

## Dynamics of territorial systems in the entrepreneurial process for a sustainable urban transition

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**Abstract:** The issue of ecosystems is attracting renewed interest from researchers. Recent studies have defined ecosystems in terms of their field of intervention and common objectives. This research aims to highlight that, in the context of sustainable urban transition, the involvement of territorial systems in the entrepreneurial process is not limited solely to their areas of intervention. The methodology used is based on the theory of innovative environments and the territorial approach. Interviews with stakeholders and activity reports were used to compile a list of the entrepreneurship systems. This work showed that cities or territories could support sustainable urban transition through entrepreneurship by providing resources for creating businesses that could, in turn, produce sustainable solutions to territorial challenges. The authors would emphasise the territorial entrepreneurial ecosystem of innovation, knowledge, and enterprise systems, as well as other systems that, through their interactions, create added value for the territory. Because each activity or project has its footprint, each system needs to be coordinated to provide a more sustainable solutions.

**Key Words:** territorial entrepreneurship, urban sustainability, entrepreneurial ecosystem, mobilization of territorial resources.

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## Introduction

This study discusses the concept of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Recently, there has been a growing interest in the subject, and debates show that studies concerning different ecosystems are necessary and topical. An analysis of the literature on the concept of ecosystems reveals a great deal of interest on the part of researchers in various ways in recent years (Almirall, Lee, & Majchrzak, 2014; Ben, 2017; Bertello, Battisti, De Bernardi, & Bresciani, 2022; Clarysse, Wright, Bruneel, & Mahajan, 2014; Cobben, Ooms, Roijackers, & Radziwon, 2022; Cohen, 2006; David & Maksim, 2017; Erik & Andrew, 2019; Fischer, Meissner, Vonortas, & Guerrero, 2022; Gaël, Servane, & Christian, 2021; Ron, 2017; van Rijnsoever, 2020). Initially used to indicate the fundamental ecological unit of the environment, the organisms that live and evolve in it in a beneficial relationship (Cavallo et al., 2019), the concept of the ecosystem was introduced with its complement, "business ecosystem", by Moore (1993). It reflects the collaboration between actors in a sector, traditionally competitors, committed to achieving a specific objective. Since then, several studies have been carried out on other ecosystems. For example, Cohen (2006) coined the term "entrepreneurial ecosystem" using a systems-based approach to highlight the links entities (potentially) have with each other in developing activities. In light of sustainable development objectives, urban issues call for innovation and implementation of new approaches to sustainable urban planning (Boissier, 2022). For this aim, the entrepreneurial ecosystem is seen as an interconnected group of actors within a local geographic community committed to sustainable development by supporting and facilitating new sustainable ventures (Alvedalen & Boschma, 2017).

Furthermore, the entrepreneurial ecosystem concept refers to a set of interconnected entrepreneurial actors (e.g., companies, business angels and universities) and entrepreneurial processes (e.g., creation rates and entrepreneurship) that drive performance within a local entrepreneurial environment, emphasising the role of entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is seen as an extension of industrial districts, business clusters and learning regions (Gaël et al., 2021). A recent systematic review reveals a classification of the different ecosystems studied. These include business ecosystems, knowledge ecosystems, innovation ecosystems and entrepreneurial ecosystems (Cobben et al., 2023), with boundaries between these ecosystems regarding the sectors of activity covered, areas of expertise or specialisation and common objectives set by players and institutions, making them up. This being the case, it's essential to understand that an ecosystem can only be qualified as such when the systems making it up have set themselves a collectively attainable goal. However, entrepreneurship research has always focused on how entrepreneurial opportunities can be discovered and exploited to produce positive externalities for a territory, region, or nation (Bertello et al., 2022). It is helpful to bring the study of the ecosystem back to the relationships the players in a territory develop to create a positive externality. This underpins an interest in the dynamics of territorial systems in the entrepreneurial process.

However, some questions still need answers. How can a city support sustainable urban transition through entrepreneurship? The authors postulate that a city could support sustainable urban transition through entrepreneurship by providing resources for the emergence of businesses responding to sustainability challenges. To demonstrate this postulate, this study lists and analyses the role of various actors, institutions and systems involved in the entrepreneurial process through territorial resources, while the contiguity of entrepreneurial, innovation,

business and knowledge systems constitutes an ecosystem rich in resources that could be exploited to produce positive externalities through a dynamic in that territory. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is, therefore, not the only one involved in entrepreneurship issues, nor is the innovation ecosystem the only one faced with innovation-related issues in a territory. For these reasons, this article proposes the term territorial entrepreneurial ecosystem to demonstrate that there is a cross-fertilization between ecosystems, that the boundary between different systems does not describe the reality of developing economies, and that collaboration, participation and partnership between public and private systems is necessary to promote transversality by overcoming sectoral, administrative and institutional divides for better optimization in the production of sustainable urbanism.

