

# Saint-Louis, Senegal: from heritage to tourism. Compromised local development? *Saint Louis de Senegal: del patrimonio al turismo. ¿Desarrollo local comprometido?*

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## Abstract

Former trading post, colonial city, and French imperial capital turned provincial city in the wake of Africa's independence movements, Saint-Louis in Senegal stands out among the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa. Inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in December of 2000, the city should be a cultural reference point on the nation's tourist circuit. Over fifteen years after its inscription, the greater "Saintlouisian" (from Saint-Louis) area is, however, faced with numerous difficulties and its tourism sector has been unable to lift the city out of its economic stagnation. This article analyzes Saint-Louis and the region in which is located as a tourist destination in the context of the Sahelian crisis by focusing on the heritage/tourism binary and its socioeconomic, spatial, and political consequences.

**Key words:** Saint-Louis of Senegal; World Heritage, Local Development, Stakeholders.

## Resumen

Antigua factoría, ciudad colonial, capital del imperio francés relegada al simple nivel de ciudad provincial con las independencias africanas, San Louis de Senegal ha tenido un tratamiento excepcional entre las ciudades del Africa subsahariana. Inscrita en diciembre del 2000 en la lista del patrimonio mundial de la Unesco, la ciudad debía ser la figura de proa del turismo cultural en el mapa del turismo nacional. Más de quince años después de su inscripción, la aglomeración sanluisiana (de Saint Louis) debe de hacer frente a numerosas dificultades y el sector del turismo no consigue extirpar la ciudad de su marasmo económico. El artículo propone un análisis del destino turístico Saint-Louis y de su región en el contexto de la crisis en el Sahel, a través de la dualidad patrimonio/turismo y de sus consecuencias socioeconómicas, espaciales y políticas.

**Palabras clave:** Saint-Louis del Senegal, patrimonio mundial, Desarrollo local, agentes.

## Summary

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## 1. Introduction

Located north of Senegal, in the Senegal River delta, Saint-Louis is a settlement of more than 200,000 inhabitants<sup>1</sup>. The site, consisting of a succession of islands and backwaters, is built on the sandy banks of the mouth of the river at the Atlantic Ocean. The year 1659 marks the beginning of its urban history with the construction of a fort by the Cape Verde company (Barry: 1985) on the island of Ndar<sup>2</sup>. Classified a world heritage site by Unesco in 2000<sup>3</sup>, the city of Saint-Louis has undergone major changes. Heritage therefore became an engine for development of the city, especially through tourism and its related activities. The unity of heritage and tourism is expected to reinforce harmonious local development. At the same time, worldwide, the "heritage industry" is increasingly standardized in both the design and development of sites and in their execution up to dedicated territorial marketing, all capable of supporting the emergence of a cult: "the cult of heritage." Therefore, along with trends that mark advanced capitalist societies in terms of consumption and culture, heritage in turn becomes an ordinary object of consumption.

This article deciphers the issues and impacts of tourism development policies that have occurred because of the classification of the island of Saint-Louis. This leads to questions on several points. Has Saint-Louis heritage launched or revived cultural tourism? What are the benefits to the city? Where do the tourists come from and approximately how many are there? Who are the actors and on what elements of the heritage are they based to promote tourism on the national or international exchequer? Do tourist facilities meet the ambitions expected by the ranking: adequacy of the means of transport to reach the city? Hospitality capacity of tourist establishments? Level of standing? High cost? Cleanliness? Professionalism of the operators? Competition with other destinations? Does the difficult geopolitical context in the Sahel, with the presence of terrorist groups, have direct impact on Saint-Louis tourism? What is the image of the country abroad? Finally, what are the steps to establish sustainable tourism capable of safeguarding the heritage?

For this reflection, the article first use a bibliography based on recent theses and studies, older monographs and various reports dealing with mainly the city of Saint-Louis. Interviews were held with the different tourism actors in St. Louis to understand if its ranking could allow the city to become a tourist destination in its own right. Other interviews were held with actors in the management of the architectural and urban heritage to assess the role of tourism in the rehabilitation operations, requalification and renovation. The maps illustrate some of the findings. Photography itself has allowed understanding the reality of tourism and evolution of the building process.

The article is divided into three parts. The first point deals with relations between " heritage" and " tourism" through the stakeholders' presentation to find out if the heritage of Saint-Louis is able to ensure local development based on tourism aiming toward the city's economic and social expansion. The second point analyzes the tourism offer and its realities. Emphasis is placed on its organization, functioning and contributions to the city. And finally, the third point raises the difficulties of the sector and the consequences on heritage. It also gives opportunities to develop tourism beneficial to the city of Saint-Louis and its region.

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<sup>1</sup> Sow, A. (2008): *L'île de Saint-Louis du Sénégal, formes spatiales et formes sociales : destinées d'une ville*. Doctoral Thesis in Space Arrangement and Urban Planning. Université Paris X-Nanterre. These figures are confirmed by the general population census of 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The island of Saint-Louis in Senegal, transferred to the French, was actually called Ndar. Some researchers believe that Ndar was an important market located close to the village of Laybar, but in local oral tradition this was the island called Ndar, a deformation of Ndaal, which means fresh-water canary in wolof. So the city will have a double name: Saint-Louis, the name given by the French, and which remained for the Senegalese administration and Ndar, a local name often used by the Senegalese. These two names refer to the same geographic space.

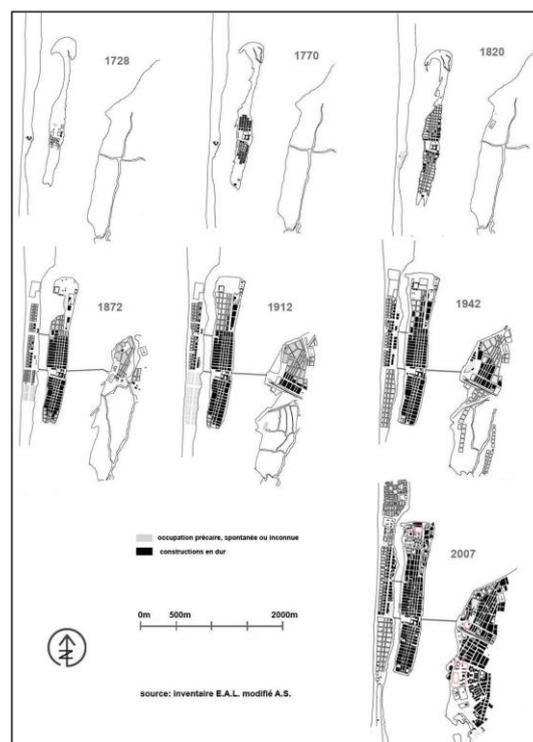
<sup>3</sup> In December 2000, the island of Saint-Louis, the historic seat of the colonial city, is registered on the Unesco world heritage list. This part represents 70 hectares on a community surface of 12 800 hectares.

