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Endless modernisation: Power and knowledge in the Green Morocco Plan

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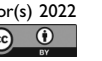

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Abstract

In 2008, in the aftermath of the World Food Crisis and in a context of an unfolding New Green Revolution for Africa, Morocco launched the Green Morocco Plan to 'modernise' its agricultural sector, thereby making the latter the main driver for economic growth and for the alleviation of rural poverty. Yet, the technicist-productivist rationale of the Green Morocco Plan, characteristic of New Green Revolution modernisation schemes, renders any positive socio-ecological outcome unlikely. Hence, recent studies of the Green Morocco Plan have focused on its impacts on food security, inequality and environment. However, how the Green Morocco Plan's rationale is (re) produced within a given set of socio-ecological, material relations has to date attracted relatively little attention. This study, therefore, explores the power-knowledge dynamics of the modernisation discourse within the Green Morocco Plan as a driver of socio-ecological change. Bringing together insights from political ecology, critical development and agri-food studies, we show how the entangled set of ideological, material, political and technical processes embodied within the Green Morocco Plan favours a reductionist view of agricultural development as increasing yields and profits. In so doing, such a view perpetuates efforts to 'modernise' smallholder/family farming.

Keywords

Green Morocco Plan, green modernisation discourse, agricultural development, New Green Revolution, political ecology

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Introduction

In the wake of the World Food Crisis (2007–2008) and in a context of an unfolding New Green Revolution for Africa, the Moroccan government launched the Green Morocco Plan (GMP) as part of a renewed effort to 'modernise' its agricultural sector. Since the era of the French Protectorate, agriculture has been considered a strategic sector for the country due to its centrality within the national economy and, crucially, its role in ensuring social stability. The GMP and the food crisis that preceded it only served to reconfirm the Moroccan state's concerns around potential links between drought, food insecurity and social instability (Brauch, 2012). Echoing the mantra of the New Green Revolution (Bergius and Buseth, 2019; Moseley, 2017), the plan nevertheless continues to favour a reductionist view of agriculture as increasing yields and maximising profits. In what follows, we attempt a reconstruction of the sedimented histories of Morocco's agricultural development to situate the GMP within its larger socio-cultural, political and historical context. We thereby identify the ideological and material legacies of development thought and practice within Morocco – in this case, the endless search for 'modernisation'. Although concerned with the material consequences of these histories of agricultural development, our focus is on the power/knowledge dynamics within the GMP itself. We therefore concentrate on the development of the plan, the context in which it emerged and the key actors involved, in order to shed light on the socio-ecological relations through which the GMP is enacted.

As Bergius and Buseth (2019) have demonstrated, the New Green Revolution for Africa can be situated within a broader history of policies around the environment and development that span both the global North and the global South. Whereas eco-modernisation emerged as one specific set of policy instruments within the global North, aimed at incentivising environmentally beneficial changes within an existing industrial sector, a green economy discourse sought – as discourses around sustainable development had done previously – to reconcile the interests of the global North and South around green development practices. The New Green Revolution for Africa therefore emerged alongside other green modernisation discourses that emphasised synergies between development and green growth, promising to 'feed the world while saving nature' (*ibid.*: 68). This process involved 'rendering technical' agricultural questions (Li, 2007), promoting the private sector and integrating the global North and South into a single market for agricultural production and consumption. The GMP, and the teams of consultants tasked with implementing the plan, needs to be situated within such processes, as well as within the contextual specificities of food and agriculture policy within the country.

Agriculture remains central to Moroccan political economy and to the lifeworlds of vast numbers within the country, accounting for 13% of GDP and occupying 73.7% of the rural (and 38.8% of the total) workforce (MAPMDREF, 2018). Smallholder/family farming – the bulk of Morocco's agriculture – remains essential for food security within the country. Yet the sector faces many challenges including a negative agricultural trade balance, high vulnerability to climatic variations (AAA, 2016), increasing degradation of natural resources (notably, soil erosion and acute water scarcity (Taheripour et al., 2020)), alongside poverty and precarity among the country's rural population (HCP, 2018). Agricultural 'modernisation' policies, enacted during the French protectorate, divided Morocco's territory into 'useful' and 'useless' and have resulted in profound territorial asymmetries and social inequalities (Jouve, 2002; Kadiri and El Farah, 2013; Rivet, 2012). These structural inequalities, coupled with increases in the prices for staple foods (particularly bread), have repeatedly induced social unrest and 'peasant'-led revolts from the 1970s onwards. There was major unrest in 1981, related to drought and the increase in staple food prices (particularly bread), and in the months preceding the GMP related to the World Food Crisis (Amar, 2012; Raimbeau; 2009). This is not surprising, as Morocco is extremely vulnerable to external shocks due to its high dependency on imports and its limited capacity to finance them (WB et al., 2009).

It is within this context – as well as the broader discursive context around green modernisation – that the country launched the GMP, aiming to make agriculture the main driver for economic growth and for the alleviation of rural poverty. Agriculture has thereby been placed at the heart of the country's development model. The GMP is based on two pillars. Pillar-1, addressing 'modern agriculture' (ADA, 2012: 3), promotes the 'aggressive development of a high-added-value/highly productive agriculture' (MAPM, 2008b: 12). Pillar-2, addressing 'solidarity agriculture' (ADA, 2012: 3) and focusing on geographically marginal regions (oases, mountains, 'unfavourable' *bour*[1]), seeks to alleviate rural poverty by increasing smallholder/family farmers' revenue, notably through reconversion projects from rain-fed cereal production to 'high-added-value' arboriculture (ADA, 2020a). In promoting the idea that 'agriculture is an economic activity like any other' (Haimoud, 2008: n.p.), the thinking undergirding the GMP is that if smallholder/family farmers are 'modernised'/'professionalised' (CGDA, 2009), they can be inserted in the same relations of production as export-oriented large-scale/capitalistic farming, thereby, increasing their revenues. Such an approach reflects a modernist-productivist rationale for agricultural development, one needed for increasing yields and profits in line with a neoliberal global economic order (Moseley, 2017).

However, this rationale is problematic, ignoring as it does the multifunctionality of agriculture (Akesbi, 2012; Pascon, 1971), which renders questionable whether smallholder/family farming is easily transformed by a neoliberal growth strategy. Moreover, the GMP with its reductionist focus on technical and capital-intensive farming echoes the first 'Green Revolution' interventions (1950–1970) (Shiva, 1991; Yapa, 1996) and 'New Green Revolution' schemes, such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) that have led – beyond evident ecological costs – to deeply uneven spatial and socio-economic outcomes (Bergius et al., 2018; Bergius and Buseth, 2019; Kerr, 2012; Moseley, 2017; Moseley et al. 2017; Patel, 2012). Thus, in spite of claims otherwise, the GMP is likely to negatively influence food security, resource degradation and inequality (Akesbi, 2011a; Berdai, 2016, Faysse, 2015; Kmoch et al., 2018; Mahdi, 2014; Schilling et al., 2012).

To date, relatively little attention has been devoted to the question of how the modernist rationale underlying New Green Revolution schemes are reproduced within a given socio-ecological and (geo)political set of material relations. In this paper, we address this question through the lens of the GMP. We thereby contribute to debates around the production of green modernisation discourses while simultaneously exploring the power-knowledge dynamics of the GMP and its limits in creating socio-ecologically sound and just practices.

Methodology

To best analyse the power-knowledge dynamics within the GMP, we drew on a detailed review of policy documents and academic publications covering Morocco's agricultural and rural context from the French Protectorate until the present day. Such a review permits an in-depth study of how the modernist discourse underlying the GMP is produced and reproduced through the power-laden (inter)national and local contexts out of which it has grown.