## Methodology

This research hypothesis was tested over the Togolese territory, where the authors have noticed, since 2012, a profusion of activities, events, projects, and programs in which several actors and institutions take positions of choice under innovation or entrepreneurship. To provide us with a (non-exhaustive) list of structures, institutions and other players involved in entrepreneurial activities and programs, the authors turned to the Support Fund Youth Economic Initiatives (SFYEI) Togo, the government body with the most extensive database on entrepreneurship, which has developed several collaborative relationships with territorial structures and institutions since 2012. The chosen methodological approach is based on the innovative environment approach (Crevoisier, 2010) and the snowball technique (N'da, 2015).

The innovative environment approach stems from regional economics. It considers the territory an entity that evolves systemically, based on local institutions and players who influence each other and create a territorial dynamic (Proulx, 1994). It understands it as an entity in a perpetual relationship with its environment and is undoubtedly dependent on it. Thus, the territory is seen as an organisation linking businesses, institutions and the local population to its economic development (Crevoisier, 2006).

The snowball effect technique is used when gathering information about systems. It is not based on statistical reasoning but consists of choosing a core group of individuals, to which all those who have a relationship (business, work, friendship) with them, and so on, are added (N'da, 2015). This technique was chosen in line with our object of study for its ability to talk to key players in the various systems.

The triple-layer probabilistic methodology is used in this research. The authors identified local and regional structures supporting entrepreneurs in the first layer. At the second level, the authors have identified the various entities within these structures at different levels of the entrepreneurial process according to their areas of intervention: financing, support and structuring, valorisation, etc. This enabled us to draw up a diagram of the ecosystem. Afterwards, the authors asked for interviews with the managers or representatives of these various structures to gather information on their contributions to building up an ecosystem and obtain statistics on the projects and companies that have benefited from support. Activity reports were also consulted with the authorisation of the person in charge, particularly that of the Support Fund Youth Economic. A parapublic structure, which the authors refer to as a government mechanism with a mandate for youth entrepreneurship issues in Togo. These mechanisms include APSEF (Access to Financial Services for the Poor), AGRISEF (Access to Financial Services for

Farmers), AJSEF (Access to Financial Services for Young People), which are loans aimed respectively at vulnerable young women and men, potentially active in small income-generating activities, and small farmers; financing mechanism based on agricultural risk sharing (agrarian insurance, mechanisation via the distribution of tractors, financial support, etc.); for 2019, it has enabled USD 14,405,944 to be mobilised for the agricultural sector, allowing nearly 75,000 producers to improve their activities and generate 140,000 jobs in the industry.

In order to understand the entrepreneurial process through the eyes of young entrepreneurs, a third level of data collection and processing was required: identifying entrepreneurs to gather information. An interview guide was used to collect information. Some fifteen companies were identified to answer our questions, of which only 12 responded. Table 1 contains the sources of information collected, including the entrepreneurs interviewed, managers or members of institutions, managers of stores or sales of local products, event promoters and consumers. The authors also had access to a few physical and digital activity reports. The authors interviewed 31 people and consulted four activity reports.

**Table 1.** Distribution of sources and volume of information obtained

Sources	Collection method	Sources	Duration/ volume of information by source(avg.)
Contractors	Maintenance	12	45 min.
Managers/members of institutions	Maintenance	05	20 min
Store managers	Maintenance	02	20 min
Journalist, media agent/event promoter	Maintenance	02	1h 18 min
Consumers	Maintenance	10	15 min
Documents	Numerical/physical	04	-
Total	-	35	-

Source: produced by the authors, June 2023.

This work aimed not to distinguish between business, knowledge, entrepreneurship, and innovation ecosystems in the same area. Instead, the objective was to list the actors and institutions involved in the region's economic life and understand the relationships that bind them together to enrich the region. So, the various cross-checks carried out after gathering information enabled us to categorise actors and institutions into different ecosystems according to the areas of intervention they assume.

