

Transversal capitalization: how to do it?

Methodological insights from the experience of the DISSEM-INN project

DISSEM-INN IN A NUTSHELL

Funded by **AFD** and coordinated by **CIRAD**, the project “Dissemination of innovations in the Sahelian zone (**DISSEM-INN**) » relates to a set of **eight projects**¹ launched under the European **DeSIRA**² initiative and implemented in the Sahel region. These projects contribute to the development of sustainable, climate-resilient agri-food systems by focusing on innovation processes, each in a specific field. DISSEM-INN aims to capitalise on their practices and invites them to collectively reflect on the sustainability and the scaling of their innovations.

In a global context where agriculture and food challenges are increasingly important, it is essential to leverage experiences and knowledge acquired through research and development projects. Transversal capitalization, as a systematic process of transforming experiences into useful and shareable knowledge, plays a crucial role in improving the effectiveness and impact of future interventions. The DISSEM-INN project has implemented an innovative transversal capitalization methodology in collaboration with eight projects of the European DeSIRA initiative in the Sahel. This technical note aims to present this methodology in an didactic way, highlighting its main components, tools and key lessons, in order to inspire and guide future users of transversal capitalization.

A co-constructed approach

The posture chosen by the project to carry out the transversal capitalization reflected what was also one of the characteristics of the projects it involved: a co-design approach applied to innovation. In this sense, DISSEM-INN conceived it as a co-constructed approach and, retrospectively considered this transversal capitalization process as an innovation, to which it was possible to apply its own analytical framework.

This co-construction required very particular attention. The elements that made it a success are as follows:

1. A **“negotiation” of the terms of participation** of the projects in the transversal capitalization: each project was approached to inform it of this initiative,

explore its potential interest, and define the terms of this participation (commitments of the project and DISSEM-INN, identification of focal points, etc.). Two factors played a key role: DISSEM-INN’s commitment to reduce as much as possible the workload of the focal points induced by their participation and DISSEM-INN’s budgetary resources to support the participation of each project.

2. A **formalization of these commitments** by signing a Transversal Information Use Protocol (PUITS) during the first inter-DeSIRA regional workshop at the DeSIRA concerned, which made it possible to formalize the terms of collaboration, in particular confirming the principles of co-construction of knowledge, pre-validation by project teams before sharing, and confidentiality.

¹ These are the projects: ABEE, ACCEPT, APSAN-Mali, BIOSTAR, CASSECS, FAIR, IRRINN et Santé & Territoires.

² Led by the European Commission, the DeSIRA (Development Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture) initiative finances more than 60 projects around the world promoting innovation in agriculture and the transformation of food systems to make them more resilient to the effects of climate change.

3. Trust relationships have developed on the basis of these negotiations, this charter, and the thorough respect of DISSEM-INN's commitments associated with regular and transparent communication, and systematic validation of content.

4. An "as we go" collective identification of the themes of transversal capitalization with the project teams, which thus made it possible to define together the DeSI concept, to work on the questions of complexity, unpredictability and gender, then to focus on issues of sustainability and change of scale.

This approach, which can be described as a "capitalization trajectory", follows a logical

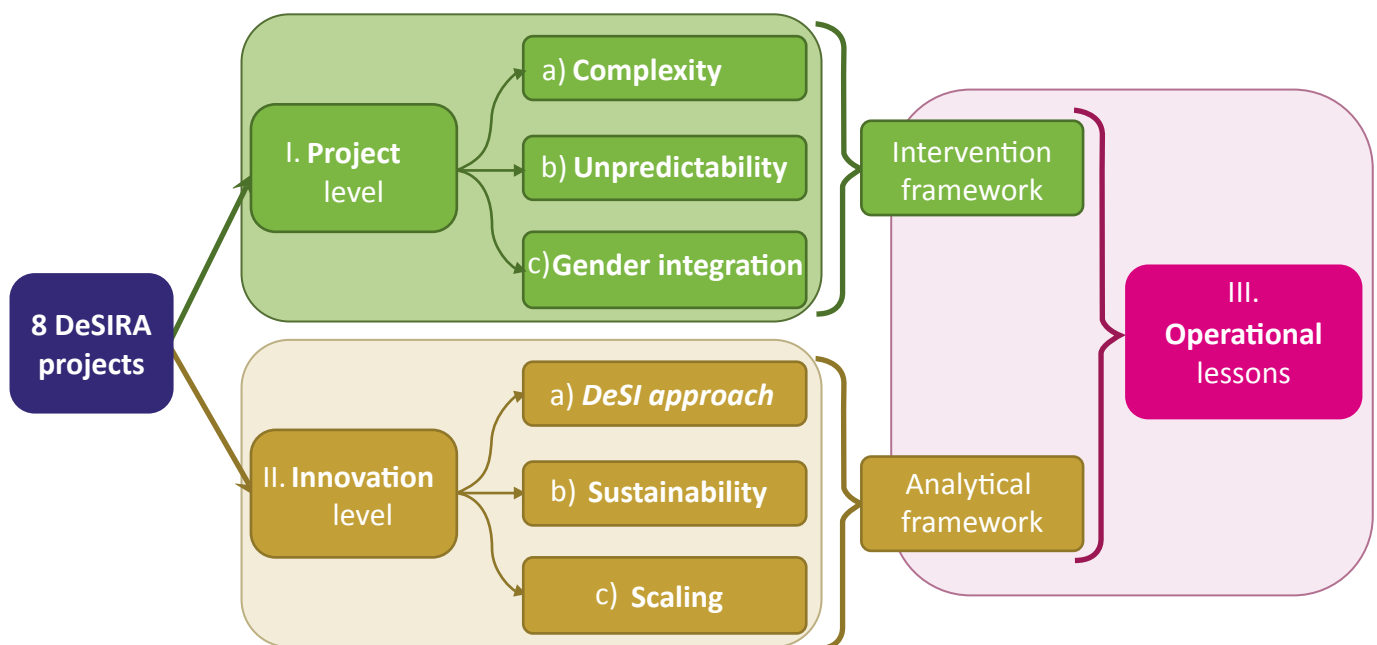
progression in three stages (see figure 1 below).

