a stranger in a new place. In this statement, Yoro stressed that it applied to both other Senegalese and foreigners like me. As a stranger you would enjoy more than just a warm welcome: you would be secure, you would be served food, you would have a place to sleep, and you would be defended. In our conversation, Taffa Yoro Sambou elaborated that the Senegalese host greatly respects the guest and it was the responsibility of the local authority such as the village chief to teach him/her all s/he needed to know. Furthermore, *teranga* continued until the stranger had 'obtained something in the locality', i.e. had established herself/himself. Thus, while *teranga* was primarily about the relations with the newly arrived, some elements were very relevant to the practice of *cohabitation* and *convivència* in a migration context.<sup>21</sup> Casamançais were often disappointed not to find a Catalan counterpart for *teranga* and the reception of foreigners typical for Senegal.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Being black in Catalonia***

While *teranga* was stylised as a national characteristic of Senegal, other aspects of everyday life of Casamançais in Catalonia also suggested an analysis that was not specific to the Casamançais experience. Often, more than anything else, Casamançais saw themselves as black in Catalonia, more specifically as black African. Two aspects contributed to this: the expectation of more similar values

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<sup>20</sup> French: Vous savez, le Sénégal c'est un pays de *teranga*. Ça, vous allez là-bas: le Sénégalais aime rendre service. Il aime faire du bien à son prochain. Ça c'est dans le cadre général. Partout où vous allez au Sénégal - Partout, vous êtes bien accueilli. Et il vous défend. Si vous loger chez quelqu'un, si quelqu'un vous touche, même si vous avez tort, il n'acceptera pas qu'on vous fasse du mal. ... Vous le trouvez chez toutes les sortes des ethnies. ... C'est pas seulement pour l'étranger, même moi, si je me déplace, je vais dans un village, c'est la *teranga*, je suis étranger là-bas. ... C'est ça le fort du Sénégal. Vous allez dans n'importe quelle maison. Si leur manger arrive tu manges. ... Tu vas chez quelqu'un et tu dis 'Je ne connais pas [ici]' - Il t'héberge.'

<sup>21</sup> Cf. to the work of Fedora Gasparetti (2011, 2009) on food and migration, and the rearing of children of migrants by distant relatives in Senegal, all practiced under the heading of *teranga*.

<sup>22</sup> In Catalonia, *acollida* (Catalan: reception) was in fact a key word of the policies dealing with immigration. However, the institutional setting it implied was too different to serve as a counterpart for *teranga*.

among blacks and the experience of racism during migration and in Catalonia. Speaking of norms and values Casamançais often assumed certain forms of behaviour of all Africans they met. For example, they perceived the greeting of people in the neighbourhood, in buildings and in public spaces as an important aspect of conviviality since it showed respect for each other. Speaking about their experience in Catalonia, they presented the practice of greeting as something essential; however, they specified that at least black Africans should continue to observe this practice of respect while residing in Europe. Whereas my informants' attitude towards greeting stemmed from Casamance, in their European interpretation what mattered was the fundamental difference between Africa and Europe. The assumption was that whereas in Europe individualism and neglect of social relations dominated, in Africa people still shared these norms of community and mutual respect. This basic example of greeting hinted at another interpretation of my informants' perception of their neighbourhoods that I alluded to earlier. Casamançais potentially named Africans first because they tended to pay a lot more attention to their own behaviour in interactions with other Africans; all Africans were expected to act more in tune with the Casamançais' own expectations.

Some Casamançais also strongly related to the discourse of racism that they encountered both during their migration and in Catalonia. Ansou Diédhiou was the first from his village to migrate to Europe. After an initial failed attempt to go through Mauretania, he went into Mali and on to Libya through Algerian territory, where he stayed for over a year to work. In Libya he worked in a bakery for an Egyptian. He gave several instances of how he, as a Sub-Saharan black, was exposed to racism and lived in permanent fear. Libyans used to randomly exert their power over black immigrants, stopping them on their way to work, blaming them of raping, seducing or simply looking at Libyan women, beating them on random occasions. Ansou said that if a woman talked to you, you needed to run, and if someone was nice you could not trust him not to beat you the next day. Additionally, the Libyans neither accepted Sub-Saharans as Muslim brothers, nor acknowledged them to be Muslims at all.