## Results

There are collaborative links that the players develop with each other, either on an ad hoc basis or over long periods. The authors have identified several players and institutions in the ecosystem: governmental mechanisms, institutions, and private companies. These actors are grouped according to the objectives they have set themselves. The authors have classified them into two categories to form two

distinct systems: national systems for institutions located within Togolese territory and governed by Togolese law, and regional/international systems for institutions located in the sub-region and internationally or in Togo but governed by foreign law. The authors have categorised them into ecosystems based on the prerogatives of each of these institutions to establish a relationship between them. There were thus identified seven groups of actors and institutions: financing ecosystems; training, research, knowledge, and support ecosystems; public policy governance systems; human resources; showcases, markets and fairs; dissemination, communication and promotion institutions; and entrepreneurial networks.

#### *National systems*

These are institutions and players established in the area who are actively participating in the success of the public policy of reducing unemployment and underemployment through youth entrepreneurship.

#### *Contractor networks*

They are generally associations and groups of people involved in the entrepreneurial world. They advocate participation and support for young entrepreneurs. They are becoming benchmarks in the field and the first point of contact for integration into the community.

#### *Knowledge and support systems*

They are systems for supporting young people's entrepreneurial ideas to stimulate and boost productivity in all sectors of socio-economic life. They provide courses and training linked to entrepreneurial realities. They give the start-ups the technical tools they need to go to market and make a competitive profit. The authors can add research and universities' entrepreneurial centres and incubators.

#### *Governance systems*

The public sector's interest in innovation and entrepreneurship can be seen in its participation in creating a competitive entrepreneurial ecosystem. To this end, several programs, projects, and institutions have been set up and are under the direct management of the public authorities. Through these services, government policies are implemented.

#### *Financing systems*

When it comes to loans and financing, craftsmen and entrepreneurs turn to financial institutions. They can choose between traditional banking services, for those who respect the often-restrictive conditions, and the services of cooperatives and inclusive finance institutions. The most popular are listed below.

#### *Human resources*

Developing youth businesses requires skills and human resources in management and corporate governance. To this end, specialized public structures make job seekers, and unemployed people registered in their databases available to new youth businesses that need human capital and skills but have little or no

means of hiring them and paying their salaries. It acts as a bridge between potential employers and job seekers.

#### Dissemination, promotion, and enhancement systems

Markets and showcases are stores and spaces dedicated to selling organic and/or local products. Here are some of the most popular. La vitrine FAO, africashop, togossimé, produits du terroir. There's also the Made in Togo platform, a website selling products of all kinds, specifically those of Togolese companies. The challenge is to bring Togolese products closer to consumers.

#### Media

They provide visibility and communication for local products and businesses, and their range varies from traditional press, televisions, and radios to digital solutions. Special programs in which entrepreneurs present their products are organised. These media also promote and mobilize potential support for financing or technical assistance set up by the various institutions to support young entrepreneurs.

#### *Regional technical and financial support systems*

Renowned for supporting African countries such as Togo, international organisations are leading in providing technical expertise and development financing in almost all country sectors.

#### Technical support

Technically, they support the incubators by providing them with human resources or by covering the salaries of staff working on support projects or incubating so-called innovative projects for young people within the incubators.

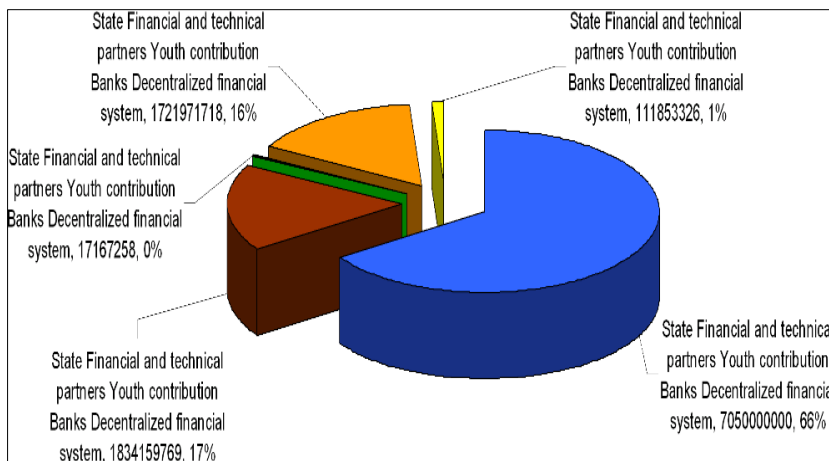
#### Financial support

These organisations provide grants to local institutions that support young people. The various missions are carried out directly with local private institutions or Togolese public services. While retaining their will and freedom of action, the multiple programs and projects they carry out are permanently enshrined in the national development policy (NDP) or government roadmap, which is the orchestra of most actions. This is the basis for most of the country's socio-economic activities. This implies that the institutions of the United Nations, the Team Europe made up of Germany, France and the European Union, as well as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Swiss Association for Entrepreneurship in Emerging Markets (SAFEEM) are important partners in achieving Togo's socio-economic objectives.

