

Sustainable Seas Through the Eyes of Art

We dream...

We dream of healthy oceans teeming with life, functioning marine and coastal ecosystems and prosperous communities of artisanal fishermen and women producing high-quality food.

We dream of fishing communities being the guardians of coastal environments helping also to keep pirates out and the sea clean, where their children are proudly looking forward to study the sea and harvest only in tune with its ability to regenerate resources.

We dream of intact corals and mangroves neither threatened by global warming nor by pollution or indiscriminate cutting - natural protections of the coastlines in balance with ecological and human needs.

We dream of harnessing the power of the waves for clean energy while maintaining the awe and beauty of nature.

We dream of studying the sea around us, trying to understand more of the dynamics of its currents that heat Europe through the Gulf Stream, well-up nutrient-rich water off West Africa, Peru and Chile and circulate in huge conveyor belts which connect even the most far-flung corners.

The exhibition takes place from 9 to 11 July 2009 at the V. MARE Conference in the historical university building, Oudemanhuispoort, 4-6, 1012 DL Amsterdam.

Opening: 9-18h.

An international jury will select the best works for public recognition during the closing ceremony of the Conference, Saturday, 11 July (14h30 to 15h). The jury is composed of Carla Zickfeld (chair), Cristina Dellepiane, Philomène Grégoire, Judith Frances and Maarten Bavinck.





"Where did they all go?" by Hristo Kouzmanov, European School Brussels I

When the dream turns into a nightmare...

Hela, scientific analyses of long-term trends of landings from the world's fisheries suggest generalised 'fishing down marine food webs' as illustrated by dramatic declines of top predators throughout the oceans. In Europe, up to 80% of fishes caught are babies! It is not always better in other regions.

In the last few decades, fishing has moved further south and deeper down as one after the other fisheries collapse from unsustainable exploitation levels. Combined with habitat destruction e.g. from bottom trawling, acidification from excessive CO₂ levels that pose threats to marine life with calcium shells and corals, humans are wreaking havoc on what seemed an unexhaustable resource.

Combine this with social distress in fishing communities suffering partially self-inflicted decline and the picture is quite worrysome. Combine this further with building up ever growing swathes of the coastline, particularly in regions which attract mass tourism, and the initial dream of wonderful beaches turns into a nightmare with coastal exodus for lack of economic perspectives and impaired natural functions. And then climate change and sea level rise!

Time to act! Such considerations are at the origin of our exhibition. Have a look!

From the Niger Delta in Nigeria ...

We want a future not made of violence and pollution but of healthy mangroves, good fishing grounds and a fair share in the oil wealth of our country – through good education and health care and interesting jobs...

This is how young people from Stella Maris College, Port Harcourt, Community Secondary School, Abuluma, and Community Secondary School, Okochiri, Okrika, all in Rivers State, are painting their surroundings now. The Vice Principal of Stella Maris supported this work full-heartedly together with the Coordinator of the Peace Club in Okrika.

This is how artist Nduwhite Ndubuisi Ahanonu, from Oguta in Imo State, a graduate of Fine and Applied Arts (University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2000)

sees 'the sea in us'. He is working with the young people seeking to encourage the search for alternatives together with Prof. Stella Williams, an agricultural economist with years of action research experience on artisanal fishing in Nigeria and other West African countries.

Two other mature artists from Nigeria expose their work:



"The sea in us" by Nduwhite Ndubuisi Ahanonu



Painting by N. Udochukwa, Stella Maris College, Port Harcourt

Aderinkonmi John Adeleye is an activist painter and deeply attached to the Niger Delta through his life and art.

Harrison Woyinpere I kibah was born in 1979 in Lagos State in the Niger Delta. Until his premature death he was a practicing studio artist and the Gallery Director of Strong Harry Studio and Gallery in Abuja. For Harrison I kibah "excellence is an art of creation, creation is a light that that illuminates things around us and giving it a new meaning in the mind of our viewers and at the same time enliven the essence of life".

