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# **Worker, Peasant or Entrepreneur? Analysis of the Entrepreneurial Logics and Practices of Family Farmers in Agrarian Reform Cooperatives in the Saiss (Morocco)**

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# WORKER, PEASANT OR ENTREPRENEUR? ANALYSIS OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL LOGICS AND PRACTICES OF FAMILY FARMERS IN AGRARIAN REFORM COOPERATIVES IN THE SAISS (MOROCCO)

## TRAVAILLEUR, PAYSAN OU ENTREPRENEUR ? ANALYSE DES PRATIQUES ET LOGIQUES ENTREPRENEURIALES DES AGRICULTEURS FAMILIAUX DANS LES COOPERATIVES DE LA REFORME AGRAIRE DU SAISS (MAROC)

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze the emerging entrepreneurial practices and the underlying logic of family farms in two agrarian reform cooperatives in Morocco. These practices can be explained by the constant negotiation of multiple and sometimes even antagonistic logics (peasant, entrepreneurial, proletarian, capitalistic) within these farms in a context of rapid agrarian change and a juxtaposition of different farm types on the same territory. Five factors illustrate this emergence: (1) the access to credit, (2) the functioning of the farm (rotation of the crops, use of inputs, workforce), (3) the access to groundwater resources, (4) the marketing practices adopted by farmers and (5) the informational factors. The porosity of the peasant and entrepreneurial worlds is the main lesson we can draw from our study. There is a subtle process of hybridization between the peasant and entrepreneurial modes of farming, with a wide range of profiles, ranging from a pure 'peasant', to a pure 'entrepreneur' and in between the peasant-entrepreneur and the entrepreneur-peasant. If we only focus on the political discourse, the trend in the development of new modes of farming seems inescapable. Our study stresses the resistance of practices and logics of peasant modes of farming which can mix with a 'modern' vision of agriculture. However, the siren songs of entrepreneurship can lead to bankruptcy, an exit from agriculture, which could have a strong impact on the social cohesion of the Moroccan society, particularly in rural areas.

### RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cet article est d'analyser les pratiques entrepreneuriales émergentes et les logiques sous-jacentes des exploitations agricoles familiales dans deux coopératives de la réforme agraire au Maroc. Ces pratiques peuvent être

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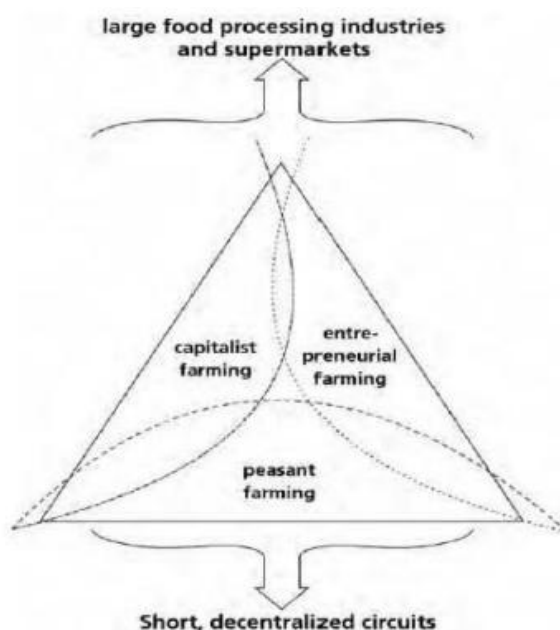
expliquées à travers la négociation constante entre des logiques multiples et parfois même antagoniques (paysanne, entrepreneuriale, prolétarienne, capitaliste) au sein de ces exploitations, dans un contexte de transformation agraire rapide et de coexistence de différents types d'exploitations sur un même territoire. Cinq facteurs illustrent cette émergence : (1) l'accès au crédit, (2) le fonctionnement de l'exploitation (rotation des cultures, usage des intrants et des facteurs de production, force de travail mobilisée), (3) l'accès aux ressources en eau souterraine, (4) les pratiques de commercialisation adoptées par les agriculteurs et enfin (5) les facteurs liés à l'information. La porosité des mondes paysans et entrepreneuriaux est le principal enseignement que l'on peut tirer de notre analyse. Il existe en fait un processus subtil d'hybridation entre les modes d'agriculture paysan et entrepreneurial, avec une large gamme de profils allant du paysan 'pur' jusqu'à l'entrepreneur 'pur'. Si on suit le discours politique, le développement des nouveaux modes d'agriculture entrepreneuriale semble inéluctable. Notre étude souligne cependant la résistance de pratiques et de logiques paysannes qui peuvent se mêler avec une vision plus 'moderne' de l'agriculture. Cependant, le chant des sirènes de l'entrepreneuriat peut conduire à la faillite, à une sortie de l'activité agricole, qui pourrait avoir un impact sur la cohésion sociale de la société marocaine, notamment en milieu rural.