In 2010 in Catalonia, Ansou was sensitive to all forms of direct and latent racism that he experienced. In one of our long discussions he detailed that at work his co-workers used to call him *Africano*, or *negro* (black), or nothing at all, but just to yell 'Hey there' if they wanted his attention. Yet all he wanted was to be called by his name and thus be respected as a fellow human being. While he was at work, Ansou's wife also struggled with incidences in the apartment block where her identity was reduced to the colour of her skin and stereotypical black characteristics were attributed to her by others, of which being dirty and disrespectful of the neighbours' space ranked highest. While economically speaking they actually fared well in comparison to other Casamançais, Ansou sensed that he had lost in migration: since he was black, he would never be equal, and discrimination would continue to prevail over *cohabitation*.

## ***Being Muslim***

I noted earlier how *cohabitation* between Muslims and Christians directly blended into cultural discourses of living together in Casamance. In Catalonia, however, this was a rather troublesome relationship. The different forms of sharing public spaces, festivities and food between Muslims and Christians that existed in Casamance did not apply to Catalonia (Heil 2011b). Instead, Casamançais experienced two dynamics: First, although many Muslims live in the peripheral neighbourhoods of Mataró, they did not have a centrally located mosque. For every prayer they had to walk to the nearby industrial quarters of the town to join other believers in the two mosques that used to be industrial plants. This included Casamançais and other West Africans who used to pray in a more centrally located Muslim association that provided Islamic religious instruction to girls. Due to large gatherings in front of the association, it was closed down by officials and the use as a mosque was prohibited. The association was later able to re-open its doors yet was solely dedicated to the schooling of girls. An earlier Moroccan initiative that aimed to establish a mosque within the neighbourhood had fared worse. Fakeba Badji recalled how the members regularly had to cope with animal dung left in front of their entrance. This continued to happen until they retreated to the industrial park. These experiences of explicit anti-Muslim practices and the permanent impression of Casamançais that they had to restrict their religiosity to the private sphere, stigmatised the Casamançais as Muslims in Catalonia. At other times this surged as an assumed identity when discussing *convivència*. Whereas the wider public did not really perceive blacks as Muslims, Casamançais nevertheless experienced the same discrimination and challenges to practising their religion in Catalonia as other Muslims – something unheard of in Casamance.

Second, Casamançais saw that churches were unpopular places in Spain. Although churches were spread throughout the towns, Casamançais were very aware of the fact that only elderly people attended services regularly. In Casamance, a critical factor for the respectful coexistence and tolerance between religions was the conviction that everyone believed in the same god, it was simply the way of practising their faith that varied between the different religions. However, in Spain Casamançais notice that very few people continued to practise their religion, which for them raised the question of whether these people still believed at all. For many of the Muslim Casamançais, not practicing religion was equivalent to not believing. Thus, for some it became difficult or indeed impossible to respect their co-residents, since they did not believe in the same god. As a result, the combination of the marginalisation of Muslims in the locality and the distancing of Christians from church placed a double burden on the Casamançais in relating to discourses of *convivència* in Catalonia, as they relied on their experiences of *cohabitation* in Casamance to negotiate the situation in Catalonia.

## Conclusions

In the last section I engaged with aspects of the discourses of Casamançais in Catalonia, which suggested that experiences of living with difference in Casamance and Catalonia had little in common. Furthermore, experiences of racial discrimination, anti-Muslim feelings, and references to *teranga* exceeded the regional references to Casamance and Catalonia. However, Casamançais compared their experiences of discrimination as Muslims in Catalonia with the coexistence of religious practices in Casamance. As Casamançais who had grown up in a region where people were proud of peacefully living together as Muslims, Christians and traditionally religious people, they found it particularly difficult to accept the marginalisation of Muslims in Catalonia. The regional perspective thus remained a relevant backdrop to understanding current, more global experiences and interpretations.

Discussing *teranga* raised the question of whether *cohabitation* was more attached to a national than a regional self-representation. Speaking of *teranga* as a national trait, Yoro Taffa Sambou in the same breath implied that his ethnic group, the Jola in the lower Casamance, were particularly good hosts. Thus, was hospitality part of an ethnic, national, or regional identity? Leaving the ethnic dimension for further investigation, I acknowledge that both references, the national and the regional one, are not mutually exclusive. Thus, the introductory statement of Souleymane Biaye in which he documents his reluctance to attribute *cohabitation* to either the Casamançais alone or to Senegal as a whole, becomes intelligible.

Yet, this cannot detract from the discourse of Casamançais that addressed the specificity of the experience of living together and of sharing the same locality in Casamance. In the discussions provoked by the policy discourses and local usages of *convivència* the Casamance-specific socialisation was very relevant. First, there were many more Christians and traditionally religious people in Casamance than in the rest of Senegal, which made religious *cohabitation* more pertinent despite the negative experiences in that respect in Catalonia. Its importance was even more pronounced since we had seen that religious *cohabitation* was directly connected to cultural *cohabitation*.

