

*Senegal Tourist Office  
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*Senegal & Sustainable Tourism*

*Whether it is branded **mass** or **international** , according to where one stands vis-à-vis that huge sector of activity ( 842 million tourists in 2006 ), the social phenomenon fully expanding worldwide, and known as **TOURISM** was adopted in Senegal, as a source of economic earnings , siding an agricultural production , later to be reduced by severe droughts in the Sahel region of Africa . My country, for the same reasons applying to almost all underdeveloped countries, welcomed the new industry , in the wake of the post war technological progress resulting in the advent of the propelled jet, which progress was combined with the increase in leisure time that occurred in developed nations of the West.*

***Senegal** , endowed by Nature with a 700km coastline, at the westernmost tip of the African Continent , and boasting 3 thousand plus hours of sunshine a year, in gorgeous landscapes , only five hours from the major european markets , could not but take advantage of those assets to open to international tourism , reinforced by an incredible strategical position of gateway to West Africa , and friendly people among whom the underlying concept behind every action or word, is the legendary **Teranga**.*

*(“ Hospitality in its most elevated meaning “ ). In taking knowingly such an important step, we were also aware of the inconveniences linked to any human activity, therefore to the duty of having to welcome international visitors in big numbers . We realized that economic earnings might go along with some concern in relation to changes in our way of life , to attacks on the environment , to a destabilization of the social habitat , and/or unwanted promotion of unequal development . But we have not thought of Tourism to*

*be a vehicle of neocolonialism , not even on spatial grounds, or acculturation . Colonialism , **unlike Tourism** today , did not favor mass contact between North and South . And only well off and learned people could afford to travel for tourism at that time.*

*Instead, we have drawn out programs for its harmonious development , having in mind a limitation of discrepancies it may generate . We have therefore integrated the regional specificities in the Global Tourism Development Project .*

*And the concept of **Sustainability** sprang up among decision makers. At this stage , I would like to point out a few( not all ) examples of sustainability in tourism as it is practiced in Senegal ; and how beneficial this form of tourism turns out to be to local populations .*

*I am all the more delighted to do so since in our West African region, we had had the privilege of a Behaviour Code edicted by King Soundiata Keita, which among other things, laid the foundation of how to secure a preserved , healthy environment . The instrument, promulgated as earky as **1234 AD** is known as the **Mande Charter** . The Charter , anyway , outlined what was later to be labeled “ **Sustainability** “ . That was when this great city of LEEUWARDEN where we are proud and honoured to be today , was being founded.*

*Very distinguished guests , Ladies and Gentlemen , I am sure you will agree with me that this is a very fortunate coincidence . It is as if Leeuwarden, in the heart of the Old Continent of Europe, has felt the **African Pulse** eight centuries ago. Today , we are grateful to the organizers of this great gathering , to give the Motherland of Africa , a unique opportunity to communicate with Leeuwarden . That’s done through some of us , unpretentious tourists.*

*To come back to the selected examples , in order to cope with the limits of our subject today , i.e the **North/South** devide notion, I am going to take two major examples : one in the North of Senegal, another in the South of the country .*

***First** , the South . As early as the **1970’s** , we experienced , in cooperation with the French Technical Assistance, the concept of **Integrated Rural Tourism** as we called it .*

*What was it all about . In a score of villages in the southern part of the country known as **Lower Casamance**, for the first time ever , a unique experience of tourism was carried out , consisting in getting the visitor , basically from Europe , to stay in a hut (one of many that formed the lodge called “camp” ) with basic (although neat) equipment , to share the meal of*

*the villagers and their daily activities, i.e field , household activities, in short taking part in the daily life of the village . In turn , the **moderate fee** paid for full board and lodging , could help , under the management of a Board consensually designated among the inhabitants , to build social infrastructures like a school , a health center , or a well , and/or reinvest in the camp.*

***Secondly** , the North. This time , upnorth , on the Grande Cote of Senegal , in a village by the name of **POTOU** , some thirty (30)years later, we are experiencing the same great adventure , this time with the **Italian Cooperation**. An Italian NGO has helped build and operate ( by local inhabitants) small lodges , contributing to halt exodus to the urban centers . In the same way than the case mentioned above , local populations take profit of the earnings , to improve their living conditions.*

*In both cases , **local change** has been brought by global exchange. In the field of Governance as such , both cases are interesting in that they illustrate the possibility for willing communities , to go around official centralism , to help secure more decent standards of living to their populations . Maybe , at the occasion of exchanges that I am looking forward to having with all of you , I will be able to give a detailed explanation of that assertion: the particularity of Tourism not being transferred to the **local level** unlike almost all major sectors that make it up.*

*Anyway, with a huge, yet underexploited potential , revolutionary forms of tourism are practicable and are definitely initiated, in accordance with the world demand for more responsible tourism . And the annual 526,300,000 Euros that in Senegal we get from tourism is made of the results of all forms of tourism : seaside resort ,pure cultural tourism,ecotourism...Beyond the amount of money , it matters more to us to be in accordance with the new spirit of tourism, favouring exchange with a more educated , more environmentally concerned tourist, to promote peace and understanding among all nations.*

*Thank you for your attention .*