In addition, the paper draws on 15 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2020 with key informants from Moroccan academia, from the public sector and from the consulting companies McKinsey, in charge of the GMP, and Boston Consulting Group, in charge of the subsequent Green Generation Plan. All interviewees have expertise with regard to Morocco's agricultural and rural context and/or have (had) key positions in relation to the conception, implementation and evaluation of the GMP. Several interviewees have either worked on the evaluation of reconversion projects and/or personally know farmers who accepted reconversion projects. Given our focus on the power/knowledge dynamics of the GMP (as well as the constraints of COVID-19 hindering

research with farmers themselves), the research does not seek to contribute to the theorisation of smallholder/family farming.

The interviewees were selected using a purposeful sampling approach, starting with four representatives of public and private institutions (already known to us from previous research and residence in Morocco) who facilitated the otherwise difficult contact with further people relevant to the study. The interviews were conducted after ensuring informed consent. They lasted between 45 and 90 min and were structured around the interviewees' work related to the GMP, the 'modernisation' vision underlying (and the socio-ecological dimensions of) the GMP, the functioning and outcome of the reconversion, and the Green Generation Plan 2020–2030. The sensitive nature of the topic requires caution and the interviewees' identities are kept anonymous. As official documentation on the GMP is extremely scarce, the primary data used here, beyond the interviews, are the – often limited – information on government websites, reports, videos, legal texts as well as PowerPoint presentations that were either available online or sent directly by the interviewees.

To tease out the modernist discourse underlying the GMP, we connect critical perspectives on modernist development (Crush, 1995; Ferguson; 1999; Mitchell, 2002; Scott, 1998; Watts, 2002) with an understanding of how dynamic smallholder/family farmers' practices might seek to foster alternative socio-ecological realities. In focusing on Morocco and on a topic relatively 'under-researched' through the lens of political ecology (Bryant, 2015; Gautier and Kull, 2015; Loftus, 2019), we seek to strengthen political ecological research. Such an approach allows us to unmask the power structures and key assumptions underpinning the modernist discourses shaping green revolution schemes (Moseley, 2017), while also contributing to an *explicitly* politicised agri-food scholarship that provides a basis for more socio-ecologically diverse and just food systems (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Jarosz, 2012; McAfee, 2008; Moragues-Faus and Marsden, 2017).

In the following section, we provide a literature review in which we synthesise insights from critical development, political ecology and agri-food studies to sketch out the intellectual and material roots of modernist discourse in relation to the developmental political economy of food. Doing so enables us to better conceptualise the Moroccan study and, through this study, to explore the broader dynamics of green modernisation schemes. We then outline the ideological and material legacy of Morocco's past agricultural 'modernisation' policies before exploring the GMP in terms of the governmental and technopolitical relations undergirding it. In so doing, we show how an entangled set of processes embodied within the GMP favours the (re)production of a reductionist view of agricultural development as increasing yields and profit. Thereafter, we discuss – via reconversion projects – how this discourse encourages 'modernisation' efforts within smallholder/family farming and how the GMP's simplifications led to conflicting demands on the state – to both expand capitalistic relations of production and to guarantee the status-quo by perpetuating the idea of an incomplete 'modernity'. We conclude that modernist agricultural development in Morocco is both ideological edifice and material power, (re)produced through a modernist 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1982), through the globalisation of agri-food systems, and through the Moroccan state's conflicting socio-ecological interests.

Critical political ecologies of agriculture and development

According to Watts, development emerged as an 18th/19th-century problem 'grounded in the European experience of governability, disorder and disjuncture' (1995: 45). 'Development as modernisation' saw 'underdevelopment' as a delay in an evolutionary, linear progress towards 'modern' societies. 'Modern' is best understood here as a normative multidimensional condition: industrialised, urbanised, secular, capitalistic, surrounded by material prosperity, with diversified occupational structures, and guided by science as the sole legitimate system of understanding that seeks to achieve dominance over 'nature' (Strohmayer, 2009). The role of development in such a view

is to help 'latecomers to modernity' engage in the replication of the historical pathway of the 'West' by provoking the conditions for 'take-off' with exterior pressure through an injection of capital and new technology. Agriculture has been at the heart of this paradigm, since a 'traditional' agricultural society was considered the first stage in the 'progress' towards a post-industrial, urban, mass-consumption society (Lewis, 1954, Rostow, 1960, Solow, 1956). With the first 'Green Revolution', 'traditional' agriculture was to be transformed into a specialised agroindustry producing cash crops for export to create surplus labour and value, an objective reiterated in the 'New Green Revolution' (Bergius and Buseth, 2019; Daño, 2007).

While the ideological hegemony of modernist development partly explains the shackling of agriculture to this endless search for 'modernity', these discourses are embedded within wider processes. As Watts (2002: 25) writes, it becomes crucial to interrogate the material forms of power, 'the contours of hegemony', that underlie this discourse and 'that produce a modernity that is partial and incomplete'. Grappling with these material forms of power means, for Watts, turning to processes of capital accumulation (*ibid*.). Charting this terrain, political ecologists and others have questioned the supposedly axiomatic relationship between population growth, environmental degradation and food shortage, demonstrating that it is only in relation to the developmental political economy of food, dominated as the latter is by global flows of capital, that one can understand the general failure or reluctance of key actors to recognise social justice and sound agricultural practices according to varying socio-ecological realities as more important than short-term economic profits.

Indeed, while the multifunctionality of agriculture and its 'more-than-economic' qualities, have been widely recognised, modernist agricultural development prevails in accordance with the neoliberal global economic order and the 'green economy' paradigm (Bergius et al. 2018; Buseth, 2017) which is based on the premise that environmental and climatic change is an opportunity – not a crisis – to the creation of new frontiers, 'zones of interaction between capital and various forms of *nature*' (Bergius and Buseth, 2019: 65).

The many interlinked initiatives unfolding across Africa under the umbrella of the 'New Green Revolution', might be understood under this perspective: a spatial fix or a new frontier for agribusiness corporations (Harvey, 2014), which see huge potential in the cheap cost of labour and *nature* in Africa (WB, 2013) to fight falling profit margins (Bergius and Buseth, 2019, Patel and Moore, 2017).

The 'New Green Revolution in Africa' was initiated in the late 1990s by the pioneers of the first Green Revolution, in line with the vision of a 'Doubly Green Revolution' (*cf*. Daño, 2007 for a detailed analysis of the players of the first and New Green Revolution). Doubly green implies that 'green' no longer just stands for high-yield agricultural techniques – implicitly opposed to 'red' social reforms (Spitz, 1987) – but that these techniques should be environmentally sustainable (Daño, 2007). This 'ecologically-sound replay' of the first revolution (Patel, 2012: 37), while similar to the first in most aspects, is characterised by public–private partnerships, since private business is seen as 'development catalyst' (Green, 2015: 632). This reflects the current political economy dominated by corporate interests and philanthrocapitalism (Bergius and Buseth, 2019). Hence, what is new in the New Green Revolution are mainly the green narratives around already existing technologies and the old techno-scientific paradigm of development, thereby recasting the modernisation paradigm as 'green' (Bergius and Buseth, 2019).

The World Food Crisis of 2007–2008 led to the take off of the 'New Green Revolution', notably through the birth of AGRA. Consequently, food insecurity has been reframed by scientists, donors, institutions and states as a technical problem that can be resolved through market regulations and increased productivity (Jarosz, 2012; Moragues-Faus and Marsden, 2017). Hence, although interest in smallholder/family farming is growing, and although it is now more and more frequently stated that smallholder/family farming produces the bulk of the world's food (Jarosz, 2012; Netting, 1993;

Van der Ploug, 2008), the dominant discourse remains the same: 'a "more efficient" industrial food system is needed to feed the world' (GRAIN, 2014: 3).

