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LAND, RIGHTS, AND THE PRACTICE OF MAKING A LIVING IN PRE-SAHARAN MOROCCO

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LAND, RIGHTS, AND THE PRACTICE OF
MAKING A LIVING IN PRE-SAHARAN MOROCCO

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By
Karen Eugenie Rignall

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Lisa Cliggett, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Lexington, Kentucky

2012

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

LAND, RIGHTS, AND THE PRACTICE OF MAKING A LIVING IN PRE-SAHARAN MOROCCO

This dissertation explores the relationship between land tenure and livelihoods in pre-Saharan Morocco as an ethical struggle over subsistence rights and the definition of community. Research in an oasis valley of southern Morocco indicated how changing land use practices framed contestations over community, political authority, and social hierarchies. The dissertation specifically examines the extension of settlement and cultivation from the oasis into the arid steppe. The research methodology contextualizes household decision-making around land use and livelihood strategies within the framework of land tenure regimes and other regional, national, and global processes. Households with the resources and prestige to navigate customary tenure regimes in their favor used these institutions to facilitate land acquisition and investments in commercial agricultural production. Rather than push for capitalist land markets, they invoked a discourse of communalism in support of customary regimes. In contrast, marginalized families without access to land mobilized to divide collective lands and secure individual freehold tenure. This complicates a prominent critique in agrarian studies that privatization signals the immersion of peripheral lands into neoliberal tenure regimes. The research shows that in southern Morocco, resistance to communal tenure regimes favoring elites was rooted in a discourse of subsistence rights and ethical claims to membership in a just community rather than a simple acquiescence to the power of neoliberal property relations. The dissertation therefore explores the shifting fault lines of social differentiation and the political and cultural embeddedness of land in processes of "repeasantization," the resurgence of rural peasantries in the context of the growing industrialization of global food production. The research draws on cultural anthropology, geography, and political economy to explore an understudied issue in the anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa: the economic and environmental dimensions of agrarian livelihoods and rural social dynamics from a critical theoretical perspective.

KEYWORDS: Land Tenure, Middle East and North Africa, Agrarian Change, Rural Livelihoods, Political Ecology

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
Chapter 1--Introduction and theoretical framework	1
Overview of the argument	6
Theoretical framework of the dissertation: a political ecology of land use change.....	9
A political economy perspective on land use change	18
The institutional dimensions of agrarian change	22
Dissertation overview	25
Chapter II--Research site and methods	31
Local histories: situating el Harte, Rbat/Imzilne, and el Bour.....	36
Research methods	47
Working with households: the organization of domestic life	60
Chapter III--The Mgoun Valley in context.....	65
Ethnographic perspectives on marginality in Mgoun	67
The not-so-secret prison and the new state of proximity	71
Mapping poverty in Morocco	75
Useful and useless agriculture	79
Agriculture and the state in Mgoun	85
Chapter IV--Customary institutions and the social life of rural capitalism in Mgoun.....	93
Situating the private and the collective in a rural tenure regime	98
The rise of commercial agriculture, exchange values in land, and the mediation of custom	105
The ambivalence of communality in el Harte's diverse economy	116
Chapter V--Land use change the new spatiality of livelihoods	124
Where the oasis ends and the steppe begins: the cultural construction of boundaries	127
Rooting new forms of mobility in the steppe: land extensions as livelihood transformation.....	133
Understanding diversity through an analysis of differentiation: case studies.....	147
Understanding wealth dynamics in the context of land use change	162
Chapter VI--The practice of agriculture and peasantization in Mgoun	168
Spatial dimensions of peasantization.....	174
Farming systems in the era of migration	180
Risk management through time	184
Spatial dimensions of farm management.....	187

Integration in oasis farming.....	190
What makes this agriculture commercial?.....	192
Profit in the margins	196
Moving in and out of the market	198
Patterns of differentiation in agriculture.....	203
Furtive home-building and everyday struggles over land	214
Competing enclosures and the right to subsistence	216
Enclosure: redefining community or a last bulwark against neoliberal tenure?.....	226
Chapter VIII--Conclusion	232
A regional political ecology linking land, rights, and livelihoods.....	236
An institutional perspective: customary tenure regimes and rural capitalism in Mgoun	237
Household livelihood strategies and land use change	238
The practice of agriculture and repeasantization	240
Collective action and competing enclosures in Mgoun.....	241
Policy perspectives on livelihoods and land use change	242
APPENDIX A: NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION.....	246
APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	247
BIBLIOGRAPHY	248
VITA.....	264

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Summary of case study household characteristics	55
Table 3.1: The five main agro-systems in Morocco: area, land ownership, and population .	79
Table 3.2: Evolution of tenure status in hectares and by percentage of total arable land, all Morocco	83
Table 3.3: Distribution of total land area of Morocco by legal status	84
Table 4.1: Distribution of land ownership in the village of el Harte, 2010	119
Table 5.1: Cultivated area in the Mgoun service region according to juridical status of land.	130
Table 5.2: Surface area of irrigated agricultural land in UNDP project area	132
Table 5.3: Key characteristics of case studies.....	149
Table 6.1: Annual rainfall, Kelaa Mgouna weather station, 1990-2009	177
Table 6.2 Grain production, Kelaa Mgouna service area, 1990-2006	177
Table 6.3: Vegetable production, selected crops, Kelaa Mgouna service area, 1990-2009	178
Table 6.4: Number of trees, selected tree crops, Kelaa Mgouna service area, 1990-2009	178
Table 6.5: Tree crop production, Kelaa Mgoun service area, 1990-2009	179
Table 6.6: Abdallah's household agricultural production and income, 2009-2010 season.....	197

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Map of Morocco and study area	3
Figure 2.1: Aerial view of the Mgoun and Dadès Valleys	32
Figure 2.2: Map of el Harte	37
Figure 2.3: Map of Rbat and Imzilne	42
Figure 3.1: Map of Kelaa Mgouna.....	68
Figure 5.1: Aerial view of the lower Mgoun Valley	129

Chapter 1--Introduction and theoretical framework

This dissertation is about how people use land to make a living in a pre-Saharan oasis valley of southern Morocco. I explore the social and economic context for land use change to trace recent transformations in the role of land in people's livelihood strategies. Drawing on a tradition in political ecology that examines agrarian nature/society interactions through the lens of the "actual historical relations of socially differentiated land use practices," I use differentiation as a starting point for analyzing the ways people secured access to productive resources and then integrated those resources into their overall livelihood strategies (Fairhead and Leach 1996: 10). In the Mgoun valley of southern Morocco, labor migration led a series of economic and social transformations that over the last half-century reconfigured the ways people acquired and used land. Tracing changes in land use practices sheds light on the kinds of livelihood possibilities available to people with different resource endowments, and on how the institutions governing access to productive resources influenced those possibilities. By looking at the land, we can also observe how differentiation ramified throughout social life in the valley. That is because in Mgoun, as in so many places around the world, the importance of land as a capital asset derived from its direct economic uses and its cultural meaning as a currency for social influence.

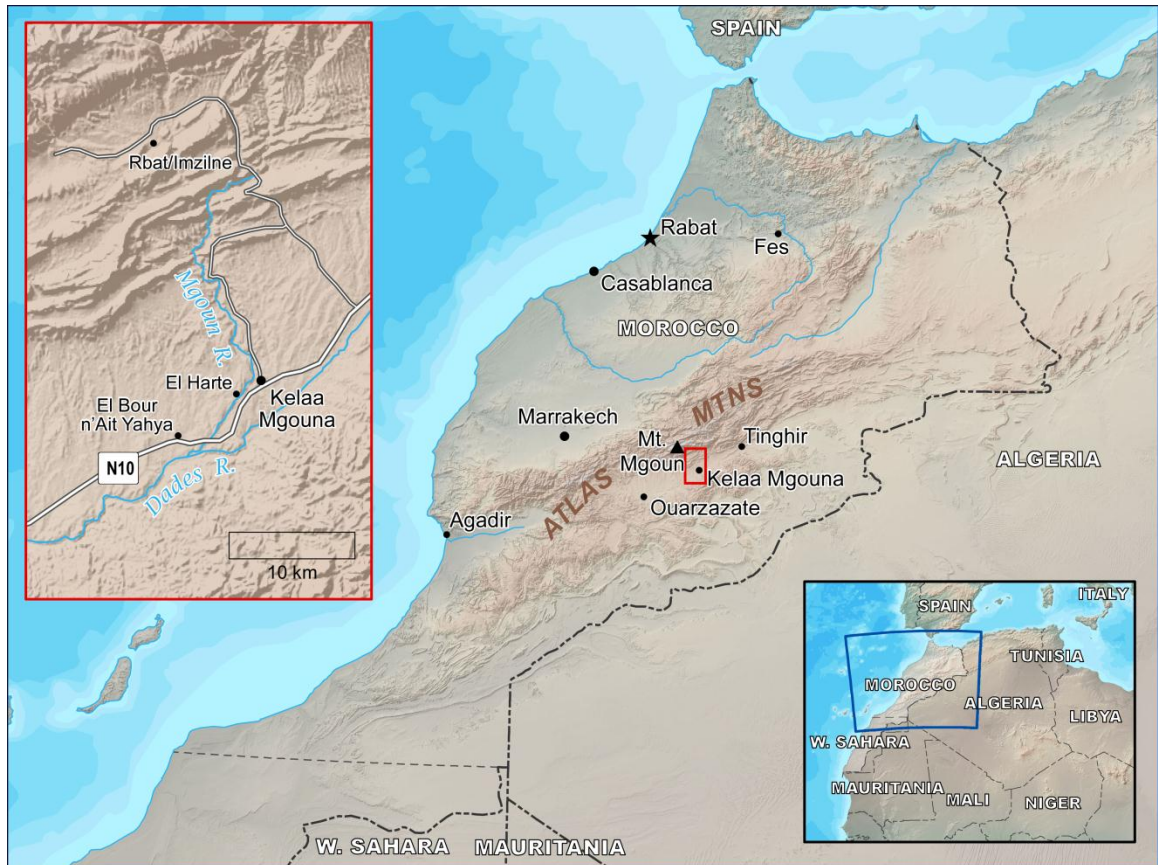
Throughout the economic and social transformations of the last half-century, land played an increasingly important role in people's livelihoods and political subjectivities. My research shows that rather than receding in importance as migration remittances and livelihood diversification restructured the regional economy, land became a key site of contestation over the definition of community, political authority, and social hierarchy. These land conflicts, from collective land occupations to the nearly imperceptible adjustment of boundaries between fields, constituted an ethical struggle over subsistence rights. People in Mgoun creatively refashioned their relationship to the land and to their homeland (*tamazirt*) through the often contentious process of redefining how a community should provide for its members. While I use land conflict as one entrée into this process, relying on conflict as the only or even primary analytic framework

limits our understanding of the mutually constitutive relationship between social conditions and natural resource management. People's everyday experiences of making a living--the mundane practices of farming and building, working and transforming the land--illustrate the spatial and temporal diversity of how resource access, use, and control constrain people's livelihood possibilities. I use ethnography to explore what the land tells us about social life in Mgoun, and in turn, how social transformations are inscribed in the landscape.

The central questions driving my research were *how do households access productive resources, particularly land, and what are the implications of their strategies for the access rights and livelihood opportunities of others?* Framing my research in terms of the institutional and social determinants of resource access use directed me away from an exclusive focus on environmental constraints. Focusing on the environment would be appropriate in the arid steppe of the Mgoun valley where water appeared to be the limiting factor for land use. However, the fluidity of boundaries between different categories of land, especially rangeland and the intensively cultivated oases, indicated the extent to which the social construction of natural categories mediated the relationship between environmental constraints and land use. Rather than take the ecological conditions of the valley and the steppe as external givens, people worked with or manipulated those conditions to forge creative ways of using the land. But this creativity was not unbounded. Differentiation shaped the institutional and social context of natural resource management in two fundamental ways.

First, the region was politically and economically marginalized. History had placed it in the symbolic as well as geographic periphery of the Moroccan sultanate and subsequently, the modern state. It remains one of the poorest areas of Morocco, a country whose middle income status obscures the gaping income inequalities and entrenched marginalization of the rural periphery. But there is nothing necessary about this marginalization. Historically, extensive pastoralism has been very productive in the pre-Saharan steppe and the region played an

Figure 1.1: Map of Morocco and study area



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important role in the lucrative trans-Saharan trade over centuries, indicating the extent to which marginality here was socially produced, not an environmental given. Second, differentiation shaped resource management through long-standing social hierarchies within and across communities in the valley, hierarchies that determined resource access and use. Historically, the dominant free, white Berbers (*Imazighen*) had indentured black populations, also Berber speaking, through sharecropping arrangements.¹ Excluded through these customary arrangements from owning land, subjugated populations were also excluded from political participation. Customary governance here was democratic in the sense that leaders were chosen through consensus, but only male landowners held the right to vote. Over the past five decades, these

¹ The terms often used to denote these groups (*haratin*, *isouqiyyin*, or *iqbliyyin*) are generally considered pejorative, especially by the groups themselves. I therefore avoid usage throughout the dissertation, referring instead to "black" populations in an attempt to use a descriptive term that does not have a politically charged local meaning.

hierarchies have been disrupted and the struggle over which kinds of differentiation should prevail now is a dominant theme of this dissertation.

I explore the relationship between land and livelihoods through an ethnography of three communities in the Mgoun valley. Extended case studies allowed an in-depth analysis of how households negotiated their individual circumstances to craft diverse livelihood portfolios in the context of a larger regional drama about land, power, and community. This larger drama constituted the principal question that I went to Mgoun to understand: despite endemic poverty and recurrent drought, the region was experiencing something of an agricultural renaissance. Livelihood diversification through out-migration had sparked new kinds of investment in agriculture, as people expanded cultivation into the range and introduced petty commodity production into oasis farming systems. I wanted to know *why*, when drought was always a threat and the risks were so high, people made long-term investments of capital and labor to bring new land under cultivation and to expand farming operations in the irrigated oases. A narrative emerged about the economic prospects of agriculture as a livelihood strategy, but this narrative was also about the significance of land--as a multivalent asset with economic, political, and cultural meanings. Furthermore, I wanted to know *how* people were expanding agriculture, both spatially into the steppe and economically as a component of their livelihood portfolios. Where did the capital come from and what kind of capital was it? What were the institutional arrangements or transformations that enabled this kind of land use change? And what was the role of markets in these new patterns of resource access and use? Was the commoditization of land a cause or effect of land use change, or was commoditization even happening at all? Did markets for land necessarily accompany the emergence of markets for agricultural production?

These were important questions for explaining the agrarian transformations under way, but a drive along the national road that cut across the Mgoun valley offered striking visual evidence that rangeland conversion was not a purely agrarian issue. Communities with adequate water and land had extended cultivation into the steppe, but their fields seemed crowded out by

the sprawling expanse of adobe and cement domestic compounds, gas stations, and tourist cafés that stretched out from the only artery linking Mgoun to the rest of Morocco. In addition to the out-migration that took men to coal mines in Europe and construction sites in urban Morocco, the region was being transformed by immigration from the Atlas Mountains that dominated the northern horizon. People forced from transhumant pastoralism by drought, or otherwise escaping poor livelihood prospects in the mountains, were settling in the steppe to gain easier access to wage labor in the cities. They did not move to the steppe to farm but to build housing. Rangeland conversion, then, was not only about the expansion of agriculture but reflected changing regional dynamics around livelihoods and land use. Agriculture was contracting in the mountains, fueling settlement in the steppe, just as oasis communities in the steppe began experimenting with the new viability of commercial agriculture. The fact that some were abandoning agriculture while others deepened their commitment to it indicates the extent to which shifting patterns of vulnerability and marginalization influenced the direction of land use change. Differential access to productive resources led households along divergent pathways in terms of the ways they could imagine using land to secure their families' well-being.

Historically, scholars interested in tribes, nomads, and oases have understood patterns of resource use in the steppe of the Middle East as a complementarity between oasis agriculturalists and herders (Asad 1979, Chatty 2006, Fabietti and Salzman 1996, Marx 1977, Nelson 1974, Salzman 1971). In Morocco, the functionalism of this model and of segmentary theories of rural social formations obscured historical disjunctures, especially those wrought by colonial policies, as well as the contestation around diverse land uses and governance institutions (Gellner 1969, Hammoudi 1980, Hart 1981, Munson 1993). Few emphasize continuity or functional complementarity as defining features of rural Moroccan society anymore. In places like the Mgoun valley, labor migration, the contraction of extensive pastoralism, agricultural expansion, and the extension of settlement into the steppe over the past half-century have transformed the landscape in a literal and metaphoric sense.

The spatial expansion of agriculture therefore unfolded as part of a larger transformation of livelihoods and settlement patterns across the oasis and the steppe, from the mountain plateaus down to the lower reaches of the valley. People themselves understood expanded cultivation in regional terms, in part because they did not define categories of land use using purely ecological criteria but rather according to the tenure system governing the land. Environmental conditions inextricably linked up with the institutional and social regimes governing land: while people were acutely aware of ecological constraints, they did not define oasis and steppe simply as areas with or without irrigation water. Farmers could change the course of irrigation canals and sink wells to bring land that was "dead" (*mayt*) into production, when, of course, the rains feeding the Mgoun River permitted. People viewed the patchwork of fields they farmed across different spatial categories chiefly in terms of what resource access rules applied, the kind of agriculture they practiced on the land, and how well that land provided for their family whatever use it was put towards. Land indexed membership in the community and formed the basis for people's right to subsistence, even if wage labor constituted the largest single portion of their livelihood portfolio. Land also represented a form of social insurance that extended across space and time, offering a store of wealth and embodying social networks that could be activated in times of need. In this context, I was interested in how new lands were *integrated into* oasis farming systems with their complex tenure and governance regimes rather than simply *appended to* oases as a wholly new phenomenon subject to a different economic or social logic. I therefore conducted a holistic ethnographic study of land, farming, and livelihoods across different land use categories along the Mgoun valley.

Overview of the argument

In this dissertation, I examine the role of land in people's economic and social lives using two analytic frames: 1) the ways institutions govern resource access and control, and 2) how households integrate land into their livelihood strategies. In order to understand the constraints on people's livelihood strategies or land use decisions, I explore the patterns of inclusion and

exclusion embedded in land tenure regimes. I understand these regimes broadly not only as a set of rules governing access to land but as institutions that define how communities are created and recreated over time. A long tradition of anthropological scholarship--and social theory generally--has emphasized how property embodies social relations. In both social and juridical terms, property expresses what it means to be a person and what kinds of authority should govern how people relate to one another.² As Marx noted, "an isolated individual could no more possess property in land than he could speak" (Marx 1857-1858). The complex tenure regimes of southern Morocco revealed a history of resource access that still framed the contemporary meanings and uses of land in Mgoun.

However, the striking diversity of people's livelihood strategies within individual communities and across the Mgoun valley as a whole also underscored the contingencies of land tenure regimes. Focusing on households enabled me to examine the various ways institutions influenced how people used land as an asset. While sharecropping as an institution of racialized inequality had sedimented hierarchical relations in Mgoun over the centuries, its durability was irrevocably shaken in the latter half of the twentieth century. Social and economic transformation enabled people to seize on the contingencies in these sedimented relations to either modify them or disrupt them entirely. By tracing individual households' experiences with such transformations, I shed light on the role land played in setting some households on a pathway to upward mobility and locking others in a situation of chronic poverty. In the process, new patterns of inequality became inscribed in tenure institutions and the land those institutions governed.

My research showed that customary tenure regimes were central to processes of "repeasantization" taking place in Mgoun (van der Ploeg 2008). The surge in agricultural investment and commercial agricultural production that I documented represented a search for

² While the literature tracing this conception of property is too large to cite here, recent syntheses of the anthropological scholarship on the subject indicate the continuing centrality of property as a theoretical and ethnographic concern (Benda-Beckmann et al. 2006, Hann 1998, Shipton 1994, Verdery and Humphrey 2004).

autonomy and a desire to "stay home" for many who had a long experience with migration. Whereas scholars usually describe the global phenomenon of repeasantization as the search for autonomy from markets through a renewed emphasis on non-market relations, I found that repeasantization in Mgoun involved both an active engagement with agricultural markets *and* a reliance on customary tenure regimes. The continued relevance of customary regimes stemmed from their historical flexibility as a governing framework for both communal and privately-held land. Households with the resources and prestige to negotiate customary tenure regimes in their favor used these institutions to facilitate land acquisition and investments in commercial agricultural production. Rather than push for capitalist land markets they invoked a discourse of communalism in support of customary regimes. In contrast, marginalized families without access to land mobilized to divide communal lands and secure individual freehold tenure. Despite these tensions, customary tenure regimes were becoming more, not less, important in communities experiencing agricultural growth. Customary institutions emerged as the primary regulators of an increasingly active land market. At the same time, they mediated the diverse institutions that governed land use and labor mobilization, preserving the open repertoire of a pluralist institutional environment rather than rationalizing markets for land and labor.

I argue that this pluralism was crucial to the emergence of commercial agriculture as a central livelihood strategy. For the first time, leading agricultural families were able to live primarily off of agricultural income in large part because they could negotiate both customary regimes and capitalist markets. In this environment, marginality came to mean the inability to farm or to use land productively. Whereas livelihood diversification had enabled some to invest in land as a productive resource, for those marginalized from the new agricultural economy, diversification represented a coping strategy that mitigated their inability to rely on farming. Through this complex story of inequality and opportunity, I present a North African case for reconceptualizing the relationship between customary tenure regimes, land markets, and

agriculture as a livelihood activity--as others have done for sub-Saharan Africa.³ In southern Morocco, customary regimes and land markets comprised hybrid institutional environments, encouraging the growth of a commercial agriculture that relied on non-market social relations and tenure regimes. However, the equity impacts were mixed. In a region marked by a long history of marginalization, these developments represented a creative search for autonomy, but they also generated new axes of inequality. Marginalization took on different forms, and land became a key site for contesting these evolving relations of domination.

Theoretical framework of the dissertation: a political ecology of land use change

Processes of land use change invariably link up with narratives about the causes and consequences of environmental change. In Morocco, the dominant environmental narratives circulating in Mgoun were caught up in larger discourses of deforestation and desertification. I analyze these narratives from the vantage point of political ecology, with its now established tradition of politicizing resource management by considering the social and economic conditions that inform environmental processes. Among the many critical threads of political ecology in the 1980s and 1990s was an effort to deconstruct the dominant narratives about deforestation and desertification in Africa. Scholars documented "how 'received wisdom' about environmental change obscures a plurality of other possible views, and often leads to misguided or even fundamentally flawed development policy in Africa" (Leach and Mearns 1996: 4). Through empirical assessments of soil degradation, land cover change, and the various processes influencing environmental change--from micro-level land use practices to the operation of global commodity markets--political ecologists have questioned the universalizing assumptions of land degradation claims. They trace the political interests at stake in blaming African smallholders or herders for environmental damage whether or not such damage is actually taking place (Bassett and Crummey 2003, Blaikie 1985, Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, Fairhead and Leach 1996 and

³ Some notable examples include Bassett and Crummey 1993, Chanock 1991, Chimhowu and Woodhouse 2006, Mamdani 1996, Peters 1994.

1998, Fairhead and Scoones 2005, Leach and Mearns 1996, Robbins 2004, Tiffen et al. 1994). The point of this body of work is not to refute the possibility of environmental degradation whole stock, but to disaggregate the narratives framing the wildly divergent estimates that 20--70% of arid lands show some level of desertification (Lambin and Geist 2006: 27-31). If we concede that there is not, to paraphrase Leach and Mearns, "just one, very big problem" of environmental degradation but "many small problems" of command over resources (3), then we concede that there is not one diagnosis, nor one policy solution for environmental degradation. This politicizes the standardized approaches of international donor institutions or national governments as narratives that can obscure the complex environmental, economic, and political processes at work.

Another strand of criticism of these dominant narratives emerged from new approaches in range ecology. This field is particularly relevant for southern Morocco, where extensive pastoralism has historically constituted the dominant land use. Ecologists have documented the fragility of arid environments: "drylands have a number of distinguishing ecological characteristics [namely, low levels of organic matter and low aggregate soil strength] that contribute to their susceptibility to disturbance and, ultimately, to desertification...both tillage and grazing by domesticated animals can have profound effects--in a very short time--on these soils" (Reynolds and Smith 2002: 9). They are also subject to wide climatic variability, with extreme fluctuations in rain and temperature over time and space. Over the past two decades range ecologists have interpreted this variability as evidence that dryland ecosystems are not equilibrium systems that naturally tend toward stable states in terms of vegetation cover or other ecological variables.

These theories of disequilibrium are now widely accepted. Scholars have broadly rejected static concepts of carrying capacity, holding instead that stochastic events and climatic variability have a greater impact on arid and semi-arid systems than grazing (Scoones 1994: 2). This has been used to contest assertions that pastoralism necessarily degrades rangelands, but the theory

does not then conclude that human activity has no impact on arid ecologies (Behnke et al. 1993). Rather, we need to examine the conjuncture of political, economic and social factors as well as environmental processes to understand the ecological dynamics of drylands (Little 1992 and 1994). The new theories of disequilibrium systems have also influenced the environmental and social sciences more broadly by questioning the political and epistemological implications of privileging equilibrium as the dominant analytic framework for understanding natural processes or human-environment interactions (Scoones 1999).

Just as political ecology sheds light on how master narratives become enshrined as scientific fact, critiques of neoliberalism have advanced our theoretical understanding of how these narratives assume specific form across time and space. It is not simply that global processes need to be contextualized in particular localities; this construction can result in a modality that "identifies a Northern 'culture of neoliberalism' that engenders Southern responses including occult economies [and] messianic movements" (Ong 2006: 12). Anna Tsing outlines an approach that breaks down the abstraction of universalizing narratives, in this case of global capital:

Universals and particulars come together to create the forms of capitalism in which we live. There is no point in studying fully discrete "capitalisms."
Capitalism only spreads as producers, distributors, and consumers strive to universalize categories of capital, money, and commodity fetishism. Such strivings make possible globe-crossing capital and commodity chains. Yet these chains are made up of uneven and awkward links. The cultural specificity of capitalist forms arises from the necessity of bringing capitalist universals into action through worldly encounters. [Tsing 2005:4]

Dominant environmental narratives work in the same way. In aspiring to universality, they run into the "friction," to use Tsing's guiding metaphor, of these "worldly encounters." Master narratives may run into diversity in their actualization, but they are also inherently contingent because of the diverse genealogies that constitute the narratives in the first place.

In Morocco, the dominant environmental narrative was not imported directly from multilateral donor institutions but emerged from early French colonial history. It began with the French invasion of Algeria in 1830: military officers, Orientalists, and other apologists for

colonial expropriation used purely literary sources to develop a story of previously lush lands despoiled over centuries by Arab nomads (Davis 2007: 4). In her definitive study, Diana Davis terms this "the French colonial environmental declensionist narrative, that is, a tale of environmental decline since what was presumed to have been the fertile and forested Roman period. This colonial narrative primarily blamed the pastoralists, especially nomadic pastoralists, and their 'ancestors,' the 'invading Arabs' of the eleventh century, for deforesting and desertifying North Africa" (Davis 2007: xii). Davis traces how French colonial policy and scholarship facilitated the dispossession of Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans. In the process, the declensionist narrative mutated from a romantic account into the authoritative language of an emerging ecological science. French scholars first used the term "desertification" to describe the Sahara in 1927, and, deploying spurious methods and literary sources, constructed potential vegetation maps to show that the entire region should have thick forest cover but was instead denuded and degrading even further (Davis 2007: 4). While the narrative began in Algeria, it reached its apogee in Morocco, the last French colonial acquisition in North Africa when the Protectorate was established in 1912. Davis details how the difficulty of conquering restive mountain and desert regions led to particularly draconian forest and range management policies. As scholars have noted for other colonial contexts, repression and dispossession were often cloaked in the language of resource conservation (see, for example, Grove 1996, Neumann 2002, Peluso 1994). In Morocco, colonial policies that required permits to move herds and demarcated tribal territories--which traditionally had been fluid and subject to renegotiation--discouraged mobility, depriving pastoralists and agro-pastoralists of their livelihoods (Davis 2007: 263).

These policies are not merely of historical interest. Following independence in 1956, there was no decisive break in the environmental narratives or the legal apparatus that supported them. Instead, the declensionist perspective joined up with global discourses of desertification to frame contemporary environmental and agricultural policy--despite ample empirical evidence that indigenous range management practices are not responsible for land degradation, and that there is

"no definitive overall pattern of massive deforestation on the order of the frequently claimed 50 to 85 percent [in North Africa] over the last two millennia" (Davis 2005: 512, Davis 2007: 10). To be sure, recurrent drought is a persistent problem in this disequilibrium system. A number of scholars have also documented land degradation in Morocco, but the primary drivers were agricultural, land tenure, and environmental policies that effectively dispossessed pastoralists and smallholders, particularly in the more productive plains stretching from Marrakech north to Fès (Glantz 1994, Pascon 1986, Swearingen 1988).

One effect of these policies was to increase the area under cultivation, pushing cropping onto increasingly marginal lands more suited to extensive pastoralism. By way of example, "cereals, the mainstay of the Moroccan diet, increased from a pre-Protectorate average of 2 million hectares to around 4.3 million hectares by 1955," with the greatest expansion occurring in the Moroccan smallholder sector on the margins of large colonial farms (Swearingen 1988: 147). A number of processes were at work. Swearingen notes how early colonial policy promoting wheat production for export to France over subsistence barley cultivation increased susceptibility to the frequent droughts because of wheat's moisture requirements (Swearingen 1994: 127). In addition to these agro-ecological factors, large numbers of peasants were pushed onto marginal lands as private and official French colonization expropriated the more fertile plains (Pascon 1986). Large-scale expropriation may have stopped post-independence but environmental narratives of peasant and herder improvidence and agricultural policies exacerbating land degradation continued into the contemporary period.

Beginning in the 1980s, Moroccan agricultural policy deployed the "declensionist colonial environmental narrative to help justify the neoliberal goals of land privatization and the intensification of agricultural production in the name of efficiency and environmental protection" (Davis 2006: 89). Davis outlines how in this period, international donors supported projects to privatize collective lands in the large irrigated perimeters of the modern agricultural sector. The agricultural investment codes of 1994 and 1995 demarcated agricultural development, pastoral

improvement, and soil conservation zones that became subject to state control, including the obligatory exploitation or improvement of this land (Davis 2006: 95). In the pre-Saharan areas, pastoral improvement programs tended to draw on entrenched assumptions that indigenous herders overstocked the range and otherwise degraded the land. Davis shows, however, that the primary driver of land degradation in Ouarzazate province (where Kelaa Mgouna was located before the creation of Tinghir province in 2010), was the expansion of cultivation into the collectively owned steppe. She notes that the area devoted to cereals in the province increased from 15,000 hectares in 1975 to 56,000 hectares in 1995, with most of the new cultivation located in the steppe (Davis 2006: 98).

This was a national trend. National agricultural surveys conducted between 1973 and 1996 estimated that the total cultivated area in Morocco went from 7.2 million to 8.7 million hectares, an average increase of 62,000 hectares per annum; this represents a conversion from rangeland to cultivation (Balaghi et al. 2007: 173, Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement 2005: 25). While official discourse historically emphasized the negative impacts of extensive livestock production, the primary pressures on the land actually stemmed from other land uses--the expansion of urban centers, rangeland conversion, and intensive use of pastoral resources because of concentrated livestock production in smaller areas (Gertel and Breuer 2007). Thus, the narrative that indigenous natural resource management caused centuries of land degradation has shown great resilience since its emergence in colonial times, despite ecological data that challenge many of its premises and evidence that exclusionary policies have had a more negative impact than the land managers themselves.

This narrative has had material effects for generations of Moroccans, but the narrative's totalizing power can also be understood as a discursive effect of the idea of the modern state as an apparatus, a contained set of institutions that "has" policies and "implements" programs as though it were a unitary actor (Mitchell 1999). If we address the state as "an effect of mundane processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, supervision and

surveillance, and representation," then the uneven ways this narrative operates over time and space come to the surface (Mitchell 1999: 95). The Moroccan state has been remarkably supple since independence in 1956, remolding narratives of environmental change, economic growth, and political representation to serve state territorialization goals or other attempts at political and economic consolidation (Hammoudi 1997). Contradictory narratives co-exist across different sites both spatially and institutionally. This is apparent in the recent twists and turns the standard narrative of environmental change has taken. In the Mgoun valley, I observed an interesting inversion whereby the declensionist environmental narrative was nudged aside by another declensionist narrative: the decline of community-based governance, and a resulting inability to manage natural resources or contain environmental degradation through customary institutions.

When I arrived in 2010 for my research, an ambitious nine year, nine million dollar United Nations Development Program (UNDP) initiative entitled *Biodiversity Conservation through Transhumance in the Southern High Atlas* was coming to a close. The aim of the program was to protect the fragile ecosystems extending from the High Atlas into the low-lying steppe from uncontrolled land use conversion and worsening land degradation (Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement 2010). However, in a departure from previous range management programs, the initiative identified the vectors of degradation not as the transhumant pastoralists themselves but rather the "decline of ancestral practices of natural resource management" (Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement 2010: 4). In other words, with the encouragement of the UNDP, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest and Water Service had embraced disequilibrium theories of range management and had shifted their strategy from containing extensive pastoralism to trying to revive it. This mirrors the success of new theories of range ecology elsewhere in shifting at least some of the dominant discourses and policies around extensive pastoralism (Turner 2011). In the depressing world of environmental policy, this represents a reason for optimism.

The many technical and social scientific studies commissioned by the project pieced

together a nuanced analysis of the regional environment, but this analysis also described a new declensionist narrative. In this formulation, social factors had led to a disarticulation of land uses and the institutions governing resource management. The Moroccan range was "still subject to old legislation in a socio-political and economic environment undergoing profound transformation, and the gaps and inadequacies do not permit the safeguarding of our patrimony," the biodiversity of the steppe and high-mountain plateaus (Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement 2005: 4). "Legislation" here refers to the formal legal framework governing collectively-owned land and the customary regimes through which communities have historically controlled land use. Traditional governing councils, tribal agreements for resource-sharing, and other customary institutions were no longer capable of managing land use because sedentarization had ruptured communal identities, while modern economic and political institutions had challenged customary authority. The result, in this analysis, was an upsurge in land conflicts between tribes, the extension of cultivation and other modes of appropriating rangeland, the rise of individualism in natural resource use, and the further erosion of community-based institutions (Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement 2005: 24). If the standard narrative of environmental change had previously hinged on the improvidence of herders, this story of decline emphasized the dissolution of customary institutions and focused on how farmers or sedentarized pastoralists were encroaching onto the steppe.

In highlighting this as an alternative narrative, I do not mean to imply that it was pure fiction. Many aspects of the project's analyses captured the complex changes taking place in the pre-Saharan steppe, but they also solidified a new discursive infrastructure for explaining land use change in Mgoun. Nor do I assert that the project itself created the narrative out of whole cloth. Rather, it was a discourse circulating among Ministry of Agriculture officials, other local government representatives, and academics who frequently discussed the breakdown of community as a leading cause for chaotic appropriation of the steppe and conversion from pastoral land uses to cultivation. This, now, was the cause of land degradation. There are strong

reasons to be wary of expanded cultivation in areas like Mgoun. Drylands are on the ecological margin in part because this is where the limit to rain-fed farming can be found: the 200 mm isohyet (geographic area receiving roughly similar rainfall) is usually regarded as the line beyond which rain-fed farming is untenable (Métral 2000: 123). Putting this land under production usually results in soil mining, as topsoil and nutrients are stripped away. Swearingen has described this process for Morocco, where farmers pushed into marginal lands without adequate rain have long struggled with diminishing productivity (Swearingen 1992). In low rainfall areas dependent on ground water, sinking deep wells can lower the water table, also resulting in low production or abandonment (de Haas 2006).

Simply abandoning this land may not guarantee that it returns to its previous vegetative cover. While "most disturbances (i.e., rainfall fluctuations and fire) have been embodied into dryland ecosystems through their evolution...some of these disturbances are new or not yet incorporated and may drive the ecosystem to qualitatively different new states along irreversible trajectories" (Puigdefábregas 1998: 394). This usually results from a combination of climatic and anthropogenic events, such as farming marginal lands (Puigdefábregas 1998:394). However, grouping together all instances of rangeland conversion can obscure the extent to which oasis agriculture has historically been an integral aspect of land use in the pre-Saharan south. What defines oasis versus rangeland is a negotiated social process, not just a question of ecological classification. As I detail in the following chapters, shifting the boundaries between oasis and steppe does not necessarily involve soil mining of converted land but may lead to the indigenous recategorization of land uses related to the availability of irrigation water and their embeddedness in tenure institutions.

The emergence of this alternative environmental narrative also does not mean that the declensionist narratives Diana Davis describes were no longer operative. Both appeared in different contexts and for different policy ends. While the UNDP attempted to revive transhumance in Mgoun, an ambitious agricultural growth strategy, the Morocco Green Plan,

included plans to "mobilize" 700,000 hectares of collective lands for agricultural development, indicating that policy had not shifted substantively from that described by Davis in her study of colonial and post-colonial environmental narratives (Davis 2007). In Chapter Seven, I explore the implications of these narratives for the state's role in governing land tenure and for emergent land rights movements. Here, I emphasize how neither narrative--of farmer or herder improvidence--adequately explained the reasons for and implications of land use change in the pre-Saharan steppe. Nor did they offer a full account of the evolving role of customary institutions and communal attachments in land use change. In order to shed light on these issues, I consider the political economy roots of political ecology to explore the dialectical relationship between land use and the social relations of production.

A political economy perspective on land use change

Engaging with political economy brings me into active dialogue with debates emerging from agricultural economics and poverty analysis. Political ecology has elaborated a sophisticated critique of the development industry, neoliberalism, and the operations of global capital, especially in resource extraction and the industrialization of agriculture. Fewer political ecologists engage with the agrarian change and development economics literature on the dynamics of rural economies. These debates address some of the central issues in my research: the dynamics of chronic poverty both as an outcome of structural inequality and as a condition households negotiate through diverse livelihood strategies; how households use various assets in structuring their livelihood portfolios and the role of those assets in either moving people out of poverty or miring them in a poverty trap; and how livelihood diversification influences the way households mobilize labor and manage land.⁴ Perhaps political ecologists have been wary of explicitly engaging with these questions because of their critical stance towards neoclassical economics or

⁴ Blaikie and Brookfield's foundational statement drew heavily on political economy, but that explicit engagement has subsequently receded somewhat in the field (1987). Some political ecologists who have addressed related issues include: Bebbington and Batterbury 2001, Carney and Watts 1990, Grossman 1998, Schroeder 1999.

the prominence of methodologies from the environmental sciences. This critical stance is important--and one that I share--but I believe these debates can clarify the key processes underlying the land use change I witnessed in Morocco.

Empirically, integrating political economy into my study means asking an important question that is not well understood in either the official narratives or scholarly accounts I have described: why and how do people in specific times and places move into the steppe? What are the social and economic conditions that inform these changing human-environment relations? Diana Davis focuses on government incentives for cereal production and policies promoting land privatization (Davis 2006). Scholarship of rangeland conversion in other drylands such as Syria, Brazil, Kenya, and, historically, in the American West also emphasize the economic and policy conditions favoring cultivation or ranching over extensive land uses (Glantz 1994, Little 1992, Lofgren and Richard 2003, McCabe 2003, Métral 2000). Swearingen and Pascon highlight the role of colonial expropriation and agricultural policies in pushing Moroccan smallholders onto increasingly marginal lands. All of these processes have been at work in various periods and locations throughout Morocco, but a macro-policy view does not specifically address the ways households and communities grapple with them. In this study, I take a regional perspective on land use change to explore how these processes unfolded in the specific context of Mgoun. I ask how individual households made their land use decisions and what broader forces influenced or constrained their decisions. This attention to the political economy of rural livelihoods shifts my focus away from recent debates about whether political ecology has privileged political critique at the expense of ecological analysis or vice versa, to considering how the tools of economic analysis might help us understand one problem in rural environments (Paulson et al. 2003, Vayda and Walters 1999, Walker 2005).

Theoretically, my focus on the political economy of land use practices means rethinking how social scientists and smallholders alike construct natural categories such as steppe and oasis. In disequilibrium theories of dryland ecology, the steppe would seem, by definition, to stand as

the binary opposite of oasis farming systems. Oases are human creations, characterized by the careful management of water and land over centuries to produce intensive, anthropogenic landscapes. The centrality of elaborate irrigation systems and the minute detail of production techniques lend themselves to an image of human-controlled equilibrium. But as Vincent Battesti explains in his study of North African oases, there is nothing necessary, determined, or even all that stable in this agricultural system; oasis farmers have always relied on experimentation, shifting crops and techniques to meet the changing conditions of climate and the surrounding crops (Battesti 2005: 151). Oases are also subject to the same climatic variability that influences the dynamics of the steppe.

Agriculture in this context is an improvisational performance that includes diverse social and ecological actors. Some constitutive elements exhibit continuity and others shift dramatically over space and time, but the system has persisted precisely because it has been able to address risk and the unpredictability of arid agriculture. "Oases are animated by shifting spaces and reveal diverse practices and discourses. These moving spaces are produced by the encounter of socio-historical and ecological factors... When we ignore the intricate character of oases they seem like monolithic spaces, but an oasis is the infinite recombination of its constituent spaces and fluctuating borders" (Battesti 2005: 38). The frontiers between oasis and steppe are fluid both in a literal and metaphorical sense. In ways that echo the opportunistic mobility of herders, farmers use diversity--of plot emplacement and of crops within fields--as a form of risk management so that positive conditions in one can offset negative conditions in another. I am not in a position to argue that ecologists should therefore "reclassify" oases to equate them with the surrounding steppe. However, in highlighting people's own epistemological categories and the commonalities in risk and resource management strategies across ecological boundaries, I de-emphasize a normative assessment of how people should use different kinds of land and focus instead on teasing apart the complex determinants of land use.

One of the most important determinants in southern Morocco is livelihood

diversification. In the mid-1990s, economic scholarship began to coalesce around the question of how and why rural households, particularly in Africa, were diversifying their livelihoods. Initially, the literature documented the extent of diversification and identified the "push and pull" factors behind it, from the seasonality of rural livelihoods, risk and uncertainty, coping with destitution, investing in capital accumulation, and new labor migration opportunities, among others (Ellis 1998, Reardon 1997, Reardon et al. 1994). Scholars shifted from this descriptive project to an analysis of how diversification affected poverty, relative inequality, and investment in agriculture and other sectors of the rural economy (Barrett et al. 2001, Ellis 1998). A consensus emerged that livelihood diversification was on the rise and that it worsened socio-economic differentiation but the debates about what it means are ongoing (Peters 2004: 282). Some contend that "not only are non-farm activities becoming central to rural livelihoods but also that an increasing number of rural households have no commitment to farming whatsoever" (Rigg 2006:181). In this formulation, deagrarianization is proletarianizing rural labor and agriculture is becoming decreasingly important to their livelihoods (Bryceson and Jamal 1997, Ellis 2000).

But is this leading to the disappearance of rural peasantries or to the decline of smallholder agriculture (Bryceson et al. 2000)? There is not one answer to this question. Diversification can either lead to an intensification or dis-intensification of agriculture, a withdrawal of labor from or an injection of capital into agriculture; it depends on the context (Reardon et al. 1994, Zimmerer 2007). A countervailing trend to the deagrarianization thesis has documented a "new rurality" or "repeasantization" of rural livelihoods (Hecht 2010, van der Ploeg 2008). In this view, diversification, especially through migration, provides capital for investing in agriculture, enabling some of the most diversified households to recommit to agriculture (Chimhowu and Woodhouse 2006: 354). Repeasantization represents "a modern expression of the fight for autonomy and survival in a context of deprivation and dependency" (Van der Ploeg 2008:7), a search for autonomy from the market by turning to non-market sources for securing inputs and labor. It is a response to marginalization, defensive but also creative in the

face of the growing industrialization of global agriculture.

These processes are variable and uneven, but all should be visible on the landscape in some form or another. In southern Morocco, the question of how and why people moved into the steppe gets at these visible traces by linking transformations in the rural economy and global processes to changing land use practices. The Mgoun valley witnessed a contraction in agriculture in some places and "repeasantization" in others, with migration remittances fueling investments in agriculture in areas with adequate land and water. However, the specificity of these processes in southern Morocco revealed the semantic limitation of the term "repeasantization." It implies a return to a former state, a time of autonomy the peasant tries to recapture, whereas what I witnessed was most definitely not a return. In the lower Mgoun valley, people were engaging in commercial agriculture for the first time in an effort to secure autonomy and an attachment to place that they never had as sharecroppers locked into rigid social hierarchies. People were negotiating identities as a new peasantry, combining commercial production with traditional oasis farming systems to craft an emerging practice and ethic of rurality.

The institutional dimensions of agrarian change

My theoretical approach therefore draws out the critical stance of political ecology to address how economic processes affect people's land use practices. Politicizing environmental and economic narratives also entails politicizing the institutional regimes that govern resource access and control. I take particular inspiration from Africanists who have sustained land tenure as a central problem in explaining agrarian transformations, environmental change, and rural livelihoods. In the Middle East and North Africa, by contrast, a turn away from the Orientalist tropes of "peasant" and "tribe," as well as the sheer difficulty of getting permits to conduct research in many rural areas have resulted in a sparse contemporary literature on agrarian change, especially from a critical political economy or ecology perspective, though this is changing. Ilahiane has explored agrarian dynamics in a Moroccan oasis, the Ziz valley, using a political ecology perspective to explore ethnic differences in intensification trends and productivity

(Ilahiane 2004). Another notable exception is the work of Timothy Mitchell, who examines the historical figure of the Egyptian peasant as an object of control and violence, and traces this past into the contemporary dispossession of Egyptian smallholders (Mitchell 2002). His work indicates the ongoing importance of land tenure and questions of rural control in the region, but the context of a historically dominant, even omnipresent state sets the Egypt case apart from areas such as pre-Saharan Morocco, where state presence has been historically minimal or irregular.

In this context, the Africanist scholarship on the negotiability of customary tenure regimes offers a relevant analytic framework. Sara Berry defined the contemporary tenor of these debates with her research on how access to resources has historically depended on people's ability to negotiate social networks in order to leave as many options open as possible (Berry 1993). In contrast to standard economic approaches--from both neoclassical and Marxian perspectives--that treat flexibility and negotiation as dysfunctional, she demonstrates how flexibility has historically enabled Africans to weather institutional and political uncertainty. Berry draws on a long anthropological and historical literature that details the importance of "wealth in people" for African land tenure systems and agricultural production generally (Miers and Kopytoff 1977). Investing in social networks becomes an important productive strategy that helps people navigate uncertainty by sustaining multiple claims in the various institutions that determine their access to resources. The notion of investing in social networks is not new to anthropology, where, for example, early scholarship on the "gift" developed a theoretical apparatus for understanding power, prestige, and social reciprocity that continues to inform the contemporary literature on reciprocity and entrustment (Mauss 1990, Shipton 2007, Strathern 1988). Berry's contribution lies in showing how these productive strategies affect agricultural performance: unstable conditions and the difficulty of mobilizing resources mean that farmers are reluctant to invest in long-term capital improvements, devoting their energies instead to keeping their options open across diverse economic activities. This explains the resilience of agrarian economies without romanticizing that resilience. While we can point to smallholder creativity, we also have to recognize that such

risk mitigation strategies are inadequate defense against the uncertainty, exploitation, or chronic poverty that set the context for those strategies.

This strain of Berry's work informs my analysis of how households use land not only as a productive resource but as an intangible social asset that sustains networks of reciprocity and provides social insurance. Here, I focus on the implications of Berry's research for understanding how land tenure regimes factor into the narratives I outlined above. Environmental narratives did not simply decry people's use or misuse of natural resources, they also developed a story about the institutional regimes that govern people's land use practices. An important premise of both declensionist narratives in Morocco--the dominant one emphasizing herder improvidence and the newer regional narrative lamenting the decline of community--is that customary tenure regimes either never have been or are no longer suitable for assuring productive use of agricultural land. Agricultural investment codes and titling programs aimed at privatizing or "rationalizing" the use of land drew on long-standing conventional wisdom that secure title and exclusive, individual property rights were prerequisites for productive investment or long-term capital improvements (Davis 2006).

A large body of research has critiqued the premises of this thinking.⁵ This critical scholarship has also "shown that agricultural intensification and commercial production are not inhibited by 'customary' landholding as much as by broader social and political-economic conditions at local, regional and international levels" (Peters 2004: 274). In the following chapters, I take this conclusion a step further and explore how customary landholding can in some cases *facilitate* agricultural intensification and commercial production. But in so doing, the flexibility of tenure regimes and their relationship to broader structures of inequality are transformed. At minimum, understanding the plurality of tenure regimes and the persistent authority of customary landholding is crucial to explaining how and why people are moving into

⁵ See, for example, Polly Hill's research on the cash-cropping cocoa farmers of Cote d'Ivoire and Platteau's synthesis of the evidence for sub-Saharan Africa (Hill 1963, Platteau 1996).

the steppe.

The ambivalent equity outcomes of the processes I describe evoke recent debates about the implications of Berry's approach. Pauline Peters cites the increasing incidence of land conflict in Africa to argue that researchers need to pay more attention to

who benefits and who loses from instances of 'negotiability' in access to land This requires a theoretical move away from privileging contingency, flexibility and negotiability that, willy-nilly, ends by suggesting an open field, to one that is able to identify those situations and processes (including commodification, structural adjustment, market liberalization and globalization) that limit or rend negotiation and flexibility for certain social groups or categories. [Peters 2009: 1318]

I do not see a necessary contradiction between the two approaches. In this research, I explore how the plurality or open-endedness of land tenure institutions offers a resource for local elites to solidify their dominance in an emergent commercial agricultural sector. Part of the way power works in this context is the ability of people to use the indeterminate nature of tenure regimes--as Berry emphasizes--to open up and then harden new lines of social differentiation--as Peters emphasizes. As these shifting patterns of social differentiation become established, people explore new avenues for negotiation, and new sites of contestation around land tenure and resource access may or may not emerge. But that does not discount the possibility that structures of inequality may become durable even in contexts of institutional pluralism or economic uncertainty.

Dissertation overview

I have organized the dissertation into seven chapters. In Chapter Two, I introduce the research sites and the methods that guided my fieldwork. I conducted an ethnography to capture the regional dynamics of land use change, alternating fieldwork between three disparate sites located throughout the valley. The first site consisted of twin communities (Rbat and Imzilne) located in the Ait Hamd plateau 40 kilometers up the mountain road from Kelaa. Water scarcity resulted in a marked contraction of agriculture but housing extensions into the plateau underscored how rangeland conversion could occur even without expanded cultivation.

Simmering land conflicts there also ensured that land remained a central theme of local politics. The second site was el Harte, an agricultural community officially part of the municipality of Kelaa Mgouna. El Harte was a peri-urban village of sorts: its economic life was largely dependent on the commercial dynamism of the market town next door. El Harte was experiencing an agricultural boom as small holders expanded their cultivation into the steppe to meet Kelaa's rising demand for vegetables and high value tree crops, such as olives and almonds.

The third site was el Bour n'Ait Yahya (alternately referred to as el Bour), a relatively new community established by migrants who began abandoning pastoral livelihoods in the mountains forty years ago to settle in the low-lying steppe. Many people commented to me that El Bour was "like a city," unique in an area where shared origins created strong communal identities based on the village as the primary unit of identification. In el Bour, however, people from disparate origins ended up living next to one another through the simple accident of having purchased land and built a house there. These distinctive political and economic dynamics surfaced tensions around what constituted a community and how a community should provide for its members, tensions that often simmered below the surface in more established communities elsewhere in Mgoun. As disparate as these three sites were, my research was not so much comparative as regional in scope. Each of the three sites was linked to the other in concrete ways, especially through family networks and economic ties. I was therefore able to explore how spatial differentiation influenced the way each community negotiated the transformations that had reconfigured livelihoods and land use in the region.

Chapter Three presents the historical and political context for the research through an analysis of the Mgoun valley's place in Morocco's geography of power. My point of departure is an ethnographic portrait of Kelaa Mgouna, the regional market town where I was based. With a population of 15,000 people, Kelaa offered a window into countervailing processes that simultaneously deepened the area's marginalization and promoted economic growth there. I address how decentralization initiatives linked state territorialization efforts in small towns like

Kelaa to national imperatives of state-making in a neo-liberal era. On the economic front, a national agricultural policy entitled the Morocco Green Plan placed agriculture at the center of the country's economic growth strategy while reinscribing the historical marginalization of Morocco's agricultural periphery. Within this broad national canvas, regional transformations were occurring in the valley that related global processes--labor migration especially--to changing settlement patterns, livelihoods, and land use practices in the valley.

