

Submitted Abstract

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Abstract

As Lebanon has plunged in the duo-crisis of its financial meltdown that coincided with the spread of COVID-19 almost 2 years ago, the country has witnessed wide array of behavioural changes in the multiple facets of its society. Lebanon is the home of “Supermarketization”; post-civil war developmental strategy aimed at countering hunger by saturating the country with an excess of supermarkets by using them as liquidation channels to the flooding imports. Those strategies contributed in deteriorating the existence of local food production and destabilizing the livelihood of rural fabrics. The Alternative Food Network in Lebanon has since then struggled to make any impact on society, let alone on the GDP, except for some niche communities who can afford adopting the ethical consumerism lifestyle. By 2021, the rate of urbanization has hit 89.1% leading to the desertification of rural areas (mostly mountains), and that historical rural neglect became one of the major pillars that contributed to the downfall of October 2019.

This study aims at exploring the processes adopted by individuals and groups in rural areas, as their perception and behaviours changed within the crisis, notably in the sectors of agriculture and agro-processing food. Keeping in mind that lockdowns and worsening financial situation as the broad struggles, the research aims at exploring the drivers on a more micro level, and compare it between several types of groups (communities), and several types of producers whom each belong to a specified food category in the Lebanese Alternative Food Network. After retrieving the drivers, the research analyses the measures of adaptation that were taken to survive, while exploring the social innovations that were used in the process.

The sample consists of several rural small scale producers from different geographical areas, all working in different crafts that belong to the Lebanese Alternative Food Network. As the retrieval of information took place via semi-structured interviews; the analysis follows the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) to understand the level of impact that those social innovations have made in a holistic manner. The SLA uses the chocks and trends to understand the impact on the human, natural, financial, social and physical capital of studied samples, and allows the researcher to retrieve the needed livelihood outcomes that were influenced by the shift in paradigm.

The expected result is the description of an emerging ‘New Rurality’ that involves civil society actors, private sector, rural small scale producers, grass-root initiatives and cooperatives.