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**Groupe de Recherche sur le Monde Rural
(GREMR)**

**Association Nationale des Géographes
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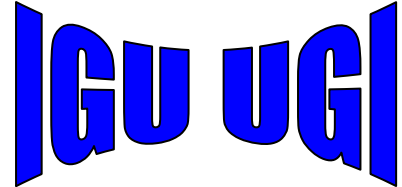
La Chaire UNESCO-GN



**International
Geographical Union**

(IGU)

**Commission on the
Sustainability of Rural
Systems**



***Presentation of the International Colloquium of the IGU Commission on the
Sustainability of Rural Systems***

Topic of the Colloquium:

Agricultural and Tourism Products and Local Development

(Rabat July 9 -- 15, 2007)

The struggle for increased production and the modernization of agricultural structures have had, as a consequence affecting the vast majority of countries, the creation of rural spaces that are heterogeneous and unequally developed. In the context of globalization, the perspectives faced by these different spaces are far from similar. On the other hand, there are those spaces which have benefited from various development policies and have become integrated into the global economy: they struggle for increased market share and use increasingly technological capital to help them do so. Those that have benefited less from these policies are faced with a series of crises that threaten their socio-economic systems of production.

Diagnosed several decades ago, the response to this crisis has been identified in a re-orientation of public policies regarding the development of these spaces. Even though this re-orientation entails improvement in production systems and the modernization of farm structures, the limits of these orientations are quickly realized, both in socio-economic terms and also in relation to their impact as dire consequences for fragile environments.

In the countries around the Mediterranean, the economy continues to be affected by a significant contribution from the agricultural and tourism sectors. The liberalization that has accompanied the GATT and Free Trade agreements poses a number of problems concerning the control of the negative impacts of competition on the markets for local agricultural and tourism products. At the same time, the evolution of these sectors has consequences for the whole socio-cultural, economic and environmental complex.

- **Definitions and Key Concepts** (*Agricultural and tourism products; Local development context; Mediterranean Basin*).

With this background, the main topic of the colloquium will have two sub-topics dealing with agricultural and tourism products. Our debate must take into consideration the spatial component and the future development possibilities of the territories involved. **By looking at agricultural and tourism products**, the totality of the interactions between society and its natural environment at the scale of specific localities must be tackled.

In the not too distant past, humankind sought first to satisfy basic food needs to eliminate nutritional deficits, an essentially quantitative quest. Today, it is rather the quality of products that counts. The consequences of new production systems on the environment and the health of consumers are becoming more important. Similarly for the tourism sector, where the movement goes beyond simply acquiring a different experience, and increasingly searches for greater quality (cultural tourism, ecotourism ...creating solidarity with host cultures)

The **local development** approach, particularly on the shores of the Mediterranean, constitutes an alternative to breaking this area out of its accumulated malaise in its different sectors, particularly in agriculture and tourism. Thus, comparisons of levels of the development of these sectors on the South shore in countries of the Maghreb or the East, with countries on the north shore of the Mediterranean such as Spain, France, Italy and even Greece, as well as elsewhere in the world, reveals significant differences. There are repercussions on other socio-economic sectors and on the political systems as well.

The **Mediterranean Basin**, because of its geographic position and the nature of its landscapes, exhibits the characteristics of a zone of transition between the Saharan spaces to the south, and the temperate zones to the North. Other than the resulting richness in biodiversity, this space has been the cradle to several civilizations and cultures. However, it is possible to identify two sets of countries around this Basin: the more advanced countries on the Northern shore, which nonetheless suffer from population ageing, and the less wealthy countries to the South, which are often confronted with socio-demographic, economic and environmental problems. In the latter, in addition to the unbridled growth of urban spaces, tourism presents a significant competitor to agriculture (for land, water and labour).

The real question is whether reconciliation is possible?

The lack of any adequate coherence between the spatial and socio-economic components of the Basin is clear, notably on the South shore.

For these reasons, the countries and peoples on both sides of the Basin are challenged by major issues in the demographic, socio-economic and ecological domains. This requires an effective cooperation between both sides with a political will and significant synergies based on a sound footing. The goal is to achieve the sustainable development that all citizens of the Mediterranean Basin aspire to.

