

LOST IN NAVIGATION?

ENSURING LIVING LAB FRAMEWORKS STAY ON COURSE WITH LOCAL NEEDS

E. Delay A. Hertzog-Adamczewski, R. Duboz, A. Ogilvie,
W. Daré, A. Bah, O. Samaké

CIRAD – IRD – UCAD – SAED



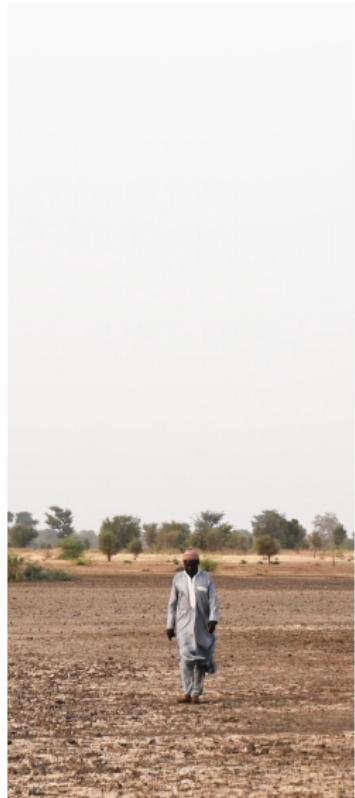
INTRODUCTION : INSCRIPTION

A Project Supporting Transitions

Main objective: to support **agroecological transitions** through the establishment of *Living Labs.*

- Co-construction of knowledge and practices.
- Experimentation in real-world conditions with local stakeholders.
- Production of solutions adapted to specific territories.

Embedded within the **One Health** framework: human, animal, environment.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & METHOD

Theoretical Framework: Assemblage Approach

The **assemblage approach** views reality as **dynamic configurations** that combine heterogeneous elements:

- humans and non-humans,
- material and immaterial,
- discourses and practices.

According to Hertz & Bousquet (2025), the specificity of assemblages lies in their ability to generate **affect**: an experiential intensity that can **trigger situated action**.

→ Importance of *affective knowing*: knowledge must be *felt and experienced* in order to become transformative.



Theoretical Framework: constitutional moments

Our methodological approach:

- **Longitudinal observation** of the project in Senegal.
- Analysis of **grey literature**: more than 2,400 documents (reports, notes, presentations, etc.).
- Attention to “**constitutional moments**” (Jasanoff, 2011): situations where established frames break down and new meanings emerge.

These moments reveal how affect and local imaginaries reshape arrangements and trigger transformations.

CASE STUDY: LIVING LABS IN THE SENEGAL CONTEXT

Chronology of the Living Labs

- **Phase 1: Diagnosis** – initial mapping of localities and actors.
- **Phase 2: Progressive integration** – emergence of groups, opening of arenas such as *Kourel* (village forums).
- **Phase 3: Rooted activities & unexpected synergies** – interactions deepened, new alignments and collaborations emerged.

→ Living Labs evolved from dispersed elements to concrete **assemblages in action**.

Initial Phase: Disjointed Elements

- Multiplicity of visions and definitions of “participation”.
→ Ranging from consultation to co-decision or instrumental mobilization.
- Divergences among thematic groups (e.g. animal health, human health, aquatic biodiversity, food systems).
- Common keywords circulated (“participation”, “One Health”), but meanings varied and sometimes conflicted.
→ The phase was marked by dispersion, inertia, and misunderstandings.



Intermediate Phase: First Convergences

- **Mergers of groups:** e.g. *Pesticides + Soil–Plant* → formation of the **Agro-Aquaculture Farm.**
- **Tensions and debates:** – Productivist logics (seeds, mechanization, yields) – Agroecological orientations (sustainability, circular practices).
- Participatory practices created **new alliances**, while some divergences persisted.

→ First steps from dispersion toward collective identities and shared perspectives.



