

Scientific report

The impact of markets in the management of rural land

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Co-Ordinator:

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The main target of the conference was to explore how the involvement of rural populations and communities in different kinds of markets (for agricultural commodities, labour, land, capital) has influenced the management of rural land in Europe.

Thirteen papers were presented. Papers in sets of two were presented by the discussants we had invited to the conference (25 mins.), followed by answers and comments from the authors (25 mins.) and questions from the floor (25 mins.). The outcome of this system was quite satisfactory. Authors received good comments from the discussants, who had read carefully the papers. On the other hand, they had enough time to stress the most important aspects of their work and, finally, there was also time to hold good discussions.

Participants (authors and discussants) in the conference came from a good sample of European countries (10) as can be seen in the Table below.

TABLE 1. PARTICIPANTS (authors and discussants):

France	4
Spain	4
Belgium	1
Finland	1
Germany	1

Italy		1
Norway		1
Portugal		1
Sweden		1
United Kingdom	1	

In our call for paper, there was no particular focus on any historical period – in fact, we hoped to receive papers that ranged from the Middle Ages to the present day. Finally, we received papers related to very different periods, with particular stress being placed on long-run approaches (9 of the papers dealt with a periods of more than one hundred years).

TABLE 2. HISTORICAL PERIODS OF THE PAPERS

Middle Ages	2
18 th – 19 th Centuries	3
18 th – 20 th Centuries	3
19 th Century	2
19 th -20 th Centuries	3

In general, most of the papers had a very strong orientation toward the topics that were emphasised in our call for papers. From this point of view, the result was quite good and allowed for a good level of discussion during the conference.

The academic level of the papers was also pretty good. Thinking about publication, from my point of view more than half of the papers were very advanced versions, almost ready to be published, and with very little work remaining to be done on them. Other interesting papers

had the potential to be published, although, in my opinion, further work was still required. In short, I think that in three or four months time we can count on a book containing around 10 or 11 interesting chapters.

Bearing in mind the different periods and topics covered by the 13 papers, it is very difficult to sum up the conference and write some general conclusions. Thus, I will limit myself to emphasising the most outstanding ideas that were discussed during the course of the conference.

Most of the papers and comments focused on precisely what were the forces driving agricultural change in rural Europe. Although the importance of these changes were very different from the Middle Ages until the present days, a common approach that emerged was to stress the importance of urban and external markets in order to give incentives to changes in the management of rural land.

With respect to the Middle Ages, Isabelle Theiller raised the issue of the importance of markets in Eastern Normandy both to the local lords looking to raise money, and to the peasants who were looking for varied goods which were not produced in their local areas. Dealing with the case of Sicily, and again in the Middle Ages, Mark Aloisio investigated the extent to which local and foreign markets for agricultural products led to the adoption and survival of the *latifundia*, and whether the medieval trade system contributed, as some historians argue, not to promote economic development in the countryside but to sustain existing property rights and forms of agrarian tenure.

The transition of agriculture and its producers, respectively, into a highly market-integrated sector and strongly market-oriented peasants formed the driving force and *prima causa* of European agricultural revolutions during early modern times. This was the case, for example, in Westfalia where, after 1840, the beginning of the Ruhr's rise towards becoming the biggest European industrial belt created extraordinarily favourable conditions for demand-driven, strongly market-oriented agricultural growth. Until around 1870, the tremendously expanding urban-industrial population of the Ruhr had to be supplied almost completely by Westphalian sources.

Similarly, in Portugal a kind of silent revolution had taken place during the course of the 18th century with the enrichment and the reconfiguration of the rural landscape and agricultural

production, the expansion of the cultivated area, growth in production, a variety of new technical tools, greater investment in agriculture and an improved articulation with other economic sectors. As a result of this, at the turn of the century, the agrarian sector could supply the larger part of raw materials needed in the wool, silk and hemp industries; Portugal was also self-sufficient (with eventual surpluses) in producing fruit, olive oil, vegetables, meat and wine; in addition, the country was becoming, in the European context, a major exporter of some of those products, wine, above all, but also fruit, olive oil and wool. In Portugal, a set of macroeconomic variables changed the market conditions for Portuguese agriculture in all possible directions.

For their part, Olsson and Svensson also found strong evidence of changes in the management of rural land in Sweden during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, driven by rising prices due to strong demand from urban markets. This resulted in an increase in production, turning a grain-importing nation into a grain-exporting one, with commercialisation and market integration being one important factor in this development.

Continuing with the nineteenth century, the works of Lana and de la Torre for Navarra (Spain), Hernández and Ozcoidi, also for Navarra, and Rossi for Reggio-Emilia showed how the management strategies of the landowners changed in a particular historical context, one that was marked by the expansion of agrarian capitalism. As a result, there was a profound reorganization of markets, both in products and in factors, within the context of great political and institutional change.

The research carried by Tretvik has shown that market factors were important driving forces in restructuring agriculture and reindeer herding in mid-Norway during this period. The adaptation differed quite a lot from district to district, due to population growth and the distance and ways of transportation to various markets, due to natural conditions or environmental factors, to other competing industries and also to regulations enacted by the authorities

The importance of foreign markets in order to drive change in different agricultures was also an important topic in the conference. In this regard, the work of Chevet concentrated on the changes in the British market for foreign wines and its consequences to producing countries like Australia or France. The impact of foreign markets was also the main issue in the paper of Pinilla and Ayuda, which analyzed the impact of the globalization of Mediterranean

horticultural products on countries like Spain, as well as the impulse that this supposed for its main producing areas in order to change the crop mix and also to introduce new techniques and, generally, very important agricultural changes.

Adopting a different approach, Cusso, Garrabou and Tello examined how the development of a market for wine in Catalonia allowed for an intense process of specialization, with clear competitive advantages with respect to earlier land uses. This also had an impact on the structure of land ownership, facilitating the appearance of small landholdings. Specialization in vineyard production also had effects on the labour market, allowing family labour to maintain itself as dominant in these areas. Particularly careful consideration was given to the extent to which this market expansion ended up by generating problems of the sustainability of these agrarian systems.

Finally, Ostman showed for Finland how the impact of market relations give rise to many contradictions, and how this is a process linked to a parallel reconstitution of local interaction, the establishment of cooperative organizations and to men's connection to an agrarian public sphere. While women's work was not marginalized on the farms, it was nevertheless deeply embedded in the family, and women were – in an informal way- excluded from the cooperative arena and from the associational movement, in which men's economic agency was formed.