Small Farmers in Mountainous and Forested Hinterlands. Contexts, Constraints and Strategies

Call for papers: Deadlines : July 15th 2018 (abstract) and November 1st 2018 (full article). Guest editors : Laurent Auclair (laurent.auclair@univ-amu.fr), Mohamed Raouf Saida (saidi.raouf@free.fr) and Coralie Mounet (coralie.mounet@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr).

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Brief

For centuries, small farmers (SFs) have made their living in the mountainous and forested areas of the Mediterranean hinterland, away from centres of power. These places have historically been places of refuge for the populations driven out from the plains – the excluded, the damned and the rebellious looking for means to subsist and resist (Braudel, 1966, Debarbieux, 2001). Nowadays, the SFs in the mountains and the forests, which have become more mixed and gradually more part of national entities, are paradoxically suffering from geographical remoteness and economic and social marginality. And yet, beyond the physical and the cultural environments’ diversity and the relationships forged with the urbanised foreland, these same communities are developing adaptive practices on the basis of specific features that continue to be sensitive to various kinds of risk and uncertainty that public policy is unable to diminish.

Environmental constraints vs. multi-activity and multifunctionality

In these environments, agropastoral practices face numerous physical (orographic and bioclimatic) and human (temporary or permanent migration) constraints, including the wilding of nature (agricultural abandonment, increase in some wildlife species).

In collective representations, these areas – long neglected by public policy in the South – are often associated with misery and underdevelopment and are referred to in statistics as repulsive spaces and as the main repository of poverty. The so-called participatory
public policies that focus on these areas follow the ideology of nature conservation and are often not concerned with the social issues and conflicts between the farming communities that result from the area’s many uses (Aderghal, 2004, 2007). In the north, despite various (local, national and European) incentive schemes, the mountainous and forested hinterlands continue to “lose their vitality”.

To cope with these constraints, SFs deploy multi-activity strategies that combine agricultural diversification with craft and business. In response to the social demand for nature driven by a greening ethos (Saïdi, 2012) and encouraged by various incentive funds, there has been a development, to varying degrees, in new forms of tourism that are both (directly or indirectly) generating additional sources of income (jobs and services) and based on enhancing local tangible and intangible heritage. All of this has been accompanied by a significant public undertaking to invest in infrastructure and provide socio-economic support.

**Conflicts of use and commodification vs farmer solidarity and innovation**

Multi-activity and multi-functionality are crucial in keeping the farmers from moving elsewhere. However, these strategies face serious constraints – the most important of which are the conflicts of use and of the appropriation of resources.

On the southern shore of the Mediterranean, SFs have had to deal with the State’s legal appropriation of the forest for more than a century. Using restrictive and coercive legislation (forest codes that date back to the colonial era), the State has kept up the assimilation of “local populations” with simple “users” for a hundred years. In some cases, the forestry service pays seasonal local labour and mobilises public social and charitable schemes to keep families where they are (Boujou and Saïdi, 1996, Gardin, 2004) in order to meet the needs of the monopolistic exploitation of forest resources, forest maintenance and erosion control. In France, where forest legislation is looser and the state monopoly less exclusive, new legislation on forest fires appears to seriously hinder the viability of mountain farming (Vilain-Carlotti, 2015). Sometimes, the conflicts of use divide the SFs because of unending antagonism between farmers and herders (sedentary or in the process of sedentarisation) and longstanding competition between herders with respect to pastoral resources, which increases during periods of drought (Rosenbeger 2001, Noin 1970). Recently, the social demand for nature, along with the mercantile mobilisation of the ecological question and the “tourism development” (and/or “touristification”) of the territories, has often accentuated competition between the farming families. Real estate and tourism promoters, mostly outside the agricultural world and sometimes foreigners, who are quick to transform farmland and communal pastures into tourist complexes, also pose a serious threat. Thus, some mountainous and forested hinterlands in France and Mediterranean Europe are transformed from poor and arid agricultural areas into areas of land rent.

Up until now, neither conflicts of use nor competitions nor invasive market logic appear to have succeeded in completely upending the lives of the SFs living in the mountainous and forested hinterlands (with the notable exception of Corsica and Sardinia) because, along with adaptive strategies, new and traditional forms of solidarity form another lever of individual/family and collective resistance. In southern Mediterranean countries, where non-EU bodies specific to SFs are still non-existent or in their infancy, traditional
solidarities (Auclair & Alifriqui, 2012) and, more recently, the development of associations in rural areas (Aubert and Saïdi, 2012), are nevertheless negotiating spaces – ramparts against land grabbing – and participate to some extent in preserving the SFs. In northern Mediterranean countries, the ingenuity and creativity of farmers’ organisations (trade unions, professional associations, local distribution networks etc.) are a channel for overcoming individualism, economic and political achievements and essential support for keeping local populations in place and for attracting others.

Objectives

This call for articles specifically seeks a comprehensive understanding, from a dynamic and comparative perspective, of the small farmers in the mountainous and forested hinterlands. It seeks to understand the specificity of Mediterranean space. Comparative papers on Mediterranean space as well as those focused on non-Mediterranean space will be accepted.

Reflecting the main brief, proposals for papers should be original, oriented around and based on empirical work and/or be a consideration of works.

Four approaches will be given preference, on the mountainous and forested hinterland of the Mediterranean and non Mediterranean:

• Diachronic characterization.
• The SFs within the context of globalisation and climate change: accommodation, resistance, abandonment, collective action...
• The SFs, the State and public policy.
• Proposals dealing with the intangible aspects of the affected spaces and populations (lifestyle, social representations...) will also be greatly appreciated.

Timeline

Article proposals, around 1,000 words in length, should be sent in either French (if the author is a native French speaker) or English (if the author’s mother tongue is any other language) by 9th July 2018 to Laurent Auclair (laurent.auclair@univ-amu.fr), Mohamed Raouf Saïdi (saidi.raouf@free.fr) and Coralie Mounet (coralie.mounet@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr), as well as the editorial team, addressed to Olivier Vallade (olivier.vallade@msh-alpes.fr). Final articles are expected by 1 November 2018. Final articles must be submitted in one of the languages in which the review is published: Alpine languages (French, Italian, German), Spanish or English. The author must see to it that the article is translated into the second language after it has been assessed. One of the two versions must be in English. If the article is submitted by a native English speaker, the second version must be in French. Publication of the articles is tentatively scheduled for the end of 2019.
BIBLIOGRAPHIE


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