

Case no. 1

Senegal-Mauritania conflict

Drought cycle and evolution of pastoralist dynamics

The transhumant and/or nomadic agropastoralists in the region close to the river valley are predominantly from the Fulani haalpulaar communities. The toucouleur farmers live in large villages.

In the lower valley, 75% of the Fulani farm the walo in the dry season, very few do so in the diéri area. The lands cultivated after flood waters recede are rented out by the Wolof and the Moors. In Bogue, very little arable land belong to the Fulani. Cropping was concentrated in the walo and around Demèt (middle valley).

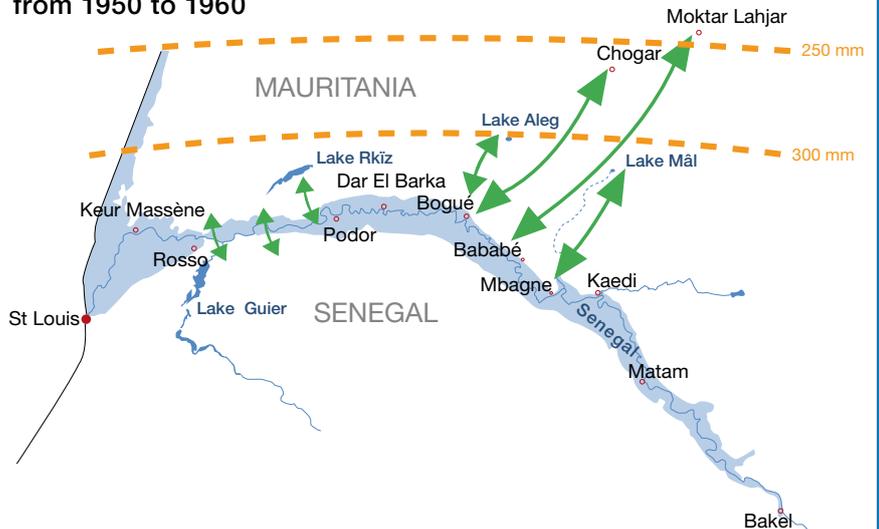
Aridity advances north of the river as shown by the shift in isohyets. During the dry season Moor and Fulani cattle herds find refuge south of the river. Campsites gradually move further south. Transhumant activities are carried out on over longer distances and durations.

Flood recession agriculture is practiced by two-thirds of Mauritanian Fulani in Rosso and Rkiz, especially in the four zones: Garak streamlets, around the diéri, walo basins between Rosso and the Ganien forest, Lake Rkiz and its streamlets. Most land is owned by Moors and Wolof (Dagana, Gani and Guidakhar).

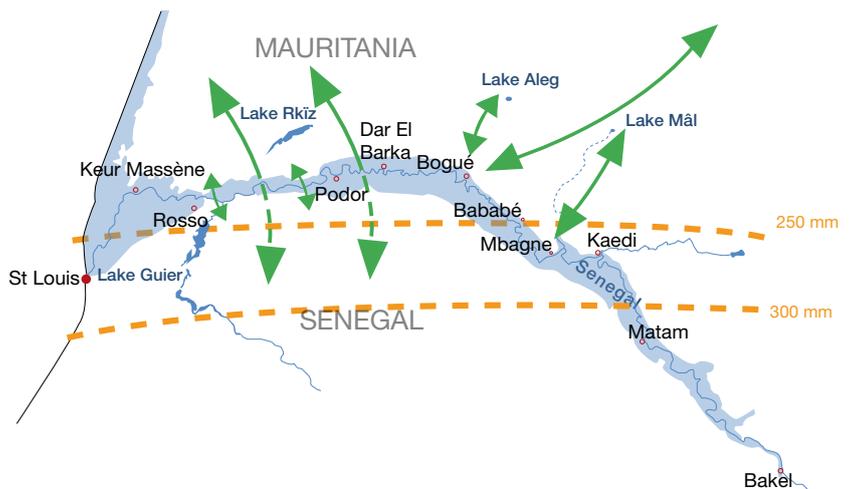
On the Mauritanian side of the river between Dar el Barka and Bogue, the Fulani seem to own more the majority of land, especially along the diéri. Transhumance is becoming more concentrated around the river while at the same time agricultural activities intensify. Agricultural and pastoral activities are increasingly in competition.