**Keywords:** groundwater economy; innovation; modes of farming; entrepreneurial practices and logics; irrigation; Saiss; Morocco.

## 1. Introduction and analytical framework

The aim of this paper is to analyze the (emerging) entrepreneurial practices in family farms in Morocco. These practices can be explained by the constant negotiation of multiple and sometimes even antagonistic logics (peasant, entrepreneurial, proletarian, capitalistic) within these farms in a context of rapid agrarian change and a juxtaposition of different farm types on the same territory. The setting of our study is the development of a "groundwater economy" (Shah, 2009) in the Saiss (Morocco) which has witnessed over the past 25 years a rapid growth of irrigated agriculture, mainly depending on groundwater (almost 50,000 ha of irrigated area, of which 45,000 ha directly depend on groundwater in 2012). The evolution of technology, public policies and new market opportunities (among many other factors) have profoundly transformed the relationships between farmers, land, innovation processes and their agricultural practices (Bekkar et al., 2009; Benouniche et al., 2014; Dugué et al., 2015). However, policy makers and development agents continue to view small-scale farming as a social activity, as if they were still following a traditional model of peasantry. In contrast, our paper will show that several forms of hybridization of logics and practices within family farms can be observed.

### 1.1 Three typical modes of farming



Van der Ploeg (2009) contrasts three typical models of agriculture, namely the capitalist, peasant and entrepreneurial modes of farming (fig. 1). The first corresponds to the model of a capitalist agricultural system, mostly driven by agribusiness market exports. This model is characterized by productive capital, the massive use of hired labor, financial and technical capital, organized in an "Empire" where the consumer and the producer never meet. In contrast, the model of peasant agriculture represents a small farming structure based on the use of an essentially family labor, mainly focusing on subsistence farming and short supply and commercialization chains. The third model would be intermediate: the agricultural entrepreneur. It would evolve between the two aforementioned models according to its size and financial capacity. However, according to Van der Ploeg (2009), there is no clear dividing line between these three models : "At the interfaces there is considerable overlap and ambiguity, and "borderlines" are crossed through complex moves both backwards and forwards" (Van der Ploeg, 2009). However, these three models of agriculture follow different logics and practices in terms of networking, organization, and production.

**Fig. 1. Three typical modes of farming (source: Van der Ploeg, 2009)**

## **1.2 The distinction between logics and practices in the modes of farming**

The study of farming practices aims at examining the organizational structure, the modes of acquisition and use of inputs (land, water etc.), from breeding to processing and commercialization of agricultural products, information acquisition, innovation and spin-offs. The main criteria of distinction are based on the analysis developed by Van der Ploeg (2009) grounded on the differentiation between the peasant and entrepreneurial modes of farming.

From a methodological point of view, a distinction is made between practices and logics of these two modes of farming. Practices describe how farmers act and how a mode of farming is concretely implemented. Logics refer to the strategy and organization of the mode of farming. Logics do not necessarily predetermine practices, because experimental practices can also influence farmers' logics for example. Since the peasant and entrepreneurial modes of farming are largely an ideal type<sup>6</sup>, our description of farming logics and practices of these two modes of farming are also idealized. However, as we will show below, this distinction will help us, in a second step, to identify several kinds of hybridization.

To summarize, the entrepreneurial practices aim at developing processes of production and commercialization more or less connected to the market, generating an added-value, which will enable to expand the investment and capitalization capacities. These practices are based on an increased use of wage-labor force and on a strong investment in technologies. They are also based on a dependence on markets for 1) input provision such as seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, 2) productive resources such as land and water, and 3) financial means (credit).