Within such a context 'traditional' knowledge and farming practices are normally ignored or condemned by development 'experts' and misrepresented as outdated, static, inefficient, segregated from the larger economy and unable to cope with population pressure on resources (ibid.; Krätli et al., 2015; Mitchell, 1988). The misrepresentation of agriculture as trapped in a 'traditional' state is mostly explained through endogenous causes, such as tribalism, ethnicity, illiteracy or ignorance, all of which serve to justify outside intervention and 'expertise' that might 'modernise' agriculture. Agricultural 'modernisation' has thereby led to an unprecedented standardisation and uniformisation of agricultural practices in line with the globalisation of agri-food systems and pressure to maximise profits in competitive mass markets (Scott, 1998).

These capital-driven developments fail to garner broad support among smallholder/family farmers, civil society and organisations such as La Via Campesina, who instead propose agroecological alternatives to such 'modernisation' (Bergius and Buseth, 2019). Yet agroecological practices, highly diverse in nature, relying on localised knowledge, and enhancing soil fertility without expensive chemicals, stand in diametric opposition to agricultural 'modernisation' and are uncongenial to large-scale agricultural development that can be planned as a purely technical exercise from a distant office (Scott, 1998). The 'rendering technical' of inherently political challenges and processes is inherent to modernisation discourse, as seen through the absence of questions of power, rights and access (Li, 2007, 2010).

Modernist agricultural development perhaps inevitably leads to the question of the state, notably in Morocco, where 'the intervention of the state, both upstream and downstream of the agrarian sector, [has been] systematic and almost general' (Guerraoui, 1986: 19). Indeed, the importance of the Moroccan state remains unchanged with its redeployment in the agricultural sector, along with private actors, helping to shape the process of neoliberal bureaucratisation from the 1980s on (Catusse, 2009; Hibou, 2012).

With the GMP, the state must balance two sets of interests; the extension of capitalist relations of production and the maintenance of rural livelihoods to guarantee stability and, thus, its own survival. Political ecology's theoretical insights on the state and the framing of the environment as a field of state action – instead of just a surface on which state strategy is played out (Robertson, 2015) – are particularly useful here. While early political ecologists saw the state as an external element of analysis, as an abstraction of hegemonic power (Blaikie, 1985) or the last element in a chain of explanation (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987), subsequent generations have developed more relational accounts of the state. Bryant and Bailey (1996) build on Walker's (1989) theorisation of the contradictory role of states as 'developer' and as custodian of the natural environment on which they ultimately depend. Later, Scott's (1998) work on the 'high-modernist' state's technopolitics conveys environmental 'simplification' and resulting degradation as a major consequence of the state's attempt to render its territory 'legible' to control it – in part explaining the preference for 'modernist' agricultural development. Similarly, and related to a modernist technopolitics, Mitchell (1991, 2002) focuses on 'state effects' – practices such as creating statistics, building infrastructure, as well as more hazardous and more-than-human interactions – that make the state appear to have a coherent apriori existence. Political ecologists have taken this notion of 'state effects' further, refusing to frame the state as a 'thing' (Angel and Loftus, 2019; Harris, 2012; Loftus, 2020; Meehan and Molden, 2015), framing it instead as a social relation, in terms of 'prosaic stateness' or as a 'resonance chamber' that brings together a 'multiplicity of localised orders of appearance' (Meehan et al., 2014: 61). In so doing, political ecologists have pointed to the multiple, unsystematic and possibly contradictory 'state effects' Within the analysis that follows, we draw on such insights to better interpret the 'modernisation' of smallholder/family agriculture as part of a broader suite of 'state effects'.

Besides this 'prosaic' state approach, the growing set of literature on 'environmentality' has productively translated Foucault's concept of 'governmentality' to the management of natural resources. For Foucault, 'governmentality' or 'the conduct of conduct' (1982: 220–221) is a more or less calculated ensemble of techniques and micro-powers (such as (scientific) discourse; (state) authorities and institutions) that shape conduct, not through repression but through normalising and disciplining behaviours and practices. Development, in this framing, represents an apparatus that yields the modernist 'regime of truth' based on the 'naturalness' of global capitalism, the virtue of 'unregulated' markets and the 'superiority' of 'modern' large-scale farming. Consequently, we define modernist development discourse here as an authoritative way of communicating that reproduces this 'regime of truth'.

In extending the analysis of the 'conduct of conduct' from the individual to the environment, political ecologists draw attention to the construction of the environment as an object of government that reproduces the socio-ecological boundaries of the state, and have subsequently explored the 'regimes of truth' guiding action in relation to the environment (Agrawal, 2005; Luke, 2011; Robbins, 2007). Given something of a tendency towards 'monological' conceptions of authoritative power in governmentality approaches (Painter, 2006), Fletcher (2010) highlights the *multiple* environmentalities that coexist within environmental management. Such work has inspired a host of subsequent studies that have drawn more extensively on Foucault's (recently translated into English) lectures at the *College de France* to tease out the various strategies through which governmentalities have shaped the conduct of conduct through acting on the environment (Fletcher, 2017; Fletcher and Cortes-Vazquez, 2020).

Bringing together these different lines of argument, the GMP offers a rich empirical study due to its 'resolutely modernist' (MAPM 2008a: 22) framing, thereby raising questions as to how the environmentality (or multiple environmentalities) of the GMP relates to a broader landscape of the developmental political economy of food and to a bigger picture of state rule. While existing studies of green modernisation provide valuable resources for interpreting such processes (Bergius and Buseth, 2019), we need to be resolutely attentive to the historical and geographical specificities of the Moroccan context.

Agriculture and the rural context in Morocco: Ideological and material legacies

Development planning is by its nature forward looking: its models and calculations promise the creation of a preordained future. Hence, there is often little interest in past development interventions or, if so, such interest is usually the basis for 'a technocratic assessment of its failings designed as a prelude to the conclusion that this time "it'll go much better"' (Crush, 1995: 8). Rejecting such historical amnesia, and building on critical political ecologies of agriculture and development, we will now reconstruct the sedimented histories of Morocco's agricultural development. Doing so will allow us to situate the GMP within the larger sociocultural, political and historical context from which it emerged. Our objective is not to exhaustively analyse past agricultural policies (Akesbi, 2006; Lazarev, 2012) but to identify the ideological and material legacies of development thought and practice – in this case, the endless search for 'modernisation'.

'The agrarian duality': Modern and traditional

The first legacy consists of a dualistic framing of Morocco's agriculture, society and territory. This dualistic framing lies at the heart of French (post)colonial ambitions and Moroccan politics and its intellectual and political basis was laid by the French Protectorate (1912–1956). To push

agricultural production for the benefit of the French empire, General Lyautey divided Morocco's territory into 'useful' – the utilisable agricultural area – and 'useless', the mountains, oases and other semi-arid regions (Jouve, 2002). 'Useful Morocco' witnessed massive investment to create large-scale, mechanised, irrigated and intensive agricultural exploitations. As Bergius and Buseth (2019) argue, in the African context more broadly, this duality rests on a Cartesian ontology in which *res cogitans* (thinking things) were to become lords and masters over *res extensa* (extended things): 'civilized' humans were thereby destined to 'master nature'.

Moroccan independence in 1956 did not change this 'modernising' approach to agriculture. Priority was instead given to irrigation schemes and large-scale export-oriented cultures in 'useful Morocco' at the expense of the bulk of Morocco's agriculture (Akesbi, 2006). In the same vein, policies were developed to encourage the privatisation (and minimisation of joint holdings) of state, collective and religious orders' land, according to the idea that (large) private property is more easily malleable to the state's production strategies, has a more reliable access to credit and is thus economically more efficient (Bensouda, 1998; Mahdi, 2014, 2020). Actively supported by the World Bank, who recommended the concentration of government investment in irrigation projects in the most favourable regions and to the benefit of the 'most advanced farmers' (WB, 1966: 103), Morocco legalised these priorities with the Agricultural Investment Code in 1969 (Dahir n° 1-69-25, 1969). The idea, reflective of the revival of the colonial model of 'comparative advantage' (Hall, 2015), and maintained today through the GMP (Mahdi, 2020), was to quickly increase the production of export-oriented cultures to improve the agricultural trade balance, so that Morocco could compensate its import of cereals, its main staple food, and create a monetary surplus for the development of the country (Swearingen, 1987). The strategy failed and Morocco retains a negative agricultural trade balance (Akesbi, 2019): indeed, the increasing liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation of the agrarian sector have reinforced structural inequalities.