Advanced Phase: Assemblage in Action

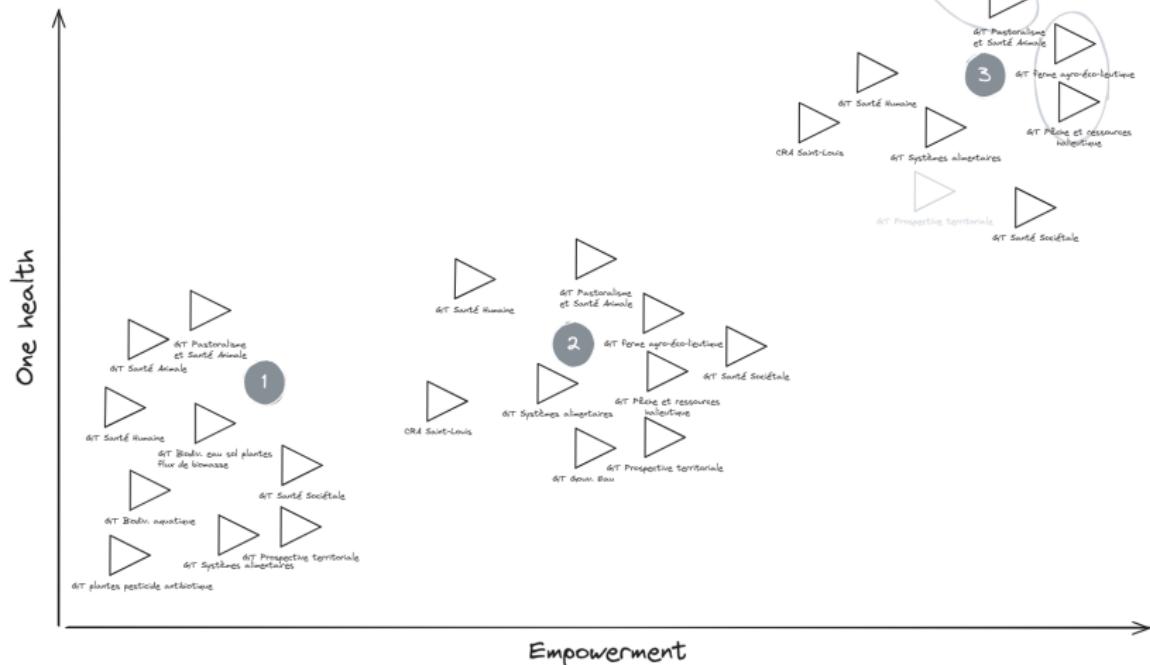
- **Concrete alignments:** – Fodder crops,
– Integrated agro-aquaculture farms, –
Fish ponds as alternatives to declining
catches.
- **Synergies across groups** emerged,
transcending disciplinary and
institutional boundaries.
- Activities rooted in local contexts
validated earlier experimental bets
and strengthened collective
ownership.

→ From abstract discussions to
operational assemblages in the field.



FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Alignements and Assemblage



Role of Affects in Reconfigurations

Triggering moments:

- Revelation of **chemical pollution** in Lake Guiers.
- **Conflicts** between indigenous and non-indigenous fishers.
- Collective enthusiasm for **fodder crop experimentation**.

→ These **lived experiences** acted as catalysts for re-alignment, showing that affective intensity can transform knowledge into **collective action**.



Participation: A Plural and Contested Watchword

- **Participation** took multiple forms:
Simple consultation, Pedagogical training, co-construction.
- This plurality generated tensions between symbolic involvement and real empowerment.
- The **Companion Modeling (ComMod)** approach stood out:
(i) Focus on discussing and reshaping representations, (ii) Open space for experimentation and **collective autonomy**.



→ Participation is not a single recipe but a **field of contested practices**.

One Health: From Slogan to Situated Practice

- **Operational challenges:** One Health often remains a normative banner rather than an effective practice.
- It becomes **concrete and actionable** when embedded in local dispositifs: – Fodder plots linking soil fertility, livestock, and nutrition, – Fish ponds combining biodiversity, food security, and water governance.
- Situated enactments reduce the “Promethean gap” between global concepts and local lived realities.
→ One Health gains meaning only when anchored in **situated practices**.



Role of Researchers

- Researchers positioned themselves between **facilitation, mediation, and refusal of prescriptive roles.**
- Constant dilemma: (i) **Guide** trajectories (risk: imposing an agenda),(ii) **Or step back** (risk: reinforcing existing power relations).
- Companion Modeling (ComMod) creating conditions for local actors' **autonomy and experimentation.**

→ Researcher engagement is not fixed but a **reflexive and mobile posture.**



CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Key Lessons

- **Progressive and non-linear alignments:** from dispersed elements to stabilized assemblages.
- **Central role of affects and concrete dispositifs** (e.g. fodder plots, fish ponds) in triggering transformation.
- **Limits:** discordant temporalities between local urgencies and long-term prospective horizons.

→ Transformation emerges through situated practices, affective experiences, and negotiated alignments.

General Conclusion

- Reducing the “**Promethean gap**”
(Anders) by situating global concepts
in local material and affective contexts.
- **Living Labs** as genuine laboratories
of systemic transformation.
- Opening perspectives: redistribution
of **capacities to act** and
co-construction of **shared**
imaginaries.

→ From abstract slogans to situated
practices that enable transformation.

Thank you for your attention



github



You can find this presentation on [github](#)