

16.4 Economic organisation processes and politicisation in European rural societies, c.1850–1940, I

Room 202

Conveners: Gloria Sanz Lafuente and Corinne Marache

Chair: Corinne Marache and Gloria Sanz Lafuente

16.41 Gloria Sanz Lafuente and Corinne Marache – Introduction: economic organisation processes and politicisation. Current state of research

The changes that took place in rural Europe during the nineteenth century were diverse in nature. The ‘staging of communication’, the opening of markets and the gradual disappearance of the Old Regime systems led, according to different paces and modalities, to profound changes within rural societies. Among these changes, we want to focus this session on the contribution the approaches and processes of economic organisation made to the politicisation of peasants in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European societies. If the issue of politicisation has been the object of much research over the last few years, this more specific issue concerning the relationship between the circumstances and modalities of economic interest formation and its contribution towards politicisation of the peasants has not been studied in European ruralist and agrarian literature. The aim during this session is to establish a synthesis of current research in Europe on the relations between the different organised economic interests, the responsibility-taking of peasants and their politicisation.

The first part of the session aims to reflect on the evolution of the different types of economic organisation of rural society on all scales in the research, from local to national. In this regard and in particular, the most structured and formal systems will be studied – agrarian societies, trade unions, credit systems, co-operatives, agriculture chambers, technical parliamentary commissions with representatives of the peasants, etc. – their radius of action and the reasons behind their success or failure and their evolution. We will attempt to analyse the peasants organised *as sectoral producers* – of wine, oil, etc. – and the first lobbies, *as consumers* – co-operatives – or *as landless workers, landowners or leaseholders*, who find themselves in the middle of, and in fact generate, competition and conflicts of interest. Likewise we will study strategic alliances – action set – of limited duration that are caused by the interaction with other industrial or trading economic groups. The economic ties between cities and villages also influence the politicisation of peasants through competition or complementarity which must be studied.

In a second part we want to study *how* these economic organisations have contributed (or not) to the politicisation of peasants following a system of inclusion or exclusion in formal politics. Did peasants participate in these organisational structures and assume responsibilities? To what extent did these structures encourage political participation of the rural world? Were peasants considered as *‘political observers’* or as *‘political actors’*? What connections did they establish with politics and how? Have they operated separately from political parties or have they been instrumentalised by political parties? How have these economic organisations contributed to encouraging the political and civic responsibility of peasants? By means of individual ties and/or assemblies, meetings, etc. How did they contribute to making peasants’ interests known to public opinion (press, speeches, publicity)? Were the demands of peasants satisfied in this field or not? Did these organisations impose forms of politicisation in villages (top-down politicisation), or did they evolve according to the political demands of the peasants (bottom-up politicisation)? New professions linked to agriculture such as veterinary surgeons, agronomists and agriculture teachers also contributed, through their participation in agrarian economic organisations, to the reception,

creation and diffusion of new political demands. We want to focus our thoughts on these issues and on others during this session.

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16.42 Clemens Zimmermann – Politicisation in German rural society 1875–1945. Internal dynamics and external drives

In this history of politicisation, the growing presence of the media – *Medialisierung* – plays an important role, as does the greater integration of the agrarian economy in the general economy, especially in the global market. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, different degrees of politicisation in agrarian societies can be found. It was only during National Socialism that the primacy of the politically recognised communities – *ländliche Gemeinden* – fractured as the basis for the experiences that motivated political decisions. In this regard, neither the bourgeois revolution of 1849, nor the so-called ‘fundamental politicisation’ of the Empire, nor the acute struggles of the Weimar Republic, could generate a decisive break with the peasant political tradition tied to localist and network principles. With the radicalisation of agrarian issues starting in 1928, a vehement politicisation emerged with a focus toward clashing national issues, issues in which the local points of view and their internal communication would have less importance. The political relevance of the local community had existed ever since the ‘Kommunalismus’ of the Early Modern Era. However, agrarian societal actors of the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic, except some elitist forces, never managed to influence central decisions – in the bureaucracies, parliaments and agrarian organisations – by themselves. There was, however, the articulation of immediate and accessible interests on the village level. In addition, it is clear that the agrarian crises, especially the collapse of prices in the 1880s and the world economic crisis in the 1930s, caused the agrarian producers to distance themselves further from liberalism. Conservative and anti-socialist, protectionist forces made progress. The Social Democrats and the Communists of the Weimar Republic, in contrast, could only move forward in villages close to the cities and among artisans and industrial workers living there.

