



# What does a territorial perspective contribute to wildfire resilience?

Carmen Rodríguez, PyroLife ESR



## CONTEXT

Wildfires are increasingly being recognised as a complex socio-ecological phenomenon. However, we often deal with them as linear cause-effect events. Carmen Rodríguez's research builds upon the idea that to build resilience in fire-prone territories, it is essential to acknowledge that wildfire risk coexists, and is shaped by, a myriad of socio-ecological elements. By engaging with critical socio-spatial sciences, she conceptualises fire-prone territories as the outcome of negotiations among diverging visions held by actors with unequal decision-making power, and the interactions of these with the biophysical environment, co-evolving with fire regimes over space and time. Consequently, wildfires are framed as a territorial problem, instead of merely as biophysical event. In order to understand what this means, Carmen zooms into Valencia, Spain, to understand how these socio-spatial ramifications relate to resilience building.

## OUTCOMES



Abandoned agricultural land in Aras de los Olmos (Valencia, Spain).

Mediterranean fire-prone territories are shaped by socio-spatial dynamics such as territorial planning, economic development, demographic fluxes, and land tenure. These, in turn, are directly shaping wildfire risk. Some elements that underlie the resilience-building process in Mediterranean Europe are:

- Worldviews held by rural inhabitants are largely underrepresented in public policies, which enhances territorial inequalities.
- Wildfire impacts in rural areas are increasingly being identified as a symptom of the neglect of these areas by the public administration, which tends to prioritise densely populated areas (cities). Rural areas and cities happen to be opposite poles of wealth, power and knowledge.
- There is a remarkable disconnection across actors operating in the same geographical spaces. E.g. wildfire researchers and practitioners share very few spaces with those dedicated to rural development and/or food sovereignty and agriculture, which hinders innovation and resilience.

## IMPACT ON WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

- Any wildfire management choice will entail trade-offs. Whereas this cannot be avoided, priorities must be established by society as a whole.
- It is essential to connect wildfire management to broader questions of socioeconomic development, markets and demographic fluxes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Advance governance frameworks that better bridge the rural-urban gap, and do not reproduce spatial inequalities.
- Create the conditions to facilitate collaboration across organisations. Excessive bureaucracy decreases the resilience of the system.

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Collaborators



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