From Safi, Morocco, with love

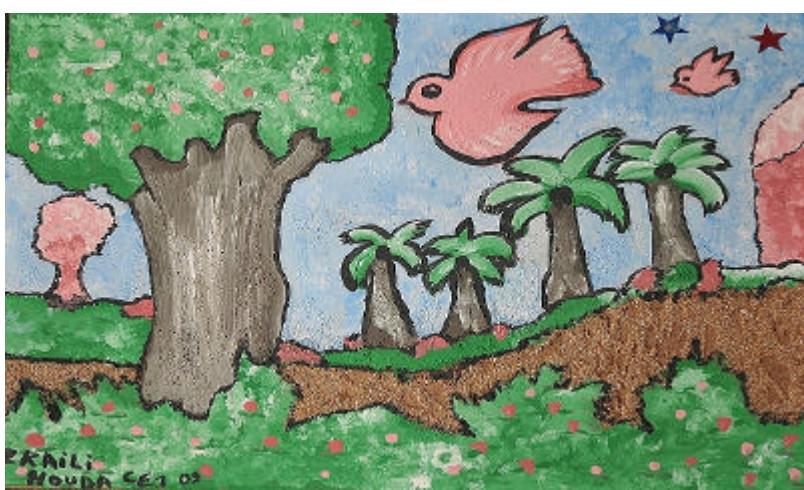
The 'Ecole du Plateau Bensouda' in Safi, the lovely capital of the Doukala Abda Region on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, is renowned for its commitment to academic excellence in combination with artistic education, danse, pottery and active promotion of knowledge of and respect for the sea and the environment. The school is open to girls and boys and directed by Ms. Faïza Bensouda.

The Pheniciens already used Safi during their explorations along the African coast. Today Safi is known as the 'Sardine Capital' because of the important fleet of sardine industrial vessels and canneries. But the most valuable fisheries are the trawlers and artisanal boats fishing valuable bottom fish, octopus and various crustaceans, but overfishing and pollution are taking their toll.

Following the initiative of the Safi Teachers' Association S.V.T., six months of activities have been carried out in several schools on the theme: 'Marine Biodiversity of our City'. The objective was to introduce the students to biodiversity in nature, the importance of the sea for our lives, the wealth of our natural heritage and the importance of keeping it intact. With the professional coaching of several teachers and including 8 students of our school, we entertained a rich programme of activities culminating in an exhibition in our school on 17 May 2009.



Kastal Zahra of CE4 explains work: The sea is a paradise where many people find recreation. This chapel, holy site overlooking the blue sea, without bottom, without end, to protect it from destruction. This sea is dear to us and a symbol of freedom.



Zkili Houda of CE1 imagines the areas adjacent to the sea: humans and animals live in peace with each other. The plants are the symbol of happiness, but look how dirty our coasts are, how poisoned our birds have become as a result of pollution.

It summarised the research findings and the results of our own explorations and was a great success.

On 27 June this year, the Bensouda School has also organised a big school party under the motto "The Sea – this big unknown, but vulnerable entity" (La mer – cette grande inconnue vulnérable). For more information on our school, look at www.ecoleduplateaubensouda.com/

Kayar, St. Louis, Dakar - Senegal for clean and healthy seas...

The fishing village of Kayar, some 60 km north of the Senegalese capital Dakar, was founded in the Department of Thies around 1971 and, in 2007, counted some 18,000 inhabitants. It is still one of the major landing sites of artisanal fishermen in Senegal, together with Mbour, Joal and others. Kayar has also hosted fishermen from Guet Ndar (St. Louis) during their seasonal migrations.

Notwithstanding its economic importance, Kayar has not benefited from much attention for building up educational and other public services to enable it to cope better with change. This change is coming about in a variety of ways, as a result of demographic developments, decline in livelihoods from overfishing, illegal migration of many young people on the hazardous journey in search of a better future in Europe and more.

