



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2023, hybrid conference
“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:
Trade-offs and synergies”

Comparative analysis of the agroecological transition through the prism of the territory concept: Two case studies in Senegal

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Abstract

In Senegal, various actors (scientists, politicians, farmers, civil society) are currently behind initiatives in favour of agroecology and are involved in several fields such as technique experimentation, product market and advocacy. However, the agroecological transition struggles to reach all actors and to settle uniformly across the territories. Even when initiatives emerge, they remain isolated and dispersed in through time and space. According to the theoretical and empirical literature, taking into account the territorial scale would be necessary to analyse and implement change in a sustainable way.

Thus, this thesis uses the concept of 'territory', and questions the way in which it can be a driving force or an obstacle to an agroecological transition in Senegal. It is in line with the 'sustainability transitions' research field, particularly in the geography of transitions, in order to take into account the socio-spatial character of change. To address the problem, two case studies were chosen to represent the diversity of territorial functioning and the trajectories that agroecology can take: the municipalities of Ndiob and Darou Khoudoss. The methodology of 'territorial diagnosis' was chosen in order to analyse agroecology in time and space, the innovations and the determinants of their development, and finally to define anticipation perspectives in a collective manner to enable local actors to organise the transition within their territory. Anchored in a comparative and participatory approach, it is based on a combination of tools, such as semi-structured interviews, field observations, stakeholder mapping and anticipation. Through these theoretical and methodological decisions (conceptual frameworks, empirical case studies in a Southern context...), the study offers original answers to the limits of current research on agroecological transition.

The progress made during the first year of the thesis has yielded field results in regards to: the analysis of the agroecological intervention of various actors; the analysis of the institutional landscape and the actor network (alliance, power, conflict); the state of the art of technical, organisational and institutional innovations; the collective identification of territorial issues using a zoning system based on the accounts of different actors.

Keywords: Accompaniment, agroecological transition, Senegal, territory