#### *Mobilizing resources*

Figure 1 shows the financial resources mobilized by SFYEI during 2012-2022 to implement its integrated support system for entrepreneurs. These funds come mainly from the State but also include the participation of financial systems and

financial partners in the form of donations. However, one remarkable aspect is the participation of the entrepreneurs themselves. This explains the dynamism of the financial ecosystem around youth entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial will of the players most concerned: young people. However, for the banks, the low level of participation is seen as an expression of their caution. The business plans of some entrepreneurs are not selected for credit because of their lack of profitability.



**Figure 1.** Financial resources mobilized by SFYEI during 2012-2022 for the implementation of its integrated support system for entrepreneurs

Source: Support fund for young people’s economic initiatives (SFYEI); modified by us, June 2023.

**Figure 2.** Dynamics of training session beneficiaries

Source: Support fund for young people’s economic initiatives (SFYEI); modified by us, June 2023

Figure 2 shows a trend in players' interest in training. From 2019 onwards, the increase is explained by the fund's new cooperative approach, which consists of accompanying and structuring young people. SFYEI first implemented it to enable many young people to benefit from its technical service offerings, notably capacities and skills building.

Figure 3 shows that, while several types of training are offered, the most common is Additional Technical Capacity Building (ATCB). The breakdown of these numbers by training type shows a high level of interest among entrepreneurs in specific training courses.

**Figure 3.** Types of training

Source: Support fund for young people’s economic initiatives (SFYEI); modified by us, June 2023

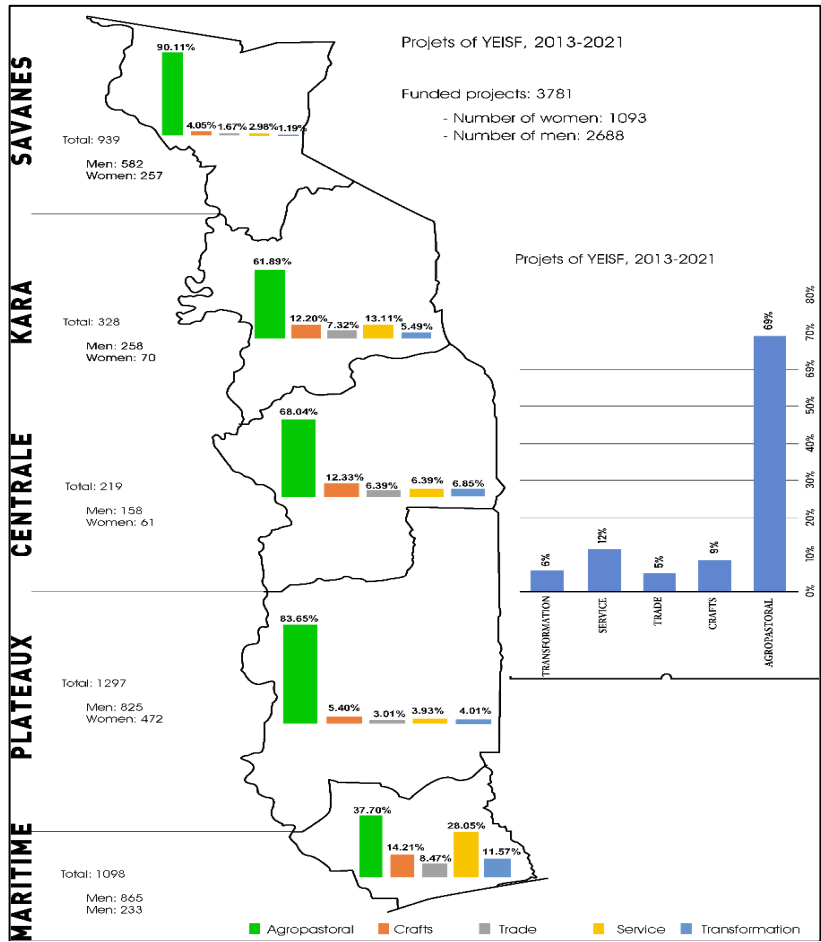


Figure 4. Mapping of youth projects by sector

Source: support fund for young people’s economic initiatives; modified by the authors, June 2023.