Evolution of transhumance routes

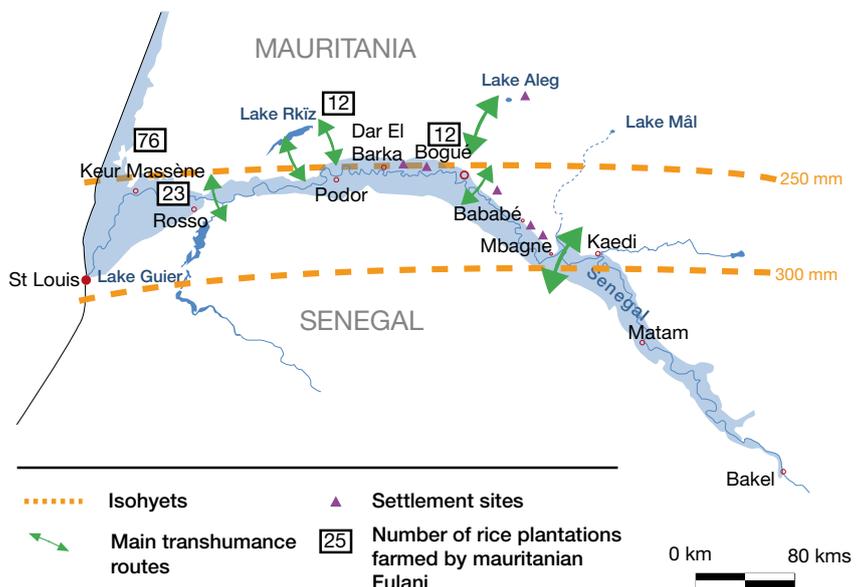
from 1950 to 1960



from 1960 to 1970



from 1980 to 1990



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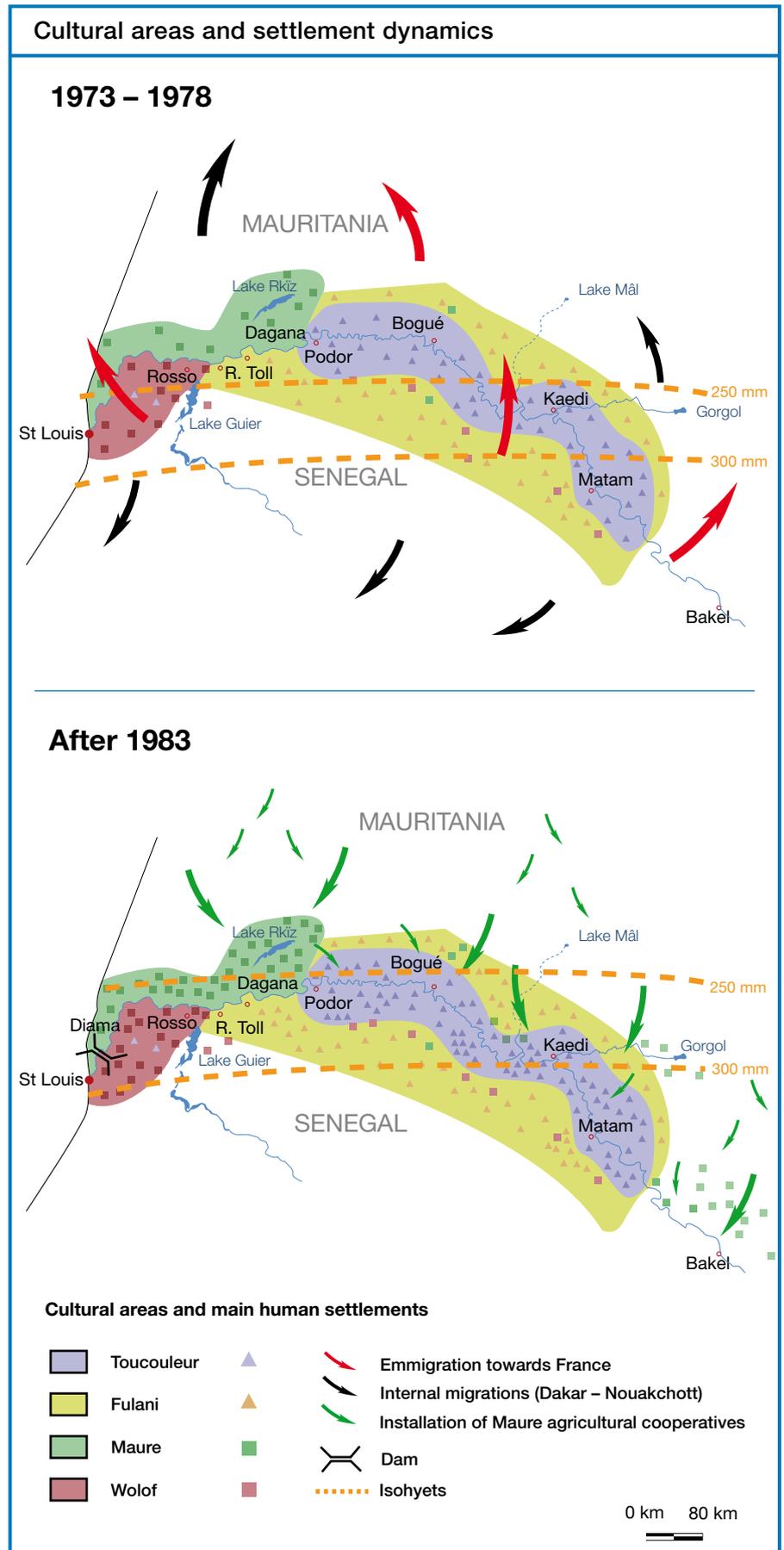
Senegal-Mauritania conflict