The old opposition of colonial/indigenous or modern/traditional agriculture – reflected in the Cartesian ontology noted above – conjures an image of two distinct societies and sectors (Guerraoui, 1986). On the one hand, there is 'traditional' agriculture, defined by self-sufficiency, weak monetisation and investment, small-scale operations, unlimited labour supply and, therefore, by weak productivity. On the other hand, there is 'modern' agriculture, conceived as market-driven, entirely monetised, industrialised, large-scale operations, seeking monetary profit and, thus, highly productive. The New Green Revolution has never shaken off such a dichotomy as it remains inherent to the idea of green modernisation itself. Hence, while the appellations change, development interventions always pivot on such a dualism. As such, the World Bank talks (1997) of 'two Moroccos', Jouve (2002) of a 'two-speed agriculture' and the GMP of a 'solidarity' and a 'high-added-value' agriculture.[2]

Notions of 'modern' and 'traditional' production and distribution are widely institutionalised in Morocco. 'Modern', rather than a neutral description, reflects a normative judgement (sometimes a nostalgic one, often a negative one) of its opposite, 'traditional', and relates to a long-lasting tension in Morocco between tradition and a given image of progress and modernity (Zekri, 2009), used for different political and ideological agendas.

Such a framing has at least two problematic consequences. First, this discourse often falsely equates 'traditional' with poor and 'modern' with rich, while directing attention away from political decisions and the progress of capitalism (*cf.* big-*D*/little-*d*, Hart, 2001) that enrich one part of the society at the expense of another. Second, this discourse creates a static and simplified analytical lens that fails to account for recent changes in agricultural practices and rural livelihoods – such as the pluri-activity and spatial mobility that increasingly characterise the realities of the rural context (Kadiri et al., 2015; Mahdi, 2016) – that do not align with a fixed idea of 'modernisation'. Consequently, this discourse leads to the perception of a continued failure of agricultural modernisation policies.

The strategic role accorded to agriculture has led to continuous interventions in the agricultural sector, with considerable ecological, technical, economic and sociocultural transformations (Dardour, 1997) and yet the results have always fallen below expectations (Akesbi, 2006) and seem insufficient for the desired 'modernisation' of agricultural practices and rural Morocco. Failures are explained with a large range of technical, operational, sociocultural and political factors (Dardour, 1997; Errahj et al., 2007; Pascon, 1973; Swearingen, 1987). Yet, beyond these elements, explaining the gap between the projected and real outcome of agricultural policies, the dichotomy of modern/traditional largely contributes to the perceived failure of the 'modernisation' project.

Although the reality is much more diverse and complex than these neat dividing lines suggest, such a duality seems a largely uncontested concept in understanding rural Morocco and in acting upon it. Such stubbornness in the face of empirical evidence suggests the political usefulness of perpetuating the discourse of 'two Moroccos' and of an incomplete modernity for the Moroccan state.

Stability and change

The second legacy is the conception of agriculture as an essential sector for the sociopolitical and economic stability of the country. Agriculture has been perceived as a sector in which the impulse for social change, namely, the expansion of capitalist relations of production can be combined with the tools to stabilise the society against risks, both endogenous and exogenous. This balance between the governance of change and stability has conditioned agricultural 'modernisation' policies and created a situation where the political interests of sociopolitical reproduction subordinates larger socio-economic and ecological interests, at least for as long as the consequences of this choice do not become a threat to the sociopolitical order itself. Hence, only after a major crisis, the colonial administration, and thereafter independent Morocco realised that they could no longer ignore the reality of the overwhelming rural population (Naciri, 2012).

As such, after the famine of 1945, the colonial administration created the Sector for the Modernisation of the Peasantry (SMP). *Fellahs*[3] were considered 'a humanity remaining in the 18th century' (Papy, 1956:328) 'with no other ambition than the survival of tradition' (Marthelot, 1961: 150), and 'peasant' agriculture archaic, static and incapable of nourishing an increasing population (Joly, 1946; LeCoz, 1975; Miège, 1953). Hence, modernisation sought not only to 'improve' agricultural practices but to put the 'peasant on an upper level as producer, consumer and man [*sic*]' (Pinta, 1955: 120) and to make technical progress an instrument for 'social progress' (Papy, 1956). This meant substituting 'peasants' rationality' with a technical and economistic rationality, necessary for transforming subsistence to market-driven farming (Dardour, 1997; Pascon, 1973). Accordingly, Berque and Couleau write that 'modernisation will be total or will be not' (1945: 20) and requires both an 'action of shock' and an 'action of synthesis' to 'emancipate' the rural context. However, under the pressure of powers fearing for the status quo, the SMP was reduced to a technical exercise before it was finally abandoned (Swearingen, 1987).

Similarly, after independence, the 'modernisation' of the 'peasantry' was considered a necessity for increasing agricultural production for national food security and improving 'peasants' livelihoods to fix them in the rural context (LeCoz, 1975) and increase their participation in the market economy (Marthelot, 1961) – considered *the* virtuous way of contributing to the welfare of the country. However, 'modernisation' had to happen without an agrarian reform transforming access to resources and the sociopolitical order of the rural context (Clerc, 1961). In early independence, the monarchy was facing a critical choice: either execute an agrarian reform necessary to increase agricultural production and improve the livelihood of the 'peasantry', which would imply alienating itself from the major landowners, its principal supporters, or avoid an agrarian

reform and sacrifice the goal of equity to guarantee its own existence (Leveau, 1985). Under the doctrine of 'revolutionary reforms to avoid a revolution' (Carré, 1978: 436) – something Antonio Gramsci (1971) might refer to as 'passive revolution' – the monarchy opted for the second option and restored the power of rural elites to dominate the rural territories and to counter the power of urban elites. Consequently, apart from the distribution of land to 'peasants' following the two attempted coup d'états (1971 and 1972), the previously colonial land was distributed among the monarchy and its entourage and strategically given to elites to gain their loyalty (Bessaoud, 2016; Mahdi, 2014). Thus, the 'revolutionary reforms', aiming to expand capitalistic relations of production without disrupting the functioning of smallholder/family agriculture, had to come in the form of technical 'progress' like large-scale hydraulic infrastructure. This was considered a solution against 'climate vagaries', a mechanism for control and a 'planned acculturation' (Dardour, 1997:2) of the 'peasantry' (Pascon, 1973). Accordingly, for King Hassan II the goal was 'to enrich the rich, without impoverishing the poor' (Le Monde, 1972: 5, 1984: 5). Yet, these policies did enrich a small class of urban and rural elites while impoverishing the poor (Kadiri and El Farah, 2013).

While these dynamics are particular to Morocco, the idea of technical change to avoid social reforms, echoes the broader context of that time; when the first 'Green Revolution' was promoted as a supposedly apolitical agricultural technique to avoid 'red' social reforms (Spitz, 1987). This idea also persists within the 'green economy' paradigm and New Green Revolution schemes, where technical changes avoid broader societal change and guarantee the persistence of the modernist 'regime of truth'.

