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1 Academic work that lies at the crossroads of gender and development issues is already part of a long history (Bisilliat, 1992). Most of the time, it seeks to ascertain how the differences between men and women are part and parcel of social representations, how they are naturalized therein (Bisilliat and Vershuur, 2000), how they are transposed into structural inequalities and how these inequalities are reproduced or modified in the economic and social changes linked to development. But even if it has been around for a long time, this issue within the social sciences is still relevant in the light of persisting inequalities between men and women, and the difficulties facing development policies promoting gender equality.

2 The development of tourism is one of the contexts in which these non-egalitarian relations between men and women have been particularly well investigated for two main reasons: tourism establishes contact between individuals within societies where gender relations are different; tourism causes the emergence of new jobs and new markets in which women and goods or services provided by women take their place.

3 The effects of tourism on development and gender relations within host societies have attracted the attention of intergovernmental organizations, foremost among which is the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO); the non-governmental organizations which often contribute to the development of tourist initiatives, and sometimes even national governments and firms belonging to the tourist industry themselves. The few studies based on international comparisons show that the development of tourism tends to reinforce gender differences rather than to change them. This is particularly the case of the report on employment and the participation of women in the tourist sector, established by the United Nations Forum on Environment and Development for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Hemmati, 1999). This report
concluded that the situation in the tourist economy reflected that of labour markets in general because of the very pronounced gender segregation in employment. Over 70% of employees in menial tasks are women. A detailed analysis of the functions of one or the other genders shows that the dominant sexual division of labour can be found in the tourist economy in an almost grotesque way: women are concentrated in the least valued informal survival sectors of the economy. Therefore, we can conclude from this work that, in the societies of the South that are opening up to tourism, gender relations tend to be reinforced and structural inequalities strengthened.

However, this field of research deserves to be examined in depth by further work: it is both necessary to provide new empirical studies and to refine the analysis of the mechanisms of social reproduction that seem to be at work in this type of context. Therefore, an approach to the gender dimension of development through tourism justifies matching an analysis between the concepts of social and economic roles, and an analysis in terms of social and collective identities. Indeed, while it has been the subject of much research focusing on the representations of ethnicity, the question of the identity dimensions of tourist development remains poorly studied in terms of the evolution or perpetuation of gender relations.

This article will show the situation in the region of Agadez in Niger. This region has experienced fits and starts to its tourist development, the effects of which can be monitored: a destination, which was becoming more and more popular in the 1980s to 1990s, has undergone the negative effects of two rebellions and the rise of Islamic terrorism, to the point of being deserted by tourists today (see for more details the article of Emmanuel Gregory and Marko Scholze in the same dossier). This was a short period of time during which the women of Agadez saw new economic opportunities opening up and new contacts with the outside world. They have retained a very vivid memory that brings them to express sharply contrasting positions on the achievements of that period and the consequences of the disappearance of tourism in the region.

This article, therefore, focuses on how women, especially Tuareg women, have seen their conditions influenced by that tourist parenthesis. It above all concentrates on how identity representations associated with them, especially those that they contribute to shaping themselves, were affected by the development of this economic sector and the contact that they had with tourists. This article also reports on the evolution of these gender identities compared to other social and cultural identities at work, including ethnic identities and group identities within some of these ethnic groups.

Relevant research was conducted in 2010 and 2011 by a small team of teachers and advanced students belonging to the Departments of Geography and Sociology of the University of Niamey and has led to several field missions and to carrying out numerous interviews. An initial trip of exploration led to the identification of tourist and handicraft firms, as well as key players in these areas: managers of travel agencies, senior officials of hotels, guides, artisans, the Regional Office of Craftsmen of Agadez, etc.. The team paid particular attention to the role of women in the various businesses and trades represented. During the second visit, which lasted a month this time, 40 interviews, mostly involving Tuareg women, were conducted in Agadez. These were mainly individual interviews, occasionally semi-directive group interviews. The women interviewed were between 31 and 80 years old, more than one third were around 50 years old. This second step of the methodology thus favoured the standpoint of the players: the descriptions of their activities, their own analyses of their own position as women in the
city of Agadez, their positioning strategies, and especially the ethnic and social categories that they garnered in these descriptions, analyses and strategic statements.

The traditional status of Tuareg women and recent changes

Every society acquires specific knowledge concerning the human being as an individual within the social body (Mauss, 1950; Bruhl, 1935; Griaule, 1947; Cissé Stoezel, 1973 and 1987). The individual is thought of as a “node” or a convergence of signs or relationships, a genealogical element that is part of a whole, a society, outside which he or she can not retain any ontological or axiological consistency whatsoever (N’daw, 1983, p. 150). Society is therefore made up of people, who are involved in a variety of structures: families, lineages, villages, clans, ethnic groups, etc.