Figure 4 presents a mapping of youth projects by sector. The map shows a high share of entrepreneurs in the agropastoral sector. This fact describes the orientation of national public policy concerning the country’s assets. It should be noted that Togo is essentially an agricultural country and that this sector alone contributes almost 40% of the national Gross Domestic Product. However, a comparison between two regions, namely Kara and Maritime, shows that young people invest in the service sector (waste management, catering, recycling, digital, mobility, etc.). This differential demonstrates the needs of cities and the assets they offer entrepreneurs to develop solutions.

### Discussions

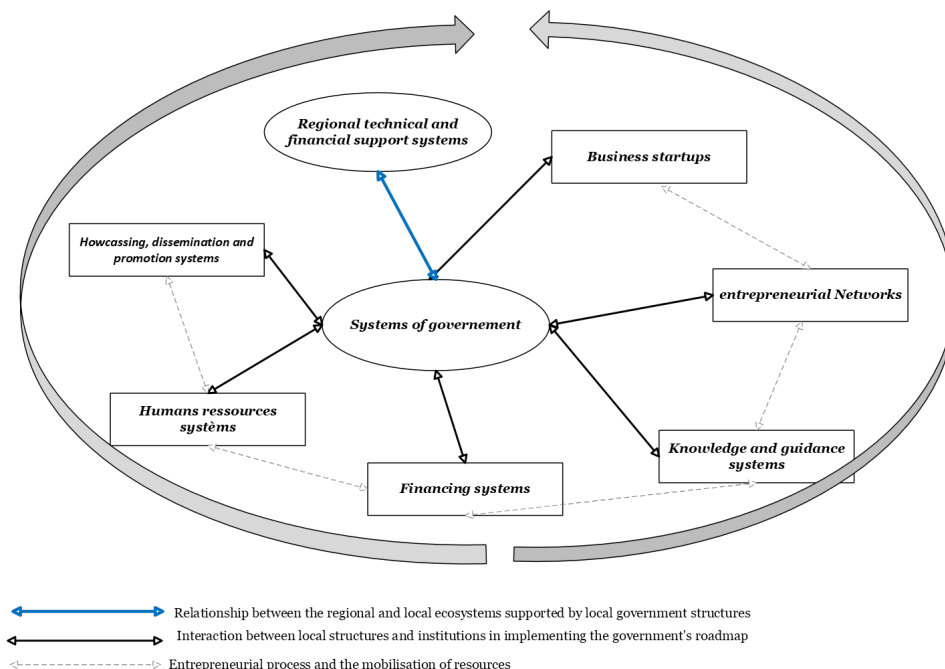
In the dynamics of territorial systems regarding entrepreneurship, several instruments can be mobilised by actors to produce solutions in favour of territories. In this research, after analysis of the data collected, it emerges that (three) 03 types of instruments for promoting entrepreneurship have been mobilized in the dynamics of territorial entrepreneurial systems. After presenting



the dynamics mapping, the authors will present and comment on the three instruments around which the players are quite collaborative. These are the mobilisation of resources, particularly entrepreneurial knowledge or technical support, financial instruments, and promotion and valorisation.

### *Systems dynamics in the entrepreneurial process*

Figure 5 presents the schematics of the interaction between ecosystems and the entrepreneurial process. Innovation and entrepreneurship are the fruit of processes rooted in a specific environment or territory.



**Figure 5.** Schematics of the interaction between ecosystems and entrepreneurial process.

Source: made by the authors, June 2023.

However, a community's ability to incubate, innovate, and become a successful, entrepreneurial, and innovative community lies in the optimal combination of available territorial resources (Proulx, 1994) and the effective will to undertake (Crevoisier, 2010). Consequently, the interaction that resides between ecosystems or between systems is triggered by the entrepreneur's entrepreneurial will and the guiding commitment of local players, chief among them the governance structures that ensure the mobilization of resources, including new knowledge and techniques, financial and human resources for the economic revitalization of the territory knowing that the types of resources an entrepreneur may need vary according to his/her specific situation and stage of development (Gaël et al., 2021). To this end, the authors base their analysis on three types of resources: entrepreneurial knowledge and technical skills, financial resources, and resources to promote adopting new entrepreneurial solutions.