The entrepreneurial logics are much more difficult to characterize. However, they are grounded, according to us, on a will to generate higher profits so as to develop, expand and intensify food production. Subsistence food producing agriculture is not considered as a satisfactory end. Besides, attachment to land is weaker. Land is much more considered as an input whose profitability must be maximized. This way of thinking is intrinsically based on a short-term horizon, because the substitutability of one land compared to one another is understood only from the possibility to generate benefits. Finally, the entrepreneurial logics are based on an organization of the farm developed on a shareholder basis or according to a hierarchical logic: in all cases outside of the family sphere.

In contrast, the peasant practices are based on loose ties with the market economy, concerning the employment of workforce (the workforce used is mainly related to the extended network of the family), the use of inputs (natural fertilizers, coming from their own livestock) and financial aspects (no bank loan contracts but informal credit). Peasant logics are characterized by a mode of development aiming at subsistence food producing agriculture or turned towards the acquisition of comfort. The added value generated by agricultural production is intended neither to fund the expansion of the farm (in terms of land acquisition or investment in costly technologies), nor the degradation of productive resources such as land or water which will enable the development of farming in the medium and long run. Moreover, the peasant logics are based on the idea of land transfer towards future generations, so as to help them becoming a farmer. Thus, the organization is primarily turned towards the family.

Based on the characteristics identified by Schumpeter (1934), followed by the works of Wenekers and Thurik (1999) and van der Ploeg (2009) among others, we can propose a definition of the entrepreneur applicable to the area of agriculture. The entrepreneur can be defined as an actor connected with capital markets (land, workforce, agricultural inputs...) and able to innovate or to use innovation to develop wealth creation in a competitive market. The modes of organization developed by the entrepreneur can be inspired from preexisting or innovating models, but the main factor explaining the innovation spin-off is linked with his capacity to mobilize capital.

The hypothesis behind the links between entrepreneurial practices and logics is based on the idea that a pro-capitalist behavior leads to the implementation of market-based strategies to develop agricultural projects. The agricultural project is the projection of a behavior and of an agricultural practice aiming at generalizing an (observed or already implemented) practice in the future. Thus, the nature of the agricultural project and the strategic means enabling its implementation will determine whether the farmers follow an entrepreneurial or a peasant mode of farming. For instance, drilling a tube-well can be understood as an entrepreneurial agricultural project if - based on a bank loan contract and on commercial inputs - it aims at generating profits enabling to expand the surface of the lands cultivated, which, in turn will generate a new capital-intensive project (in the agricultural domain or in another). In all cases, this project to drill a tube-well is expected to cover far more than subsistence food producing agriculture.

Concretely, agricultural practices are not empty of meaning. The more it will be connected to the market and motivated to increase agricultural yields beyond the basic needs and search for comfort, the more it will be an obvious translation of entrepreneurial logics.

Inspired by this analytical framework, an empirical study was conducted between April and June 2013 (Papin-Stammose, 2013) and between April and June 2014 (Martin, 2014) in two agrarian reform cooperatives located in the Saïss plain (Morocco): Ezzahra and Iqaddar. Based on the observation of the practices and on the analysis of logics developed by the diversity of farmers established in these cooperatives, we analyze the factors explaining the emergence of entrepreneurial agricultural practices (selection of crops, irrigation vs rain-fed, livestock, land markets, land renting, access to credit, etc.). However, we contrast this trend by showing the persistence and resurgence of peasant practices (informal credit, land association, etc.). Then, we present the multiple and (sometimes) antagonistic logics inside family farms and their

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<sup>6</sup> According to Weber (1949 :90) "It is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description".

incarnation in agricultural practices. This case study in the Saiss plain will allow us to extend the analysis of the modes of agriculture proposed by van der Ploeg (2009), so as to stress the various forms of hybridization currently occurring.