I. Start from the projects: **analysis of projects as a whole** to identify **practices, commonalities, and challenges**³.

II. Explore innovations: in-depth analysis of innovations developed by projects, **using a common analytical framework**⁴.

III. Operationalize and share the knowledge produced to **propose paths of action for the design and implementation of future agricultural innovation initiatives** and capitalization⁵.

Figure 1. The three dimensions of the transversal capitalisation trajectory



A rigorous methodology

This co-constructed approach has enabled DISSEM-INN to develop a rigorous methodology including data collection, processing and analysis, and the dissemination of knowledge, aimed at ensuring the richness, relevance and reliability of the information capitalized (see figure 2 below).

For **data collection**, the following tools were used:

- **Systematic monitoring:** analysis of existing documents (reports, articles, websites, social networks) for a global understanding of projects

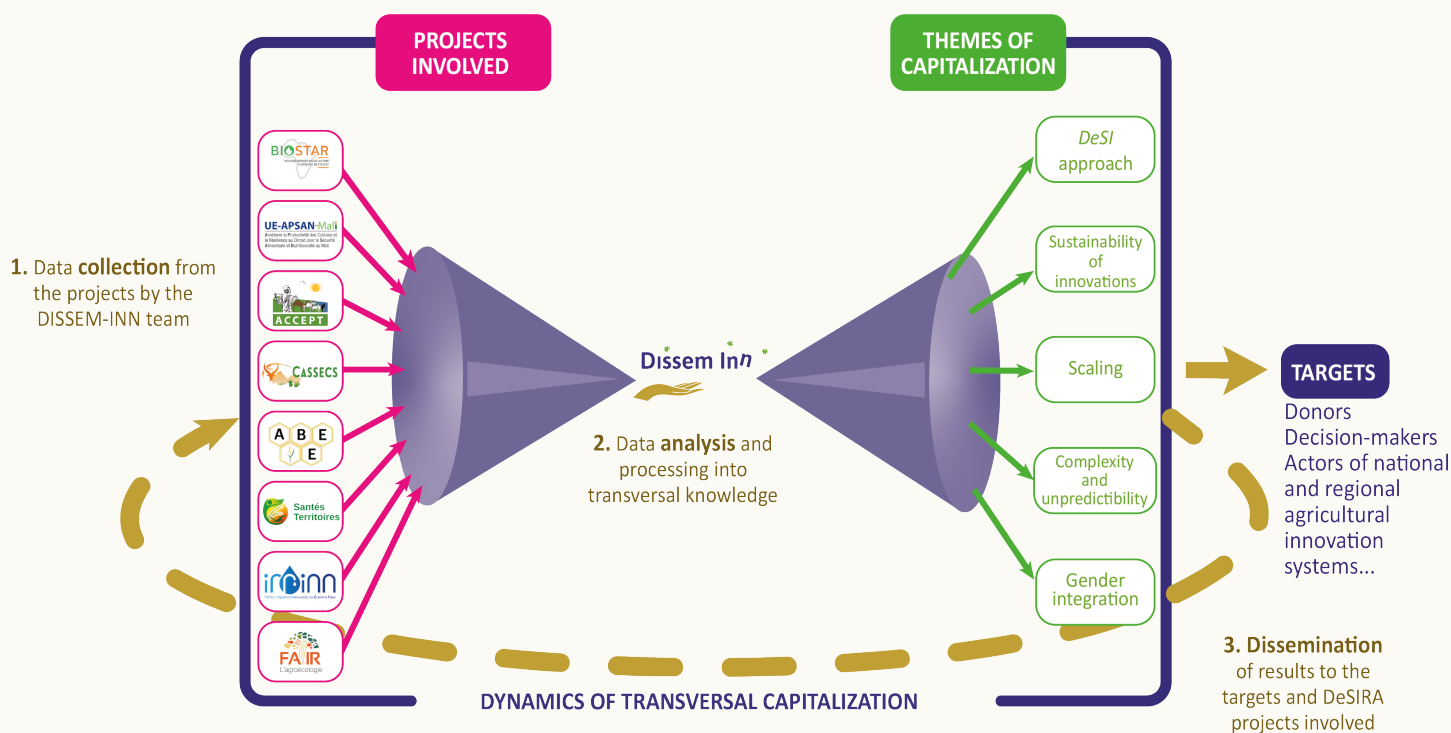
and their innovations.