Chapter Four addresses the institutional framework for how people accessed productive resources and used land. Using the example of el Harte, I argue that customary tenure regimes actually became more important as new land use practices based on commercial agriculture emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. This was when migration remittances began to flow into the valley, fueling new investments in agriculture and turning Kelaa Mgouna into a regional economic hub. Well-placed farmers in the rural communities around Kelaa responded to these opportunities by embarking on petty commodity production as a central livelihood strategy. They did this not by dismantling customary institutions but by reinforcing them. Specifically, leading farming families worked through customary land tenure regimes to prevent the full commoditization of land: maintaining non-market ways of accessing land and mobilizing labor facilitated the growth of commercial agriculture by reducing input costs or eliminating other production bottlenecks. While these processes magnified the exclusionary tendencies of customary institutions, they also reinforced norms of social reciprocity embedded in those institutions and became increasingly relevant to people's lives and livelihoods as a result.

Chapter Five relates extensions into the steppe to how people constructed their household livelihood strategies. I first describe the extensions into the steppe and assess their magnitude. This analysis indicates how even the critical contributions of political ecology can become normative in their own right. In affirming the benefits of extensive pastoralism in the arid steppe, we should not then immediately dismiss the surge in cultivation as inherently destructive or misinformed. By understanding how the Mgounis themselves culturally constructed natural

categories such as steppe and oasis, we can better explain the causal dynamics of land use change as well as its implications for the livelihood opportunities open to different groups of people. Rather than assume the oasis and steppe are binary opposites, it may be appropriate to consider both categories of land use as disequilibrium systems across which people practice diverse risk-management strategies. At minimum, the inherent changeability of landscapes in the region placed the oasis and the steppe in dynamic relationship to each other rather than in a zero-sum antagonism.

In this chapter, I also link new land use practices to the specific livelihood strategies of four households representing different social locations. Through oral histories and analysis of their resource endowments, labor availability, migration experience, and other factors, I assess the varying role that land played as a productive resource, store of wealth, and form of social insurance. My aim is to provide an ethnographic perspective on a line of inquiry in poverty analysis that addresses how asset ownership factors into chronic poverty traps. I argue that when combined with external income sources and high labor availability, land was essential to setting households on a path towards economic mobility. The threshold for a downward trajectory to chronic poverty was not landlessness--virtually everyone owned the plots upon which they constructed their homes--but a combination of minimal holdings, inability to command labor through the family or social networks, and access to low-paying, unskilled wage labor opportunities. Land's importance as a productive resource receded for these families. However, they still considered land a key asset and a marker of social belonging. For them, land ensured that their continued participation in networks of reciprocity and served more as a form of social insurance than as a productive resource.

In Chapter Six, I take a farming-systems perspective on the role of agriculture in livelihood portfolios and the regional economy to argue that petty commodity production was fueling the "repeasantization" of rural life in Mgoun. Scholars have described this global phenomenon in contexts such as Latin American and Europe, where neoliberalism has thoroughly

structured local production to serve global markets (Enrique 2003, van der Ploeg 2008). In Mgoun, the context was somewhat different. People did not forge peasant livelihoods in an effort to return to a former state of autonomy that had been lost. Rather, they used labor migration to challenge sharecropping arrangements and to experiment with petty commodity production for the first time. Through an analysis of farming practices and their economic underpinnings, I develop a portrait of a hybrid agriculture based on a combination of traditional oasis farming systems and a productionist approach geared to local commercial markets. Though commercial agriculture was a relatively new phenomenon here, people were explicit about their goals for preserving their agrarian identities. When they combined commercial production with time-honored oasis techniques for managing risk or promoting agro-ecological diversity, they articulated a material expression of autonomy. However, the ability to participate in the market for agricultural production was limited and new patterns of differentiation emerged with the new agricultural landscape. I outline the factors that allowed some households to base their livelihoods in farming and created barriers to entry for others.

In Chapter Seven, I address how the collective dimensions of land use change produced new kinds of political mobilization in Mgoun and the surrounding steppe. In negotiating livelihood transformations and the new economic dynamics of Mgoun, people pushed up against the geographic and social boundaries of historical land tenure regimes. People's resistance to or defense of customary regimes reflected the embeddedness of those regimes in historical forms of social differentiation, and the sometimes surprising trajectories of people's political commitments warn against assuming a natural association between customary/egalitarian and capitalist/exclusionary. In the communally owned steppe, many of the most marginalized mobilized for the division of collective lands or individually appropriated land in an effort to claim their customary rights in land. When the poorest groups mobilized for land division and individual freehold tenure, I interpret their claims not purely as a defensive position drawing on the only tools left to them by neoliberal regimes, but rather try to understand what histories and

ethical commitments their claims referenced. In Mgoun, new forms of inequality emerged as historical forms of domination through land (i.e., subjugation by sharecropping) were overturned. In this context, many of the most marginalized articulated new visions of community and subsistence rights that simultaneously drew on and challenged traditional conceptions of customary rights. While the state and local elites espoused a commitment to communal identity as a reason to preserve collective lands--and the privileges they derived from these lands--poorer residents and immigrants from the mountains embarked on their own "enclosure movement" to protect their land rights from what they perceived as an effort to usurp their claims. I term these divergent stances competing enclosure movements because state preservation of collect lands represented an alternative enclosure with the dual aim of extending state territorial authority and retaining a land reserve for allocation to large agricultural investors. The result was a series of land occupations and conflicts, as people forced a redefinition of the "communal" based on their rights to land and to subsistence. Concluding the dissertation with these collective expressions of dissent and demands for rights brings to the surface the profoundly political nature of all of the processes I describe, from a village-wide land occupation to the type of labor a household is able to apply to their land.

Chapter II--Research site and methods

Viewed from satellite photographs (Figure 2.1), the Mgoun valley stands out as a thin emerald ribbon wending its way through the brown, jagged topography of the southern High Atlas mountains. Mgoun is in the rain shadow of the Atlas. In Kelaa Mgouna, the market town at the base of the valley, average annual rainfall calculated over a 20 year period hovers around 150 mm, too little for rain-fed agriculture (Centre de Mise en Valeur Agricole 2010). Although rainfall is usually higher in the mountains, recurrent droughts have made rain-fed agriculture a distant memory in the plateaus overlooking the valley.⁶ The limited water that nourishes the intensive agriculture of the pre-Saharan oases collects in the high mountain plateaus and gorges. The waters descend from Mt. Mgoun (*Ighil n'Mgoun*), at 4,000 meters one of the highest peaks of the Atlas, and converge into a river that is one of the few in the region that runs all year. The Mgoun River passes by Kelaa Mgouna, literally the "fort of Mgoun," at an altitude of 1,400 meters and then works its way southwest, joining with other rivers to feed the Dra' Valley, the last string of oases before the hyper-aridity of the Sahara.

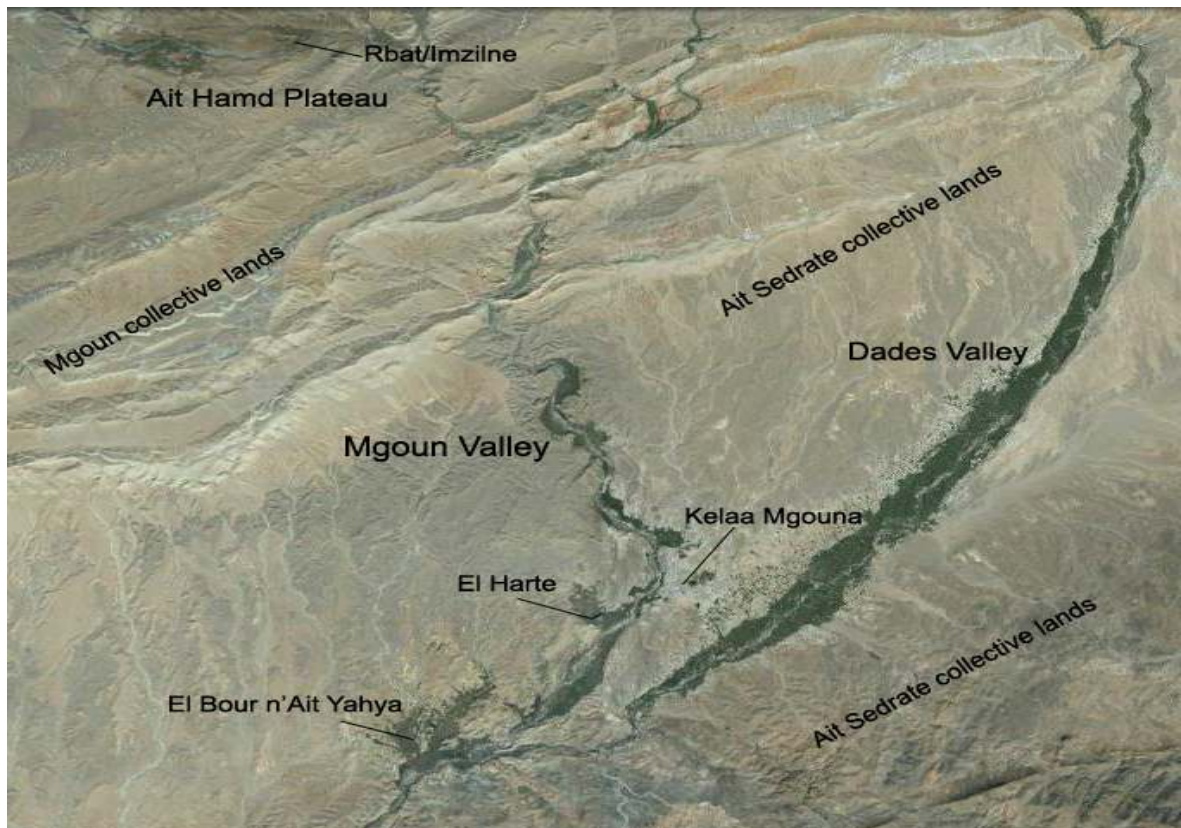
This ribbon of green marks the stark contrast between the arid steppe and the lush fertility of the oasis. A space of emptiness confronts the concentrated space of people, cultivation, and in the Orientalist imaginary, civilization. Yet historically, every bit of this land was social, governed by diverse institutions that regulated land use by extensive pastoralists or small-holder farmers, institutions that in the contemporary period vied with agencies of the state, outside investors, and expanding urban settlements for authority over the disposition of space. Ethnic collectivities established rights of way and otherwise managed the collectively-owned steppe linking mountain pasture to winter grazing lands to the south.⁷ The seasonal movement of sheep and goats

⁶ Defining precipitation thresholds in Morocco is difficult. Whereas the threshold for rain-fed cereal cultivation is often set at 200 mm per annum, given the potential for extreme variability in precipitation in Northwest Africa, the 400 mm average annual precipitation line (isohyet) is considered to be the threshold for viable rain-fed cereal production there (Swearingen 1992: 406).

⁷ "Ethnic collectivity" is the official term for a tribe. First introduced during the French Protectorate (1912-1956), the definition was never fully elaborated. It was unclear whether it referred to larger tribal

traditionally defined the semi-nomadic pastoral system (known as transhumance) that thrived alongside intensive oasis agriculture, where private land ownership prevailed. The riparian oasis of the Mgoun valley is too high and cold to support the iconic date palm usually associated with Saharan oases, though similar principles guide the diverse farming systems. Tree crops such as almond, olive, pomegranate, peach, apricot, fig, quince, and in the higher altitudes, walnut and apple dispersed throughout fields growing a wheat/barley and maize rotation. Kitchen gardens yielded fava beans, turnips, carrots, squash, and other vegetables. While intensive livestock

Figure 2.1: Aerial view of the Mgoun and Dadès Valleys



Source: SPOT image (image date January 11, 2008); Accessed through Google Earth March 22, 2012.

confederations made up of independent though allied tribes or smaller configurations such as fractions or both. It was also not clearly defined according to either geographic or social criteria, making the question of what constituted membership in a collectivity a difficult one. This ambiguity has created problems for contemporary land law regarding rights-holders in collective lands (a subject I discuss in greater depth in Chapter Seven). Despite this ambiguity, I retain usage of the term "ethnic collectivity" because I am drawing more on this official designation that delimits rights to collective land than on "tribe" as a social formation elaborated in the literature on segmentary structures in Morocco.

production had recently assumed greater importance, it was always integrated into oasis farming systems, with cattle, donkeys, goats, and sheep providing manure for cultivation, animal traction, and a ram to slaughter every year for the religious commemoration of 'Eid el Kebir.

In this chapter, I introduce the valley of Mgoun through my three field sites: 1) the village of el Harte, a farming community a kilometer away from the market town of Kelaa Mgouna, 2) the twin communities of Rbat and Imzilne in the Ait Hamd plateau 40 kilometers north of Kelaa Mgouna, and 3) the new settlement of el Bour n'Ait Yahya in the steppe 15 kilometers to the west of the Mgoun valley. I then describe the research methods I used to understand the political ecology of land use change and livelihood transformation at the household, community, and regional levels.

Soon after arriving in Kelaa Mgouna, I was introduced to the region's complex cultural and economic landscape by the collective land representative for the Mgoun tribe, a grouping of 25 villages that coalesced as an ethnic collectivity some 300 years ago. The shared identity that historically linked these communities together as Mgoun derived not from an origin story of a fictive ancestor but more pragmatically from a natural resource management and governance structure that developed around their control of the river and adjoining rangeland after they had invaded from the south. For Haj Ouchtou, the collective land representative, this history was very present.⁸ An authoritative and powerful figure with one of the area's largest herds on the range, his role as representative was to protect the Mgoun's collective lands for the benefit of local communities. In the past, such protection involved policing agreements with other groups vying for access to water and pasture; while that was still important, his role now extended to preventing the illegal appropriation of land and vetting outside investors who requested allotments. His demeanor underscored the seriousness with which he approached this charge; he had a rough-hewn face framed by a *razza*, the tightly wound yellow turban common in the region, and spoke with commanding tones. As we sat in a café overlooking the Mgoun River on a clear,

⁸ I use only pseudonyms throughout the dissertation.

winter day, he swept his hand across the horizon in a dramatic gesture. "Our land extends from there," he said, nodding his forehead in the direction of the snow covered peak of Mgoun dominating the northern horizon, "down here to the asphalt at my feet," the two-lane road in front of our café that skirted the southern boundary of the Mgoun valley.

Haj Ouchtou had dramatically simplified the various land tenure regimes in the region for effect, but he was well aware of their complexity.⁹ In one sense, all of that land was Mgouni. Ethnic collectivities such as the Mgoun confederation historically provided security and governed the vast steppe and mountain pastures used by transhumant pastoralists. Without delving into the long and occasionally acrimonious debates about governance in segmentary systems, I note here the importance of confederation-level structures for developing access rules, negotiating rights-of-way, or waging war to gain access to rangeland and water points (Ilahiane 1999). Any member of a confederation could take their herd onto the range, but access to specific winter and summer pastures was governed by rules regarding the timing and location of pasturing, the location of corrals along transhumant routes, and the ownership of manure. On the other hand, other forms of usufruct and ownership were embedded in this collective regime. Most property in the oases--the villages and their surrounding agricultural lands--was private (*melk*) as defined in the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence dominant in Morocco. Similar to private freehold, individuals (either men or women) owned land which could be bought, sold, and passed through inheritance. Within communities, private property was embedded in complex Islamic and customary arrangements that were more communal in orientation. Local governance bodies (*jma'a*), allocated communally owned land to individuals native to the community, transforming the status of that land from communal to private freehold. People were not completely free to dispose of land as they pleased, though, since communal resource management around water, farming systems, and the emplacement of housing constrained people's land use practices. Each

⁹ Land tenure was complex throughout the country, an expression of the Sultan's historic practice of building political alliances through land concessions as well as frequent conflicts over tribute with various tribal confederations. In this short introduction to land tenure, I discuss only the regimes present in Mgoun.

community was surrounded by a "protected space" (*horm*), a communally owned buffer zone separating villages from the open range, which was subject to a different tenure regime. Villagers pastured their domestic herds in the *horm* and were permitted to collect brush or wild plants.

Thus, when Haj Ouchtou expressed a sense of shared identity based on the collective ownership of the land, he downplayed the importance of these other, more localized modes of affiliation.¹⁰ I encountered few other people who articulated this shared identity as readily. One of the first questions I posed when I began conducting census interviews in el Harte was "what is your tribal affiliation?" The response was usually a quizzical look and then "el Harte. Our tribe (*taqbilt*) is el Harte." It was my turn to be puzzled, since this challenged my understanding of what a tribe was: a regional social formation, not the geographic space of a village. After some discussion, people would eventually allude to their Mgoun affiliation but the point was clear: especially for villages that had no historical involvement in extensive pastoralism, such as el Harte, the sense of being part of a confederation from "the summit of Mgoun to the asphalt" was simply not as important as a place-based identity rooted in their local communities. This is not to say that regional connections were irrelevant--many of those connections are at the heart of this dissertation. People had family ties throughout the region, as most marriages were still concluded between families in the valley and women in particular frequently visited relatives and their natal homes elsewhere in Mgoun. Other social and professional ties widened people's networks to create a thickly-layered set of relations that extended beyond family and community.

Regardless of people's rootedness in their communities, Mgoun was an undeniably intelligible cultural space. People contrasted themselves with the neighboring Dadès valley to the east which they felt was privileged because it had become more of a tourist destination than Mgoun and boasted more migrants in Europe. Mgounis also distinguished themselves from the

¹⁰ Any governance functions tribes formerly held had long since been supplanted by the modern state; the collective land representative was the one of the few positions at the tribal confederation level that still had authority over the disposition of land and natural resources in communally owned areas, though there were other informal modes of governance in some areas.

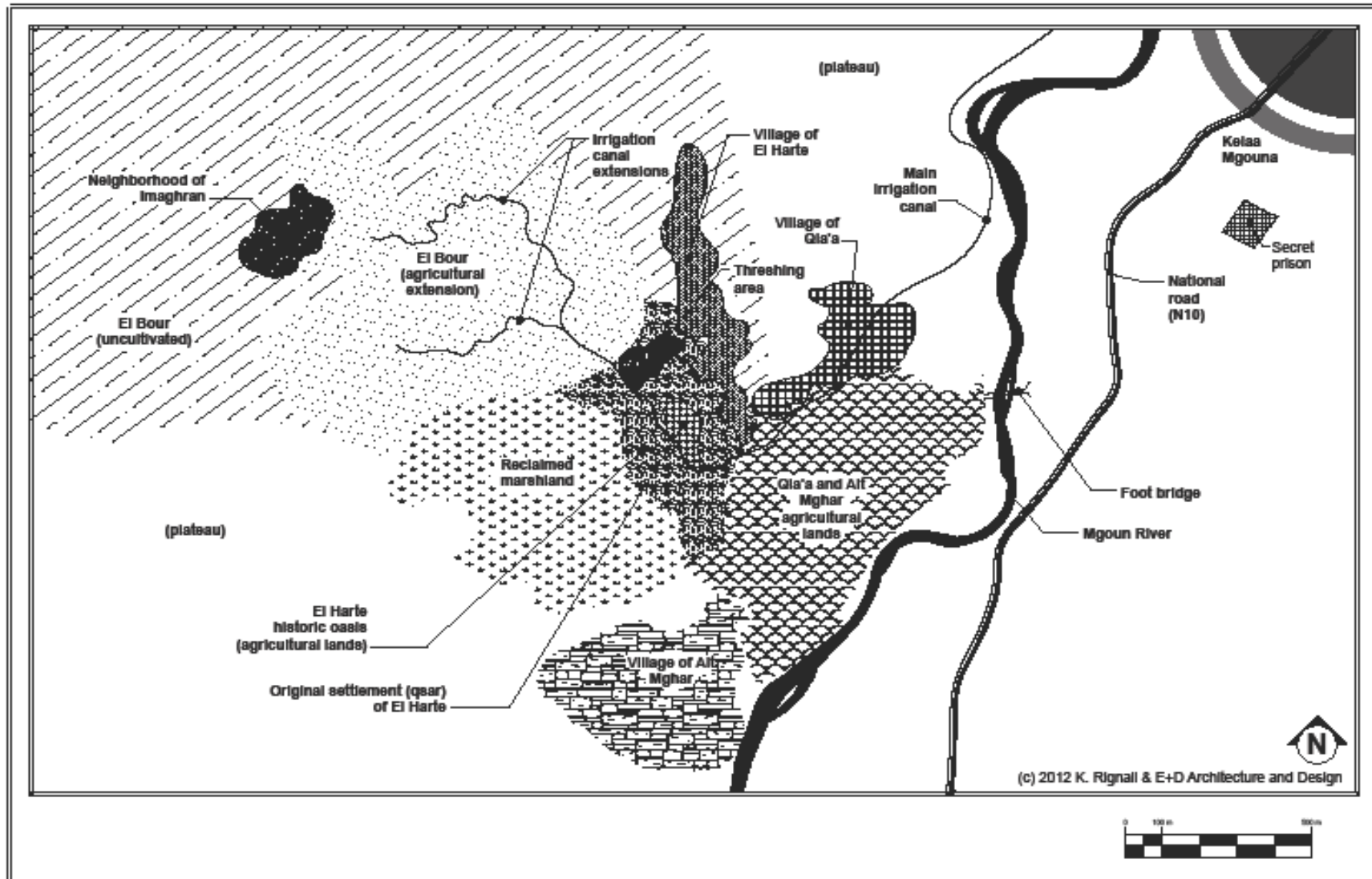
oasis 30 kilometers to the west, Skoura, home to a historically dominant Arab population, though that town had become a progressively more heterogeneous mix of Arabs and Berbers. Mgoun had no historic Arab presence other than a few traders who may have come to settle in the market town. When I did my fieldwork, there were a number of Arabs living in Kelaa: civil servants, bank employees, and others who moved there for work, but the valley was decidedly Berber. Despite this strong ethnic self-identification, Mgoun was not a center of political activism in a region known for its Berber rights movement.¹¹ As Mgounis themselves often described to me, people in Dadès valley were much more politically active in the Berber (*Amazigh*) movement because they were richer and had more college graduates. People often learned the language of indigenous rights at universities in the big urban centers (Crawford 2005, Feliu 2004). With low levels of formal education and a higher incidence of poverty, people in Mgoun were more focused on livelihood security than political activism. For my interlocutors, "Berberness" was self-evident, experienced more as habitus than as an explicit articulation of political subjectivity or a cultural identity defined in opposition to "Arabness" (Bourdieu 1977, Ilahiane 2001). The regional dynamics that drew people together in the Mgoun valley drew on a shared past of marrying, working, and living together under a common system of governance. But in order to understand these regional dynamics, I needed to grasp the affective attachments and specific histories that bound people's sense of themselves to their local communities. Each of my three field sites expressed these local identities differently.

Local histories: situating el Harte, Rbat/Imzilne, and el Bour

El Harte: One of the first images I encountered in el Harte consisted of piles of mud. One day early in my fieldwork, I walked into the village from the dirt pathway that wended its way

¹¹ Morocco is home to a Berber rights movement largely focused on cultural recognition and rectifying the historic neglect of rural areas, which are predominantly Berber. However, ethnicity does not map simply along urban/rural lines and the categories of Berber and Arab have traditionally been fluid over time and space. The great diversity within Berber groups and the complexity of social and political affiliations across ethnic categories has meant that historically, ethnic conflict between Arabs and Berbers has not been the primary idiom for expressing social tensions. See Hoffman and Miller 2010 for a current assessment of Berber identity and activism.

Figure 2.2: Map of el Harte



through the neighboring village of Qla'a to see a group of men shoveling heavy, wet mud from the main irrigation canal that brought water to el Harte. I had already met some of them, and with the same warmth they would extend to me throughout the year, they stopped their work to greet me and explain what they were doing. It was a collective work day, when the irrigation manager (*amghar u aman*), managed a work party of at least one adult man from each household to conduct maintenance on the complex network of irrigation channels. They piled the mud, mixed with weeds and other plant residue, on the banks of the canals so that residents who needed to repair their adobe homes could collect the mud before it hardened. There were not many such days: collective work in the village was largely limited to canal maintenance but it was a significant moment of coming together both for its practical importance in permitting the smooth flow of irrigation water and for its performance of communal identity.

A village of approximately 133 households and 1,000 people, el Harte both exemplified the resilience of customary institutions and the transformative impact of migration. It was a historically black community, though it was not strictly speaking in a subjugated position vis-à-vis its dominant neighbor, the village of Qla'a. Qla'a was home to some of the region's most powerful families, white Berbers (*Imazighen*, plural of *Amazigh*) who had served as governors of the lower part of the valley during the colonial period. Residents of el Harte, on the other hand, were immigrants from all over the southern oases who came to settle near the Islamic brotherhood in the area, *Zawiya Ait Ba 'Amran*. Their only allegiance was to the saints (*shurufa*), of the brotherhood but whereas other brotherhoods indentured black laborers much like the Imazighen, the founder of el Harte was able to preserve his community's independence with the blessing of his patron at the brotherhood (Ensel 1999). As a result, individuals in el Harte could own land and transfer it through sale or inheritance. Women could own land as well and though few did in the past, most women in el Harte now receive their inheritance.⁷ Despite their formal

⁷ My discussions of landownership in this dissertation focus on male heads of household, who in this patrilineal context held the greatest authority in the acquisition and disposition of household resources. As

freedom, landownership was a right most el Hartis could not exercise. Those who did own very little because of their history as immigrants escaping their indentured status in the other southern oases. They were poor and lived in a hierarchical social environment that left them with few avenues for mobility. With small plots of their own, they often still worked as sharecroppers or day laborers. Haj Ahmed, the collective land representative of el Harte and one of the village's most prominent farmers, described a youth of desperate poverty. His father supplemented their meager agricultural production with commerce, buying peaches, figs, walnuts, sugar, and candles from itinerant traders to sell at the regional market, which was based in el Harte before the French moved it to Kelaa Mgouna in the mid-1940s. As a young man, Haj Ahmed himself "worked for God and it was God who paid." He received barley, wheat, or maize as payment either in sharecropping arrangements or for day labor. In my oral histories, people in el Harte and throughout the Mgoun valley emphasized the hunger and deprivation that many suffered up until the 1960s and 1970s. "We worked only to eat, and many times, we couldn't even eat" was a common refrain.

El Harte's proximity to Kelaa and an abundance of water and land positioned the village well to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by migration. Some of the dominant families from neighboring Qla'a sold their land when they lost agricultural labor to the French mines in the 1970s, allowing el Harti migrants to begin buying up land themselves. The particular geography of the community also meant that large tracts in the steppe, an area known as *el Bour*, could be irrigated by extending existing irrigation canals.⁸ El Harte's location across the river from the main road leading into Kelaa meant that farmers could plant high-value crops like tomatoes and

the extensive regional literature on women's economic decision-making and power in the household has established, women exercise their authority in substantial and varying ways across time and space (See for example Hoofar 1996 and Seph and Slyomovics 2001). While historically, women's land ownership in Mgoun has been minimal, and remains so today, gender plays a fundamental role in shaping the trajectory of land ownership across generations and in mobilizing the labor necessary to maintain land in production.⁸ *Bour* is a term used throughout Morocco to denote rain-fed agricultural zones. In the south, rain-fed agriculture is not possible without irrigation, but the steppe surrounding the irrigated valleys and oases is still called *bour*. In some cases, the term has become a proper place name, as in *el Bour*, the outlying areas of the village of el Harte, and *el Bour n'Ait Yahya*, the newly settled community that served as one of my field sites.

other vegetables without having to worry about theft. A number of families--some with migrants and some without--began selling their agricultural production in Kelaa, combining traditional oasis farming systems with new cropping combinations geared to the market. This was the system I encountered in 2010. Virtually all families retained the traditional winter wheat or barley/summer maize rotation at the heart of their farming strategies, and people rarely sold grain. Even the wealthiest families would stock surplus grain production as a risk management strategy that recognized their history of deprivation. "You cannot sell wheat," said one man. "You have to make sure you have enough to eat in case something happens." Families with adequate land and labor were often able to complement this subsistence ethic with commercial agriculture, especially vegetables. While all land holdings included trees, these families were able to sell surplus production from olive, almond, pomegranate, fig, peach, quince, and apricot trees in the regional market. Similarly, most holdings had rose bushes marking field boundaries and everyone sold their rose production, but only a few families saw substantial earnings from their harvests. Land poor families had kitchen gardens where they grew vegetables for own consumption but they would still have to buy produce on the market. There were few completely landless families--most were recent immigrants from Imaghran (a neighboring tribal confederation) who were escaping poor livelihood prospects up in the mountains and did not have access to communal land allocations.

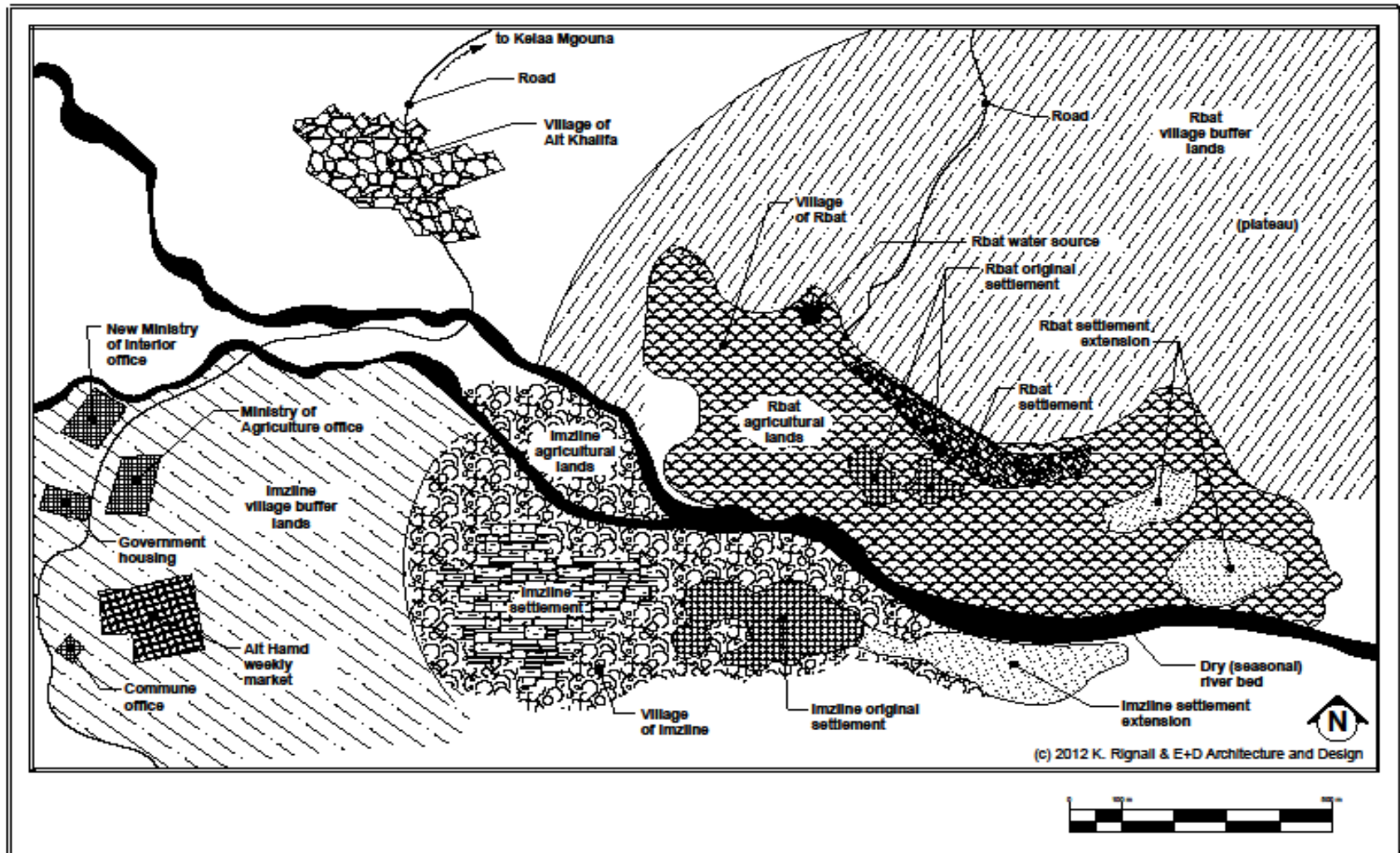
El Harte was closely integrated into the life of Kelaa in other ways. Many people from el Harte commuted into town for work. Walking the footbridge over the Mgoun River to conduct interviews in el Harte, I would greet a steady stream of people negotiating the wooden planks in the opposite direction to their jobs in Kelaa: everyone from local government officials, barbers, market vendors, electricians, butchers, and even the town's taxi dispatcher, a respected livestock trader who headed one of my case study households. Most of these people were members of larger households engaged in agriculture but through access to education or a trade, were able to bring in needed cash income through local wage employment rather than migrating abroad or to

Moroccan cities. There were still many families who had members working or living either in Europe or in urban Morocco; households were large and often distributed members across economic sectors and different geographic locations to assure their livelihood security.

Rbat/Imzilne: The bustle of el Harte, essentially a peri-urban community despite its overtly rural character, was a distinct contrast to the dramatic silences, expansive sky, and apparent isolation of the Ait Hamd plateau 40 kilometers up the mountain road from Kelaa. The government was in the process of paving the often harrowing road during my year in the valley; the asphalt stopped virtually at the feet of a group of elderly men who sat each evening on a rocky outcrop at the entrance to the village of Rbat. They went there to watch the sunset and catch up on the day's events in the plateau. I was struck by how the elderly men and sometimes women took the time to contemplate the beauty around them, an unforgiving landscape of hard work as well as starkly beautiful vistas. However, the isolation here was only apparent: the plateau was as implicated in the social and economic changes of the previous half century as el Harte, though the outcomes were often quite different. Commercial agriculture had few prospects for success here. Water availability was a constant concern, villages were small and dispersed, and transhumant pastoralism had receded in importance after the droughts of the 1990s. It was the kind of area that many observers, from colonial sociologists to more recent scholars, predicted would empty because of migration (Bencherifa 1991, Berque and Pascon 1978, Montagne 1952).

This was a marked shift in fortunes from its historical prominence as the seat of the Ait Zahirs, a family that ruled as regional overlords for nearly three centuries. While Rbat was an Amazigh community, the dominance of the Ait Zahirs meant that others in the village often served as sharecroppers or lived in dire poverty despite their formal status as white freemen. Many of Ait Zahir's sharecroppers came from Imzilne, the historically black community of forgers across the seasonal stream that fed into the Mgoun River. Blacksmithing offered a certain degree of livelihood autonomy for Imzilne, and community members kept their own plots to grow subsistence crops. However, like el Harte, their marginalized social status meant that the only

Figure 2.3: Map of Rbat and Imzilne



other way to supplement livelihoods was through sharecropping others' land.

The new political and economic orientations of contemporary Morocco placed Ait Hamd in the national, even regional, periphery. It was no longer a political center and though the Ait Zahirs remained powerful--and are to this day--migration was the lifeline for Rbat and Imzilne. Some Imzilne residents migrated to Europe, which enabled their families to remain in Imzilne after drought and diminishing demand for blacksmithing further limited already constrained livelihood prospects. Though overseas migration opportunities had essentially ended by the 1990s, every family had at least one member working in Moroccan cities. New cement housing, a recently constructed water tower, and the emergence of some businesses around the weekly market indicated the extent of people's commitment to place. As one Imzilne resident told me, "you have to go outside to work--there is not enough here," but that did not mean migration had drained the community of its population. To the contrary, migration enabled the community to endure in the face of historic marginalization, environmental constraints, and persistent poverty. Across the riverbed in Rbat, a number of people had also migrated to escape the dominance of the regional overlords. One of the heads of household I interviewed for my case studies, Taleb, had returned from 18 years in a French mine to accumulate substantial land holdings and a medium-sized herd on the range. His was an exceptional case of successful upward mobility, but here, too, people made great efforts to stay home when the search for livelihood security took members of their family elsewhere.

In both communities, subsistence agriculture predominated. In Imzilne, the lack of water meant that no one could produce enough grains to cover subsistence needs and vegetable production was minimal. When I conducted my research in 2010, Imzilne's almond and walnut trees still had not recovered from droughts of the early 1990s, leaving a denuded landscape in contrast to the green canopies of Rbat. Rbat maintained close control over its more ample water sources, but there, too, only a few prominent families sold portions of their agricultural production, especially almonds, walnuts, apples, and potatoes. Extensive pastoralism could still

be profitable, but only the wealthiest families could maintain a herd of adequate size to make it economically viable. In effect, there were few prospects for addressing the economic vulnerability of the region other than migration. Agriculture had contracted in recent decades and few expected the problem of water availability to improve. While some seized on adventure tourism as a possible strategy, attracting small groups of European hikers into the village also seemed like an unrealistic pathway to locally generated growth. And yet, the plateau still exhibited a degree of economic and social dynamism that I would not have anticipated given the hardships people recounted. The newly paved road drew the region even closer to Kelaa and migration remittances funded an expansion of housing into the plateau surrounding the villages. These were the extensions in Ait Hamd, smaller and not geared to commercial agricultural production as they were down in the steppe, but nonetheless a sign of how regional transformations influenced land use practices even in areas experiencing agricultural contraction.

El Bour n'Ait Yahya: Like Rbat and Imzilne, the community of el Bour gave an initial impression of isolation even though it was situated on the open steppe only 15 kilometers to west of Kelaa Mgouna. With few agricultural fields and high-walled enclosures, few people were visible in the streets of the new settlement. The silences seemed heightened by the sound of the winds blowing off the steppe and through the alley ways between the cement and adobe compounds. Many people remarked to me that el Bour was "like a city." Four decades of immigration from the surrounding mountains spurred settlement beyond the historical villages grouped around the convergence of the Mgoun and Dadès Rivers. The lack of family relationships and other social bonds linking households resulted in the locally incongruous situation of strangers living right next to each other in a rural context.

The silences here were emblematic of a more atomized social life. Women were not drawn into daily contact by working in the fields--few had agricultural land here--and so they found other ways of building social connections. Passing by the two mosques in el Bour, I would occasionally hear peals of laughter from women taking part in daily literacy classes. These

classes proved to be the best way to meet people in the settlement. They offered a common space where women from disparate backgrounds could congregate and begin developing social networks to replace those they left behind in their natal homes. I wondered how, when women in this region worked so hard, these women were able to spend up to two hours a day in literacy courses. But as they said, without agricultural work and the large family compounds they were used to, they were left with little to fill up their days. The literacy courses gave them a feeling of accomplishment and helped them feel connected in the often isolating environment of el Bour.

It was an accident of history that brought settlement into el Bour. Two tribal fractions disputing the land approximately a century ago resolved their conflict by donating it to a local Islamic brotherhood, the *Zawiya Abdel Malik*. Formerly collectively-owned steppe used by transhumants in their spring and fall passages, el Bour became the private property of the brotherhood, though the saints still allowed transhumants to use the land. There was little else to do with it; it was too far from the rivers or existing irrigation works to bring it under cultivation. Eventually, the dwindling fortunes of the brotherhood's saints led the founder's direct descendent to begin selling off the land in small parcels to new settlers in the region. The relatively cheap prices attracted some residents from historical villages in the area, but soon households from the mountains began arriving, forced out by recurrent drought and the transformation of pastoralism. They were already leaving their mountain villages, sometimes settling in regional cities like Ouarzazate or Khenifra, on the southern and northern foothills of the Atlas. For many, el Bour was more appealing than these cities because the land was affordable and closer to their natal communities. Households with some resources used this proximity to extend livelihood activities from their home village in the mountains to the whole region and beyond, often combining livestock trading, agriculture, and wage labor.

Other more marginalized households had to abandon their livelihoods in the mountains whole stock. They sold off their herds in the droughts of the 1980s or 1990s and the agricultural land in their communities was not adequate for their growing households. This was particularly

true for the *Imaghran*, the immigrants from a neighboring valley who practiced transhumance in combination with mountain cultivation as the historically dominant livelihood system. Decades of worsening drought hit this area particularly hard, sending waves of out-migrants in greater numbers than in Mgoun, where more consistent availability of water allowed for more cultivation and herd retention. When I conducted census interviews in el Bour, the pattern was immediately apparent--women maintained nuclear households with no agricultural land in el Bour while their husbands travelled to work as manual laborers in Morocco's major urban centers, especially Agadir, Casablanca, and Marrakech. Settling in el Bour was a good option for these families. With limited assets, they could not afford to buy homes or land even fifteen kilometers away in Kelaa Mgouna (which, as a small regional town, was significantly cheaper than moving to a larger city) and the location of el Bour along the national road afforded easy access to transport to their jobs in the city. Labor migrants could therefore return home more often, depending on their work situation, than if they lived up in the mountains.

El Bour n'Ait Yahya was like a city not only because strangers lived next to each other, but also because households relied more heavily on wage labor for their livelihoods than oasis households. In the oases, most families had members working in the city, but they almost always had some agricultural land. This was not true in el Bour, where most residents bought a large enough plot to build a house but did not have the land or the ability to sink a well to begin agricultural production there. Some women in el Bour worked in agriculture, doing periodic tasks for in-kind or cash wages on lands owned by the historical oasis dwellers or the few commercial farms that hired outside labor. For these women, working for wages in the mountains was unimaginable, not only because of the tight economy there but because of cultural injunctions against women working for money. In el Bour, the greater anonymity and economic need combined to neutralize that injunction, even if work opportunities for women were still limited.

El Bour therefore represented an anomalous case in the area: a small number of large farms engaged in commercial agricultural production with the help of deep wells while the

majority of residents built houses on small plots as a last-ditch effort to stay close to their natal homes. In the past decade, other residents from the region also began buying property in order to set up members of their households in new locations. The relatively wealthy branch of a large household could have a compound next door to a vulnerable family surviving on less than \$8 a day of wages earned in a distant city. El Bour exemplified both the new opportunities and vulnerabilities that took shape during the transformations of the past fifty years. Migration represented a path to mobility for some and a coping strategy for others. The fact that many of the communal institutions and informal support networks that characterized village life did not exist in el Bour put these distinctions into sharp relief--for those without those traditional support mechanisms, livelihood insecurity could easily slip into destitution.

Taken alone, each of the communities told a unique story of the way migration, environmental change, and livelihood transformation remade the social and economic landscape of the valley and the steppe. Taken together, connections emerged that illustrated the broad spatial and temporal reach of people's strategies to assure their livelihood security.

Research methods

This dissertation is an ethnographic inquiry into the political ecology of land use change in the Mgoun valley from the vantage point of households and communities. I develop detailed portraits of people's lives: how the sedimentation of history shaped their possibilities, the context and implications of their decision-making, and the ways those strategies articulated with broader processes at a variety of scales. This fundamentally interpretive project complements more quantitative or macro-scale analyses by exploring the local dynamics of land use and livelihood transformations not simply as constitutive processes that aggregate in a linear fashion to produce change at higher scales of analysis (Turner 1999). Rather, I explore the contradictions inherent in these dynamics and the disjuncture between processes at different scales and periods of time. These tensions may not surface in statistical or technical analyses that often limit consideration to a specified set of variables. Ethnographic perspectives can therefore raise new questions and

suggest different kinds of answers in productive dialogue with other methodologies.

This kind of openness to the "messiness" of social life meant that I spent little time actually discussing extensions in the steppe, because if social science has to circumscribe a problem in order to make it available for analysis, people in their everyday lives do not. I conducted the majority of my fieldwork in the oasis, interviewing smallholders about their livelihood strategies across all kinds of spaces and piecing together how communities governed their natural resources in different geographic and institutional settings. Extensions whether for farming or settlement were elements in a broader transformation of livelihoods that entailed-- even required--rethinking historical categories for defining appropriate uses of land. I therefore constructed my research questions to capture the overall dynamics of change in people's lives.

My guiding research questions were *how did households access productive resources, particularly land, and what were the implications of their strategies for the access rights and livelihood opportunities of others?* Exploring land use change from the perspective of resource access enabled me to relate household strategies to larger structural forces and the institutional determinants of land use practices. I disaggregated this larger question into three interrelated lines of inquiry:

1. How livelihood diversification (including but not limited to labor migration) shaped resource access and use, especially through the creation of markets in land and labor;
2. How customary land tenure regimes responded to and determined the direction of land use change, especially in the context of an emergent commercial agricultural sector;
3. How the role of agriculture in household livelihood portfolios and the regional economy was changing, with varying equity impacts and resource access consequences.

Field research focused on data collection around the extent and nature of land use change; livelihood diversification; the changing role of agriculture; the nature of land markets and other markets for labor or agricultural production; land tenure regimes at the community and regional level; and the role of livelihoods in determining social and economic status.

The setting: I conducted fieldwork over 12 continuous months from December 2009--

December 2010 and throughout this time resided in Kelaa Mgouna, the market town at the foot of the Mgoun valley. I was familiar with the region from having worked on community development projects in Ouarzazate province first in the early 1990s and again in 2000-2001. I chose Kelaa Mgouna as a base to facilitate access to three separate field sites: working in three locations enabled me to capture the diversity of land use arrangements, geographic and ecological variables, and social conditions in Mgoun. Kelaa ended up becoming a fourth field site, a crossroads where I could observe how people throughout the valley interacted with each other and with the market town as an economic, political, and social nexus for the region. Kelaa was a municipality as well as the seat of a rural Ministry of Interior representative (*qaid*) who was responsible for five of the surrounding counties (*communes*). People came through Kelaa to buy provisions at the Wednesday market, load construction supplies onto the collective vans that worked their way up the valley, receive medical care at the health center, get official papers, complete financial dealings, and otherwise connect with what was happening in the region. My approach to understanding the role of Kelaa and how people experienced this liminal space was purely ethnographic. As a participant observer, I waited in front of the school to pick up my children with other parents, some of whom were rural notables trying to advance their children's fortunes by sending them to the only French and Arabic language preschool in town; bought our vegetables in the weekly market; attended local municipal council meetings; chatted with women as we scrubbed our respective children in the public bath (*hammam*) owned by our landlord; and conducted the business of life with repairmen, pharmacists, bakers, electronics merchants, and the myriad other people who found their niche in this regional economic center.

Some of these people were originally from my rural field sites, giving me insight into the multiple identities they enacted in their villages and in the slightly more anonymous, freewheeling environment of the market town. It was only slightly more anonymous because social networks were incredibly dense throughout the valley, with familial, political, and business relations linking people from disparate, sometimes isolated rural communities. These networks

crossed over in Kelaa. Gossip traveled fast there and it was only a matter of a couple of months before I knew the key players and understood the political landscape of the region. People also knew quite a bit about me, my family, and our movements in the valley, a comforting thought given the ever-looming prospect of our aged Fiat Uno breaking down.

The relations I developed in the market town also led to my choice of field sites. Early on, I met Rachid, a teacher and non-profit activist whose professional ties and family origins in the region facilitated my entry into three communities that met my basic criteria for the study: one in the mountains that had limited agricultural expansion or rangeland conversion, a second close to Kelaa that had intermediate levels of expansion into the steppe, and a third in the rangeland surrounding Kelaa that represented the most extensive conversion of land uses. My initial goal was comparative--to understand the variables driving land use change in disparate environments. As I began to understand the ways mobility linked household and community in Mgoun, my analytic framework shifted from a comparative one to one focused on regional dynamics. In this perspective, communities, households, and individuals were elements in a larger kaleidoscope that recombined as environmental conditions and the political economic context shifted. My goal, then, was to tell a larger story of transformation in the valley, and to use the experiences of specific households and their communities to link processes across different temporal and spatial scales. Throughout my fieldwork, I alternated time in each community on an informal basis, though I spent the most time and developed the closest relationships in el Harte, which was a kilometer from our home in Kelaa. The site in the steppe, el Bour, was a 15 minute drive and my mountain field site, Rbat/Imzilne was an hour and a half drive (40 kilometers up the mountain road) from Kelaa.

Data collection: I collected three main types of data: 1) geographic and demographic data, 2) secondary research and interviews aimed at building a contextual foundation for my case studies, and 3) ethnographic data based on extended case studies.

1) Geographic and demographic data: The process of collecting census data and

mapping natural resources solidified my relationships with community members and established the geographic and demographic context for the research. I approached this research differently in each village. In the Rbat and Imzilne, the neighboring communities in the mountains, my research assistant and I visited the leading families in each lineage to gather demographic information and garner their approval to work in the two villages. It was important to include both communities in the research--Rbat, the dominant white Berber community, and neighboring Imzilne, a historically black and subjugated community--because of their historical links and membership in the same tribal fraction. My second site, el Harte, was Rachid's natal village and was experiencing land use change on the edges of the historical oasis. Here, we also began our data collection with leading families, though lineages were less important and we emphasized prominent agricultural households who were also dominant in village level governance. In both Rbat/Imzilne and el Harte, I gathered demographic information on the whole community through a combination of interviews and work with key informants. I chose key informants whose social role or experience in village governance gave them a broad knowledge of community demographics. I conducted a total of twenty-nine demographic/census interviews in el Harte, nine in Rbat, and eleven in Imzilne.

Before I met with these key informants, I used the water associations' registers of hook-ups to the local water supply to develop a comprehensive list of households in the community.⁹ In Rbat/Imzilne, I met with leaders of each lineage (all men) who knew the demographic details of households in their lineage not only because the families had affinal and consanguinal relationships but also because they were responsible for calculating each household's obligations for irrigation maintenance and other collective activities. In el Harte, I began building a demographic portrait of the community with my research assistant, who had himself conducted a

⁹The lists corresponded to domestic compounds that reflected the social definition of a household. I vetted the lists to make sure that the water accounts matched actual households as they defined themselves and were not a second home or extension of an existing household. I also collected information on the small number of households not connected to the community water supply.

full village census for his own research a decade before and whose active role in community life kept his knowledge current. We met with the irrigation manager and collective land representatives to complement and confirm his assessments. I tested the data gleaned from these informants by randomly selecting (from the sample frame developed from the water associations) a sub-set of households to interview directly. I collected data on household demographics, land ownership, migration status, and primary livelihood activities.

In el Bour, the final site located completely in the steppe (i.e., with no links to irrigated oasis farmland), we needed a different strategy because it was a large, new settlement (population of approximately 5,000) without historical lineages or community institutions. The government does not release census data at the community level, the water supply network had not achieved full coverage, and it was impractical for me to conduct a census of such a large area, though I did conduct demographic interviews with twenty households. I therefore focused on developing a more qualitative, ethnographic understanding of the social make-up of the community. In this way, el Bour represents a secondary field site in comparison to el Harte and Rbat/Imzilne for which I have more comprehensive contextual data. With the help of the settlement's elected official and snowball sampling based on other links to el Bour (primarily relatives of acquaintances in el Harte and Kelaa who lived there), I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with households selected purposively to represent different social categories: new immigrants from the mountains dependent on wage labor, new immigrants with successful commercial or farming operations, established residents who had been among the first to settle in the area nearly four decades before, and newer residents who had moved there from neighboring communities such as el Harte or other villages in the valley. My purpose in these interviews was to understand their family situations and experiences of life in el Bour; I gathered their demographic information as well as social histories of the settlement. In all three research communities, I also worked with the same key informants to map natural resources, charting land uses (rangeland, cropland, or other locally defined categories), water sources and irrigation

works, trees and other vegetation, habitation, social spaces, and others to elucidate community members' own understandings of the region's resources.

2) *Secondary research and interviews*: I conducted a series of open-ended and semi-structured preliminary interviews with community leaders, collective land representatives (customary leaders charged with managing community lands), agricultural extension officers, local government officials, non-profit activists, agricultural entrepreneurs, returned migrants, international development project officials, academics, and other resource people. These interviews helped me to map the social geography of the valley and understand the political economy of recent changes in the region. I continued this kind of interview throughout my fieldwork as opportunities or new questions emerged. They complemented the ongoing discussions I had with friends, research participants, and local government officials, who were exceptionally welcoming and open, frequently inviting me to attend meetings or simply observe the daily flow of work at the municipal offices. I also conducted interviews with officials from the Statistical Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, United Nations Development Program, and World Bank during a trip to Rabat, the capital city. Finally, I collected secondary data such as government reports, development project documentation, land records and legal compendia, and other documents relating to land tenure, agriculture, the economy, and the environment.