Traditional Tuareg society, for example, a society of a matrilineal nature, granted women an important position. A woman was the custodian of the Tuareg culture (Naffet, 2006). It was through the maternal line that powers, those of a warrior aristocracy, were transmitted (Issiag Ag Kato 2003). Noble women (imajighen) were exempted from any physical effort; they alone knew in general how to read and write tifinar (the Berber alphabet), the knowledge of which they handed down to young people. So they devoted their time mainly to cultural reproduction. In the traditional marital institution, they played the central role, from the wedding day, to children’s education through home management. A Tuareg woman also held property rights, and everything that made up the family cell belonged to her starting with the tent and its contents. In case of separation, the man was only allowed his ceremonial dress in the strict sense of the term. Moreover, the imajighen sat alongside their husbands or without them in the Tamenokalat (assemblies of chiefdoms) but had only advisory votes in the “deliberations”. However, they participated actively in the political “intrigues” (Naffet, 2006) to oust the chiefs from power.

In recent decades, this condition has profoundly changed, at least for women who have left their region of origin. The mass exodus of the Tuaregs, their sedentism, the settling of many of them in towns like Agadez and economic changes brought on by these profound upheavals have redistributed the roles and statuses. Forced sedentarization in particular has led women to settle in areas where they have often found themselves without any means of subsistence. Family property has often been sold to ensure the survival of the group. Furthermore, women have often been stripped of their own assets: livestock and jewellery. Loss of livestock has been accompanied by loss of income and material security in cases of divorce. Driven by necessity, Tuareg women have had to submit to productive work that they never took part in beforehand. Their role as educators and counsellors, decisive in the transmission of knowledge to girls in particular, functions no longer as it did before. Finally, sedentism has led women to abandon their former role in the construction and maintenance of tents, a role they have not found in the solid structures with which they are not associated.

Tuareg women who settled in Agadez found themselves immersed in an environment characterized by a strong mix of different cultural groups – Tuareg, Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Songhay, Arabs – and a variety of economic activities related to the role as an exchange hub played by the city between North Africa and the Sahel region. If Agadez has fewer
tourist resources than the surrounding region – mainly landscapes, archaeological heritage and traditional lifestyles of the Aïr Mountains and Ténéré desert, made popular by the first Paris-Dakar rallies, among others – it became, in the 1980s, the gateway to European tourists and the logistics hub of the tourist economy in the region. The inhabitants of the town and its immediate vicinity were integrated into the new economy, while adapting their production and lifestyles. Travel agencies and hostels sprouted up in the town; shepherds offered their services to travel agencies, guiding tourists; farmers, who were market gardeners, have adjusted their range of products to Western tourists’ demands; craftsmen, long specialized in manufacturing furniture and culinary instruments (mortars, ladles, etc.) have turned to the manufacturing of jewellery made out of nickel, gold and silver, realizing very quickly that tourists were very fond of it, etc.

The evolution of the gender division of labour in the tourist parenthesis in Agadez

The different cultural groups represented in Agadez are characterized by more or less specific economic activities; the Tuaregs above all master the art of blacksmithing, making leather goods and weaving palm leaves. All these groups have adopted a gender-based social division of labour that meets two organizing principles: the principle of separation (there are jobs called “men’s jobs” and jobs called “women’s jobs”) and the hierarchical principle (the work of a man is “worth” more than the work of a woman). If the universal character of this structure has been the subject of debate in anthropology (Héritier-Augé, 1984; Peyre and Wiels, 1997), it was obviously common to different populations present in Agadez in the early 1980s. Assigning priority to men in the productive sphere, and to women in the reproductive sphere, and simultaneously the appropriation by men of social functions of high added value (political, religious, military, etc.), is a characteristic shared by the populations of the Sahel, who have come together in this town. Thus blacksmithing is an activity reserved for Tuareg men, while leather work and palm leave weaving have become women’s activities, once women were made to contribute to the craft industry.

Tourist development has not called this structure into question. The Tuaregs have been particularly active in the development of tourist services and handicrafts for tourists and for export. But this development has clearly reinforced the gender differential and corresponding hierarchy of prestige: guide activities and accommodation, considered the most rewarding, were very quickly allotted to Agadez men; women have, on the other hand, rather strengthened their presence in the domestic services, particularly in hostels and have been involved in handicrafts, i.e. in activities considered to be less noble. At the height of the tourist activity, there were only a few women in Agadez at the head of the most prestigious tourist firms: three were female heads of travel agencies in 2000, a fourth woman was a hotel owner. The place that women have occupied in the tourist economy from the 1980s on corresponds to their traditional place on the local labour market: the principle of separation and the hierarchical principle have been transposed there.