## 2. The links between heritage and tourism

### 2.1. Heritage at the service of tourism

Inland, the Senegalese authorities distinguish several major tourist regions, each with a different and complementary vocation: Dakar responds more to business tourism; the Petite Côte, the Sine Saloum and the Casamance specialize in seaside tourism, while Saint-Louis and the Bassari (Eastern Senegal) country lend themselves more to cultural tourism and discoveries<sup>4</sup>. Since its ranking, Saint-Louis has experienced a revival of interest by some shareholders, especially in tourism. Indeed, the city founded by the French enjoys a rich imagination that can meet the demands of tourists.

**Figure 1.** Evolution of the urbanization of the city of Saint-Louis: from the island to the urban area



Source: Inventaire "Ecole Architecture Lille", modified by A. Sow

This city was the guardian of the history of Senegal and French-speaking Africa, well before colonization. And because it embodies the memory of Senegal, infinitely more than Dakar in many ways, Saint-Louis must "speak" and "tell stories" (of the ancient kingdoms, slavery, colonization and FWA<sup>5</sup>, the griots, customs, music and dance...). Its architecture and its urban planning show the periods of its past grandeur. It also represents a potential hub for the entire Northwest area of Senegal (Laurent and Tomatis: 2010) and a gateway to West Africa. The presence of the sea and the river, the natural parks of Djoudj<sup>6</sup>,

<sup>4</sup> République du Sénégal, Ministère de l'Economie et des Finances, Agence Nationale de la statistique et de la démographie, Service Régional de Saint-Louis (Ecoloc) (2005) : *Situation économique et sociale de la région de Saint-Louis*.

<sup>5</sup> French West Africa, a colonial policy implemented in 1895 when France felt the need to unify territories conquered in West Africa. Saint-Louis was the first capital of this creation until 1902. Dakar then took the reins, but Saint-Louis remained the capital of Senegal and Mauritania until their independence in 1960.

<sup>6</sup> Recognized as a natural heritage by UNESCO in 1981 thanks to its importance as a migratory bird refuge, the national bird park of Djoudj is located more than 60 Km from Saint-Louis. The park has a surface of 15 000 hectares and hosts an

Langue de Barbarie and the Gueumbeul reserve, enabled the development of tourism and cultural industries. The city, long overshadowed by the Casamance and the Petite Côte, aims to become a stop on Senegal's tourist map.

Indeed, until the middle of the 1990s, the development of tourism was not a major political concern. There were only three tourism destinations in Senegal: Dakar, the Petite Côte and the Casamance together accounted for over 90 percent of the country's hospitality infrastructure. In recent years, tourism seeks to develop because the number of hospitality facilities, hotels and visitors is visible in the city. Aware of the importance of the heritage values of Saint-Louis and its region, and the need to preserve character and authenticity, the tourism Initiative Union of the Saint-Louis Region has established its "goodwill":

"the soul of St. Louis is its architecture. Heritage is something that yields benefits and has become one of our main commercial variables" <sup>7</sup>.

Asked about the current situation of tourism in Saint-Louis, Jean-Jacques Bancal, owner of a hotel on the island of Saint Louis, among his other activities, believes this sector has grown significantly in the northern region: "Fifteen years ago, there were only three hotels in Saint-Louis. Today, there are fifteen, and forty hostels. St. Louis has become an important tourist hub for Senegal's destination," he pointed out before declaring that "this region's offer, through the originality of its heritage, gives Senegal a different dimension."<sup>8</sup> In 1990, the tourist facilities in Saint-Louis consisted of 4 hotels: Hôtel de la Poste, la Résidence, the Palace hotel and the hotel Coumba Bang (former hotel of the Meridian Group located in Sor, outside the classification area). According to the Director of the Tourism Initiative Union in the Region of Saint - Louis:

"After independence, Saint- Louis, Senegal, gradually became a forgotten city. The former privileged class of the colonial system left with the transfer of the capital. Many sons of senior leaders in Saint-Louis have left their family homes gradually falling into ruins for lack of maintenance. Until 1989, the date of the unfortunate events between Senegal and Mauritania, 80% of tourism customers in Saint-Louis came from Mauritania."<sup>9</sup>

This crisis, immediately followed by the closure of the Senegalese-Mauritanian border, put the struggling sector in great difficulties, with huge shortfalls in earnings at least from 1989 to 1991.<sup>10</sup>

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average of 14 000 tourists per year, making it an important site among the protected areas of Senegal from the point of view of its ecological importance and tourism activities. The site has been classified within the Ramsar international standard since 1977, being recognized as humid area of international significance. An important reserve for the ecotourism destination of Senegal, the Djoudj park includes biological a station that is the site for lodging visitors, the backwater of Djoudj, the canal of crocodiles, the white pelican nesting site, the rice fields of Debi-Tiguet, where farmers cultivate more than 900 hectares for rice production. The pelican nesting site is one of the highlights of Djoudj. More than 365 bird species per year frequent the park, 150 of which are from Europe. Visitors observe migratory bird species such as the cormorant, the gray heron and the aquatic phragmites.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmadou Cisse, former director of the Tourism Initiative Union of the Saint-Louis Region, *Interview of October 3, 2007* in Saint-Louis. Idriss Ben Geloune, the current director was heading in the same direction, *Interview of November 20, 2015 in Saint-Louis*.

<sup>8</sup> Sheikh Saad Bou Seye - Director of Publications of Ndarinfo.com - Journalist - Ndarinfo.com - Saint-Louis of Senegal, Edition of March 25, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Ahmadou Cisse, former director of the Office Tourist Information of the Saint-Louis Region, *Interview of October 3, 2007* in Saint-Louis.