3) *Ethnographic data--extended case study research*: Extended case studies comprised the core method of my fieldwork. My research design followed McCabe (2004), who examines four Turkana (Kenyan) pastoralist households' decision-making about mobility and herd management and then relates their strategies to macro-environmental, political, and economic processes. For McCabe, such a small sample size renders the question of representativeness moot: he does not claim that these households provide a window into Turkana decision-making as whole. However, in amassing such a detailed data set about household movements, livestock ownership, and other variables over more than two decades, he is able to make definitive conclusions about the various pressures and considerations that frame household decision-

making. I took a similar approach in developing detailed portraits of the livelihood portfolios and land use practices of households in Mgoun. Since this was my first experience with fieldwork there, my portraits were not longitudinal, though I intend to follow these households over time. However, collecting data on family history, land ownership, migration histories, livelihoods, land use, agricultural practices, education, housing, assets, income, consumption, and expenses of a select group of households laid a rigorous foundation for an ethnographic understanding of social and economic transformation.

I purposively selected households in each community to achieve a range of socioeconomic status, landownership, and livelihood profiles. In keeping with my emphasis on el Harte as my primary research site, I chose seven households there, three households in Rbat/Imzilne, and two households in el Bour n'Ait Yahya. I selected the households in consultation with my research assistants: we studied the results of our demographic research and narrowed the choices to households that exemplified social categories meaningful to the research questions (in particular, different levels of livelihood security and social status, landownership, migration experience, and involvement in agriculture). Table 2.1 summarizes the characteristics of the case study households.

I used a detailed and standardized questionnaire based on the Moroccan Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), a survey administered nationally by the High Planning Commission (Haut-Commissariat au Plan or HCP, which houses the statistical directorate). I decided to use this questionnaire because it had been field tested in three separate cycles of survey administration, though I modified it to suit the local situation based on the ethnographic understanding I had developed in the first months of my research. The questionnaire also allowed me to contextualize my findings in a broader, more robust set of data concerning poverty levels and inequality even if I did not have large enough sample to conduct a full statistical analysis.

Table 2.1: Summary of case study household characteristics

Household	Household size (male/female) ¹⁰	Sources of cash income	Type of agriculture	Landholding ('acher) ¹¹	Migration experience
<i>el Harte</i>					
Abdallah	19 Adult: 10 M/5 F Children: 2 M/2 F	Agriculture (cultivation and intensive livestock); income transfers from internal migration; commerce	Commercial/subsistence cultivation; limited sale of intensive livestock products (dairy)	80 acher (owned); 30 acher (sharecropped for uncle)	Uncle in Holland; two brothers in Moroccan cities
Hassan	9 Adult: 2 M/4 F Children: 2 M/1 F	Wage labor (Kelaa); agriculture (intensive livestock)	Subsistence cultivation; some sale of agricultural production; intensive livestock fattening and trading; sale of intensive livestock products (dairy)	25 'acher (owned)	None
Idir	9 Adult: 2 M/ 3 F Children: 2 M/ 2 F	Saddlemaking; income transfers from internal migration	Subsistence cultivation	5 'acher (sharecropped); 3 'acher (owned); .5 'acher (rented)	Immigrated to el Harte from the mountains (Imaghran); two sons in Moroccan cities
Ahmed	24 Adult: 10 M/6 F Children: 4 M/4 F	Local and regional construction contractors/craftsmen	Subsistence cultivation	45 'acher (owned)	Two brothers in Moroccan cities (no income transfers)
Mohamed	8 Adult: 2 M/3 F Children: 3 F	Local construction work	Subsistence cultivation	12 'acher (owned)	Father and brother in Moroccan cities (no income transfers)
Moha	11 Adult: 3 M/7 F Children: 1 F	Casual wage labor (Kelaa); minimal income from agriculture; income transfers from internal migration	Subsistence; some sale of agricultural production, especially ancillary products	6'acher (rented from relative); 3'acher (rented from the religious endowment); 6 'acher (entrusted relative's land)	Son regularly travels to work in Moroccan cities

¹⁰ There is no clear demarcation between childhood and maturity in terms of when children begin to contribute to the work of the household; I use the age of ten since this is roughly the age when most children begin participating more actively in agricultural work.

¹¹ An 'acher is the local unit of land measure roughly equivalent to 1/40 of a hectare. I retain usage of the term because the landholdings tend to be so small that expressing them in terms of hectares results in awkward fractions. 'Acher was also the only term people used to describe plot size.

Table 2.1 (continued): Summary of case study households

Household	Household size (adult male/female) (child male/female)	Sources of cash income	Type of agriculture	Landholding ('acher)	Migration experience
<i>el Harte</i>					
Abdelhafid	15 Adult: 8 M/6 F Children: 1 F	Agriculture; commerce (Kelaa); European pension	Commercial/subsistence cultivation	90 'acher (owned)	Returned migrant from France
<i>Rbat/Imzilne</i>					
Taleb	30 Adult: 11 M/9 F Children: 6 M/4 F	Agriculture (extensive and intensive livestock and cultivation); income transfers from internal migration; European pension	Commercial/subsistence cultivation; sale of livestock (extensive pastoralism)	100 'acher (owned)	Returned migrant from France; sons and nephews regularly work in Moroccan cities
Khadija	7 Adult: 3 M/3 F Children: 1 M	Tourist hiking shelter	Subsistence cultivation	2 'acher (rented); 1 'acher (owned)	Two sons/1 grandson in Moroccan cities (no income transfers)
Houcine	11 Adult: 7 M/4 F	Blacksmithing; commerce; income transfers from internal migration	Subsistence cultivation; some sale of agricultural production, especially nuts	20' acher (owned)	Two sons in Moroccan cities
<i>el Bour n'Ait Yahya</i>					
Youssef	10 Adult: 4 M/2 F Children: 4 F	Agriculture (intensive livestock)	Subsistence cultivation; intensive livestock fattening and trading; sale of intensive livestock products (dairy, honey)	30 'acher (owned)	Immigrated from mountains (Imaghran)
Idir/ Fatima	6 Adult: 2 M/1 F Children: 2 M/1 F	Internal migration (sole income source)	Subsistence cultivation	.5 'acher (owned); .5 'acher (rented with other family from the religious endowment)	Immigrated from mountains (Imaghran); husband and son working in Moroccan cities

Source: fieldwork, 2010; households are indicated by the pseudonym of the head of the household.

The living standards measurement survey (LSMS) was initially conducted in 1990/1991 as part of an initiative funded by the World Bank in Morocco and 31 other countries around the world (Grosh and Glewwe 2000:7). The surveys were intended to support more standardized data collection for the purposes of national and comparative poverty analysis. Morocco repeated the survey (in 1997-1998 and 2006/2007) and it is now a permanent and domestically funded department of the HCP. The goals of the Moroccan survey are to use household-level income and consumption data to "analyze the level, sources and inequalities in household income, develop poverty indicators, study inequalities in living standards, and provide the data necessary for economic and social program development..." (Royaume du Maroc 2008:193). However, the sample size of 7,062 households only permits national level analysis and some discussion of urban/rural disparities; the government has paired these data with results from the 2004 census to make more disaggregated assessments and to construct national poverty maps (Royaume du Maroc 2010). I used the questionnaire more to facilitate my interviews than to set up a formal comparison with country-level results, but I also aim to shed light on micro-level processes that may not surface in aggregate statistics.

The survey also presented an interesting ethnographic opportunity. While the interview protocol for the national LSMS involves two visits to a given household, I did my interviews over 4-10 visits per household with interviews lasting a minimum of 1-2 hours and sometimes significantly longer. My visits took place over meals or in fields and usually led to long conversations on related--and some unrelated but invariably interesting--topics. The interviews represented one dimension of my relationships with these households, relationships that took on more layers through social interactions and occasional work together in the fields. The information I gleaned on the margins of the questionnaires and through other interaction provided a meta-commentary on the respondents' "formal" answers. Often, these side conversations would contradict or expand on answers given in the formal portion of our interview, leading me to reflect on the ethnographic and epistemological meaning of the exercise. Not surprisingly for a

rural area with male literacy rates of 20-30 per cent, female literacy of under 10 per cent, and diverse combinations of agricultural and wage-based livelihoods, few people did anything approximating a formal cost accounting of their income, expenses, farming operations, or other aspects of their household budgets (perhaps few people anywhere do). There was no separation between personal and business related expenses, and even if most households did meet one basic criterion for a unitary model of the household--a common budget or resource pool--resources flowed in and out of households in diverse ways.

This is not to say that people did not have a detailed knowledge of their resource flows and economic situations. All respondents explicitly discussed their strategies for prioritizing expenditures and balancing future resource needs with current consumption needs and the seasonality of their income. For the wealthier, complex interactions between livelihood activities and asset stores made it difficult for them to articulate the kinds of measures questionnaires demand, such as the value of an asset or wealth at any given point in time. For them, resources were always in motion, helping to support social relationships or longer term investments in agricultural expansion, for example. However, this detailed knowledge was difficult to quantify in monetary terms or in the standardized time horizons of a questionnaire because so many exchanges and livelihood activities operated outside a money nexus and occurred over varying spatial and temporal scales.

Beyond the problem of "fit" between people's own epistemological categories and the format of a budget survey was the question of people's intentions in answering my questionnaire. Being able to contextualize people's formal responses to the questionnaire in a broader ethnographic understanding of their lives shed light on the importance of self-presentation and normative constructions of status in how people related to the research process. In her analysis of the Ghanaian Living Standards Measurement Survey (part of the same World Bank initiative as the Moroccan LSMS), Jane Guyer finds that the relative accuracy of the data are not as important as the insight into people's social aspirations that the data provided: the image of themselves

respondents hope to convey when answering questions about their economic status (Guyer 2004: 131). She notes that in such surveys "people say *something* true about themselves, but on assumptions that probably differ from those of the investigators. The less routinized is formality in their lives, the more likely are respondents to construe questions from their own standpoints in their own social landscape. They are saying something, but perhaps something else" (131). Concerns about discrepancies in the data caused considerable concern to the economists administering the LSMS in Ghana, but Guyer argues that we should not simply dismiss surveys conducted in environments where data accuracy is in question (Guyer 2004: 131-139). They are a valuable resource for examining the cultural models people use to negotiate their economic situations and represent them to others, though ethnography is crucial to decoding the cultural understandings embedded in the statistics. Through this optic, poverty becomes less about a set of numbers that defines a household's living standard than about the experience of vulnerability, and the livelihood strategies that arise from that experience.

This interpretive approach also expands the definition of livelihood from a discrete "thing" or set of delimited economic activities to a more processual notion encompassing "activities that are not typically seen as economic production but are nevertheless productive strategies" (Cliggett 2005: 93). This can include spending valuable harvest time working on a patron's field to gain access to his animal traction, cooking at a neighbor's wedding, or doubling the time spent at the weekly market by buying from a series of vendors who are important to one's social network instead of stocking up at the cheapest stall. To a certain extent, this echoes the definition of "livelihood" developed in the sustainable livelihoods literature which includes the activities, assets, and access to resources that allow individuals and households to assure their well-being (Ellis 2000). But rather than trying to establish quantitative or qualitative equivalency between the various kinds of "capitals"--human, natural, social, or financial--for the purposes of measuring livelihoods, a process which can depoliticize questions of access and inequality, I focus on the pathways by which different productive strategies lead to differential outcomes.

Working with households: the organization of domestic life

My research design privileged households as the primary unit of analysis but I did not specifically integrate intra-household dynamics into my research questions. I conducted formal interviews with the heads of households, and occasionally with other adults who shared decision-making authority. Household heads were overwhelmingly male in this region--large families were usually organized according to patrilocal arrangements whereby adult brothers lived with their wives and children in a common household under the guidance of the patriarch and pooled resources and livelihood strategies in generally cooperative arrangements. While semi-structured interviews with household heads constituted the formal method for my extended case studies, I also spent unstructured time with women in some of the households I came to know well. My status as a married woman who had been introduced to the community through respected local figures meant that I could interview men without social impropriety, especially since I always had a research assistant with me.¹ But my natural social interlocutors were women and I would regularly visit female friends and participate in daily village activities, especially in el Harte because of its proximity to our home in Kelaa. I became particularly close with women in a family that was not one of my case study households. I would assist them in harvesting and other agricultural activities, accompany them to doctor's appointments, cook meals together, clean wheat, bring my children for visits, and attend village social occasions with them.

Administering questionnaires with the primary male decision-maker implicitly assumed a patriarchal, unitary model of the household. However, participant observation and disaggregating

¹ I engaged two new research assistants for the second phase of the research. Rachid, the assistant who had been so helpful for the first phase, did not have the time to work closely with me on the case study interviews and his status as a community leader would have made the detailed personal interviews sensitive for some. For el Harte and Ait Yahya, I worked with a resident of el Harte who was well-respected among all sectors of the community and had himself conducted field research there for his BA in geography nearly 15 years before. In Rbat/Imzilne, I worked with a school teacher who was not from the mountains but was also well respected as a neutral presence in the community. Both research assistants were integral to my research, offering language support and even more importantly, advice and insights as we collaboratively built a research strategy. They consistently lent social legitimacy to my work as well, since meeting with older men was permissible when others were present but would have been more sensitive were I to attempt interviews alone.

some data down to individual family members allowed me to complicate this assumption. If economists have traditionally assumed a unitary "enterprise" model in order to analyze micro-level livelihood processes, anthropological methods are more comfortable with how variable demographic situations and asymmetric relations define households as a mode of organizing social life (Guyer 1997, Guyer and Peters 1987). I was able to use both the interview instruments and more informal discussions to discern key processes such as how demographics, especially the number of men and women of varying ages in a household shaped labor availability; how inter-personal relations influenced the level of household cooperation around livelihood activities; how inheritance practices, especially the decision of when to divide assets after the death of a patriarch, affected resource endowments of different segments of a family; how and why sub-units in a family would decide to create an independent household; and the diverse ways that families negotiated decision-making and authority.

In interviews and informal conversation, people tended to represent domestic arrangements as geographically determined: they marked the mountains as more traditional, with gender and family relations becoming progressively more open the closer people lived to Kelaa. But this graduated model of family life and domesticity did not map quite so neatly onto the complexities of social life as I observed them. In Rbat/Imzilne, the three households I worked with illustrated this complexity. Taleb was known through the plateau as an authoritative patriarch who kept a household of over 30 members (large by regional standards), a substantial farm and orchard, a mid-size herd on the open range, and an intensive livestock operation all running smoothly. The gendered division of labor in this household was the dominant one throughout the region: men prepared the soil, sowed, irrigated, and sometimes took responsibility for tending to vegetables, particularly those destined for the market, while women weeded the fields, collected weeds and other forage (such as alfalfa cuttings) for the livestock, fed the animals, and harvested all of the crops. During the busiest harvest seasons, the whole household would get involved as men loaded bundles of wheat or maize women had harvested with their

hand sickles onto donkeys and hauled the crops back to the compound for threshing.

Everyone knew their role in Taleb's complex operation. I asked the women how they apportioned the tasks among the nine women and girls who worked the fields and one shrugged, saying "we know what needs to be done and where; we just go out to the field that needs attention." But the daily rhythms and interpersonal dynamics of the family were neither so streamlined nor stereotypically gendered. Over time, I saw that Taleb had delegated most authority for running the household to his eldest daughter, Fatima, who at 30 no longer entertained the possibility of marrying and leaving her natal home. Even the older men in the household dutifully heeded her words, and she held the key to the pantry, a privilege usually reserved for the matriarch of the family. Taleb's second wife (his first wife had died many years before) seemed happy to pass on this privilege since it also seemed to lessen her responsibility for keeping everyone on task. Taleb affirmed that the only way to keep the family--and its assets--together was to remain uncompromising in one's expectations.

At first glance, Taleb's family seemed the ideal-typical domestic arrangement but it was just that: an ideal that few households even in the ostensibly traditional mountains approximated. Taleb had seen how family conflicts or mismanagement could decimate a household's fortunes, erasing the gains he had made after 18 years of toil in a French mine. Across the river in Imzilne, Houcine and his brother Lahcen had taken the painful decision to divide their assets even though their elderly father was still alive. They simply could not agree on how to manage the family's finances and the frequent disagreements were making domestic life intolerable. Literally building a wall to separate their adobe compound and apportioning out their small holdings (less than half a hectare), whittled away at their collective assets but preserved family relationships. Houcine regretted that they could not pool their income and coordinate their farming strategy, but was at least happy to remain on cordial terms with his brother. Typically, adult brothers lived in a unified household until the patriarch died, at which point they would divide their assets according to Islamic law. But Houcine and Lahcen's case indicated how this division could happen before

the patriarch's death. I encountered other examples of households that did the reverse: even after the patriarch's passing, they maintained one household in order to preserve the worth of their collective assets. Household lifecycles did not follow a uniform trajectory but rather reflected strategic decisions about livelihoods and assets, as well as the unpredictable twists and turns of family relationships.

These twists and turns could result in households that deviated from the ideal-typical model of the patriarchal family in other ways. Typically, divorced or widowed women would either move back to their father's home if they were young enough and the parents amenable, or, if their children were older, live with one of their sons. However, I encountered a number of female-headed households that illustrated the different ways that this situation could take shape, particularly in the era of labor migration. On the hillside facing Taleb's compound in Rbat, Khadija, her daughter, and daughter-in-law ran a tourist hiking shelter as one of the few all female households in the mountains. Khadija had been widowed many years before, her daughter was divorced, and she felt her two adult sons had essentially abandoned the family. One earned irregular wages in the cafés of Kelaa; the other left his wife in Rbat while he traveled in search of casual labor, rarely visiting or sending money. In this case, not being able to rely on male labor, either for agriculture or for wages, not having access to land, and being limited in one's own livelihood possibilities as women marginalized Khadija's household socially and economically. Her situation indicated how migration could shape household dynamics by putting women in decision-making roles in new ways.

Households were spatially flexible, including present and absent members whose membership was defined more by their social ties and economic contributions to the family than the absolute amount of time spent with the family (Hoffman 2008). In el Bour n'Ait Yahya, I conducted all of my interviews for one case study with the wife of the household head, who had de facto authority over her small nuclear family's affairs because her husband worked elsewhere and returned for a total of less than one month a year. Households could be spread throughout

space because of labor migration abroad or to the cities, or when one segment of the household moved from a mountain village to a homestead in the steppe with continuing cooperation across the two locations. They were the locus for livelihood decision-making, organized family life, and served as a key pathway through which the "local" related to the "global." Labor migration--not immersion in global agricultural markets or a tourist trade that offered few benefits to residents--was the primary link tying Mgoun to the nation and beyond, and remittances flowed almost exclusively through households before they ramified into the regional economy.

Thus, while I adopted the household as a unit of analysis rather than an *object* of analysis, I worked with a flexible understanding of households as encompassing a diverse set of arrangements, not a universal model of patriarchal authority. These arrangements interacted with the other variables of interest in my research--such as landownership, income levels, social status, gender roles, and others--to determine the possibilities for accumulation, or deepen the intractability of chronic poverty. Ethnography, in combination with other supporting data, allows me to tell the stories behind these different outcomes, and to convey my own appreciation of people's creativity and resilience in making do there. The processes and institutions that shaped people's access to productive resources did not operate as abstract constraints but took on meaning as lived experience, reinforced or nudged in a different direction through the daily play of relationships and the persistent drag of structural forces. In describing the rhythm and textures of life in Mgoun, I emphasize the multivalence of people's identities. Despite the entrenched inequalities and emerging forms of differentiation, easy interpretations of who was exploiting whom are elusive. I attempt to capture this complexity through a faithful account of how social and economic boundaries were set, resisted, or negotiated and some of the outcomes of these negotiations.

Chapter III--The Mgoun Valley in context

I sat with Hamid, the oldest blacksmith in Imzilne, a community in the mountains historically known for its forgers (*imzilne* is the Tashelhit word for blacksmith). He was joined by two elderly visitors from down in the valley, men who had brought satchels with hand sickles for repair before the harvest season put new demands on them. Together, they recounted the history of the Ait Hamd plateau that included Imzilne, Rbat, and a few other villages--life under colonialism, the grinding poverty punctuated by occasional famines, and the richness of a social world that brought people together through simple interactions such as getting one's tools repaired. They surmised that they were the last generation that would travel hours up the valley to personally bring their tools to their blacksmith, staying the night to catch up on each others' news. Now, people just go down to the weekly market in Kelaa Mgouna and drop off their tools to be fixed while they buy their vegetables. Hamid's daughter-in-law listened as she spun wool around a wooden spindle. She theorized that modern transport had damaged social relations because "before, you used to walk everywhere and had to stop in the villages along the way to visit people." Now, people took collective vans (*transits*) that whisked travelers from Kelaa up the newly paved road that ran right to the entrance of Imzilne, passing by the villages they used to visit for a meal or some tea.

Just across the river in Rbat, I sat with Karima as she took a rest after thinning out a field of maize. A generation ago, Karima's family had been one of the village's poorest families, but her uncle's 18 year stint in a French mine had enabled them to acquire large land holdings and a herd that her father kept on the range. Karima was 16, starting to wonder when she would get married and where her husband would take her. When I noted how beautiful the river was, she grimaced and said "no, this is ugly. We come here to clean our clothes. Kelaa Mgouna is the beautiful place." Kelaa, with its cement block houses interspersed with mechanics shops on rocky dirt roads always seemed like the ugliest place in the valley to me. But Karima would have loved to move there, where there was less work and so much more going on. She regretted that the rare

times she went to see a doctor or get identity papers in Kelaa, she only stayed in the house her uncle kept there for one night. The women always had to rise early and catch the transit up valley, never experiencing the market town for more than a day.

New forms of mobility--both spatial and social--represented at once possibility and constraint, progress and decline, for the diverse actors I encountered in Mgoun. For women who had been accustomed to mobility, new modes of transport closed off some opportunities for social contact but also brought them to relatives spread across the valley with a new speed. The life of the market town exposed them to new ways of being and reminded them of their limited ability to explore them. As a hub of regional economic activity, Kelaa offered a window into the ambivalent processes transforming the valley and its market town. Clifford Geertz' description of the market in the northern Moroccan town of Sefrou as the "promiscuous tumbling in the public realm of varieties of men" could easily be applied to Kelaa (Geertz et al. 1979: 141). For Geertz, the bazaar was a complex cultural form, drawing on historical institutions and identities but enacting the imperatives of commerce in fundamentally modern terms. In Kelaa, this analysis could be expanded beyond the confines of the actual market--it was not a traditional "bazaar" anyway--to encompass the town as a whole. Kelaa was a "promiscuous tumbling" of *men* in particular. Women certainly lived in town and passed through with regularity, but men had the most visible role in defining this space as an economic and social crossroads. The chance meetings and unexpected associations (at least to me) between research participants from throughout the valley underscored how people with markedly different positionalities related to the market town as a place of both opportunity and exclusion.

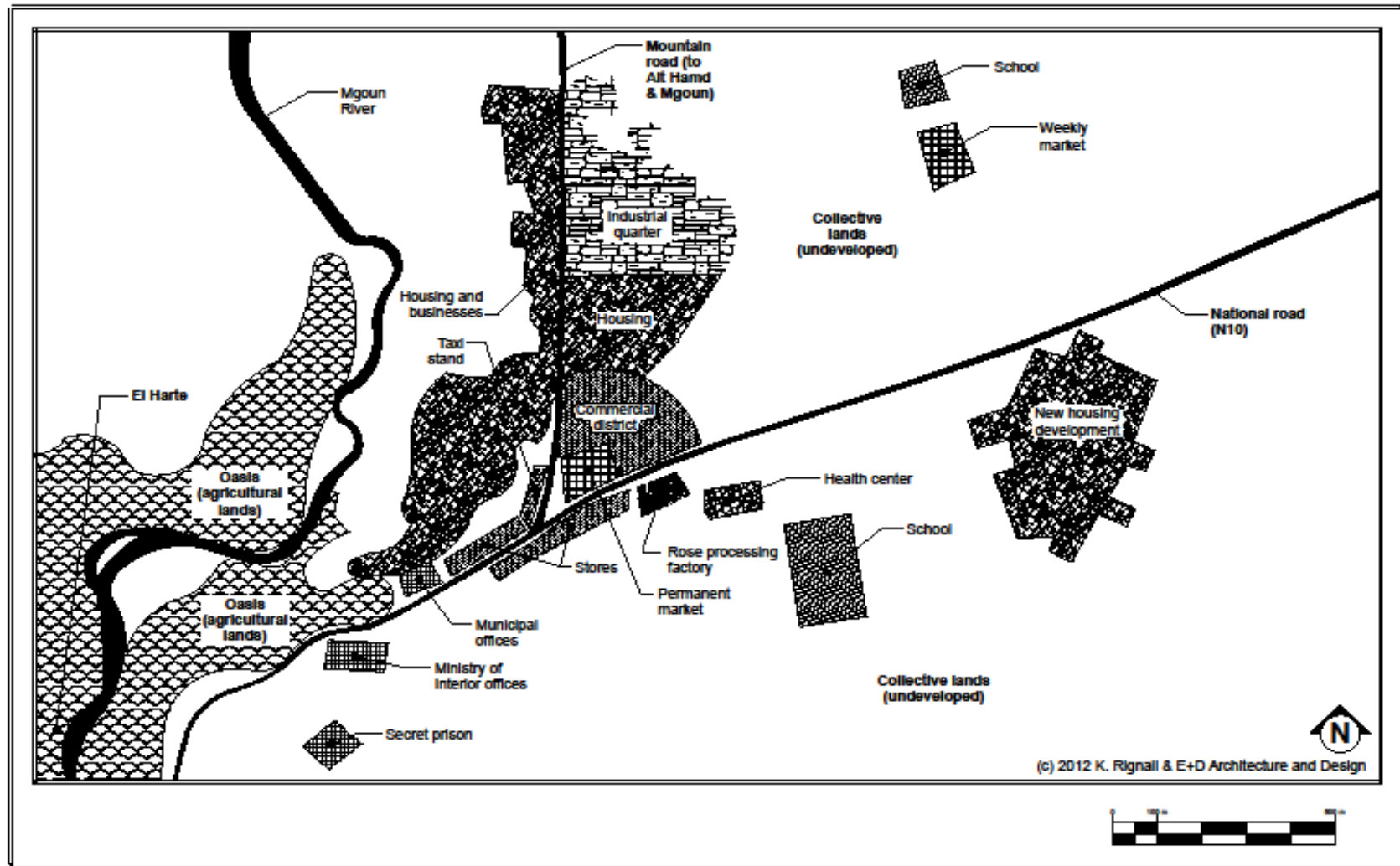
In this chapter, I present the economic and political context for my field research. I begin by tracing the individual trajectories of some of the people from my field sites as they moved through Kelaa. This highlights the regional scope of their lives and hints at other connections, for example, to global markets and Moroccan urban centers. The connections shed light on how processes of differentiation at various scales and domains--from national policy to internal

community dynamics--shaped people's experiences of marginality and mobility in Mgoun. I then move to an exploration of the national context through a discussion of how Moroccan state-making and agricultural policy have shaped rural poverty.

Ethnographic perspectives on marginality in Mgoun

Hamid kept his blacksmithing work in Imzilne, a reflection of his age and attachment to the historical geography of the valley: Imzilne was the place to go for metalwork before Kelaa emerged as the regional market town. However, I would see his son, Houcine, who I interviewed as one of my case study households, with some regularity down in Kelaa. He also was a blacksmith, but he supplemented that low-paying and irregular work by stocking up on dates or other goods that he would resell up in Ait Hamd's weekly market. I greeted him one day as he gazed out from the transit idling next to our house. He and the other passengers were waiting as Taleb loaded nylon sacks with provisions onto the van. Taleb was Karima's uncle, the returned migrant from France who had built substantial wealth for his large family in Rbat. Houcine and Taleb often moved through the same spaces--in the market, on the transits--but they represented very different social locations. Houcine still struggled to make ends meet as a blacksmith in Imzilne while Taleb had used his remittances to buy land and put a herd of sheep and goats on the range. Taleb kept a house in Kelaa, two blocks from mine, so that he could descend every Tuesday for the Wednesday market. Even though there was a local market up in the mountains, he preferred the market in Kelaa and coming down allowed him to keep up on the latest news in the valley. It was habit.

Figure 3.1: Map of Kelaa Mgouna



Occasionally, I would run into Taleb at the weekly market as we weighed carrots at Abdallah's vegetable stall. I made sure to buy at Abdallah's stall every week--he was the head of one of my case study households in el Harte. They were a prominent farming family and while their stall provided an outlet for some of their produce, their main reason for keeping it was to gain regular access to wholesale prices for vegetables they bought for their large family. I encountered a number of people from across the valley in my regular visits to Abdallah's stall. One day I saw a group of elderly men that I had seen the day before at Taleb's house in the mountains: they had been his patrons as a young man, hiring him to serve as their shepherd in the high mountain plateaus before he migrated to France. He maintained close relationships with them.

At the market, I would also frequently nod in greeting to Yacine Ait Zahir, the patriarch of Ait Hamd's most powerful family and principal of a school down in Kelaa. The Ait Zahirs had been regional overlords for nearly 300 years. Although Yacine lived in Kelaa, he was the commune president (similar to an elected county commissioner) up in Rbat, where his family's holdings and ancestral home were still located. Yacine and Taleb, the returned migrant from France, moved through the same spaces up in the Ait Hamd plateau and down in Kelaa but their spatial proximity was also not a social one. Taleb's father had worked as a sharecropper on Yacine's father's land. When Taleb began to amass land and livestock with his migration remittances, Yacine tried to block his access to irrigation water, at least according to Taleb. The enmity had hardened over the years.

Rivalries and alliances that emerged in the rural hinterland were rarely visible on the surface of Kelaa's alternately busy commercial life and languid social pace. But these relationships invariably directed the flow of commerce and social interactions. In addition to the established community leaders and returned migrants with money to spend and prestige to protect, other more economically vulnerable people came to Kelaa for ephemeral supplementary earnings or to make the rare and proud purchase. I became familiar with the small group of destitute men and women who walked into town daily from surrounding villages to beg for alms,

and I remember the day I saw Safiyya, a divorced mother from el Harte, smiling as she walked a newly purchased goat back to the village. She had saved money from cooking and washing for families in el Harte to buy the goat, a key productive asset for a woman with no access to land.

Virtually everybody I knew in the valley moved through the space of Kelaa, following trajectories that reinforced networks anchored in their communities, created new connections in town, or skirted the paths of strangers trying to make their own way through life and the two crowded roads bisecting town. For these people, Kelaa represented both center and periphery. It was one of a string of regional market towns along the national road in southeast Morocco that had witnessed a boom driven by migration remittances, and in some areas, tourism. Kelaa drew in people from throughout the region--they looked for services, consumer goods, building supplies, health care, investment opportunities, and for some, a more cosmopolitan place to live. But it became such a center because of the region's peripheral place in the national and global economy. It could only grow, only offer economic opportunities, because it had served as a labor reservoir for urban Morocco and industrial Europe.

Marginality is not a geographic condition, or at least not only a geographic condition. It is an outcome of processes of differentiation, though never a completely stable outcome. Marginality finds expression in diverse social, economic, and political idioms, and as these idioms shift, so too does the nature of marginality. Peet and Watts have critiqued the concept of marginalization as "an awkward label for several complex and contradictory processes" (2004: 11). However, such imprecision can have its analytic uses, pointing to the ways that various forms of differentiation interact at different times and places to produce marginality. This was particularly true in Mgoun, where socio-economic and political marginality created the imperative of mobility, or the inability to stay home to make a living, and in the process disrupted durable structures of social hierarchy. Migration enabled a whole generation of Mgoun residents to confront their poverty and repression and as such was--and still is--highly desirable. In carving out the possibility for economic mobility, migration challenged entrenched modes of political

marginalization.

However, migration also set in motion new processes of social differentiation that disrupted rigid, race-based hierarchies in favor of a more income-based, economic definition of status and wealth. New forms of economic marginalization replaced the old. Hein de Haas' analysis of migration in the nearby Todra valley suggests that "the new major socio-economic divide is between households with and without access to international remittances" (de Haas 2006: 571). It is not the simple fact of migrating that differentiated families--the kind of migration mattered as well. As I discuss in Chapter Five, low-wage labor migration could anchor households in chronic poverty by limiting both their wage-earning potential and their ability to earn a livelihood back in Mgoun.

In this chapter, I present Mgoun in its national context to argue for the region's economic and political marginalization. But as a general concept, marginalization cannot explain the ways particular households and communities experienced differentiation or resisted their marginality. Through the rest of the dissertation, my primary interest may be land and livelihoods, but just as my daily routines in the market town became intertwined with people from throughout the valley, I came to understand the overlapping and often contradictory nature of the social processes I observed. I do not isolate particular forms of marginalization as economic, social, or political but rather explore how different axes of differentiation informed one another. I begin with the state, and Mgoun's place in the political geography of Morocco.

The not-so-secret prison and the new state of proximity

Approaching Kelaa from the national road, one of the town's first visible landmarks was a large adobe complex that, if it were not perched on top of a hill, isolated and devoid of all vegetation, would look like a domestic compound. It was a secret prison, one of the many sites for the long-term imprisonment, torture, and disappearance of political prisoners during King Hassan II's reign. It was right there, overlooking the municipal park and the post-office, defying my sense of what "secret" meant. For 20 years, this particular prison held Marxists, supporters of

Western Saharan independence, and Islamists (Deback 2010: 39). People told me they knew "something" was going on up there, but rumor had it the complex held Saharan secessionists who wanted to destroy Morocco and people quickly learned not to ask questions. The prison was closed in the early 1990s, as King Hassan ushered in a wave of reforms and scaled back human rights abuses, some say in recognition that illness would soon end his reign. The regime allowed greater freedom of the press, inaugurated a restitution process for victims of the abuses, and implemented measures intended to promote greater political participation and an active voice for opposition parties, one of which King Hassan invited to lead the government in 1998. The ground was laid for Mohamed VI, King Hassan II's son who rose to power when his father died in 1999. Mohamed VI developed a new philosophy of governance, a "politics of efficiency, based on the principles of proximity and participation" (Royaume du Maroc 2010b). Through decentralization, democratization, and economic modernization, the state would become more responsive to its people and more effective in fostering economic growth.

In 2010, the prison hovered over town like a Greek chorus. Local human rights activists called for it to be turned into a site of remembrance, though few anticipated the government would allocate resources for that. For the moment, it stood empty as a symbol of what the state used to be and an index of what had changed. With the Consultative Council for Human Rights, a national state agency created to offer individual and collective reparations for human rights abuses, the government had made substantive gestures to break with the past. In the municipal offices at the base of the prison hill (as my children called it), I attended a number of meetings about how to disburse monies from the collective reparations program to the people of Kelaa. Local residents had not been imprisoned, but the reparations also included communities whose reputation suffered because they were known as the location of previously secret prisons. These meetings alternated with another series of meetings devoted to the government's new approach to participatory local development planning. The new communal charter law of 2008 mandated that local communes (following the French tradition, local government entities equivalent to counties)

draft seven-year development plans using a participatory approach. The stated goal was to empower local elected government to take charge of development and counterbalance the heavily centralized style of governance inherited from the French Protectorate. Local elected officials attended a series of trainings on "gender and development" and "participatory rapid appraisal" held around the region by consultants responsible for similar trainings across the country.

These measures to reform local government were real but they represented only one dimension of Morocco's complex culture of governance. After Moroccan independence in 1956, the monarchy gradually introduced an elected system of local government based on the communes but never diminished the Ministry of Interior's authority over the territory of the nation. This was an executive form of authority inherited from the colonial Office of Indigenous Affairs (*Bureaux des Affaires Indigènes*) that ran parallel to the elected officials. Together these various structures constituted a sophisticated state territorialization strategy on the part of Kings Mohamed V (reigned 1927-1961) and his son, Hassan II (reigned 1961-1999). A number of scholars have described this strategy as an attempt to place the king, the sacred guardian of Moroccan Islam, above partisan politics but squarely in control of the country (Bourqia and Miller 1999, Hammoudi 1997, Waterbury 1970). By serving as the arbitrator of Morocco's diverse social forces, both kings deftly played off these forces against each other to create a shifting but enduring power base rooted in a clientelistic reliance on monarchical favors. The goal was to extend state authority over the national territory in a way the pre-colonial Sultanate and the French Protectorate had never been able to do.

When he came to power in 1999, Mohamed VI inaugurated a new kind of state based on proximity but the enduring presence of Kelaa's prison indexed the ambivalent meanings of the term. It could mean local participation and decentralization, but it could also suggest surveillance and control, the looming prospect that country could go back to the way it was. Increasing detentions of Islamists as part of Morocco's own "war on terror" made that an uncomfortable possibility, and there were interesting continuities in Mohamed VI's approach with that of his

predecessors. Ten years into this reign, Mohamed VI had become known as the "great inaugurator," constantly visible in the public eye cutting ribbons at rural health centers, day cares, and youth sports complexes. Many of these projects were funded by the National Initiative for Human Development (*Initiative Nationale pour le Développement Humain*, known widely by its acronym, INDH), a highly publicized and well funded effort begun in 2005 to address entrenched poverty and rural-urban disparities. Implementation rested with the Ministry of Interior and bypassed elected government in what many perceived as an explicit attempt to marginalize elected officials (Benchemsi 2010: 4). In this analysis, Mohamed VI re-inscribed himself as the sole legitimate authority in Moroccan society by presenting the monarchy as the savior of the poor while corrupt and ineffectual elected officials squandered the public trust. One official from an international finance institution characterized the INDH to me as a state territorialization strategy rather than a serious poverty alleviation effort. It was a way to further deepen state presence in areas historically suspicious of the central government.

The Mgoun valley was just such an area, at the same time marginalized and an object of state control. Kelaa's secret prison began as a storage depot, built by the French in 1929 when they founded Kelaa Mgouna as a staging ground for French efforts to quell the last resistance against Protectorate rule further to the east and as a way to control old trade routes through the mountains (Ait Hamza 1993: 127). The French finally conquered the south in 1933, though their presence remained light throughout the colonial period--they relied largely on proxies to govern the region¹. This strategy of state control but minimal governance reflected the French division of Morocco into "useful" and "useless" Morocco (*le Maroc utile et inutile*), a famously cynical approach to colonial authority that focused resources on zones deemed economically productive (Bidwell 1973). Those areas were the more fertile littoral plains given over to large colonization

¹ The French Protectorate officially spanned 1912-1956. Though the 19th Century represented a long and painful loss of sovereignty as Morocco became entangled in Great Power politics, foreign control over the south was late in coming. There is a substantial literature on this period; see, for example, Bidwell 1973, Burke 1976, Dunn 1977, Pennell 2000.

schemes and private French accumulation. Mountain areas and the pre-Saharan oases were considered of marginal economic value. Though the pre-Saharan southeast had a cosmopolitan past as a stop in the centuries-old trans-Saharan trade, the modern circuits of global capitalism provincialized the area. Low investment and economic marginalization persisted into the independence period, entrenching income inequalities and the heavily rural nature of poverty that characterize contemporary Morocco. At the same time, the Moroccan government had an increasing interest in asserting its authority in these peripheral areas. War and then lingering tension with Algeria after Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara in 1975 placed a particular importance on a visible state presence in border regions such as the southern oases.

By the time I arrived to do my research in 2010, the government had developed an economic program to redress income disparities that dovetailed with its longstanding territorialization goals. While the INDH built women's training centers and flour mills around Mgoun, cementing Mohamed VI's image as a compassionate leader, reforms promoted participatory local government, satisfying foreign donors' (especially the EU) interests in democratization processes. This move to deepen state authority in peripheral areas evokes Das and Poole's notion of the "margins of the state," an effort to "think beyond a simply spatial model of center and periphery [to build] a spatially and conceptually dispersed picture of the state" (Das and Poole 2004: 3). In this formulation, the margins "do not so much lie outside the state but rather, like rivers, run through its body" (13). This image underscores how Mgoun's marginality did not rest on the relative absence or presence of the state but on the quality of that presence. The prison loomed above the town, a reminder both of the state's centrality in the valley and the partial and exclusionary nature of state power.

Mapping poverty in Morocco

It is easy to attribute too much power to the French distinction between *le Maroc utile* and *inutile* in tracing the geographic contours of inequality and poverty in Morocco. The distinction is hardly the only reason why the rural peripheries are among the poorest areas of the

country but it does serve as a metonym for a complex set of processes that sedimented economic marginality along spatial lines. The image of "useful" and "useless" spaces based on their economic potential naturalized geographical difference, a construction that still holds great power. A 2004 World Bank report "reveals how a remarkably high degree of inequality is attributable to differences between geographic units, particularly in rural areas. This is no doubt due, at least in part, to the tremendous variation in terrain and geography that can be found in Morocco" (World Bank 2004: 26). Neither the World Bank nor the Moroccan government locates the reasons for poverty purely in the topography, but the ease of turning to geography elides how the French legacy of disinvestment in rural areas carried into the independence period. Geography matters but in socially and politically significant ways, not as an isolated set of ecological constraints.

Morocco is a middle income country with such striking inequalities that the economic and demographic profiles place the country in the lower third of the Human Development Index, a sensitive political issue in the country. In 2011, the per capita gross national income was \$2,850, placing Morocco in the rank of 140 out of 215 countries listed by the World Bank (World Bank 2011: 2). But this statistic tells us little about actual income dynamics in the country: in 2009, the government estimated that the richest 20% of the population earned 52.6% of total income, while the poorest 20% of the population earned only 5.4% (Royaume du Maroc 2009c:147). The tenacity of this inequality began to worry the government when structural adjustment reforms begun in the 1980s ushered in a period of increasing poverty and low growth. Morocco's adjustment measures were broadly similar to those elsewhere: subsidy cuts, fiscal reforms, reduced income supports, and privatization of state-owned companies, to name a few. As in many other countries, the reforms--combined with other grievances--spurred political unrest and did little to address Morocco's structural inequalities: the economic primacy of the littoral plains, the concentration of wealth among the monarchy and a small group of elite families, and the bifurcated structure of Moroccan agriculture, a subject to which I will return in the next

section.

The 1990s brought economic stagnation and worsened poverty. Throughout the decade, Morocco's average economic growth rate was 2.5%, the worst performance for the Middle East and North Africa region (World Bank 2006:1). Unemployment remained high, successive drought years depressed agricultural production, falling phosphate prices reduced foreign exchange receipts, and other factors kept growth rates low. Poverty increased from 13.1% in 1991 to 16.3% in 1999 (Royaume du Maroc 2006:8). The economy took a slight expansionary turn after 2000, with growth rates averaging 4% and poverty inching down to 14.2% between 2000-2004, but it was clear to the government that persistent poverty, high unemployment, and the tendency of economic growth to track high rainfall years meant the status quo could be politically as well as economically dangerous (Royaume du Maroc 2006: 8, World Bank 2006:2). The last half of the decade saw the development of a growth strategy focused on the strategic sectors of high value export agriculture, tourism, and "offshoring" for Europe. There was also a more concerted focus on reducing poverty, though advances in this area were due more to overall growth patterns, still largely driven by agricultural production, than specific anti-poverty policies. By 2007, the national poverty rate had fallen to 8.9% (4.8% in urban areas and 14.4% in rural areas), a function of strong harvest years, improved economic growth, higher tourism receipts, and a strong service sector generally (Royaume du Maroc 2009b: 2).

The latter half of the decade also ushered in efforts to track the spatiality of poverty. In 2007, the government developed a poverty map by combining census data with the results of the Household Living Standards Measurement Survey. Ouarzazate (where Kelaa Mgouna was located before the creation of Tinghir province in 2010) was the sixth poorest province (of 61), registering a poverty rate of 18%; two of the poorer provinces were also in the southeast (Zagora and Tata), while the remaining three were in the northern Rif mountains, another historically marginalized rural enclave (Royaume du Maroc 2010a: 6). Moving to the local level, the rural character of poverty becomes even more pronounced: the 2004 census registered a poverty rate of

14.1% for the municipality of Kelaa Mgouna (which included some surrounding villages, such as el Harte, my primary research site), 23.6% in the rural commune of Ait Sedrat Sahl Gharbia (location of el Bour n'Ait Yahya, my field site in the steppe outside of Kelaa), and 34.3% in Ighil Mgoun (location of Rbat/Imzilne, my field site in the mountains), making Ighil the 10th poorest commune out of a total of 1298 rural communes in all of Morocco (Royaume du Maroc 2004, Royaume du Maroc 2010a: 7). The government used a poverty line of 3,037 DH (approximately \$375) per person per year for rural areas, which the World Bank admits is "best viewed as conservative" (Litvack 2007: 214). I present these statistics on income poverty to place Mgoun's economic marginalization in national context rather than to make definitive conclusions about the incidence of absolute poverty. Table 3.1 offers another view from the perspective of landownership and the distribution of population in space. It shows how the vast majority of the rural population relies on agricultural production in the more marginal agro-ecological zones. Historically, government investment has been limited to the rain-fed plains and irrigated perimeters. As a result of this investment and more favorable agro-ecological conditions, these two zones are considered more productive and are the locus of Morocco's high-value, commercial production. Rural poverty is most closely associated with the less fertile soils and more uncertain conditions of the three other zones. The experience of poverty I encountered through fieldwork, however, was both more dynamic and more durable than numbers alone would suggest. It could swing wildly with crop failures or good harvests, new jobs, or a debilitating accident on a construction site, but it was also linked to resource endowments that stretched back generations.

Table 3.1: The five main agro-systems in Morocco: area, land ownership, and population²

	Mountains	Pre-Sahara and Sahara (oasis)	Semi-arid plains and plateaus	Rain-fed plains	Large irrigated perimeters	Total
Number of landholdings (farms)	437,000	85,000	520,000	288,000	100,000	1.493 million
Holdings of under 3 hectares (%)	65%	82%	44%	47%	47%	53%
Rural population (million)	3.72	0.86	5.12	3.05	(2)	12.75
Population engaged in agriculture (million)	2.68	0.57	3.71	1.90	(2)	8.87
Cultivable area (million hectares)	1.66	0.24	3.84	2.28	0.71	8.73
Irrigated area (million hectares)	0.22	0.14	0.08	0.10	0.71	1.25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/3 of cultivated area • 35% of irrigated area • 70% of holdings • 80% of agricultural population 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/3 of cultivated area • 65% of irrigated area • 30% of holdings • 20% of agricultural population 		

(2) There are no population estimates specifically attached to the large irrigated perimeters, which are agricultural zones served by centrally managed irrigation systems; the populations linked to them are assigned by the agricultural census to the rain-fed plains.

Source: Royaume du Maroc 2009a: 163

Useful and useless agriculture

*People here in Kelaa do not have a specialized knowledge of agriculture.
You cannot say that people know agriculture here. It is not modern.
Ministry of Agriculture official*

The statistics cited above played out in everyday discussions about the reasons and solutions for rural poverty in Mgoun. Like in so much of rural Morocco, discussions invariably turned to agriculture. Agriculture was simultaneously the reason for poverty, the obstacle to growth, and the only way out of poverty. At the local development planning meeting in which the ministry official gave the above assessment about local farmers, government officials struggled

² The term "agro-system" in Morocco is a geospatial characterization that primarily describes the type of land and irrigation/water availability in a particular zone. They roughly coincide with types of farming: agro-pastoralism (transhumance and intensive subsistence agriculture) in the mountains, intensive cultivation and livestock production in the oases, irregular cereal production and extensive pastoralism in the arid and semi-arid plains, cereal production in the rain-fed plains, and cereal production and high-value cultivation in the large irrigated perimeters. The term "agro-system" also constitutes a formal designation that determines eligibility for investment programs and which agricultural legal codes apply to a given area.

with how to stimulate agriculture not only to help people climb out of poverty, but also to prevent in-migration from the mountains above Kelaa. While these judgments reproduced an archaic developmentalist discourse about the stagnation of oasis agriculture, I was struck by the ministry official's discursive bind. He had a complex and empathic understanding of the dilemmas of agriculture in Mgoun. I had seen how hard he worked on behalf of local farmers and his underlying respect for them, but he felt discouraged by the fact that farming in Mgoun did not conform to government expectations regarding agriculture's role in economic growth or his understanding of what productive agriculture should be. He both reflected and critiqued the duality of "useful and useless" Morocco that had emerged during the Protectorate.

The ministry official was, in certain respects, right. Agriculture here was not modern, at least not according to the conceptions guiding Moroccan agricultural policy (in Chapter Six, I will critically examine what it means to have "modern" agriculture in this region). The division of Morocco into productive and unproductive sectors during the colonial period bifurcated agriculture into "modern" and "traditional" sectors. It was a discursive construction that guided patterns of investment. Massive irrigation perimeters were formed around consolidated tracts devoted to mechanized agriculture, while rain-fed agriculture, irrigated oases, and pastoral areas received virtually no government support. Will Swearingen details how this duality became more pronounced after independence in 1956 (Swearingen 1988). King Hassan's policy of a "thousand dams" inaugurated a massive infrastructural effort to direct water to industrial agriculture with "not a drop of water to the sea" (Swearingen 1988: 36). The policy benefited large landowners, not least the state itself, which became the country's largest landowner (holding approximately 1 million hectares) when it folded formerly colonized lands into state-owned enterprises rather than redistribute them to the dispossessed (Courade and Devèze 2006: 24; Pascon 1986).

The dam policy tried to conquer climatic uncertainty and food insecurity by channeling a

steady supply of water to the most fertile plains.³ But the bulk of cereal production--then as now--took place outside of these zones, grown by the majority rural population who were smallholders cultivating rain-fed lands (Swearingen 1992). In the Mgoun valley, all agriculture is irrigated, but it is not the state-managed irrigation of the large perimeters. The small irrigation works, as they are called, involve traditional irrigation canals directing water from mountain-fed rivers and managed by centuries of customary law. But it is firmly in the *inutile* part of Morocco, receiving little in the way of government investment, and subject to the same climactic uncertainty--when the rains do not come, the rivers run dry. Morocco has always suffered because of frequent drought and the climactic uncertainty characteristic of disequilibrium systems but drought has become an increasingly pressing problem. Benassi describes how "the frequency of periods, the intensity and duration of drought have increased over the past three decades," while the "average annual precipitation...experienced a decrease of about 15% nationally during the period 1971-2000" (Benassi 2008:85). Although there is no official threshold for drought, the government bases its statistics on an agricultural definition linked to cereal production rather than absolute precipitation amounts. By this method, Morocco experienced drought for 10 out of the 25 years preceding 2005 (rains between 2005-2010 were relatively strong) (World Bank 2007: iv). Thus, while agricultural policy favored large schemes and large landholders, the majority of rural residents coped with climactic variability on their own. The "modern" and "traditional" sectors were reified along spatial lines, with rain-fed uplands, mountain regions, and the pre-Saharan oases marginalized in agricultural development plans.

With structural adjustment in the 1980s, the government stepped back from this strategy, as did most other countries in an era of fiscal austerity and more fine-tuned agricultural strategies focused on specific commodity chains. By the late 2000s, however, the Moroccan government returned to agriculture as a central feature of its national economic growth strategy. In 2008, the

³ Food insecurity here is defined on the national level as reliance on imported staples, especially the strategically important wheat.

government announced the Morocco Green Plan (*Plan Maroc Vert, or PMV*), an ambitious plan to transform agriculture into the "principal motor of growth for the Moroccan economy" (Ghiche 2009:2). The PMV included subsidy programs, public-private partnerships, incentives to attract private investment, and funding to strengthen the comparative advantage of each agricultural region. The goal was to generate MAD 100 million in gross domestic product annually, improve farmer incomes, and bolster national food self-sufficiency (Ghiche 2009:2).

As one Ministry official described to me, the Plan Maroc Vert was "a philosophy" of governance and investment that "simplified value chains" so that private capital could more easily flow into agriculture. The plan had the hallmarks of neoliberal agricultural policy, but it was not simply imported from an abstract global model or orchestrated by the World Bank through its concessionary loan programs. Aihwa Ong reminds us to pay attention the tensions between national and international neoliberalisms, and the pervasive use of the term as a catchall for virtually any aspect of contemporary capitalism and governance has obscured the specific genealogies of neoliberalism in different contexts. (Ong 2006: 92). In the case of Morocco, the PMV internalized globally circulating discourses about the importance of high-value exports, but it also reflected domestic concerns about the political risks of ignoring rural poverty and the economic vulnerabilities caused by low productivity outside the large irrigated perimeters. The plan was designed to showcase Moroccan sovereignty: in the media, proponents of the PMV evinced pride that this was a home-grown strategy for Moroccan development, not one imposed from outside donors or finance institutions.

The PMV and the political calculations that it represents are complex, but here I emphasize two somewhat paradoxical implications of this new agricultural policy for Mgoun's positioning on the margins of the state. First, it opened up the national space to new kinds of calculations and operations of government. If, to use broad strokes, colonial and post-colonial policies focused on the highly productive areas while neglecting the other categories of land and agriculture, the PMV represented a new approach that examined each agro-ecological region for

what kind of value could be extracted. The Ministry of Agriculture examined land statistics and saw untapped potential, especially in the vast collectively owned lands, some of which could be turned over for cultivation and the rest which could be "valorized" through other means, especially commercial livestock production. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 present a statistical view of this potential. Table 3.2 shows the evolution of arable land--here defined as land used specifically for cultivation--between the agricultural censuses of 1973 and 1996, showing a substantial increase in cultivation of collectively owned land (historically devoted to extensive pastoralism), and a concomitant increase in private freehold.