These two legacies serve to demonstrate that agriculture is a field of state action (Robertson, 2015) crucial for maintaining Morocco's sociopolitical status quo[4]. Hence, while the modernist discourse underlying Morocco's past agricultural policies – and the misrepresentation of the rural world as trapped in a 'traditional' state – are also found elsewhere (Crush, 1995; Mitchell, 2002, Scott, 1998), their continued dominance can only be understood in relation to Morocco's specific social and material relations of power. Taking such an understanding further, we now turn to the manner in which the GMP legitimises certain actors and normalises certain processes, thereby transforming the sociopolitical landscape of Morocco's agricultural sector.

The technopolitics of the GMP

The emergence of the GMP

Following a Structural Adjustment Programme in the country (1985–1993), the Moroccan state has induced three major changes, paving the way for the GMP, the technopolitics of which represents the latest iteration of the state's 'endless modernisation'. First, it took steps to move away from a conception of the 'agrarian exception' towards a consideration of agriculture in terms of its economic activity. In so doing, agriculture has been subjected to the laws of the 'free market'. Following the Marrakech Protocol to the GATT (GATT, 1994), Morocco negotiated 55 bilateral free-trade agreements with an agricultural component (Akesbi, 2014). The consequences of this new conception of agriculture are threefold: the production of goods with a favourable cost–benefit ratio; the restructuring of agricultural production away from national to international demand; and, thus, abandoning food self-sufficiency as an objective, which, notably, implies reducing cereals.

Second, there has been a change in governance. The state maintains certain historical interventions (subsidies of 'strategic goods' (sugar oil and cereals), tax exemptions, responsibility for infrastructure) but it has increasingly privatised state-owned companies thereby no longer focusing on production itself. Instead, the Moroccan state pushes for corporate control of (African) agriculture

and sees its role as opening the international market for its producers and incentivising the self-organisation of the sector's actors, allowing them to conquer parts of the international market. In the same vein, the state increasingly delegates the spread and management of 'virtuous' agricultural practices (irrigation, plantation, commercialisation, selection of seeds) to private actors. This mirrors the 'New Green Revolution' rationale in which private business is seen as a 'development catalyst' (Green, 2015), and the state's role shifts therefore towards that of a facilitator of business-enabling environments to ensure the smooth movement of capital under the lead of agri-businesses (Bergius and Buseth, 2019, Moseley, 2017). Privatisation and deregulation do not weaken the state and the monarchy (Hibou, 2012). Instead, the state's redeployment 'reinforc[es] the strictly political prerogatives of final arbitrage[5], which is the principal means of control of the Moroccan monarchy' (Catusse, 2009: 212).

Third, since 2004, under public–private partnerships, the state has granted land to private Moroccan and foreign actors with sufficient social and financial capital, thereby favouring large-scale/capitalist ventures at the expense of smallholder/family farming (Mahdi, 2014, 2020).[6] In relation to the larger context of 'land grabbing', this process has led to a rush to acquire formerly state property (*ibid*.). Material reasons, such as a dependence on foreign capital (Guerraoui, 1986; WB, 2020) and the need to find new forms of lucrative investment, underline this decision (Mahdi, 2014). Yet the decision follows the neoliberal discourse underlying the New Green Revolution, that privately owned, capital-intensive, large-scale operations are more efficient and productive than collective-owned and/or small-scale ones and, thus, that the former positively influence food security, farmers' livelihoods and even the environment (Davis, 2006; Mahdi, 2014; Moseley, 2017).

The GMP has therefore legitimised, formalised and translated these changes into a new strategy for the agricultural sector. Indeed, the GMP 'driven by the logic of business, gain and profit' (Gharios and Mahdi, 2018 :1), and 'erecting the big farm as the example to follow' (Akesbi, 2011b :25), seems like the coronation of these transformations, thereby confirming the old idea that development happens 'by copying the model of modernisation, competition, profit making and industrialisation already proven to be effective by the modern histories of the First World countries' (Peet and Hartwick, 2015: 277). Indeed, such changes in governance and institutional arrangements reproduce the governmentality of modernist agricultural development and the creation of new environmental subjects.

New actors and new knowledges

Processes of neoliberalisation have simultaneously legitimised a new actor, the consulting company, which has played a fundamental role in shaping the power-knowledge dynamics within the GMP. While existing studies point to the importance of philanthrocapitalists in promoting the New Green Revolution (Bergius and Buseth, 2019; Moseley, 2017), in Morocco, if we are to understand the endless modernisation behind the GMP, we need to better understand the role of consultants in shaping power/knowledge dynamics. Indeed, Morocco's agricultural policies tend to result in a collusion of interests: this collusion has been particularly evident since the SAP in the 1980s that marginalised universities and scholarly researchers at the expense of consulting companies (Akesbi, 2014)[7]. Beforehand, the emergence of rural sociology in Morocco had been linked to the colonial period and, thereafter, rural sociology and the meticulous study of the rural context was put into the service of the newly independent nation (Nicolas, 1961; Rachik and Bourqia, 2011; Zahi, 2014). Yet, under public–private partnerships, and further reflective of a process of neoliberal bureaucratisation (Hibou, 2012), consulting companies have become 'the new planner of Morocco's economy' (El Fassi, 2010: 57). Since 2000, several sectoral development plans (plan/strategy replaced the term policy) have been elaborated to accelerate Morocco's economic

growth. As such, McKinsey, well known for its neoliberal orientation (Naciri, 2012), was responsible for elaborating the Plan Azur (2002) for tourism, the Plan Emergence 1 (2004) and 2 (2009) for industry, and the GMP for agriculture.

Confirming these trends, when the new government was constituted in 2007, Aziz Akannouch, a businessman from the hydrocarbon sector, became the new agricultural minister (Akesbi, 2014). With 5 months in which to present a new strategy for the agricultural sector, Akhannouch ordered McKinsey, with whom he had worked before on the Plan Emergence 1, to elaborate this strategy. The GMP was delivered, as required, at Morocco's International Agricultural Trade Fair (SIAM) in 2008, presented in the form of PowerPoint slides, and was thereafter implemented without being debated in parliament (Akesbi, 2014).

The recourse to the 'expertise' of consulting companies has subsequently become an instrument for the legitimisation of the strategies adopted. While the issue at stake is highly political, consulting companies depict agricultural development as a technical exercise, characteristic of neoliberal development discourse (Mawdsley and Rigg, 2003). An interviewee from McKinsey states that with Akhannouch, 'who is apolitical', agriculture can now be considered from an economic angle. This statement, however, representative of modernist discourse, is highly ironic. As Pascon[8] writes 'the purely technical point of view [be it hydraulic, agronomic or economic] is always the point of view of the dominant class': technology and science are 'neither objective nor innocent' (1973: 9).

The emergence of consulting companies comes with a change in the knowledge available and of that which is deemed important. According to many interviewees, rather than capitalising on the knowledge and experience of local universities and researchers, McKinsey draw upon their idea of 'international best practice'. Related to this, two interviewed researchers noted that knowledge concerning the rural context and family farming is being lost as agronomy students no longer learn about the systemic interrelation of agricultural practices, learning instead about project management and value chains. Internships are conducted with agri-business and consulting companies, rather than with farmers. If knowledge is lost, data is also increasingly hard to access, and several interviewees highlighted the lack of access to statistical data from the Ministry of Agriculture. Notably, the results of the agricultural census from 2016 are not yet available, meaning any attempt to assess the impact of policies such as the GMP is incredibly difficult. As one interviewee stated, 'there is an internal attempt at evaluation of the GMP, but it is neither official, nor discussed or published'. Moreover, researchers have criticised the incoherence (*cf.* Akesbi, 2014) and lack of explanation of the GMP, especially, concerning its PowerPoint presentation. As such, an interviewee says that 'the GMP is mute. There is no rhetoric. They think that with their schemas they convince us, but it is only to laugh'.