The Principal of the College (CEM) in Kayar, Abibou Diop, complains that he has only one real classroom, no water and electricity and was forced to occupy the fish marketing hall near the beach.

Stopping overfishing is a key challenge. These are the main themes developed by the students for the exhibition in Amsterdam.



The recent painting workshop to prepare Kayar's participation in the Amsterdam exhibition took place in the maket hall occupied by the College.

Women play traditionally a big role in Senegalese 'artisanal fisheries', particularly in the post-harvest sector.

While fresh high-value products intended for international markets leave by refrigerated camion directly to the next airport, sun-dried and smoked fish processed by women is marketed through the Sahel region thanks to its long shelf-life.



Goddess of the water, Coumba Castle, off Gorée Island, by Diogomaye

What future do they want for their children? What do the young people themselves aspire to? Getting access to better education and scientific knowledge, but without shunning the long accumulated ecological and cultural knowledge of their community, has potential for giving them more options. Collaboration with youth and adults in other parts of the globe should open more doors and attract also more public support. Aliou Sall of the ECOST research project helps make the connections.

Arts Working Group of the Helmholtz-Gymnasium Hilden, Germany

Since the foundation of the Arts Working Group of the Helmholtz – Gymnasium Hilden (HGH) in the summer of 2007, we, 18 committed young people between 15 and 20 years old, confront our surroundings regularly through the eyes of the arts. In the context, we set up a big exhibition last year in a public exhibition space of our home town.



We see our participation in the exhibition project „Sustainable Seas Through the Eyes of Art“ as an opportunity to position ourselves in relation to political issues and to act more consciously as Europeans and citizens who are co-responsible for global problems.

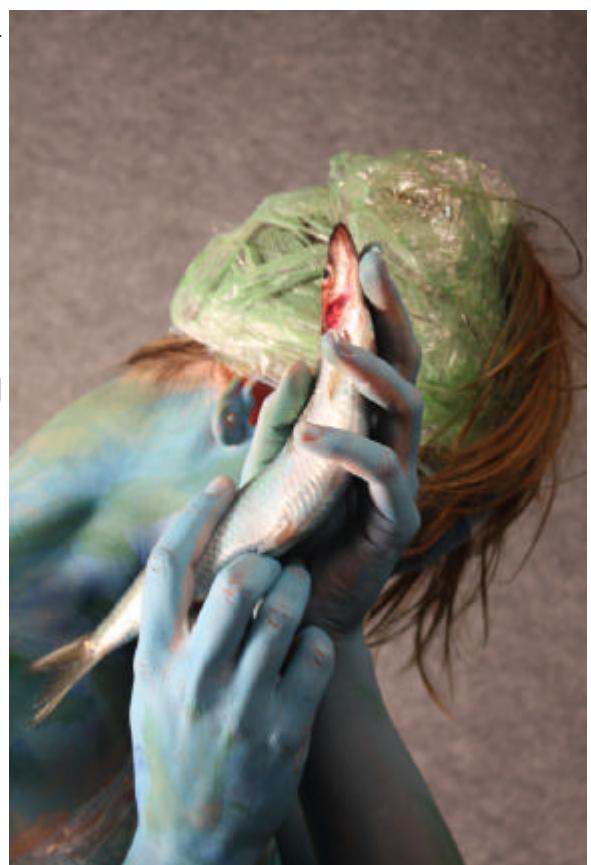
During a visit in Brussels, we had the opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the regional representation of our Land Nordrhein Westfalia (NRW) in Brussels, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European School in Brussels. This way we learnt more about the precursor of this project as well as its scientific and political background.

Back in Hilden we teamed up with a local cooperation partner, the Aquazoo Düsseldorf, whose scientific staff introduced us to more in-depth knowledge about the reef ecosystems and their increasing destruction through dynamite and cyanide fishing, bottom trawling and unsustainable tourism. Global warming as a result of climate change is another major threat to corals. Together with other stress factors it results in bleaching (loss of colour of the corals as a result of expulsion of symbiotic unicellular algae) and ultimately coral death.