Table 3.2: Evolution of tenure status in hectares and by percentage of total arable land, all Morocco

Status	1973		1996	
	Hectares	% Arable land	Hectares	% Arable land
Collective lands	1,009,900	14.0%	1,534,654	17.6%
Private freehold (<i>Melk</i>)	5,374,000	74.3%	6,608,966	75.8%
Pre-colonial royal concessions (<i>Guich</i>)	319,200	4.4%	240,441	2.8%
Religious endowment (<i>Habous</i>)	83,700	1.2%	58,843	0.7%
State owned	445,000	6.1%	270,001	3.1%
Total arable land	7,231,400		8,712,905	100%

Source: Banque Mondiale 2008:7

Table 3.3 places these data in the context of Morocco's total land area. Government plans for the PMV focused on the 12 million hectares of collectively owned land that by virtue of topography or rainfall is unsuited to cultivation. The goal was to put as much of it as possible to "productive use" by mobilizing 700,000 hectares of collectively owned land over ten years (Ministry of Agriculture official, personal communication, July 12, 2010). Though plan documents are vague on whether that involves rangeland conversion for cultivation or expanded livestock projects, the goal worried some observers, from World Bank officials to local Ministry of Agriculture representatives in Kelaa. They expressed concern about the environmental implications and economic risks of promoting cultivation on such vast tracts of steppe. The same Kelaa official

critiquing the traditionalism of local agriculture expressed frustration that his staff were trying to support transhumance as an appropriate use of the collectively owned rangelands at the same time that the national government encouraged people cultivate that land. Thus, the PMV opened up the steppe surrounding Mgoun to new forms of valuation and investment, and local residents became concerned about how that value would be extracted and exported out of the region.

Table 3.3: Distribution of total land area of Morocco by legal status⁴

Status	Area (hectares)	%	Managing authority
Collective lands	12,000,000	41.6	Ministry of the Interior (Direction of Rural Affairs)
Private freehold (<i>Melk</i>)	8,000,000	27.7	N.A.
Pre-colonial royal concessions (<i>Guich</i>)	210,000	0.7	Ministry of Interior and Ministry of the Economy and Finance
Religious endowment (<i>Habous</i>)	100,000	0.3	Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs
State owned (including forest land)	8,565,000	29.6	Ministry of Equipment, Ministry of the Economy and Finance, High Commission for Water and Forests
Total	28,875,000	100.0	

Source: Banque Mondiale 2008:2.

The second implication of the PMV was in tension with the first. Despite the PMV's goal of reducing rural poverty, the program ended up re-inscribing the binary *le Maroc utile et inutile*. The bulk of incentives were directed at encouraging private sector investment in high-value crops, which resulted in the de facto exclusion of small-holders whose production did not meet the minimum threshold for subsidies. The PMV addressed this group through a secondary funding portfolio, entitled "Solidarity Agriculture," which followed a more traditional rural development model: some subsidies, "aggregation" of smallholders into organizational units similar to cooperatives, and projects aimed at enhancing the value of specific *produits de terroir* (traditional food or agricultural products associated with a particular region). Local Ministry of Agriculture officials felt the plan shortchanged farmers in areas like Mgoun. Very few, if any,

⁴ Discrepancies in the data between the two tables are due to: the difference between arable land and total surface area, changes in the amount of land brought under cultivation between the last agricultural census and the more recent study used to produce table 3.3, and changes in the ownership regime of land. I was not able to disaggregate these data to account for the relative importance of these processes.

investment projects or farmers in the valley would ever qualify for PMV support, even in the "Solidarity Agriculture" program, because of their small size and subsistence orientation. A number of Ministry employees sighed that the plan would not improve the situation of agriculture in marginalized areas such as Mgoun, both because of the limited financial support directly available to farmers and because their office had too few resources and staff to adequately implement the programs that the PMV did bring to the area.

Through all the winding paths that agricultural policy had taken in the past century, residents of Mgoun found themselves in a remarkably stable position vis-à-vis the state by the time I conducted my research in 2010. Even though state territorialization strategies had increased the government's role in everyday life, people received little if any support and did not expect it. One el Harte resident from one of the village's most successful farming families expressed it succinctly. Though he was born long after the agricultural tax imposed during the colonial period was lifted, he remarked that all the state did when it "came" to el Harte was "take and take and take."

Agriculture and the state in Mgoun

Though it is important to consider this national context, people in Mgoun did not pay great attention to all the discussions about how to redress Mgoun's peripheral status through increased agricultural production or participatory development planning. People with the wherewithal --literate and confident enough to approach the extension officers --were happy to apply for government subsidies to sink a well or buy PVC pipes. But no one waited for government support in their effort to secure upward mobility, and new economic dynamics were transforming the region outside formal circuits of state intervention. This became apparent when I observed the tension around roses.

El Harte was one of the villages surrounding the market town of Kelaa Mgouna that produced one of the odiferous roses (*rosa damascena*) European manufacturers use for cosmetics. The PMV settled on roses as one of the *produits de terroir* that would be the focus of its

development plan for Mgoun. But increasing production would take a concerted campaign. Agriculture officials and visiting researchers regularly lamented the stagnation of rose production: how farmers were decreasing, not increasing the area under rose cultivation and seemed indifferent to improving the quantity and quality of the area's one export crop. The researchers and officials tended to attribute this situation to farmers' lack of awareness of modern techniques. As people recounted to me, however, the problem was not in their techniques but in the rose itself. Few households were interested in devoting more resources to it: the prices were low and the crop had few local uses, other than delineating field boundaries.

And women, who were responsible for the harvesting, hated roses. I went out with Fatima as she and her sisters used hand sickles to pull down the thorny branches, swiftly picked off the small blooms, and tucked them in their folded *tajdat* (large overdress that women knotted and draped over their shoulders to carry harvested crops). Few people could afford gloves, meaning the sticky resin from the roses seeped into the cuts from the thorns. When the *tajdat*s were full, the women guided them into a burlap sack, hoisted the sack on their shoulders, and sold the roses to the buyer for the rose processing factory in Kelaa who had set up in the village for the month. They would do this circuit every day, about 5 hours a day, for the month, moving from their fields to the fields of extended family with whom they did labor exchanges. Each time we came upon a new plot, I asked who it belonged to in an attempt to map ownership and labor exchange relations. At one point, the women shrugged their shoulders and said, "someone in Casablanca--we take care of his fields and when he comes back in the summer, we give him half the harvest, or his money from the sale." In other words, they sharecropped the land.

The rose harvest and Fatima's involvement with it, offers a window into how state strategies for agricultural development simply bypassed the way people practiced farming and struggled for upward mobility in Mgoun. Her family was one of the few in the village that did not have a migrant working abroad or in Moroccan cities, and they lived off their agricultural income even though they had minimal holdings. Her family supplemented their holdings by renting

religious endowment (*habous*) land and sharecropping for migrants in the cities. They strategically planted high value vegetables such as turnips, cilantro, and tomatoes for the high seasons--Ramadan and the annual return of migrants, who came in August for family visits and weddings--because of the surge in household expenditures and resulting high prices. Fatima's family made charcoal from trees on their land for sale during the high seasons, and they stored other crops or ancillary products until their prices rose. And they relied on the labor of Fatima, her mother, four sisters, and a host of other female relatives to provide agricultural labor. Their unpaid work was a crucial element in the family's agricultural operation because it eliminated labor costs. The women ensured that the family did not miss on the cash from the rose harvest, but the truly lucrative income opportunities came from vegetables and tree crops sold in Kelaa and to migrant families. Even if Fatima's family had no migrants, their ability to live off of agriculture depended to a large extent on the centrality of migration to the regional economy. However much the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to promote rose as a cash crop, it simply could not compete with the economic impact of migration.

A number of scholars have described the impact of migration on the economy and society of southern Morocco (Ait Hamza 2002, de Haas 2006, Ensel 1999, Ilahiane 2001 and 2004). In the late 1960s, an entrepreneurial labor recruiter, a legendary Frenchman by the name of Mora, singlehandedly enlisted thousands of workers from throughout southern Morocco to work in northern French coal mines. There had been a long tradition of mobility and migration in the region--some elderly men told me of their grandfathers working on French farms in colonial Algeria in the late 19th century. But it was the post-World War II labor shortage in Europe that instigated unprecedented levels of out migration. Racially subjugated groups used migration as an opportunity to escape the oppressive conditions and poverty of indentured sharecropping. They sent home their remittances both to provide for their families' basic needs and to buy land. Owning land was an important political statement, allowing these groups to exercise power in ways they hadn't before: through electoral politics, demanding a role in customary institutions,

and other forms of economic clout, such as establishing commercial enterprises (Ilahiane 2001).

This clout also undermined sharecropping, the dominant institution that defined social hierarchies and drove the social organization of agricultural production until the 1970s. As migrants withdrew their labor, sharecroppers who remained were emboldened to demand a higher percentage of the harvest: the traditional arrangement of receiving 1/5 of the harvest was so well established that it (*khoms* or fifth) served as the name for the institution itself.⁵ That percentage was pushed up to 1/2 by the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the institution began a secular decline in importance overall throughout southern Morocco. One man from the family of regional overlords in the mountains recounted to me how they historically employed scores of sharecroppers on their land, but since the mid 1990s, had to hire agricultural labor for wages. "The amount you make in one year as a sharecropper you now get in 2-3 months of working outside [*barra*, which could mean working in Moroccan cities or abroad]. People find work in the cities so they don't have to serve as sharecroppers anymore." In one generation, migration had effectively dismantled racial and ethnic hierarchies based on sharecropping, allowing an economic escape for subjugated groups whose continued ties to their home translated into economic investment, political engagement, and for many, eventual return to the region (Iskander 2010).

It was not only the emancipation of subjugated groups that transformed the social, economic, and political landscape of Mgoun. Whereas in other regions black subjugated groups constituted the overwhelming majority of the émigrés, in Mgoun, white Berber and black, rich and poor left. Mora, the French recruiter, did not use race-based criteria to enlist workers. Men from the region's powerful families worked in the mines of Calais alongside poor black émigrés. This new avenue to mobility allowed former sharecroppers to secure their economic and political

⁵ See Ilahiane 2001. The term for sharecropper (*khmas*) had a pejorative meaning for some of my interlocutors because of its tainted past of racial subjugation. One Berber activist I spoke to explicitly rejected it as racist; he drew these historical meanings into contemporary struggles for Berber cultural autonomy in the face of Arab domination, asserting that "only Arabs still use that term."

independence, but it also allowed influential families to guard their stature just as the region's insertion into national and global economic circuits threatened to erode their traditional privileges. The impact of migration was also felt regardless of the absolute numbers of émigrés in any given village. Only three men from el Harte were part of the initial cohort of émigrés who left with Mora--at the time of my research, two of the three men had returned to el Harte to head prominent farming families and the other continued to send remittances from Holland for his now well-off relatives.⁶ But they were the vanguard of subsequent waves of emigration to Europe and, when the doors of European immigration began to close in the late 1990s, to Moroccan cities.

The impact of migration was wide-reaching in sometimes surprising ways. Migration may have emancipated labor, but sharecropping did not disappear--it lingered in a new form alongside a diverse array of land ownership and usufruct regimes. When black groups began to refuse sharecropping arrangements, traditional patrons abandoned agriculture for lack of labor, relied more heavily on family labor, or began hiring immigrants from a neighboring tribal confederation (the *Imaghran*) who fled drought and poverty in the mountains. The 1980s ushered in an interesting inversion whereby Imaghran from the uplands began to represent the majority of sharecroppers down in the steppe--they were racially white and historically freemen but at the lowest rung of the socio-economic spectrum because of their outsider status and poverty.⁷ The stigma attached to the institution also meant that new forms of sharecropping that had emerged in the past three decades were not labeled as such. I repeatedly encountered people, such as Fatima's family, who "took care" of others' land under arrangements strikingly similar to sharecropping. Sharecropping had shifted in its meaning as a social mechanism for subjugation into a more differentiated institution for sharing risk and compensating for labor shortages. For migrants interested in sustaining membership in the community, keeping land in production was a key

⁶ Many émigrés moved to Holland to escape the dire working conditions in French mines.

⁷ This development did not mean the end of racial tension. Some in el Harte surmised that people in the historically dominant village of Qla'a next door were happy to substitute the Imaghran for black sharecroppers because it allowed them to hire only whites and not even deal with blacks anymore.

means of signaling active interest in their land claims and holding their place in social networks. In an ironic twist, migration had both dismantled sharecropping and kept it alive as a strategy for émigrés to remain involved in agriculture back home.

Migration also transformed the regional economy through a series of multiplier effects. Remittances injected capital into agriculture and the ability to accept the risk embedded in these new investments. Remittances also reshaped consumption. Farming households began to introduce new cropping combinations to meet the higher demand for vegetables and commercially available produce. As de Haas describes for the Todgha valley 200 kilometers away, migration spurred the growth of a regional economy centered on market towns at the base of mountain valleys, a new set of consumption patterns, and the exponential growth of related commercial activity (de Haas 2006). Remittances monetized the local economy in new ways, permitting the growth of the local construction sector and other commercial enterprises. Returned migrants like Abdelhafid bought agricultural land in el Harte and when he was satisfied with his holdings, built two houses in Kelaa as investments and places for his expanding family to move. Two of his sons ran shops on the ground floor of his houses because, as he phrased it, "not everyone wants to farm, and the land cannot hold everyone anyway." Many others set up second or third residences in Kelaa and structured non-farm economic activities around the new dynamics of the market town. The result was surge in demand for land in Kelaa and higher valuation of agricultural land in the surrounding towns that supplied produce to the market.

These multiplier effects meant that many non-migrants were able to capitalize on the new regional dynamics to secure upward mobility or protect their status. My landlord, Youssef, was one of the wealthiest and most influential men in town, but according to an elderly Amazigh patriarch, he began by "stealing corn from our fields," a pejorative reference to his family's low status as black sharecroppers. Youssef had begun amassing his wealth by receiving remittances from workers in France and traveling to deliver the money to families dispersed throughout the valley. Kelaa had no bank in those early years and transport was poor, allowing him to hold onto

the cash for varying periods and to use it as working capital to buy commercial properties and start his own construction business. Other historically influential families were able to preserve their status by deftly seizing opportunities offered by others' migration experiences. Some of the large landed families that had previously acquired property through seizures or desperation sales began buying land from families who had lost sharecroppers to migration and decided to exit agriculture (few departing migrants sold land if they had it). Others from more modest situations learned trades such as carpentry or car repair and set up in Kelaa to service the growing economy.

Mgoun experienced what de Haas calls "rural urbanisation," a process whereby migrants invested outside of their natal villages but within the region (2009: 1583). New poles of attraction for regional migrants emerged as populations coalesced around market towns, but migration also allowed people to stay still. Rather than depopulating the three major migration "belts" (the southeastern oases, the southwestern Anti-Atlas mountains, and the northern Rif mountains), migrant outflows enabled family members to stay in the village or at least in the area (de Haas 2007: 12). It is hard to overstate the importance of migration for Mgoun and the country as a whole. In 2004, "out of a population of 30 million, close to 3 million people of Moroccan descent lived abroad" (de Haas 2009: 1572). The country was the fifth largest recipient of remittances in the developing world--an estimated \$4.2 billion in 2004--and the largest recipient in per capita terms (de Haas 2007: 5). The government has long been acutely aware of the importance of remittances, developing various mechanisms to try to direct more of those resources through formal banking channels.⁸ At the local level, however, the regional transformations precipitated by migration had assumed a dynamic of their own, largely independent of the participatory development plans and agricultural growth strategies laid out by government officials. Programs to encourage rose production in an effort to increase agricultural incomes seemed oddly out of step with the ferment of activity in farming and other commercial sectors driven by remittances. People had understood their historical marginality in Morocco's geography of power. It was that

⁸ See Iskander 2010 and Brand 2006 for a description of some of these programs.

marginality that made this region so attractive to labor recruiters, and offered opportunities for upward mobility. They repatriated their money and eventually themselves, creating economic dynamics that bypassed the state, just as they felt the state had bypassed them.

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Chapter IV--Customary institutions and the social life of rural capitalism in Mgoun

How could they say I didn't have the right to sell? I created that land--there would be no land if it weren't for me!

Haj Hsain

Haj Hsain was an elderly notable who received visitors in his richly appointed salon overlooking the oasis gardens, a dense patchwork of fields planted with wheat, rose bushes, and a mix of fig, apricot, pomegranate, almond, and olive trees. I passed by his home almost daily as I walked across the footbridge over the Mgoun River and wended my way through the village of Qla'a to get to el Harte, my primary research site. Until my visit to Haj Hsain, I had not met anyone from Qla'a, the home to the Berber overlords (*amghar*) who had historically dominated the lower reaches of the Mgoun valley. Haj Hsain was one of their descendents who continued to hold considerable influence. He recounted to me how he had established a farm on the outskirts of el Harte when he returned from working in France in the mid-1970s. People thought he was odd to claim nearly eight hectares of land--a huge tract by local standards--in the uncultivated steppe of el Bour, the rocky plain surrounding the agricultural fields of the village. At that time, he added, "the people of el Harte did not want land--they were not farmers," eliding their long history of sharecropping. It was common for families from Qla'a and other Amazigh villages to own land in el Harte with el Hartis serving as their sharecroppers.

When Haj Hsain established his farm in el Bour, he convened a lunch with el Harte's local governing council to propose a communal effort to extend the irrigation canal that ran through Qla'a and el Harte into the steppe--the customary mode of seeking permission and participation in a project with communal benefits. Though the canal would flow through private land, it was considered a collective resource and even if community members in el Harte did not contribute financially, they still needed to approve the extension. They did approve, but only a handful of people volunteered to join him in the effort. Only when they saw his success, he remarked, did people in el Harte begin to join him in the steppe. But by the time residents of el Harte started farming in el Bour in the 1980s, his wife had died and he decided to return to Qla'a.

He sold his land to migrants from Imaghran (a neighboring valley and different tribal confederation) who were escaping drought and poor livelihood prospects in the mountains. The sale of such a large tract to outsiders evoked the ire of many community members in el Harte. They felt that Haj Hsain did not have the right to sell his land to the Imaghran; that if he left, he needed to return that land to the community of el Harte. The way he saw it, "I *created* this land," when he extended irrigation into the uncultivated pastures surrounding the village, creating the possibility for agriculture and giving value to the land beyond the confines of his own property. The dispute ended up in the courts and dragged on for years, long after the former farm had been settled by the Imaghran, and was eventually decided in Haj Hsain's favor. The Imaghran would stay in el Harte.

By the time I conducted my fieldwork in 2010, this dispute had been resolved for some time, but it was clearly an important episode in the recent history of the two villages, emblematic of the transformations in economic and political hierarchies that were gathering steam just as Haj Hsain sold his land in the 1980s. He himself saw daily evidence of these changes, as mules carrying produce from el Harte made their way to the market in Kelaa on the pathway in front of his house. Laden with cilantro, turnips, squash, pumpkins, and other vegetables, the mules carefully navigated the steep incline down to the river and patiently stepped across the rocky river bed in an effort to balance their loads. Most of the farmers bringing goods to market had harvested their yield out in el Bour, the former steppe initially converted into farmland by Haj Hsain. The image of this harvest bounty on its way to market contrasted sharply with that of the communal meeting in the 1970s when only two or three people expressed interest in extending the irrigation canal. From the period when no one "wanted" that land to 2010 when I frequented the pathway, the village had experienced an unprecedented surge in commercial agricultural production as people integrated newly converted steppe into expanded farming operations in the oasis.

The legacy of Haj Hsain's "creation" of agricultural land in el Bour frames this chapter on the role of institutions in how people accessed land as a productive resource in Mgoun. I focus on el Harte, the epicenter of the surge in commercial agricultural production, and on the role of customary institutions in the social, economic, and political transformations of the second half of the 20th century. In order to understand how households structured their livelihoods and land use, it is important to place those strategies in institutional context: both the socially embedded rules and juridical practices that framed their universe of possibility and the ways people influenced how those rules and practices would evolve. I argue that customary institutions in Mgoun did not simply respond to change, they were central in shaping the direction of the economic and social transformations I detail throughout my dissertation.

Scholars in the rural development and agrarian change traditions have tended to reify customary institutions as operating outside of a market or capitalist logic. To caricature the divergent perspectives, customary institutions either impede agricultural investment by denying tenure security and access to credit or they represent one of the last sites of resistance to the inevitable integration into and domination by neoliberal rationality.¹ In this chapter, I challenge the notion of customary institutions as relics--representing the past to capitalism's present and future--to explore how they *mediate* between capitalist and non-capitalist modalities of production, exchange, and even governance. Instead of serving as capitalism's other, customary institutions index the complex articulations between diverse economic assemblages.

I deploy the idea of diverse economies in order to highlight the contingency and multivalence of these articulations. Gibson-Graham develop the concept of diverse economies to

¹ Jean Philippe Platteau (1996) collected evidence largely from mainstream economic studies to empirically and theoretically contest these claims, at least as they relate to the role of property rights in agricultural and economic growth. This critique is now widely accepted, even within development circles (see Peters 2009), but many of the premises of the advocates for privatization have lived on in other guises, such as the much celebrated de Soto 2000. The opposing perspective tends to see customary institutions as subsumed to capitalism. More recent variations of this perspective emerge in iterations of the food sovereignty and peasant resistance movements, though they tend to take an explicit political stance in defense of customary institutions rather than a pessimistic acceptance that they must be eclipsed as a necessary step in the evolution of capitalism. See McMichael 2008 for an overview of these movements.

describe an "economic landscape... populated by a myriad of contingent forms and interactions" (Gibson-Graham 2006: 5). Agentive capitalism does not simply wash over passive customary institutions with a dominance so total that it "has no outside" (Gibson-Graham 2006: 2) but rather articulates with these contingent forms. Gibson-Graham's concept challenges the idea that the changes that I observed in Mgoun represented a clash of unitary modes of production--a pre-capitalist formation confronted by agrarian capitalism--and instead focuses analytic attention on the diverse practices and institutions that mediated how people experienced economic transformation.

The lunches that Haj Hsain described were still being held in 2010. Community leaders in el Harte periodically gathered at the home of a petitioner, who made a formal offering of couscous, the staple stew (*tagine*), and fruits from oasis trees as a precursor to a request for an allocation of communal land or approval for a project that had implications for the rest of the village. This practice joined the many other procedures, rituals, and routines that shaped the formal contours of customary institutions and their informal reach into the social life of this rural community. These practices represented much more than mere persistence. The residents of el Harte forged agriculture as a viable livelihood strategy not by dismantling customary institutions but by reinforcing them. In particular, people worked through customary land tenure regimes to prevent the full commoditization of land in order to permit the growth of commercial agriculture. On a practical level, maintaining non-market ways of accessing land and mobilizing labor or other inputs reduced production costs, a topic to which I will return in Chapter Six. In a broader sense, customary institutions channeled the new possibilities--and exclusions--of commercial agriculture in such a way as to buttress networks of social reciprocity. In this case, customary institutions and rural capitalism were mutually imbricated as conditions of possibility for one another.

In el Harte, what enabled customary institutions to endure as non-capitalist practice was not their ability to serve as a bulwark against capitalism but their role in mediating the way

capitalism was integrated into social life. Jane Guyer's description of these processes in West Africa is apt for the Moroccan context as well: "transactional institutions [in this case institutions regulating access to land] do not form mutually entailed systems but rather relatively open repertoires. New institutions can be added, without necessarily eliminating the precedents... People preserve the repertoire, rather than 'rationalizing' it into a system, Weberian style" (Guyer 2004: 98). In el Harte, the emergence of commercial agriculture engendered a plurality of tenure institutions. Community leaders and successful petty commodity producers actively reinforced the authority of customary tenure regimes in an attempt to preserve this diverse repertoire of institutions. Cognizant of the boundaries between capitalist and non-capitalist practice, they used these boundaries to practice a form of cultural arbitrage, creating social and economic value through the negotiation of diverse economic rationalities. This was at times a difficult process and could be highly conflictual. The shifting configuration of tenure regimes and agricultural production offered new opportunities for social reciprocity but also cemented the marginalized position of newcomers and the landless. Diverse economies can represent a redemptive struggle to break free of capitalism's disciplinary power, but in this case, el Harte's alternative economic space simultaneously magnified the exclusionary tendencies of customary institutions and reinforced the norms of reciprocity embedded in those institutions.

My argument proceeds by exploring the antecedents of the plurality that characterized the institutions governing land and labor in el Harte. Historically, customary institutions mediated the relationship between individual and the collective property, positioning these institutions well for a new kind of mediating role with the advent of commercial agriculture. Second, I detail the emergence of a diverse economy in el Harte based on the partial commoditization of land and the reinforcement of customary authority. Finally, I explore the tensions between exclusion and social reciprocity that these processes engendered in el Harte. It is difficult to map resistance or acquiescence to the authority of customary institutions when these institutions indexed such multivalent meanings. By adopting Guyer's notion of "transactional institutions," institutions that

harness and convert value through negotiated relationships rather than codified rules, I emphasize that the material importance of institutions in shaping people's access to land resided at least in part on the fluidity of these institutions. Rather than falling into clearly bounded categories like "capitalist" or "customary," tenure institutions actualized the value and mediated the social relations embedded in land in different ways through time and across various configurations of power.

Situating the private and the collective in a rural tenure regime

The label "customary institutions" imposes an image of organizational coherence onto an array of practices and formations that range from formalized procedures governed by political authorities to embodied cultural understandings. The label also implies a categorical distinction that separates "customary" from capitalist, modern, or formal institutions. People in el Harte did not experience such distinctions as immutable or even all that important. They negotiated different institutional modalities with an understanding that diverse institutional regimes may apply depending on the situation, resource, or actors in question and they invoked whichever regime seemed appropriate or advantageous.

I came to this conclusion early in my fieldwork, when I tallied landholdings in the village as part of my effort to map household resource ownership. In addition to individual interviews, I sat with the collective land representative, who could recite the holdings of all 133 households in town: he knew people's holdings because he not only made decisions about allocating communal lands, but he also adjudicated disputes and oversaw the division of assets after the death of a patriarch. I also visited the irrigation manager (*amghar u igran*), Abdallah, who headed one of my case study households. He knew everyone's land holdings because as irrigation manager, it was his responsibility to make sure everyone respected their *nuba*, their turn in the time allocation system that governed when and for how long people could release water from the main irrigation canals onto their plots. A given household's *nuba* was linked to the land they owned. His tally matched the collective land representative's almost exactly, to the person and the size of the

holding. The men had come to this knowledge by virtue of their leadership in customary institutions. The thickness of social ties and people's movements throughout the dispersed fields meant that most el Hartis knew which field belonged to whom, but the two customary leaders garnered particular respect for their expansive knowledge of the village landscape. When questions or disputes arose, both men often stepped in as mediators because of that authority.

They also served as a mediating presence between other, more "formal" institutions. El Harte's main irrigation canal originated 3 kilometers up the valley, at a diversionary dam that directed water from the Mgoun River into a complex network of canals servicing five villages before it terminated in the steppe outside of el Harte. Theoretically, the main canal had been managed by a water user association (WUA) since 2004. The Ministry of Agriculture required the creation of a WUA as a criterion for funding a cement lining that ran the length of the main canal. But the WUA did not supplant the customary institutions governing irrigation. When Abdallah yawned in the middle of our interview about landholding, he explained that he had been up in the middle of the night because the diversionary dam had broken and he needed to rush up river to resolve the problem. Was this not the responsibility of the WUA, I asked? He paused to consider the answer and said that the WUA was there for when they needed to deal with the Ministry of Agriculture, but the customary irrigation manager was there for actually making the irrigation system work for farmers and communities. "We respect what the other does, but we each do different things."

The continuing efficacy of customary institutions lay at least in part on their sensitivity to the way different modes of ownership interacted across different resources, especially land and water. In this context, "customary" did not equate with "communal" but rather governed how private and communal systems related to one another. This role was particularly important for land tenure. Throughout pre-Saharan Morocco, customary tenure institutions have historically regulated access to land through two primary mechanisms: by subsuming private landownership to collective governance and by policing the boundaries between insider-outsider so that only

community members could access village lands. Historically, freehold tenure was well established in the Mgoun valley and throughout the southern oases. Individuals could transfer land through sale and inheritance, and in theory held the exclusive rights to use the land and enjoy its products. However, these rights did not exist apart from collective modes of regulating land and resource use. As in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, where individual tenure existed alongside or nested within communal forms, customary regimes presided over an institutional and legal pluralism (Benjaminsen and Lund 2001, Berry 1993, Peters 2004). In southern Morocco, local village councils governed the disposition of private property in relation to other forms of ownership and natural resource use. They regulated land use, the maintenance of irrigation canals, and a myriad of other issues related to rights of way and the collective impacts of private use.² Housing had to be built outside of arable zones, and while the councils did not dictate cropping decisions, they arbitrated disputes about trees impinging on property, field boundaries, and the like. They also appointed field monitors to preside over the shifting precedence of landowner rights and communal prerogatives. Anyone had access to the weeds growing alongside irrigation canals for use as forage and gleaning was an accepted practice. After harvest, community members could help themselves or their animals to crop residues left in others' fields but during the rest of the growing period such gleaning became crop theft, subject to penalties imposed by community consensus.

The councils therefore regulated access to and management of natural resources in a way that expressed the communal--rather than the private land owner--as the ultimate referent for land use and disposition. In this role, the councils also served as the ultimate arbiter of who was a member of the community. The people of el Harte were not supposed to sell land to outsiders.

² Historically, irrigation management represented a highly complex dimension of oasis farming systems – water constituted both a communal resource flowing through private lands and a privately owned or appropriated resource (people owned shares or slots of irrigation time) with collective implications. In Mgoun, land and water were "married" and could not be transferred independently but this is not true of other systems. See Hammoudi's classic treatment of water rights in the Dra' Valley of southern Morocco (1985).

Outsiders (*Idd barra*) included anyone who could not trace their origins to the community and the local council would approve or disqualify private sales if there was a question about the status of the buyer. This injunction was more of a guiding principle than an accurate reflection of who actually owned land in the complex patchwork of holdings situated at the intersection of multiple communities. One day, my research assistant, Mustafa, and I approached the home of an elderly woman to interview her about the history of the village's place names. We sat on the bank of an irrigation canal in front of her house; her daily routine was to open her bright blue metal door in the mid-morning to signal that she was free to receive visitors and so we waited by the canal for the door to open. Mustafa laughed when he noticed a small cement lined irrigation canal crossing over the deeper unlined canal we were sitting near and asked me, "do you know what this is?" When I shook my head, he explained the complicated dispute that culminated in the construction of the cement bridge. The deeper canal "belonged" to a neighboring village--while canals were not formally private property, communities and individuals could dig canals to bring water to their land. Normally, community members from the surrounding villages would not own land in el Harte, but at some point in the past a group from this other village was given property to compensate for land they lost in order to dig another canal that benefited el Harte. Disagreements over how deep and where their canal should run resulted in the dueling structures beside us. Mustafa explained that even though they were not supposed to sell or allocate land to outsiders, many outsiders did in fact own property in el Harte. In some cases, the property was compensation and in other cases, families held land as a historic hold-over from a time when dominant Imazighen seized land and indentured black sharecroppers. Those seizures had stopped over a half century ago though no one had considered demanding restitution; the land simply belonged to those families, many of whom sold their property when migration started in the 1970s and sharecropping declined, removing their primary source of labor.³

³ Many of the Imazighen who had been landowners in the pre-migration period sold land when sharecropping broke apart and opted not to substitute that labor with wage workers or unpaid family labor

Individual property rights therefore existed in dynamic relationship to commonly held resources such as irrigation canals. They also existed in dynamic relationship to other forms of land tenure. In el Harte, the local governing council not only regulated private property, it was the institution that *created* private property and presided over the transition of land from one ownership status to the other. Historically, the council administered land that was not already privately held as a collective resource of the community. Most of this land was in the *horm* (protected space), the area surrounding the cultivated fields and forming a customary boundary with the collectively-owned rangeland. The council allocated land from this unused space to original residents who needed land. Outsiders were not eligible to receive these free allocations. Once that land was appropriated, its status shifted from communal land to freehold, and the owners could dispose of it as they pleased, though the outsider injunction still applied.

While the council would serve as the ultimate authority in allocating land to individual households, there were other instances in which people could simply develop the land without a formal petition for a plot. After Haj Hsain, the notable who opened my account, extended cultivation into el Bour, a number of farming families joined him in the steppe and plowed under the rocky expanse to begin the long process of planting trees, applying manure, and sowing leguminous crops to render the soil fertile. One man described how when his family moved out to el Bour in the 1970s, "there was no irrigation and the area was dangerous [*wa'ir*, meaning wild and uncultivated]. All you needed to do was to put up your sign [*'alamu*] and there was no problem. Sure, you still had to talk to the communal land representatives of the village, but you could take as much land as you wanted because the land was not in demand." In other words, land tenure was "thick" with customary rules and conventions, but there was some leeway in land acquisition strategies, especially in areas where land had historically been in low demand.

(usually female). Former sharecroppers who acquired land and others who continued to farm in the new institutional environment came to rely primarily on family labor with wage labor and sharecropping as secondary modes of mobilizing labor (immigrants from Imaghan were heavily represented in the latter two groups).

The role of customary institutions in creating private property raised an apparent paradox. In presiding over the transition of communal property to freehold, was not the council creating the conditions for its own obsolescence?⁴ Two factors mitigated the erosion of customary authority through the distribution of collective lands under their purview. First, the expansive role of customary institutions meant that their authority was not tied exclusively to controlling communal lands or to having a land reserve for allocation to individuals. Historically, the local councils were the fundamental unit of local governance, shaping social and political life as well as natural resource use. Today, even in communities that have completely divided their land, collective land representatives (the contemporary incarnation of local governing councils) continue to arbitrate land disputes, preside over common property resources, and monitor land sales to outsiders.

Second, until labor migration gathered steam in the 1970s, land was simply not in demand because of the mutually reinforcing effects of endemic poverty and racial hierarchy. In this context, few called upon the local governing council for increased distribution of collective land to community members and land markets were moribund. Some land transfers out of the framework of inheritance did occur; I have described how powerful families occasionally seized land while some families sold land out of desperation. Land was very cheap and was essentially bartered for meager amounts of wheat or maize. As one man remarked, "back then no one had money and there was no one to buy; there is money now," a function of the migration remittances that began to flow into the community in the 1970s.

I have focused on customary institutions' regulation of land, but tenure regimes are as much about labor as they are about land. In el Harte, the centrality of private freehold in agriculture meant that the burden of collective labor was historically quite small. Collective labor obligations were limited to twice annual sessions to clean and maintain irrigation canals. Beyond that customary institutions had little formal influence in the organization of agricultural labor.

⁴ I am indebted to Brian Burke for this formulation.

However, the dominant labor regimes--sharecropping, family labor, and labor exchanges (*touiza*)-were pivotal in shaping tenure relations. While el Hartis might sharecrop others' land, they usually relied on family labor to work their own small plots and engaged in mutual assistance during periods of intense labor or resource needs, such as sowing and harvesting. Men often did labor exchanges with extended family, sharing animals and tools to work the soil, and also maintained ongoing arrangements with non-relatives, often a patron who needed their labor in exchange for a draft animal or plow. Women managed mutual aid primarily with extended family, working the land of their patrilineal line as well as their affinal relatives for in-kind contributions of barley or wheat or in exchange for the labor of their female relatives when their turn to harvest came. Cash wages for agricultural labor were unheard of until migration remittances arrived in the local economy.

By and large, these non-wage means of mobilizing labor remained dominant into the period of my research in el Harte and most other communities in the Mgoun valley. While virtually every household in el Harte sent off men to earn wages in the cities or elsewhere in Mgoun, it was still shameful--though sometimes necessary--to do agricultural work for wages. Receiving wages implied a divorce from networks of reciprocity, though I did hear rumors of women from a prominent family that lived on the outer edges of el Harte quietly trekking over the plateau and out of sight to a commercial farm to earn cash wages. However, as in the case of land tenure regimes, it would be misleading to read the contemporary presence of customary modes of labor mobilization as mere persistence, an institutional relic from the past that survived the social and economic changes of the past half-century. The continuity visible in labor regimes did not represent stasis so much as a way of managing change that drew on the thick web of resources and relationships embedded in community life. Following Jane Guyer, I read institutions as means of domesticating instability: they are "stabilizing elements--but they are not composed into integrated systems. Rather they are ordered as a multiplicity" (Guyer 2004: 129). This multiplicity constitutes a "roster of possibilities" that "can be differentially cultivated and

emphasized: from one era to the next and, importantly, by different categories of the population" (Guyer 2004: 122). By cultivating this multiplicity, customary institutions in el Harte offered an archive of resolutions to problems of regulation and governance. Some resolutions fell by the wayside, some were reactivated with renewed vigor, and some were introduced for the first time.

The customary land tenure institutions I have described were already ordering a multiplicity of ownership and usufruct regimes before outmigration ushered in more capitalist forms of land exchange in the 1970s. Customary tenure regimes provided an institutional umbrella of sorts that domesticated social and economic upheavals by folding them into existing access rules--those access rules were not static but they were stabilizing, used by different categories of people to further objectives of capital accumulation or aspirations for political prestige. So while in the next section I emphasize the unrelenting change that accompanied the emergence of el Harte's "diverse economy," customary tenure institutions mediated the transformations by subsuming the "roster of possibilities" for accessing land under its authority and the communal identity on which that authority depended (Gibson-Graham 2006, Guyer 2004).

The rise of commercial agriculture, exchange values in land, and the mediation of custom

The changes associated with el Harte's new economy were evident in the daily rhythms of my research: the work routines associated with commercial agriculture, the ways that farming tracked the seasonal demand created by the migrants' return, the new kinds of consumption supported by migration, and countless other ways. But there were also particular incidents that threw the transformations of the previous half century into sharp relief. One day while I was discussing the relative merits of buying olives to press for oil or buying already pressed oil, a man burst into the room where I was conducting my interview. I could tell from the way he spoke Arabic--no one in el Harte would speak Arabic unless they had to--that he did not live in the village. He greeted everyone in the room warmly and clearly knew them well, but he was agitated. After a quick series of inquiries about everyone's health, he asked, "do you know anyone who can build an adobe wall?" Everyone's eyebrows went up, and my host said, "after the

holidays [the 'Eid el Kebir was approaching] you can get someone, but not now. Everyone is too busy." "But I need it now," he retorted, "if I don't build the wall, they will take the rest of our land." "*Mushkil* (problem)," was my host's noncommittal response.

The ensuing conversation illuminated how the meaning of land and the ways customary institutions governed resource access had changed in the era of migration. Indeed, the man, Khaled, did not live in el Harte. He was born and raised in Casablanca but his elderly father had retired to his natal home in el Harte and Khaled returned every year, as he had done since he was a child. Now in his fifties, Khaled had requested an allotment of communal land as a native son of the village even though he had never lived there--his family had maintained its ties to el Harte -- but unlike most of the other recent requests, his land was for a summer home, not a primary residence or agricultural project in el Bour.⁵ When Khaled visited his land during this last stay, he noticed it had been divided in half by small cairns and was told that the collective land representatives had assigned that land to another petitioner. Khaled was indignant: "How can they give it and take it away? My family has not taken our rights in land here yet. Don't we have our rights? Our ancestors are buried here and this is where we will be buried!" At least by enclosing the plot, he thought he could protect the remaining land since walls were respected as markers of ownership.

There had apparently been some confusion about the boundaries of plots given to different people. Though this kind of confusion was usually not difficult to resolve, for Khaled it represented a contravention of the way customary tenure was supposed to work. So many people wanted land in the village these days that he suspected corruption among the land representatives. He urged the permanent residents in the room and the village as a whole to speak out for their rights against the land representatives' arbitrary decisions. The other men were sympathetic but had a more measured perspective. "There is no one to speak up here," one man suggested, to

⁵ Allotments of communal land were theoretically only for domestic construction. Such allotments for farming were formally prohibited, in this case by Ministry of Interior regulations governing the work of collective land representatives, but it was accepted practice to flout this injunction.

which Khaled responded, "Elect young people who can stand up to them!" The others in the room seemed almost amused by this sentiment and one closed the conversation with a quiet, "In the village, it is hard. It is not like you imagine."

As members of the community embedded in complex social and economic networks, they knew that such vocal resistance could disturb social relations beyond the immediate parties involved. But their reluctance was not simply fear or resignation: they did not see this incident or others like it in such stark terms. When disputes over boundaries did arise, they were generally resolved amicably through mediation efforts. For the permanent residents in the room, the mandate of customary tenure institutions was more than just assuring every household received their rightful share.⁶ Since migration had started in the 1970s and Haj Hsain established his farm, those institutions also had the broader responsibility of marshalling the community through profound changes in the value and meaning of land. I have described how remittances funded land purchases and investments in agriculture, while the regional impact of migration spurred petty commodity production for the first time through changes in purchasing power and consumption patterns. In Chapter Six, I discuss what this transformation meant for the practice of agriculture. Here, I focus on the implications for land tenure.

The withdrawal of sharecropping labor through outmigration not only broke apart historical labor regimes and social hierarchies, it disrupted longstanding tenure regimes. The result was the emergence of commoditized land markets for the first time. In el Harte, two interrelated processes unfolded out of this situation, sometimes in tension with one another. Customary institutions were at the heart of both: 1) the proliferation of tenure institutions and modes of accessing land, and 2) the concentration of authority over land in the figures of the two collective land representatives.

⁶ Women did not receive allotments of communal land even if they had inheritance rights since allocations were formally reserved for heads of household. Though there were some women heads of household, the implicit definition was *male* heads of household.

One of the most striking results of capital infusion into agriculture was the formation of land markets and a steady rise in land prices. Throughout the region, people talked about the surging demand for land el Harte. Abdelhafid, the head of a prominent farming household in the village, began buying land in 1970 just two years after he migrated to France. His first purchases were priced at MAD 350 per *'acher*; by 2010, the price had climbed to MAD 20,000 per *'acher* (\$2,500 at 2010 exchange rates).⁷ By the time he returned to el Harte, he had purchased nearly 70 *'acher*. If, as many people described, there used to be "no money" in el Harte to finance land purchases--both because of poverty and the literal absence of money in this rural hinterland--the influx of migration remittances beginning in the 1970s monetized the land market and barley or wheat were no longer accepted currency for transactions. In addition to their impact on land prices, remittances affected the value of land through new kinds of capital investments: the creation of *landesque capital*.⁸ *Émigrés* bought land already under cultivation, but they also financed the development of land informally acquired or allocated to them in the steppe outside the historic oasis. Remittances enabled the introduction of bulldozers to level land, tractors to work the soil, and importantly, the ability to smooth income as households waited for the land to yield production.

Migrants throughout the southern oases made these kinds of investments, but El Harte's proximity to the market town as well as the availability of land and water made these investments particularly profitable. El Harte had become a center for commercial agricultural production, meaning that for the first time, land began to generate a monetary surplus. A contrasting example

⁷ An *'acher* is the local unit of land measure roughly equivalent to 1/40 of a hectare. I retain usage of the term because the landholdings tend to be so small that expressing them in terms of hectares results in awkward fractions. *'Acher* was also the only term people used to describe plot size.

⁸ Blaikie and Brookfield define *landesque capital* as "any investment in land with an anticipated life well beyond that of the present crop, or crop cycle" (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987:9). While traditionally scholars regarded these investments as more likely in privately held land--Esther Boserup and Robert Netting among them--the case of Mgoun underscores the many different forms that private ownership could take. Without formal titling or land markets, land owners in Mgoun felt that tenure security was adequate enough to merit such investment, or may have made those investments at least in part to solidify their claims to land. See Unruh, Cliggett and Hay 2005 for an example in another ethnographic context of "clearing to claim," the practice of clearing land to enhance the legitimacy of claims, an analysis that could apply to investments in *landesque capital* as well.

is illustrative of the unique trajectory of agrarian change in this context. Chauveau and Colin describe how customary tenure relations in Cote d'Ivoire came under pressure when "land use [for cocoa production] generated an appreciable monetary surplus" (88). "The closure of the agricultural frontier meant that land was no longer in abundant supply and acquired an exchange value for the first time. This activated land markets and undermined the customary tenure relations that had historically governed access to land" (Chauveau and Colin 2010: 96). In el Harte, a nascent market for agricultural production also generated a monetary surplus from land for the first time. The difference is that in el Harte, it was the *increase* in land supply, not its scarcity that helped to spark a transition to an exchange value for land. Land prices did not increase because a fixed supply of oasis land became increasingly desirable, but because a flexible supply of land meant that investment in agricultural production could pay off through both intensification and by bringing new land under cultivation.

With the emergence of commercial agricultural production, el Harte's land market would appear to have been well on its way to commoditization. People transferred land through market exchange, and many other aspects of the agricultural production process had also become commoditized. And yet the process of capitalist transformation did not continue inexorably until market-based exchange eliminated other non-market means of mobilizing land and labor. Commoditization was partial and uneven--many of the primary modes for accessing land and mobilizing labor were not monetized and when I conducted my research in 2010, showed no sign of dissipating.

By breaking apart the social rigidity of sharecropping and racial hierarchies, migration paved the way for a diversity of land acquisition, labor mobilization, and investment strategies within individual households as well as across the community. One immigrant from Imaghan, one of the few who had successfully built broad-based social ties in el Harte, exemplified this diversity. Said rented a small plot of fruit trees (1/2 'acher) from the original owner of his home for an annual rent of MAD 150 Dh (approximately \$20), owned 3 'acher that he bought from a

Qla'a landowner forced to sell in order to get his son out of prison, and sharecropped another 5 'acher for another Qla'a landowner. He owned a plough in partnership with another family and they shared labor and animals to do the major agricultural tasks since he only owned one donkey (two are used to till the land). Said did most of the agricultural work himself, but because he was disabled, he would occasionally have to hire day labor when his adult sons were working construction jobs in the city. Said's status as immigrant meant that all his land was acquired through market transactions of one sort or another, though patronage relations with el Hartis facilitated these transactions. For native el Hartis, the diversity of land acquisition strategies and transactions expanded beyond market transfers to include inheritance, communal allocations, and land development out in el Bour, the uncultivated buffer around the community. Whereas a generation ago, land transactions only surged during periods of desperation sales and sharecropping dominated the social organization of agricultural production, the physical and social mobility that accompanied migration loosened the rigidity of land and labor management regimes. In 2010, people deployed a variety of mechanisms for acquiring land and managing labor: renting *habous* land (land endowed in religious trust), renting land from individual landowners, buying land, developing uncultivated land, using family labor, using informal labor exchange, and hiring day labor. In a new incarnation of sharecropping, land poor households began farming migrants' land for half the harvest, while some migrants simply entrusted their holdings to poor family members with no expectation of a share of the harvest.

This diversity represented a proliferation of institutions and social relations around land, but such multiplicity was hardly chaotic: customary institutions continued to exercise ultimate authority in governing access to land both communal and private. When customary authorities allocated collective lands, they facilitated the attribution of an exchange value to land. After a plot was claimed and brought under cultivation, it became the private property of the developer and could be legitimately exchanged through market-based transactions. But the process of commoditization stopped there. As demand for land rose, the collective land representatives of el

Harte made an explicit decision not to divide the village's collective land, a move which would have promoted the full commoditization of land by allocating communal reserves to individuals as freehold. Many other communities in the Mgoun valley had taken this step, but most of them had limited prospects for agricultural expansion and the land divisions were intended to give households plots to construct homes for their growing families. Customary authorities were often still important there--I noted their role in mediating disputes and regulating resource use--but their role in the agricultural economy had narrowed.

In el Harte, by contrast, it was the increasing value of land for agricultural production that invigorated the role of customary institutions in governing land use and disposition. In the context of proliferating labor mobilization and tenure regimes, customary tenure institutions became an even more important mediator of the market. On the one hand, as land became more economically valuable, the authority over access to land--the right to say who can transfer land to whom--also became more valuable and customary leaders moved to protect their prerogatives. On the other hand, customary institutions enjoyed enhanced legitimacy because of their location at the intersection of local governance and economic regulation. The power to enforce a monopoly of access became concentrated in customary tenure institutions as the state simultaneously deepened its presence in rural life and stepped back from governing land tenure at the local level. Following independence from the French in 1956, the national government progressively dismantled the broad governing power of the local councils and concentrated authority over customary tenure institutions in the position of two collective land representatives per village. I have described how historically the local councils not only allocated communal lands but governed virtually all aspects of community life. Following independence in 1956, state territorialization efforts focused on establishing a pervasive, highly bureaucratic apparatus organized around the Ministry of Interior that assumed most of the governing authority previously held by the councils.

At the same time, the state strategically disengaged from key aspects of resource management and governance. To this day, residents in the Mgoun valley cannot get formal title to their land in accordance with Protectorate-era tenure laws that created an unwieldy hybrid between Islamic or customary law and the Napoleonic code. The state designated the entire region as collectively owned land despite the de facto presence of freehold within communities, meaning that individuals could not get formal ownership documents from the state as they could elsewhere in Morocco.⁹ Land tenure was left to communities to manage: the state never established formal boundaries between villages, meaning that customary boundaries were invoked when land or water disputes flared up, often with problematic results. In the early 1980s, however, the state formalized the role of customary institutions, requiring communities to use local deliberative processes to appoint two collective land representatives who would be legally responsible for regulating land tenure within their village boundaries. But it established only minimal guidelines for the work of the collective land representatives; they were not official functionaries of the state and were charged with using customary practice whatever that may be to govern land disposition.

Power over land allocation had become concentrated in the hands of the two land representatives. They derived their authority simultaneously from the historical legitimacy of customary institutions and from the state, which appointed the representatives to the lifelong sinecure theoretically on the basis of community consensus.¹⁰ In a context in which land had

⁹ This analysis reflects Mgoun's particular location in Morocco's economic and political geography. In the more "productive" areas of Morocco--the agricultural plains extending from Marrakech through Casablanca to Fès--private and official colonization during the French protectorate resulted in the widespread dispossession of Moroccans and the wholesale commoditization of land. In the periphery, where there was little prospect of such investment, the same mechanisms used for dispossession elsewhere (the designation of collective ownership under the tutelary authority of the state) maintained collective ownership as the dominant tenure regime and prevented the formal commoditization of land because the private freehold dominant in the oases was not officially recognized as a legal form of ownership. See Pascon 1986 for a renowned account of dispossession in the Haouz plains outside of Marrakech.

¹⁰ There was no mechanism for voting out collective land representatives, though community members could theoretically petition the local Ministry of Interior official (in this case, a pasha) to replace a land representative who was not fulfilling his duty. No community in the Mgoun area had done this, and such a

become progressively more valuable and the state assumed many but not all local government functions, the collective land representatives became the most important political positions in the community. Other nodes of local power previously located in village institutions were diffused among various arms of the state, from elected officials to Ministry of Interior representatives. The fact that the state retreated from governing tenure at the local level left customary tenure institutions as the ultimate authority in the disposition of land.

A formal market is by definition created by the state: it sets the legal parameters for land transfers as well as the operation of formal credit markets. When the state stepped back from this role in southern Morocco, customary authorities provided the institutional structure that governed the emergent commercial agricultural economy. The result was the emergence of vernacular markets regulated by customary institutions. Thus, even if communal land became private freehold when it was allocated to individuals, customary institutions continued to play a central role in setting the boundaries and terms of the market--by defining the legitimate uses of various categories of land, determining who could sell land to whom, and excluding outsiders from entering the market.

The contemporary social and economic environment was a world away from el Harte of the pre-migration period, when sharecropping dominated and the village councils held wide governing authority. The central government and other local state institutions had assumed many of the governance powers formerly held by customary leaders. However, the institutions that historically regulated resource access and use remained important because they set the parameters for how capitalist markets would operate in the village. Customary tenure institutions became the most formalized regulator of the land market at the community level, translating different modes of valuing land into commensurable "currencies," whether that meant bringing collectively owned land into market-based exchanges or keeping certain-kinds of transactions outside of a market

move would represent a scandalous rebuke to local leaders at the center of extensive social and political networks.

logic to reduce input costs for commercial farmers, maintain networks of social reciprocity, and strengthen village-based governance (Guyer 2004).