### *Mobilising knowledge and providing technical support for entrepreneurial projects*

One of a company's strengths is its business *model*. This tool is crucial to developing a good project and, above all, to a company's survival. It is the entrepreneur's compass, guiding him from the conception of his idea to its growth to the development of his product or service. It is also the indicator of success that encourages funding bodies to invest funds in the project.

In the various interviews the authors conducted with entrepreneurs, they found that, although the environment presents the same types of resources, they did not need to mobilize all these resources in their entrepreneurial process or do so in the same way. Each had their path. This reveals that entrepreneurship is a specific and idiosyncratic adventure.

The promoter of tomato puree tells them how he mobilizes knowledge:

*"I learned on the job; I've never had any training in entrepreneurship or in processing tomatoes into purees. I realized there was a problem during my stay in a village when I noticed many tomatoes rotting due to a lack of market outlets. So I thought of a solution: conservation through processing. I did some research on the Internet. I tried several times, but it didn't work, but in the end, I succeeded (entrepreneur 1)".*

He had to do this without going through the formal institutions established for the cause. Indeed, in the Togolese context, incubators such as Nunya lab, Banm lab and Tilitu lab are the first public structures to spring into action when the desire for entrepreneurship arises. They are places for training, entrepreneurial support, knowledge sharing, learning and networking. Training courses are offered in a hybrid format; they also organise competitions between project leaders or anyone else who wants to get involved in the dynamic to stimulate the creativity of the young population. The various sources of motivation are often prizes. Most of the time, these are cash envelopes, computer hardware and consumables. Incubators are recognised as being extremely useful in supporting innovative entrepreneurs. To do so, financing institutions sometimes require the entrepreneur to have an "incubator track record", understood as the process by which an entrepreneur or innovator is supported by an incubator from the moment his/her idea takes shape right through to bringing his/her product to market; this reveals an interaction, a close link between incubation and entrepreneurial financing:

*"Incubators and resource centres for social entrepreneurship are institutions that are becoming increasingly involved in product, service and social innovation in Togo. We have supported several technological projects". (Business manager, incubator, Lomé youth centre).*

Based on this statement, the authors can confirm that the entrepreneurial process needs management and knowledge acquisition resources to mature the idea, develop it, and sustain the business. These skills can only be acquired in a suitable structure with the resources to transfer them to the project owner. From the point of view of the literature, the authors would situate these structures in knowledge ecosystems. However, data collection has shown a boundary-crossing or interaction between ecosystems, blurring boundaries. However, some entrepreneurs do not take advantage of these resources.

Searching for knowledge, training or sharing entrepreneurial experience is not the exclusive domain of incubators or training centres. Entrepreneurship enthusiasts also turn to online courses and videos. These are all expressions of entrepreneurial will. Tanko Timati's statement, "[...] I did some research on the

*Internet*" is a clear example. The knowledge of how to preserve tomatoes and transform them into purees is acquired through technology (Crevoisier & Jeannerat, 2009).

On the other hand, the business management training, he has acquired has served him well in setting up and running his business. From this perspective, incubators in the country are an essential resource for entrepreneurship and innovation in Togo. This is why these training systems are categorised as part of the research ecosystem.

While for some, technology has enabled the acquisition of knowledge, an essential resource for activities in developing countries, for others, knowledge is acquired through physical proximity, and sometimes not just geographical proximity. This is now made possible by the mobility of people, thanks to the development of transport means. One tangible example is the Togolese chocolate maker

*"He learned how to make chocolate at home. First, he was in Italy, where it all began, and then he went to Mexico to visit the Mayan people; I was there with him. There, he acquired the artisanal, ancestral techniques that he passed on to the cocoa farmers back home; they can produce chocolate themselves, using the same technique he uses in his production unit (entrepreneur 3).*

By immersion, the coffee processing entrepreneurs have learned how to transform the raw resources that Togo abounds in the environments that provide practices related to their business projects. For the promoter of King Café, mobility was a primary learning resource for his innovation. Immigrating to Italy, he decided to return after "*becoming aware of all the potential of his home country*", and especially the production of "*good quality*" coffee, in his words, without any industrial processing units:

*"[...] On my return to Italy, I started by visiting coffee processing plants. I'm acquiring knowledge, techniques, machines etc., and anything else that can help me set up in Togo" (entrepreneur 2)*

The resources to provide solutions may come from another geographical area for a need identified in a given area. Thanks to the mobility of players in a distant area, the interweaving of structures or players in ecosystems is becoming increasingly possible and relevant due to the development of means of transport. It is now possible to acquire knowledge in one sector of activity from knowledge providers identified in another territory for a business or entrepreneurial need in another territory. This mobility takes knowledge out of its ecosystem and into the public arena. On this aspect, it is pretty logical to argue that to delimit territorial systems by classifying them according to whether they are knowledge, entrepreneurship, business, or innovation ecosystems would be to ignore the overlaps and, above all, the implications that each of the systems or ecosystems has on the territory.

Listening to him, the authors understood that, like the promoter of tomato paste, he could acquire and combine resources from here and elsewhere to get his business off the ground. The resources mobilized abroad are mainly immaterial, while those used locally are more material. The same applies to the chocolate producer who travelled to Mexico after receiving his first training in Italy on transforming cocoa into chocolate.

In addition to the mobilization of external knowledge, its transmission and implementation in the Togolese context, the interaction between the entrepreneur

and his environment was manifested in the combination of other locally available resources. Indeed, while both entrepreneurs drew on techniques and knowledge developed elsewhere in a social context foreign to Togo for their local business, the implementation of projects did not occur without the contribution of one or other institutions available on the territory.

#### *Financing entrepreneurial projects*

The financing of businesses, especially young ones, is a crucial issue in the ecosystem. For regional development, funding seems to be very important for companies if they are seen to be providing sustainable solutions. In the Togolese ecosystem, entrepreneurial support structures have financing mechanisms to a certain extent. However, the interaction between the local and regional or international ecosystems means that project promoters are not dependent on the ecosystem. By ecosystemic dependence, the authors suggest the limitation of the project leader to local structures or his ecosystem. The consequence of this will be the inability to mobilize resources for the development of its solution and its impact on the region. For the promoter of tomato paste, setting up the first processing unit came about thanks to financial support from a local system, after personal investment and "help from the family that didn't impact the process". He turned to SFYEI, which is included in the public services category of our ranking:

*"I received support from SFYEI when I applied for a loan of six million (6,000,000) CFA francs from an Orabank institution. This enabled me to increase my production to 800 boxes" (contractor 1).*

SFYEI is a public institution providing financial guarantees for young people's businesses. For the tomato paste promoter, setting up the first processing unit was made possible by financial support from a local system after personal investment and "help from the family that didn't impact the process". Love money is financial support from the entrepreneur's friends and family, who have confidence in the project and provide the start-up funds without the constraints of a bank. Generally speaking, these are not large sums of money that could cover the entire investment. He turned to the Support Fund for Young People's Economic Initiatives, a public institution supporting entrepreneurship in Togo and, therefore, a system of governance.

On the other hand, the promoter does not claim to have received any support from the Geneva Federation for Cooperation (mentioned before). However, our investigations led us to discover this in the media, of which this is one. In addition, the same information appeared in this other source (COMMODAFRICA, 2020).

In short, the process of local anchoring requires and results from coordination between territorial players from here and elsewhere, from the quality of the entrepreneurial ecosystem based on the relationships that entrepreneurs forge (Erik & Andrew, 2019). Through the globalization of economic activities, entrepreneurship requires a combination of resources from here and elsewhere in its anchoring process. Indeed, with globalization, nations can no longer claim to build an economy on the scale of their borders (Crevoisier, 2007), including entrepreneurship. The harmonisation and combination of resources are reflected in the ability of entrepreneurs to access them with the support of local institutions, notably *public systems* or *networks* of entrepreneurs or investors. This indirectly ties in with section 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals: the need to forge effective partnerships to achieve other goals.