## 2. Analysis of the entrepreneurial logics and practices of family farmers in the Saiss

### 2.1. Presentation of the case study and context of the Groundwater Economy in the Saiss

Our study was carried out in two agrarian reform cooperatives covering a total area of 700 ha: Ezzahra and Iqaddar (Fig. 2). These cooperatives, located in the province of El Hajeb, were part of a larger cooperative created by the State in 1978 for the production of cereals, after the dismantling of the agricultural land management society (SOGETA). The assignees of the large cooperative worked under the supervision of staff of the Ministry of Agriculture, and often compared their situation to that of labourers. The State distributed only in 1991 land use rights of 9-13 ha to 65 members of State cooperative. In the 1990's, organizing work on a cooperative basis, under the direction of the State, was mostly based on imposed crop rotation, so as to facilitate cultivation operations, inputs acquisition and product commercialisation. But the failure of this system, based on rain-fed agriculture, considered unprofitable by the farmers themselves, was progressively abandoned by the farmers who succeeded to obtain an access to groundwater resources through individual wells and progressively developed diversified family farms. In these two cooperatives, groundwater access is difficult to obtain. In 2006, only 9 wells (3 located in Ezzahra and 6 in Iqaddar) were identified, which demonstrate that the massive development of groundwater exploitation through tube-wells is very recent.