For example, the BIOSTAR project regularly publishes news on its website about its activities, and benefits also from specific publications on LinkedIn from the "Cirad'Innov" service providing detailed updates about its innovations.

- **Interviews:** semi-structured interviews and surveys with key project stakeholders (focal points and coordinators), based on specific guides to explore experiences and results in depth.

³ See the Analytical Note and the Policy Brief from the Report of the Regional Methods Sharing Workshop. ⁴See the Analytical Notes and Policy Brief from the Report of the Inter-DeSIRA Workshop on the Sustainability and Scaling Up of Innovations in the Sahel. ⁵See the Policy Briefs from the Synthesis Workshop Report.

Figure 2. Operation and components of transversal capitalization in the DISSEM-INN project



• **Direct observations and interactions:** Participation in workshops and project meetings for immersion in the dynamics and interactions between stakeholders.

The involvement of the head of the DISSEM-INN project as a researcher in two of the eight DeSIRAs (FAIR Sahel and Santé & Territoires) allowed the DISSEM-INN project team to be invited to participate in their internal meetings.

For the processing and analysis of the collected data, the following tools were used:

• **Database:** creation of a database to centralize and organize the information collected.

This database has been modified and restructured over time to take into account advances in capitalization, the emergence and evolution of concepts and thus to refine the collection of information accordingly.

• **Analysis and synthesis:** analysing data to

identify trends, practices, challenges and key lessons.

The data collected being essentially qualitative, the main analysis methodology used consisted in typologies to highlight key categories transcending the diversity of activities carried out by the projects individually.

• **Validation of collected data:** submission of the results of the collection and analysis to the project focal points for comments and adjustments, thus ensuring the validity and co-construction of knowledge.

For example, the analytical framework developed for the transversal capitalization relating to sustainability and scaling was discussed, tested on sixteen innovations, adjusted during the inter-DeSIRA workshop⁶, and then presented during the synthesis workshop.

For knowledge sharing, the following modalities were employed:

⁶ See the dedicated note "For sustainable agricultural innovations in the Sahel, an analytical framework on sustainability and change of scale"

- **Transversal products:** Production of various knowledge supports (reports, analytical notes, policy briefs, maps, posters) to disseminate the results of the capitalization.

In total, a set of 15 publications were produced and made available online, including four detailed reports from which six notes (including this document) and five Policy briefs were produced.

- **Exchange spaces:** organization of meetings in the form of workshops at different stages of the

project to share and discuss the content of the transversal products.

Four workshops marked the advancement of the transversal capitalization process. Each allowed also to move forward along the capitalization trajectory, up to the synthesis workshop, which allowed for reflection with the project teams and a wider audience on the issues of financing and institutionalizing transversal capitalization (see dedicated Policy brief).

What to remember

The transversal capitalization methodology implemented by the DISSEM-INN project offers a robust and adaptable framework for transforming experiences into useful and shareable knowledge, by integrating co-construction principles as presented above.

This is an iterative and progressive process that requires the continuous participation of all

stakeholders based on clear commitments, which must be encouraged and supported throughout the projects' life cycle.

In this sense, the tools and lessons presented in this technical note constitute a resource for future users of transversal capitalization, whether they are researchers, development practitioners, donors or policy makers.

⁷These publications can be found in the "Production" section of the DISSEM-INN website: <https://www.dissem-inn.org/ressources/productions>. They are also available on Agritrop.

Reference

.Report of the synthesis workshop "*Bilan d'une capitalisation au Sahel pour développer des innovations de façon pérenne et penser leur changement d'échelle*", DISSEM-INN Project, 2024.

À découvrir aussi

.Policy brief «Optimizing the impact of development projects: How to anticipate the sustainability and change of scale of their interventions?»

Authors

Robin BOURGEOIS, DISSEM-INN Project manager
robin.bourgeois@cirad.fr

Chloé LESENFANS, Consultant for the DISSEM-INN Project
ext-chloe.lesenfans@cirad.fr



Photo credit: see the regional workshop exchange report, p. 125

