

COST action A 35 Progressore
Programme for the Study of European Rural Societies

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Second Workshop of Working Group 2 – The management of rural land

Call for papers
Agricultural specialisation and rural patterns of development
Rennes (France)
15-16 june 2007

Coordinator : Annie Antoine, Université Rennes 2 (France)

Scientific board:

Vicente Pinilla (University of Zaragoza), Annie Antoine (Université Rennes 2), Danilo Gasparini (Università de Padova), Matti Peltonen (University of Helsinki), José Vicente Serrão (ISCTE, Lisbon), Aud Mikkelsen Tretvik (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim)

The second conference of the Working Group 2 (The management of rural land) will be held in Rennes (France) in june 2007. It's devoted to the study of agricultural specialization and rural patterns of development from the Middle Ages to nowadays. It is closely linked to the first conference of WG2 (impact of markets).

The project of this conference is based on the assumption (we will have to confirm or cancel it) that agricultural systems have not been necessarily reluctant to any form of agricultural specialization. Agricultural modernization occurred on different dates in the different countries of Europe and traditional opposition between large-scale cultivation as a factor of progress and small-scale agriculture, seen as archaic and not very productive, is probably very reducing and exaggerated. It probably conceals an evolution that a micro-economic analysis can reveal.

We use to say that, traditionnaly, main goal of agriculture has been to provide food for the farm household ; so, some productions are essential and unavoidable : the first of which is cereals. Can specialization occur only beside this production ? What are the links between specialized productions and self-sufficient productions ? How does it work ? We must distinguish auxiliary activities and a true specialization; it will therefore be necessary to define thresholds in order to clarify the process of specialization.

We have to think about various kinds of agricultural specialization. Cereal crops constitute the main form of specialization in old agricultural patterns ; it gives at the same time supplies for the farmer and wheat for the markets. But there are many other choices, connected to the natural environment, the market, the size of the holding, the farm equipment, the kind of contract, etc. The main aim of this conference is to reveal, beside cereal crops, other forms of agricultural specialization and to wonder if they can constitute alternative patterns of rural development. Stock breeding is probably one of these alternative choices, but what are the different kinds or stock-raising? What are the other choices? How do these patterns work?

In this session, we will work at the micro-level : the one of the exploitation (farm) or the one of a small area. The aim is to understand, with concrete samples, how agricultural specialisation is practised by peasants as well in modern as in traditional patterns of production.

The papers will essentially answer the following questions:

- 1- How to reveal agricultural specialization in systems which must always feed the farm household ? What kind of indications can be chosen to reveal agricultural specialization ?
- 2- When and why does it appear in different countries ?
- 3- Can it constitute models of alternative development to cereal crops ?
- 4- In which economic and social context does it set up ? (large or small holdings ? tenants or owners? importance of the urban network ? of the road network ? what about labour force ?)

Some other topics can be approached:

- Who do the initiatives come from ? What are the ways of agricultural progress ? What is the share between theoretical work and farmer's practices ?
- What are the links between agricultural specialization and the markets ? And between agricultural specialization and the circulation of money in the country ?
- Is agricultural specialisation a factor of social progress or a reason of the perpetuation of the small-holdings ?
- Is there any link between specialisation and pluri-activity ?

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The papers can present general studies but also special examples if they are well connected with their context. First of all, we should choose those:

- that will contain a theoretical thought about what means “agricultural specialisation” particularly in old agricultural systems,
- that will present studies on a long period or on a transitional period,
- that will give comparative views.

All participants belonging to the countries of the COST program A 35 are concerned by this call. About fifteen papers will be chosen.

If you are interested to participate, please send an e-mail with a preliminary title as soon as possible, to: annie.antoine@uhb.fr, and let your abstract (200-500 words) follow so quickly.

Dead line for submission : end of january 2007

Final papers had to be given one month before the session. If you are not able to speak english or to speak french with an english translation (paper ou power point), please say it quickly to the organistor of the session : it's not really a problem and some solutions will be found.

After the session, it will be necessary to propose quickly your text for publication : dead line is at the end of september 2007.

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