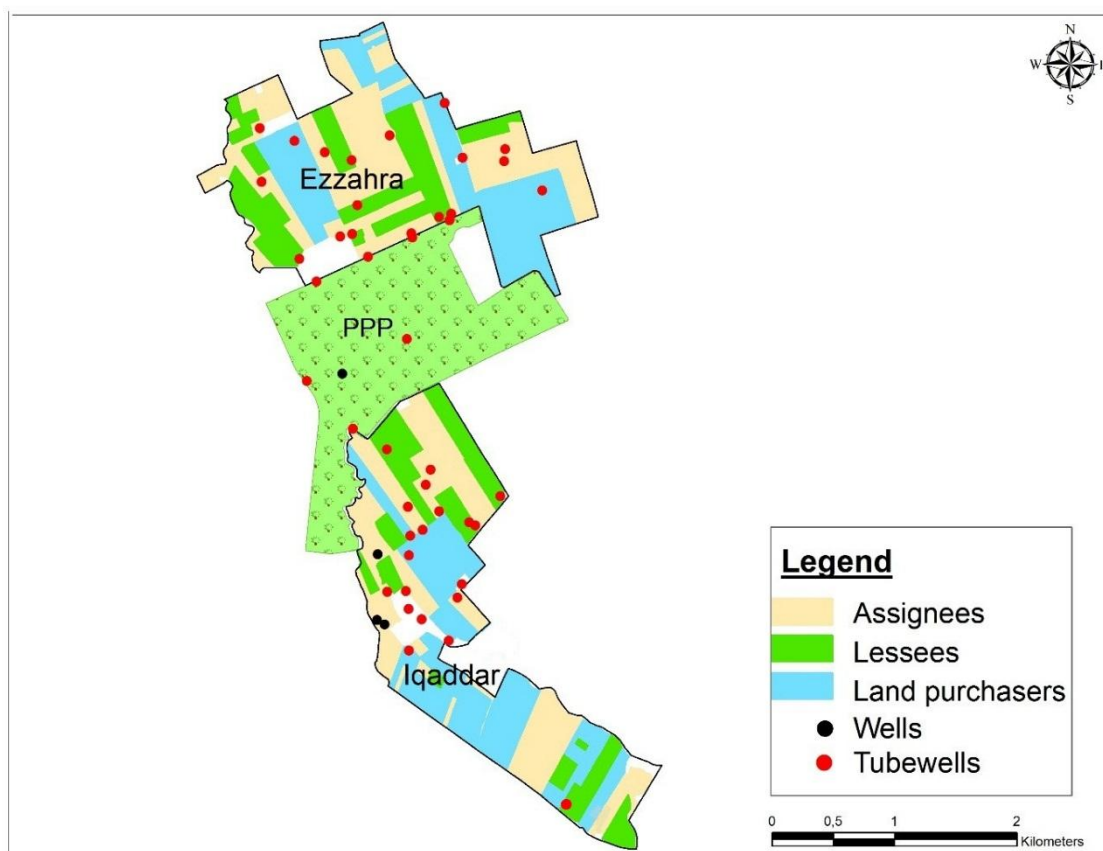


Fig. 2 : Study area

In 2006, the State privatized the land, which was considered “frozen” by the administration (Bossenbroek and Zwartveen, 2015) and members of the cooperatives could obtain property of the land for quite low prices. Following the ambitious ‘Green Morocco Plan’ of 2008 aimed at intensifying agriculture through irrigated, high value crops and at attracting investors to agriculture by providing substantial subsidies (Akesbi, 2014; Faysse, 2015), a lively land market emerged in these cooperatives. Land prices were soaring very high (up to 50,000€/ha) and a number of the cooperative members had debts and were forced to sell the land. In 2014, 53 % of the surface of both cooperatives are now in the hands of these investors<sup>7</sup> and even 72 % of the irrigated area within the cooperatives<sup>8</sup>. In 2014, there was a tremendous increase in the number of tube-wells (18 in Ezzahra and 20 in Iqaddar), most of whom were installed by the investors, who are mostly

<sup>7</sup> 35 % for land purchasers and 18 % for lessees.

<sup>8</sup> 30% by land purchasers and 42 % by lessees.

planting fruit orchards. Their irrigation equipment is actively subsidized by the State to promote intensive irrigated agriculture. The former cooperative members, on the other hand, only irrigate 21% of their land due to lack of capital to invest in tube-wells, but also due to reduce the risk linked to volatile agricultural markets for the high value crops. They are considered small-scale family farmers not so much because of their farm size (7-13 ha), but rather because of the lack of capital on these farms. There are also a number of lessees in these cooperatives, growing horticulture, by renting in the land from the cooperative members. These lessees also make intensive use of groundwater by installing tube-wells.

## 2.2 The emergence of entrepreneurial practices

The aim of this section is to understand the emergence of entrepreneurial practices in the two cooperatives under study, in a context dominated, during the last decades, by a peasant mode of farming, and confronted with new entrepreneurial modes of farming of investors. We will more particularly focus on five factors (1) the financial factors (investment, credit), (2) the factors linked with the functioning of the farm: rotation of the crops, the use of inputs such as workforce, fertilizers and pesticides, seeds, etc.), (3) the factors linked to the access to water resources and especially to groundwater, (4) the commercialization practices adopted by farmers and (5) the informational factors.

First, it is important to mention that the situation is really contrasted between the two cooperatives in the domain of credit. In 2005-2006, two cooperatives of the region were drawn and selected to benefit from a cancellation of debt. Ezzahra was concerned, contrary to Iqaddar. This has influenced the way farmers have managed their (symbolic and use) relation to formal credit.

The 'Green Morocco Plan' encourages the use of credit to increase farm performance through a credit policy managed by the bank 'Credit Agricole'. In practice, the interest rates are high (7 to 10% as an average in 2014) and this generally discourages small farmers to invest and request a bank credit. Moreover, the loan with interest is sometimes presented (especially in rural areas of Morocco) as '*haram*' (illicit). But their disinterest is also related to peasant logic. A small farmer from Ezzahra states: "*I did not use a bank credit after the decision of the king Mohamed VI to cancel our debt. Taking a loan means that you don't work for yourself, but for the bank. I prefer to work with less surface area rather than being exhausted to work on a large surface area with the money of the bank.*" This is the reason why many farmers prefer the solution of an association of production, with a neighbor for instance, to divide the cost of investment. Informal credit (interest-free) is however a solution largely adopted (in 5 cases out of 9 in Iqaddar and in 5 cases out of 13 in Ezzahra).

In Iqaddar, because the cancellation of debt did not occur and because the proportion of new investors coming generally from the city is more important than in Ezzahra, resorting to formal credit is more frequent. These new investors directly benefit from the credit policy of the Moroccan State, since they generally exploit large farms (55 ha as an average for the new investors, compared to 5 ha as an average for family farmers) and because the minimum size of the farms required to benefit from this credit policy is 5 ha... To put it in a nutshell, the new agricultural policy implemented by the Moroccan State, through the 'Green Morocco Plan' can be summarized with the famous slogan: "Big is beautiful"!

