The study intends a comparative analysis of gender social relations in coastal fisheries in three villages situated on the Guinean coast: Bubaque in the island of Bubaque in the Bolama-Bijagós region, Cacheu in Rio Cacheu, Farim in Rio Farim. In these localities, fishery guarantees the feed security for most families and, through marketing, for a great number of urban customers in Bissau markets\(^1\).

These localities were chosen because the main fishing ethnic groups from Guinea-Bissau – Pepels, Bijagos and Beafadas\(^2\) – are concentrated here. Besides the importance of these localities in social and economic terms, feed security and fish market supply, they differ in terms of environmental legislation. This allows to a comparison between behaviours and effects that such legislation can or cannot generate among them. The localities of Farim do not belong to any protected area nor have a specific environmental legislation, whereas Bubaque and Cacheu are part of a protected maritime area. The first is part of a Biosphere Reserve and the second of a National Park of Mangrove.

In Guinea-Bissau as in many other West-African countries, fishing, even being considered a masculine activity, depends to a great extent on women practices and know-how. These know-how and practices have been constantly understated, devaluated, or even ignored. We intend with this study recognizes them and value them in an analysis perspective of gender social relations.

This linking of fishing to a wild nature, the sea, marked strongly the exclusion of men and mainly of women that seek to extract from the sea their subsistence and to build from it their way of life and their culture.

The stigmatization of fishermen exists even today in many societies that see them as exotic, turbulent, individualistic and unruly.

Our study will take account of the relationship between fisheries and community culture, gender relations, feed security, sustainability and cognitive justice.

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\(^1\) Guinea-Bissau’s population is estimated in 1,400,000 inhabitants and almost 25% lives in the capital, Bissau.

\(^2\) Data from the Framework Inquiry in Guinea-Bissau maritime coast, 1998 and 2000/01, CIPA-Research Center of Artisan Fishery, Ministry of Fichery.
At present fishery supplies 16% of proteins for the humanity and a fish production higher than 94 millions tons\(^3\). This activity consists of capture, processing and marketing, mainly of fish, crustaceans and clams - although, to a lesser extent, they also capture reptiles, batrachians, marine mammals and seaweed.

The classification systems employed for the analysis of fisheries show that the distinction between industrial and artisan, is, in reality, a line of well established landmark between two worlds, the North, central, and the South, peripheral, in a relationship not only dichotomist but hierarchical. In a similar way, landmarks of maritime space between the coast and the high sea present the same division instituted by the patriarchy between the House and the World, which establish the responsibilities, spaces and universes between the feminine and masculine sexes.

Woman is the house and man is the world. Thus, transformation and commerce activities depend on woman and those of capture in the sea belong to man. Coastal fishery aims to familiar auto-subsistence and maritime fishery to the market. Here, also, in equivalence with dichotomies such as North/South, Center/Periphery, industrial/artisan fishery, we can recognize that dichotomies such as coastal/maritime fishery, capture/processing and market, formal commerce/ "informal" commerce also include hierarchic relations between sexes.

These dichotomies are submerged by classic classifications, which apprehend fishery from a «spatial» or "technological" point of view. From the «spatial» point of view it corresponds to definite subsequent geographic zones - continent, coast, contiguous maritime zone, wide sea (inside ZEE) and deep sea (outside ZEE\(^4\)). Continental fishery can be done through aquaculture system and through fluvial fishery in rivers, lakes and lagoons. Coastal fishery is done in coastal ecosystems as estuaries, mangrove, reefs, beaches, swamps, deltas.

Coastal ecosystem is often considered a place for leisure and landscape observation. However its value is incalculable for the human survival, not only for feeding, but for

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\(^4\) The Convention of the United Nations on the Right of the Sea, celebrated in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 1982, established several maritime spaces among which the territorial sea and others related - contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone, EEZ, continental platform, high sea. The territorial sea is a coastal water band that reaches 12 nautical miles from the base lines established according to the own Convention. The contiguous zone is the band of more 12 miles beyond the exterior limit of the territorial sea. The EEZ is the maritime space of the responsibility and management of each coastal country and cannot exceed 200 nautical miles from the base lines that had defined the width of the territorial sea. The high sea, or international waters, is defined from the exterior limit of the EEZ and is where free navigation is practiced.
species reproduction, garbage evacuation and other basic services for human beings welfare. From this ecosystem depends the survival of numerous animal species, aquatic and sea plants, birds that reproduce there.

According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report⁵, this is the most productive and most stressed geographic space in the world. Increasing population and technological progress had augmented during the last century in an unprecedented way, making unsustainable the exploration of this ecosystem. In Guinea-Bissau this coastal ecosystem is mainly formed by rivers and islands estuaries and is covered by mangrove, an aquatic plant adapted to saline milieu which supplies coastal agricultural communities with combustible, timber for house building, habitat for the reproduction of several species of fish, shrimp and oysters.

In adjacent wet lands to this ecosystem it is practiced the main process of culture of rice, the "bolanha"⁶ rice, essential base of feeding of families. If we consider that the alimentary diet of most Guineans is made of fish and rice, we can easily understand the importance of this ecosystem and of wet lands for the life of human beings, plants and animals.