For many women, the development of tourism in Agadez has undoubtedly helped many Tuareg women to draw new revenues. If it is impossible to have statistics on turnovers and profits in this area, let alone the distribution of income among individuals, the
interviews emphasize the importance that the flow of money represented for some people when the activity reached its peak. These revenues stem mainly from passing tourists in the 1980s, and then from the exports of their handicrafts by Hausa traders travelling between the Niger and the Maghreb or by European NGOs.

Most of the women who had a gainful employment in the crafts were associated with the artisanal centre of Agadez. This centre has federated up to 1500 members, men and women, a large majority of whom were classified by trade within cooperatives. At the height of the centre’s activity, there were 72 of those cooperatives. The centre received support from the Support Programme for Handicrafts (PAA), which is funded by the Federal Republic of Germany. Women exerted activities that sometimes existed before the development of tourism (leatherwork, basketry, shoemaking, weaving); sometimes there appeared alongside them others (dyeing, the manufacturing of sheets and pillows, knitting, sewing and small businesses). But in fact, these handicraft products sold less and made less profit than the jewellery made by blacksmiths, all of whom were men. The advantage that these blacksmiths had on the tourist market served their wives, who had a few facilities to dispose of their own production, while the other women, including nobles, more often than not, struggled to find buyers, including through the distribution circuits set up by NGOs.

The women’s crafts industry was mainly organized in collective groups, also known as “unions” or “economic interest groups.” From this point of view, the situation in Agadez differs significantly from that observed in the Aïr. At Timia, for example, female artisans worked on their own, most often at home, while men devoted their time to market gardening (Spittler, 1993).

Moreover, even in the areas of choice activities for women, men are the ones who make the decisions. In the field of handicrafts, women just execute, they almost never enjoy positions of responsibility in companies and associations: a study conducted in the late 1990s, while tourism was quite dynamic in the region, showed that the Agadez region had the lowest rate of businesses run by women in Niger, the national average being already very low. In all areas of specialization of craft production, men control the entire cycle of production and marketing. For the manufacture of leather goods and decorative items, for example, men have mastered the trade of raw materials, namely palm leaves (kava) and leather hides; they buy from farmers and breeders and then sell them to women. The latter do not have access to this market. In doing so, men arrogate the profits from various transactions and ensure at the same time the monopoly of the final marketing of these products.

Identity issues of women’s involvement in tourist development

The tourism and craft economy in Agadez are strongly marked by gender differentials in the trades exerted, decision making and the control of the flow of goods and money. However, this article also aims to analyze how respondents account for this state of affairs using identity categories. Analysis of the interviews leads us to four different findings.

The first finding is that the gender difference is very much prevalent in the descriptions and explanations given to us by our interviewees. Interviewed on tourism in Agadez and
the changes it has brought about, especially in the field of handicrafts, many of the people we spoke to were prone to specifying, themselves, the different roles men and women play in these economic sectors; they often related those roles to the roles of one another in the traditional social organization. For example, a female leather worker told us: “women play multiple roles (housework, childcare …) … they exert activities such as dyeing, knitting, they work with leather and skins, manufacture soap cosmetics, do embroidery, manufacture linen sheets, and do the sewing.” Another female leather worker pointed out: “I am an old woman, so I can tell you what women represent in our society even though I was not lucky enough to have many children. The women of Agadez are in charge of the home. They work with skin and weave mats. As you can see, despite my age, I can still make Istufor (a traditional wallet carried by Tuaregs) and pockets.” The President of the artisanal centre of Agadez also told us:” We have (...) a very a good relationship with women. We help them, we will always ensure they evolve.” Such statements readily put gender differences at the heart of the descriptions given to us; they tend to segment those differences geographically, ascribing women to the regional and to the domestic economy. Women’s contributions to the tourist industries and crafts are also presented as being in line with the traditional household chores and when the “evolution” of their condition is referred to, it is encompassed in a statement attesting the perpetuation of paternalistic and patriarchal patterns.