Second, the discourse of multilingualism and the use of diverse language were particularly pertinent in Casamance. This perfectly fitted with the Catalan quest for the legitimacy of their mother tongue as well as the linguistically diverse life in immigrant neighbourhoods in Catalan towns. However, it did not prevent the Casamançais from seeing a difference between the relative equality of all languages in Casamance – temporarily blocking out the selective tendency of Mandingisation and the growing dominance of Wolof – and the hierarchical order of languages in Catalonia, in which they placed their native languages at the bottom. For both aspects, religious *cohabitation* and multilingualism, the Casamance experience is a very relevant, re-occurring reference point. Catalonia as the location of destination is also decisive in provoking this comparison, first by providing the

discourse of *convivència* and second due to the particular role Catalonians attribute to their Catalan language.

Finally, the cultural diversity encountered in both Casamance and Catalonia was the least contested dimension of how the conviviality discourse relied on a regional Casamançais experience as one among many Senegalese migration trajectories. Having grown up in a context of diversity in which differences between people were omnipresent, Casamançais tended to have a positive attitude towards diversity and claimed to be flexible enough to accommodate differences, to adjust to varying situations, and to deal with this as self-evident. Their willingness to learn Catalan was the one example I gave in this paper of such an adjusted conduct, but there were more examples such as the partaking in local festivities, and consideration and tolerance towards the needs and worries of neighbours (Heil 2011a, 2011b).

From a focus on *cohabitation* and *convivència* as the discursive elements of the fragile process of conviviality that centres on practices of living together in a shared locality, this paper has shed light on a specific trajectory of migrants who stem from the south of Senegal and who have gone to the northeast of Spain. While the migrants from Casamance assumed many different identities and related to various discourses and experiences, they nevertheless shared the specific experiences of *cohabitation* in Casamance, which led to some common features in interpreting and living *convivència* in Catalonia.

