

1. Project Background and Description



- ✓ Deepening one of the MIGRADAPT-project (2017-2021) research questions, which seeks to understand under which socio-economic and political conditions migrants in Belgium can support the adaptation and resilience of their communities of origin, through different types of remittances and initiatives in Morocco, Senegal and the DR Congo.
- ✓ Studying four villages in Northern Senegal that had similar levels of exposure to natural shocks and stresses but experienced differential changes in their livelihood strategies (including farming).
- ✓ By synthesizing perspectives from concepts as of ‘translocal sustainable livelihoods’ (Schöfberger, 2017), political ecology (a.o. Sakdapolrak & Greiner, 2014), well-being (a.o. White, 2010) and resilience (a.o. Turner, 2013), the study employs contextual, multi-dimensional and actor-oriented approaches.

Gaps:

- Interdisciplinary, Multi-sited, Translocal and transnational study
- The system-oriented perspective inherent in resilience thinking fails to acknowledge the heterogeneous values, interests, and power of social actors and their roles in navigating social-ecological change.

2. Research Questions and Hypotheses



- **What is the role of international mobility in terms of adaptation and resilience to social-ecological changes?**

Hypothesis: international mobility can play a major role in changing causes of social vulnerability through various remittances in the broad sense, and thus increase adaptive capacity, sensitivity and exposure of households and communities.

- **What are the (socio-)environmental risk inequalities between households and communities with family members abroad and those without?**

Hypothesis: international migrants are major actors determining resilience and well-being of households and communities, because they are themselves shaping trajectories of change through remittances (in the broad sense).

Sub-questions:

- How and to which extent do the communities of origin perceive migrants' remittances (both material and immaterial) in terms of resilience and adaptation to environmental changes?
- Which developmental, resilience and adaptative dimensions do they deem important when considering migrant's (actual and potential) contributions for their well-being and why?

Hypothesis: Migrants are considered as very important, but the impact of their immaterial remittances on social-ecological resilience is underestimated.

3. Methods

i First out of three fieldwork phases in Senegal in four representative rural villages of the Fouta (Northern Senegal, Matam region):

- ✓ Migration and income-generating activities from agriculture and non-agricultural sectors (both formal and informal activities) are analysed simultaneously, as part of broader collective, translocal and long-term livelihood strategies.
 - **Semi-directed questionnaires** (individual interviews: 20 returnees, incl. temporary; 88 non-migrants, among which 37 with members abroad) + **Focus groups** (23) + informal conversations.
 - 40-50 migrants to be interviewed in Belgium and France – recent and > 5 years.
- + next years: consolidation – evt. with closed questions (cf. MECLEP)?
- **Direct and participant observation - Mapping of initiatives** per category
 - **Sampling (criterion-based) :**
 - ✓ Key resource informants playing relevant role in community.
 - ✓ Individuals from different economic sectors & activities, with particular attention to agriculture (purposeful; quota; snowballing).
 - ✓ Gender-balanced – in terms of focus groups; but more men for interviews (household heads).

4. Major Findings

- i**
- ✓ **Inequalities** observed between households of different wealth classes within networks with winners (mostly participants) and losers (mostly outsiders) from cross-scalar practices:
 - Obvious differences in terms of exposure and adaptive capacity to environmental risks (dykes breaking, droughts, heavy rainfall,...) in function of the international relations (family members abroad and links with the village's development association).
 - Remittances help to solve funding problems and mitigate the impact of specific power structures.
 - Migrants are not so eager to invest heavily in 'too risky' agriculture, neither are they systematically pushed by the stayers to do so; Little support to agriculture, which is still considered as very important, probably due to increased state intervention and support.
 - ✓ Several **risks of maladaptation** in different sectors: e.g. housing (traditional vs. brick), agriculture (agro-business vs. agroecology; intensive vs. extensive farming):
 - Farmers' dependency to seed and chemical companies (pesticides), reliance on new technologies with high polluting and land degrading impacts instead, massive decrease of agrobiodiversity, and tasteless food,...

5. Conclusions

i Promising avenue to explore empirically the combined application of resilience, political ecology, and well-being perspectives in understanding the influence of remittances (in the broad sense) on distributional effects of social-ecological change in 'environmental/climate hotspots'.