In el Harte, the rise of petty commodity production reinforced the authority of customary institutions. However, the absence of commercial agriculture elsewhere in the valley did not necessarily precipitate the parallel decline of their customary institutions. As I outlined in Chapter One, development project reports, local government officials, and some academics posited that Mgoun was witnessing a generalized decline in "community" and the traditional institutions that governed natural resource management. Instead of a generalized decline, I observed striking heterogeneity in the relative authority of customary institutions depending on the particular circumstances of a given community. In Rbat, there were no collective land representatives and few could remember the last people who had served in the position; I learned the last man to have done so died in the early 2000s. People commented that such an institution was unnecessary in Rbat since authority over access to land and rules regarding its use had always rested with the Ait Zahirs, the family that had dominated the region for nearly 300 years (the implication was that when they did serve, the collective land representatives held little power). In this case, the absence of customary land tenure institutions did not indicate the decline of tradition but its persistence in the form of personalized rule by a dominant family.

Across the river in Imzilne, the collective land representatives were active community leaders and customary institutions played a vibrant role even though agriculture had contracted here and the only real lifeline sustaining families was outmigration. I would often see Lahcen, one of the collective land representatives at the site of the weekly market on the Ait Hamd plateau, even when the market was quiet. He was building a mosque there, financed from community donations, especially from Imzilne residents since the market was formally on Imzilne land. Whenever donations would come in, he would buy a few bags of cement and gather a small crew to advance the work a bit further. He did this, he said, "just for the community." As he described it, Imzilne residents had a strong sense of being together and for them, customary

institutions served as an advocate for the community in a way that government, elected officials, or other forms of representation did not. As a historically marginalized village, they were the only ones who would speak for their rights and needs, especially when it came to the politically charged issue of land. I will address mobilization around land questions in Chapter Seven, but I note here how Imzilne's customary institutions defended the community's sovereignty over its land against external challenges in order to underscore the multivalent role those institutions could play in different contexts. The need to mediate land markets and provide organizational coherence to a commercial agricultural sector was certainly not the dominant concern here as it was in el Harte, but that did not mean that customary institutions no longer held authority as arbiters of land tenure relations.

The examples of Rbat and Imzilne illustrate why, in arguing against the definition of customary institutions as inherently non-capitalist or "relics" from a pre-capitalist time, I also resist positing any necessary relationship between commercial agricultural production and the persistent authority of those institutions. I return to Guyer's concept of transactional institutions to emphasize how customary institutions did not play the same role in every instance but rather constituted an "open repertoire" that managed change differently in each community (Guyer 2004: 98). Their continued relevance was driven home to me when I heard that el Bour n'Ait Yahya had submitted a formal request to the Ministry of Interior for permission to appoint collective land representatives for the settlement. At first glance, this was an oxymoron. As a new settlement constructed entirely on land purchased piecemeal from a private landholder, el Bour theoretically had no collective lands and certainly had no tradition of customary institutions, land tenure or otherwise, to uphold. But the elected officials and other community leaders from el Bour saw the utility of having collective land representatives--of creating a customary institution *de novo*--to serve as an interface with the state and advocate for the community. Perhaps el Bour had no communal past, but it envisioned a communal future through the creation of a customary tenure institution.

The ambivalence of communality in el Harte's diverse economy

There is much improvement in our lives--especially in the spirit of our community. Before, we only thought of getting enough to eat. Now, we think about improving, about getting profits from our agriculture.
Abdallah

The state says we are from el Harte. It is written on our identity card that we are from el Harte no matter what community leaders say!
Kateb

Kateb was the angriest I had ever seen him when he told this to me. We were talking about the Imaghran, members of the "foreign" ethnic group who had immigrated to el Harte when drought forced them down from the mountains in the 1980s and 1990s. I asked Kateb if the Imaghran would ever be considered native residents (*Ait el Harte*). He assured me they would always remain outsiders. He noted with rancor that "people here really hold onto the idea that the immigrants are foreign and they are the people el Harte." He himself came from an Arab merchant family that had settled in el Harte nearly a century ago and though he was a son of the village and respected presence in community life, he was always reminded of his outsider status. Like the Imaghran, Kateb's family did not have a right to formal allocations of communal land. The state may have said that outsiders were "from" el Harte on their identity cards, but customary tenure institutions still had the power to determine who could secure access to land.

Contrast this with Abdallah's assessment that the communal spirit of el Harte was stronger than ever. I had heard many people from across the socio-economic spectrum, even Kateb, emphasize the uniqueness of el Harte: contrary to surrounding villages, they said, customary institutions were strong and residents worked together, practicing traditional labor exchange with a new vigor that reflected the vitality of both subsistence and commercial agriculture. I had seen enough of the complexities of community life to know that this narrative obscured real tensions, but I also understood the astuteness of Abdallah's comment. There *was* a vibrant spirit of community in el Harte though it derived its power less from the straightforward persistence of tradition than from the transformation of communality to mediate the intensified

pluralism of economic practice. El Harte was unique because its enduring communality thrived in the context of an emerging commercial agriculture. At the same time, notions of communality hinged on defining insider/outsider status and it was this process of circumscribing the benefits of community membership that both bolstered the power of communal tenure institutions and gave rise to the tensions that Kateb expressed.

A central precept guiding much critical agrarian scholarship is that the advent of capitalism in rural contexts, usually through petty commodity production, acts as a "powerful solvent of the ties that connect locale and 'community,'" fostering social conflict and the decline of communal institutions (Bernstein and Woodhouse 2001: 319). In el Harte, a vibrant, if small, commercial agricultural sector did indeed challenge longstanding notions of community, but few of the upwardly mobile farmers were nostalgic for the ties that had "dissolved" in the process. My interlocutors emphasized the increased freedom and better standard of living they enjoyed as a result of migration. Not living in fear of famine and subjugation mitigated the enduring hardships they continued to face in making a living. Customary institutions may have been transformed with these changes but they were not simply undermined. They enjoyed historical legitimacy and were embedded in broader networks of social reciprocity. They also created a space for new forms of upward mobility for many in the community.

The fact that not everyone could enjoy this upward mobility indicated how el Harte's customary institutions also derived their power at least in part from sustaining the exclusion embedded in tenure relations. Rather than eliminating the economic and social differentiation characteristic of the old sharecropping regime, customary institutions sustained the tensions between exclusion and social reciprocity. This became apparent when I mapped who was expanding agriculture into the steppe. Only a few families had the financial resources and labor to be able to turn the steppe into productive farmland; limiting who could access that land helped to protect some of their prerogatives. They had been able to move out of poverty 30 years ago by acquiring land from communal reserves at no cost to build profitable farming operations. Fully

monetizing land acquisition might jeopardize their market advantages. More broadly, maintaining customary tenure institutions buttressed the dominant labor regimes that facilitated access to labor provided by poorer, landless family members or clients. Despite their theoretical inclusivity, el Harte's customary regimes did not, in fact, ensure access rights for all native residents. This resonates with Pauline Peters' assertion that the research on tenure in Africa "belies the assumption that socially embedded systems of landholding and land use guarantee access, let alone equal access" (Peters 2004: 305). A de jure right is not a de facto right. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of land ownership in el Harte, with 62 landless households out of a total of 133 (44 of those households were from Imaghran and had no formal rights to land in the village). The native residents had become landless because of the vagaries of inheritance, desperation sales, or other reasons.¹¹ While they could, and sometimes did, ask for allocations from communal land, they were rarely in a position to develop that land for agriculture. Constraints regarding labor availability, asset stores, and current income needs circumscribed poorer residents' ability to take on land for farming, whether for subsistence or commercial production. There were few avenues for mobility for the landless in this context, with the result that customary institutions ended up subsidizing the wealthier residents. Some of the families who were desperately poor only 30 years ago but were able to mobilize labor and acquire communal lands to achieve success in commercial agricultural production were among the most vocal proponents of customary tenure regimes.

¹¹ In this context, being landless meant owning one's home and possibly a kitchen garden but not having enough land for agricultural production. Formal lot sizes for homes (as officially allocated) were 30 x 30 meters but actual lot sizes varied substantially depending on the age and location of the home. It was accepted practice to appropriate more land if a household was particularly large or space permitted, but these appropriations were rarely substantial.

Table 4.1: Distribution of land ownership in the village of el Harte, 2010

Number of 'acher	Number of households	Percentage of total households
0	62 Non-native: 44 Native: 18	46.6% Non-native: 33% (of total) Native: 14% (of total)
1 - 5	14	10.5 %
6- 10	17	12.8%
11 - 15	9	6.8%
16 - 20	4	3.0%
21 - 30	11	8.3%
31 - 40	4	3.0%
41 - 50	2	1.5%
51 - 60	3	2.3%
61 - 70	2	1.5%
80	5	3.8%
Total	133	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2010

If el Harte had divided communal lands as some villages in Mgoun already had, poorer residents might have been able to monetize their land in other ways, such as renting or selling it. As I will detail in Chapter Seven, advocates for land division in other communities were often highly vulnerable households who wanted their land rights clearly assigned to them. But the collective land representatives made it clear that they would not divide el Harte's remaining communal holdings because if they did, "that's it, the land is gone and there is no way to reserve land for those who may need it." The land representatives saw their role as ensuring that some communal land remained available for future generations. Many found this argument compelling, but the corollary was that large landowners benefited from land poverty among their extended relatives because it freed up those relatives to work on their land in uneven exchanges. On the surface, then, the persistence of customary tenure institutions appeared to be a strategic move by prosperous families to protect their own interests. Maintaining traditional injunctions against the sale or allocation of land to outsiders created a de facto monopoly of access, limiting the pool of people who could enter el Harte's agricultural economy. Furthermore, preventing the full

commoditization of land by retaining collective reserves had the obvious benefit of maintaining a supply of land that could be allocated free of charge to residents able to develop that land. It seemed that customary institutions drew on the ethics and practice of communality to maintain a land market based primarily on exclusion--of outsiders and the landless. Alongside their power over customary forms of labor mobilization, leading families could be seen as successfully capturing both customary and capitalist institutions for controlling land.

Returning to the concept of "diverse economies," however, complicates this interpretation by placing customary tenure at the center of diverse articulations between capitalist and non-capitalist practice. Customary tenure regimes in el Harte, as elsewhere, did not simply lay down rules for accessing land, with the benefits of this isolated function accruing to the privileged few when commercial agriculture emerged on the scene. Tenure regimes were embedded in an array of practices that contingently articulated with one another and with a changing social and economic context. These practices drew on diverse registers of value--some market-based, some not--so that institutional configurations that promoted social differentiation by one measure protected social welfare by strengthening communal attachments by another.

In this reading, one of the most important consequences of the rise of commercial agriculture was how it reinforced customary institutions as a vehicle for social insurance and subsistence support. People from a diverse range of social positions were quite aware of the equity impacts I have discussed but they also emphasized the legitimacy and strong communal sentiments surrounding customary institutions. There is an extensive literature in agrarian studies that addresses this apparent tension; inspired by E.P. Thompson's notion of moral economy, this literature extends into James Scott's and others' treatment of resistance in rural contexts characterized by power differentials and exploitation (Edelman 2005, Scott 1985 and 1990, Sivaramakrishnan 2005, Thompson 1971). The social embeddedness of land rights may not guarantee access to land but it does guarantee *something*, usually an individual or group's "right to access to the means of subsistence for himself (sic) and his family" (Chauveau and Colin 2010:

82). Many of the women, for example, who engaged in labor exchanges with their extended families explicitly referred to the vibrant agricultural market in Kelaa as reinvigorating these social and economic support mechanisms. If it were not for the profitable farming of their relatives, they would be forced to go out of el Harte to look for wage labor arrangements. They took pride in the fact that in el Harte, in the words of one woman, "If you are willing to work, someone will always help you. You will always find something to do to support your family." This assurance did not fully mitigate the sting of landlessness and exclusion, but it was an assurance that did not hold true everywhere in the valley, where systems of labor exchange and reciprocity did not maintain the same force as they had in el Harte. Customary institutions were still so important in el Harte not only because they channeled access to productive resources but also because they reinforced the social support mechanisms for the most vulnerable members of the community.

This observation has been documented in many contexts. In Africa, Sara Berry notably linked the need to invest in social ties as an important determinant of agricultural productivity because of its impact on people's investment patterns and agricultural decision-making (Berry 1993). Insecure land tenure and erratic political environments may have suppressed productive investment in her case studies but they did create a space for negotiability that allowed people to build social ties and craft risk management strategies as a kind of informal social insurance. In el Harte, customary institutions may have benefited the few families able to break into commercial agricultural production, but they also buttressed a complex of economic and social institutions that guaranteed some measure of subsistence support for the economically vulnerable. Participating in labor exchanges or working others' land in a rental or sharecropping arrangement ensured that residents did the social work necessary to draw on wealthier family members or patrons in times of need. As always, land tenure was about more than access to a productive resource. In el Harte, commercial agriculture activated or reenergized systems of social support that keep diverse social actors invested in communality. If the customary "framing" of the

capitalist land market offered rents for the most influential, it also enjoyed legitimacy because people perceived customary institutions as protecting their social bonds. However, customary institutions did not protect social bonds by shielding them from the market. Rather, they redirected those social relationships in service of commercial agricultural markets. In this way, customary tenure regimes distributed at least some benefits of communality to the more marginalized members of el Harte.

In 1963, Polly Hill famously described the emergence of an export-oriented cocoa sector in Ghana's agricultural frontier in a prescient challenge to the assumption that when Africans enter the exchange economy, they must exit "traditional" economies (Hill 1963:2). To the contrary, the social and economic structures that facilitated the development of this cash crop were firmly rooted in customary modes of labor mobilization and land acquisition. Despite the complexity of her and others' analyses of the way customary tenure and labor regimes intersect with capitalism, the notion persists that customary regimes exist "outside" of markets and either must be supplanted--as in the neoliberal tenure policies of the 1990s--or reconciled, as in more recent incarnations of development policy that acknowledge a role for customary regimes in certain contexts. Tracing the recent migrations in the meaning and authority of customary tenure institutions in el Harte offers a different analytic framework for understanding these unstable articulations.

In el Harte, customary institutions presided over a hybrid agrarian economy that generated monetary surpluses from the land without fully commoditizing that land. As modes of ownership and exchange proliferated, those institutions channeled who could participate in the emergent commercial sector without rationalizing markets so much as bringing them under an informal institutional umbrella. The result was a purposive economy that drew on historical forms of social legitimacy. Beyond people's affective attachments to their ethnic identities and familial networks, this new configuration of power and exchange offered a communal rent of sorts derived from participating in social networks of reciprocity. Were it not for the vitality of an

emergent agricultural sector, those social networks may very well have fallen into disuse, as residents of el Harte assured me they had in surrounding villages. Acknowledging the openness of these economic assemblages should not, however, devolve into a celebration of agrarian capitalism in Mgoun. The same contingency that allowed for diverse economies also prepared the ground for new forms of exclusion or exploitation. These new forms of exclusion will undoubtedly become sedimented, only to be disrupted again by new articulations of diverse economic rationalities.

Chapter V--Land use change the new spatiality of livelihoods

When I first traveled the road to Kelaa Mgouna in the early 1990s, a striking emptiness surrounded the oasis towns along the two lane ribbon of pavement. Constructed during the early colonial period, the road did not follow historical trade routes or pastoral byways. It cut them in half, a reflection of French colonial efforts to secure control of the region. I saw transhumant pastoralists guiding herds of goats, sheep, and perhaps a few camels across the road down to winter pastures, and occasionally a man or elderly woman would stand on the side of the road, waiting for a passing car to provide transport. It was difficult to imagine where they could have walked from, but the visible emptiness belied the intense sociability of this space. Villages nestled in the foothills and in the river valley hidden below the plateau had long used this land to pasture their herds and as a gateway to livelihoods and social ties throughout the valleys that open onto the plateau. Now they used the road to get to regional town centers, the hospital, or their jobs in the city.

Approaching Kelaa Mgouna in 2010, I saw the same landscape dotted with small patches of green where people had found a water source close enough to the surface to sink a well, build a house, and plant crops. As I drew closer to Kelaa Mgouna, these irregular attempts to settle in collective lands gave way to two commercial farms visible from the road. These farms were known as *firmas*, a local derivation of the French word *ferme* (farm), though here it connoted a commercial holding that used "modern" techniques. One firma was just getting under way: a bulldozer leveled land while farm workers planted olive trees at regular intervals. At a second firma, goats gnawed on the olive saplings, indicating that it had been abandoned. The road became almost suburban after that. It was hard to distinguish where one village ended and the next began with the agglomeration of houses, gas stations, and tourist cafes that gravitated to the national road. The agricultural fields seemed crowded out by the sprawling expanse of adobe and cement housing compounds extending into the steppe.

At Kelaa Mgouna the national road became the de facto town plaza, as people from

surrounding villages and new housing developments vied with the cars and trucks just passing through. Groups of children made their way to school on the road, women walked in groups to the health center, men rode into town on bicycles, and donkeys carried produce to market. On the road that broke off the main artery to carry goods and people into the mountains, other landscape changes came into view. The angled turns of the road revealed villages clinging to steep river banks, but the empty hillsides and plateaus were not so empty anymore. Piles of dried brush collected for cooking fires dotted the landscape and adobe walls marked off large geometric enclosures with no construction inside them. Some of the villages with room to grow were ringed by newly constructed homes with small gardens and young tree plantings. Land divisions in progress were marked by piles of rocks laid in regular increments, olive saplings, or newly pounded adobe walls.

All along the road, then, there were extensions: extensions of cropland, housing, commercial activity, and the simple claiming of land, as yet undeveloped. The extensions stretched from mountains down to the steppe, and they indicated how landscapes and social life were changing together. This chapter explores one facet of those changes--what the extensions of agricultural land and the built environment into the steppe reveal about the relationship between land use and people's livelihoods. These extensions caused some concern to agriculture officials worried about the effects of well pumping on the water table and some--though not many--large herd owners who still moved their flocks down the mountains. But for the people settling in the steppe, this land use change represented an opportunity for social and economic mobility. It allowed them to maintain their households and perhaps their livelihoods close to home after recurrent drought had forced them from pastoral livelihoods. For others without past links to transhumance, the extensions were a way to create value in the land by adding to their holdings or experimenting with commercial production.

In this chapter, I take these local perspectives as my point of departure for an ethnographic analysis of extensions into the steppe. I ask how people's land use practices

reflected changing strategies for livelihood diversification, flexibility, and mobility and in turn, how these strategies affected households' future prospects. While these extensions have been termed "rangeland conversion," people's own stories developed a more complicated narrative than the binary formulation of conversion from rangeland to cropland would suggest. This was not a linear movement from the steady state of one land use to another. Rather, land use change indexed a regional reconfiguration of spatially and temporally differentiated processes: shifting settlement patterns, livelihood activities, and environmental conditions influenced land use practices in often unpredictable ways.

There are three parts to the chapter. First, I explore the cultural construction of the boundary between the oasis and the steppe, arguing that the contours of historical oases were never fixed and that people regarded the boundaries as inherently changeable. Notions of the appropriate use for different categories of land can reify those categories. The very idea of "extensions" implies that rangeland is an immutable classification almost ontologically set apart from the oasis. I challenge this binary by drawing on Guyer et al.'s notion of "re-inhabited landscapes," the idea that these landscapes (in their case, diverse landscapes in sub-Saharan Africa) are already anthropogenic and that people refashion the way they inhabit and use their environments by drawing on the social past of that landscape (Guyer et al. 2007:5). This illuminates how "apparently cumulative processes also comprise discontinuities" without having to posit a complete break with the past (5). Instead, I attend to how people have historically constructed natural boundaries to inform analysis of the qualitative shifts occasioned by the social and economic transformations of the latter half of the 20th century.

Second, I argue that the extensions represented an emergent form of risk management whereby new strategies of flexibility and mobility--spreading households and cultivation over various locations, settling closer to wage labor opportunities, and others--had begun to replace historical forms of mobility based on the complementarity of transhumant pastoralism and cropping. Many of these strategies have long been acknowledged as fundamental to livelihood

and natural resource management strategies in arid and semi-arid lands. While some of the strategies, such as positioning one's family to facilitate access to wage labor, were new, the main feature that set these risk management strategies apart from the historical repertoire was less the strategies themselves than how they articulated with broader processes of change in the region: the environmental stress on pastoralism, the impact of migration, and the spatiality of land, labor and commodity markets.

Third, I explore the equity effects of these strategies using a concept drawn from development economics. Recent research on dynamic asset poverty thresholds describes how households set on divergent paths to multiple, stable equilibria and cement their economic position either at a low-level equilibrium (poverty) or on an upward cycle of accumulation (Lybbert et al. 2004:768). This concept frames my use of ethnographic case studies to explore the wealth dynamics that emerged from the interaction between new land uses and livelihood transformations in Mgoun. While many household strategies "looked" the same on the surface, people's asset positions, their historical experience with migration, and a number of other factors conditioned the kind of returns they could expect from those strategies. Integrating a theory developed in economics into ethnographic analysis raises disciplinary "translation" issues, but it can help to make sense of the temporal and spatial heterogeneity in the relative success of livelihood strategies to secure upward mobility. The fact that such heterogeneity existed *within* different categories of extension or land use as well as across such categories suggests the importance of attending to social differentiation in determining what land use change means in any given context.

Where the oasis ends and the steppe begins: the cultural construction of boundaries

In order to study extensions, I first needed to define extensions and assess their magnitude. The ambiguity surrounding the definition was my first indication that extensions comprised a social and political category, not a purely technical one. The first definition was rooted in customary law, which essentially zoned land below (literally at a lower altitude) the

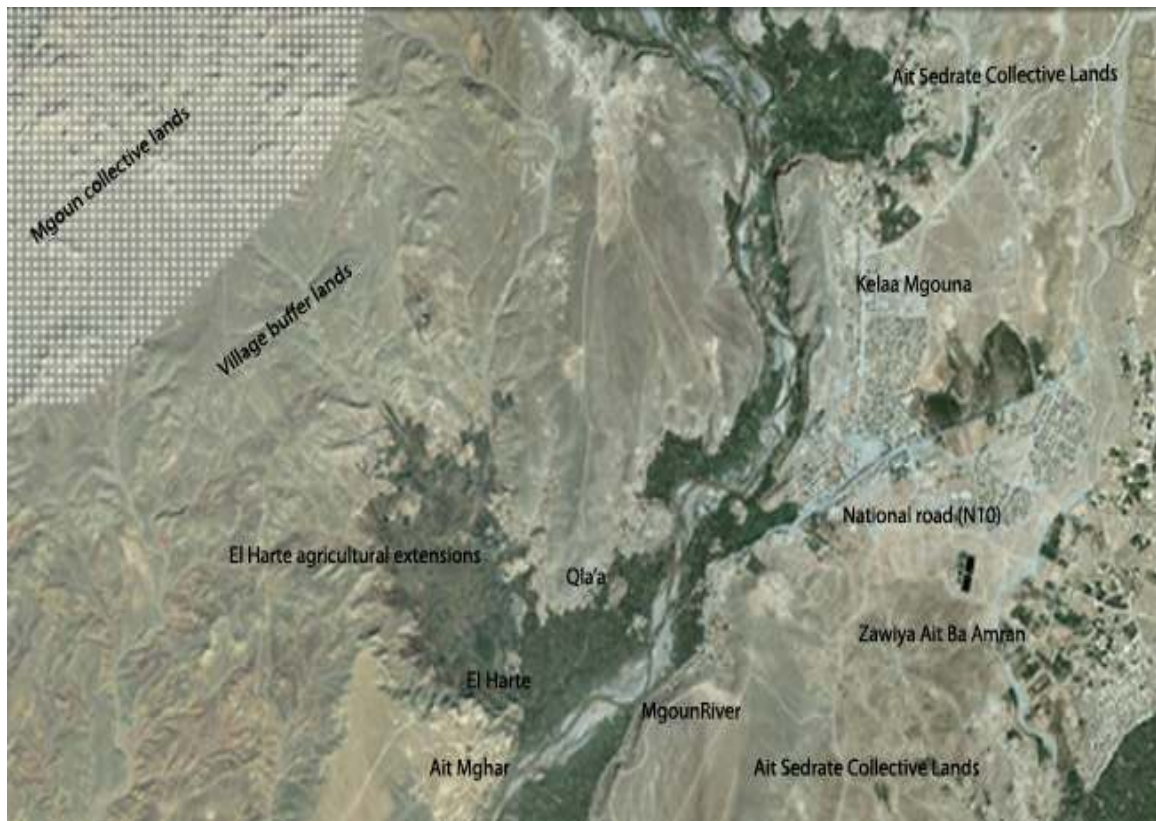
irrigation canal for agriculture. Customary irrigation systems were gravity based and did not irrigate land situated above the canals. Historically, higher land was reserved for domestic construction but in the contemporary context, it also came to define extensions since in theory they were developed beyond the limits of traditional irrigation works. This was the definition the agricultural extension officers used: in response to my question about how the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) defined extensions, one field agent told me to look out the window and swept his hand across an imagined landscape, saying, "all of that, all that land around us not fed by a irrigation canal, all of that is an extension." This would mean all of the growing villages, the settlements around the market town, and the new fields brought into cultivation by pumping. Even Kelaa itself.

However, that definition presumed that what constituted "above" and "below" the irrigation canal was static, and my experience in el Harte showed me otherwise. Many of the most productive lands in el Harte were called *isouhad*, or "made by man." This was land above the irrigation canal that people reworked to fall below it. The work involved earthmoving with bulldozers and heavy doses of patience as landowners worked in organic matter over successive seasons to make the land productive. Defining extensions by their relationship to irrigation canals also implied that irrigation canals themselves were static, which also was not true. In Chapter Four, I described how in the 1970s Haj Hsain joined with a small group of landowners to extend the main irrigation canal in el Harte further into the uncultivated steppe. This brought approximately five hectares of additional land under cultivation, a substantial area for a village in this region. Beyond that, individual landowners had the right to extend the secondary canals on their land and a number of families in el Harte did that after the initial extension in the 1970s. An oral history of land use indicated the shifting boundaries between oasis and steppe, as people recounted not only extensions of irrigation canals but also the movement of housing out of the fortified settlements into more and more dispersed settlements. Though people used the term "extension" to indicate these movements, this was not an extension "out into" the steppe, but the

historical expansion--and sometimes retraction--of the oasis itself.

Oases always had fungible borders, and those borders were more complex than the visual line between brown and green would suggest. If "rangeland conversion" only referred to the cultivation of steppe that had actually been used to pasture transhumant herds, then much land use change would not be captured by the term. Many of the extensions in el Harte and elsewhere were into the village horm, the buffer zone separating communities from collectively-owned rangeland (Figure 5.1 superimposes these land tenure distinctions on a satellite photo of the lower Mgoun valley; Ait Sedrate is another tribal confederation).

Figure 5.1: Aerial view of the lower Mgoun Valley



Source: SPOT image (image date January 11, 2008); Accessed through Google Earth March 22, 2012

These buffer zones had never been used for extensive pastoralism. They were off limits to passing transhumants, and while they were used for pasturing small village herds in the past, few took their animals out to the horm anymore. In recent years, families had taken to growing more alfalfa, collecting weeds, or purchasing forage instead. Since much of the land used for the extensions had never really served as rangeland, at least not for extensive pastoralism, no one imagined the extensions as conversions at all, regardless of the land's ecological classification.

Estimating the extensions was therefore not simply a case of choosing an appropriate baseline for growth out of the oasis, but instead hinged on the shifting categorization of land. That said, it is useful to estimate extensions to give a sense of the magnitude of the land use change. The Kelaa agricultural extension office estimated that in between 1990 and 2010 about 850 hectares in their service area (the five communes constituting the Mgoun valley, part of the Dadès valley, and the steppe bordering both sides of the valley) had been added to the then 4000 hectares of cultivable land. The regional extension office collected data back to 1995, represented in Table 5.1. I only included years that registered changes in cultivated area.

Table 5.1: Cultivated area in the Mgoun service region according to juridical status of land

Year	Private property (<i>melk</i>) (hectares)	Religious endowment (<i>habous</i>) (hectares)	Cultivated collective lands (hectares)	Total cultivated land (hectares)
1995	3,500	200	600	4,300
1999	3,500	200	700	4,400
2001	3,500	200	750	4,450
2003	3,500	200	800	4,500
2005	3,500	200	900	4,600
2007	3,500	200	1,000	4,700
2008	3,500	200	1,100	4,800

Source: Boumalne Centre de Mise en Valeur Agricole, 2010

I take these statistics as stylized representations of land use change. While the extension agents who collected the data had a close knowledge of the field, their survey methods did not account for some key processes: increased land area served by extending existing irrigation canals on

privately held land or within village boundaries (that number remains constant in the table, but my ethnographic work indicated it changed significantly in some locations), or the area absorbed by new construction in the steppe, such as the expansion of housing developments around Kelaa.

A second set of estimates comes from GIS analyses in the context of the UNDP Biodiversity and Transhumance Project (PNUD 2007). These data are difficult to compare with MOA estimates because of the different area covered and divergent methodologies. Both are concerned with charting newly irrigated land, however, and do not address settlement in the steppe, which would result in underestimates. The UNDP research team used topographic land use maps developed in 1970 as their baseline and then compared the digitized results with SPOT images from 1996 and 2006 to yield the following estimates of changes in irrigated crop land.¹ While MOA data cover their five commune service area, the UNDP categorized their data, shown in Table 5.2, according to tribal collective lands which do not map onto administrative demarcations. The data of interest are the Mgouna estimates, which chart growth in cultivated area in Mgoun from 1129 hectares in 1970 to 1888 in 2006 (to make the number more compatible with MOA estimates, portions of Ait Sedrate and the Saghro would have to be included). Based on these various sources, the increase in cultivated land in Mgoun and the surrounding communes between the mid-1990s and 2010 hovered around 500 hectares. In a region with 4,800 hectares of cultivated land, where 67% of holdings are less than 5 hectares and 90% of landowners own less than 5 hectares, an increase of 500 hectares is significant (L'Office Régionale de Mise en Valeur Agricole de Ouarzazate 2009: 4). I consulted MOA dossiers on new agricultural projects in the extensions to develop a portrait of the average holding size in the extensions (applications for subsidy support for new wells or other inputs include the land area). Based on the MOA statistics regarding new projects, the installations are, not surprisingly, larger than holdings overall. While I worked with the extension agents to make as complete a list of projects in the steppe as possible,

¹ The study used SPOT images at a resolution of 20 meters and conducted a spectral analysis of images collected between March and April, when the difference between cultivated and uncultivated land would be greatest (PNUD 2007: 17).

I cannot assume these data are representative because smaller landholders without some documentation of ownership tended not approach the MOA for

Table 5.2: Surface area of irrigated agricultural land in UNDP project area

Tribe	Total surface area (hectares)	Irrigated area 1970 (hectares)	Irrigated area 1996 (hectares)	Irrigated area 2006 (hectares)
Ait Affane	25,815	77	94	272
Ait Zaghar	40,870	451	543	763
Ait Zekri	126,012	403	587	719
Ait Sedrate	162,169	3,269	4,116	4,177
Ait Ougrou	63,494	1,043	1,024	919
Ait Ouitfao	50,401	1,293	1,604	1,504
Mansour Ad Dahbi Dam	17,094	14	170	555
Iguernane	41,877	49	173	333
Kantola	34,536	159	159	225
Mgouna	154,110	1,129	1,690	1,888
Saghro	201,452	422	774	1,518
Skoura	37,212	2,785	3,204	2,392
Toundoute	241	183	166	200

Source: Rouchdi et. al. 2008

support. Based on these MOA data, the average size of new projects in the extensions was 15 hectares. I heard of only one family that had a holding that large in the historical oases, a regionally dominant family that had accumulated 25 hectares over three centuries. Aside from that example, no one in El Harte, my field site with the most active agricultural economy, had land approximating the average size of the agricultural extensions (the largest holding I registered was approximately 4 hectares). The average in the extensions reflected three investment projects of 100 hectares each. Remove them and the average size was seven hectares, still larger than the largest holdings in the historical oases.

It is difficult to use these data to make definitive conclusions about the extent of rangeland conversion. However, it is clear that norms regarding land use categorization and the social construction of boundaries influenced what was defined as an extension. The necessity of choosing a baseline in order to measure change obscures the historical ebb and flow of oasis

boundaries that extends into the distant past. Extensions did not begin in 1970 but historically shifted based on water availability, security, changing economic conditions, and a host of other variables. Just as the oasis was a social construction--literally an ecological creation of centuries of intensive agriculture in a water scarce environment--so was the steppe, at least to a certain extent (Battesti 2005). What people regarded as steppe was influenced by tenure regimes and norms about appropriate land use; they did not consider steppe as part of the range, for example, if it was located in the village horm.

In this context, I found it helpful to think of extensions as a way of "re-inhabiting" the landscape, not in the sense of *returning* to cultivation as it had once been practiced in the steppe but rather inhabiting the land *again* with a shifting set of criteria regarding its use (Guyer et al. 2007: 5). As Guyer et al. elaborate, the concept of re-inhabited landscapes "throws into relief precisely the local institutional complexes that have grown and changed as they mediate amongst the ambitions of current inhabitants and new arrivals and departures, whether the latter be their own children, migrants, pastoralists, laborers, elite farmers, national parks or ministerial policy makers" (5). All of these actors (with the exception of national parks, though parks are a factor elsewhere in Morocco) were at play in the extensions I observed, indicating that I needed to step outside of a purely ecological or technical framework and address the political ecology of extensions into the steppe in order to understand land use change in Mgoun.

Rooting new forms of mobility in the steppe: land extensions as livelihood transformation

There is no difference between here and there. I will not move back, but I am from there until I die.

Youssef

Youssef exemplified the way people's land use practices simultaneously drew on a well established tradition of mobility in the Mgoun valley and negotiated the new challenges posed by regional livelihood transformations. He was from Ait Toumert, a group of villages of the edge of the Ait Hamd plateau about 40 kilometers up the valley from Kelaa Mgouna. Youssef had never spent time on the range, but his family had roots in transhumant pastoralism. In a common

arrangement, his uncle was in charge of the herd, moving them between summer and winter pastures, while his father managed the family's agricultural lands in the village. When Youssef's grandfather died, they divided the inheritance by giving his uncle the herd and retaining the agricultural land for his father, but an ever increasing family -- there were 40 people living in the household--could not live on a mere 10 '*acher*'.² Historically, very high levels of maternal, infant, and child mortality would have tragically circumscribed the growth of families.³ People also wanted to "live better now," as Youssef explained, and so were no longer willing to accept the living conditions of the past.

With limited possibilities for living off the land, he explored other options. As a young man, Youssef dug wells near Casablanca, but he eventually returned to the area to take charge of the family and become the collective land representative for his village in Ait Toumert. In what turned out to be a remarkably good investment, his father bought a substantial holding of 20 '*acher* down in the steppe in 1992 and in 2006, Youssef made the definitive move to el Bour n'Ait Yahya with his wife and children. He bought a van and made a comfortable living as a regional livestock merchant, looking for opportunities in Mgoun but going as far as Marrakech, the Atlantic coast, or the border with Algeria to buy livestock for resale in Kelaa. He also cultivated the 20 '*acher* in el Bour, planting winter wheat and fallowing the land during the summer for lack of water. He still had a brother up in Ait Toumert and they maintained their land there, too, even if production was limited to almonds and walnuts for home consumption. Another brother was a recent clandestine immigrant to Spain and few expected him to send remittances while he tried to establish himself. Youssef made the 1-2 hour trip back to Ait Toumert about twice a month, to check in with the family and the land there, and to fulfill his duties as collective land

² An '*acher* is a local land measure roughly equivalent to 1/40th of a hectare. As in Chapter Four, I retain usage of the term in place of hectares since it was the only word people used to describe their holdings.

³ These rates are still very high in mountain regions and rural areas underserved by the public health system. In 2008, Morocco had a maternal mortality ratio of 110 per 100,000 and an under-five mortality rate of 39 per 1,000 live births, ranking it 130 out of 187 countries listed in the Human Development Index (UNDP 2012).

representative. He was both "here and there." Living in el Bour assured a secure livelihood while keeping him close enough to Ait Toumert to maintain his prominent role in village life. He would not move back, but his heart was there and would be there until he died.

Youssef was not typical. Few people could afford to buy 20 'acher even in 1992, much less a van and the gas to operate it. But it was the specificity of his situation that struck me as the key to understanding how people's movements into the steppe related to their livelihoods history and their prospects for the future. People living right next to each other in the "city-like" environment of el Bour often negotiated radically different pressures or opportunities even though they seemed to be deploying the same land use strategy: moving out into the steppe. Social scientists have been critical of the tendency in land use and land cover change science to simplify the social drivers of land use change to one or two processes that usually occur at a broadly defined macro-level (Turner and Robbins 2008). The diversity I observed spoke to the need to disaggregate processes down to the household level, looking for patterns that could then be used to understand transformations at different temporal and spatial scales.

Such spatial and social heterogeneity also spoke to the need to examine the "black box" of categories such as risk management, diversification, and flexibility. There is an extensive literature detailing how all three underpin livelihood strategies and natural resource management in arid and semi-arid lands, especially in treatments of pastoralism.⁴ Extensive pastoralists who have historically relied exclusively on livestock deploy flexibility, mobility, and the opportunistic use of natural resources as their primary strategies. Economists have also investigated how in high risk, arid environments, "the underlying agroecology plainly influences the extent to which households diversify income sources" (Barrett et al. 2005:48). In this line of research, scholars address livelihood diversification across various activities, particularly livestock production,

⁴ While much of the literature focuses on pastoralism in sub-Saharan Africa, especially the Sahel, scholars have also addressed these issues for agro-pastoralism and intensive cultivation. See, for example, Adams and Mortimore 1997, Behnke et al. 1993, Bollig 2006, Little et al. 2001, McCabe 2003, Mortimore and Adams 2001, Pedersen and Benjaminsen 2008, Scoones 1994, Warren 2004.

cultivation, and wage labor, as a risk management strategy intended to mitigate the underlying uncertainty of environmental (and socio-economic) conditions. However, these scholars warn against viewing all such strategies through the unexamined lens of risk management (Barrett et al. 2001). What may be a desperate coping strategy for some is a capital accumulation strategy for others. This is perhaps obvious to anthropologists attuned to the textures of social life and the ways power and economic differentiation shape people's varying prospects. But even for anthropologists, "risk management" can be a convenient if imprecise category, obscuring the different meanings of people's strategies as well as what may be qualitatively new in those strategies.

In this context, viewing the land extensions in Mgoun as a new form of risk management is a useful starting point but not end goal of the analysis. Extensions into the steppe did not signal the end of mobility by fixing people in space in contrast to the movement historically represented by extensive pastoralism. Instead, people described their choices about land use as attempts to create new forms of mobility to suit the contemporary economic and environmental reality of their lives. However, to understand the dynamics of these strategies and their equity implications, a fuller examination of how different people experienced these new land uses is necessary. I first describe the land extensions using a "risk framework" before taking a household-level perspective on how land use change related to livelihoods. There were three primary categories of extensions in Mgoun. While extensions for cultivation were the focus of the Ministry of Agriculture--and the estimates of rangeland conversion--extensions for domestic construction, and for speculation were also important. I detail each in turn.

1) Agricultural extensions: The iconic image of rangeland conversion--tracts of steppe turned over for cultivation--actually captured a minor phenomenon in Mgoun. There were three large projects in the Mgoun area (each 100 hectares though one had been abandoned by its German owner only three years after establishing the farm in 2004) and approximately 30 smaller projects ranging from 1-15 hectares. Most of these agricultural extensions in the collectively

owned rangelands were *firmas*, a category of farming operation named specifically to set them apart from the far more common smallholdings in the oases and village-level extensions. The difference did not hinge on how much of the production was commercialized--the most successful commercial farmers in el Harte would not call their operations *firmas*. A combination of factors defined a *firma*: they were located in the collectively-owned lands outside village boundaries, usually comprised larger contiguous holdings laid out with geometrical regularity, and used what people labeled as modern techniques. By this, they usually meant higher levels of mechanization, drip irrigation, the use of high yielding varieties, and other "modern" inputs. *Firmas* were not necessarily monocultures and often drew on the crop mixes and integrated systems typical of oasis farming. But the term implied a systematic spatiality, market orientation, and level of commercial success that commanded the respect of farmers throughout the region, though this respect was usually reserved for native sons. The owners of the two largest projects were "foreigners," the rose processing company and an Arab businessman from Casablanca. While they were considered interlopers, the Mgouni farmers who had established operations, often with remittance support, were regarded as exemplars of progress. I interviewed one such farmer, Hmou, who was revered in the valley for his work ethic, his business acumen, and the technical knowledge he accrued in the course of the past three decades despite his functional illiteracy. People lauded him for practicing "organized agriculture" (*fellaha biltartib*) because of his systematic methods and commercial success.

No one expected an explosion of commercial farms in the steppe such as those in the export regions of the Souss or the plains around Marrakech. Water was too scarce here even with reliance on deep wells. However, the attempts at large scale *firmas* did raise people's eyebrows--either in admiration or consternation. Ministry of Agriculture officials alternately supported the goals of increasing agricultural production the *firmas* represented and expressed concerns about the impact of the water table. I described people's respect for successful farmers but some expressed concern about the appropriation of collectively-owned land for individual, especially

foreign, benefit. The large operations were acquired as long-term leases on Mgoun and Ait Sedrate (the adjoining tribal confederation) land. A contract signed with the Ministry of Interior, the tutelary authority, with the agreement of the collective land representative allowed 99 years of use rights, at which point the contract could be renewed or the land converted to private freehold. I will discuss the political implications of these kinds of leases in Chapter Seven; here I note that despite some concerns about the firmas, few people viewed them as threats to pastoral land uses or the environment in and of themselves. While some pastoralists I spoke to felt the firmas established a worrying precedent and blocked transhumant routes, most commented that it was not hard to work around them. For them, the main challenges associated with pastoralism were chronic drought, the economic expense of keeping herds in a commoditized livestock sector, and securing reliable shepherding for their herds, not the firmas.

Firmas in Mgoun were officially sanctioned uses of collective land. There were also unofficial appropriations of the open steppe to build a home and cultivate a small plot but they were widely dispersed around Mgoun and usually small in scale. Interviews with pastoralists and UNDP project staff described transhumants who assigned a portion of the household to stake a claim clandestinely, without a formal land division or appeal to a collective land representative for a plot. The households doing this did not have access to agricultural lands in a village setting in this area; they were generally from an ethnic collectivity with pastoral use rights but no claim to village lands. These appropriations began in earnest in the 1950s as pastoralists tried to diversify livelihoods and meet subsistence needs, especially for grains. However, attempts at cultivation in the steppe were often abandoned when drought lowered the water table and wells dried up. Conversion again picked up pace, in the same locations or elsewhere, when water availability improved. For most of these agricultural enclosures, a portion of the household remained involved in transhumance and the household did not rely on cultivation as a primary livelihood activity. Both pastoralism and cultivation were unreliable for families with small herds and isolated plots in the steppe. The groups involved in this kind of extension were among the

most vulnerable in the region.⁵

Most extensions for smallholder agriculture were more subtle accretions onto existing oasis agricultural lands. Some settlers in el Bour n'Ait Yahya were able to farm small plots in their domestic compounds, but few had the resources to establish a smallholding in el Bour, and regionally, geographical and environmental limitations restricted the spatial distribution of agricultural extensions. There were few communities in Mgoun that had both the land and the water to enable an expansion of cultivation. For areas without adequate water such as the Ait Hamd plateau, "the land has no value because of drought and no one wants to come here," in the words of one mountain resident.

The fact that agricultural extensions were primarily located within the customary boundaries of villages meant that they were not, by definition, collectively owned rangeland. They were therefore governed by a different tenure regime--community-level councils (*jma'a*) which were nestled within but operated independently of the broader ethnic collectivity. These kinds of extensions were qualitatively different from the land divisions that other ethnic collectivities had conducted elsewhere in Morocco, distributing rangeland among the tribal rights-holders and allowing them to cultivate that land as private property. No large-scale tribal land division had happened in Mgoun. Among the Mgoun, land divisions did happen at the village level, but officially this was only for domestic construction.⁶ For smallholders adding new lands onto their existing holdings, extensions involved a painstaking, expensive, and often drawn out process of 1) extending a irrigation canal, digging a well, or in some cases, hooking up drip irrigation systems to the town water supply (irrigation "by faucet," as some called it); 2) bringing in bulldozers to level land; 3) and working in organic matter and planting a number of seasons of

⁵ These groups were fractions from the Ait Atta confederation, which has been politically dominant in the region for centuries. Those from areas of the Saghro mountain range to the south of Mgoun contended with particularly harsh environmental conditions and other pressures on pastoral livelihoods. They were outside the regional scope of my research.

⁶ Though in Chapter Four, I noted how some used their allocations of collective land for agricultural projects with the tacit approval of the community.

leguminous crops to increase the productivity of the soil.

Despite the difficulty of expanding cropping, farmers in land- and water-rich communities showed increasing interest in bringing new lands under cultivation. In el Harte, a wave of extensions began in the mid-1990s, when some migrant households and others with access to capital began digging wells in earnest. In 2010, ten new households were staking claims and beginning work on extensions in the steppe surrounding the village. Recent years of good rains had reduced concerns about the water table, but few people relied on wells as their primary source of irrigation water in the extensions anyway. In the past decade, a village water system drawing off a deep well had been installed and extended into the steppe so that landowners could draw on that available albeit expensive water supply as they brought their new plots under cultivation. Others relied on extensions of the irrigation canals. Large sections of the village's salinized marshland (*almou*) had been brought under cultivation in the past decade this way, as people dug drainage canals to remove some of the salinized water and extended the irrigation water further out into the marsh. People assumed that even in times of drought, the water supplied by the Mgoun River and the village's deep well would still provide the minimum necessary to keep these lands irrigated. The economic incentives for expanded cultivation were a major reason for people's interest in expanded cultivation, as they saw demand for high value crops such as olives, vegetables, and almonds only increasing in the Kelaa market. Even if it took a few years to get production to market, no one expected demand for these crops to decline as Kelaa's importance as a regional town grew and consumption of vegetables increased.

Even if people saw these investments as extensions, they did not formally separate them, either conceptually or in terms of practical operations, from their existing holdings. I return to the point that boundaries defining the oases and extensions were historically mutable. While people in el Harte emphasized the difficulty of farming new lands, they had already assimilated parts of the steppe that had been brought into cultivation in the past 30 years into their conception of the historic oasis. For them, there was no clean break between the "old" and "new" lands.

2) *Extensions for domestic construction*: Most of the extensions in the steppe around Kelaa Mgouna had less to do with the need for farmland than with the availability and affordability of land for building a home. In Chapter Two, I described the phenomenon of regional migration as pastoralists were driven from mountain villages, especially in Imaghran, during the droughts of the 1990s. Moving down into the steppe allowed them continued access to their natal homes and easier access to wage labor opportunities in the cities. Male migrants overwhelmingly worked construction and other manual labor for low wages, returning once or twice annually to visit their families in el Bour n'Ait Yahya or elsewhere in the steppe. There were some local work opportunities for the immigrants from the mountains because of Kelaa's status as regional market town and the burgeoning agricultural sector in the surrounding villages. During the rose harvest, men, women, and sometimes whole families traveled to high producing villages to look for day labor. Unlike many other crops, most households immediately monetized their rose harvests or held onto only a small portion that they would dry and sell later in the year; larger producers would pay workers on the spot if their family labor was insufficient. These laborers were largely from Imaghran, settled in el Bour or on the outskirts of other villages along the national road. The men often combined periodic trips to larger cities with efforts to earn money locally if circumstances required their presence at home consistently throughout the year.

While el Bour was known primarily as a haven for migrants from the mountains, offshoots of families from villages throughout the region were interspersed among the Imaghran. The availability of land in el Bour offered opportunities for brothers getting married to set up an independent household to reduce the stress on their natal families while still remaining "one household." Historically, brothers would marry and raise their children in their father's home, only creating independent households upon the passing of the patriarch and division of his assets. Even in this circumstance, however, many families stayed together often under the new authority of the eldest son, keeping their assets undivided and potentially maintaining a joint domestic compound. When brothers did establish an independent household, it was usually in the village,

though sometimes men would travel for work as shepherds, well diggers, or soldiers before labor migration gathered steam in the 1970s. In the contemporary context, there were more opportunities for establishing independent households outside of the natal village. El Bour was a primary destination because a large number of plots were for sale to anyone regardless of their origin, in contrast to customary tenure regimes that limited who could purchase land in a village to its native residents. Whether I was interviewing a vulnerable family in Imzilne or a well off farmer next door in el Harte, discussion invariably turned to a family member who had moved to el Bour n'Ait Yahya. There were different reasons for moving out into an extension: it could be a concerted effort to remove pressure on the household or to ease a family conflict without causing "separation," the formal division of household assets. One man from a wealthy family in el Harte moved into a house in el Bour belonging to his sister who had migrated to France--he was essentially a guardian--while another brother moved his nuclear family from the homestead in el Harte to the uncultivated steppe surrounding the village. The family had not divided its holdings but conflict over financial management drove the brothers to seek some independence without striking out completely on their own, which they all realized would diminish their collective wealth considerably.

This "breaking off" a portion of the family by moving to el Bour was part of a larger shift in domestic arrangements and construction norms. This was visible in the contrast between housing in the oldest sections of villages and the new construction on community edges and out in the steppe. Extensions for domestic construction were not limited to el Bour, but occurred throughout the valley where villages had room to grow. Newer houses were larger, on more expansive plots. Some research participants suggested that people were adopting urban styles of consumption, here expressed in larger homes with more private spaces. Whereas previously only married couples in the households would have their own bedroom, families had begun building larger homes that gave individual family members such as unmarried sons their own rooms. It was also a question of construction quality. People did not want to build vertically anymore, as in

the historic fortified settlements, because they felt construction standards had declined and the thinner adobe walls common now could not bear the weight. Skilled craftsmen who could build such walls were difficult to find and expensive, one reason why people turned to cement construction⁷.

This combination of factors increased the appeal of moving out into extensions, where plot sizes could be larger, unimpeded by surrounding homes that had been grouped together for safety in times of greater insecurity.⁸ One man in Imzilne attributed the increase of construction on the peripheries of villages to people's search for "freedom." Before, everyone lived in the fortified settlements out of fear, but increased security had ambivalent implications for him. He lamented that people had begun to "separate"-- they did not want to live together anymore and were "letting go of their traditions." And yet, I also saw that building large homes on the edges of the village also enabled households to stay together comfortably, allowing brothers with their own growing families to remain under one roof. If moving into extensions offered a release valve for portions of the family to break off, it also offered new possibilities for keeping families together.

The spatiality of changing domestic arrangements and increasing family size therefore remade the landscape of mountain communities as well as the steppe. Extensions did not simply represent a movement of people from higher altitudes down to the steppe: many of the households that sent family members to live in the steppe also claimed unused land in the village horn for expanded housing. The Ait Hamd plateau, for example, witnessed unprecedented growth in settlement after 2000 despite a contraction in agriculture and increasingly constrained

⁷ Domestic construction and home maintenance represented major financial and labor burdens. Some scholars in Morocco have decried migrants' tendencies to use remittances to build large cement homes, abandoning traditional adobe construction which they see as more culturally authentic (de Haas 2009), but there were important reasons for this. While more suited to the alternatively hot summers and cold winters, adobe required constant maintenance with a particular need for repair after the fall and spring rains. This represented either a financial drain given the shortage of skilled adobe builders or a high time commitment for men who were often working away from the home.

⁸ See Ilahiane 2004 for a detailed description of how security concerns historically shaped community dynamics and architecture.

livelihood opportunities. Population growth had increased the size of families, while remittances allowed more of them to stay in the village. Houcine, a blacksmith in Imzilne, explained that "a family like ours that used to have 20 now has 50. Before maybe four children survived and now, all the children will survive." Migration allowed households to remain in their communities by providing an outlet for the family members that the tight village economy could not support.

3) *Speculation and the rising value of land*: All of these movements of people swirled around the market town of Kelaa. People descending from the mountains who could afford to settle there often preferred it to el Bour because of its concentration of services and market activity. Regional market towns such as Kelaa were also more appealing for returned migrants, many of whom had grown accustomed to urban amenities. For them, investing in businesses or real estate in town was more attractive than returning to often remote village locations. This resulted in a wave of home construction, some of which remained empty because of people's reluctance to rent to strangers. The growth of the town spurred extensions into collective lands: real estate development companies secured agreements with collective land representatives to build in the steppe and the municipality used a form of eminent domain to mark out new land for development. Urban expansion spurred other kinds of extensions as well: the need for waste disposal, an abattoir outside of town, a water treatment plant, and an electricity transfer station all paved the way for the municipality's frequent use of a 1919 legal provision allowing the state to acquire collective land in perpetuity at symbolic prices.