The functioning of the farms also reflects an evolution in the modes of farming. Historically, cooperative members have witnessed a similar trend in the two cooperatives concerning the evolution of rain-fed and irrigated total areas. Groundwater access (through wells) first developed slowly and assignees were able to apprehend and develop progressively irrigated agriculture. Groundwater access (through tube-wells) then accelerated from 2006 onwards with the arrival of the investors. The rain-fed surface area has decreased from 1995 to 2009 in both cooperatives. Since 2009 however, there is stagnation of these surface areas. This change in the access to water, coupled with the possibility to rent or sell land, has also generated a change in crop rotation and in the varieties grown in the area. If cereals are still largely used by small farmers as rotational crops with legumes such as beans, the development of high value crops for horticulture (potatoes, onions) has developed in line with the evolution of irrigation and change of land status. In parallel, the planting of fruit trees and the development of orchards has been observed in the past decades.

Concerning the wage-labor used in both cooperatives, all the farmers interviewed hire seasonal workers, during specific periods. However, a distinction can be made since the former assignees continue to employ family workforce, whereas larger farms hire a wage-labor force, especially since the landowners are generally absent from the farm. This mechanism causes a number of interactions between the different farming modes, as a lot of young men and women, descendants of the former assignees, work on the large farms, thus observing and practicing new forms of agriculture.

In the area of seeds provision and agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pesticides), most of the small/family farmers produce themselves their seeds and use natural fertilizers but none of the farmers we met are only relying on self-production – they have a clear link with the seeds and agricultural inputs markets. In larger farms, however, the wide majority of the farmers we met (almost) exclusively buy their seeds and agricultural inputs. This situation clearly shows a strict distinction between the peasant and entrepreneurial modes of farming.

Farmers also develop a different relation to land, water and especially groundwater access. Whereas small family farmers generally continue to rely on rain-fed agriculture with only a small portion of their land which is irrigated, larger farms cover the majority of their cultivated surface area with irrigation (especially drip irrigation). Irrigation has been highly subsidized during the past ten years by the Moroccan government, but the property rights over the lands must be clearly established to obtain the authorization to drill a tube-well and the family farmers often do not have the means to finance the associated costs (equipped tube-well, drip irrigation, high cost inputs). In this context, small farmers who have not been able to obtain the formal property rights over the land they cultivate (especially in the case of Iqaddar) cannot obtain the authorization to

drill a tube-well and benefit from the subsidy for the development of drip irrigation. Thus, it is possible to identify a two-tiered system: large farms, cultivating high added-valued crops and able to plant orchards, have a comfortable groundwater access and benefit from subsidies to convert their farm to drip irrigation; whereas most of the small and family farms are still in a peasant mode of farming, cultivating rain-fed crops without the possibility to benefit from the subsidies of the Moroccan government. Of course, as will be later shown, this contrasted picture does not exactly illustrate all the spectrum of the farming practices which can be observed, since in many cases, a process of hybridization occurs.

In terms of the marketing all the farmers we met in Ezzahra and Iqaddar confirmed that in 2009-2010, with the massive arrival of investors in both cooperatives, the price of onion seeds has substantially increased and this situation has generated the development of onion seed beds. *"The buyers were often civil servants who didn't know anything about agriculture. They all bought the seeds at high prices. I couldn't afford to pay this price, then I decided to replant onions, just like my neighbors did. The following year, a lessee proposed me to buy a portion of my seed bed. I then decided to start planting more seed beds to sell the seeds."* Mohammed, small farmer in Iqaddar.

This situation can help us to understand the evolution of marketing practices between the farmers in the cooperatives – depending on their status and knowledge in agriculture – and the role played by economic factors – such as the seeds price - in the development of the marketing practices. At the same time, as mentioned by Mohammed during our interview, there is clearly an imitation process which is operating in the development of seed beds and in the marketing processes.

The quotation above is also interesting in relation to the importance of informational factors. Channels of information are often difficult to circumscribe, since they can hardly be observable, except if you have a regular and repeated communication with the various actors. Our study of the farming practices and logics in Iqaddar and Ezzahra has benefited from long and repeated interactions with farmers, but also with local merchants (providers of agricultural inputs, materials, etc.). One figure is especially interesting to mention in this network of actors operating in the Saiss region: the brokers. Brokers are often people with multiple activities (taxi driver and farmer; local merchant and farmer, for instance). They act as nodal points or intermediaries in the groundwater economy, collecting information all along their activities and developing their businesses thanks to their deep knowledge of the places, actors, legislations, opportunities of subsidies, etc. Family farmers who generally work in their fields are less connected with brokers, since these brokers usually stay in the small towns of the region where the economic activity of the groundwater economy is especially developing (El Hajeb, Ain Taoujdate for instance). On the contrary, investors and managers of larger farms have more time to spend in town and they also benefit from continuous interactions with these brokers. Information is really crucial to succeed in agriculture in this groundwater economy.