Settlement dynamics and competition over land and resources

The droughts of 1972 – 1973 and between 1983-1986 lead to decline in cattle herds reducing significantly the revenues of Fulani cattle herders. Negro-mauritanian farmers - mainly Soninke – have emigrated massively during the mid-70s (65% of arriving migrants in France in 1975 are Soninkés, 15% Halpulaar). During the same period Maure nomades fled in great numbers to Nouakchott and Dakar.

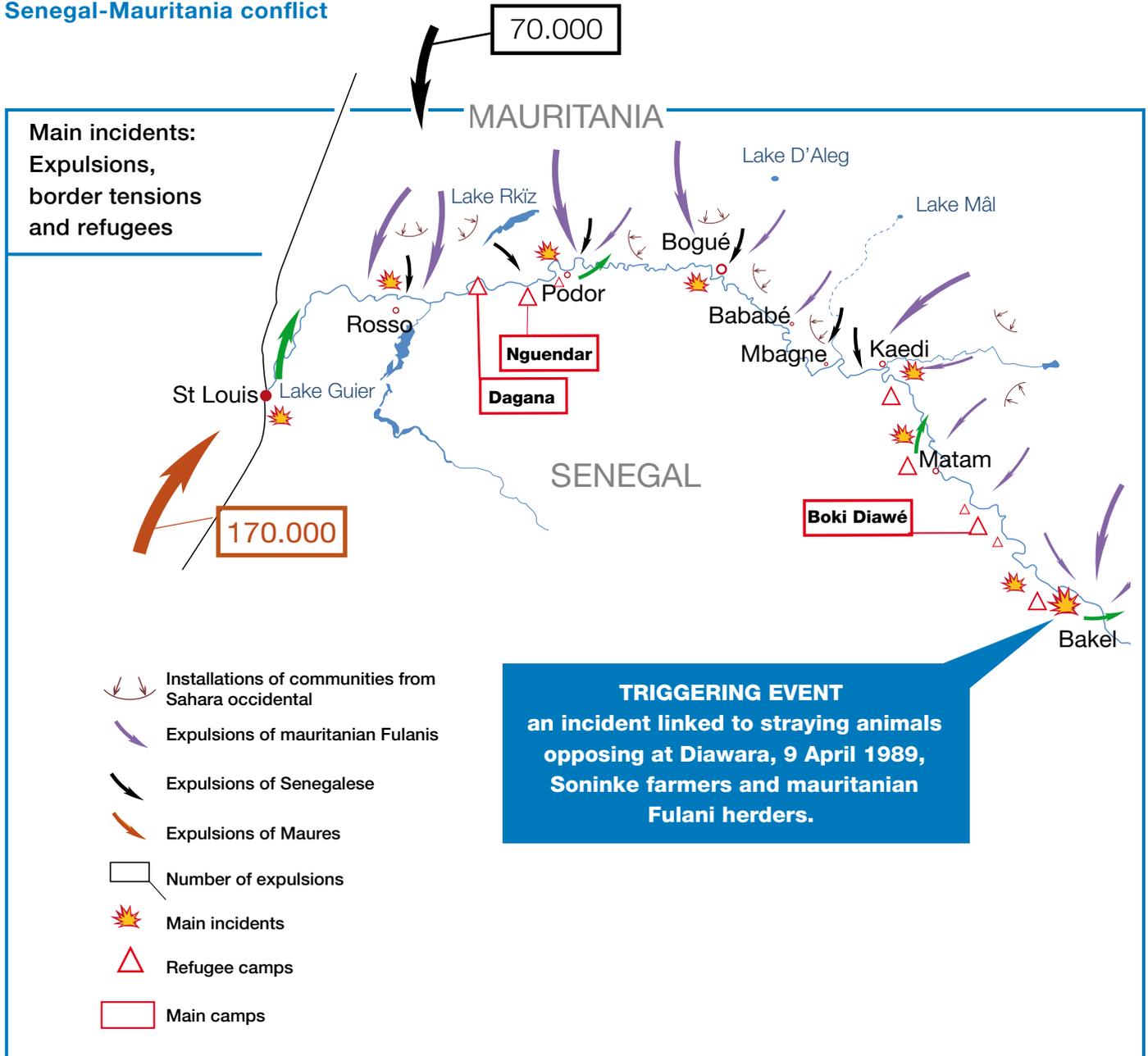
Drought and water scarcity encourage efforts to broaden co-operation between Senegal, Mauritania and Mali. Leading to the construction of dams in Manantali (1988) and Diama (1986) and the creation of an Inter-state authority to jointly manage the river (OMVS). This example contradicts often expressed beliefs that water scarcity is always a conflict vector. The 1989 Senegal-Mauritania crisis illustrates how economic opportunities, created by hydroelectric and agricultural investments, can heighten tensions over land and water assets and awake an old dispute over the border demarcation between the two countries.