<sup>10</sup> In 1989, a diplomatic crisis took place between Senegal and Mauritania, which resulted in closing their common border for more than three years. In one year, Mauritania expelled all of the Senegalese (70 000) from its territory and thousands of Mauritians in turn were ejected from Senegal. To this must be added the execution in Mauritania of an Arabization plan by the former regime that consisted of excluding and excommunicating black Mauritians. During this crisis resulted in the expulsion of more than 50 000 Black Africans (Halpulaar'en, Soninkés, Wolofs) and Black Berbers (former black slaves), refugees to Senegal and Mali. With the democratization of the political system and the change taking place in the middle of 2007, a plan was made for the refugees to return. Since January 2008, thanks to the support of the High Commissariat of Refugees (HCR), these former refugees, mostly Senegalese and Malians, gradually reached their countries of origin in small groups. The new Mauritanian regime that came out of the military coup of August 2008 showed readiness to continue the return movement of political refugees. Between 2008 and 2017, after

**Figure 2.** From the celebration of colonialism to assertions of Muslim identity



Sources: Engravings, Crds. Photographs 2: Rakkats. A. Sow

Aware of the enormous potential of tourism and the significant contribution that could make in the local economy, the authorities and tourism professionals in the sector have undertaken initiatives. Tourism efforts for Saint-Louis and the surrounding area began in the early 1990s. There was a Regional Development Committee which brought together all the heads of departments and members of civil society, chaired by the Minister of tourism at the time. This Committee concluded with the following findings: the site offers considerable but little-exploited potential. The Lille/Nord-Pas-de-Calais region sent a Cooperation expert to assess the potential of the site with the hoteliers. In 1991, the Tourist Initiatives Union was created<sup>11</sup>. The Director of the Saint-Louis Region's Tourism Initiative Union says:

"This is the group that worked with the cooperation expert with Lille which launched the Tourism Initiative Union."<sup>12</sup>

Some time after its creation, the Union reached its first findings: lack of trained tourist guides; lack of heritage tourism routes, and even fewer proposed; existence of calèches (horse-drawn carriages) but unstructured.

The product "city" has met some difficulties, especially with some intellectuals and historians knowledgeable of Senegal's history, but unaware of the architectural heritage of Saint-Louis. The proposal to introduce an urban discovery route resulted in making historical plaques for the architectural heritage as

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political instability at the peak of the State, the situation of black Mauritians seemed to normalize despite some tension connected with ethnic criteria established with implementation of biometric identity cards and passport at the start of 2013.

<sup>11</sup>The Tourism Initiative Union has the primary vocation of welcoming and providing information to tourists, as well as the promotion and development of tourism activity in the region. In fact, it was equipped with an information bureau that welcomed up to 12000 visitors per year. They receive general information on hotel and tourism establishments (hotels, inns, camps, travel agencies), excursions and guided visits, restaurants, sports and cultural recreation, the CRDS and Aéropostale museums, the events and parties, etc. Beyond its mission of providing information, the Tourism Initiative Union, with the support of its partners, began several actions to enhance the heritage and promote tourism in the Saint-Louis region.

<sup>12</sup> Idriss Ben Geloune, director of the Office of Tourist Information of the Saint-Louis Region. *Interview of November 20, 2015* in Saint-Louis.

a tourist destination. In addition, this " search for urban history" has allowed many people to become interested in colonial heritage, the latter still too often being marginalized and dismissed (Sow): 2014) lacking ownership by the populations. Subsequently, the Ministry of tourism developed a full relaunch strategy for promotion of the "Saint-Louis destination."

**Figure 3.** The discovery of heritage. the Hôtel de la Poste



Source: A. Sow, 2015

## 2.2. A Circuit of Discovery for Architectural and Urban Heritage

The initiatives of establishing an urban heritage tour of with the illustrated map of the city of Saint-Louis, with the preparation of brochures on « *Saint-Louis du Sénégal – Ville d'Afrique, Cité magique* », « *Saint-Louis entre fleuve et océan* », « *Saint-Louis Ville d'Art et d'Histoire* » ("Saint-Louis - Senegal - African city, magic city" , "Saint-Louis between river and ocean" , "Saint-Louis City of Art and history") , training professional guides, and collection of large carriage operators in economic interest groups (I.E.G.) headed by young local entrepreneurs, all contribute to heritage preservation and development for cultural and economic revitalization of Saint-Louis.

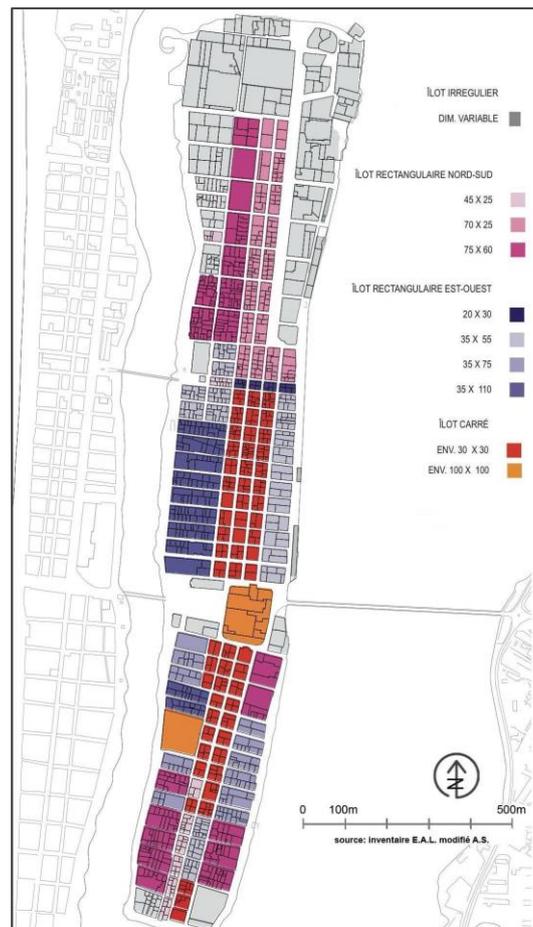
The city is favored in this tourism policy by its proximity to the nature parks of Langue de Barbarie, Gueumbeul and Djoudj. The recommissioning of the legendary ship *Bou El Mogdad* allows heading upriver starting from Saint-Louis to Podor, a city known for its fort and located about 200 kilometers upstream. This circuit into the hinterland is a first step in the development of regional tourism<sup>13</sup>. In addition, along with the traditional editions of promotional material for the city of Saint-Louis, there are brochures on the region: « *Dagana entre Diéri et Waalo* », « *Podor entre Caravelles et Caravanes* », « *Saint-Louis et la Région du Fleuve* » ('Dagana between Dieri and Waalo', "Podor between caravans and caravels," "Saint-Louis and the River Region), pamphlets on the parks of Djoudj and Langue de Barbarie, « *Guide des espaces naturels de la région de Saint-Louis* », guide « *En remontant le fleuve Sénégal de Saint-Louis à Bakel* » ("Guide to natural areas in the region of Saint-Louis," " Going up Senegal River to Saint-Louis in Bakel,") and a poster titled "Pourquoi ne pas choisir l'authenticité " ("Why not choose authenticity?). The head of the NGO *Initiative for Sustainable Development (ISD)* adds:

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Jacques Bancal, director of the hotel Résidence and also President of the Tourism Initiative Union of the Saint-Louis Region brought together a group of stakeholders to recommission the *Bou El Mogdad*. Functioning since November 2005, on a week-long route between Saint-Louis and Podor, with several planned stops, the price per person was 655 957 F CFA (1000 euros) on average for full board, including everything but the airplane ticket. If for a certain clientele, essentially Europeans, this price seems acceptable, for the majority of Senegalese, this represents a fortune.

“the structure and the Rhône-Alpes region are working with tour operators and political stakeholders in the region of Saint-Louis to establish an interpretation tour of the Saint-Louis area with signs indicating different sites and monuments of the region and directional signs from RN2 to the heart of the sites (60 road signs and 30 village boundary monuments).<sup>14</sup>”

The tourism initiative union has also housed the Museum since October 2005, in partnership with the association “Mémoire d'Aéropostale” of Toulouse, of the Jean Mermoz Postcard Museum. It has thus revived this adventure while paying tribute to the illustrious characters who participated.

**Figure 4.** The different islets of the island: colonial heritage



Source: Inventaire “Ecole Architecture Lille”, modified by A. Sow

<sup>14</sup>Serge Pajot, Director of the NGO Initiative for Sustainable Development (IDD), *Interview of 22 November 2015*, in Saint-Louis. This interview took place in Crds grâce and in company of Fatima Fall director of this institution. Starting with this experience of the Saint-Louis region, Serge Pajot is establishing tourism circuits in many regions of Senegal between 2008 and 2015.

The permanent exhibition, in addition to holding iconography, paintings, posters and archival documents, chronicles the history and evolution of the Air Mail Service, the life and the career of Jean Mermoz, as well as the lives of other prominent characters of the Air Mail Service (Pierre-Georges Latécoère, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Henri Guillaumet, etc). The Union is conducting two studies. While the first addresses "*the place and role of Saint-Louis in the Atlantic slave trade and domestic slavery*" to really understand the city's role in the Atlantic slave trade and its triangular relationships Europe - Africa - Americas<sup>15</sup>, the second, titled "*the traditional history, myths and legends of the Saint-Louis region*," is initially to get in touch with contacts in the areas of investigation; e.g., the Fuuta Toro the Waalo and the Community of Saint-Louis.

Centers of interest were then arranged according to their relevance, and about forty individuals, mostly seniors, were interviewed and recorded on audio cassettes. Here, the hope is to preserve, develop and transmit the intangible and living cultural heritage in the Valley of the Senegal River.

### 2.3. Many associations serving heritage and tourism. The Saint-Louis Jazz Association and its international Jazz Festival

A group of music fans and tourism operators, in love with Saint-Louis, in 1991 established an association named Saint-Louis Jazz, in honor of the first Saint-Louis Jazz group in 1946. This association has set a goal on the one hand to organize a Jazz Festival every year in May in order to reconnect with the history of this music from several training groups have emerged: the Saint-Louis Jazz in 1946, Jazz Star in 1947, and Amical Jazz and the Quintet Baby in the years 1950-1960. These groups are led by the biggest names in Jazz, all from Saint-Louis, Joe Nash, Doudou Azmy, Papa Samba Diop alias Mba, Gana Mbow and, more recently, Aminata Fall. On the other hand, the association wished to give the city a festive dimension.

Since 1991, thanks to successful tourism marketing, the Saint-Louis Jazz Festival became a cultural event of international renown. In parallel with the Festival that lasts a week, a part of the Place Faidherbe is transformed into a market displaying the local products and works of art of the region. Alongside this exhibit and sale space, the musical event has two parts: *In* and *Off*. The *In* translates as an event inside a room or in a closed space; the admission, paid or by invitation, is controlled by the organizers.

This event takes place from 8 at night to 2 in the morning at Place Faidherbe, converted for the occasion. It usually hosts great Jazz artists. The public is essentially foreign, with many Western tourists and a few Senegalese Jazz fans. The *Off*, free meanwhile, is performed in open free spaces. This event takes place from 4 in the afternoon to 10 at night and welcomes mainly Senegalese artists of all musical genres, with a predominance of *Mbalax*<sup>16</sup>. The audience is essentially composed of Saint-Louis residents. *Off* Sponsors are often non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attempting to reach young people with their messages. Each year an awareness theme is covered (rights and duties of children, child beggars, pedophilia...).

On two occasions, heritage has been in the spotlight. During the thirteenth edition from 4 to 7 May 2005, Unesco signed a partnership with the Saint-Louis Jazz Association to raise awareness in Saint-Louis for the preservation of its cultural heritage. On April 23, 2005, the Unesco plaque was placed in a formal ceremony symbolizing the inclusion of the Island of Saint-Louis on the world heritage list. The goal of Unesco was to raise awareness, in particular among young people, to encourage respect, safeguarding and transmission of the cultural heritage. This heritage theme was addressed from 11 to 16 May 2016 during the twenty-fourth edition due to the risk of the Saint-Louis Island ranking on the list of endangered world heritage.

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<sup>15</sup> Even if, according to certain historians, Saint-Louis played a greater role in the slave trade than did Gorée, Senegalese authorities believe that the latter city is more closely associated with it. Saint-Louis, therefore, has no need to compete in this area, especially since the city has other assets that are not found elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup> Serge Pajot, Director of the NGO Initiative for Sustainable Development (IDD), *Interview of 22 November 2015*, in Saint-Louis. This interview took place in Crds grâce and in company of Fatima Fall director of this institution. Starting with this experience of the Saint-Louis region, Serge Pajot is establishing tourism circuits in many regions of Senegal between 2008 and 2015.