### 2.3 The underlying logics of farmers

Farmers logics, as mentioned above, are much more complex to grasp. However, in-depth interviews with the farmers (assignees, lessees) and land investors can help to understand the main elements which can influence the logics behind the various modes of farming. These elements can be identified when questioning these actors on their future projects. According to our understanding of farmers' logics, these elements deal basically with (1) the logic of capital use, (2), the relationship to the land, (3) the capacity to expand the size of the farm (inside and outside of the cooperative), and finally (4), the farm organization.

In the case of family farmers, the profits associated with production are mostly dedicated to satisfy family needs and to related projects. Entrepreneurs, on the contrary, use the profits associated with production as a primary source of productive investment, which represent a strategy of intensification and development of the farm. The way farmers project themselves in the future is a good indicator of their intrinsic logic.

Another important dividing line between the peasant and entrepreneurial logics holds in the relationship established between farmers and the land they cultivate. Assignees and their families, generally have a very strong relationship with the land, since the land ownership has been very hard to obtain. They have come a long way, from being laborers to family farmers. However, attachment to the land has a different meaning in Ezzahra and Iqaddar. In Ezzahra, attachment to the land is more deeply rooted for assignees and their families (especially assignees' sons) than in Iqaddar. In Ezzahra, the sons of 3 assignees only (out of 13) have stated their readiness to sell (part of) their lands<sup>9</sup>. As reported by Hichem, heir of an assignee *"Why should I sell my land? If I sell what allows me to live, what should I do with this money? I'm a farmer, I know how to grow crops and take care of my livestock. Doing another job could be a pleasant activity but I don't know what I could leave to my children afterwards. Shame on those who sell their lands to buy a car and don't do anything intelligent with this money. The land sustains us, I will never sell it, except if the life of my children is at stake"*. In Iqaddar, the price of the lands has grown very quickly in the past ten years and assignees have been more tempted to sell their lands to investors. Lessees and investors have of course a completely different relationship with the land they cultivate. Lessees are sometimes only looking for short-term incomes. They take out the riches of the land without any consideration for soil deterioration or pollution. Investors generally do not cultivate themselves their lands but they hire a manager who is in charge to develop irrigated intensive farming.

The differences identified in the relationship to land and in the capacity to mobilize the profits associated with production also explain the contrasted trends concerning the capacity to expand the size of the farm. Since most peasant modes of farming do not generate enough profit to buy new lands, family farmers generally prefer the solution of a local production

<sup>9</sup> However, none of them was working effectively on their lands.

association or to rent a parcel to a neighbor. In contrast, lessees coming from outside of the cooperative and new land owners investors do not only cultivate and grow up crops in one location, but have several parcels disseminated in the Saïss region. This strategy is explicitly considered, since the very beginning, as a model of expansion and intensification, coupled with the use of technologies aiming at generating short-term profits.