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16.43 Antonio Herrera, David Soto and Manuel González de Molin – Socialism and agrarian issues in Spain, 1890–1930

We focus our attention on how Spanish Socialism understood the agrarian matter at the end of nineteenth century and first decades of twenty century. We are interested on weight up the actions realised by the Socialist Unionism (UGT) in order to promote politisation among peasant.

Because the Socialist theory mostly adopts the main ideas of orthodox Marxism, they did not pay too much attention to rural world, convinced that the change would be played by the proletarians of urban areas. That was the idea developed by political and union ‘elites’. In spite of that if we pay attention to local level we could notice peasant behaviour. Peasant social conflicts show that they participated in the construction of the political structure. In this sense it is not very well known that local electoral results show that peasant preferred non conservative options as traditional historiography pointed out. That is the reason because we are checking traditional perspectives that identify rural world with political and social backwardness.

Antonio Herrera has a PhD from the Universidad de Jaen (Spain), Department of History, 2003. He is currently Associate Professor (Contemporary History) at the University of Pablo de Olavide (Seville, Spain). His research fields are Spanish Contemporary History, Democracy and Social Movements, Rural History, and Environmental History. In 2009 he was Visiting Scholar in the Department of Sociology at Pittsburgh University and in 2004, Visiting Scholar at Canada Blanch Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science. His publications include *La construcción de la democracia en el campo (1975-1988)* (Editorial M.A.P.A. Madrid, 2007); 'Otra lectura de la transición española es posible. La democratización del mundo rural (1975-1982)', *Ayer* 74 (2009); and (with Soto, D. and González de Molina, M.) 'Peasant protests as environmental protests (eighteenth-twentieth centuries)', in *Global Environment* (in press) and 'El Pacto Andaluz por la Naturaleza: la confluencia del movimiento campesino y el movimiento ecologista', in *Historia Agraria* (in press). Current projects are Democracy and Citizenship in the Rural World and the History of Environmental Movement in Spain.

16.42 Dulce Freire – Local movements with national goals. Political mobilisation during the First Portuguese Republic, 1910–1926

The renewed interest of researchers in social movement issues has revealed aspects neglected by the studies carried out before the 1980s. This paper aims to contribute to the discussions that are ongoing, focusing the analysis on the processes of mobilisation in the rural context.

Empirical data were collected for a small village located in the centre of Portugal. This rural community acquired national projection during the first decades of the twentieth century. It was during this period, characterised by strong economic and political instability, that the Monarchy was replaced by the Republic (1910). In studies conducted by Portuguese historians, social movements that took place in this village are presented with different political meanings. First they are seen as an example of the ability of republican elites to mobilise ordinary people and as an important contribution to the Monarchy collapse. And then, when national resistance to the young Republic arose, as a local focus of anarchist mobilization. These interpretations agree that this village is one of the cases that show the inability of the First Republic (1910-1926) to assure the expectations of the social alliance that had supported the new regime.

As recalled by A. Walder (2009) recently, political approaches are insufficient to clarify the processes of mobilisation and collective action. Taking up the suggestions of Tilly and others, to understand the formation and development of social movements it is necessary to consider different aspects, such as the diverse motivations of the protagonists, social networks, local problems, and collective identities. To clarify these aspects requires analysis based on the internal dynamics of the rural community. Focused on the small village of Alpiarça, this paper seeks to explain the mobilisation of different social groups during the tumultuous years of the First Republic.

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