This change in the actors and the knowledge deemed important is inherent to the governmentality of the GMP and illustrates the micropowers operating to install the modernist 'regime of truth'.

Technopolitics and its simplifications

The GMP corresponds precisely to a form of technopolitics that aims to render the state's development, territory and people more 'calculable' (Mitchell, 2002), 'legible' (Scott, 1998) and 'technical' (Li, 2007). Rather than favouring an 'organic' understanding, modernist agricultural technopolitics are specialised in 'dismembering an exceptionally complex and poorly understood set of relations and processes to isolate a single element of instrumental value' (*ibid.*:21). Both so-called 'externalities' and long-term outcomes are considered secondary until they start to impact production (*ibid.*). With the GMP, the state's role as 'developer' thus clearly outweighs its role as 'custodian' of natural resources (Walker, 1989). Indeed, the GMP attempts to implement, formalise, standardise and control certain approaches, processes and practices to simplify agricultural development and to

stimulate economic growth. Such processes can be seen in the reorganisation of the institutional landscape (e.g. the creation of the Agricultural Development Agency (ADA) – the institutional home of the GMP – with its regionally declined agricultural development plans). However, agriculture cannot be managed like a textbook neoliberal business strategy focused on economic growth. The pure economic and technical logic 'does in the best case only allow to exclude for a moment the living person and the real society of the field of reasoning to find the delight of perfect equations' (Pascon, 1973: 9). Indeed, there are important socio-ecological consequences that fall through the modernist lens of the GMP.

First, such a modernist lens abstracts only one element of instrumental value, at the expense of systemic reasoning. It can thereby be contrasted with the multifunctionality of smallholder/family farming. What for the state constitutes 'under-exploited land', 'anti-economical water use' (MAPM, 2008b: 4) and 'added-value' is in sharp contrast to the farmers' points of view. While for an interviewee from McKinsey growing cereals in Morocco is like 'burning water', and producing meat is 'a heresy', such practices make perfect sense for smallholder/family farmers, for whom variability and complementarity of different crops serve as an insurance against economic and climatic shocks and is crucial given the multifunctionality that agriculture represents for their household. Moreover, with the predominant focus on production, the terms 'peasant'/farmer have largely disappeared from public discourse (except in Pillar-2 of the GMP, which explicitly refers to smallholder farmers). As an interviewee says it is 'as if the only thing that matters is production, no matter how'.

Second, the focus on productivity and economic gain neglect environmental constraints. Indeed, according to several interviewees, the concern for sustainable management of natural resources, especially water, was only included in the GMP in 2011. Subsequently added like a tick-box on the technocratic to-do-list of development, 'sustainability' contradicts the overall vision of the GMP and there are no precise, formal criteria to evaluate the GMP's environmental aspects (ADA, 2012, 2015). Instead, the planting of trees and the extension of drip irrigation and solar panels are presented as environmentally sustainable actions in themselves. This discourse is captured in several of our interviews, and yet many interviewees emphasise that drip irrigation, although water-saving on the hectare, if correctly implemented and used, allows an increase in the area irrigated. Hence, privatisation and expansion of irrigation infrastructure is rather a means of intensification and serves intensive agriculture, notably, 'high-added-value' fruits for export, which have a high water demand. Such a shift lowers groundwater levels and, as a former senior executive of the Centre of Resources Pillar-II specifies, 'groundwater tables have an annual water inflow of 4 billion litres and the current exploitation is of 5 billion litres, there can thus be no question of sustainability'. Especially in the context of COVID-19, this leads to calls for a redeployment of the scarce water resources to satisfy national food security instead of 'exporting water' in the form of fruits (Akesbi, 2020; Kadiri, 2020, Sraïri, 2021).

Most interviewees consider the environmental trajectory under the GMP to be disastrously wrong. One agro-engineer states: 'the GMP is a planned environmental disaster'. Many interviewees explicitly mention agroecological initiatives and other interventions for resource conservation while adding that these are isolated efforts. Yet, there seems to be little scope for changing the current approach to intensification, as the following quotes from different interviewees illustrate.

> "Everyone is under pressure to realise the numbers."

> "Agronomy is the art of forcing the soil and our job is to implement the official goals, while limiting the worst damage".

> "Either there will be a scientific innovation for less water-consuming trees or God has to help us."

"Europe has now a highly productive agriculture, the transition to modern agriculture has its costs."

These concerns regarding the socio-ecological consequences of the GMP do not mean the latter has failed in forming environmental subjects according to the modernist 'regime of truth'. On the contrary, it has succeeded in forming environmental subjects who consider inevitable – although not promising – the supposedly teleological evolution towards modernist agriculture, thereby hindering alternative imaginaries of Morocco's agricultural future and ejecting socio-ecological consequences and broader political-economic dynamics from the realm of agricultural development.

Moreover, the coalition of interests between the consultant, for whom the criteria of performance is the purely nominal realisation of a project, and the bureaucrat, for whom it is the exhaustion of its budget, reproduces the GMP's modernist myopia. Hence, the GMP has managed to install the idea of agricultural development as increasing yields and profits, not because the idea is true, but rather; the idea becomes true because it is powerful.

Overall, the technopolitics of the state and the resulting technocratisation of development are far from neutral (Foucault, 1980; Scott, 1998). Entangled with an environmentality based on the modernist 'regime of truth' (although partly contested), technopolitical strategies serve to favour actors and knowledge that will transform the agricultural sector according to a neoliberal growth strategy. Hence, modernist discourse only becomes dominant through its relation to wider social and material processes, confirming the manner in which modernist development serves as both ideological edifice and material power (Watts, 2002).

Reconversion: The 'modernisation' of smallholder/family agriculture

If Pillar-1 of the GMP emerged in a specific context was driven by a new set of actors and has produced a technopolitical simplification of complex socio-ecological contexts, Pillar-2 works in somewhat different ways. Focused on reconversion projects, Pillar-2 projects provide important vantage points from which to interpret the 'modernisation' underlying the GMP and the tensions between stability and change that characterise Morocco's agricultural policies. As above, our aim is not to conduct a general evaluation of the reconversion projects, rather it is to analyse the discourses underlying reconversion. In so doing we seek to uncover the mechanisms of legitimisation (and contestation) that reformulate agricultural values and thereby become a driver of socio-ecological change.

Reconversion from cereals to arboriculture

The GMP continues the 'project to engage the peasantry in the path of agricultural and rural modernisation' (ONCA, 2020: n.p.). 'Modernisation' here implies the insertion of smallholder/family farming in 'economically viable' (ADA, n.y.: 4) agricultural supply chains according to the 'territorial agricultural vocation' (*ibid.*:10) defined by the state – an emblematic example of the GMP's technopolitics that aims to render the state's development, territory and people both more 'calculable' (Mitchell, 2002) and more 'legible' (Scott, 1998). To this end, the aggregation projects of Pillar-1, legal arrangements in which smallholder farmers are incentivised to pool their land (often without really understanding the contracts they are signing, says an interviewee who worked on these projects) are supposed to integrate smallholder farmers in the value chains of agribusiness, and the reconversion projects of Pillar-2 are intended to incentivise smallholder/family farmers to change from cereal production to 'high-added-value' arboriculture (e.g. olive-growing). Reconversion projects are inspired by past interventions; however, before the GMP, they remained marginal as cereals were considered too sensitive to be addressed directly. An interviewee from McKinsey stated that 'the GMP wants to break with this taboo but cereals are perceived too

social to be at the centre of the proposed productivist change'. Cereals continue to form the basis of Morocco's staple food, representing smallholder/family farmers' principal culture, and there is a strong correlation between the cereal harvest and the overall performance of the economy (Akesbi, 2019).