Our second observation is that this fact is often justified by continuity with tradition. According to one dyer: “women should stay at home and men must go out. But staying at home, she must not just cross her arms, she must perform manual tasks to back up the man. Women also have a role to play in the education of children. As far as I’m concerned, I do dyeing and knitting at home.” Therefore for some women, this division of roles presented as being inherited from tradition appears to be satisfactory or rewarding precisely because it reinforces tradition. But these women are also aware of the fact that the skills and know-how they bring to the tourist economy and the social image they convey meet tourist expectations: they perceive among tourists the pleasure of dealing with women for products they strongly associate with the image the latter give of local populations and the role that women can play therein. Thus contact with tourism contributes to strengthening the positions and social identities while legitimizing them: “The arrival of tourists strengthened our identity because it allows us to watch over it”, “tourism gives us a guarantee as for the preservation of our cultural identity.”

Our third observation concerns, more specifically, a group of women who present things from another angle and position themselves differently. These women say they are aware of being embedded in social and political relations that are part of a culture and an ideology that keep them in an inferior position. Those who speak like this say they relied on the tourist context to extricate themselves from this situation. In fact, they still bear witness today to the frustrations they underwent when tourism was at its height in Agadez: “when the tourist industry was in full swing, men prevented us from getting promotion, but we are in an era where we cannot allow this to happen ; “or even more “men benefit more than us from tourism, women are forced to be happy with the leftovers, ” ; “it’s like in other fields, men take over everything.” This time tradition is mentioned as a pretext for conservatism: “men are more involved than women in tourism because they have more resources than we have, they prefer us to stay at home, they hide behind the tradition according to which women should stay at home.” The role that men play in the chain of supply, production and marketing of handicrafts is particularly criticized: “Men often do not let women do the work. They take over
“During the tourist season, everyone finds some benefit whether a man or a woman, ok. (But) we are still trampled down by men. We are really marginalized because it is always to men that we sell our products at a very low price, but they take care they sell them at a more expensive price to tourists.” Few women qualify this type of statement: “When tourists came, women did not wait for their husband to give them what to prepare.”

In this case, the mobilization of gender identity is part of a form of criticism, protest or even resistance. It was able to encourage initiatives that emerge as real alternatives to the situation criticized. The Union of the craftswomen of Agadez was created by bringing together six professional groups. A European NGO, Takkayt, which calls itself “an association supporting farmers’ initiatives,” accompanied this initiative by providing the necessary equipment for the manufacturing of leather goods. The person in charge of the union explained to us: “We drew our revenues from the sale of the products we made, i.e. wallets, purses etc. with five thousand CFA francs per unit. The entire amount was given to each of the female group members. It was an obligation for every woman to pay a lump sum of three thousand francs every four months.” This initiative is clearly presented as an expression of the desire to emancipate women from male guardianship, especially by making them autonomous players in the monetization of their business. It was because of this goal of emancipation that the NGO Takkayt partnered this initiative.

Our fourth and final observation relates to the different effects that tourism seems to have had in the development of gender identities, on the one hand, and ethnic identities on the other. In the interviews we conducted, belonging to an ethnic group was hardly ever cited by our respondents to describe and analyze the tourist parenthesis in Agadez. Whenever it was cited, it was in two ways. In the first type of statement, people said that identity issues, related to the perpetuation or transformation of women’s activities, were similar from one ethnic group to another; in the second type of statement, it was noted that tourism had helped to change the handicraft practices between ethnic groups and between castes within ethnic groups. Thus craftsmanship among the Tuaregs has long been the preserve of the blacksmith caste (inadan in Tamashék). Recently, this activity has spread out to other social categories. So today we can see that the term “inamajalan” (artisan) is much preferred to that of “inadan.” The interviews conducted seem to show that tourism has not so much exercised its power of social transformation in the field of gender identities as in others.

While contributing alongside urbanization and sedentism to the important metamorphoses of the role of women in society, the development of tourism in Agadez has perpetuated the strength of the man-woman couple in the representations of social practices and raised different identity positions among artisans to sometimes justify the manifestations, sometimes to challenge them. Some have accommodated themselves to the identity assigned to them, justified by reference to tradition or promoted by the tourists’ collective fantasy. Others saw in this economic and cultural opening, an opportunity to challenge these assignments. This line of social and identity division appears to be particularly strong and stable when compared to others, albeit more publicized, such as ethnicity.
The repositioning of the handicraft sector in the context of a crisis in tourism

25 With the rebellions of 1990 and 2000 and the rise of Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), tourists have disappeared, and Agadez women have lost their principal clientele of customers passing through. At present, the handicraft centre of Agadez is only a shadow of what it was in the early 1990s; many rooms are closed and only a few craftsmen or craftswomen come there on a regular basis, and some shops stay open for potential visitors. Some collective structures of production and marketing have been maintained, but they had to reposition themselves.