The rising value of land around market towns such as Kelaa also extended to the national road linking these regional urban centers. The national road stretching from Ouarzazate to Errachidia may have been built as a tool of French conquest, but by 2010, it had become the pre-Saharan's main street. On the empty stretches between towns, entrepreneurs secured leases for collective land on which to build gas stations, cafés, and hotels to service the tourist buses that rumbled past the villages in their visits to the "thousand kasbahs." This represented a spatial reorientation away from the old pastoral byways and rivers towards the paved commercial artery.

When the national road was built, some powerful ruling families lobbied the French to route it away from their communities in an effort to repel outsiders. Some told me their parents or grandparents had sold land along the road to get away from the intrusions it represented. They regretted their decision now that the land had become so valuable.

These emerging forms of valuing land created a climate of speculation unknown in the pre-migration period when the regional economy was largely unmonetized and land markets were moribund. Beginning in the 1990s people began to claim land not only for its use-value but also for its potential exchange value and to prevent competing claims. Their strategies were as subtle as laying out brush collected for kindling to dry in a progressively wider radius around domestic compounds.⁹ Over time, that land became informally attached to that homestead, and the brush would be moved further and further out. Other claims were bolder, involving the construction of adobe enclosures around empty sections of steppe without formally acquiring the land from collective land representatives. Over time, that land, too, became associated with its owner as long as no one of authority contested the claim. In the mountains, these kinds of extensions usually reflected the need for more land to expand the homestead. Down in the steppe, the claims were more speculative. People sensed that change was afoot in the region's collective lands and wanted to be well positioned to take advantage of it. For one thing, they were concerned that the municipality of Kelaa Mgouna would continue to expropriate land for progressively more city services or residential development. Even if such expropriations did not happen, the growth of the town would likely raise the value of surrounding land. Claiming it now would yield a high sale price in the not too distant future. Further out in the steppe, people also understood that land was acquiring new value. Not only were new firms being established but in 2010, the central government announced the "plan solaire," a public-private partnership with World Bank and EU support that would install solar panels on thousands of hectares in Ouarzazate province and other

⁹ This was a practice largely instigated by women, who were responsible for collecting firewood and understood their families' increasing demand for land.

areas of the pre-Sahara in order to provide renewable energy to Europe. Fears of government expropriations and expectations of higher land prices drove these speculative claims.

The diversity of land extensions I have described speaks to the different ways risk management might explain the changes in how people used the steppe around Mgoun. There was not one vector of movement out from the mountains into the steppe, but a churning taking place throughout the Mgoun valley--a churning of people, goods, and livelihoods. Risk management is an apt description for many of the livelihood strategies embedded in the new land use practices to the extent that it informed how people diversified their income sources and developed new types of flexibility vis-à-vis land based resources. People enacted a new kind of mobility when they left their pastoral livelihoods and moved into the steppe as a staging ground for wage labor, used remittances to help maintain their families in the mountains, sent portions of their household to live elsewhere in the valley, or just extended their landholdings within their village boundaries.

Although ecological analyses of rangeland conversion emphasize how the immobility of cultivation prevents the opportunistic use of steppe resources, the roots that people were striking in the steppe did represent a kind of livelihood mobility. Instead of the flexible and opportunistic strategies exemplified by extensive pastoralism, however, people were spreading risk through space in new ways. The idea of using natural resources in different ecological settings and of maintaining the flexibility to tack back and forth between different livelihood activities were not, in and of themselves, new. But the particular contours of those strategies and their conjuncture with broader social and economic processes were new: in the previous half century, many people had left pastoralism definitively and saw no prospects for returning; migration remittances and integration into the national economy had monetized economic life; wage labor in Mgoun, nationally and internationally had emerged as a viable, even necessary, livelihood strategy; and changes in the way land was governed and valued allowed people to acquire land in new places within the valley. For the first time, their mobility was based on the ability to enter and leave wage labor markets in the city as their local agricultural and other livelihood activities required.

Other families searched for agro-ecological flexibility by farming land in multiple locations in a way that would not have been possible before public transport traversed the valley. People like Youssef cultivated in the steppe and in their natal villages, often gathering groups of relatives in *transits* to spend the day harvesting land further up the valley.

It is important not to equate this mobility with the ecological flexibility of transhumant pastoralism--cultivation could have environmental impacts that diminish the ecological resilience of the steppe--but it did represent a transformation of mobility as opposed to the end of it. Instead of viewing rangeland conversion as a transition from mobile livelihoods to sedentarized ones based on the immobility of cultivation, I interpret these extensions as the search for a new kind of flexibility based on the management of risk across an increased array of livelihood activities. While many treatments of pluriactivity or livelihood diversification refer to the creation of a population that is "neither here nor there," moving between various livelihood activities without rootedness in agrarian livelihoods or rural identities, in Mgoun it was more a question of people being, as Youssef himself said, "here *and* there," using mobility in creative ways to retain their roots, if not in agrarian livelihoods at least in their rural homeland (Peters 2004: 282). However, risk management did not mean the same thing to all people. By placing four case studies in the context of these regional processes, I identify the major determinants and implications of household livelihood strategies in Mgoun.

Understanding diversity through an analysis of differentiation: case studies

In order to understand the diverse trajectories of households sharing the same space and deploying similar livelihood and land use strategies, it is important to identify who was able to take advantage of new opportunities, who struggled with chronic poverty, and why. One approach in the poverty traps literature develops typologies of livelihood strategies and uses broad data sets to determine which one is more likely to result in a positive cycle of capital accumulation or upward economic mobility (Barrett et al. 2008). I present four case studies that roughly coincide with the typologies applicable to Mgoun as a qualitative analysis of these dynamics (Table 5.3

presents the main characteristics of the four case studies). This focuses attention on how family history (or in more limited, formal terms, previous asset positions), idiosyncratic factors like health crises, the political dynamics of access rules and social status, and other issues impact households' diverse livelihood prospects. Conclusions derived from these case studies are programmatic; in future research, I plan to amass larger data sets in order to make more generalizable claims.

Case study 1: Fatima (unskilled migrant labor, resettlement in the steppe, and exit from agriculture)

When I visited Youssef, the livestock trader I introduced earlier from Ait Toumert, our conversations always took place around a bowl of butter (*uddi*) churned from the milk of his cows, and honey collected from his family's hives in the mountains. I would take advantage of the trip out to el Bour to stop in and visit Fatima, another research participant who lived a few hundred meters down the hard, dirt road from Youssef. Honey was out of her reach--at nearly \$50 a liter, the treasured mountain honey was far too expensive for people who could not keep their own hives. Fatima, like Youssef, was from Imaghran and had moved from the mountains, but her situation was markedly different. She managed her small family, three young children, by herself while her husband worked on irrigation schemes in the Souss, a 4-5 hour bus ride away. He returned twice annually for a couple of weeks, leaving her in charge of most of the family finances and other affairs; I conducted all of my case study interviews with her. She had an older son, Driss, who at 21 had already spent 4 years in Casablanca learning the plaster trade and sending home wages to complement his father's earnings. They still struggled to get by. They had moved to el Bour in 2005 and built a house on the small plot they had purchased two years before. Fatima carefully tended the few almond and olive trees she had in the house courtyard, and would occasionally harvest a few bundles of alfalfa from another rented plot to feed to the 5-6 goats she kept in the courtyard.

Table 5.3: Key characteristics of case studies

Household	Household size	Sources of income	Cash income, 2009 (MAD)	Type of agriculture	Landholding ('acher)	Livestock holdings	Migration experience
Abdallah (El Harte)	19 Adult: 10 M/5 F Children: 2 M/2 F	Agriculture (cultivation and intensive livestock); income transfers from internal migration; commerce	Ag income: ¹⁰ 60,000 Business income: 8,000 Remittances: 18,000 Transfers: 0 Wages: 4,000 Total: 90,000 (\$11,250)	Commercial/subsistence cultivation; limited sale of intensive livestock products (dairy)	80 acher (owned); 30 acher (sharecropped for uncle)	4 cows 6 sheep 2 goats 2 mules 2 bee hives	Uncle in Holland; two brothers in Moroccan cities
Idir/Fatima (El Bour n'Ait Yahya)	6 Adult: 2 M/1 F Children: 2 M/1 F	Internal migration (sole income source)	Ag income: 820 Business income: 0 Remittances/wages (no locally earned wages): 24,000 Transfers: 700 Total: 25,520 (\$3,190)	Subsistence cultivation	.5 'acher (owned); .5 'acher (rented with other family from the religious endowment)	6 sheep	Immigrated from mountains (Imaghran); husband and son working in Moroccan cities
Moha (El Harte)	11 Adult: 3 M/7 F Children: 1 F	Casual wage labor (Kelaa); minimal income from agriculture; income transfers from internal migration	Ag income: 7,740 Business income: 0 Remittances: 25,560 Wages: 6,000 Transfers: 350 Total: 34,250 (\$4,281)	Subsistence; some sale of agricultural production, especially ancillary products	6'acher (rented from relative); 3'acher (rented from the religious endowment); 6 'acher (relative's land farmed at no cost)	1 cow 4 sheep 1 goat	Son regularly travels to work in Moroccan cities
Taleb (Rbat)	30 Adult: 11 M/9 F Children: 6 M/4 F	Agriculture (extensive and intensive livestock and cultivation); income transfers from internal migration; European pension	Ag income: 110,000 Business income: 28,000 Remittances: 27,000 Wages: 0 Transfers (pension): 90,000 Total: 255,000 (\$31,875)	Commercial/subsistence cultivation; sale of livestock (extensive pastoralism)	100 'acher (owned)	200 sheep (extensive) 100 goats (extensive) 1 camel (extensive) 4 cows/4 bulls 5 sheep (intensive) 3 mules/1 donkey 2 bee hives	Returned migrant from France; sons and nephews regularly work in Moroccan cities

¹⁰ Agricultural income includes imputed income from agricultural production consumed by the household.

In the summer of 2010, Fatima's son, Driss, returned home for Ramadan and to study for his driver's license, an intense month-long and expensive effort that was an important livelihood investment for many literate men in the area. It cost MAD 2,500 (\$310) to study and sit for the exam, over two months' salary for her son. The ability to drive opened up whole new work opportunities, though, and he envisioned a job as a chauffeur for the Casablanca elite who needed to shuttle their children to private school. The family lived exclusively on the income of Fatima's husband and son, completely dependent on wage labor in Morocco's urban centers and agricultural heartland. The key factors that shaped Fatima's livelihood prospects were her family's land ownership history, their reliance on low-wage internal migration, the lack of a social network to assist with childcare or provide labor exchange opportunities, limited mobility opportunities through education, and low labor availability.

Landownership and other assets: Fatima had no land on her own account, and Idir's landownership history was limited. He came from a family of transhumants, and only two weeks into her marriage, Fatima joined them on the range while Idir returned to a job digging wells in the north. Most of the agricultural land Idir's family owned was "eaten by the river," washed away in periodic floods. The family's modest herd of 100 or so animals was decimated by the 2001 drought and they abandoned extensive pastoralism. They also divided what little remained of their agricultural land. Idir sold that land in 2003 and bought their 30 x 30 meter parcel in el Bour for MAD 5,000 (\$625). He and his son built their house there and they planted six almond trees. Five years later, he used the social support benefits he had saved from his job to purchase a second, adjacent plot of 20 x 20 meters for MAD 6,500 (\$810). As of 2010, they hoped to deepen their well so that they could plant olive and almond trees on that plot. In addition to this modest holding, in early 2010 Fatima and Idir began renting 1/2 'acher in partnership with another family for MAD 800 a year (\$100) on which they grew alfalfa. The yield, shared with the other family, made a minimal contribution to their forage requirements for the six sheep they kept. Fatima occasionally sold livestock to keep her forage costs down and bring income in: in

2009, she sold one for MAD 500 (\$63).

Migration, wage labor and transfers: Fatima's family relied exclusively on the wage labor income of Idir and her son. While Idir had stable employment constructing irrigation canals for an agricultural contractor, he had asthma and often had to take unpaid sick leave. Fatima herself had numerous health problems that both impeded her ability to work and put a financial drain on the family. Idir was the only person I interviewed, either for my case studies or in other semi-structured interview situations, whose work in Morocco offered benefits (health insurance and support payments for school-age children), and while the payments proved valuable at some crucial points, they did not substantially increase the family income. Fatima never used the health insurance because she did not know how to navigate the paperwork; she was illiterate and embarrassed to ask for others' help. This resulted in substantial health care expenses: I estimated that she alone spent MAD 1,500 (\$188) in doctor's appointments and medication in 2010, and Idir undoubtedly registered health care expenses that Fatima could not recall or were accrued while he was away. Fatima did receive occasional transfers from two brothers who had migrated to Saudi Arabia and Algeria; faced with an unanticipated expense, she would occasionally call them for help but in 2009, this amounted to only MAD 700 (\$88).

Domestic arrangements, social networks, and labor availability: Another source of vulnerability for Fatima and Idir was the fact that they lived alone as a nuclear family and could not coordinate livelihood activities or pool expenses by sharing his family's domestic compound. Numerous problems among women in the family had made co-habiting impossible for Fatima, who had already suffered a severely traumatic childhood and had difficulty coping with the pressures of conflictual domestic life. These conflicts were a major reason why Idir gave up his share of the family house in the mountains and moved the family to el Bour; the move also facilitated access to his job in the Souss. Living in el Bour may have provided respite from conflict, but it created new challenges because Fatima had virtually no social network to assist her in caring for the children and supplementing the family income. While women in Mgoun

generally did not work for wages, they made essential contributions to household livelihoods through their agricultural work and labor exchanges that could yield substantial in-kind payments. Fatima did have access to some of this income. Soon after moving to el Bour she met women who weeded and harvested for oasis farmers for in-kind payments and they brought her along. She established some lasting ties to landowners this way but could only do field work irregularly and for a few hours a day because she needed to retrieve her young children from school. Her poor health as a result of a serious burn injury as a girl meant that she could not always go out to the fields, and had lost some of her patronage ties because of her inability to commit to regular work.

Divorced from family and social networks, with young children and only two adult men to earn an income, Fatima's household experienced severe labor constraints. In some respects, these constraints would be more challenging if they relied on an agrarian livelihood but even for wage labor, they had a limited pool of men who could bring income into the family. It would be another eight years before her younger son could join the labor market.

Education and other avenues to economic mobility: While some in Mgoun were able to use wage labor as a ladder to upward mobility, Idir and his son's limited education narrowed their possibilities. Idir was functionally illiterate and while Driss did complete some schooling, which allowed him to contemplate sitting for the driving exam, the lack of a high school degree and even more importantly, the lack of social networks either through education or their family background limited their ability to access better jobs.

Fatima's household therefore negotiated a series of constraints on their livelihood prospects. While they felt that the move to el Bour was both necessary and beneficial to the family, it would not offer a pathway to upward mobility. It offered greater flexibility in terms of access to wage labor and, if Fatima's health permitted, some agricultural work in the steppe. But as a livelihood strategy it was essentially defensive and held little potential for moving them out of poverty. The investment in land for them was essentially for domestic construction and did not

offer income generating potential, though they could sell if they had to. Since the land and house were their only fixed assets, they could not envision this scenario except in dire circumstances.

Case study 2: Moha (subsistence agriculture and local wage labor)

Like Fatima, Moha lived in an extension, but his was a small neighborhood that extended from the center of el Harte into an embankment overlooking the village. The neighborhood was Talat, the Tashelhit term for the dry ravines that gather the waters of flash floods in the steppe, and the pathway to the small collection of homes consisted of rocks drawn down the slope by previous rains. The homes here had recently been constructed on either side of the ravine and Moha carefully planted about two dozen olive trees on the sloped allotment he received from el Harte's collective land representatives. Moha headed a household of 11 people, one of the more economically vulnerable though well-liked families in the village. "You could tell this," Mostafa, my research assistant from el Harte, said, "because they receive the annual Ramadan donation from the Mohamed V Foundation." Moha had been embarrassed to tell me of this transfer. The foundation's donations of cooking oil, flour, sugar, and tea were intended for the poorest residents of communities around the country, but recommendations for the recipient list came from elected officials and community leaders. Many indicated to me that one's relationship to those leaders mattered more than one's actual economic situation. Moha represented a case of actual need but his links to one of el Harte's leading families through marriage also helped secure a place on the recipient list.

Landownership and other assets: Moha was formally landless because of his family history as a latecomer to el Harte.¹¹ His father's family had left the Dra' valley further to the south after poverty had forced them into itinerant begging throughout the region. When Moha's father finally settled in el Harte, he actually married into a prominent family, though his wife had not received her inheritance because her brothers decided not to divide the family's assets upon the

¹¹ Families without agricultural land were labeled as "landless" even though everyone in rural communities in the region owned their home and the land upon which it was built. Moha farmed rented land but that, too, would not change his status as landless because *ownership* of agricultural land was what mattered.

death of the patriarch. Moha's father did receive an allotment from communal lands for a house, and Moha himself built his new home in Talat with another allotment from the land representative, a relative of his wife. Though they owned this land, it could not accommodate any agriculture beyond a small kitchen garden. Moha's family did engage in subsistence cultivation, though, with six 'acher rented from a family member, six 'acher entrusted to him by his cousin in Casablanca at no charge, and three 'acher rented from the religious endowment office. The family owned one cow, three sheep, and one goat; Moha considered livestock an important means of saving and he actively bought and sold animals based on his need for cash.

Diversified livelihood activities with some income from agriculture: Moha combined a series of agricultural activities with locally earned wages and remittances from one of his two sons who installed telephone cables in Ouarzazate province, close enough that he could return home to help during peak agricultural times (the other son lived in northern Morocco with his family and did not send regular remittances because of his tight economic situation). Moha devoted all but one 'acher to a wheat/maize rotation in an effort to secure these basic staples for the family (the remaining 'acher was devoted to alfalfa). In 2009, a small surplus of maize allowed him to sell 5 'abra; normally people stocked grains, and his was the only case I had heard of someone selling maize, but he needed the cash. He also earned MAD 1,500 (\$190) in the agricultural season 2009/2010 from the sale of roses, figs, and almonds; this covered the MAD 1,500 rent on the land.

Moha earned MAD 500 (\$63) a month as a guardian for the empty home of an émigré in Europe. He spent each night there and did a number of other tasks for the family, who maintained agricultural land in the village. With his son's remittances included, the family's wage income in 2009 was approximately MAD 26,000 (\$3,250). However, their income would vary substantially from year to year because the son sending regular wages earned MAD 70 (\$9) a day only for the days he worked and that could vary substantially from month to month. His son also needed to pay his living expenses in Ouarzazate with these wages. Moha seized every opportunity to earn

income throughout the agricultural season by offering day labor either for cash or a share of whatever was being harvested or collected. I encountered him one day repairing his roof with the tall reeds he had received in payment for cutting them down from the banks of irrigation canals for another family. He also described amassing a small store of hay that he would take to Kelaa to sell during the winter when prices were high. His family was able to gather enough weeds and forage from their one 'acher of alfalfa for their livestock, enabling him to sell this and other ancillary products when he had the chance.

Domestic arrangements and social networks: Even though Moha himself had received income transfers--the Mohamed V Foundation donation and occasional gifts, some of which were anonymous--he fulfilled the religious injunction to donate a tenth of his harvest as alms, giving away 5 'abra of maize and wheat in 2009, even though people felt that someone of his wealth was not expected to do so. He told me that he saw it as his obligation, and I am sure that this contributed to his strong reputation in the village. This was one of the many ways that Moha's family was inserted in el Harte's social networks in such a way as to provide a safety net despite a their difficult economic situation. Like Fatima's family in el Bour, Moha had limited male labor in the family, essentially himself and his son who lived close by. He had "separated" from his two brothers: even with no land to divide, they decided to set up independent households, with each building their own home and another brother migrating to urban Morocco. They did not separate out of acrimony since the brothers maintained close ties, but rather made a strategic decision that it was easier to manage their tight finances independently. Had they possessed agricultural land, Moha said, they might have decided differently.

However, Moha's labor availability differed from Fatima's in an important sense. With seven women of working age (above the age of 9-10) in the household, they had ample labor to both work the land they farmed (rented and entrusted) and maintain labor exchanges with other families in the village. These were not equal exchanges but essentially constituted agricultural labor for in-kind wages on Moha's wife's extended family's holdings. In Chapter Four, I described

how the large farming families were often the most vocal proponents of customary institutions and labor mobilization practices, because they secured access both to land and to unpaid labor. In an example of this, the women in Moha's family always had agricultural work and the in-kind payments it offered because of their links to a wealthy family, but the context was one of persistent inequality.¹²

Education and other avenues to economic mobility: Moha had no possibility of using education as a means of accessing higher paying job opportunities. He had no formal schooling and his sons stopped their education after primary school. But the family had a level of livelihood security that Fatima in el Bour did not even if Moha's household had roughly the same cash income. Moha's family's immersion in el Harte's social networks secured access to labor opportunities and agricultural resources that supported subsistence and could occasionally be sold. But just as they felt confident they would never face destitution, they were also acutely aware of the constraints on their upward mobility. Moha did not envision being able to amass savings to buy land, nor could he afford to bring new land into cultivation. They could not set up an agricultural operation in the extensions even if that land could be accessed at no cost because they did not have the capital to put new land under production. Moha's family did, however, play an important role in making those extensions viable for the households able to make such an investment: they, along with other vulnerable el Hartis, provided much needed cheap labor and helped to buttress the ambivalent moral economy of the village.

Case study 3: Abdallah (commercial and subsistence agricultural production)

In 2010, there were only a handful of households in el Harte that "lived only off of agriculture" (I counted 10 out of a total of 133 households who presented themselves in these terms). This is clearly a small number, but as I noted in Chapter Four, their impact was widely felt in the social and economic life of the village. However, the label "living only off of

¹² See Crawford (2008) for a sensitive ethnographic analysis of how households experienced and negotiated inequality in a High Atlas community.

agriculture" is a misnomer because while they may have been more specialized in farming than other families, these households still had diversified livelihood strategies and migration in particular played a central role in their ability to focus on petty commodity production. Abdallah and his brothers were an example of a family that considered themselves professional farmers (women in the household were not particularly interested in this kind of label).

Land ownership and other assets: Abdallah's great grandfather had been a member of the Royal army (*makhzeni*) in colonial times, and despite his marked status as a black resident of el Harte, he was able to acquire land through the then typical practice of seizing property (or receiving it as a concession) as a privilege of his position. Inheritance division left Abdallah's family with 50 'acher, to which they added 20 'acher through purchase, and another 20 'acher that they "improved" or developed in el Bour. They did not have to pay for this last 20 'acher, but Abdallah surmised that it was, in the end, more expensive than the previously cultivated land they had purchased because of the amount of time and money required to render the land arable. It took three to five years to level the land, work in manure, and secure consistent water supplies before the first crops would show any production worth harvesting, and it took significantly more time after that for yields to match those of the older fields in their holdings.

The ability to wait this long before seeing returns depended largely on remittances. Abdallah's uncle had migrated to Holland in the 1970s and sent regular remittances until a lingering family dispute finally led to a division of assets between his father and uncle in the mid-2000s and the literal separation of their compound--they built an adobe wall right down the middle of the house they had shared. By the time the division was completed, the loss of regular remittances had little impact on Abdallah's family. They had already purchased the land and made the investments necessary to maintain a successful operation. Nor did the division result in a complete rupture of ties; Abdallah sharecropped 30 'acher that belonged to his uncle because the latter did not have the labor in el Harte to farm all of his land. The result was a substantial holding that combined with the other assets the family commanded (in particular labor, some financial

capital, and livestock) allowed them to live well off of their subsistence and petty commodity production.

Diversified livelihood activities based primarily in agriculture: Despite this self-conception as a farming family, Abdallah's 19 member household included three brothers who lived and worked as plumbers and contractors in urban Morocco; they jointly sent MAD 1,500 (\$190) a month to support the family. One brother living in the household supplemented family income with well digging: he earned MAD 4,000 (\$500) in 2009, while another brother maintained a vegetable stall in the weekly market. The stall provided an outlet for their produce, eliminating intermediaries, and an estimated annual income of MAD 8,000 (\$1,000) from the retail sale of other vegetables purchased wholesale, but one of the main reasons they kept the stall was to gain access to wholesale prices for produce they needed to purchase for the family. I estimated their cash income from non-agricultural activities at MAD 30,000 (\$3,750), as compared to approximately MAD 60,000 (\$7,500) from agricultural production (based on commercialized and the imputed income from consumption of own production, minus input costs).¹³ As I will discuss in greater depth in Chapter Six, Abdallah's family sold a wide variety of crops and ancillary products from their land and they perceived this as their core livelihood.

Domestic arrangements, social network, and labor availability: Abdallah's family was known in el Harte for their "good management" and high level of cooperation. While conflict had led to a separation with his uncle, those remaining in Abdallah's household developed their livelihood strategies collaboratively and pooled all of their resources to better leverage the activities of each member. In the time I spent with them, they seemed an exceptionally close and convivial family and this was evident in the way they both worked and socialized together. They had high social standing in the community from having served as customary leaders (irrigation

¹³ With 17 family members living in el Harte (I eliminated the two brothers in Casablanca for the purposes of this calculation, since they sent regular remittances but otherwise maintained an independent household), the per capita income for Abdallah's household in 2010 was MAD 5,294 (\$662), a comfortable living for one of el Harte's leading families but not even double the national poverty line (MAD 3,037).

managers and other roles) for generations, though in certain respects, they were less enmeshed in village networks of reciprocity than some of the other prominent farming families. Abdallah remarked that they did not engage in labor exchanges with other families because they had the family labor needed to work their land (14 household members of working age), though they would occasionally hire a wage laborer or two at peak periods in the agricultural seasons. It was easier to pay wages for a few days than to tie up the women's labor in exchanges on others' land and they did not have vulnerable extended relatives who could work their holdings as Moha's family did for his more affluent relatives. Abdallah's family participated in village social networks in other ways, however, through almsgiving, general leadership of village affairs, and other roles.

Education and mobility opportunities: Abdallah's family had secured upward mobility largely without reliance on education. Even though the family had enjoyed high social stature and significant landholdings since the early part of the 20th century, they, like most el Hartis, experienced significant income poverty until the era of migration. Like many other of the other farming families in the region, migration played an essential role in assuring upward mobility and allowing them to center their livelihoods on agriculture, but it was a particular kind of migration at a particular time. International remittances in the 1970s and 1980s were higher and more consistent than the kinds of remittances newer emigrants were able to send home. This regularity permitted the steady purchase of land while it was still relatively inexpensive and to carve a niche in the small though growing commercial agricultural sector in Mgoun. While the remittances Abdallah's two brothers sent every month provided needed liquidity, Abdallah was aware that they could not have built up their farming operation in the way they had without his uncle's support from Holland over the years.

Case 4: Taleb (livestock based livelihood with diversified income sources and subsistence agriculture

While there was some diversity in how people fashioned agriculture-based livelihoods,

they tended to be divided into two major categories: petty commodity production (the cultivation of vegetables and tree crops) as in Abdallah's case, or livestock production as in the case of Taleb, one of the case study households located in Rbat. While they represented different strategies in terms of the resources and skills they required, they shared a reliance on migration as a source of start-up or working capital.

Land ownership and other assets: The son of a sharecropper in Rbat, Taleb did not have the stigma of being from a racially subjugated group but still grew up in extreme poverty after his father's desperation sale of their minimal holdings during the famine of the 1940s left them landless. Taleb was 17 when he left in 1969 to work in the mines of Calais and he spent 18 years there, remitting money for the regular purchase of land and livestock. He purchased 60 'acher this way, and subsequently added 60 more 'acher by improving land in an extension outside of Rbat.¹³ This required substantial investments in digging two wells and installing motor pumps, but Taleb felt he had no choice because a dispute with Rbat's most powerful family had deprived him of adequate irrigation water from the village spring. He had a very clear goal: to meet all of his large household's subsistence needs (there were 30 members of the household, most of whom lived in the same compound) and to field a herd on the range. Taleb's family had never been involved in transhumance--they were too poor even before his father's desperation sale--but as teenagers, he and his brother spent a few years as herders and learned enough to get them started.¹⁴ There was a strong personal motivation to focus his energies on extensive pastoralism: it was a time-honored livelihood for elite families and a way to challenge the dominant hierarchies that had impoverished his family and many others in the region. Taleb built up a large enough herd to send out on the range (approximately 100 animals) only two years after he started purchasing livestock

¹³ Taleb began purchasing land in 1970 for an initial price of MAD 750 per 'acher and purchased his last plot in 2008 for MAD 14,500 (\$1,800) per 'acher, a roughly similar trajectory as the land prices I cited in Chapter Four for el Harte over the same period (MAD 350 in 1970 to MAD 20,000 in 2010).

¹⁴ Taleb remarked that it "is not very hard and you do not need to know much" to practice transhumance, a reflection of how much expertise he and his brother had internalized over the years. It was, of course, quite hard and required specialized knowledge of livestock, the environment, and market dynamics.

in the late 1970s; he said it was possible to buy a sheep then for MAD 200 and steadily increase herd size through reproduction. He subsequently kept his herd at 300 animals, selling additional animals as reproduction increased herd size, which in a good year could amount to up to 200 head. Income from commercial off-take alone could reach MAD 80,000 (\$10,000). Taleb had to cap herd size because of the lack of shepherding labor; his brother maintained the animals on the range and could not safeguard a herd of more than 300.

Diversified livelihood activities based primarily in agriculture: Like Abdallah, Taleb's livelihood strategies were centered on agriculture--in his case intensive and extensive livestock production--but the family had a highly diversified livelihood portfolio. Most of their crop production was for subsistence, though they sold nuts, especially walnuts, potatoes, and some roses. Another brother was a livestock trader, buying animals regionally and selling them at the weekly market in the plateau; another brother kept a corner store in the village, making a modest income by refilling propane tanks, and three sons in the family travelled regularly for unskilled construction jobs in urban Morocco. They sent a total of MAD 27,000 (\$3,375) in remittances in 2009, while Taleb's pension from his work in the mines added MAD 90,000 (\$11,250) a year to the family's income. Their annual household income of approximately MAD 255,000 (\$31,875), which includes imputed agricultural income, was very high for the region, but as Taleb remarked, their household was large and their expenses substantial. The cost of domestic consumption, agricultural inputs, the ongoing development of agricultural land, and various expenses associated with maintaining the herd meant that when times were tough, such as during the last drought, there were few places to trim expenditures and he had to sell more animals than usual.

Domestic arrangements, social network, and labor availability: As I discussed in some depth in Chapter Two, Taleb retained decision-making authority over his household's complex financial affairs, while his eldest daughter in particular organized family labor and helped him to keep everyone on task. Their style was based more on centralized authority than the collaborative decision-making of Abdallah's family, but as Taleb noted, discipline was necessary to make sure

their large household operated smoothly. They had ample labor supplies, though occasionally poorer residents from Rbat would assist at peak agricultural times and receive in-kind payments for their work. Taleb's economic ascendance over the previous four decades evoked respect in the region but did not propel him into a position of political authority in an area still dominated by the powerful family that had indentured his father. In this context, the mere fact of his economic success was perceived by many as a form of political resistance.

Education and mobility opportunities: Like Abdallah's family in el Harte, a lack of formal education beyond a couple of years in a Quranic school did not hinder Taleb's upward mobility, at least economically. He had been able to take advantage of international migration opportunities early on, which positioned him well to make lasting investments that would root his family in agricultural livelihoods after his remittances, and eventually his pension, came to an end. His was not a case of returning to an agrarian past but rather of using remittances to venture into extensive pastoralism and agricultural production for the first time. Taleb was exceptional in the path that he chose--I heard of no other migrants fielding a transhumant herd without more significant prior experience in extensive pastoralism--but it was a path that made sense given the limitations of petty commodity production in the high mountain plateau and the continuing profitability of livestock production there. Other migrants and even some non-migrants who engaged in livestock production as a primary livelihood strategy elsewhere in the valley generally raised animals intensively or focused exclusively on trading animals already fattened for the market.

Understanding wealth dynamics in the context of land use change

Land--and land use change--played an essential role in the livelihood stories of all of my case studies. Everyone participated in the extensions I detailed at the beginning of this chapter in some way or another. Youssef and Fatima moved to el Bour to access cheap land and enhance the mobility they needed for their wage or commerce-based livelihoods. Moha built his new home in an extension, while his family joined the cheap labor pool that enabled el Harte's wealthier

households to expand agriculture into the steppe. Abdallah's family had been one of the "pioneers," one of the first families to base themselves in el Bour and bring the uncultivated steppe into production. In the mountains, Taleb had used his migration remittances to finance a strategy that combined the most traditional livelihood activity--extensive pastoralism--with the newest, the use of earthmoving equipment and deep wells to bring a hectare and a half of land into agricultural production.

These land uses and the livelihood strategies that depended on them did not simply perpetuate a longstanding social order that enabled the rich to get richer and mired the rest in poverty. Rather, they allowed some families that had lived in desperate poverty just one generation ago to start on a path to upward mobility and maintain that secure position. Yet not everyone was able to enjoy this mobility and my case studies point to the factors at the root of these diverse outcomes. They also illustrate the limitations of using a straightforward typology of either land use or livelihood strategies to isolate the reasons for economic differentiation. Similar land use strategies might accompany very different trajectories for households with divergent asset positions, labor availability, and access to social networks.¹⁵ The land use change I documented may have reflected new strategies for risk management and livelihood diversification but Barrett et al. remind us that since "diversification is not an end unto itself, it is essential to connect observed patterns of income back to resulting income distributions and poverty. Not all diversification into off-farm or non-farm activities [or in the Mgoun case, diversification *into* on-farm activities] offers the same benefits and not all households have equal access to the more lucrative diversification options" (Barrett et al. 2005: 38). To the extent that patterns of

¹⁵ I have mentioned the role of education in each case study because research elsewhere in Morocco indicates that it is an important indicator of vulnerability to poverty (Kusunose 2010). Through my ethnographic work, I did not find educational attainment to be determinant: levels of education were generally low for everyone and the major avenue for upward mobility in the past half-century, international labor migration, required only the most basic literacy. Some elite families, such as former regional overlords, had children who successfully moved into professional or civil service positions in major cities through access to higher education, but these cases were rare. A regional survey with a statistically valid sample would be necessary to make more fine-tuned conclusions about the role of education in upward mobility here.

diversification also involve particular kinds of resource use, this approach can extend to land use change.

In making the connection between activities or strategies and outcomes, I have found the concept of dynamic asset poverty thresholds a useful heuristic. This line of research attempts to map the wealth dynamics that create and sustain poverty traps, and represents an effort to move beyond static income measures of poverty or assumptions that people's livelihood strategies simply reflect their "revealed preferences." Lybbert et al. explain this new thinking on poverty traps:

The core hypothesis is that multiple dynamic equilibria might exist and thus that initial conditions matter to subsequent income or wealth accumulation trajectories. Under this hypothesis, some subpopulations find themselves "trapped" at a low stable equilibrium, in the sense that without a sizable positive shock to their asset holdings or incomes, their equilibrium welfare does not grow but merely fluctuates around a penurious level. Others enjoy a higher, stable dynamic equilibrium. The hypothesis of multiple, stable dynamic equilibrium implies the existence of at least one unstable dynamic equilibrium, a threshold point at which households' path dynamics switch, with households converging back to their ex ante dynamic equilibrium in the wake of shocks that do not push them across the threshold, but converging instead on another (lower or higher) stable, dynamic equilibrium if a shock is significant enough to push them across the threshold. [Lybbert et al. 2004: 768]

This is an important area of theorizing for development economists and macroeconomists but I use it more as a heuristic because it fits awkwardly into the ethnographic methods and theoretical orientations that guided my research. A major concern of this poverty research is to develop econometric models that can both capture the dynamics of these equilibria and pinpoint the empirical location of the threshold points in different contexts. I, on the other hand, turned to the specificity of case studies to develop a qualitative understanding of how power, history, and the idiosyncrasies of individual lives shaped household livelihood prospects. Nor would an anthropologist be surprised to learn that "initial conditions matter," but how they may matter is where the concept can be helpful. It trains attention on the temporal and spatial "breaks" in the narratives I collected about upward mobility and chronic poverty, those moments that were determinative for setting households onto their divergent paths to a lower or higher stable

equilibrium.

While I may not be able to estimate an empirical threshold point, the "shocks" that pushed households across the threshold emerged clearly from the narratives. Not reducible to a single event like a hurricane, drought, or famine, these shocks--both positive and negative--converged around a 20-30 year period in which international labor migration created new opportunities and then closed them off, allowing some families to "jump" the threshold while relegating others to the lower equilibrium. These latter households may have witnessed improvements in their welfare: Moha and Fatima testified to their improved livelihood security compared to their youth and other case study households not presented above reaffirmed the sense that life had improved for most. But they were under no illusions that their upward mobility would take them out of poverty.

International migration gave many households a positive "shock" that improved their consumption and provided capital to finance local investments, especially in land and livestock. The timing here was crucial. Accessing international remittances early on, when land was cheap or available at no cost, and then devoting that land to petty commodity or livestock production allowed households like Abdallah's and Taleb's to build and then sustain "high-return portfolios" (Zimmerman and Carter 2003: 234). When the doors to international migration closed, these families had cemented their economic position, which was, to a certain extent, dependent on others' inability to access similar levels of migration remittances. Migration was still prevalent when I conducted my research in 2010, but it was a less remunerative internal migration that preserved or perhaps improved families' existing positions but could not push them onto a path of capital accumulation. In this way, international migration helped to create an "asset space" that opened a relatively brief window of opportunity, while the reconfiguration of migration in the mid-1990s subsequently narrowed that asset space.¹⁶ What Zimmerman and Carter hypothesize

¹⁶ I use the term "asset space" metaphorically; it has a technical usage in economics as deployed by Zimmerman and Carter 2001.

through modeling resonates with my ethnographic research: "There is initially only a probabilistic border between rich and poor: near the borders of [statistical] regions, there are exceptionally lucky or unlucky agents who cross into neighboring regions of attraction. After several periods, however, agents repair to the interior of their respective zones, and income mobility across classes becomes much more difficult;" here "respective zones" refers to the differing equilibria for agents in the model who command low or high assets (Zimmerman and Carter 2001: 253). In the case of Mgoun, the "probabilistic" nature of that border could be located in the relative openness of migration opportunities to groups from a variety of social positions. One could participate in that early migration regardless of one's background, allowing people to move across economic divides in a way not previously possible.

However, I do not want to attribute unicausal power to international migration in shaping the dynamics of poverty in Mgoun. Migration intersected with other factors to influence a household's social and economic positions. The case studies highlight the most important: the ability to command labor, integration into social networks, and access to land not only through purchase but also through membership in a community. Whether a household could use these factors to their favor was spatially as well as temporally differentiated. Thus, moving to el Bour improved access to wage labor but reduced access to the social insurance offered by membership in a community. There were also families able to secure upward mobility during the same period without direct involvement in international migration. At various points in my dissertation, I have discussed Haj Ahmed, a leading figure in el Harte who became a successful commercial farmer even though his family never had an international migrant. High social standing and early acquisition of communal lands positioned him well for a primarily agricultural livelihood. However, I would argue migration created the condition of possibility for his mobility--and that of others in similar situations--by creating new markets and monetizing the local economy. Migration was not one event, reducible to a shock that pushed people over a single, empirically observable threshold, but it had a defining and differentiating impact that would shape how

people could access and use the diverse resources--land-based, social, and financial especially--
that proved essential to securing upward mobility over the past half-century.

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Chapter VI--The practice of agriculture and peasantization in Mgoun

Historically, observers have used water distribution as a point of entry for understanding oasis farming systems. For centuries, complex irrigation infrastructure and finely tuned social institutions have allocated water across similarly complex field configurations in the southern oases. In el Harte, one of the first questions I asked to learn about the village's agricultural landscape was "what is your time slot (*nuba* or turn) in the irrigation schedule?" People politely noted their day, but they also offered the caveat that there had been no "turn-taking" since early 2009 because ample water supplies allowed everyone to irrigate as they pleased with no ramifications for their neighbors. If water scarcity emerged again as a concern, families would automatically revert to the time-based allocation system. During this time of plenty, irrigation management--when farmers could dislodge the mud dams to release water onto their plots and who held rights of way in the variegated patchwork of holdings--was still quite complicated, but documenting irrigation turns would not necessarily lead me to the central dynamics driving agriculture in the community. It was another dimension of water distribution, the potable water system run by the village development association, that offered this insight into the transformation of farming in el Harte.

One day early in my fieldwork, I accompanied Mohamed, the part-time employee of the development association, on his bimonthly tour of the village to read people's water meters.¹ Rather than make the rounds in the village center, however, we ventured out through the densely planted plots of the old oasis to the larger, less shaded fields in the newer extensions. I thought that we must be starting in Imaghran, the neighborhood on the edge of town named after the ethnic group from the mountains that began settling there in the 1980s, but we continued on to the rocky steppe at the edge of the village buffer lands (*horm*). I asked Mohamed why we needed to

¹ The potable water system was installed in 1998 (with extensions in 2000 and 2003) with the financial and technical support of the National Office of Potable Water (the state-owned utility), but the village development association managed water distribution independently, collecting bi-monthly fees based on water usage levels.

hike out to this empty expanse far from the homes provisioned by the deep communal well. He pointed to what looked like a boulder in the distance but which was, upon closer inspection, a water hook-up encased in concrete. I realized that these hook-ups dotted the landscape at regular intervals. Some had faucets and hoses used to irrigate olive saplings that were the only sign of cultivation--or any kind of human presence--in the windswept steppe. One family had engineered an ad hoc drip irrigation system, placing a plastic cooking oil bottle at the base of each sapling to slowly release water from a small hole punctured in the bottom. When the village association first set up the potable water system in the 1998, there was a heated discussion about whether or not to extend the hook-ups into the horm. While some felt that it would encourage people to move into the steppe and place unsustainable demands on the association well, others felt they needed to plan ahead for the inevitable growth of the village. No one had yet moved there, but a small group of farming families had begun the long process of rendering the land arable even if it meant using expensive association water until they could dig wells. The irrigation canals fed by the Mgoun River did not extend this far and the lay of the land meant that sinking wells would probably be the only way to cultivate the newest extensions to el Harte's agricultural landscape.

The hook-ups offered visual confirmation of el Harte's new status as the agricultural hub of the Mgoun valley. As the former site of the regional market, el Harte's economic life was historically driven by commerce, not agriculture. When the French Protectorate authorities moved the market across the river in the 1940s even this source of economic sustenance was cut off and impoverished sharecropping families maintained subsistence plots while circulating regionally to farm others' land. By the late 1990s, a new narrative had taken hold. As we wiped sand off the glass encasing the water meters, Mohamed, the association employee, described how el Harte was known throughout Mgoun as one of the only villages where people "lived only off of agriculture." When I told people in Kelaa or up valley that I was conducting research in el Harte, they commented approvingly on how el Hartis were "real farmers," with good land and ample water that was the envy of communities struggling with chronic drought.

Up in the mountain community of Imzilne, by contrast, the fields extending from the irrigation canals were poignantly bare, virtually empty of the almond and walnut trees characteristic of the higher altitude villages. Imzilne had lost most of its trees during the droughts of the 1990s, exposing the soil to the unrelenting sun. Far from expanding agriculture into the steppe, farmers there planted saplings in the historical oasis in an uncertain effort to replace their losses, uncertain because water scarcity had become a chronic problem and no one was sure those trees would survive. While farmers in el Harte harvested an expanding repertoire of vegetables in the summer, many people in Imzilne could not sow a summer crop of maize, which, along with winter wheat, had long served as the staple rotation in this oasis system.

Like Imzilne up in the mountains, the landscape of the new extensions in el Harte was bare and planting trees was a risky leap of faith. Unlike Imzilne, however, farmers in el Harte took the risk with confidence that agriculture's expansion in the village would continue. This caused some concern to local extension officers, who expressed ambivalence about the environmental consequences of agricultural expansion. They admired people's surging interest in improving agricultural production, especially using "modern" means, and eagerly offered technical support to farmers in the extensions. At the same time, they warned, as one officer told me, that "drought has become structural here; people should not extend fields or plant trees in the steppe. The water table cannot guarantee the sustainability of these extensions; during the last major drought [in the 1990s], many people let their lands go." This tension in the practice and discourse of agricultural extension was never resolved for me, and I suspect, for the officers themselves, who struggled to reconcile their positive valuation of high productivity and agricultural modernity with the potential environmental costs of farming in the steppe.² Talking with farmers, however, I learned they were aware of the environmental constraints. They saw the

² I encountered many such tensions in the ways different state institutions approached economic policy, agricultural extension, and environmental management in Mgoun. One state agency would frequently embark on an initiative without consulting other relevant agencies, or even with their active opposition, often leading to heated debates at the municipal and Ministry of Interior offices.

extensions as one element of a multi-faceted livelihood portfolio and though the environmental implications of these new land uses remain an open question, farmers did not forge ahead ignorant of the risks.

The new extensions represented a risky investment, but for many it was a calculated risk that made sense as part of a diverse repertoire of livelihood strategies. The diversification of cropping regimes and a surge of commercial agricultural production were important new features of this repertoire and they were not only a phenomenon of the extensions. On our walk to the outer reaches of el Bour, I had registered the sight of women in the historic oasis gathering apricots that men had knocked down with long sticks as a sign of the endurance of traditional agriculture. Yet the cultivation and sale of apricots was a relatively new phenomenon--barely 40 years old--and an equally powerful symbol of what had changed in el Harte's agrarian landscape as the water hook-ups in the steppe.

In this chapter, I explore agrarian change in the Mgoun valley as an uneven process of "peasantization," the active construction of peasant livelihoods and identities in the context of globalized markets for food and labor. It is uneven because in the regional context of the Mgoun valley, the expansion of agriculture in some villages took place alongside the retraction of farming livelihoods in others. Scholars who have examined this phenomenon elsewhere emphasize a similar point: a comprehensive assessment of global agriculture must consider "repeasantization" in the context of countervailing processes such as the industrialization of global food production and the "deactivation" of millions of farmers forced to leave agriculture because of worsening subsistence crises in rural areas (van der Ploeg 2008:1; see also Bernstein 2010, Hecht 2010, McMichael 2008). These scholars have moved away from earlier formulations of the "Agrarian Question" inspired by Marx, Lenin, Kautsky, Chayanov, and others which deliberated the fate of a global peasantry confronted by the transformative power of industrial capitalism and class-based politics. Instead, they emphasize the heterogeneous interaction between global processes and the place-specific circumstances of diverse peasantries. Rather than

ascribe a totalizing power to neoliberalism, this line of research allows for spaces of difference where people cobble together the resources and pursue peasant livelihoods, even if from a defensive or marginalized posture (Gibson-Graham 2006, van der Ploeg 2008).

The concept of peasantization offers analytic tools for considering investments--both financial and emotional--in agriculture on their own terms, not purely in relation to non-agricultural sectoral dynamics, the imperatives of economic growth, or the lack of other investment options for rural producers. The concept turns our attention to the cultural processes that influence people's choice of farming style and relative emphasis on agriculture versus other activities in crafting a livelihood portfolio. But the concept is still programmatic at this point: if scholars have identified a generalized trend that falls under the label of peasantization, we have only begun to see detailed analyses of how peasantization processes take shape in specific contexts. How are these processes different from the kind of expansion and retraction that has historically characterized the role of agriculture in livelihood strategies, particularly in economically or ecologically uncertain environments, such as many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and, I would argue, Morocco?

In Chapter Four, I focused on the institutional dimensions of peasantization: how people forged peasant livelihoods through engagement with agricultural markets *and* customary tenure regimes. In this chapter, I turn to farming systems to make a parallel argument: in communities with adequate water and land, people forged a qualitatively new role for agriculture in their livelihoods based on commercial production and new cropping mixes. However, they did this not through a whole-scale adoption of "modern" techniques as defined by the productivist logic of agricultural extension offices or industrial farming. Rather, they integrated these new approaches into the traditional oasis farming system in an effort to mitigate the risks and resource constraints inherent in dryland agriculture. There are two implications of this argument. First, this agriculture was "new," which is why I use the term "peasantization" to refer to this "modern expression of the *fight for autonomy and survival in a context of deprivation and dependency*" (Van der Ploeg

2008: 7). The term "repeasantization" as used by van der Ploeg and others implies that peasants are attempting to return to a former state of autonomy that has been lost. In Mgoun, households used migration to challenge sharecropping arrangements and experiment with more autonomous peasant livelihoods for the first time. They did this by combining commercial production with traditional oasis farming systems and forging new kinds of rural identities.

Second, the fact that peasantization processes were embedded in longstanding practices of oasis agriculture meant that purely quantitative indicators or other conventional measures of agrarian change would not give a full description of how agriculture was changing here. Isolated production data for individual crops, measures of intensification, and profit-loss calculations are important, but when used to evaluate farmer decisions in el Harte, those decisions may not appear economically "rational." Expanding those indicators to consider agro-ecological considerations, changing labor regimes, and the social organization of agricultural production led me to different conclusions about the relative viability of oasis agriculture and the logic behind peasantization. Here, profit was made in the margins--in the small moves and creative adjustments at each stage of the growing, processing, and marketing process. These adjustments appeared like minor details when considered alone, but when contextualized in a given farming style, a farmer's (or more accurately a household's) personal approach to the practice of agriculture, such small moves could determine the viability of agriculture as a livelihood strategy.

In the following analysis, I use ethnography to parse out what aspects of peasantization were new in el Harte and what that novelty meant for understanding the direction of change in rural livelihoods in Mgoun. I then describe the key features of commercial farming and the factors that enabled petty commodity production to emerge as a viable livelihood strategy. Finally, I explore the determinants of the different household trajectories: why were some households able to maintain viable family farms and others not? By framing my analysis in terms of differentiation, I hope to avoid a romantic agrarian populism that isolates the small family farm as *the* linchpin for strengthening rural livelihoods or rectifying the problems of industrialized

agriculture. The problem with such populism, according to Henry Bernstein is that it holds up the family farm or smallholding as an ahistorical ideal, naturalizing it as

[the] norm from which other social forms (capitalist farms on one hand, "landless" peasants on the other) deviate. However, the relatively stable "family" farm--when it occurs--has to be problematised both analytically and concretely, that is to say, historically. This includes investigating whether and how the formation and reproduction of such farms are *the result of processes of differentiation* as "entry" and reproduction costs rise in the course of commodification, there is competition for land and/or the labour to work it, and so on. [Bernstein 2009: 73]

In Mgoun, the family farm as I encountered it in 2010 was barely four decades old, a departure from the subsistence economies and patterns of exploitation characteristic of earlier sharecropping regimes. The new family farms may have emerged as a challenge to these longstanding hierarchies but they were still an outcome of processes of differentiation, both spatial and economic. In areas without such geographic advantage agriculture receded, while in communities positioned to expand agriculture, most households found that capital and labor constraints limited their ability to remake themselves into peasant farmers.

Spatial dimensions of peasantization

The day I spent with Mohamed reading the water meters was a very social affair. Though many people were in the fields, others poked their heads out from behind the metal doors that enclosed their compound to see who was milling around and chat about the harvest or the current whereabouts of family members--France, Casablanca, the fields. At one point, a young man stopped Mohamed and me on the dirt pathway and advised us that Abdallah was looking for us. Abdallah had heard that I was conducting research on agriculture and wondered why I had not called on him yet since he was, after all, one of el Harte's "grand farmers." I had not met Abdallah yet and felt intimidated, but Mohamed simply chuckled. We stopped in to Abdallah's adobe compound in the newer extensions (el Bour) to find him in the typical head of household position, seated on the floor in the family's salon with a metal box housing tea and sugar by his side. He was apportioning out tea, bread, and olive oil to family members in need of mid-morning

sustenance. He laughed when he saw how effective his summons had been. Abdallah was indeed a grand farmer but he also had an ironic sense of humor. He became a generous and trusted resource on agriculture, guiding me through the economic and agronomic complexities of farming in el Harte.

Our first visit was short--we had meters to read--but he made a point of showing me the trellises that he had just constructed out of the reeds that grow along the irrigation canals for his field of tomatoes behind the compound. He had been cultivating tomatoes for some time and considered it one of his most lucrative crops. But growing tomatoes was hard. They required a lot of water and work: staggering the planting, weeding, and staking, unlike potatoes, for example, which "you just leave in the ground and irrigate now and again." Abdallah explained that el Bour was a good place to grow tomatoes because it was safe for high value crops. In the villages along the river--and the main road skirting the river--people stole produce from the fields in plain daylight. This was one of the reasons land was getting expensive in el Harte: set back half a kilometer from the river, el Bour in particular was less exposed to theft. It was also less exposed to other dangers. Prior to the extension of the irrigation canal into el Bour in the early 1980s, el Harte suffered the geographic disadvantage: less access to water and distant from the river and the market town. The villages along the Mgoun River had historically controlled the best lands nourished by the water and silt from the periodic flooding. But by 2010, flooding had begun taking the land with it and the riparian communities' fields were eroding.³ In a region where water scarcity was a chronic concern, the overabundance of water could create just as many problems.