Complementarity between economic sectors, particularly agriculture and tourism

The Mediterranean agricultural sector has constituted the backbone of the economy of several countries, particularly those on the South bank.

However, and despite the competition between agriculture and tourism, it is desirable to initiate a holistic development approach in which the articulation between the two sectors is oriented towards the same objective: sustainable development. The struggle against the sector approach that tends to be competition and hegemony oriented, is an important objective in order to mitigate the consequences of out-of-control globalization. It requires a political strategy that orients efforts in the direction of complementarity between the agricultural and tourism products of the two banks of the Basin. The persistence of small scale peasant agriculture around the Mediterranean Basin can only be pursued, it appears, through organically based farming systems integrated with an equally sensitive ecotourism.

Cooperation and coordination in all domains on both banks could lead to economic results that are beneficial to all. It requires a local development approach based on a clearly articulated exchange between the two populations and the two sets of products, that takes into account the needs and expectations of all concerned. A real cooperation between the peasant and the tourism actors on both banks is thus needed. Recent waves of illegal migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa represent the immediate consequence of the imbalance and the unequal development of the two banks¹.

The development of both the agricultural and tourism sectors depends upon the development of transportation infrastructure and the exchange of labour, capital and products. This approach would lead to the creation of a Mediterranean free trade zone that would be prosperous and beneficial to the populations on both banks of the Basin.

Through the analysis of different experiences presented during this colloquium and the ensuing discussions, we hope that we will be able to bring some light on:

- a) The different strategies adopted by local societies in the agricultural and tourism domains;
- b) What are the agricultural and tourism products that should be promoted? ;
- c) What is the probability that these territories can win the battle of quality, in a context characterized by competition between territories?

This International Colloquium of the IGU Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems will take place from the 9th to the 15th July 2007, at the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université Mohammed V-Agdal, Morocco, in partnership with the Local Organizing Committee comprised of the Groupe de

¹ A high level international congress was held in Rabat, July 10 and 11 2006, to debate the solutions required to correct these imbalances. The first conclusion was that the repression of illegal migration as the only solution was a failure.

Recherche sur le Monde Rural (**GREMR**), the **Chaire UNESCO-G-N**, the **Association Nationale des Géographes Marocains (ANAGEM)** and the **Association Nationale de Géographes Ruralistes (ANAGER)**.

This colloquium will provide the opportunity for researchers to put together a synthesis of experiences from different Mediterranean countries and other countries. This event could provide an opportunity to initiate discussions on ambitious policies to develop the rich potential of a sustainable tourism based on local agricultural products and the specificities (not to mention the curiosities of the rural sphere. This will require us to debate how to develop valuable natural and cultural heritage resources, and local agricultural systems. The conclusions and experiences that will be presented during the colloquium will serve to open up new perspectives for sustainable development.

Sub themes:

- a) The role of agriculture and rural tourism in partnerships between North and South;
- b) Agriculture and tourism: cooperation and exchange of experiences between the two banks of the Mediterranean;
- c) Peasants faced with globalization: liberalization and globalization of the world economy and territorial competition.
- d) Levelling the development of rural spaces to achieve sustainable development.
- e) Organic agriculture and food security: technical innovation and the development of new methods of production and distribution.
- f) What forms of interaction and what alternatives for rural heritage and tourism?;
- g) Agriculture and tourism: conflict or reconciliation?

We wish to recall that the integrating thread of all these themes remains: Sustainable development in the context of the globalization of rural systems (see the six research themes of the IGU Commission on the Sustainability of Rural Systems).

Participants can of course choose to present papers on any one of the six research task of the Commission, as follows:

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| Theme 1 | The social construction and the analysis of sustainable development in rural areas |
| Theme 2 | The regulation of sustainable development for the rural milieu |
| Theme 3 | Sustainable development and rural business |
| Theme 4 | The interactions between rural and urban systems and sustainable development |
| Theme 5 | Contributing to the component Land Use and Cover Change (LUCC) of the International Program IGBP |
| Theme 6 | Sustainable development and the dynamic of rural communities. |

- **II. The Field Trip:** The field trip planned in the context of the colloquium will have as its objective to focus on cases of agricultural and tourism development based on Morocco's rural heritage in the Moroccan Mediterranean Basin (The countryside of Chefchaouen in the Rif for example).

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