Title of the symposium:

Policy and governance innovation in agricultural landscapes: recent trends and future pathways towards enhanced sustainability and food security.

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Symposium abstract

Agriculture occupied in 2017 37.265 % of worldwide land surface, down from 39.47 % in 1991 (World Bank, 2018). Alas, its regional distribution and trends largely differs (World Bank, 2018), with a maximum of 43.5 % in the European Union in 2015 (yet down from 1961) and a minimum of 13.4 % in Pacific Islands Small States in the same year (yet up from 1961). Especially problematic is the regional miss-match between the "developed" regions where agriculture is increasing its efficiency and capacity to feed their own (largely stagnating) populations with high-quality food, and others ("developing") where population is exponentially growing and largely lacking access to healthy, affordable and sustainable food.

Furthermore, agricultural land is embedded in wider agricultural-dominated (rural and peri-urban) landscape mosaics that are currently undergoing shifts of unprecedented magnitude and complexity driven by changes in socio-economic, environmental and cultural conditions at scales that range from the farm to the global. This is all central to political, geo-strategic and social debates currently dominating the global arena, including: climate change, sustainability and food security. Alas, it also directly contributes to relevant discussions about the empowerment of local and regional actors in the face of globalization, the largely unresolved trade-offs and tensions between food production and environmental conservation, and between productivist and post-productivist approaches to agricultural production. These are all points that are commonly discussed on the policy and science arenas, whilst some other key points remain (so-far) relatively untouched. Amongst the latter, deeper and more critical insights are required on the complex dynamics of change, and generic lack of innovation, in the intricate and multi-scale framework of governance and policy instruments that drive decisions in agricultural landscapes. When addressing

agricultural landscapes, most policy and governance approaches focus on food production and rural development and on how these are positioned to tackle the aforementioned global challenges. Nevertheless, by restricting the view point to this set of policies as pivotal and yet isolated pieces, we are missing the full picture of the processes of changes, including interactions with policies and governance models from other sectors (e.g. conservation) and better insights into the wider rural landscape that use a different kind of rationale. For instance, agricultural policies build on a voluntary menu-based structure of financial incentives, whereas spatial planning and environmental policies are based on restrictions of uses and practices, thus rendering their mutual integration virtually impossible.

In response to such challenges, this session aims to combine theoretical arguments and empirical cases of policy and governance innovation around the world can help disentangle the potential of agricultural landscapes to help advance sustainability and food security. More specifically, we expect that each presentation will address at least one of the following three points in the symposium:

- Identification of key aspects of policy and governance innovation of relevance for agricultural landscapes (e.g. policy integration, improved public participatory procedures and standards….)
- Insights into how such innovation processes can help tackle more efficiently globally relevant challenges related to agriculture (climate change, food security and biodiversity conservation…).
- Regional and local case-study examples of good practices in governance and policy innovation for agricultural landscape sustainability and improved food security.

How your symposia will improve landscape ecology science?

We expect that our symposium will help disentangle the following key questions and challenges that are directly of relevance for Landscape Ecology:

- What is the reasonable potential that we can expect from agricultural landscapes to fulfill multiple societal demands and contribute to sustainability and food security?

- How does this potential vary across diverse scales, regions and socio-political, cultural and environmental contexts?

- What is the role potentially played by innovation in governance and policy to improve the achievement of more sustainable agricultural landscapes across the world?

- How can such innovation be enacted through social and political praxis (e.g. through better policy alignment and integration)?

- What are the key instruments (e.g. spatial planning, participatory policy making) that can help enact innovation leading to sustainability and food security?, and how do they need to improve?

- What are the conditions required for such innovation to take place, and what needs to differ across diverse contexts (culturally, politically, socio-economically)?

- Last, are there any exemplary cases with lessons to be learnt and adopted?

Ultimately, we expect that in attempting to answer these questions will help Landscape Ecology adopt a more central and better acknowledged role in shaping future agricultural policies and governance that foster an improved efficiency in food production and food security across the globe whilst they also contribute tackling other key environmental and social challenges in close alignment and coordination with other sectoral policy and governance frameworks.

Broad thematic areas

Broad thematic areas 1st choice: Landscape governance
Broad thematic areas 2st choice: History, dynamic and transformations of landscapes

Free Keywords

Agricultural Landscapes: Food Security: Sustainability: Governance: Policy: Innovation

Outcomes of symposium

Special issue in a scientific journal (to be negotiated)

Notes

We are currently discussing the possibility of publishing a special issue with the contributions received in an international journal. Preferred options include:

- Sustainability (http://www.mdpi.com/journal/sustainability/about),
- Land (http://www.mdpi.com/journal/land/about), or
- Agronomy (http://www.mdpi.com/journal/agronomy/about),

They are all open-access journals with low timescales for publication of papers and SIs.