Differences of topography, water availability, and proximity to markets therefore conditioned the kind of agrarian change that would take place in the heterogeneous communities along the valley. Such a high degree of spatial differentiation makes it difficult to develop an

³ Few people suggested that the floods had become materially worse in recent years. Extension agents described it as the normal process whereby rivers forge a new course through the broad floodplain. However, it is possible that longer and more severe droughts as a result of climate change are intensifying the erosion precipitated by flash flooding. To my knowledge, this issue has yet to be researched in southern Morocco.

aggregate portrait of peasantization processes. Peasantization could not simply be measured by rangeland conversion since it also included intensification on existing oasis land and the adoption of different farming styles. Nor could it be measured as an increased share of household income earned from agricultural production because in many cases, peasantization could only occur because migration remittances had become a dominant source of income. And finally, attempting to trace peasantization through regional increases in subsistence production, petty commodity production, or both, yielded an incomplete picture because the highly localized scope of the phenomenon buried it in aggregate production statistics. I compiled data collected by the Kelaa Mgouna extension office for the five communes in its service area on cereal, tree crop, and vegetable production over the previous twenty years (the most detailed data I could find). I have presented these data, along with rainfall statistics and number of trees over the same twenty year period, in Tables 6.1- 6.5. Following my field interviews that indicated increased investment in commercial agriculture and vegetable production, I had hoped to see an increase in agricultural production and was disappointed to find that at the regional level, at least, they did not.⁴

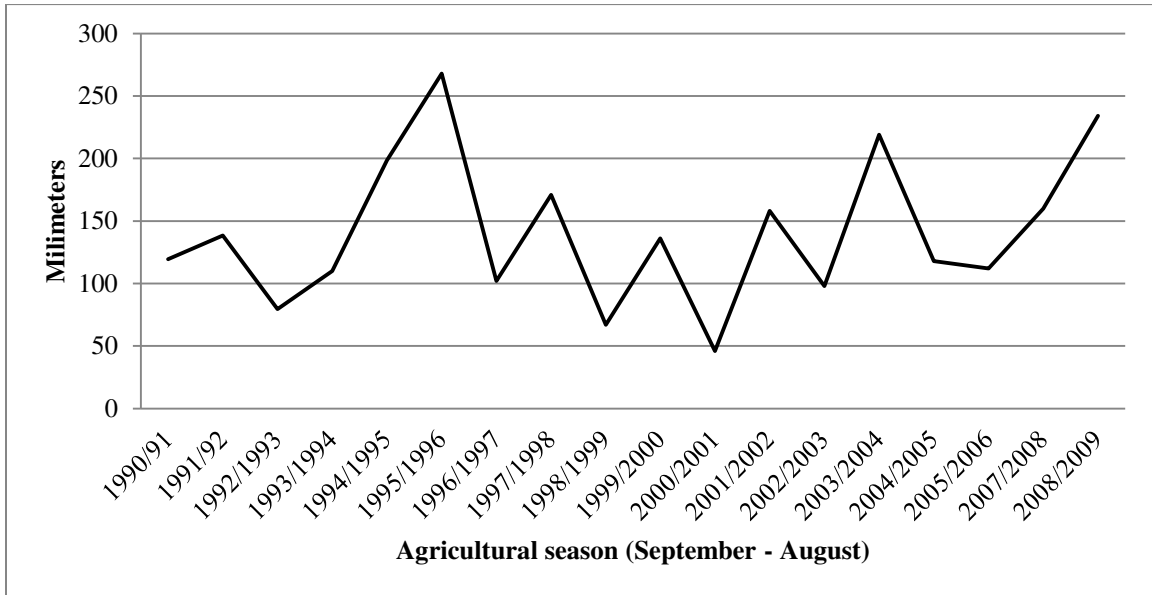
There are a number of observations to make about the data. First, they cover a large five-commune area that includes 104 villages and a population of approximately 70,000 people. The peasantization processes I observed were likely overshadowed by the number of communities that saw a contraction in agriculture or stability in area cultivated. For example, 23 of the communities were located in the Dadès valley, which has struggled with water scarcity and reduced cropping to eliminate the summer maize rotation in many areas.⁵ Increased vegetable production was impossible in these communities. Hence, the aggregate picture masks

⁴ I also doubted the accuracy of the statistics. The repetition of exactly the same production data for some crops across growing seasons raised questions about how often new field data were collected; units of measurement also varied, sometimes within the same report, and I also encountered some obvious errors in data transcription.

⁵ The dynamics of land use change, migration, and livelihood transformation have unfolded differently in the neighboring Dadès Valley. Dadès experienced even higher levels of outmigration than Mgoun and while many have invested in agriculture there, higher population density, the prominence of tourism, and greater urbanization have put pressure on the water supply and resulted in a contraction in agriculture.

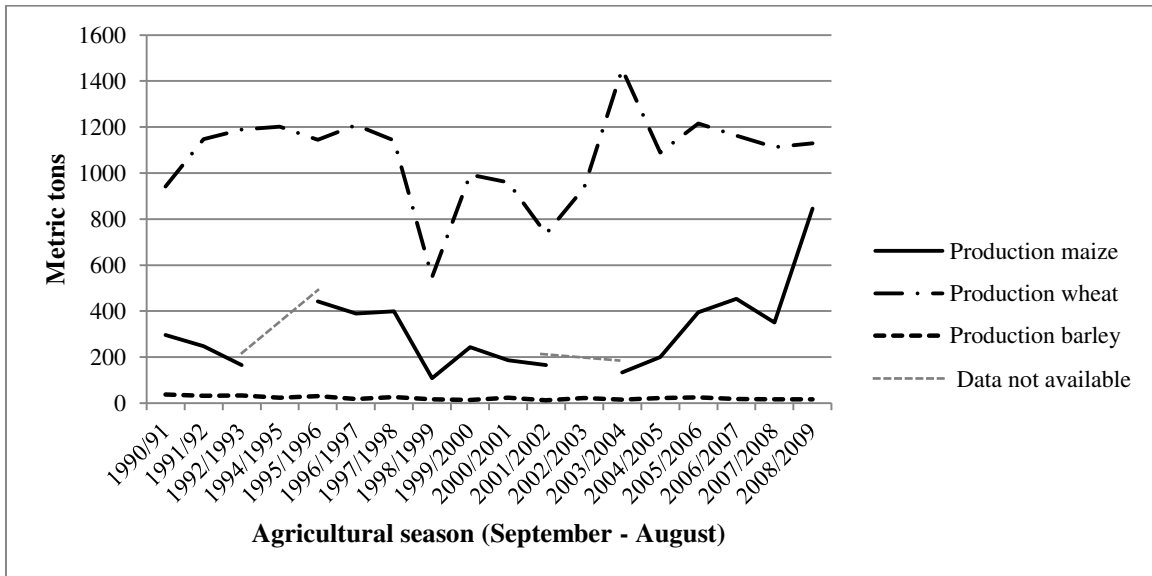
countervailing processes--agricultural area and production increased in some places and decreased in others. Also, these data begin in 1990 when the turn to commercial production was already underway and hence do not represent a "before and after" scenario.

Table 6.1: Annual rainfall, Kelaa Mgouna weather station, 1990-2009



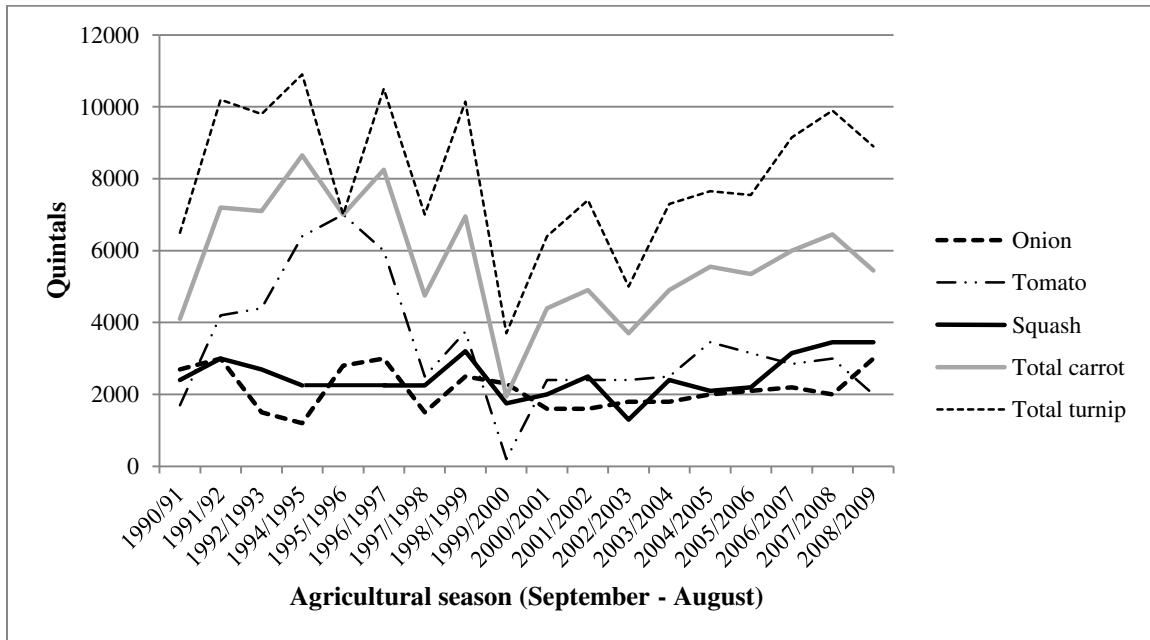
Source: Kelaa Mgouna Centre de Mise en Valeur Agricole

Table 6.2 Grain production, Kelaa Mgouna service area, 1990-2006



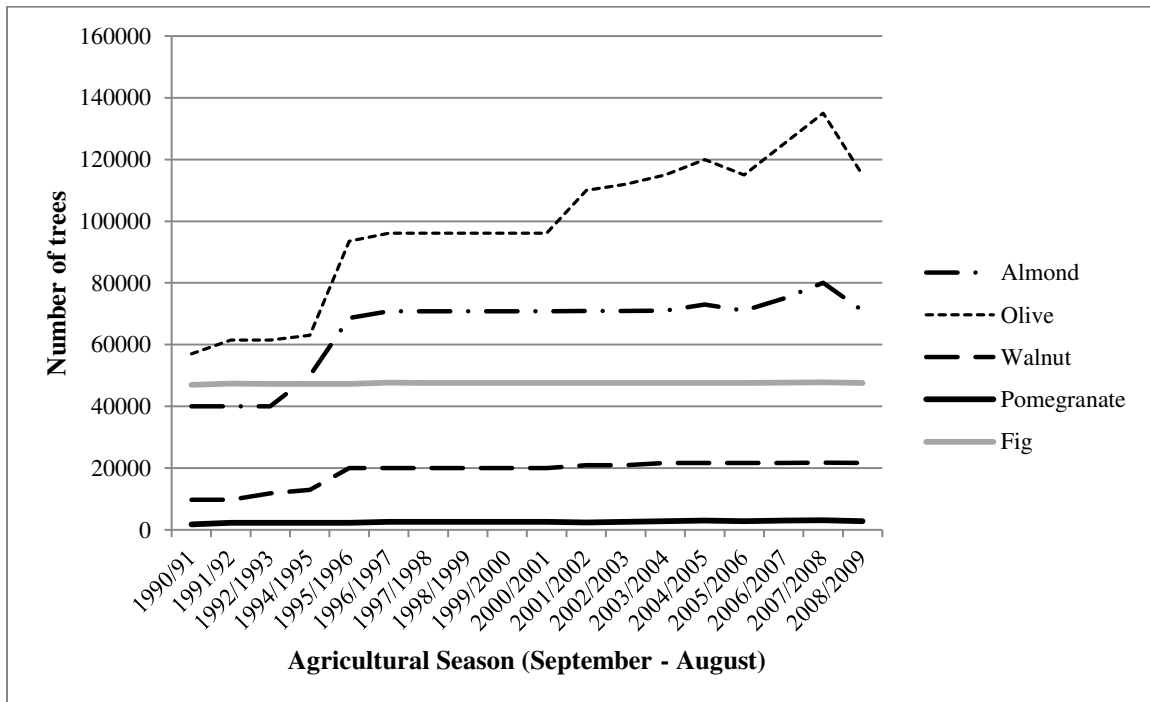
Source: Kelaa Mgouna Centre de Mise en Valeur Agricole

Table 6.3: Vegetable production, selected crops, Kelaa Mgouna service area, 1990-2009



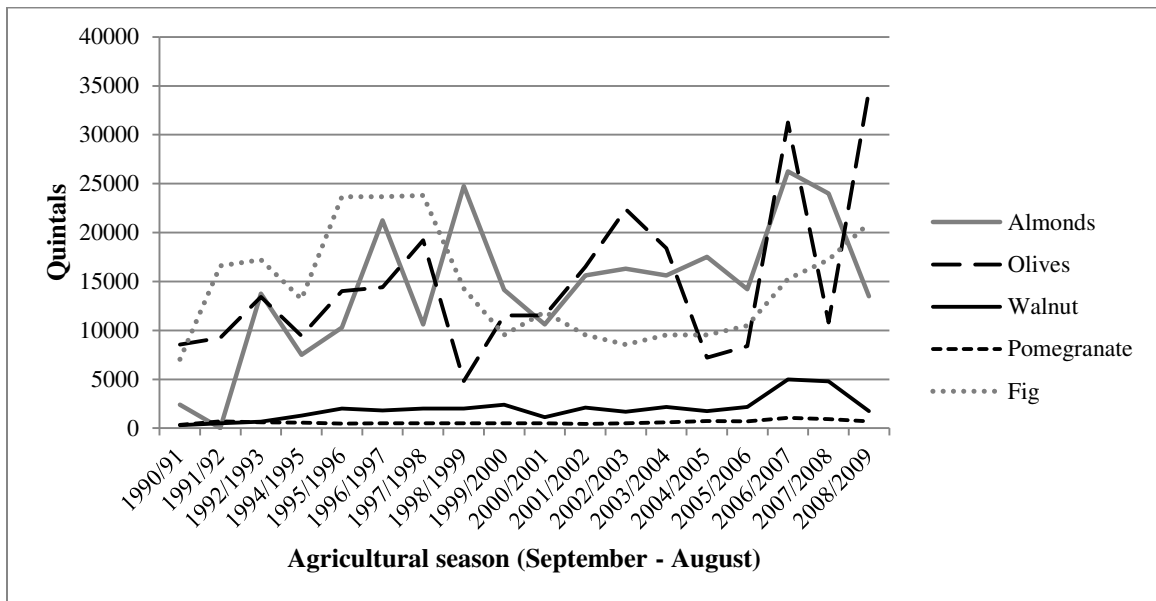
Source: Kelaa Mgouna Centre de Mise en Valeur Agricole

Table 6.4: Number of trees, selected tree crops, Kelaa Mgouna service area, 1990-2009



Source: Kelaa Mgouna Centre de Mise en Valeur Agricole

Table 6.5: Tree crop production, Kelaa Mgoun service area, 1990-2009



Source: Kelaa Mgouna Centre de Mise en Valeur Agricole

The fact that cereal production did not experience a secular increase was not surprising; extension officers had described both the area planted and yields as a fairly stable (in the context of highly variable rainfall) feature of area farming systems.⁶ However, my ethnographic research told a different story than the data on vegetable production. I believe this reflects the spatial heterogeneity of agriculture in the region. Time and again, people in el Harte described how agriculture had changed--how before the 1980s, there were few trees and hardly anyone took their production to market. By the 1990s, there were plenty of trees, and el Harte's vegetables were in demand. One of the area's most successful farmers, Haj Ahmed, described how "people come from all over to get our vegetables. They are great quality. They come for our quince, figs, tomatoes, potatoes, and watermelon. There wasn't any of this before. I was the first to grow mint [in the 1980s] and when I took it to market, people gathered around me out of curiosity. We were not known for that. Bit by bit, we became known for our farming." The transformation from extreme vulnerability--the most recent famines occurred in the 1940s--to at least adequate levels

⁶ The recent upsurge in maize production reflected several years of good rain after drought had suppressed the summer crop in many locations.

of food security (by people's own reporting) and significant upward mobility for many, could not simply be traced to the use of migration remittances to support increased consumption. Migration combined with other social and economic changes to reconfigure the way agriculture was practiced here. Approaching peasantization with a focus on the *practice* of agriculture at the household and community levels therefore indicated the extent to which farming as a social relation and livelihood strategy had assumed a new importance that extended beyond the households that had directly expanded agricultural production. The fact that some households could adopt commercial agriculture as a central livelihood strategy also had multiplier effects that informed the overall transformation of livelihoods in the era of labor migration.

Farming systems in the era of migration

Said sat in a wooden chair and placed a bucket of coriander seeds in front of him. He doused the seeds in water and ran his hands through the bucket, every once and a while taking a handful and inspecting it. "This is coriander," he explained, but even without his explanation the scent released from the immersion in water was unmistakable. It was mid-June and Said noted that he was planting cilantro, tomatoes, and potatoes for Ramadan and the return of labor migrants from Europe or urban Morocco, an annual ritual that coincided with the customary European summer vacation. "Prices are good and demand is high" at this time, though Said regretted that Ramadan and the return of migrants overlapped this year in August. Normally one could expect separate spikes in demand and prices: religious holidays such as the month of Ramadan, 'Eid el Kebir, and 'Achoura shifted each year in accordance with the lunar calendar, while the migrants' return occurred the same time every summer.

Farmers tailored their cropping decisions to the expected increase in market activity around holidays and the holiday-like atmosphere created by the migrants' return. August had become wedding season, when families took advantage of the migrants' presence to conclude important rites of passage. The increased consumption was visible in the bustling market and lavish meals offered during celebrations. Farmers timed their planting to coincide with these

rhythms and when they could, held on to dried or processed foods to sell when prices were high: Said reported that olive oil yielded MAD 25 (\$3) a liter immediately after the olive harvest (in the late winter of 2009) but had climbed to MAD 50 (\$6) a liter during the summer migrant season. "They buy everything, and they don't care about the price," he explained, citing the case of one migrant who famously spent a reputed MAD 6,000 (\$750) in one day at the weekly market during one of his vacations from Holland. Migration had not only spurred increased demand for produce, it was at least partially responsible for changing consumption patterns through higher incomes and the creation of new tastes. When Haj Ahmed told me about the relative novelty of commercial tree crops in el Harte, he also described how olive oil consumption had increased in recent decades (he characterized it as an "import" from the Middle East). Before the wave of tree planting in the 1980s, they would purchase oil from itinerant traders or in the weekly market. He gestured to the table in front of us, with freshly baked bread and a small tea plate filled with olive oil to make the point that it had become integral to every meal and consumed with bread during various breaks throughout the day. Increased consumption of vegetables, especially tomatoes and potatoes, was also only a few decades old, reflecting higher incomes and the increasing standardization of Moroccan diets, whereby dishes known as generally "Moroccan" but previously uncommon in the south were integrated into regional cooking.

Migration therefore provided the capital needed for families to expand their farming operations and created new opportunities for households whether they had relatives away or not. Said had no family members working in the city but he was able to build a viable agricultural livelihood because of his neighbors who did. He did so with an array of skills and a propensity to innovate based on his own experience farming in the oasis. In my discussions with local agricultural officials and Moroccan researchers about the impact of migration, they frequently emphasized a new openness to agricultural experimentation that the migrants brought back with them from Europe. Abdelhafid, for example, had returned from 15 years in the mines of northern France to create one of the largest farming operations in el Harte. He noted that he had been the

first in town to use a metal plow in place of the traditional wood, and he pointed to two possessions that he felt symbolized his achievements as a returned migrant: the 1980s Renault automobile he brought back from France and parked in the central courtyard of his adobe compound and the metal cultivator that he designed and fabricated on his own. He had not only built financial assets abroad, he developed what he described as a new mentality that informed his approach to farming.

It would be difficult to pinpoint how important farmers such as Abdelhafid were in introducing new techniques and attitudes in agriculture. I suspected observers seized on mechanization, the use of chemical inputs, or other technical advances as the most important indicators of innovation because to them, these practices defined "modern" agriculture. However, when I saw the kinds of strategies farmers like Said deployed, I became hesitant in ascribing responsibility for experimentation purely or even primarily to migrants' early adopting behavior. Some of the most innovative strategies were not as visible as new cultivators or drip-irrigation systems: they were just as likely to rely on or modify traditional techniques as deploy ostensibly modern ones. Understanding people's farming style in the era of migration meant not only looking for evidence of change but attending to how the artistry of their practice and the logic of their decision-making drew on a collective body of knowledge about oasis farming systems built up over centuries.

This was most strikingly evident in the discourse around rose cultivation. In Chapter Three, I described how provincial agricultural officials and visiting researchers regularly expressed concern about the lack of modern methods for increasing the quality and quantity of rose cultivation. They noted how women tore the roses off the stems, how people either did not prune or were "brutal" in their cutting, and how the use of roses as boundary hedges meant that they did not get the irrigation or fertilization regime suited to their needs--they only received the water intended for the field crop, whatever that crop's needs were. I was interested then, to hear the local agricultural extension officers speculate about the impending failure of a 100 hectares

rose farm established in the steppe by the royal company (literally part of the King's private holdings) that owned the rose processing plant in town and wanted to demonstrate production techniques to local farmers while securing a stable supply of roses for the plant. After seven years, the farm had yet to match yields in the oases and the extension agents debated how long it would take before the company shuttered the effort. They explained that the alternately frigid and hot winds coming off the steppe buffeted the shrubs: the roses needed the protection offered by the microclimate of a diversely planted oasis system. As in so many places around the world, monoculture was no match for agro-ecological diversity.

It is true that women were aggressive with the rose bushes when they pruned. One woman laughed that this was retribution for the prickling during harvest time. For her, the real object of pruning was to cut back the plants so they didn't grab onto the women's dresses when they walked through the fields and to bring back forage for the livestock. They, and the male household heads who made most of the main agricultural decisions, did not have a specifically productionist logic when it came to roses because for most, it was a relatively minor player in the diverse repertoire of crops and ancillary products they derived from their fields. In fact, their strategies did not isolate the yield of any one crop as the priority at the expense of all other considerations: they assessed their use of inputs or techniques based on the interaction of different tree and ground crops in any one field. As Vincent Battesti explains in his study of North African oases, development planners have historically dismissed oasis farming systems as stagnant: the same land has often been farmed for hundreds of years and appears unchanged from early romantic colonial paintings. To these observers, such stasis, even decline, blinds farmers to the imperative of maximizing yields of the most profitable crop, usually dates (Battesti 2005: 180). However, the overriding importance of diversity means that the productionist tactics of agronomy often yield poor results in an oasis context.

Farmers in el Harte used innovation to increase yields, but they did so by drawing on traditional farming systems. They understood that higher productivity did not depend on the yield

of the most important crop so much as on the interaction and diverse uses of the many agricultural products that came from the land. I return to Abdallah, the farmer who summoned me early in my research, to describe how this interaction worked and focus on three main features that guided farmer decisionmaking: risk management through time, risk management across space, and integration in the farming system.

Risk management through time

Abdallah's home was in el Bour, the steppe on the edge of the village that since the 1970s had been gradually plowed under for cultivation. His father had been one of the first to venture out from the center of the village, setting up both the family's residence and farming operations in el Bour. Cultivation and other housing had since extended beyond their compound, now located in an established agricultural zone with mature trees and productive fields. That choice--to move the family and commit to the as yet untested agricultural potential of el Bour--spoke to their ability to manage risk over time through the creation of landesque capital that only yielded returns over a long time horizon and with uncertain regularity. In Chapter Five, I described how Abdallah's family retained significant landholdings from his grandfather's time as a member of the royal army. However, it was Abdallah's uncle's departure to Holland that allowed the family to double their holdings, adding half a hectare through purchase and another half through development in el Bour. During the years they waited for the new lands to produce, their established holdings provided subsistence while regular infusions of cash enabled the family maintain and even improve their consumption. By the time family conflict cut off those remittances in the mid-2000s, Abdallah's family was no longer dependent on them as a source of financing for agriculture. The financial capital sent by his uncle had already been converted into landesque capital. If the concept of landesque capital captures the logic of investments that extend beyond the current growing season, Abdallah's example shows how the logic of a longer time

horizon could extend years into the future.⁷ For one thing, his family's slow, methodical investments in land reflected the availability of capital in small amounts, over a long period of time. I will explore the use of credit later on in the chapter, but here I emphasize the complementarity between the agro-ecological situation and access to capital through remittances. Land could only be valorized over an extended period since it took time to raise its productivity while the resources to make those investments were also only available in increments over that same period.

Second, Abdallah saw these investments as creating a store of value in land that would hold its value on an essentially permanent basis. This is perhaps counterintuitive to local observers, such as the agriculture ministry officials, who saw new fields extending into lands progressively further away from stable and sustainable water sources. Abdallah's family's risky venture in the 1970s had become part of the "old" Bour, an established and productive agricultural zone, and now ten of el Harte's most prominent farming families had moved further out to begin development in the rocky expanse I visited during my meter reading expedition (Abdallah was not participating in this new expansion because as he stated, "we have enough work on our fields as they are"). Another three families had abandoned the expansion efforts they began in el Bour in the mid-1990s, though no one ascribed this to a straightforward lack of water, even during the droughts of that decade. Rather, it was a combination of financial resources drying up due to the particular circumstances of those households and what some discretely described as "management problems." I was told that families who had abandoned their efforts (they still held onto the land and could conceivably recommit to developing it) had sunk wells in the improper location and had not approached their investments with an understanding of the particular soil conditions, geographic constraints, or water availability in this part of el Bour.

⁷ As I discussed in Chapter Four, Blaikie and Brookfield define landesque capital as "any investment in land with an anticipated life well beyond that of the present crop, or crop cycle" (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987:9).

Households making these investments in 2010 held no illusions that the current situation of water abundance would continue indefinitely and it was this uncertainty that led them to approach the extensions with great deliberation. They adopted water saving techniques such as drip irrigation and began working the land only gradually, planting trees with low water requirements, such as olive trees, and ensuring the trees became well established before committing additional resources. And based on their experience in developing the older parts of el Bour in the 1970s - 1990s, they also understood that they may only see strong yields one out of several years. If they did get a harvest one year out of ten, the investments would still be worth it, because the land had, in their eyes, been definitively converted into farmland and the risks of cultivation here factored into the risks of cultivation in *all* of their lands, regardless of the location. The newest extensions were not yet fully in production, but for the other recent conversions of steppe, relative productivity did not map simply onto the distance from the farmland of the historical oasis. The spatial heterogeneity of farming here meant that sometimes newer areas would have better years than the old, depending on the lay of the land, the distribution of rain and temperatures over the growing season, the winds, the incidence of frost, and other factors. People's investments in the land were not directed to any one crop or any one season; they were focused on a long-term investment in the overall productivity of their land. Their longer time horizon, and their strategy of timing incremental investments often over many years, enabled them to wait the long "gestation" period before new lands would see yields and to cope with the irregularity of those yields when the land did begin to produce. In the late summer of 2010, Abdallah asked me if I remembered the trellises he constructed for the tomatoes behind his house. When I said that I did, he shook his head and said they had come to naught: everyone who planted tomatoes in el Harte that summer lost their crop because of an ill-timed heat wave. "That is what farming here is like," he explained. "You have to take your losses and move on."

Spatial dimensions of farm management

Farmers like Abdallah could move on because they not only managed their agricultural investments over time, they managed them over space. One of the hallmarks of agriculture in the pre-Sahara is the exceedingly small plot size and the dispersal of plots throughout the oasis. Since colonial times, this fragmentation of holdings has been seen as an impediment to growth, and contemporary assessments of the state of Moroccan agriculture continue to emphasize fragmentation's drag on productivity (Royaume du Maroc 2005). The fragmentation in el Harte was undeniable: Abdelhafid had a two hectare operation dispersed across 30 plots and most farmers offered comparable assessments of their holdings. When I began documenting plot size I thought back to Chayanov, who advised: "In organizing peasant farms, one must almost always take account of their exceedingly poor layout. The excessive intermingling of the peasant household's strips, their length, and their fragmentation of arable and meadow frequently attain quite Homeric proportions" (Chayanov 1986: 174). In el Harte, this "Homeric" situation extended to the organization of cropping in the fields. The successful commercial farms of people such as Abdallah looked no different from the smaller, subsistence operations of poorer farmers in this regard: trees often blocked the sun from reaching ground crops, diverse crops crowded together in small fields, and vines sprawled across the pathways between plots, which were dispersed throughout the village's agricultural lands rather than grouped to form a "farm." For Chayanov this kind of fragmentation represented an obstacle to overcome, but in the oasis context it represented a resource--diversity in growing conditions--to manage risk, a situation to manipulate, not eliminate.⁸

It would be difficult to gloss the spatial organization of fields as a purely intentional strategy to manage risk: it also reflected the sedimentation of history and the fundamentally social

⁸ This fragmentation also deepened the sociability of farming. The ways people moved through space to access their plots created regular patterns of social intercourse throughout the day and growing season, as people greeted each other, worked alongside each other, and often sang together to ease the burden of labor. See Ilahiane 2004:204-205 for another discussion of the productive uses of fragmentation in an oasis context.

nature of farming. Islamic inheritance laws that divide land among heirs were one reason for the size and dispersal of plots, but there were a number of other factors that determined the patterns of plot location and cropping strategies.⁹ Land would sometimes come into a family from the maternal side as more and more women received their inheritances, meaning that some households owned land not only in diverse locations throughout the village, but sometimes elsewhere in the valley. Other reasons for the dispersal of plots were the need to purchase land whenever and wherever it came up for sale, the opportunistic choice of uncultivated areas to convert to farming, and the collective land representatives' allocation of plots to different petitioners. Some households did "trade" plots, selling in one spot and buying in another for purposes of consolidating a holding or getting a plot with more advantageous growing conditions. But by and large, farmers worked with the spatial organization of plots they were given, and weighed the different advantages of each location according to a myriad of considerations: plots bordering the larger irrigation canals benefited from seepage and were best for crops with high water requirements; those closer to the home were best for crops such as tomatoes that either needed greater care or were a high-value candidate for theft; land with an even slope and means of ingress for a tractor were suitable for crops benefiting from mechanized turning of the soil; and different degrees of shade from the trees planted in or along the borders of plots created microclimates and adjusted sunlight to suit the needs of different crops (not to mention cropping decisions based on regular assessments of soil fertility, which led to the adjustment of a rotation to accommodate legumes or to cycle out of a multi-year rotation of alfalfa). Factors that suppress yields in one location in any given year could bolster yields elsewhere and farmers used this diversity as an essential strategy for managing risk.

⁹ Islamic inheritance practices do not necessarily produce an inexorable and irreversible process of fragmentation. I encountered a number of strategies households used to maintain the size of their holdings, such as taking the decision not to divide land after the death of a patriarch or having one or a group of family members buy out the other heirs. Research on this topic would benefit from a political ecological analysis, as the narrative of archaic Islamic practice obscures the kind of land concentration at the hands of elites that has historically marked many Middle Eastern agrarian contexts, such as Egypt and parts of Morocco.

New extensions played a key role in this strategy because of the way they made use of what I came to see as the "life cycle" of the land. When I asked Haj Ahmed whether agriculture differed in the new extensions compared to the historic oasis, he answered "Of course. The new fields give strong yields because there are no trees yet." Could you not just cut down trees in the old fields when the shade got too heavy? "I guess you could," he responded. "But it is shameful (*hashuma*) to pull up a tree. It is like you killed a person. It takes ten years for a tree to grow. You cannot just cut it down." Abdallah offered the same analysis when I asked him why he kept the 30 walnut trees he planted some two decades ago, even though he determined that the climate was too hot to sustain good production: "Sometimes I think of cutting them down but I never do. It's shameful to cut down trees." This was not only a cultural injunction. It also reflected the real economic value of trees; even the ones unsuited to the climate could at least offer a sustainable source of wood.¹⁰ Haj Ahmed asserted that those who had planted trees in the 1980s like himself were the ones who had become big farmers because those trees--olives and almonds in particular --yielded the most sustained profits over the years.

In the historic oasis, these factors had produced a "mature" landscape: trees were well established and in some areas shaded out crops that needed steady sunlight. People pruned trees in an effort to strike the desired balance between sun and shade but no one entertained the idea of ridding a plot of trees entirely for economic and agronomic reasons: they would lose the income from trees and the micro-climate they provided. Nor did people refrain from planting trees in the new extensions in order to maintain an area devoid of shade. Planting trees was seen as an important step in bringing new land into production. In this case, landholders were not only concerned about economic and agronomic factors. Trees were an important way to solidify a

¹⁰ Maintaining a stable supply of wood and other building materials was a high priority for families because of the nearly constant need to maintain or repair homes. Most homes in el Harte and in the other rural communities in the valley were still adobe, or had large portions of adobe in combination with other cement structures. The cost of maintaining homes in terms of material and labor was substantial. This cost, along with the need to secure a stable supply of firewood for baking bread and preparing couscous (propane tanks were widespread for other cooking purposes) explained the importance of trees not only for the crops they harvested but also for the wood they produced.

claim to land, which explains why people would often purchase olive saplings from the extension office even if their land was unsuited to olive production. The subsidized trees represented a relatively inexpensive and effective way to mark the boundaries of land and ward off any possible challenges to ownership. However, people did take advantage of each plot's different position in the lifecycle of their holdings, planting shade tolerant crops in the mature sections and sun-loving crops in the "younger" plots. Eventually, these plots would also enter into maturity. If there were new lands to bring into production, all the better, but if not, they would turn again to pruning as the dominant strategy for striking the right balance in their growing conditions.

Integration in oasis farming

Farmers considered this trade-off between sun and shade as one of the many they needed to make to balance the diverse goals of this integrated system: nutrient cycling, preserving or building soil fertility, maintaining livestock, subsistence production, and in the last four decades, commercial production. As in smallholding farming systems around the world, animals were a key aspect of this integration. Animals were a more liquid store of wealth than land, but they could be expensive to keep. All of my case study households actively bought and sold animals to shift the composition of their domestic holdings between cows, sheep, goats, and donkeys. They managed their need for meat (in particular, the imperative to slaughter a ram during the holiday of 'Eid el Kebir), animal traction, and cash. People made strategic decisions about when to maintain an animal for traction or access another family's through labor sharing agreements. Each decision had implications for other aspects of farm management: the demand for forage influenced cropping strategies and how people processed their crops. Everyone passed wheat through the threshing machine; in addition to speeding up the work of threshing it made particularly palatable straw for the animals, though they would thresh wheat using traditional methods when they needed the straw for constructing adobe walls or repairing roofs.

Many of these decisions reflected personal convictions about the relative profitability of cropping, livestock, and tree crops. Each had commercial potential. In the mountain community

of Rbat, the historic importance of transhumant pastoralism likely influenced Taleb's decision to invest his remittances in a combination of extensive pastoralism, intensive livestock production, and cultivation. He cited a Berber aphorism that "animals are better than land," (*oufint ulli agern*) to explain his priorities, but down valley in el Harte, I also encountered people who preferred livestock to cropping as a livelihood strategy. Their preferences were not necessarily linked to the particular location or extent of their landholdings, but reflected differing opinions about where the greatest profit margins lay. Hassan, another case study farmer, asserted that the real profits in agriculture came from animals, not from crops and as a result, he directed his capital accumulation strategies to buying, fattening, and selling sheep rather than expanding his landholdings for cultivation. Regardless of a given family's guiding strategy, however, no one maintained a completely specialized operation, exclusively engaged in commercial vegetable farming, tree crops, or livestock production. Everyone held up an integrated approach as fundamental to their farming style.

In addition to nutrient cycling and balancing the relative profitability of crops and livestock, integration also ensured a diverse and steady supply of ancillary products that cut input costs and provided additional income. When I sat down with Said the day he cleaned the coriander seeds, he had just hauled four large bags of charcoal into his storehouse. In addition to planting vegetables for the migrants' return, he had made charcoal from wood on his holdings to sell during the holiday season, when grilling meat is an important aspect of celebratory meals. Stopping in to see Abdallah later that fall, I encountered him and his brothers using wood and dried reeds from their land to repair the roof on their house. Late fall--after the wheat had been sown but before the olives were harvested--was devoted to cutting down the 20 foot tall reeds growing along irrigation canals which could then be sold as construction material, used for home repair, or shaped into trellises for vines and tomatoes. Weeds gathered from the fields and along irrigation canals reduced forage expenses, while virtually everything produced or even discarded

in the village, such as almond shells, rose cuttings, and the residue from olive pressing, found another use.

The more integrated and diverse a farming operation was, the greater the possibility for reducing input costs and finding new sources of profitability for commercial production. In an interesting inversion vis-à-vis industrial agriculture--whereby specialization through monocropping theoretically leads to higher productivity--areas in Mgoun where agriculture was contracting had the more simplified farming systems. In Imzilne and the drier areas lower in the valley, water scarcity had eliminated summer cropping, restricted ancillary products, and diminished the diversity of crop regimes. The most productive areas were also the most diverse production systems.

What makes this agriculture commercial?

The specificities of oasis agriculture came into even sharper relief when I ventured out to a large commercial farm (*firma*) in the steppe 15 kilometers west of the Mgoun valley to learn more about this end of the farming spectrum. The Kelaa agricultural extension agents regularly visited the Arab businessman from Casablanca who had established the farm in 2007, offering advice as well as subsidized prices on equipment and inputs. One agent invited me along to meet the owner, Tahar, during one of his periodic trips to check on his farm manager. He was not at all what I had expected: rumor had it that as a "foreigner" (as Arabs coming from elsewhere in Morocco were known), he intended to take the land with the sole purpose of expatriating profits to Casablanca, but he saw his project as an expression of commitment to the area. As he phrased it, he had fallen in love with the south when his construction company executed a government infrastructure contract in the area--its stark beauty seemed suited to his contemplative personality. Even though he had no experience with agriculture, he saw the farm as a way to strike roots in the region. Of the 100 hectares Tahar had rented from the Ministry of Interior in 2007 on a 99 year lease, 35 hectares had been leveled and planted with olive trees at regular intervals. Since beginning the project, he had committed nearly MAD 5 million (\$625,000) and conceded that it

would take some time to bring the farm to profitability. Tahar planned to gradually turn over the remaining land to olive production and press his own oil; he also intended to establish a commercial honey operation. When I saw a small plot growing vegetables on the property, I asked him if they figured in his commercial strategy and he shook his head: "the vegetables are for the workers and for bee pollination. People in this area are too poor for commercial vegetable production to succeed."

The idea that commercial agriculture was not viable in Mgoun because people were too poor to constitute a market was a striking contrast to what I had documented in el Harte just a few kilometers away. I realized that it was not a question of Tahar simply getting it wrong; his discursive referent was different. Based on his understanding of the scale, returns, and stability necessary for a profitable operation given his capital outlay, his conclusion might very well have been right. But it also indicated the extent to which commercial agriculture was invisible in the valley because it did not evince all the obvious hallmarks of "modern" agriculture, either in terms of scale or technological development. This conception of modern agriculture ended up mapping the binary of commercial/subsistence production unto a parallel binary of modernity/tradition. Yet it was precisely because agriculture did not look modern in these terms that it *could* work as a viable livelihood strategy. Farmers negotiated the boundaries between commercial and subsistence production in a way that maintained their flexibility--their ability to adjust their strategies to suit their situation in any given year. They integrated techniques and inputs such as high yield seed varieties and inorganic fertilizers when and how it made sense given the overall logic of their operation, and they moved in and out of the market with a sophisticated understanding of when such a move made economic sense.

In this context, farmers approached commercial and subsistence agriculture less as opposites than as a continuum of engagement with the market. The agricultural practices I encountered drew on historical farming systems *and* a new emphasis on productivity that was certainly related to the discourse of "modern agriculture." This was not, however, the modernity

of Ministry of Agriculture programs. When the farmers spoke of *fellaha biltartib*--they usually used the Arabic phrase meaning "organized agriculture"--they meant bringing a more productionist logic to a tradition of experimentation that had long been a part of oasis agriculture.

In Mgoun, this found expression in the selective use of market-based inputs, mechanization, or improved varieties. As Richards and others in the indigenous knowledge tradition have documented elsewhere, experimentation was common in a variety of scientific modalities (Beinart and McGregor 2003, Brookfield 2001, Fairhead and Scoones 2005, Richards 1985). Two brothers in a village north of Kelaa known for their commercial success were formal in their approach: they bought their seeds in Agadir, one of Morocco's largest cities and the commercial center for the country's horticultural sector, and conducted on-farm trials to see which worked well in Mgoun. Abdelhafid, the returned émigré who had invented his own cultivator, described his style of experimentation as more casual. He had tried groundnuts, cumin, sugar beets, and a European variety of carrots he had brought back from France--none of which were common crops in the area--noting that they had all worked well even if he was not growing any of them anymore. "You try something sometimes and then you change," he explained. Personal styles, ideas of quality, and the social nature of farming in heterogeneous spaces informed people's choice of inputs. Few farmers used pesticides despite concerns about the impact of disease, particularly on fruit production. One man explained that pesticides were useless; in such close spaces, "you use them but your neighbor doesn't and so they do nothing." Everyone, however, used inorganic fertilizers; they considered them essential to maintaining production but applied them selectively based on their understanding of their impact on quality. Taleb never put chemicals, as he termed them, on tomatoes or onions, because he felt the taste was compromised, noting that one had to mix organic and chemical fertilizers for best results: "the more organic, the better." Quality needed to be weighed against production, whether it was for subsistence or sale.

A similar consideration of competing goals informed people's decisions about equipment and mechanization. The brothers who ran a commercial operation north of Kelaa used greenhouses as a key element of their strategy to get their crops to market early and extend their season after other local farmers had completed their harvests. But in el Harte, no one used greenhouses even though many had had experience with them. Abdallah's brother had spent a couple of years working on commercial farms in northern Morocco and Libya and based on that experience, had considered setting up greenhouses on their holdings in el Bour. But they decided against it. They explained that greenhouses require continual investment in upkeep, special seeds, and fields cleared of trees. "We want our trees," they elaborated, and were not willing to forgo the profits from trees for the longer season or production gains a greenhouse might offer. People had similarly mixed feelings about the use of tractors. Conventional wisdom holds that oases are largely unmechanized in part because the small size of the holdings and the small earthen walls that divide up fields for irrigation purposes cannot accommodate tractors. I was impressed to see how expertly farmers were, in fact, able to negotiate tractors through tight spaces and in between trees. Everyone used tractors on at least some of their holdings: common practice was to hire a tractor (the only one in town was owned by the collective land representative) to turn the soil every two years. However, the use of tractors did not necessarily represent a progressive or linear move toward greater mechanization and away from hand tools or animal traction. All harvesting was conducted by hand, an expression of the availability of unpaid female labor, and some farmers rued the detrimental effects of the tractors on their soils. One man attributed his high wheat yields to the fact that he continued to hand turn his soil with better results than mechanized equipment. Thus, people weighed their use of any given machine or technology not simply based on an accounting of their relative cost, expected production gains, or a vaguely defined "openness to change," but after deliberating how that choice would fit into their entire farming operation and the consequences for quality, soil fertility, yields, and other factors.

The techniques and practices I have outlined were common for farmers of varying socioeconomic status and commercial success. The use of shared strategies among farmers in different wealth categories was crucial to understanding why commercial agriculture could work here. First, for all farmers, profits were located "in the margins," through deft manipulation of the different stages of the growing cycle and distribution process and through arbitrage rather than an exclusive focus on profit margins for one or two cash crops. Second, farmers shared broadly similar cropping strategies--core subsistence production with variations in the relative emphasis on tree, livestock, or vegetable production--and maximized the commercial possibilities through a flexible engagement with the market for both inputs and marketing their crops.

Profit in the margins

I catalogued a diverse array of strategies that capture the idea of extracting profit in the margins. Abdallah, the most commercially-oriented farmer among my case studies, marketed over 20 crops in any given year, though the number changed from year to year: olive oil, almonds, figs, walnuts, pomegranates, peaches, apricots, quince, apples, grapes, tomatoes, turnips, cilantro, parsley, celery, squash, pumpkins, potatoes, carrots, watermelons, fava beans, peas, and mint. Table 6.6 lists the income he earned from these crops for the 2009-2010 growing season. While there were some prominent high-earners, Abdallah emphasized that his success lay in the accumulation of smaller profits from selling different crops at different times of year. The size of his operation did not lessen his interest in extracting value where he could. It was, for example, more profitable to pay to press his olive harvest and sell the oil than sell the olives directly. Even though the price of apricots sometimes dipped so low that farmers would let the fruit rot on the ground, if the trucks belonging to jam producers in Marrakech came through the village in late spring to gather the harvest as they did in 2010, most people would fill plastic crates and earn whatever they could (though in 2010, Abdallah's family opted to make jam out of their apricots). Labor was available and any cash was welcome. Lulls in the work schedule offered other opportunities for increasing the income from crops: Abdallah's almond harvest was

Table 6.6: Abdallah's household agricultural production and income, 2009-2010 season

Crop	Production ¹¹	Net income (MAD)
Grains/forage (all for home consumption)		
Wheat	120 'abra	4,500 (imputed)
Barley	60 'abra	1,100 (imputed)
Maize	100 'abra	2,000 (imputed)
Alfalfa	650 qarda	2,250 (imputed)
Tree and other cash crops		
Rose	1 metric ton	9,000
Almond	40 'abra (10 'abra home consumption)	2,800 700 (imputed)
Fig	60 'abra (18 'abra home consumption)	2,080 720 (imputed)
Pomegranate	1 metric ton	8,000
Apple	20 'abra	1,000
Olive oil	150 liters (150 liters home consumption)	4,500 4,500 (imputed)
Vegetables ¹²		
Tomato		16,000
Fava bean		8,400
Turnip		6,000
Potato		4,800
Carrot		3,500
Greens (cilantro, parsley)		3,000
Mint		1,500
Squash		1,500
Peas		1,500
Miscellaneous		
Butter		1,400
Livestock sales		8,000
Additional input costs (livestock costs, tractor fees, and other expenses; fertilizer and seed costs are embedded in net income for each crop)		(38,600)
Total		60,150

Source: Fieldwork, 2010

¹¹ An 'abra is a local unit of measure equivalent to 10 kilograms; a qarda is a local unit of measure for forage; it consists of a tied bundle of dried alfalfa.

¹² Abdallah did not estimate vegetable production reserved for home consumption, explaining that the family took varying amounts to market weekly after domestic needs were met. The data are his estimates of net income based on amounts marketed; they exclude imputed income for home consumption.

large enough that he would usually sell the nuts unshelled, but one sunny afternoon, I approached the compound to see his mother, wife, sister-in-law, and two brothers seated on a plastic mat and cracking almonds as they chatted and took advantage of the late autumn warmth. Some of the almonds were for their own consumption, but shelled nuts yielded a higher price and so they would also take some to market and sell them by the kilo (as opposed to the *'abra*, a local unit of measure equivalent to 10 kilos, which was the standard way of selling unshelled almonds). In Imzilne, Moha had only a limited number of almond trees, all of them relatively young, after drought decimated his holdings in the 1990s. He would shell all of his almonds, selling a few kilos at a time when he needed the money to maximize the income from his small harvest.

People placed a premium on crops they could dry, store, and sell at different times or places as both a savings strategy and an effort to increase their margins. Moha, who headed the poorest household in my research, would store hay, dry alfalfa, and gather residues from others' fields for resale in Kelaa either immediately upon collecting them or in the winter, when prices climbed. He used these stored crops as a safety net throughout the year, holding onto them as long as possible to take advantage of higher prices at different periods throughout the year or in different markets. Sometimes, bringing hay across the river to sell in the Kelaa market, where prices could be slightly higher than in the village, was worth the effort or cost of transport. At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, Haj Ahmed, patriarch of the village's most prominent farming family, described his version of the same strategy. He said they never had had to sell land when they needed money because "we have trees: we have olives, figs, almonds. We eat from them and every time we need something, we take a bit from our stores and sell it."

Moving in and out of the market

Another strategy farmers used to enhance the commercial viability of their holdings was to shift their engagement with the market, both in terms of inputs and other factors of production, and in terms of whether to consume or sell a given crop. The ability to organize farming with

minimal reliance on purchased inputs, equipment, and labor was an essential element of oasis agriculture and one of the more striking contrasts with the firma I visited in the steppe outside the valley. As I elaborated in Chapter Four, customary regimes for mobilizing labor and maintaining networks of reciprocity were increasingly relevant in the era of commercial agriculture. They reduced direct expenditures, gave commercial farmers flexibility in managing labor and other inputs, and created a safety net for the more vulnerable households who relied on larger families for work or other support. Labor exchanges enabled livestock or equipment poor households to secure use of a donkey, plow, or other needed material, while it gave households who lent out these resources access to additional labor in peak periods. While men orchestrated these exchanges during soil preparation and sowing, women took the lead in the complex web of labor exchanges on relatives' and patrons' land during harvest time. In charting the movement of mules, donkeys, and plows with the counter movement of labor, I began to feel like Malinowski documenting the movements of a *kula* ring, with similar flows of symbolic meanings and economic value (Malinowski 2003[1922]). The ability to mobilize labor through non-market means was essential, as was maintaining flexibility in the acquisition of other inputs. Many farmers would alternate between buying improved seed varieties from the extension office and saving seed, shifting the source either to save money or get a periodic production boost. But the ability to produce other inputs was also important. When Abdallah lost his tomato crop, at least he had not paid for the trellises he had constructed.

Decisions about when and how many crops to sell were also a key element in farmers' strategies for maximizing commercial success. The core feature of everyone's rotation was subsistence grain production: barley or wheat in the winter and in all but the driest areas, summer maize. No one marketed these crops for profound historical reasons: famines were not such a distant memory, even if only the eldest residents remembered the last one in the 1940s. People placed a high priority on assuring basic subsistence needs and even the largest producers would never sell their grains regardless of their relative livelihood security; instead, they would stock the

grain, often keeping a large surplus on hand. Hassan, a livestock trader and taxi dispatcher, would regularly harvest 80 'abra (800 kilos) of wheat, more than his nine member household (five of whom were children) could consume in a given year. But he never sold, he said, "because there are children." He needed to be ready for any eventuality. Commercial strategies built upon this subsistence foundation. The most vulnerable households might only be able to keep a kitchen garden for their own consumption because of the input costs and labor requirements of commercial vegetable production, but they could market even small quantities of a crop if prices climbed particularly high. The dominant strategies of larger, commercial farmers were not so different. Haj Ahmed explained that his vegetable rotations were quite similar from year to year; he grew what his family ate and if there was extra, they would sell it. Even Abdallah, who regularly earned MAD 20,000 (\$2,500) on his tomato harvest, made his cropping and marketing decisions so that consumption and income goals aligned. If prices of a particular crop remained high, he would market a greater percentage of that crop, but he did not plant any crops purely for sale or based only on trends in prices.¹³ People moved in and out of markets within and across growing seasons.¹⁴

These strategies are hardly limited to Morocco, nor are they particularly new. Peasants' shifting engagement with the market was one of the foundational issues scholars of the agrarian question addressed. Chayanov described the importance of use values in the "nonmonetary farm" as determinant. In the Russian smallholder farm he modeled,

The activity of the man that ran it was directed to a whole series of separate consumer demands and in many ways had a *qualitative* hue...the question of whether it is more advantageous to sow rye or mow hay, for example, could not arise, since they could not replace each other and thus had no common scale for comparison. The value of the hay obtained was measured in terms of the need

¹³ One of Abdallah's brothers managed a stall at the weekly vegetable market, less for the income than to secure wholesale prices for the produce they needed to buy to supplement their own production.

