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Integrating Peri-Urban Farmers into Regional Planning: Case Study of the Oued el Maleh Valley, Morocco

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Abstract

The PhD research has been realised in the framework of the project “Urban Agriculture, Casablanca” which is a German-Moroccan research project financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) within the megacity research programme RR-research for the Sustainable Development of Megacities of Tomorrow”. The objective of the research was to better define possibilities to integrate peri-urban small-scale farmers into the regional planning through the study of four peri-urban aspects: planning system, farm viability, public policies and management of urban-rural dynamics.

The Oued el Maleh valley situated in the periphery of Casablanca, was selected to study the direct relations between urbanisation and peri-urban farmers. This agricultural valley counts many small-scale mixed-farming family farms that are in relation with urban dwellers visiting the valley during the week-ends. Farmers are selling their products and the urban visitors enjoy a still conserved rural space. But the rapid urbanisation of Casablanca and Mohammedia means that the valley will probably change in the near future.

To understand the urban and agricultural dynamics within this valley, prospective scenarios for were developed. Variables were selected to take into account urban and rural dynamics as well as public policy aspects of the territory’s development. These scenarios were not based on quantitative variables but on a qualitative approach to look at what influenced the development of peri-urban spaces and particularly peri-urban agriculture. A simple model for a simulation of farm systems and territory results was also created to better approach and quantify peri-urban agricultural situation within the scenarios.

These scenarios enable us to better understand the impacts of urbanisation on agriculture and to determine which type of urbanisation will lead to which type of urbanised agriculture. The scenarios highlight possible evolutions of peri-urban agriculture and emphasise at the same time the possible urban-rural synergies which could exist according to the type of urbanisation of agriculture. The scenarios also help us understand the role that agriculture could play in the identification of a peri-urban territory often considered as a space without identity.

Keywords: Peri-urban farmers, regional planning, scenario