Since August 2008 we are already working on canvasses, three-dimensional objects, photography and collages all around the maritime theme. We are trying to capture the positive as well as the critical aspects.

We expect the exhibition project „Sustainable Seas Through the Eyes of Art“ to open up successful national and international cooperation and an enrichment of our human and artistic development.

Our coach is Ansgar S. Beer, an arts and biology teacher at the HGH and registered artist in Düsseldorf.



Brussels students against overfishing, for sustainable seas and international solidarity

We are a group of students (17 to 19 years old) preparing for bacalaureat at the European School Brussels I, Belgium. We are mostly children of officials in the European Institutions with family backgrounds mostly from different parts of Europe. There are currently about 3,200 students in all sections from kindergarten to secondary. We are lucky to have a beautiful school.

Confronted with results of international scientific cooperation showing a worrisome decline in fisheries in West Africa over the last more than 25 years from overfishing, ecosystem degradation, sometimes pollution and environmental change, in 2008 we started a twinning with the College (CEM) Kayar, Senegal. In the arts class (4h/week) of Ms. Bettina Ghallale, we reflected on how to express our reaction to these facts artistically. We managed to organise a joint exhibition with works from Kayar, though nobody from there could attend at the time.

This is why we were very happy about the invitation to contribute to an exhibition in Amsterdam bringing people and works from different locations and horizons together in the context of the V MARE Conference.

We hope that conference participants and other visitors of the exhibition concur with us that much more needs to be done and help us to bring about rebalancing of fishing practices with what nature can give us and make international solidarity an everyday practice. We also believe that collaborating with other youth groups in other European and African countries and elsewhere will allow us to gain valuable new experiences and open new horizons, especially as we are about to leave school and enter a new phase of our lives.



"Don't eat babies" by Olalla Sabater Sanz



Eleonora Maggiore

We are excited about the possibility to meet face-to-face with at least some of the African and European contributors to the exhibiton, not only help show their work! We would have liked to be even more successful with fund raising for the participation of African groups in Amsterdam. But we trust there will be a next time...

Get going, engage, join!

There are many ways to access pertinent scientific information, enjoy art works, contribute to more interesting educational programmes, team up with interested people of different horizons across the world and engage for a better future of the seas and the people of the seas. The Initiative organising the exhibition invites you to get involved. Get in touch at InfoSustSea@gmail.com.

Support our activities financially: Special account: 001-5809088-28
(IBAN: BE37 0015 8090 8828; BIC Fortis/Paribas: GEBABEBB)

Here are some internet resources.

Website of the Initiative in 5 languages (including photo galleries of exhibitions, information around the sea, education support, service for validating websites):

www.sustsea.org

All fish species and anything that lives in the sea: www.fishbase.org,
www.sealifebase.org

Fish catches, economics and effects of marine fishing around the world:
www.searoundus.org

How do we value the social costs of fishing? www.ecostproject.org

Reconciling multiple demands on coastal zones: www.incofish.org

Gender in fisheries and aquaculture (in four languages):
cordis.europa.eu/inco/fp5/acprep_16_en.html

Educational support with basic facts about our planet (in English and Skandinavian languages): www.forskning.se/infactplaneten/index.html?lang=eng

Educational support on the Ocean of the Future (in German and English): www.ozeander-zukunft.de

The EUROMED Cultural Heritage Programme started in 2002 (in English, French and Arabic): www.euromedheritage.net/

Seaweb – leading voices for a healthy ocean: www.seaweb.org

The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) supports small-scale fisheries which are more in tune with environmental and social norms: www.icsf.net

World Database on Marine Protected Areas: www.wdpa-marine.org/#/world/filter

Latin-American Centre for Rural Development (in Spanish and English):
www.rimisp.org/inicio/index.php

Seafood guides for different countries: www.incofish.org/isfg.php

Cover page photo: "Dance of the gods" by Harrison Woyinpere Ikibah, Nigeria