

## Perception as a key component in the development of fire affected land in Eastern Spain. El Massís del Caroig study case

Artemi Cerdà (1), Paulo Pereira (2), Manuel Estaban Lucas Borja (3), Saskia Keesstra (4), Xavier Úbeda (5), Juan Francisco Martínez Murillo (6), Miriam Muñoz Rojas (7), Marc Oliva (8), and Agata Novara (9)

(1) Soil Erosion and Degradation Research Group, University of Valencia, Department of Geography. Valencia, Spain. [artemio.cerda@uv.es](mailto:artemio.cerda@uv.es), (2) Environmental Management Centre, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania, (3) Department of Genetics and Agroforestry Science and Technology, Univ. of Castilla-La Mancha, Spain, (4) Soil Physics and Land Management Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands, (5) GRAM (Grup de Recerca Ambiental Mediterrània) Universitat de Barcelona, Spain, (6) Instituto de Geomorfología y Suelos, University of Málaga, 29071, Málaga, Spain, (7) School of Plant Biology, The University of Western Australia, Australia, (8) Institute of Geography & Spatial Planning – CEG, Universidad de Lisboa, Portugal, (9) Dipartimento di Scienze Agrarie e Forestali, Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy

Land Degradation needs biophysical and socioeconomic research approaches to understand the processes that alter the natural ecosystems by the human societies. Both approaches are relevant also to achieve the development of the societies and reach the sustainability of the land management (Escadafal et al., 2015; Jafari and Bakhshandehmehr, 2016). The opinion of the citizens, their perception of the land degradation and the chances we have to build more sustainable management and societies is less researched than other topics such as soil erosion, climate change, water contamination or loss of biodiversity (Francos et al., 2016; Keesstra et al., 2016; Martínez Murillo et al., 2016; Muñoz Rojas et al., 2016; Ruiz-Fernández et al., 2016; ). Forest fires are part of the Earth System since the plant colonization of the continents, fire is present in all the human societies and fire contributed to shape ecosystems. However, a negative opinion about the fire is found in many modern societies (Marques et al., 2015; Assefa and Hans-Rudolf, 2016; Orchard et al., 2016; Pereira et al., 2016). Forest fires are not a new issue in the Mediterranean due to the traditional use for grazing, agriculture or hunting, but the wildfires are generalized since the abandonment of the land in the last century. The loss of rural population and the mechanisation resulted in a vegetation recovery that triggered large wildfires in the whole North Mediterranean since the 1970's. The perception of the forest fires by the citizens is very negative in El Massís del Caroig. Since 2012 until 2015 a questionnaire was applied to 188 stakeholders in the region and the results demonstrate that the prescribed fires are negative for any group of the society and they reject the use of prescribed fires. Fire is seen as a problem.

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