*Promoting and disseminating entrepreneurship*

As part of a territorial development approach, the media, distribution systems, players and other intermediaries are key players in enhancing the value, dissemination, promotion and influence of local entrepreneurial products and services, both locally and outside the geographical perimeter of the place of production. As reported by this media representative, they also help attract investors to the region:

*“Investi Média’s commitment is to promote investment in Togo. We aim to attract potential investors. So, through our various broadcasts, the authors inform the Togolese and foreign public about the different growth sectors and the different measures that the government is putting in place to support and facilitate the implementation of businesses in Togo (Media 1).*

Many of the media host broadcasts in local languages to raise awareness and promote the adoption of endogenous solutions. Promoters are invited to participate in these programs or receive visits from the presenters to their companies. The media men film, interview and report on local initiatives to make quality information available. Exchanges with the media bear witness to this. The media are, therefore, at the heart of the mobilization of players, the promotion of local solutions to residents, and territorial outreach (Jeannerat, 2012). Sustainable urban transition, therefore, requires the co-construction of the direct and indirect players involved in the process without leaving out the intermediaries. Several public actions have been taken in Togo to support young people, notably signing contracts between support structures and the media. One example is the partnership between the Ministry of Grassroots Development, Youth and Youth Employment and Togolese Television, intending to give young people's businesses airtime to promote their solutions.

The role of identified markets and showcases is to answer questions about disseminating local solutions. In the interests of sustainability, towns and cities need to highlight local businesses that offer local solutions at lower financial and environmental costs and, above all, that meet the needs of residents. To boost competitiveness and ensure permanent accessibility, several stores and showcases dedicated to Togolese products have been set up. A census of these shops and showcases revealed those listed in the distribution systems. Online sales platforms complement these showcases.

**Methodological limitations, and direction for the future**

The territorial approach, Crevoisier (2010) identifies the relationship between the spatial organisation of a territory and its economic organisation and how a spatial territory is transformed by its economic dynamics. From this perspective, Proulx (1994) argues that their immediate environment and local milieu generate territories' activities. Secondly, the fertility of one milieu concerning another depends on its capacity to incubate and grow SMEs. Thus, the authors conclude that job creation in a local context and encouragement and support of entrepreneurial initiatives are relevant issues in economic policies to make environments more developed. Moreover, this approach emphasizes the entrepreneurial character and freedom of the players involved. So, from the point of view of innovators, it's not enough to juxtapose and "combine" the various components of an innovation system for it to work; you need more than that: you

need "animation" and the interaction of players, which is the key to triggering the process (Crevoisier, 2010).

In the context of sustainable urban transition, local players must plan a policy focused on the territorial ecosystem, involving all institutions and players and associating communities to implement and ensure the success of sustainable development projects. To do this, ecosystem players must develop their ability to take ownership of and activate a project, leading to a local dynamic (Crevoisier, 2010). The results show that territories or cities can provide residents with resources to support and finance businesses in terms of sustainable urban transition. Territorial players mobilize resources from here and elsewhere, according to their specific needs, to anchor them locally and establish territorial products with a firm valuation (Dewey, 2008; Jeannerat, 2012; Vatin, 2009). It demonstrates the fact that entrepreneurship is today a field of importance intending to stem situations critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) endogenously and autonomously, and which could effectively tackle the challenges facing the continent (global warming, digital transition, etc.) (Chapus et al., 2021).

In summary, the hypothesis is validated. The authors accomplished both the aim to demonstrate that cities or territories can support sustainable urban transition through entrepreneurship by providing resources for business start-ups and to identify the systems that underpin the territorial ecosystem in terms of entrepreneurship, innovation, knowledge and enterprise, and other systems that, through their interactions, create added value for the territory. Consequently, on the scale of a developing territory, faced with several social, economic, and environmental challenges, it is difficult to form ecosystems and delimit them in relation to their fields of competence and intervention. Since the territory is imprinted with each activity or project carried out, coordination of each system is required for a more sustainable solution.

From a methodological point of view, the study did not focus on the precise situation of an urban or territory but targeted a sector and a solution developed through local entrepreneurship to analyse its sustainable impact on management or planning. This paves the way for research into the impact of companies supported by territorial ecosystems on the territory regarding sustainable development.

## **Conclusions**

Our hypothesis that territories would support sustainable urban transition through entrepreneurship by providing resources for business start-ups is validated. However, this research does not study what entrepreneurship or new businesses bring in terms of solutions to the challenges faced by territories in the face of urban difficulties in terms of solid waste management, sanitation, mobility, food, or sustainable job creation. As such, it paves the way for a new study to understand and explain the impact of businesses, whether in the service, agrifood or digital sectors, on the sustainable urban transition.

In addition, this work serves as a benchmark for all actors and entrepreneurs in Togo and elsewhere to understand the composition of an ecosystem and territorial development processes. It is also a resource for municipalities to understand and initiate territorial networking regarding sustainability.

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