Mangrove is in the origin of an alimentary chain that reveals all the vulnerability of this system. Leaves of mangrove create a phytoplankton that feeds a rich zooplankton whose growth is favoured by the type of soils and by tides movement. This zooplankton feeds young shrimps, crabs, oysters and some fish, before becoming adults and moving for high sea. In turn fish predators, birds and men feed from these species.

Besides mangrove, coastal ecosystem offers, at low tide, a favorable soil where shrimps, clams - *combé, lingron* - and crustaceans - *cacri*, crabs -, oysters and some fish species are collected. The coastal ecosystem represents in our study the central environment, because is there that most of fish capture artisan activities are done.

Women fish mainly in mangrove areas, in river estuaries and its tributaries and lakes, "bolanhas" and in slimy lands between two low tides. This particularity, the presence of women in all phases of fishery, has not been properly analyzed, even by the most

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⁵ A study carried out during five years by 1,700 experts in 95 countries - WRI, le PNUE, la Banque mondiale et le PNUD, 2005.

⁶ "Bolanha" is a specific habitat, propitious to the culture of salty water rice, where the marshy soil, plenty of crustaceans, shells and clams, is covered with mangrove and possess a definite dose of salinity and water which is controlled by a system of levees and floodgates through which the management of the necessary water level for each phase of the production of the rice is done. In this ecosystem the first Portuguese navigators identified a variety of rice specific of Africa, *Oryza Glaberrima*, that was gradually substituted through the settling by the *Oryza sativa*, of Asian origin.
interesting feminist studies on fishery, generally concentrated in the activities of processing and marketing to analyze the work of women in this activity. However, we can see that "not-recognition" of fish capture by women means undervalue a feminine know-how essential to the sustainability of this ecosystem from which adult species depend in the high sea, where men exert adult fish capture. This know-how must be understood in its multiple - material and spiritual - dimensions. Just to give an example about clams, combé (*Anadara senilis*), which is the main protein source for many communities, is at the same time a cultural element essential to the ceremonies of initiation and traditional cures. Combé collection is subject to rules that vary greatly between communities, but in some places it is subject to interdiction of collect or transport to other places duly warned to bring about shipwrecks and storms. Undervaluing this know-how is a condition that explains much of failures of environmental protection strategies and plans drawn during last years by international organizations and by post-colonial state, and it may represent a severe risk for the future Guinea-Bissau feed security.

In the territorial sea and the contiguous zone, fishing is done by men with boats, row-canoes or motorized canoes protected by artisan fishery legislation. High sea fishery, inside and outside ZEE, is done by boats of bigger tonnage, and using more sophisticated technical equipment, nets and engines.

The second distinction between artisan and industrial fishery is technological and draws from the kind of device, the equipments employed, specific knowledge and objectives. Artisan fishery is the main halieutic activity and it involves the communities of maritime culture with their own means of production and millenarian know-how and aims in particular to the capture, processing and marketing for auto-subsistence and supplying of local and national, and even international, markets.

Several types of "métier"7 can be classified as artisan having in account the combination of the kind of fish, the technique of capture (type of nets and lines) and the boat or way of locomotion employed.

Besides coastal fishery which, as we pointed out, is practiced in a specific form by women, in groups of neighborhood or age class, using as instrument of work their

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7 The notion of "métier" is used here as a set formed by the species-technique of capture-boat. Thus we can say that "tainha" fishing is a "métier" if we consider the set tainha fish – mesh net – motorized canoe.
circular nets, the hamper-traps or "cambua"\(^8\), maritime artisan fishery is done with canoe, which can be to monoxilar, row-canoe, or motorized. Canoe fishing is lead by a crew of men, hierarchically organized - captain, fishermen, apprentices - which can go from 4 to 10 people in Guinea-Bissau, but in some countries as Ghana it can reach, for certain kind of fishery, 40-50 people. Canoe artisan fishery concentrates mainly in demersal\(^9\), celacea\(^10\) and pelagic\(^11\) species.

In this fishing process, gender relation in the work division makes traditionally from capture a men practice, and processing and marketing, a women practice. Artisan fishery has incorporated some technical innovations, such as certain kinds of nets, new refrigeration techniques and, mostly, motorization with the introduction of outboard motors.

This last innovation, the motorization, began in Ghana in the sixties, in Senegal in the seventies, in Guinea-Bissau in the middle of eighties, and has had important effects on the creation of a new African entrepreneurial class where women are relevant. This phenomenon has been object of analysis in some African countries, particularly the Ghana and Senegal, where women investment in fishing means of production has changed the traditional division between sexes in fishery (Christensen, 1977; Odotei, 1991; Overa, 1992). This fishery is done in a complex, fragile and mobile marine ecosystem.

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\(^8\) Technique to stick woods and rocks in the beach sand at high tide and to wait that fish are hindered to pass at low tide.

\(^9\) Demersal species are those whose habitat is deeper, for example badejo, linguado, bica, sereia, bonita, catfish, garoupa, sinapa, simpoteba.

\(^10\) Selaciens species are cartilaginous fish like sharks, rays.

\(^11\) Coastal pelagic species as for example tainha, sardine, chicharro, cor-cor, and high sea pelagic species like tuna, espadão, bonita pintada.