The last distinctive element identified in our study area concerning farmers logics is based on the structural organization of the farms. As already mentioned, assignees rely most of the time on their own families as a workforce. The patriarchal organization mode of farming is also connected with inheritance issues. The sons of the assignees share the work in the farm, in relation with their own future interest in the farm production. In the majority of the cases, family farms mode of organization is based on a strict division of labor. The father is the central decision-maker, even if he is no longer able to work for reasons of age or disability. The sons work in the fields and take care of livestock breeding. In Iqaddar, an unusual situation was observed, since the decision-making process is in the hands of the father and the oldest son. The latter has invested a large part of his savings in the farm and has been able to renegotiate his status in the decision-making process. Another interesting situation occurred on a family farm in Ezzahra, where the youngest son has developed new production techniques (drip irrigation) and has negotiated with his father and with his six older brothers a contract enabling him to obtain 25% of the net profit of the farm. However, beyond these specific cases, it is interesting to mention that in most cases, the decisional weight of the father is decreasing with the ability to work effectively in the fields. In several cases, informal association with neighbors has been observed, without knowledge and consent of the father. In this patriarchal mode of organization, gender inequalities are obvious. However, mothers sometimes play a hidden role as reported in another cooperative of the same area (Ait Ali) by Bossenbroek and Zwartveen (2015). The attraction to an entrepreneurial mode of farming is however generating, according to the same authors, a 'professionalization' of farming *"with farming identities increasingly becoming reserved for, and actively taken up by, some ambitious young male farmers whose fathers or mothers used to be members of the state cooperative. Their positive appreciation of the opportunities offered by mechanization, higher value crops and drip irrigation is based on- labelling of these changes as 'new' and 'modern'. They mark a new era, and allow male youngsters to positively distinguish themselves from their old-fashioned 'peasant' parents, and to become new, clean and entrepreneurial farmers."* Bossenbroek and Zwartveen (2015: 163).

In contrast with this patriarchal mode of farming, the organization of production in large farms owned by private investors is different. These private investors do not generally have the knowledge to conduct their farms and in most cases, when they arrived in the late 2000 in Ezzahra, but probably more often in Iqaddar, they searched for an association with the assignees who were already cultivating the lands since 20 or 30 years of time. The private investors – most of them working as civil servants – sought to maximize their investment and oriented their farm towards arboriculture, primarily plums or apples, considered as high-value crops. Their association with small farmers was considered as an opportunity to develop projects, based on the mastery of agriculture – and especially horticulture – of these small farmers. However, the concentration of investors developing horticulture in the same area of production and their lack of knowledge of the marketing processes generated financial worries according to five testimonies gathered in Iqaddar during our fieldwork. This situation helps us to stress the high dependence of the new investors on a variety of local actors who can have a crucial role from an organizational point of view.

### **3. Discussion and conclusion - New peasantries? Hybridization in peasant and entrepreneurial practices and logics**

The understanding of peasant and entrepreneurial logics and practices, based on the fieldworks conducted in 2013 and 2014 in Ezzahra and Iqaddar and presented above, is only partial if we consider these two modes of farming as hermetic. The porosity of the worlds, idealized in our presentation following the methodology we chose to adopt, is the main lesson we can draw from our study. What happens in reality is a subtle process of hybridization between the peasant and entrepreneurial modes of farming, with a wide range of profiles, ranging from a pure 'peasant', to a pure 'entrepreneur' and integrating, in between, the figures of the peasant-entrepreneur and of the entrepreneur-peasant.

The figure of the entrepreneur, as idealized by the Moroccan agricultural policy (Green Morocco Plan of 2008) seems to operate as a powerful and strange magnet to small farmers, especially young men, who continue to develop their activities in a structure and organizational mode of farming inherited from their ancestors (the Peasant mode of farming), but try, on a trial and error basis, to progressively integrate the knowledge, techniques and innovations developed in the entrepreneurial mode of farming. However, this world of entrepreneurship is not really 'their' world, and many resistances continue to operate in the way they conduct their farms. This is the reason why, many small farmers accept to rent (part of) their lands but refuse to sell. Selling their lands would mean turning away from agriculture to develop another economic activity. Several farmers we met in Iqaddar and Ezzahra returned from their brief attempt to develop a new mode of farming. Indebted and unable to continue on the trend of 'modern' agriculture, they decided to renew their livestock – considered traditionally as the best savings method. But there are also several examples of success. For instance, one of the families decided to start to irrigate his lands in the late 1990's, only for horticulture. They currently generate profit and have adopted the techniques of the entrepreneurial mode of farming. However, the organizational structure of the farm is still embedded in the family.

If we only focus on the political discourse in the field of agriculture, the trend in the development of new modes of farming seems inescapable. Our study stresses the persistence and resistance of practices and logics of ancestral modes of farming which can mix with a 'modern' vision of agriculture. However, in several cases, the siren songs of



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entrepreneurship can lead to bankruptcy, an exit from agriculture, which could also have a strong impact on the social cohesion of the Moroccan society, particularly in rural areas such as the one we have studied.

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