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Food transition in the Ferlo (Senegal)

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, years of severe drought, the Ferlo region has undergone profound changes.

This concerns:

- **pastoral activity and lifestyles¹** : there have been changes in the way people produce, trade and consume, with strong links to markets. There is also a diversification of economic activities. Finally, families are becoming more nucleated.
- **food²** : Today, access to food is obtained via weekly markets, village shops, butcheries, bakeries, dibiteries, tanganas and gargotes. These new supply channels give access to new foods, both appreciated for their modern taste and decried for the damage they cause.
- **opening up the area³** : through development projects that encourage greater movement of people, products and ideas. Transport and communications systems are also being improved.

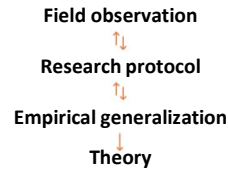
Question: To what extent do the Great Green Wall project, changes in lifestyle and the reconfiguration of food systems influence the practices, representations and standards governing food in the village of Widou Thiengoly?

Aim of the study :

- describe and understand the dynamics of dietary change at Widou Thiengoly in the context of climate change and the socio-economic changes it is inducing.
- study the forms of societal compromise and adaptation at work among the Fulani of Widou Thiengoly, placing our analysis at the crossroads of two worlds: that of the globalization of food systems and that of Fulani identity in transformation.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

We have chosen to implement inductive research, i.e. to start from the field and deduce generalizations. Focusing on the study of subjects' experience, it enables us to explain a phenomenon from the point of view of those who have experienced it. It starts from the concrete, i.e. empirical data, and moves towards the abstract, i.e. theoretical development. It implies flexibility, with an iterative movement between the collection and analysis of data that will lead to the development of the research protocol. Thus, for our fieldwork, we applied 4 interview guides that we perfected over the course of our analyses.



The application of this method seemed to be better adapted to the context of multilingual research and served as a safeguard against an ethnocentric approach.

We were able to carry out 3 missions between May and June 2022, with a total of 18 days in the field during which we conducted 40 interviews, representing 37 hours of recordings that were transcribed and translated from Pulaar and Wolof into French.

RESULTS

GREAT GREEN WALL



The GMV project provides additional economic resources through employment in the nurseries and multi-purpose gardens.

The multi-purpose gardens have made vegetables a permanent fixture in the Fulani diet. The daily availability of fresh vegetables, at affordable prices and with knowledge of production conditions, has encouraged this consumption.

The presence of people involved in research and development projects, such as doctors, water and forestry officers and researchers, has led to new knowledge and views on food. For example, the prevention of industrial products such as bouillon cubes and drink mixes in sachets, chemical products and pesticides, and medical dietary recommendations.

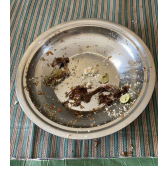
FOOD SYSTEM

We focused on two aspects:

- Out-of-home eating: This is seen as a practical way of eating during activities outside the home. But above all it is a source of pleasure. An access to individual freedoms and individual hedonism.
- Snack foods, the case of crisps: they are not considered to be a 'real' food that can feed an adult. As a result, they are given to children as gifts, to show affection. This is a far cry from the asceticism advocated in the Fulani diet. Here, emotional eating is encouraged, responding to emotions rather than hunger or satiety.



WAY OF LIFE



Certain rules of conduct have been relaxed. In particular, the rules governing mealtimes, dictated by the Fulani moral code: *ndimaagu*.

This concerns :

- the appropriateness of not finishing a dish '*I don't practice these theories, when I'm hungry I eat everything*', a 26-year-old Fulani man. Tinkering' takes place between sociality and sociability⁴. The rules imposed by Fulani sociality are rearranged to express their personal aspirations and individuality.
- the separation of the sexes around the bowl during meals. There has been an evolution in norms, in parallel with the emergence of a private space.

CONCLUSION

The information gathered points to effective and consolidated dietary diversification, in which traditional and modern foods coexist. We can see that new foods, whether raw or processed, or new ways of eating, have a specific signature in Fulani culture. What's more, they are giving rise to new forms of pleasure in the act of eating. Lastly, there has been a relaxation of certain standards governing food. This assertion of self and individuality can be linked to the more general transformation of society with the emancipation of pastoral activity.

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