

## **Panel: Land Reform: from the State to the Village, or the Village to the State?**

### **Panel organisers:**

**James Simpson.** Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

**Juan Carmona.** Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

**Jean-Philippe Colin.** IRD UMR GRED, France and ENSA, Algeria

**Eric Leonard.** IRD UMR GRED, France

### **Panel abstract** (Up to 250 words)

It is estimated that at least 1.5 billion people today have some farmland as a result of land reform, and 'are less poor, or not poor, as a result' (Lipton, 2009). The theoretical literature suggests that land ownership helps both alleviate poverty and stimulates economic growth. Exactly how land redistribution should take place has resulted in a considerable volume of theoretical literature, but there is much less on the practical difficulties involved in carrying it out. This session brings together papers from a wide variety of countries (Algeria, Austria-Hungary, Chile, Finland, France, Greece, Mexico, Rumania, Russia, and Spain) that look at the tensions found between the demand for change by individuals and groups at the village level with those at the centre (state officials, political parties, Church, and trade unions). The subjects examined include the importance of local communities in influencing government policy; how government and agronomists attempted to implement reform in local communities; and how political parties (or trade unions) tried to use the agrarian problem to further their own objectives.

### **SESSION ONE.**

Chair

**James Simpson.** Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

### **Papers**

*Promoting land reform 'from below': Land redistribution rumours in Finland, c. 1880–1905.*

**Sami Suodenjoki.** School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Tampere, Finland

The paper discusses the role of land redistribution rumours in land reforms and public debate on the land question in Finland, c. 1880–1905. During this period, Finland was a largely autonomous borderland of the Russian empire but was under increasing pressure of Russification by the imperial regime. The period was also marked by growing land agitation, which manifested itself e.g. in waves of rumours about a forthcoming land redistribution implemented by the Russian tsar in Finland. The paper suggests that passing on land redistribution rumours was a central means for tenants and landless people to inform the

government about the need for a land reform. Second, the paper examines how the land rumours were fuelled by the concurrent measures of the government and how the rumours affected state and party policies during the following years. Moreover, the paper discusses the methodologies and sources for studying the rumours 'from below', i.e. from the perspective of the rural people among whom they spread.

*Outcomes of Land Reform across a Triple Frontier*

**Irina Marin.** University of Leicester, United Kingdom.

This paper examines the nature and divergent outcomes of land reforms around the triple border between Austria-Hungary, Tsarist Russia and Rumania between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The region's main interest lies in the fact that until late nineteenth it represented a fault line between three empires (Ottoman, Habsburg and Tsarist); serfdom continued until the 1860s, and it was dominated by latifundia. By exploring historical precedent, as well as interactions between the State, the landed elites and the peasantry, the paper seeks to account for the dissimilar results of land reforms implemented across this triple frontier ranging from a free and prosperous peasantry to proletarianized peasants, colonizations, *neo-serfdom* (or the replacement of legal bonds with economic ones) and major social unrest. It examines the condition of peasants and their interactions with the State, and the extent that this shaped the degree of social combustibility in each of the three states.

*The implementation of land reform in Greek Thessaly (1917-1940)*

**Socrates D. Petmezas, George Gassias.** University of Crete, Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FoRTH (Greece)

This paper will address the issue pursuing the following aims: a) to study the legal and practical procedures adopted by the Greek administration to concretely implement the expropriation of large estates, b) to establish the periodization of the application and completion of the land reform (from the first tentative distribution of the estate's lands to the cultivators' cooperative to the final legal transfer of the property titles to the new small-owners) and, finally, c) to assess the concrete results of the implementation of the land reform.

Sources: a) the successive laws and regulations of the land reform and the legal and statistical literature on the land question (1881-1912), b) the recently available archives of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Inter-war period, and c) the official administrative reports on the expropriation of different estates.

*A spontaneous land reform in post-WWI Italy?*

**Pablo Martinelli.** Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

In this paper I explore an Italian episode of massive land sales from large landowners to smaller owners (most accessing ownership for the first time) in the immediate aftermath of WWI. While this phenomenon is often deemed as a spontaneous land reform, its causes have never been examined. Red fear and political uncertainty are usually claimed to have played a key role, but this "expectations" story interacts with changes in the economic fundamentals underlying estates' profitability (real wages and local taxes), which in turn are correlated with social unrest in the countryside. I exploit variation in the incidence of the phenomenon across

Italy in order to check the narrative explanation against hard data while disentangling the role played by different causal mechanisms.

## **SESSION TWO.**

**Chair:** Pablo Martinelli. Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

### **Papers**

*Reforming land relations. From market prohibition to local practices: a comparative perspective from Algeria and Mexico*

**Jean-Philippe Colin**<sup>1,2</sup>, **Eric Leonard**<sup>1</sup>, **Ali Daoudi**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>IRD UMR GRED, France; <sup>2</sup>ENSA, Algeria

One of the issues raised by land reforms is the distance that may exist between the legal framework and administrative processes as designed by the central power (formal institutional change), the pragmatic adaptations that effective implementation of these policies induce, and actual local land practices. The paper tackles this issue through a comparative perspective regarding land reforms in Algeria and Mexico. In both cases, the land reforms went in some points of their history through a succession of phases of expropriation / land redistribution, a recast of organizational structures through which the land was used, and a redefinition of the beneficiaries' rights. Bringing together the Algerian and Mexican cases sheds light on two fields of practices that reflect the actors' agency while facing heavy government interventions in the local governance of land allocated during the reforms: a process of *de facto* decollectivization, and a strong momentum of illegal commoditization of land.