#### 2.4. From the Association for the Restoration and Preservation of Saint-Louis Architecture (ARCAS) to the emergence of associations under the heritage label

Founded in 2000 on the initiative of civil society, the Association for the Restoration and Conservation of the Saint-Louis Architecture (ARCAS) aims to preserve and highlight the architectural heritage of Saint-Louis, in partnership with the Government of Senegal as well as with other organizations and associations.

This association, which brings together professionals of the heritage and tourism trades is managed by a volunteer Steering Committee. It educates people about the major risks of alterations of the architectural heritage, including the elements of ornamentation at risk such as the doors, balconies and windows of the buildings; it intends to counteract the increasingly frequent disappearances of houses. Thus, it leads worksites to witness restoration of the architectural heritage of the island and to encourage residents to adopt personal initiatives for the rehabilitation of homes. The Association leads a heritage education and awareness project for children in a school on the island. The project execution has allowed students to discover Saint-Louis architecture (shapes, colors, building organization, and use of space...) through their own perceptions.

Today, there are several associations working in Saint-Louis heritage to support to the tourism sector. Among these are *Ndart*, *l'Association pour le Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers de l'Élégance et Entre'vues*.

*Ndart* seeks to preserve the historical traditions of Saint-Louis elegance, the heritage of women of mixed race known as *Signares* (Shining Lights) and their Fanal (lantern festival). *Ndart* works on the memory of the traditions and has over 100 historical costumes and accessories. Thanks to this collection, it organizes large Takusaan (processions in wolof), festivals or celebrations. This association also aims, through a fashion show, to boost the sector of stylists-creators with a contest.

The Association for the Conservatory of Arts and Crafts of Elegance (ACACE) is essentially involved in traditional African fabric manufacturing. This association has opened a Conservatory on Saint-Louis Island to show residents and visitors all the objects of Senegalese adornment. These include, among others weavings, dyes, embroidery, types of hairstyles (braids), jewelry, accessories...

The *Entre'vues* Association has the main objective to contribute to the preservation of the heritage and to promote it through support to certain economic development targets of the region. With doors open in November, coinciding with the start of the tourist season in Senegal, *Entre'vues* has completed eight editions between 2009 and 2016, mixing artists, writers, photographers, and shared stories. The edition before last has allowed residents and tourists to discover the architectural and urban heritage as well as many treasures of the cultural and intangible heritage. Since 2013, these open houses have been held in partnership with the students of the Heritage Trades Section of the Gaston Berger University of Saint-Louis.

This presentation shows that tour operators and civil society were levers of development of cultural tourism of the city of Saint-Louis with a regional scope. Do these efforts contribute to local tourism development?

### 3. Tourism: A Still Undervalued and Anarchic Field. Characteristics of Tourism in Saint-Louis

After fishing, tourism is the second formal economic sector of Saint-Louis and its region and produces a high added value. The number of facilities has increased, with more than 60 accredited tourism establishments consisting of 26 hotels, 16 camps, 33 hostels, and a few guest houses, for a capacity of nearly 2,000 beds. However, according to the study by the AFD<sup>17</sup> However, according to the study by the AFD: "*Saint-Louis offers 1,600 beds at best (or about 841 rooms, including 103 on Sor, 328 on the island, 250 on the Langue de Barbarie, about twenty in Gandiolais, 35 in the area of Louga/Lompoul, 40 in the Djoudj, 29 in Richard Toll, 8 in Dagana and 28 in Podor). The only "international level" 3-star*

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<sup>17</sup> République du Sénégal, Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, Agence Nationale de la statistique et de la démographie, Service Régional de Saint-Louis (Ecoloc) (2005) : *Situation économique et sociale de la région de Saint-Louis*. Gravari-Barbas, M. dir (2005) : *Habiter le patrimoine. Enjeux, Approches, Vécu*. Rennes : PUR.

*accommodations only a few hotel rooms and 1 or 2 hotels, a few hundred beds at most"* (Laurent and Tomatis): 2010, 6).

Although Saint-Louis is the second potential destination in Senegal in terms of capacity after Petite Côte, the city and its region occupy fourth place in Senegal after Petite Côte, Dakar and Casamance. At the height of its tourist activities, the St. Louis destination barely received 10% of international tourists visiting the country.

While, since 2013, Senegalese tourism places in the TOP 10 of the African countries most in demand by tourists with the arrival of a million visitors according to a ranking of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), according to figures from 2012<sup>18</sup>, the destination of Saint-Louis has undergone a real setback, followed by stagnation in the number of tourists<sup>19</sup>. Between 2009 and 2015, the city receives between 55,000 and 17,000 international tourists. Seventy percent of them are French. Spaniards represent 25 percent. The remaining 5% are Belgians, Italians, Americans and Africans. They spend an average of 1.9 nights, or less than two days, in Saint-Louis.

However, if we add the Senegalese visitors on the pilgrimage of the *two Rakkats*<sup>20</sup>, the August 15th events<sup>21</sup>, the regattas, the week of the Lantern, the Jazz Festival and other cultural events, stakeholders believe domestic tourists number nearly 2 million a year<sup>22</sup>. Although these tourists are involved in improving the image of the city, the direct economic impact is insignificant.

### 3.1. Economic benefits

In 1997, with a capacity 26 facilities composed of 256 rooms with 520 beds: *"tourist activity has reached a production of 2.4 billion francs CFA in 1997 for a value added of 1.3 billion francs CFA. It employs 421, made up mainly of young people and women who receive remuneration of 394 million francs CFA."*

Current Saint-Louis Tourism produced an added value of more than 4 billion CFA francs and occupies about 600 assets. Indirect jobs generated by this activity employ about 15,000 people, with the majority working in crafts. Most of the tourist facilities are located in the old town and at Hydrobase beach as are the majority of other indirect activities related to tourism. In 2007, a study showed *"that there are 18 hotels, 34 restaurants and bars, 11 service shops, 58 craftspeople, 126 production artisans, 43 telecenters and cybercafés, and 6 nightclubs. Overall, the island has 120 activities related to tourism out of its 517*

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<sup>18</sup> Egypt has long dominated in this classification with 11, 2 million tourists. Globally, these statistics note a progression in the number of tourists arriving on this continent, of 6 %, also allowing reaching the bar of 50 million. This, in financial value, is a product of receipts of 34 billions of dollars. This sum is still low when analyzed at the world level, representing just 3%. The most remarkable progressions on the continent are to the credit of Cameroun (+35%), Tanzania (+24), Sierra Leone (+14), Madagascar (+14), Cap Vert (+13) and the Seychelles (+7).

