Countryside consumption as a new driver of food production – transition in land use strategies spreading in Southern Europe

Teresa Pinto Correia, Cecília Fonseca, Mara Almeida
ICAAM / University of Évora
PORTUGAL
Differentiation in space trajectories: the changing rural in Europe today

**what is driving**

**the use of the rural land?**

Relative weigh of production, consumption and protection are being altered, and often re-arranged again >> contradictions and complex dynamics

new management models
Montemor-o-Novo
100 km east of Lisbon and 25 km from Évora
Natura 2000 site

Small-scale mosaic
New functions in old patterns: from production to consumption countryside

»» but how much is really changing?
Contrary to what is described in literature, the landscape pattern is kept more and larger buildings but the same land cover, linear elements, composition, configuration.
Consumption as a driver of farm and farmland management

grounded in a quest for rural lifestyle, healthy food, leisure, which may or may not be closely linked to production

the lifestyle farming strategy: the income generated from agriculture is not the main motivations for the choices taken

- new types of actors and interactions
- new approach to farming and farm system
- new land management paradigms

»» a niche?
What defines this niche?

Mixed profiles: new comers + locals + returnees (local family roots)

Reasons for coming:
Tranquility + landscape + healthy food and life

Reasons for staying:
Social network + agriculture + landscape

Multiple interactions in different spheres:
- for managing commons
- and for traditional knowledge and practices
- for cultural interests, for recreation
- for producer-consumer relation: short supply chains
- for information: urban connections

Same products, but innovation in production goals and farm system: technology, organic, direct-sale

Retro-innovation: niche productions, e.g. aromatics
2nd »» Looking at niche-regime interactions:
Different regimes (agriculture, real-estate, conservation) are relevant, but regimes do not interact
Agriculture regime: pressure from the landscape is deviated and openings do not mean anchoring
No formal or informal rules about what is desirable
The new dynamic in small farming remains as an un-seen process
3rd »» Looking at the niche itself

**A significant production capacity:**
in its present extension and with present water availability, the small scale farms can provide enough basic products (potatoes, oignons, melons,..) to supply the food needs in the municipality

*even if a lot is used to feed the livestock or remains un-used*

new comers are diversifying this production

not a single plot is abandoned
Looking at the niche itself

This production is not seen as a farm production nor as a professional activity, rather as a gardening and production of own food.

The new comers follow the dominant local paradigm: production as an extension of the home activities, a way of living, a dynamic intercation with nature and with neighbors » a duty in face of human-nature dependencies

In the local network, products are exchanged by services or other products » enhancing community building

The production contributes to the household economy by reducing the need for food purchase » enhancing resilience and autonomy
Heterodoxy in Mediterraneaen agriculture

...challenging what has been observed in other contexts, new contours of the countryside consumption effects:

Maybe there is no niche after all: the niche does not see itself as a niche in agricultural production

Not less agriculture, but still mainly a non market driven agriculture

Diverse production forms with mutiple non formalized interdependencies and a role in food autonomy: the pluri-activity and pluri-income tradition

Interaction of different social spaces in the same geographical space >>> leading to a new and reshaped community, new network relations, highly grounded in place bindings

Not a vanishing landscape, but a landscape maintained and taken care off as an extension of home, an identitary land use
THANKS !