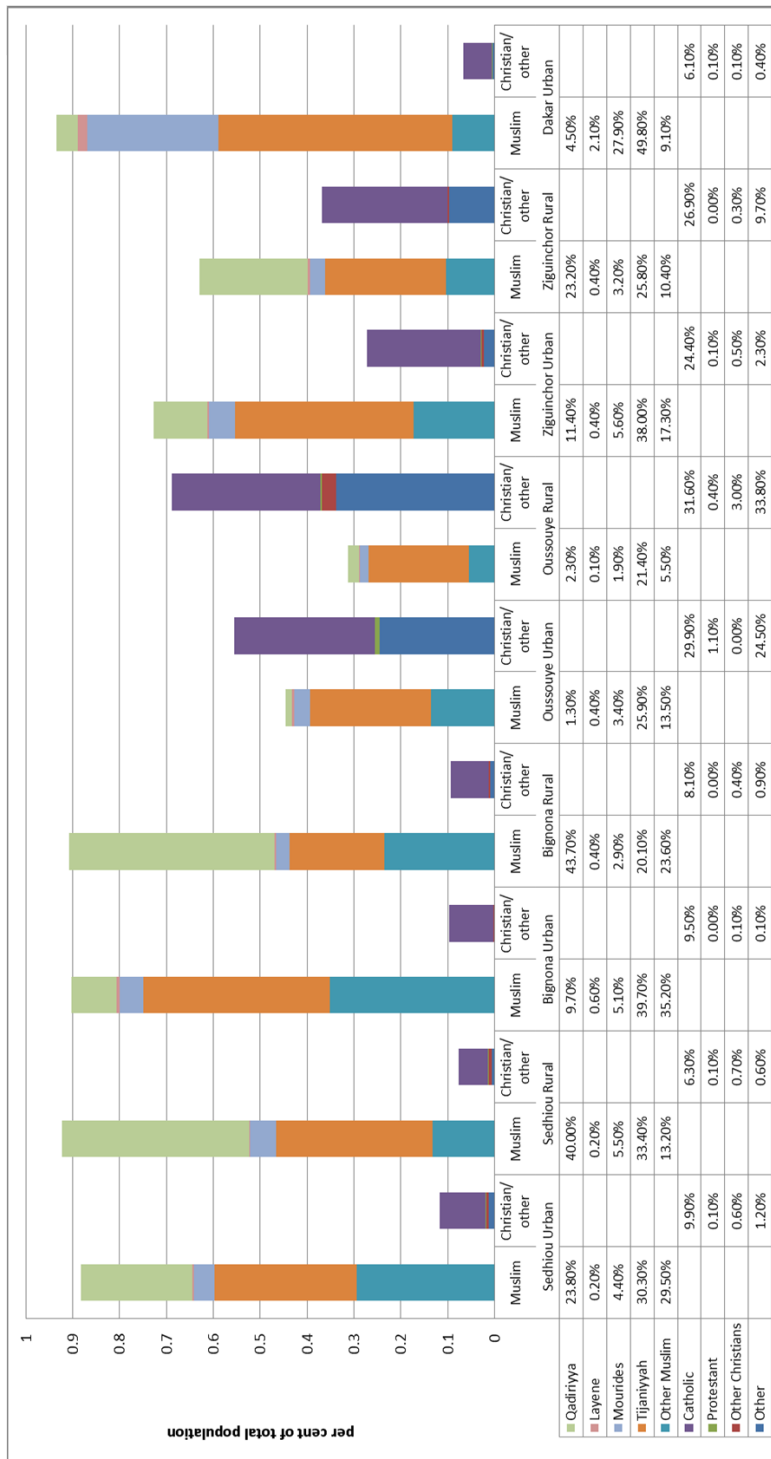
## Appendices

**Table 2 Population of the Kolda, Ziguinchor, and Dakar regions by department and ethnicities, 2002.**

Ethnicity or nationality	Dept't Sédhiou		Dept't Bignona		Dept't Oussouye		Dept't Ziguinchor		Region Ziguinchor		Region Dakar	
	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %	Count	Col %
Wolof	10,563	3.1%	2,413	1.3%	1,381	4.0%	12,010	6.6%	15,804	3.9%	1,034,722	49.2%
Fula	73,943	21.7%	11,916	6.3%	2,370	6.8%	28,370	15.7%	42,656	10.5%	430,843	20.5%
Serer	2,421	0.7%	2,517	1.3%	1,477	4.3%	7,062	3.9%	11,056	2.7%	281,077	13.4%
Jola	31,780	9.3%	147,506	77.4%	27,486	79.1%	60,095	33.2%	235,087	57.8%	104,745	5.0%
Bambara	2,471	0.7%	909	0.5%	132	0.4%	2,713	1.5%	3,754	0.9%	43,712	2.1%
Manjak	23,288	6.8%	2,018	1.1%	233	0.7%	11,928	6.6%	14,179	3.5%	40,939	1.9%
Mandinka	137,372	40.3%	15,128	7.9%	717	2.1%	29,371	16.2%	45,216	11.1%	35,461	1.7%
Sosé	13	0.0%	15	0.0%	11	0.0%	389	0.2%	415	0.1%	28,870	1.4%
Moure	505	0.1%	1,461	0.8%	76	0.2%	553	0.3%	2,090	0.5%	22,581	1.1%
Saraxolé	1,415	0.4%	745	0.4%	202	0.6%	1,901	1.1%	2,848	0.7%	23,188	1.1%
Soninké	276	0.1%	143	0.1%	36	0.1%	913	0.5%	1,092	0.3%	18,791	0.9%
Balant	42,509	12.5%	1,982	1.0%	205	0.6%	9,462	5.2%	11,649	2.9%	7,857	0.4%
Mancagne	6,470	1.9%	368	0.2%	226	0.7%	8,999	5.0%	9,593	2.4%	9,170	0.4%
Bainuk	4,274	1.3%	2,647	1.4%	63	0.2%	4,385	2.4%	7,095	1.7%	4,178	0.2%
Soussou	138	0.0%	123	0.1%	34	0.1%	578	0.3%	735	0.2%	4,220	0.2%
Diakhanké	1,822	0.5%	362	0.2%	42	0.1%	1,106	0.6%	1,510	0.4%	2,262	0.1%
Malinké	53	0.0%	45	0.0%	1	0.0%	55	0.0%	101	0.0%	2,339	0.1%
Créole	33	0.0%	7	0.0%	2	0.0%	72	0.0%	81	0.0%	566	0.0%
Dialonké	118	0.0%	25	0.0%	-	-	48	0.0%	73	0.0%	198	0.0%
Others	1,195	0.4%	287	0.2%	58	0.2%	1,029	0.6%	1,374	0.3%	8,669	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>340,659</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>190,617</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>34,752</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>181,039</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>406,408</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,104,388</b>	<b>100%</b>

Senegalese National Census 2002, Dakar: ANSD

**Figure 2 Religious Diversity in Sédhiou, Ziguinchor, and Dakar, by department and region, 2002.**



Senegalese National Census 2002, Dakar: ANSD

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