The management of reconversion projects reflects the redeployment of the state, described earlier, and the institutional arrangements that aim to form new environmental subjects – 'modernised/professionalised peasants'. Indeed, the state remains the main funder (approximately 70% public funding compared to 30% private funding, contrary to Pillar-1 projects), and while the institutional reorganisation serves to successfully supervise the GMP, the interaction with farmers is delegated to private actors. The overall objective, the surface to reconvert and the number of projects to implement are prescribed by the ADA. Regional and provincial agricultural agencies are therefore required to find a suitable territory to translate these objectives into concrete projects that are validated again at the central level (ADA, n.y.). The project implementation is done by private actors: first, a technical consultant for the administrative procedures (e.g. regrouping farmers into cooperatives/associations to create a big surface); and, second, a service provider for the plantation and eventually an element of valorisation (e.g. processing or irrigation infrastructure). After 2 years, according to such a plan, the plantation will then be handed over to the farmers. The approach claims to be participatory and bottom-up, with farmers coming together to apply for such projects; however, in the vast majority of cases, farmers are merely the final link in the whole process. An interviewee therefore states that 'farmers' participation is their acceptance and trust', reconfirming what Pascon (1973) observed 50 years ago; smallholder/family farmers are considered beneficiaries, not economic actors in their own right.

From simplification to complexity

The modernist lens underlying the GMP's technopolitics leads to several shortcomings with regards to such reconversion projects. The hypothesis underlying the GMP is that if smallholder/family farmers are 'professionalised' (CGDA, 2009: 16) – another word for 'modernised' – they can be integrated into the same relations of production as export-oriented, large-scale/capitalist farming, and can thereby increase their revenues. Such revenues are considered essential for economic growth, the well-being of the population and thus the avoidance of social uprising. Reconversion from cereals to 'high-added-value' arboriculture should thus alleviate rural poverty by increasing smallholder/family farmers' revenue. However, such potential is highly unlikely to be realised. Besides the operational and ecological hindrances involved, the main obstacle for effective reconversion is the GMP's one-dimensional conception of cereals as an 'economically unviable' culture. As the project manager of a regional office of the ADA stated, quite sincerely:

> "Reconversion is from obsolete to 'high-added-value' cultures. Naturally, the impact on farmers is positive."

Smallholder/family farming households rely on multiple sources of income (e.g. remittances, income from activities in other sectors) (Kadiri et al., 2015). Therefore, the economic viability of one crop is secondary to the multifunctionality it represents for the household. Smallholder/family farmers cultivate cereals for their own consumption, while simultaneously using them as fodder for their livestock which, among others, represents their treasury. Accordingly, an interviewee states that 'even when the state is in a logic of food security through the international market, farmers stay in the logic of (partial) auto-sufficiency'. He exemplified this with the following anecdote:

> "In a Northern province, representatives of the local administration went to a farmer's house to convince him of the advantages of the reconversion. As it is the custom in Morocco, the farmer invited them in. He served tea, but instead of offering bread with olive oil, he just put the oil on the table. His message was clear."

The GMP generally presents its success through increased investment, the number of projects implemented, trees planted and irrigated hectares expanded (ADA, 2020b; Arrifi, 2019). Such measures are also true for the reconversion (ADA, 2020c). Olive and fruit trees need several years before they are productive and can be harvested; which is longer than the 2-year timeline of the reconversion projects. Hence, the purely nominal, technical realisation of a project says little about the effective reconversion. It shows even less about the final objective, a long-term increase in smallholder/family farmers' revenue, as exemplified by the following anecdote told by an interviewee:

> "A group of farmers in Southern Morocco agreed on a reconversion project and managed to get contracted on their own land by the service provider in charge of the plantation. Hence, for the duration of two years, they got a salary and could diminish the area of land dedicated for cereals. Yet, upon completion of the project, without that source of salary, the farmers re-increased their cereal production, while their animals ate the freshly planted trees."

This anecdote confirms the adaptability and agency of farmers (cf. Faysse and Thomas, 2015; Faysse et al., 2014, 2015) over and above the success of the project. The fact that farmers accept a 100% subsidised project, does not mean that they abandon their models of farming. Indeed, 14 out of the 15 interviewees stated that in their experience farmers have not substituted cereals. Indeed some did not immediately understand what was meant by 'reconversion', choosing to speak instead of 'plantation projects'. Several interviewees also explain that for them the idea was never for a reconversion, and that trees are planted 7–10 m apart so that farmers can continue to cultivate cereals between them. Hence, while many interviewees concluded that 'reconversion' projects did lead to a diversification of production (an unplanned positive socio-ecological result), others quite pragmatically conceded that the reconversion has failed *so far*. Today, contrary to Berque and Couleau's 'shock therapy' (1945), 'modernisation' and thus reconversion, is conceived as a mid-long-term endeavour, according to the idea that older farmers will not change their mentality, contrary to younger generations, who might, more easily, be drawn into purely capitalist relations of production. Consequently, reconversion projects figure among those that are continued under the Green Generation strategy in the attempt to replace family/smallholder farmers with a 'new generation of young agricultural entrepreneurs' (MAPMDREF, 2020: 11) – new environmental subjects, eager to listen to the logic of the market as modernisation and progress marches on. This should serve the creation of a rural middle class who has, according to King Mohamed VI, 'a dual vocation as a driver for development and social stability' (Royal Speech, 2018: n.p.). Here social stability means the avoidance of social uprising, as witnessed in 2011 with the February 20th movement, recent boycott campaigns (2018) or the recurrent daily small-scale protests over public service provision issues.

Whether the new generation will accept the imaginary of the 'agricultural entrepreneur' at a time of global crisis – and when they experience difficulties related to acute water scarcity, climate change and hazardous profitability – remains unclear. Moreover, whether the reconversion and creation of an 'agricultural entrepreneur' (if even possible) will lead to a positive socio-ecological outcome remains questionable. The reconversion to monocultures aims to increase production and uniformity, a criterion of 'quality' that is important for industries not farmers, and one that would replace current poly-cropping. Poly-cropping corresponds to complex social relations

rather than purely profit-maximising strategies, and responds to household members' different needs as well as to rapidly changing circumstances (Scott, 1998). Today, farmers easily sell their cereal surplus in 'informal' short-circuits, whereas new commercial cultures like olives are destined for other markets and, thus, increase the farmers' dependence on intermediary actors while requiring new know-how of commercialisation. Also, fruits perish more rapidly, which requires farmers to sell their harvest even if the price is low, rendering them more vulnerable to price volatility. Moreover, besides these storage issues, in many areas, the same fruit and olive trees are planted, without having done a market analysis to see if there is sufficient demand (on both the domestic and international market). Hence, the reconversion to 'high-added-value' arboriculture only guarantees a higher revenue when many other factors are satisfied (such as climatic conditions, sufficient demand, know-how of commercialisation, transformation, 'quality' of the product).

Smallholder/family agriculture in Morocco's 'modernisation' strategy

If the GMP's modernisation strategy is clear, what is less straightforward is how smallholder/family agriculture is seen within it. Indeed, smallholder/family farming is subject to multiple, unsystematic and possibly contradictory 'state effects' (Meehan et al., 2014; Mitchell, 1991). This echoes the mutually contrasting agricultural development processes – industrialisation and repeasantisation – that contributes to 'the overwhelming impression of chaos and disorganisation that currently seems to characterize world agriculture' (Van der Ploug, 2008: 1). Hence, rather than constructing a coherent text out of a reality that seems much more complex, contentious and even hazardous, we outline three possible interpretations that time and further analysis may confirm or discard.

First, there is no long-term vision for smallholder/family agriculture, since the GMP's main priority remains Pillar-1. An interviewee says 'planting trees in marginal areas is considered a charity' and another explains 'because you have to play politics and sell Pillar-1, Pillar-2 was created'. Accordingly, since Pillar-2, based on a 'solidarity rationale', concerns the geographically marginal regions and considers family/smallholder farmers as beneficiaries instead of economic actors, this suggests that the GMP consecrates the colonial legacy while abandoning the idea that these farmers can become economic actors.