<sup>19</sup> Official statistical data compared with figures given by the Director of Tourist Information Office and Tourism for the Region of Saint-Louis, *Interview on August 20, 2012*, indicate the following: 31,808 tourists in 2009; 54,960 tourists in 2010; 17,443 tourists in 2011; 18,500 tourists in 2012; 19,400 in 2013; 18,300 in 2014 and approximately 20,000 in 2015. Some tour operators have given an average of 15,000 visitors per year since 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Pilgrimage commemorated since 1975 every September 5, the condemnation, then the deportation in 1895 of the guide and founder of Mouridism, called Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba by the colonial authorities of the era. Called *Deux Rakkats*, this event attracts thousands of faithful of the Mouride brotherhood coming from Senegal, of Africa, but also Europe and more recently in North America among African-Americans. Many Senegalese of other brotherhoods and religions were present at *Deux Rakkats* due to the implementation since the beginning of the years 2000, of a large market on the island lasting three weeks along with commemoration.

<sup>21</sup> Coinciding with the Christian festival of the Assumption, the 15<sup>th</sup> of August holds a special meaning for Senegalese youth. Many young people gather at Hydrobase Beach, located 10 km from Saint-Louis, to watch, listen, and dance to the sounds of renowned musicians. August 15 has become a yearly ritual and now figures among Saint-Louis's most famous festivals.

<sup>22</sup> The quoted data were provided by the Office of Tourist Information and Tourism for the Region of Saint-Louis. The figure of 2 million is probably accounted for by the open-air campers who visit on August 15, given that those who make the pilgrimage on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September typically only stay for the day of prayer and/or the regattas. This figure should be taken with caution.

*economic activities. The north and central neighborhoods together host 90 of the 120 tourist economic activities*" (Deleneuve and Vefaille, 2007: 199).

The value added generated by tourism is below expectations. Given the rate of long-term unemployment in the city,<sup>23</sup> the direct and indirect jobs generated by tourism are insignificant. Tourism does not yet cover the job losses in the fishing industry. Faced with the lack of jobs, many people will do anything to avoid being inactive. They join the informal sector, thus enlarging its workforce.

More serious still, since the beginning of the month of August 2013, layoffs have been noted in several hotel accommodations<sup>24</sup>. Recently, the Diamarek hotel complex located at Hydrobase beach put up a "for sale" sign. Visits to the hotel sites showed a sharp decline. According to official figures, tourist activity declined by 20 to 30% between 2013 and 2015, compared to 2011 and 2012. Tourism professionals shared their concern on this issue in a meeting with the new Governor of Saint-Louis. This slump is explained by the economic crisis that spared no country, but as an aggravating factor, the stakeholders point to what they see as "anarchy" in the tourism sector.

While, according to many tourist operators, tourism in the region has real potential, it still true that in 2016 Saint-Louis was absent from the map of Senegalese tourist destinations.

### **3.2. This sector, once controlled by foreigners, but that has become increasingly "Senegalized"**

Very little of the profits generated by tourism remained in Senegal until the early 2000s. Indeed, more than half of the direct and indirect tourism in Saint-Louis was controlled by foreigners. In many cases, these are major global tourist groups whose presence is more pronounced on Petite Côte than Saint-Louis.

For the old town, most of the tourist activity was concentrated among Europeans or certain nationals of other African countries. In both cases, profits are usually repatriated to the country of origin of investors. Even if most of the indirect jobs are still controlled by nationals, the situation of tourism investment is increasingly questioned. Some Senegalese from abroad, wanting to return permanently to the country, invest their savings in tourism activity. This long absence for people known to have business sense is linked to a former social stigma marking hoteliers as accomplices of tourists looking for debauchery.

Thus, many people working in the tourism industry are still struggling to learn the jobs they occupy. For example, it is still frowned upon in a Senegalese family for one of its members to work in a bar, a disco, a casino, or even an ordinary hotel in a country where more than 95% of the population is Muslim. It is still difficult to reconcile local culture, market economy and personal aspirations.

### **3.3. A lack of hospitality facilities leading to gentrification**

On the occasion of the major cultural events of Saint-Louis (Jazz Festival, Fanal lantern festival, the Two Rakkats), all the hotels are full one month in advance. Some personalities who decide to come at the last moment are often forced to subcontract with the populations to meet this shortfall. Currently investments in the sector are estimated at more than 5 billion CFA francs. More than half of these investments are made up of foreign capital. Even if it is a still marginal phenomenon in Saint-Louis, for some time, the old stones fuel the passions of amateurs of all kinds.

Thus, alongside the tourism stakeholders and some real estate brokers, a new African bourgeois class, primarily European, emerges and is beginning to acquire old Saint-Louis buildings at the cost of millions of CFA francs. This brings tough competition for hoteliers since after restoration of these new acquisitions, new owners often living there for only half the year, or intermittently, take the opportunity to rent their buildings as guesthouses for tourists the rest of the time.

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<sup>23</sup> Of 100 active, only 28 have revenue-generating activities.

<sup>24</sup> Agence de Presse Sénégalaise (APS) : « Des professionnels du tourisme inquiets des difficultés du secteur à Saint-Louis », lundi 5 août 2013.

Many Saint-Louis owners attracted by these exceptionally lucrative offers are selling the family home on the island to invest in land in the community outskirts. The island's ranking on the Unesco list drew attention and created dynamics of all kinds.

The balance between the preservation of the architecture of the place and the positive impact of tourism tips under the search for maximum profit, entailing expulsion of the poor from the island. The development of tourism and a fledgling gentrification coinciding with losses of inhabitants on the island of Saint-Louis, could lead this city slowly but surely to become a City Museum. To avoid this situation, the FDA study advocates the planning and building of tourist accommodations with a capacity of 1,000 beds, aligned with international hotel standards<sup>25</sup>.

