

## Fighting for space

**Fishworkers' communities face another challenge as tourism develops in the coastal areas of West Africa**

**T**his article deals with fishermen's organizations at the national level, although there exist traditional associations at the local level. Today, the type of fishermen's organizations existing in countries from Mauritania to those in the Gulf of Guinea demonstrates that it is a strictly material and economic concern which is the base for setting up fishermen's organizations nationally.

It is in this context that the initiative of CNPS (Collectif National des Pecheurs Artisanaux du Senegal) can be appreciated, despite the growth crisis this organization is currently facing. Towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, CNPS decided to evolve thematically, refusing to focus its analysis and actions strictly on economic issues. Thus it came to pass that after 1990, for the first time in African artisanal fisheries, an organization defended its right to participate in the EU-Senegal negotiations of fisheries access agreements. Since 1994, CNPS has participated in the negotiations for the renewal of these agreements.

These agreements, considered a threat to the traditional rights of access of artisanal fishworkers to the resource, consolidated the CNPS, giving it a more political dimension, compared to co-operatives. This happened in two ways.

First of all, the campaigns led by CNPS to denounce these agreements mobilized women from the processing sector, especially when the 1996 agreement decided to explore the possibility of access to small pelagics for European vessels.

Secondly, as the Senegalese are huge consumers of fish themselves (28 kg/person/year), the media coverage of the agreements won the organization public sympathy. From a social

organization, CNPS grew into a more general movement.

With the complicity of some government functionaries, promoters of tourism have developed their business on land initially used by maritime communities for fishing, processing and, in some cases, for agricultural activities complementing fishing. This process of displacement in the localities of M'bour, Joal, Kayar and Saint Louis is a 'hidden privatization' of coastal zones. The development of tourist complexes and related activities, such as yachting, are forcing fishermen and women to reduce, or even abandon, their earlier activities.

In the zone of M'Bour, for example, many fishermen are not able to use their beach seines because tourist complexes have privatized these spaces with marker buoys. These areas are being used instead for recreational boating. Similarly, the mooring of yachts and pleasure boats close to the coast makes it impossible for fishermen using oars to practice passive net fishing in their traditional zones. These problems of cohabitation between tourists and fishermen using traditional gear and pirogues propelled by oars are more accentuated in the localities of M'bour, Hann and Sendou.

### Women's problems

Women fish processors are also the victims of tourism development. For some years, women fishworkers based in M'Bour have lived under the threat of displacement. Public authorities prefer to defend the interests of the tourist sector rather than those of women fish processors, despite their socioeconomic importance in creating jobs and supplying fish and processed fish products not only to the Senegalese population but also to other West African consumers.




**T**he administration, in fact, constantly reminds the women that the smoke produced by fish smoking is unpleasant for tourists (foreigners, of course). The authorities conveniently forget the important role played by a locality like M'bour in the African integration process and in the regional market. M'bour is a converging place for fishmongers from several countries within the subregion, and contributes to the supply and exchange of fish adapted to African tastes.

In some localities, artisanal processing of fish has completely disappeared because of the lack of the necessary space. The use of the coastal zone as a residential area for wealthy people (both local and foreigners) has, for example, led to the removal of women fish processors in Hann. They have now to work at a distance of 4 km from their homes.

At the end of the 1980s, a small group of women who had been able to maintain their activities along the coast, were pushed out towards Thiaroye by the political authorities of the village, in collaboration with the police. This was the consequence of a demand by a Korean who wanted to start a fish processing plant and who promised to recruit for his boats some family members of the politically powerful village authorities. These developments also threaten the right of access to resources for a number

of small-scale fishermen who still utilize unmotorized boats propelled by oars or sails and who can not go farther out to sea to fish in other fishing zones.

In July 1990, CNPS began a campaign to denounce the negative impacts of tourism. This campaign had several phases, including the sending of memorandums to the authorities and the organizing of press conferences. A request was made to the government proposing a study, to be undertaken jointly by CNPS/Tourism Ministry, to evaluate the consequences of tourism. Through its campaign, CNPS hopes to persuade the government to switch from a relationship of conflict between fisheries and tourism to one of sustainable cohabitation. One of the main demands is to get the Senegalese parliament to extend land reservation for fishermen.

Women will play a prominent role in this campaign for the recognition of the access rights to land because, for cultural and historical reasons, the essential activities of women relating to fisheries (like processing and small-scale marketing) take place on land. 

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