*Landowners, Political Violence and Rural Conflict in Southern Chile during Agrarian Reform.*

**Felipe Sánchez.** Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile

This paper analyzes the contentious actions conducted by landowners in the Southern Chilean provinces of Cautín and Llanquihue, to deal with the land reform and rural mobilization experienced during the Popular Unity's (UP) government period (1970-1973). Despite the massive and radical peasant mobilization in these provinces, a number of landowners in Cautín responded with violence against peasants and indigenous people, while in Llanquihue violence was negligible and late. I argue that local variables configured the contentious actions developed by landowners. While in Llanquihue rural mobilization was led by the Christian Democrats (CD) which was a moderate opposition; in Cautín rural protest was led by the Revolutionary Peasant Movement (RPM), a highly radical leftist group which preferred direct action as opposed to institutionalised mechanisms as a way to achieve socialism. The different political trajectories that were followed these provinces also explains, in turn, the options of the UP government. For example, while in Cautín, Salvador Allende decided to use "moral force" to stop illegal land seizures, in Llanquihue the UP sought a temporary alliance with landowners and pursued peasant leaders in order to imprison them.

*A reflection on the rural labor market in the Second Republic (1931-1936)*

**Ricardo Robledo.** Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain

If land reform, interpreted as one of land redistribution, only became important after March 1936, then it is the changing labor relations in 1931, promoted by the Socialist party (PSOE) with Largo Caballero as Minister, that explain most of the social conflicts in the Spanish agriculture during the Second Republic. This paper considers the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments that blame the government for the social conflict, and proposes alternative ideas using new documentation presented here. It analyzes the labor market before the proclamation of the Republic and the real changes (not just legal ones) affecting wage levels and employment conditions. In addition, it shows the resistance of large landowners and small farmers to the new legislation and the attitude of unions. The ultimate goal is to clarify the problems of collective action and assess labor market problems as a factor in triggering civil war.

*Too many workers or not enough land? Why land reform failed in Spain in the 1930s.*

**Juan Carmona, James Simpson.** Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

On the eve of the Second Republic there was a broad consensus among most contemporaries that some form of land reform was necessary for the southern provinces of Spain. Rural poverty was widespread and while enormous estates were believed to be under-cultivated by their absentee owners, a significant number of workers were denied access to the land. Yet the implementation of reform was very slow and, as Spanish society became deeply divided, its failure is often cited as a major cause of the outbreak of the Civil War. This paper, using a large sample of farm level information collected by the Institute of Agrarian Reform for expropriated estates in Extremadura, argues that the attempts at land reform were not only inefficient as a mechanism to raise farm output and productivity, but also failed to provide an adequate solution to rural poverty.

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**James Simpson** teaches economic history at the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. His publications include *Creating Wine: the Emergence of a World Industry, 1840-1914* (Princeton, 2011) and *Spanish agriculture: the long siesta, 1765-1965* (Cambridge, 1995). Currently he is writing with Juan Carmona *The Agrarian Origins of the Spanish Civil War*.

**Juan Carmona** is Associate Professor of Economic History at the UC3M. He has published in international journals such as the JEH, Continuity and Change, EREH, the EHR and RHE-JILAEH on sharecropping, Spanish land markets and estates management. He is currently working on land reform and collective action in Spain during the Second Republic

**Jean-Philippe Colin** is Director of research at the *Institut de Recherche pour le Développement* (IRD), and has conducted extensive field research in Côte d'Ivoire and Mexico on land issues, with an institutional economics approach. He is currently assigned as visiting professor with *the Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique, Algiers*.

**Eric Leonard** is research director in the French Institute for Development Research (IRD). He has worked on topics like agricultural and land policies, and the relationships between institutional and territorial changes. He has published 9 books and more than 50 articles on these subjects. He is currently director of the Pôle Foncier Montpellier

**Ali Daoudi** is assistant professor at Ecole Nationale Supérieure Agronomique, Algiers (ENSA). He has worked on informal markets and arrangements for access to productive resources in

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**Ricardo Robledo** is author of *Economistas y reformadores españoles: la cuestión agraria (1760-1935)* (1993), «Política y reforma agraria: de la Restauración a la II República (1868/74-1939)» (1996), «Sobre el fracaso de la reforma agraria andaluza en la Segunda República» (2014) and editor of *Historia del Ministerio de Agricultura, 1900-2008* (2011).

**Felipe Sánchez-Barría** is a Ph.D student at the Institute of Sociology, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. He earned a M.A in History in 2014 from the same University. His research interests are Rural Conflicts, Contentious Politics, Political History of Chile and Mexico. For further information, <http://uc-cl.academia.edu/FelipeSánchez>

**Pablo Martinelli** has a PhD from the European University Institute (2012). He is assistant professor of economic history at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. His main research interests focus on land distribution and its relationship with other problems of the economic development of interwar European agriculture.

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**George Gassias** has a Msc Contemporary Greek and European History. He is a PhD Candidate at the History & Archaeology Department of the University of Crete and Research assistant in the project: "The Greek Rural Economy during the Inter-war years" (Scientific Responsible: Professor Socrates Petmezas, University of Crete/Institute for Mediterranean Studies/FoRTH)

**Sami Suodenjoki** is a historian and postdoctoral researcher at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Tampere, Finland. His research interests include agrarian protests, the labour movement and the interaction between citizens and the state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Irina Marin** is a Leverhulme research fellow at University of Leicester, currently working on a postdoctoral project examining the circulation of rumour and violence across the triple frontier between Austria-Hungary, Tsarist Russia and Romania at the end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century. Her PhD is from University College London (2009) and most recent publication is *Contested Frontiers in the Balkans: Ottoman and Habsburg Rivalries in Eastern Europe* (I.B. Tauris, 2012).