#### **4. An unfavorable and difficult tourism context**

##### **4.1. A desert limited to the road**

The historical significance of the transport sector in Saint-Louis is currently declining. At the level of air travel, the international air route landing in Saint-Louis was removed in 2005. Thus, there is almost no air transport or river transport outside the Bou El Mogdad tourist cruise. As for rail transport between Saint-Louis and other communities across the country, it was suspended in the early 1990s and has never returned. The only existing transport to rally Saint-Louis is the road. Dakar, the capital, is only 5 hours away from the major countries from which tourists arrive. However, at least 3 to 4 hours must be added to the drive for the 270 km of road between Dakar Saint-Louis (when everything is running smoothly and without traffic jams!). In addition to a huge waste of time for tourists, the cost of tickets, high airport taxes and visas also obstruct the Saint-Louis destination<sup>26</sup>.

However, the northern capital has an airport with a 2500-meter runway of capable of receiving long-haul type Airbus or Boeing aircraft. Since the early 2000's, charters with a smaller track (1900 m) have served the city. However, as the demand in Saint-Louis is very limited, no company is currently willing to take the risk of scheduling Saint-Louis.

Transport to other parts of the country, consisting of about 80 taxis, 20 cars, is languishing except during cultural and religious events in Saint-Louis, and it concerns mainly Dakar and localities on this axis. For example, on a normal day, only one 7-seat taxi leaves from the Saint-Louis bus station after a minimum wait of three hours between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m., and it serves all towns located between Ndioum and Matam. Many people, who want to get to Fuuta (Valley of the Senegal River) are forced to wait along the national road, at gas stations or in the vicinity of Saint-Louis restaurants, to obtain rides in cars from Dakar.

##### **4.2. Crafts, a poorly organized sector**

Saint-Louis developed quality craftsmanship very early. Originally, the Mauritians and Moroccans, settled in the city since the 19th century, were the most prominent (Sow and Aoustin-Sow): 2015). Throughout history, their know-how mixed with local techniques leading to the emergence of craftspeople whose reputation, in number and quality, spread across the Senegalese border. The Saint-Louis Chamber of

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<sup>25</sup> The Agence Française de Développement (French Development Agency) has given a loan of 16 million CFA francs to the State of Senegal for the restoration of architectural heritage and the revitalization of tourism development in the city of Saint-Louis. This project is struggling to get off the ground because of the players involved and conflicts of interest.

<sup>26</sup> Between July of 2013 and June of 2015, a visa was required for Europeans wishing to travel to Senegal. As the Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs had announced would happen, Senegal ended up enacting visa reciprocity, as had long been sought by local associations. Nationals of countries requiring visas must make the same arrangements to remain in Senegal. Concerns voiced both by tour agencies and tourists themselves finally persuaded Senegalese authorities that the measure had harmful consequences. Starting on July 1, 2015, visas are no longer required for Western nationals traveling to Senegal. The measure aims to boost tourism, a key sector in the "Emerging Senegal" plan.

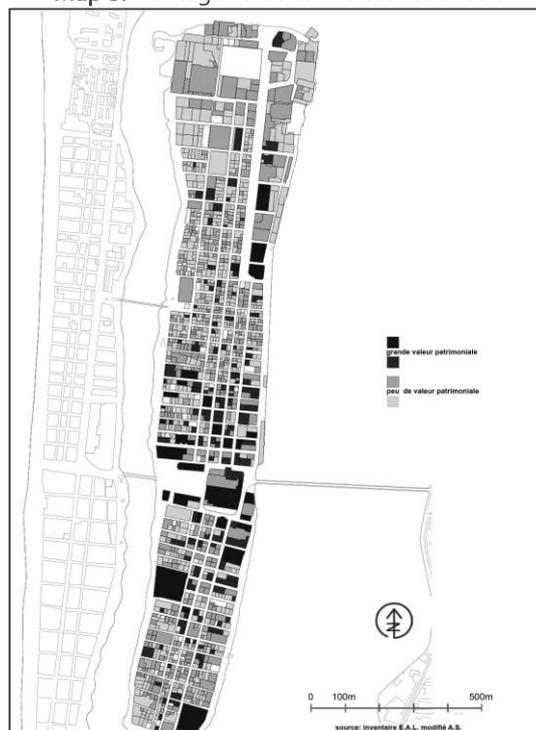
Commerce, Industry and Agriculture estimated their numbers at more than 10,000 people including employers, (111 business leaders), artisans (500), apprentices and live-in caregivers. According to this structure, the crafts trades have developed a great deal and can be divided into three components: craftspeople, service artisans and production workers. Craftsmen, with 30 business leaders, represent about 10 per cent of the workforce and mainly concern the trades of the jewelry, tannery, wood sculpture, embroidery/knitting and dyeing. Grouped in the craft village of Sor for production and on a street in the northern district of the island, specializing in marketing. Activities of these craftspeople are still handed down from father to son since those who exercise them belong mostly to one caste (*Nienio*). It is a sector with a strong contribution. Service artisans are estimated at 28% of the total and include, in order of numerical importance, activities of hair styling and braiding, mechanical repair, electricity and plumbing. They are everywhere in the urban area and this occupation is open to all people without any consideration.

Finally, the production artisans, by far the most important with 62%, are engaged in fish processing, sewing and design, masonry, carpentry, and the manufacturing of food products such as bread. They are everywhere in the urban area and this body is open to all populations. On the island, they are installed in the old colonial shops with structural frames, which restrict them in their development opportunities. The average surface of a shop is 5 x 5 meters, although there are smaller and larger shops. This poses many problems for some craft activities that require more space and ventilation to work. For example, many craftspeople making doors and windows have their cutting tools for wood in the street, occupying the sidewalk or pavement and also creating risks of accidents. This is detrimental to the tourism sector because many craft activities leave an unstructured and neglected city image.

#### 4.3. The management of public space: speculation in waste management

Politicians such as officials of the State services experience more and more difficulties to establish precise rules, accepted and respected by all the players. In the face of the tourism vocation that many stakeholders want to give to the city because of the Unesco classification, new phenomena, such as land speculation, appear. The traditionally marked boundaries between social, political, economic and cultural environments become porous and blurred.