The second possible interpretation is that although the GMP officially considers the 'duality in Morocco's agriculture' as a hindrance (CGDA, 2009), it deliberately favours not only the development of an agriculture that is economic by vocation (Pillar-1) but also the maintenance of smallholder/family farming (Pillar-2) in its current form. This way smallholder/family farming fulfils its social function by a threefold necessity: economic (the supply of cheap food and labour); sociopolitical (a guarantee of the status quo) and ideological (the dissemination of values and mentalities that sustain this social function). Accordingly, reconversion projects are just another example in the attempt to 'modernise' through technical change to guarantee the sociopolitical status quo, as has been done throughout the last century.

Third, the GMP represents a fundamental break in Morocco's agricultural policies, since agriculture is considered 'as any other sector in terms of its economic activity', a view put forward by McKinsey, and, thus, no longer as strategic for the rural context and social stability. This reflects the idea that agri*culture* has to pave the way for agri*business*, as says Akinwumi Adesina, president of the African Development Bank and 2017 World Food Prize laureate (AGRA, 2017). Accordingly, 'smallholder/family agriculture is unwanted and the GMP aims to "decongest" the rural context to make space for large-scale/capitalist agriculture' (Interviewee working for the state). Accordingly, Pillar-2 reconversion projects aim to create 'agricultural entrepreneurs' and integrate those smallholder/family farmers who stay in the rural context in the same rationale as large-scale/capitalist agriculture. The idea that agricultural land should be 'managed' by more efficient 'agricultural entrepreneurs', while reducing the overall number of farmers, lies at the heart of

(green) modernisation discourse (Bergius et al., 2018) inherent to the New Green Revolution (Bergius and Buseth, 2019). Consequently, this view is supported by influential institutions like the World Bank (McMichael, 2012) – an important actor in the GMP, although it remains unclear to what places and what sectors African farmers should migrate (Li, 2011).

Interestingly, while an interviewee from the Moroccan government states that 'the rural exodus is considered a given and its consequence is not under the responsibility of agricultural policies', several interviewees emphasise that the GMP falsely assumes a rural exodus. Indeed, over the last few years, the rural population seems relatively stable (HCP, 2018). Should this third interpretation be correct, however, there would be practical challenges to its implementation such as land fragmentation, the rationales of family farming impeding the transition to purely capitalistic farming, and limited job opportunities in other sectors. Moreover, so far it is smallholder/family agriculture not large-scale/capitalistic agriculture which supplies cheap bread, an unchanged crucial component for social stability. An extinction of smallholder/family agriculture would therefore become another example of the 'second contradiction of capitalism' (O'Connor, 1988); where the expansion of capitalism destroys the socio-ecological basis on which it depends.

Overall, the socio-politico-economic importance of smallholder/family farming renders its place in the GMP complicated, if not contradictory. Consequently, reconversion projects, where multiple environmentalities coexist, shape socio-ecological outcomes that challenge the GMP's neoliberal growth strategy, thereby perpetuating Morocco's agricultural 'modernisation' efforts.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the power-knowledge dynamics that (re)produce the modernist development discourse underlying the GMP, in order to interrogate the latter's role in frustrating socio-ecologically sound and just practices. This is a necessary task, given that socio-ecological concerns are routinely overlooked in the myopia characterising hegemonic 'New Green Revolution' modernisation schemes today. In line with the neoliberal global economic order, the GMP, an example of 'green modernisation', aims to transform agriculture into a specialised and standardised agroindustry, producing 'high-added-value' goods to stimulate economic growth.

The modernist discourse that yields the 'regime of truth', based on the 'naturalness' of global capitalism, the virtue of 'unregulated' markets and the 'superiority' of large-scale/capitalist exploitations over smallholder/family agriculture, contributes to a reductionist view of agricultural development as increasing yields and profit. It thereby becomes crucial to opening up Africa as a new frontier in the development of global capitalism. In focusing on the different processes entailed in the GMP, we showed how the continued dominance of this discourse can only be understood in relation to Morocco's specific socio-ecological conditions and the material relations of power out of which it has grown and to which it speaks. And while the endless modernisation underlying the GMP is transformed and contested by different actors, the redeployment of the state and the reorganisation of the institutional landscape aligns the interests of consultants, bureaucrats and 'technical' actors. This coalition of interests thereby (re)produces the myopia of a modernist discourse and, at least partially, succeeds in forming environmental subjects according to the modernist 'regime of truth' in so far as they consider inevitable – although not promising – the supposedly teleological evolution towards modernist agriculture, thereby hindering alternative imaginaries of Morocco's agricultural future. Consequently, protection of natural resources and social justice are subordinated to an increase in yields and profits. The extent to which we can hope for a reconsideration of agricultural development is thus restricted by this entangled set of processes. Investigating these dynamics, inherent to the governmentality of the GMP, we illustrate how this modernist discourse is reproduced and, thereby, how it becomes a driver of socio-ecological change.

Subsequently, the paper engages with the role of smallholder/family farming in Morocco's 'modernisation' strategy. The state's contradictory interests – to simultaneously expand capitalist relations of production and maintain social stability through preserving smallholder/family farming – render the role of smallholder/family farming complex if not also contradictory. Indeed, while a reductionist view of what constitutes 'modern' agriculture feeds a continuous endeavour to 'modernise' smallholder/family farming, as explored via reconversion projects, the state's focus on 'economically-viable' crops at the expense of the multifunctionality of agriculture is contested by different actors. This contestation can result in unexpected outcomes, such as diversification instead of monocropping. Moreover, the dichotomy of traditional/modern perpetuates the search for a narrow form of 'modernity', instead of favouring an inclusive vision comprising different forms of farming, thereby drawing attention away from the political and economic distortions that exacerbate the marginalisation of smallholder/family farming.

Reconciling smallholder/family farming and the state's development strategy remains a challenge as long as the objectives of the two remain opposed. When agricultural development is reduced to 'modernisation', understood as expanding capitalist relations of production to maximise profit and, thus, as integrating smallholder/family agriculture in increasingly standardised, monopolised and globalised agro-industry, the promise to create diverse, socio-ecologically fair and sound agri-food systems seems modest if not futile. In contrast, we would argue that attending to the complex, multifaceted practices constituting the daily life of smallholder/family farmers poses a challenge to such narrowly conceived abstractions, as well as a potential challenge to encroaching capitalist relations of production.

Highlights

- In-depth analysis of the forces shaping the GMP.
- GMP is deeply influenced by ideological and material legacies.
- GMP is analysed as an example of the New Green Revolution.
- Key actors identified within current agricultural development in Morocco.
- Reframes agricultural development as the pursuit of endless modernisation.

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Notes

1. Pluvial.
2. We refer to large-scale/capitalistic and small-scale/family farming, knowing that these appellations are neither a perfect reflection of Morocco's much more hybrid reality.
3. Peasants.

4. The role of agricultural modernisation as a field of state – and *geopolitical* – action was, of course, most notoriously recognised in Norman Borlaug's award of the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in the first Green Revolution.
5. 'Final arbitrage' refers to the Monarchy's decisive power in strategic sociopolitical and economic decisions.
6. The World Bank and the International Finance Corporation notably finance such partnerships in Morocco (e.g. Houdret & Bonnet, 2016)
7. However, many researchers and university professors work as consultants as well, and many former civil servants in the agricultural ministry set up their own consultancies in the wake of the 'depart volontaire program', an early retirement scheme in the mid/late 2000s.
8. Paul Pascon (1932–1985) is a Moroccan sociologist who helped shape understandings of rural Morocco.

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