The economic and environmental effects of the large scale hydroelectric and agricultural investments are very different for riverside residents. Population increased over the last 30 years, predominantly sedentary Maures and Haratins. Population between Gorgol and Guidimakha grows from 135.000 to 229.000 between 1970 and 1990 and between the area of Trarza and Brakna from 77.000 to 138.000. The fragile livelihood system equilibrium is altered by intensive agricultural production and provokes conflicts between fishing communities, farmers and livestock breeders over land and resource use. Underlined by the multiplication of incidents provoked by straying animals during the late '80s.



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The economic and geopolitical context in Mauritania during the the '70s and '80s is particularly fragile. The financial situation deteriorates between 1976 and 1978 following the conflict with the Front Polisario. Iron ore prices fall and the great drought of 1973 causes significant loss of cattle herds. The tensions caused by the debate over the "nationality" issue is further aggravated by the Coup d'Etat attempt in 1987 orchestrated by black-mauritanian officers of the FLAM.

In 1983, the mauritanian government adopts a new land right law aimed at stimulating agricultural productivity in irrigated areas.

This reform ignores customary law and legalises expropriations, predominatly suffered by mauritanian Fulani. The crisis further spurs the expulsions, often to the benefit of large agricultural cooperatives.

In April 1989, incidents opposing mauritanian Fulani herders and senegalese Soninke farmers end in massacres. Waves of retaliation follow: against mauritanian traders in Dakar, senegalese residents in Mauritania and large scale expropriation and expulsions of senegalese Fulani herders and black-mauritanians from the mauritanian river bank. The land is acquired by Maure and Haratin

communities. During the same time the number of senegalese refugees in camps along the river bank is estimated at 25 to 50.000 during 1989 et 1992.

During May and June 1989 the risk of a military conflict between the two states is considerable. The tension over the border demarcation reemerges when Senegal tries to apply for international arbitration. Until 1992, the two states defend their unreconcilable positions. Based on a colonial treaty from 1933, Senegal insists on the north-bank of the river as delimitation of the border.



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