Map 3: Heritage value to the tourist circuit



Source: Inventaire "Ecole Architecture Lille", modified by A.Sow

This speculation is that hoteliers looking for strategic facilities in the island are willing to consider any proposal. In recent years, the island houses located on the docks with a view of the river have become coveted by hotel investors. In the island there is currently a high demand by buyers for a property and/or real estate at a very reduced price. According to one of the two notaries of the city: *“for more than 70 sales per year reported in the commune of Saint-Louis, only 15 to 20 concern the island. about 50 people are looking for an old building or an open lot to rebuild on the island. More than half of these potential buyers are of European nationality. The rest consists essentially of Senegalese citizens abroad and current Senegalese Ministers.”*

This opposition between demand and supply, coupled with the scarcity of land in the island inevitably lead to speculation with alarming prices: *“the price per square meter in the island ranges from 400.000 to 500.000 CFA Francs, or 610 to 762 euros”* said the Director of the Regional Directorate of urban planning. The consequence of that hype was to construct higher and higher buildings. Thus during the colonial period, height differences were established as follows: R + 2 corresponded to a template for equipment, R + 1 to the colonial houses in the heart of the island, the constructions on the ground floor to the homes of the black population. The transition between DRC and R + 1 was gradual from the center toward the south and north ends of the island. Today, this zoning of the colonial era does not exist and new construction no longer respects this logic. Since then, some promoters rebuild R + 1 at the Center and R + 3 at the south to have views over the river and the sea. Height becomes a means by which the developer makes the large investment pay off. Thus, we witness building-heights being pushed to the limit. Traditional hierarchies between buildings fade more and more to disappear entirely in some places.

In addition to ongoing destruction, other changes are observed. This included uses of new construction that accompanied the change of activities. Degraded or existing warehouses are destroyed and in their place, investors build hotel complexes with 2, 3, or 4 floors. The north and south points, traditionally made up of public housing barracks, are areas where the transformations are the most spectacular. Thus, instead of barracks, multi-story buildings were built of stone and brick.

With limited resources and infrastructure needed for a tourist city, some hoteliers no longer hesitate to intervene in public space to participate in their way to the improving the visitors' living environment. Although considerable efforts have been made in the collection and the treatment of garbage with the support of the Cooperation Wallonia Brussels, Saint-Louis is still facing, like the cities of the third world, the difficulties associated with regular waste pick-ups.

As such, in recent years, the Association of hotel owners in Saint-Louis has adopted a position on this issue to “support the efforts undertaken by the city in terms of cleanliness.” Thus, each hotel ensures the garbage collection in its immediate environment. Others also create outdoor facilities, such as in the south where there are two hotel complexes. The docks were renovated with coconut trees and well-kept floral gardens. The roads have been redone. Behind their buildings, brand new, is “the City of Barracks,” a space stigmatized because of its precarious habitat and the poverty of its residents. These infrastructure developments, done piecemeal, without prior consultation with the facilities provided by the authorities, encourage discontinuities and urban discrepancies.

Lack of cooperation? Failure of local and State authorities in the face of their prerogatives? In any case, in addition to positioning itself as a major player, some use this status to quickly increase their business, allowing the inhabitants of the “City of Barracks” to live in a precarious urban and architectural situation that builds economic and social distress.

## 5. Conclusion

Today, tourism in Saint-Louis and its region has a bleak outlook. The number of visitors steadily declining and tourism industries are in crisis. Heritage, which should be a lever for development is “hijacked” for other uses because of the day-to-day concerns of the population facing major socio-economic difficulties. The difficult geopolitical context of the Sahel partly explains the “desertion” of the main customers of the Saint-Louis destination. The activism of some terrorist groups operating in Sahel turns Western tourists away from Saint-Louis, a city historically known as a meeting point between black Africans, the Arab-Berbers and the West.

However, entering the TOP 10 African with more than 1 million visitors since 2012, Senegal is succeeding with its tourism investments. This success is tied to proven democracy and political stability prevailing there, making Senegal a stable country with a good image abroad, open, tolerant and with a hospitable population. However, without a fast and durable peace in Casamance and in the Sahel, the foundations of its future tourism development are compromised because Saint-Louis is not Senegal. Indeed, analysis shows that the tourism sector of Saint-Louis and its region has always been dependent on the peace of the states along the Senegal River Valley: Mauritania, Mali, Guinea... The Nation of Senegal, by signing an agreement with France through the French Development Agency for a loan of 22.5 million euros (16 billion CFA francs) and a grant of 1 million euros, seeks to promote local development with people as direct, primary beneficiaries. This explains the strong involvement of local communities, including the municipality. This funding should allow "continuing tourism development program and more generally economic activity of the city, to preserve the architectural and environmental heritage of Saint-Louis and its region.

This is therefore, a project with strong economic, social and environmental impact, which will improve the living environment of residents and the working conditions of the population. The tourism development program of Saint-Louis and its region aims toward development of a sustainable tourism focusing on the enhancement of historical, cultural and natural heritages. The idea is to increase the attractiveness of the territory.

This program will only succeed only if governments and local people have a clear vision of tourism development of their city and its region. Some strategies are possible. First of all, the isolation of Saint-Louis must be broken by restoring regular and/or charter flights that goes through lobbying of Senegalese authorities by airlines and tour operators.

Next, tourism activities in St. Louis and the region must be finally assumed and performed by all, just like fishing, rice growing, of sugar industries and the tomato. Both cultural and natural heritage should be the basis of tourism because of the urban history of Saint-Louis and the ornithological park of Djoudj, both Senegalese sites on the Unesco world heritage list. Thus, the St. Louis tourist destination will be diversified to increase the duration of stay of tourists with a regional tourism development plan, also incorporating circuits in Mauritania.

Finally, business tourism should not be overlooked either. This requires holding meetings and conferences and having other specific equipment the University Gaston Berger of Saint-Louis (UGB) and its business incubator are seeking. The BMU fully contributes to the development and economic, cultural, social and scientific expansion of Saint-Louis.

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Abdoul Sow is Research Professor in the School of Civilizations, Religions, Arts, and Communication (UFR) at Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis, Senegal, Abdoul Sow is Head Researcher in the Department of Heritage Professions . One the creators of this innovative discipline in Senegal, he was also the program's director from 2012 until 2016. A geographer with a doctorate in Spatial and Urban Development from Paris Nanterre University and a postgraduate degree (DESS) in Urban Planning and Local Development, he was first in his class in 2000 and is also a practicing urban planner. His work focuses on architectural and urban heritage and tourism, which he places in perspective with the city, the urban, and territories in transformation. Between 2002 and 2010, SOW taught at the University and the School of Architecture and Environmental Design in France. He is an expert member of ICOMOS and of the UNITWIN/ UNESCO Chairs Programme.