26 Even before the rebellions, some European and Nigerian NGOs had created distribution networks of handicrafts from the region of Agadez to Europe. But the crisis of 2007-2009 has compromised several. Today some initiatives have been trying their best to redirect the flow of production to major Sahelian cities. Fairs are organized today at an almost monthly rate between the different capitals of the region – Ouagadougou, Dakar, Bamako, Niamey, etc. Agadez products are marketed there among many others. In addition, the International Exhibition of Handicrafts for Women (IHEFW), biennial and travelling from one city to another in Niger, is a major outlet for women's handicrafts coming from all over Niger. Its objectives are, among others, to “promote handicrafts by and for women, contribute to the empowerment of women artisans.”

27 However, this type of industrial substitution, from private or state initiative, can not replace in importance the sales formerly ensured throughout the year by the contact with tourists and merchants transiting through Agadez. These attempts at redirecting the marketing of the products to Sahelian trade shows have met with modest success, opening some opportunities certainly, but not allowing as large a production flow at conditions as favourable as in direct relationship with tourists passing through.

28 The crisis of tourism and tourist handicraft in Agadez occupied an important part in the interviews that were conducted in situ. To describe the consequences, the gender differential is generally not mentioned: “When the tourist season was in full swing, we used to collect over a hundred thousand francs a day in our shop. But now with the insecurity, we hardly earn one thousand francs a day.” A craftswoman commented on the situation: “Tourism had a prominent place in the lives of people in Agadez because we sold our products as we wanted to and everyone benefited from it. The lack of tourism today has created an economic imbalance, fatal for Agadez. That is why all tourist-hunters have become real criminals.” A difference in the degree of exposure to the crisis facing men or women is only very rarely mentioned: “That's why we ask the state to do its utmost to bring back peace, lasting peace by helping especially women who are the most vulnerable.”

29 Yet our field analyses have led us to believe that some handicrafts made by men are more resistant to the tourist crisis than most of the products made by women. This is particularly the case for silver jewellery, more particularly the Southern Cross or Cross of Agadez, of which male blacksmiths have become the specialists. This jewellery continues to flow through North-west Africa and Europe thanks to circuits set up during the tourist parenthesis. Unlike women, whose geographic mobility is constrained by social and cultural factors, including the requirement that they have to keep the home and take care of the family, the men were able to migrate to Niamey to move their handicraft business
there to cater for tourists or move across the continent, or even across Europe, to export their know-how and their products.

**Conclusion**

Finally, it appears that tourism at its peak in Agadez has significantly changed the nature of Agadez and helped to give Tuareg women a significant economic role. However, the involvement of the latter in tourism and crafts, although it was new to many, has not led to significant changes in gender relations as they existed beforehand, in particular because of the perpetuation of identity representations prevalent in populations. Gender identities have rather been strengthened even if a minority of people has tried to renegotiate them.

In any event, the crisis in the sector caused by the Tuareg rebellions has had a profound impact on the economic and social situation of these women. They can no longer expect profits from the local tourist market close by for their products, or hope to retain the modest degree of financial independence gained from the latter. Those who were counting on the tourist economy to change gender relations are deprived of resources for their social and political action. Marketing channels for artisan products introduced to compensate do not appear to bring the same resources along with them; nor do they have that pretention.

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NOTES

2. They were Sabara Akan faya, Imordonafala, Alhéri, AgargariSaka, Adili Kaya, N’wala, TuduBiano. These are Haousa names symbolizing the quality or function of the group: for instance mountain of Biano, success, bravery.
3. About 8 euros.
4. Blacksmiths are members of a caste, a group defined by its endogamic and hereditary characteristic, and by its members belonging to the same ethnic group. Unlike their opposite numbers in the west of Niger, the Tuareg blacksmiths are not considered to be members of an inferior cast. With tourism, the trade has been upgraded. Traditionally, the blacksmiths are considered to have mystical powers.
5. Extract from the decree creating the IHEFW

ABSTRACTS

The Agadez region, Niger, experienced an important tourism development between the 1970’s and 1990’s. Then, it was suddenly interrupted by the two successive Tuareg rebellions and the spread of islamist threat. This development led to the rise of new services in town and the growth and adaptation of craftsmanship for fitting the tourist needs and desires. This transformation also led to a new distribution of professional tasks between men and women. This paper presents the modalities of this gendered redistribution of tasks and social identities, during and after the tourism period.
INDEX

Keywords: gender, development, tourism, craftwomen, identity

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