¹⁴ This diversified strategy explains people's reluctance to specialize in rose production, one of the few cash crops sold outside the region. Not only were prices too low to hinge any livelihood strategy on them, but they did not play a multi-dimensional role in people's livelihoods the way other crops did. People did dry the roses and stock them for sale when prices rose, but they had few other uses and represented a risky dependence on outside markets and forces beyond the control of local farmers.

for fodder, and the value of rye in terms of feeding the family. [Chayanov 1986:124]

This conception of how the use values of a diversified farm shape decision-making aptly describes the Mgoun example, but I believe we can take that notion of use value further. When and why people decided to engage or distance themselves from the market also reflected the different ways that they converted value at different stages of the agricultural production process. Migration remittances invested in bringing land into production brought money earned through capitalist circuits of production and exchange and converted them into values that might again be actualized in the market as commercial production, or further embedded in culturally thick networks of reciprocity or other social relations. Van der Ploeg highlights the dynamics of this process: when inputs are either produced on or enter into the farm as use values, the peasant retains "the freedom to do with them what he thinks best (he might lend them to a neighbour, or sell them again in order to pay a hospital bill for his wife...such conduct is considered 'delinquent' in credit schemes. If, however, such products or services are bought on credit, they are to be repaid with interest from the results to be generated from the *coming* cycle of production" (2008: 33). Farmers in el Harte managed their resources and developed a marketing strategy with this broader conception of value that could be stored and converted through agriculture as a social relation as well as a productive one.

This explains why credit, usually considered essential for commercial farming, was absent in any formal sense in Mgoun. None of the case study households I worked with, or anyone else I interviewed, had ever taken out production credit from the formal banking system or Ministry of Agriculture lending programs. Taleb, the returned migrant in Rbat, had taken a loan to build a new house, which he felt was prudent because he had a pension from his years in France that ensured he would be able to service the debt. There were also two micro-credit programs in Kelaa, but none of those loans went to agricultural operations, focusing instead on small commercial enterprises. The absence of credit was not simply a function of farmers'

inability to capitalize their assets--a common assumption regarding poor smallholders' relationships to formal banking systems--either because they lacked formal title to their land or did not possess enough collateral. In the most influential recent incarnation of this assumption, Hernando de Soto goes so far as to assert that "without property records as representations, [the poor's] assets remain financially and commercially invisible: they are dead capital" (de Soto 2003: 180; see de Soto 2000 for a fuller expression of this position). Capital was most certainly not dead in Mgoun; people just used multivalent systems of value and exchange that intentionally avoided formal credit mechanisms. They had longer time horizons for many of their investments, felt the risk of a loan was too great, and were explicit in their desire for autonomy--to not make their farming beholden to an external institution that did not understand or care about their well-being. But this is not to say that there was no credit at all to facilitate agricultural investments or cover operating costs: the socially embedded systems of reciprocity involved a complex accounting of how much any given household owed and was due.

This fluid and expansive understanding of value resolved an apparent paradox that I encountered in my discussions with farmers. From the beginning of my fieldwork people told me, "if you did any cost accounting, you would see that agriculture doesn't pay." During one community meeting with visiting French researchers, farmers emphasized, "we never do calculations here. It would never work out. We say that agriculture is just a blessing from God (*baraka*) and you have to rely on that blessing to continue." One of the most successful commercial farmers in the whole region threw up his hands when I asked him about this, saying "agriculture doesn't want you to do accounting. If you did, you would close down your farm. Calculating profits and costs would make you crazy, so I don't do it." He farmed because of the *baraka* and hoped for the best. Time and again, people reiterated that farming would not stand up to a formal accounting but many of the people making that claim were, in fact, earning quite a decent living by local standards from agriculture. It was a more understandable stance for the poorer families I interviewed. Their farming operations were usually simpler and a surface cost

accounting indicated that it cost more to plant wheat, for example, than to buy it on the market. However, when all of the ancillary products of farming, such as wood, forage, reeds, etc. and the importance of maintaining networks of social reciprocity through the act of farming were taken into account, the cost-benefit analysis came out differently. The farmers were right that accounting would make one crazy: when they declared that agriculture "did not pay," they acknowledged that trying to calculate the inputs and outputs of this diverse farming system ran the risk of missing the complementarities crucial to making the system work and the other benefits of manipulating market and non-market relations.

Patterns of differentiation in agriculture

As impressed as I was by the creativity and resourcefulness of local farmers, any tendency I may have had to romanticize agriculture was kept in check by the patterns of differentiation I observed. Not only were the benefits of this new surge in commercial agriculture limited to the families who had the resources--material, human, social, and so forth--to set themselves on a path to upward mobility, but their success was to a certain extent predicated on the divergent fortunes of households unable to expand their operations. Those households were in the position of having to provide labor through informal exchanges to patrons in the village, and some of those patrons included extended relatives. Mohamed headed one such household, an example of how migration, family relationships, and one's place in social networks did not always result in a positive cycle of accumulation. Mohamed's grandfather had immigrated to el Harte from another oasis valley, meaning he was not one of the original residents who would have had access to communal lands, but he did marry a woman from one of the village's most prominent families. While Mohamed's grandfather had purchased 12 'acher, the family's land acquisition stopped there. Mohamed's father migrated to Casablanca when Mohamed was an infant and his work as a waiter never resulted in any substantial remittances. When his father divorced his mother a few years later and started another family in Casablanca, Mohamed's fortunes sank further and at an early age, he helped support the small female-headed household. As an adult,

Mohamed had achieved some much sought after stability: he had learned the construction trade and had fairly steady work in Kelaa and the local environs. He continued to farm the family's 12 'acher, though he rued his low production: he had yielded 15 'abra of wheat (150 kilos) on the 8 'acher he had planted in 2009 (in striking contrast to Hassan, the taxi dispatcher and livestock trader, who yielded 80 'abra on the 8 'acher he planted, because, he said, he turned the soil by hand not with a tractor).

Mohamed was not sure why his production was so low but he offered a thoughtful assessment of what someone like him could realistically hope to accomplish in agriculture. As a head of household with only young daughters and the need to work off-farm full-time in order to keep the wages coming in, he had limited options for his cropping regime. He did not grow vegetables--they took too much work and time--and in any case, planting wheat was the priority to assure his family's basic needs. Even with his exclusive focus on wheat, his yield was not sufficient and the previous year, he had had to purchase 14 'abra of wheat. "For a man by himself, like me," he elaborated, "it is very difficult to base yourself in farming. You need to have a lot of land, like 50-60 'acher. I know that for the amount of money I put into agriculture, I could buy the wheat, but I have to cultivate the land. There are other benefits to farming that bring money and food: like figs and almonds." He did an accounting the previous year and was so discouraged by what he found he decided not to do that exercise again: it cost him approximately MAD 2,200 to grow the amount of wheat that he could have bought for approximately MAD 1,000. But on that same land, he was able to garner an additional MAD 2,300 from the sale of his tree crops and roses, none of which had any input costs other than the labor time he and the women in the family expended. Mohamed did not feel like he had any other choice; he could not grow vegetables and could not imagine leaving the land uncultivated; planting wheat kept the land in cultivation, maintained his social networks, and provided for basic needs, even if the cost-benefit analysis on that crop alone was negative.

Mohamed's account underscored how the factors determining whether a family could base their livelihood in farming were interrelated. Patterns of differentiation did not simply reflect people's ownership of or access to the major factors of production. Rather, it was the way ownership and access interacted with the demographic make-up of the family, family status, control over labor, and other axes of differentiation. Mohamed indicated that a certain amount of land was necessary to farm profitably--by his estimate, 50-60 'acher--but there was no absolute threshold above which agricultural livelihoods became viable. That depended on the kind of agriculture a household practiced as the requirements for a tree crop, vegetable production, or livestock-based strategy were different. Nor was the question of access to land a straightforward one of amassing the capital necessary for purchase or development. Mohamed--and the village as a whole--was well aware that he should have larger holdings because he was due an inheritance that his grandmother never received. A member of a prominent farming family, she never received that inheritance because after the patriarch's death, her brothers decided not to divide the family's land in order to keep their holdings consolidated. Many community members disapproved of this decision and of other families that had done the same, noting that it dispossessed poor heirs who really needed land: not dividing an inheritance to consolidate land was an acceptable strategy if there no heirs were deprived of their rightful share. There was little Mohamed could do about the problem, but he could have theoretically accessed more land by petitioning the collective land representatives for an allotment from the village's communal reserves. However, owning the land was useless without the people to work it, and aside from whether or not he could raise the capital to consistently farm it, he knew that he could not mobilize the necessary labor.

Access to capital was not the only determinant of a households' ability to farm but it remained important to their ability to buy or develop new land, wait long periods until that land sustained good yields, and weather the risks of agriculture in the oasis. But what determined a household's ability to secure access to capital was often a complicated set of social and historical

factors. Many of the most prominent farming families were desperately poor a generation ago, a reflection of the collective poverty of the region's subjugated groups. But certain factors in a family history provided a more propitious avenue to upward mobility. Two of the heads of households (Abdallah and Abdelhafid) I interviewed had grandfathers who were *makhzenis*, members of the royal army or agents of the sultan, which enabled them to accumulate land even if their overall standard of living was not much better than their neighbors. Though Abdelhafid's family lost all of their land because his grandfather was murdered while trying to collect taxes in the weekly market (allowing other community members to take--or retake--the land unchallenged), that household was still well positioned for upward mobility. The experience working for and travelling on behalf of the Sultan exposed them to patronage networks and built the cultural capital that facilitated Abdelhafid's later migration to France as a miner.

Migrating during the early phases of Europe's post-World War II labor recruitment boom gave these families access to a kind of capital later migrants would not enjoy. These migrants had formal, long-term labor contracts that--only after sustained organizing with progressive elements of European labor movements--yielded benefits and pensions in retirement. It would be hard to overstate the importance of what people termed the *shahriya*, a wage or pension that arrived in regular amounts and at regular intervals. It was not only the absolute increase in income that mattered but the ability to rely on a stable amount that allowed families to plan the use of their remittances and make incremental investments in farming or other commercial enterprises. In the early years of the surge in agricultural investments (the 1970s through the early 1990s), this regularity allowed the gradual purchase of land or development of uncultivated lands in el Bour. When the migrants returned or retired (a minority stayed in Europe but still returned to Mgoun as active members of their households), the *shahriya* assumed a different role: consumption smoothing, investment capital when the need arose, and the support of regular operating expenses. Taleb, who received a MAD 7,500 (\$900) monthly pension from his time in the mines, a staggering sum by local standards, said frankly that he did not think he could maintain his herd

of 300 head on the range if it were not for the regular availability of cash to buy forage and cover other expenses when the environmental conditions in the pasture were difficult. Pastoralism could still be profitable, he said, but the issue of cash flow made his pension crucial.

Most families I encountered in 2010 still had migrants working elsewhere, but the structure of their remittances and their livelihood profiles were markedly different from the "first wave" that had left Mgoun four decades before. People talked regretfully about how the window of migration to Europe had closed. The working conditions in those early years may have been difficult but the jobs paid well and would ensure livelihood security into retirement. A second wave of migrants who left to join their families in the 1980s and 1990s usually found work, but it was less remunerative and more insecure. The most recent wave, in the late 1990s and 2000s, enjoyed even less security: going to Europe now involved risky smuggling operations and informal sector jobs because EU migration policy had eliminated formal migration channels, with the exception of seasonal agricultural labor contracts in Spain, and even those contracts were drying up with the economic crisis post-2007. In this climate, migration was largely limited to Moroccan cities. Low levels of education and professional training meant that most Mgounis could only find low or unskilled jobs, often of limited duration and rarely including benefits. The households who had been able to convert the capital they accumulated as remittances in the 1970s-1990s into profitable investments or viable local livelihoods were the ones who had solidified their upward trajectory as farming families. They could usually protect that position even if they did not have access to a regular pension in the contemporary period. Some of these households had all of their members living in Mgoun, able to craft a completely local or regional livelihood portfolio.

Most households engaged in internal migration could not rely on remittances as a source of investment capital. For them, remittances were the primary source of income rather than a supplement to local livelihoods. This situation had implications for labor availability, another major determinant of whether a household could engage in farming as a primary livelihood

activity. On the one hand, sending adult males to work in the cities could remove labor at peak periods during the growing season, though such labor shortage could also be due to the demographic make-up of any given family (i.e., few adult males). Not being able to call on labor exchanges to the same degree as wealthier families with equipment or animals to lend out meant that households with migrants and the least resources at their disposal had to rely on paid labor during peak agricultural times. They may have to hire both labor and animal traction to turn the soil and sow seed; women did not assume these tasks. This not only ate into already meager incomes, it placed severe constraints on these households' ability to spark a dynamic of accumulation through farming. In a system where the ability to mobilize inputs and labor through non-market means was a key element of both subsistence and commercial farming, households forced to rely on the market were at a marked disadvantage. On the other hand, the short term nature of many internal migrants' jobs gave them some flexibility to time their work away from home so that they could meet their agricultural responsibilities.

This illustrates one of the most important features of peasantization as I observed it in Mgoun: the shifting relationship between sources of income, capital accumulation, and the role of agriculture in livelihood portfolios. In recent decades, scholars have overturned longstanding assumptions that agriculture's main function lay in "facilitating a process of accumulation of physical, financial and wage goods [that] can become the basis of the emergence of capital," feeding growth in other economic sectors (Akran-Lodhi and Kay 2010b: 193). The experience of Mgoun's "first wave" of labor migrants to Europe shows how migration could generate the capital smallholders needed to invest in and strengthen their involvement in agriculture, rather than exit agriculture for an urban livelihood. The experience of Mgoun's internal migrants, those who maintained flexible involvement with urban labor markets in Morocco either by choice or by necessity, adds a further wrinkle to this analysis of agrarian change. In classical treatments of the "agrarian transition," the "key dynamic process in the emergence of agrarian capital and agrarian capitalism was the transformation...of petty commodity producing peasants into wage labour, and

hence labour-power, through complex forces of dispossession" (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010b: 257). In this scenario, migrants became involved in wage labor because they could no longer secure an adequate livelihood farming. In Mgoun, where farming arguably never constituted an adequate livelihood for sharecropping households that had to cope with extreme vulnerability and occasional famines, I interpreted the experience of internal migrants somewhat differently. While limited access to capital, labor, and land may have constrained their possibilities for upward mobility through farming, it was not necessarily a process of dispossession that had pushed them *from* an agricultural livelihood *into* wage labor. As a number of these farmers described, it was the wage labor that enabled them to remain in agriculture at all, to not have to migrate definitively to the city with the unpalatable prospect of living in a shantytown, and to remain connected both to their natal home and to the networks of social reciprocity that offered crucial social support and emotional significance to them and their families. Peasantization was therefore a multi-faceted process with ambivalent equity outcomes, but one that drew households from very different social locations into an increasingly dynamic agricultural economy. For families with access to capital, labor, and land, peasantization represented a new experience of economic and social autonomy, while for those dependent on external wage labor, the new vibrancy of agriculture in Mgoun sustained the possibility for their continued involvement in farming, and for connecting to this important source of subsistence and cultural worth.

Chapter VII--Competing enclosure movements: the collective dimensions of land use change

It was autumn, and the angled rays of the afternoon sun illuminated the broad, yellow fig leaves that were nearly ready to fall. The fields in el Harte were busy, the sound of loud whacks and an occasional branch falling indicating that it was time for the olive harvest. I visited Abdallah in el Bour as he stood in a tree, alternately hitting a branch with a stick to send olives raining down to earth and cutting a branch to prune the tree. Women sat around the tree and gathered the olives. They picked the fruit off of the stems, tossed them onto a large plastic tarp, and tied up the leaves to bring home as forage for the livestock. Abdallah descended for the afternoon prayer, and when he got up with the other men who prayed alongside him on the field border, he called to me and told me to take a look. "See those fields?" He indicated two neighboring plots that appeared to be divided by a line of rose bushes. "Can you believe that Abdelkrim just stole a meter from his neighbor, just like that?" The others shook their head in disapproval but I did not understand what he meant. "See where those rose bushes are? That is where their fields should be divided, but Abdelkrim just ploughed a meter into his neighbor's field and planted wheat and there it is, he took the land!" I saw that one field had recently been worked while the other had not, the visible signs of recent irrigation extending one meter past the rose bushes into the neighboring field. It seemed quite brazen, but Abdallah said the owner of the other field would probably say nothing. Abdelkrim came from one of the most powerful families in town, which begged the question of why someone who commanded one of the largest holdings in el Harte would make the effort to take 20 square meters of someone else's land. Abdallah shrugged, indicating that everyone always wants more land and perhaps there was a personal dispute underlying the shifting boundaries.

This was a small incident, private and perhaps noted only by the handful of people in Abdallah's field that day. It warranted little attention at a time when much more public conflicts around land were unfolding around the region, with groups of people claiming large tracts of

collective land in two separate incidents during 2010. In this chapter, however, I address both Abdelkrim's subtle gesture and the land occupations in the steppe as part of the same political process: the diverse ways land became a terrain for social contestation in Mgoun. I consider these disparate expressions of personal or collective dissent as different modalities for contesting rights to land and to subsistence. *What* exactly people were contesting varied tremendously from case to case: they could involve family disputes, local political rivalries, confronting state power to expropriate land, and one's basic right to make a living off the land, or at least to build a house on the land. However, the conflicts shared an important commonality. They underscored how people's political subjectivities placed land at the center of fundamental questions about what it meant to be part of a community and how that community should provide for its members. By considering these different kinds of conflict together, I resist interpreting Abdelkrim's movement into his neighbor's field as somehow less political than the other more overt mobilizations I document in this chapter. In Chapter Five, I described how Taleb's extensions of his farmland in Rbat were widely interpreted as a challenge to the dominant family that had indentured his father. That example underscored the extent to which livelihood and land use strategies were embedded in the complex politics of the region.

This argument has been central to political ecology since its inception, and yet the common distinction between less choate forms of resistance and broad-based political mobilization still tends to categorize that resistance as a precursor or less developed form of the latter.¹ Those peasants who mobilize are contrasted to those who "simply struggle to get by with a range of livelihood strategies" (McMichael 2008: 207). Throughout my dissertation, I have attempted to show how those "struggles to get by" are never very simple. In Mgoun, household livelihood strategies had to negotiate the transformations in social and political hierarchies that

¹ The argument is not only central to political ecology: E.P. Thompson made foundational contributions to theorizing resistance in terms of a "moral economy" and different scholarly traditions have drawn on these insights, from Subaltern Studies to James Scott's work on "everyday forms of peasant resistance" (Guha 1982, Scott 1979 and 1985, Thompson 1971).

had unfolded over the previous half-century. It is true that Mgoun was not known as a hotbed of Berber activism on par with the Dadès Valley, only a few kilometers away. But Berber activism is not the only frame for understanding collective expressions of political dissent in the Moroccan south.² In this chapter, I consider these collective expressions as an extension of the diverse livelihood strategies I have described to examine their shared political idioms--especially how the right to subsistence was embedded in conceptions of an ethical community.

When I began my fieldwork, I had not anticipated the extent to which land conflict, politics, and ethical claims around community would dominate my fieldwork. I struggled to find a theoretical language to describe these conflicts, since the overtly political dimensions of people's actions and understandings were relatively muted in favor of a discourse of ethics that emerged from people's membership in local and ethnic communities (i.e., a place-based sense of belonging to a village and an ethnic dimension of belonging to a tribal confederation). Gibson-Graham elaborate on this distinction between politics and ethics: "If politics is a process of transformation instituted by taking decisions in an undecideable terrain, ethics is the continual exercising, in the face of the need to decide, of a choice to be/act/think a certain way" (Gibson-Graham 2006: xxviii). I am, however, less concerned with defining "ethics" in contradistinction to "politics" than in exploring the ways people framed their ethical commitments. During my fieldwork, I developed a notion of ethical claims that emerged from research participants' own enactments of communal identities and land claims rather than a pre-defined set of philosophical concepts. These enactments invariably raised questions about how people's different positionalities and social attachments affected the way rights to communal resources evolved in the context of

² The dominant frame for understanding political dissent in the region (at least from an American scholarly and popular perspective) has quickly become the Arab Spring since the Tunisian revolution of early 2011 inspired uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa. It is worth noting that the term with more resonance in the Moroccan south is the Berber Spring in Algeria, as the seminal events at Tizi Ouzou were called, that inaugurated the Amazigh rights movement in 1980. The Algerian government cancelled a conference on Berber poetry and sparked a series of strikes and demonstrations that it violently suppressed. The events and political consciousness they inspired have since been commemorated in Berber song, poetry, and political discourse throughout the Maghreb.

changing pressures on livelihoods and land-based resources. Gibson-Graham extend their use of the term "ethics" to capture this tension:

The commons can be seen as a community stock that needs to be maintained and replenished so that it can continue to constitute the community by providing its direct input (subsidy) to survival. Clearly there is a delicate relationship between nourishing and preserving this stock and placing pressures on it to provide higher levels of consumption... Whether to deplete, maintain, or grow the commons is a major focus of ethical decision making. Such an ethical practice of commons management is part of what defines and constitutes a community. It creates and reproduces the "common substance" of the community while at the same time making a space for raising and answering the perennial question of who belongs and is there entitled to rights of decision. [2006: 97]

People in Mgoun grappled with this question of belonging in explicitly ethical terms. Theoretical frameworks developed to understand indigenous rights movements or land reform activism were not, however, particularly helpful because people did not link their land claims to the transnational or globally circulating discourses around cultural autonomy like Berber rights activists elsewhere in Morocco.³ Nor did the notion of moral economy as it has developed in the agrarian studies literature seem an adequate or at least sufficient analytic framework because it implies an effort to insulate communal identities from market logics. In Mgoun, ethical debates about what it meant to be a part of a community--the subsistence and resource claims such membership entailed--often involved a hybrid of "retreat" from the market and a use of market processes, land division, and privatization to pursue land claims.

Just as I used extensions into the steppe as an entrée to analyze agrarian change in Mgoun, I turn again to extensions to shed light on these hybrid strategies for linking subsistence claims to land rights. I argue that tensions over land tenure made extensions the flashpoint for competing enclosure movements. In Mgoun and the surrounding area, extensions into the steppe involved the division or appropriation of collective land, a process usually considered indicative of the integration of common property into capitalist tenure regimes. Here, some of the most

³ See Paul Silverstein's work in Goulmima (approximately 150 kilometers from Kelaa on the national road), for an example of local activists explicitly framing their claims in terms of the broader North African Berber rights movements (Silverstein 2010).

marginalized settlers on the steppe advocated for parcelization of collective lands--an enclosure movement based on moral economy claims to the right of subsistence--in opposition to state protection of collective regimes. I term these divergent stances competing enclosure movements because state preservation of collective lands represented an alternative enclosure with the dual aim of extending state territorial authority and retaining a land reserve for allocation to large agricultural investors. Extensions into the steppe therefore framed a state of ethical claims about the role and meaning of community--collective action to divide up communally-owned lands could become the basis for a new ethical community based on the right to subsistence rather than ethnic and historical ties that often upheld rigid social hierarchies. This case may force us to rethink the nature of enclosures and the individualization of land tenure as not reducible to a neoliberalization of tenure regimes or a reaction against capitalism but as a site for contesting how communities provide for their members (Hardt and Negri 2009, Harvey 2010).

Furtive home-building and everyday struggles over land

Extensions into the steppe became a particularly charged site for contesting land rights because all the churning--of people, livelihoods, and land uses-- they represented involved land that had to be acquired. All land throughout Morocco had existing tenure arrangements, often of a complex nature that combined collective, private, state, and even royal prerogatives. There was no unclaimed steppe that could simply be appropriated. In the south, ethnic collectivities controlled the vast territories of the steppe and mountains. So when a household decided to move out into the steppe to build a house, dig a well, or begin to farm, those tenure arrangements had to be negotiated in some way. Many of the strategies I have already described in the dissertation involved land purchase or requests for allocations from collective land representatives--i.e., working through existing tenure institutions even if the ways those institutions functioned was evolving. Other strategies represented more explicit challenges to dominant authorities or tenure regimes through either individual subversion or collective expressions of dissent.

The traces of these challenges were visible throughout the valley. On the hard dirt road

leading into Rbat a large cement house slowly took shape during the year of my research. It appeared that a recent infusion of income had allowed one of the families in Rbat's neighboring community to "upgrade" from the adobe and rock that characterized the adjacent compounds. Though it seemed a natural extension of the other homes, it was at the center of a local political controversy since the home was officially located in the horm of Rbat, not the neighboring village. Even people from his own community were concerned about the confrontational move: the owner of the home had simply started building at night in defiance of customary law and of Rbat's dominant family. Under the initiative of the family's patriarch, the community forbade construction in the horm in order to preserve the integrity of the village's primary water source (a spring located near the village entrance). The furtive home builder would not have rights to that land anyway as an outsider with no customary claims. But a longstanding electoral dispute had created enmity between the two families and the act of constructing a home on the land constituted a provocative intensification of the dispute. Local government authorities did not relish the prospect of destroying someone's home, a very rare occurrence in the valley even for blatant infractions such as this, and so a long process of mediation and eventually court action got underway.

There were many stories of conflicts unfolding through the medium of land in Mgoun. They drew on the cultural importance of land and its changing economic valences to make personal claims, contest political decisions, and challenge many of the hierarchies I have discussed elsewhere in this dissertation. An important dimension of these disputes is the extent to which they capitalized the institutional proliferation I described in Chapter Four. As migration remittances and the accompanying livelihood transformations created new kinds of economic value in land, customary institutions presided over an increasing array of institutional regimes for managing land, labor, and economic relations generally. In another incarnation of this institutional proliferation, people began "forum shopping" by drawing on the different mechanisms for conflict resolution that accompanied these institutional regimes. Often, this

would drag the disputes on for years as people turned to their collective land representatives or community leaders, the elected officials of the commune, the local Ministry of Interior representative (*the qaid*), and the courts--sometimes in succession, sometimes simultaneously--to each issue their rulings. The proliferation of authority and jurisdiction could result in the absence of real authority, and many actions such as the house outside of Rbat or the Imaghran neighborhood in el Harte would become a *fait accompli* long before a ruling was actually issued.

The disputes I have described in el Harte and Rbat highlight the personal rivalries that were at the root of many intimate disputes. This does not preclude the possibility that conflicts could be simultaneously implicated in the historical injustices of the valley's social hierarchies or the emergent inequalities that accompanied the transformations of the previous half-century. However, the very nature of these inequalities underscored how these kinds of conflicts might never rise to the surface of village politics. Two of the households I interviewed in el Harte were landless because female heirs (in both cases, the grandmother of the household head) had never received their inheritances; the poverty of the current patriarch and their dependence on patronage networks meant they were unlikely to ever raise their concerns publicly or even privately. While it may have been difficult to articulate these challenges on an individual basis, expansion into the steppe created new spaces--in a geographic and political sense--for experimenting with collective action. This spurred a new dynamic linking land conflicts to the changing political economy of property rights in Mgoun and the surrounding steppe.

Competing enclosures and the right to subsistence

My visits to Fatima in el Bour usually involved a quiet morning talking over the bread she made in her *tanourt*, the style of clay oven typical of her native Imaghran but uncommon in Mgoun. Whenever one cracked, she would have to travel to the weekly market 30 kilometers away in Skoura to replace it; that market was closer to Imaghran and potters made the oven there. One day in mid-summer, we returned from Skoura with a new clay oven to hear excited voices in her compound. Her son, Driss, was in town. He had returned home from his job doing

plasterwork in Casablanca to spend Ramadan and study for his driver's license. In between his studies, however, he was sidetracked by political events sweeping up many of the young men of el Bour. Emboldened by a successful land occupation down the road just a few months before, a group of families began staking claims in the empty steppe extending from the new settlements of el Bour. They had seen someone "signaling" a plot, laying out rocks as though to claim it, even though land sales in el Bour had officially stopped because of alleged corruption. Rumor held that people were selling the same land multiple times, or were selling collective land outside of the formal boundaries of el Bour, which belonged to the descendents of the Islamic brotherhood that historically owned the land. Angered residents set up encampments and refused to leave until the qaid gave them each a plot for themselves. Driss quickly joined the occupiers, and in two weeks, the qaid, elected officials, and residents of the area brokered an agreement for the division of the land outside el Bour--which included collective lands belonging to the Ait Sedrate confederation--to residents from nine villages, including the settlement of el Bour itself. Everyone who had lived in the area for over five years could sign up to receive an allotment, which would divide up a wide swath of steppe between el Bour and the foothills of the Atlas. As the elected representative of el Bour told me, they were meant to help poor families set up households for themselves and their sons, though income level was not a criterion for acceptance on the list and Youssef, the head of another one of my case study households, signed up to receive his plot even though he was fairly well off. "You always need more land," he shrugged.

I have described how Mgoun was not known for its political activism and the first collective action to divide communal lands occurred in 2010. In the Berber activist centers of Boumalne, Tinghir, and Goulmima, there was a longer history of mobilizing around land claims, often couched in terms of asserting Berber identity and indigenous rights (Silverstein 2010). Here, the language used was that of rights, but in a semantically different way--the term for "right," (*haq*) was also the term for "share" or "portion," whether of land or of meat in a shared plate of couscous. When people talked about their goals in el Bour and the other conflicts I

witnessed, they emphasized their right (haq) to actualize their share (haq) as rights-holders in collective land or their basic right to own enough land to build their house, a subsistence claim that did not include agricultural land. Though it would have involved the same word, they were not invoking a collective identity linked to the national and trans-national Berber cultural movement.

In the case of el Bour n'Ait Yahya, 30 years of individual land acquisition created a whole new community before the "sit-in," as it was called, took place. These latest strategies for land acquisition had taken on a collective dimension that while only nascent, still began to look like an enclosure movement. What had been happening on an individual level and now on a more collective one was resistance against collective tenure regimes and the use of those regimes by the state and other elites to appropriate land at the expense of the most vulnerable. The circumstances of this conflict belie an interpretation that puts forward state-led enclosure as the catalyst for popular resistance against capitalism and for the protection of collective tenure regimes. The primary demand of the protestors was not a preservation of communal tenure but a division of lands to ensure that all rights-holders received their share.⁴ In effect, there were competing enclosure movements with radically different perspectives on what it meant to have rights in land. Land conflict is a useful entrée into understanding these movements--and a dominant analytic framework in the land tenure scholarship--but the case of extensions into the steppe highlights the diverse modalities for enclosure. There were many sites of contestation, from legislation stretching back to the colonial period, to local government appropriations, to individual acts of purchase or appropriation. I first address state-led enclosure before describing competing movements.

⁴ Here, division was limited to male heads of household. Elsewhere in Morocco, where land divisions have occurred in much more economically valuable land (such as the plains surrounding Casablanca or Marrakech), the exclusion of women from land allocations has given rise to movements of "femmes soulaliyat," a French-Arabic hybrid roughly translated as "women of the tribes." Through demonstrations and other venues, these women have demanded recognition as rights-holders in collective lands. This was not, however, a part of the public conversation around collective lands in Mgoun.

The first grand act of enclosure in modern-era Morocco was orchestrated by the Protectorate government (1912-1956) under the guise of protecting collective ownership of the vast tribal lands across the country. In addition to the rangelands, these collective lands included rain-fed lands in the plains suitable for large-scale agriculture as well as forested uplands. This is not simply historical background. The Protectorate decrees governing land tenure are still in force today with only minor modifications, one of the few instances globally where decolonization resulted in virtually no change to colonial property regimes, much less land reform.⁵ The tensions of colonial-era tenure policy have also persisted with a remarkable continuity. The first Resident General, Lyautey, attempted to avoid the mistakes of previous French colonial administrations, especially Algeria, where in his estimation, the use of force and outright land expropriations alienated local populations and thwarted the colonial effort (Davis 2005: 219). His administration laid down the architecture of colonial land policy as a delicate balancing act between appeasing the speculators and colonial agricultural concerns that pushed for large scale expropriation and, in Lyautey's narrative, respecting Moroccan tenure institutions and the ability of Moroccans to continue living as they always had. Of course, over a century of aggressive European encroachment on Moroccan sovereignty and immersion into global markets had already eroded Moroccan livelihoods throughout the country by the time the French took power in 1912 (Pennell 2000). Regardless, the idea of preserving Moroccan traditional institutions by absorbing them into the state apparatus, thereby ossifying them and neutralizing their authority as governance institution, continues to inform the contemporary juridical framework for land tenure.

This land policy was laid down long before the French defeated the final last resistance against colonial rule in 1933, just 200 kilometers away from Mgoun (Ilahiane 2006). A 1919 decree (*dahir*) placed Morocco's estimated 12 million hectares of collective land under the

⁵ The tenure regime I describe in this section was related to but separate from the customary tenure regimes I described in Chapter Four. The institutional framework presented here governed the collectively owned lands that were predominantly rangeland and were beyond the boundaries of individual communities. Chapter Four specifically addresses the tenure regimes within villages.

tutelage of the Office of Indigenous Affairs: Moroccan tribes retained ownership but the Office "protected" the lands from illegal appropriation or encroachment. The Protectorate administration established a structure for the "rational" distribution of portions of those lands for the goals of economic development while ostensibly ensuring that any given ethnic collectivity would retain enough land for their members' livelihoods (Bidwell 1973, Pascon 1986).⁶ A committee composed of Indigenous Affairs officials along with the collective land representative from the relevant tribe weighed proposals for allocating collective lands for individual projects (usually private French agribusiness or concessions for colonial settlers) or state-led infrastructure projects such as road building. The state could also preside over the division of collective lands among the entirety of the rights-holders (*ayants-droits*), members of the ethnic collectivity due a share of communal land. In the case of wholesale division, the land would become the freehold property of the individual rights-holders, while for individual projects, the fiction of long-term usufruct contracts resulted in the de facto transfer, and often eventual formalization, of ownership to the foreign investors. In the Wild West atmosphere of early colonial land grabbing, these procedures allowed for the wholesale transfer of large tracts of productive lands to colonial concerns while ostensibly controlling speculation out of respect for Moroccan institutions (Bidwell 1973, Pascon 1986). A hybrid, state-led enclosure process fueled intense land speculation in these early years, essentially creating a reserve of collective lands under state control to be doled out through opaque and unaccountable procedures while still retaining ethnic collectivities' formal ownership of those lands.

This process played out differently depending on the location and potential economic value of the land. In Mgoun, these juridical procedures were of little relevance during the colonial period when there was minimal foreign interest in these peripheral lands, and the main concern of

⁶ The Protectorate administration established an arbitrary threshold of 5 hectares as the minimum amount of land a household needed to survive, a threshold that has tenaciously endured in Moroccan policy discourse even though it does not acknowledge the diversity of environmental and agro-ecological conditions or livelihood systems (Pascon 1986).

the French was establishing some modicum of territorial authority. In the contemporary context, however, the dahir of 1919 is quite important for residents of Mgoun's collective lands. The Office of Indigenous Affairs is no longer, but the Ministry of Interior inherited its tutelary authority and currently, the Rural Affairs Directorate at the Ministry of the Interior coordinates those same committees charged with allocating collective land, manages the accounts of the ethnic collectivities receiving rent on the long-term contracts on their property, and otherwise attempts to resolve the many conflicts and requests for clarification of the ambiguous status of collective lands.⁷ The staff of the Directorate took their work very seriously, scrambling with a meager budget and inadequate staff to manage hundreds of thousands of hectares on behalf of ethnic collectivities they worried were on the brink of dissolving.

The Director of the Rural Affairs office was committed to his role as protector of collective lands, but he also offered a disarmingly frank analysis of the state's own role in creating a "land problem." The government had never established procedures for determining individual rights in collective lands or clarified the relationship between the state's juridical authority and the myriad of other use and ownership rights densely layered over collective lands. He recognized that the colonial-era tension between the role of the state in protecting collective lands on behalf of their true, legal owners and allocating those lands for "productive purposes" to investors had become even more untenable in the contemporary climate, with much greater demand for land in even the most peripheral fringes of the country. "In addition to the large projects we sanction, I worry," he said, "about the small appropriations and the piecemeal extensions of villages that are eroding the integrity of collective lands. While the state promotes the mapping and delimitation

⁷ While the Ministry oversees the funds collected on behalf of the ethnic collectivities, those collectivities have no access to or control over their accounts and most have never received the money due for contracts on their land since those contracts started being issued in 1919. In the province of Ouarzazate, the first efforts to disburse the millions of Dirhams that had accumulated over the previous century to the many collectivities began in 2003. The Ministry's inability to trace exactly how much money was due to each tribe or to resolve the controversial issue of identifying eligible rights-holders meant the Ministry did not attempt to distribute cash directly to the ethnic collectivities. Instead, they established a community development fund to finance economic and social projects around the province.

of collective lands, we have never developed a consistent definition of what it means to be a rights-holder in land. When collective lands are divided, many tribal members don't get their rights, like émigrés, women, and immigrants into the area." I was struck by the Director's concern for equity, a sentiment most Moroccans did not associate with the Ministry of Interior. He expressed concern about the decline of communal identities: "when the collectivity does not have land, it is no longer a collective. It is not only a group of people--it is history, customs, tradition that are disappearing. We are talking about the future of our collectivities, our tribes."

The Director regretted these threats to communal identities and ownership regimes. As a committed officer of the Ministry, he struggled with the fact that the government's tutelary authority (*la tutelle*) was a primary reason for this state of affairs. The Ministry of Interior's power over land framed state efforts to replace the governance authority of communal institutions with the territorial authority of the modern state. Retaining the institution of tutelary authority gave the independent monarchy great latitude in disposing of collective lands, with the result that the collectivity no longer exercised real, or at least traditional, rights over its land. This evokes Chang's description of the enclosure of Native American lands not just as a transfer of property but as a political project that transfers sovereignty (Chang 2011: 7). The Moroccan state held collective lands in abeyance: it dismantled indigenous systems for governance that historically combined land management with other governing functions and instead, concentrated communal authority over land disposition in one office holder per ethnic collectivity. Collective ownership was expressed entirely in the person of the collective land representative, a liminal bureaucratic figure officially chosen through indigenous democratic procedures by tribal members but in reality, a life-long sinecure held by powerful regional notables, some with more popular legitimacy than others. Some were seen as staunch defenders of collective lands against outside investment projects, while others were dismissed in private as weak, easily manipulated by the state (though few people would openly criticize them out of decorum). These were the collective land representatives who were at the center of many of the land conflicts the area.

The scenario I have described may not conform to the formal definition of enclosure, the literal or legal fencing off of common lands for individual or private use.⁸ The state did not parcel out land in a single act of enclosure--juridical or otherwise--but held that land as a reserve to be distributed by provincial officials through opaque and sometimes corrupt procedures. This opacity offered the ever-looming prospect of potential enclosure, a prospect that worried residents of Mgoun and the surrounding steppe. In 2008, residents of Ichihn, a community in the steppe 15 kilometers outside of Kelaa, watched as bulldozers began working on the 100 hectare concession across the national road from their community. That concession became the Arab businessman's firma I described in Chapter Six. When a bulldozer appeared one day in early 2010 on *their* side of the road, residents quickly rushed to resist the Ministry of Interior's new concession of another 100 hectare tract. They argued that this was not land for the Ministry of Interior, or their own collective land representative, to give away because it was part of their village's horn, not communal land belonging to the ethnic collectivity. And so they moved out whole families, set up tents, and persisted with a dramatic land occupation for 38 days that even saw the governor send out the army in a rare act of intimidation.

Residents refused to back down, demanding not only that the concession be withdrawn but that the qaid sanction the formal division of the land between residents of Ichihn. While convention held that local communities could divide up their village lands without even notifying the qaid, residents of Ichihn had seen the government give away that land and insisted on a written convention that formalized individual households' ownership of the divided plots. In an unprecedented move, the agreement also specified that a 500 meter buffer--land along the

⁸ As one of the central stories in the rise of industrial capitalism, enclosure has engendered powerful myths celebrating the power of private property or critiquing its destructive effects. Raymond Williams notes how in England, "the idea of the enclosures...can shift our attention from the real history and become an element of that very powerful myth of modern England in which the transition from a rural to an industrial society is seen as a kind of fall, the true cause and origin of our social suffering and disorder. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this myth in modern social thought. It is a main source for the structure of feeling...the perpetual retrospect to an 'organic' or 'natural' society" (Williams 1975: 96). Similar ideas of organic or natural society undergirded discourses of community I encountered, such as that of the Ministry of Interior official quoted above.

national road that the state did not agree to allocate to individual households--could be developed but only by prior agreement of the residents and only to a native investor, not to a foreigner (*barrani*) like the Arab businessman from Casablanca. Ichih had put conditions on an allocation procedure for collective lands that had been in place for nearly a century, conditions that for the first time privileged the local, native residents over outside investors.

This incident became a prominent topic of discussion throughout a region that held little esteem for the Ministry of Interior or the central government generally. It was also an inspiration, the land occupation that emboldened the families of el Bour to conduct their own sit-in a few short months later. By timing their action to coincide with a royal visit to the south, residents of el Bour received their concession in a mere two weeks as opposed to Ichih's 38 days because the qaid could not afford to have the King view a land protest as his motorcade passed by. These two incidents were dramatic, particularly in an area known for its relative quiescence. However, dramatic as they were, I want to avoid romanticizing conflict or overstating the centrality of collective action in this account of land tenure. While scholars such as Pauline Peters rightly emphasize the importance of analyzing why land conflict is increasing in Africa, the inevitable draw of conflict for social scientists, particularly those interested in the dispossessed's struggle for justice, means that visible collective action can obscure the continuum of conflict, tension, and subtle actions that mark contestation over property regimes (Peters 2004).

The case of Imzilne underscores this subtlety and the unspoken political positioning that often characterized competing enclosures in Mgoun. If we regard extensions into the steppe (or mountain plateaus) as not only a literal enclosure of land for private use, but also as a political project asserting competing sovereignties, then no conflict was as contentious as the dueling construction sites on the edges of Imzilne in the summer and fall of 2010. When I initially saw that the weekly market for the Ait Hamd plateau was on the edge of Imzilne, I assumed that choice of location in the 1960s must have been a commercial boon for the marginalized community of metalworkers. They had easy access to weekly market goers who brought their

donkeys for re-shoeing or needed other repairs. This may have been partially true, but the market's emplacement was politically charged, involving multiple successive appropriations of Imzilne land. The land had been designated for public use by the local government, but with a small group of rural notables dominating the commune, everyone understood the emplacement as a decision by the most powerful family to keep market traffic away from their land in Rbat, less than a kilometer away. Over the coming decades, the area around the market came to house the rural commune offices, a housing development accommodating commune employees, a branch of the agricultural extension office, the local middle school, and a dormitory for children attending the middle school from their remote mountain homes. All of these structures were built in Imzilne's horm and the village was neither consulted in the decision-making process nor did it receive any compensation for the appropriations. As the Imzilne collective land representative, admitted to me, "there was no way to say no," a succinct characterization of centuries of racialized domination coming from Imzilne's most respected community leader.

When the foundations for a new round of construction were laid in the summer of 2010, however, Imzilne residents decided that they needed to find a way to say no, or at least, no more. The government created a new administrative district of the Ministry of Interior (*qiyada*) in the Ait Hamd plateau and the new qaid's offices were to be located in the same complex of government buildings on the fringes of the market. Imzilne residents knew this would probably herald yet more expansion into their village horm so they decided to formally divide Imzilne's collective lands. This move was not provocative in and of itself. Many of the villages in the valley had already divided the collective lands within the customary boundaries of their communities. This customary process did not involve the Ministry of Interior in contrast to the procedures for dividing or appropriating the collective lands that belonged to entire ethnic collectivities. For communities dividing their own lands, it was a question of clarifying who had right to what land, and making sure that each household received their fair share.

Imzilne residents had talked about dividing their land before, but the final impulse came

when they saw government contractors begin work on the new qiyada. As the collective land representative asserted, "If we do not divide our land, they will just come and keep on taking more and more. At least if individuals own and 'signal' (*'alam*) their land, the government cannot take anymore." So in a matter of weeks, the sounds of cement mixers on the Ministry of Interior construction site mixed with the sounds of Imzilne residents pounding the wet clay of the adobe walls going up around their newly allocated plots. This move elicited no response from the local commune president who was also the patriarch of the regionally dominant family, or the local representatives of the Ministry of Interior. It was, after all, Imzilne's right to divide up village lands but the political message was clear and the progressive appropriations of the previous decades had now been answered by the quiet enclosure of Imzilne's remaining lands.

Enclosure: redefining community or a last bulwark against neoliberal tenure?

Land division has increased our communal spirit, not lessened it. We all came together to solve a problem. Before, there was conflict over who had what land, but now all of that is clear, and we work better together to solve our problems.

Mgouni Collective Land Representative

As I watched land conflicts unfold and explored the reasons for the extensions into the steppe, I was struck by an apparent paradox. The state was in the position of maintaining customary tenure regimes in the face of individual and collective challenges to those regimes, challenges that rarely came from large agricultural interests or local elites, but rather from the most marginalized members of those ethnic collectivities. If, in colonial times and even now in other areas of Morocco, the state has presided over the formal dismantling of many collective lands, in Mgoun, the local representatives of the state were the most vocal defenders of communal regimes. Local government officials began to decry the breakdown of extensive pastoralism and the customary land tenure institutions upon which it depended. Now, in their view, it was the farmers and the migrants from the mountains who were taking apart collective lands piece by piece or in grand gestures as in the occupations in Ichihn and el Bour. In this narrative, rampant individualism and the dissolution of community drove extensions into the

steppe.

To resolve this apparent paradox, it is important to tease apart the diverse discourses of the state, especially when various official actors capitalized on the opacity of Moroccan land law to extract new kinds of rents from collective lands. In contrast to the concern for the status of tribes and their collective lands that regional officials expressed, many government pronouncements discussed how the antiquated juridical framework for communal land impeded economic development by making investment difficult in the "undeveloped" steppe and rangeland. This tension in discourses often played itself out in the same individuals: some of the same state officials who emphasized the importance of preserving Moroccan tribes also talked about the need to mobilize millions of hectares of collective lands to promote national development. During a local planning meeting, one government official pleaded that "we need to develop our land. It is the basis for our economy. There are many collective lands not used here and they need investment," implying that transhumant pastoralism, which his Ministry of Agriculture colleagues seated at the table were working so actively to promote, did not constitute a "use" of that land. In this discourse, the current juridical framework was unsuited to economic development goals.

At the same time, however, concentrating authority in the unaccountable hands of Ministry of Interior officials gave the state great latitude in the disposition of Morocco's vast collective lands. Preserving the juridical status quo of collective ownership allowed state agricultural development programs and corrupt investment deals alike to proceed without serious interference from the ethnic collectivities themselves. In this context, there was little political appetite for changing land law: it would not only remove or at least diminish state authority over collective land, it would also raise thorny issues about whom in the various tribes should have access to land, and what alternative tenure regimes should be put in place. This situation is not unique to Morocco. Scholars in other parts of Africa have described how "government's ability to expropriate land was better served by the maintenance of customary tenure as controlled by tribal

authorities than by any reform that provided statutory recognition (and need to negotiate compensation for individual users' rights)" (Chimhowu and Woodhouse 2006: 351). In Morocco, the state could most effectively control the enclosure of collective lands by maintaining communal tenure regimes and refashioning them rather than dismantling them outright. The state promoted the image of the monarch as protector of the nation's collective patrimony while simultaneously creating a sanctioned institutional space for enclosing collective lands when the economic and political objectives of local officials or national agricultural policy required it.

This interpretation of state tutelary authority as a form of enclosure frames my argument that new settlements, smallholder extensions, and collective land occupations represented an alternative enclosure movement in Mgoun and the surrounding steppe. The Imaghranis who set up a homestead in el Bour to have access to wage labor opportunities, the smallholder who extended irrigation canals to expand cultivation, the villages that divided their lands, and the groups who conducted sit-ins to claim their share all posited land as essential to their subsistence. Their demand to exercise their rights to those lands came from two kinds of claims: as members of the ethnic collectivities that communal lands, they had the right to their share, and for the Imaghrani immigrants--the outsiders without the ability to claim rights-holder status--it was an ethical claim about the right to subsistence. There is a subtle but important distinction to make about this right to subsistence. People did not draw on a globalized discourse of human rights and rights-based development, such as Amartya Sen's formulations, that has now been adopted by many transnational justice movements and the development establishment alike (Sen 1999). Instead, I found people echoing a basic desire to be able to continue living in their home--one migrant worker commented that every man should stay in his homeland (*tamazirt*) and that his goal was always to get back, to make enough money to be able live with his family. The protesters in Ichihn expressed no personal hostility to the Arab businessman who set up his firma in the steppe but the protest leader was firm, using the same phrase as the migrant worker: "everyone should stay in their tamazirt. He should stay in his and we should have the right to

ours." In this context, subsistence claims were moral economy claims about being a part of a community linked to place, the tamazirt. Membership in that community brought the right to land, the right to make a living, and the right to maintain one's family in the homeland.

Unlike other subsistence claims elsewhere in Morocco, such as the young unemployed's (*jeunes chomeurs*) frequent sit-ins in Rabat, people here did not demand state social support or benefits--they wanted access to productive resources from which they could make their living.⁹ All they needed was a plot. From there, they would build their own homes, find their own jobs, or cultivate their own land in a spirit of independence that also acknowledged their marginal place in Morocco's political and economic landscape. Land was a productive resource laden with especially profound meaning. It was a symbol of connection to home, even if for the Imaghranis home was a few hours away in the mountains. Land was an effective store of wealth that could be monetized if cultivation was not possible. When cultivation was possible, it provided staple foods, preserved the region's agricultural heritage, and provided new sources of income for commercial farmers. And it was a bulwark against state incursions into the community. When people acquired land for extensions--individually or collectively, through established procedures or outright protest--they challenged a particular version of collective tenure.

People were rather unsentimental about the possible implications of these challenges to communal regimes: that they may progressively dismantle the institutional structure for collective lands. None of the people I interviewed viewed the extensions or the land divisions as signaling the death of community or the dissolution of collective tenure regimes. People were quite realistic about these changes, but they located the reasons for their ambivalent effects in the droughts,

⁹ Since the early 1990s, groups of unemployed graduates have held regular sit-ins in front of the Moroccan parliament demanding sustained government attention to the plight of the unemployed, especially young college graduates (Beinin and Vairel 2011, Cohen 2004). They have also organized into associations, carefully trying to avoid the kind of political scrutiny that would result in a government crackdown. Many of these young people were involved in the demonstrations of 2011 that represented the limited Moroccan mobilization after the Tunisian revolution. At the time of this writing, Moroccans are weighing the fallout from a violent government suppression in January-February 2012 of a series of demonstrations in the northern city of Taza led by youth demanding greater economic opportunity and respect for human rights.

shifting economic opportunities, and political marginalization that had transformed their livelihoods over the previous decades, not in the fact that extensions were threatening communal identities. Their demand for tenure changes to grant households land rights in the steppe was a pragmatic realization of the need for new forms of mobility and flexibility to make their evolving livelihood systems work: to allow the communal framework for life in Mgoun and the surrounding steppe to continue to support households' right to subsistence. People's lack of nostalgia for collective tenure regimes was not a challenge to the "communal" as a basis for identity and action. Rather, they were challenging state and elite-led enclosures: the 100 hectare concessions for foreign-owned firms or local government expropriations for yet another official building. And they were challenging a particular form of collective ownership that had long been appropriated by the state and manipulated on behalf of foreign investors or rural notables who benefited from entrenched social hierarchies.

The state had subsumed collective lands for nearly a century and the confusing juridical structure had little legitimacy for many of the people struggling for access to land, if they understood the law at all. They simply saw outsiders, state or non-state actors, appropriating their lands when it suited them. But that does not mean that communal tenure regimes had no legitimacy. There were other enduring practices of communality that recognized the multiplicity of rights and uses in different categories of land. Some of these practices--like the communal management of high altitude pasture (*agdal*)--were vibrant in some areas and less so in others. Regardless of their variability, these practices offered a vision of how a community rooted in a moral economy might work. That vision needed to include land extensions if those extensions enabled people to adapt to the new realities of their livelihoods systems. People may have wanted to dismantle certain portions of collective lands but they did so with the aim of reimagining community, not dissolving it. Extensions into the steppe therefore undergirded ethical claims that belied a straightforward interpretation of the individualization of land tenure as the atomization of communal life. Collective action to divide up lands could become the basis for a new ethical

community based on the right to subsistence rather than a state-sanctioned tribal affiliation that encoded long-standing social hierarchies and allowed people little or no control in the disposition of their collective lands.

This underscores the important point that the communal referent point for popular enclosure movements was definitely not a return to an idealized past of collective governance. As I did life histories, people emphasized how the oppression and poverty of the past was rooted in rigid inequalities, and that however difficult life was now, there was more freedom. They could move for work, for example, rather than suffer the burden of indentured labor. In the nascent visions of community I encountered, the respect for land rights and the right to subsistence allowed a surge of communal spirit such as that described by the collective land representative whose quotation opened this section. Certainly, intra and intercommunity tensions abounded--around land, other natural resources, political power and a myriad other issues--but the fact that people advocating land division could speak of increased communal spirit encourages us to consider the different ways that people might imagine the relationship between individual rights and communal identities.

Chapter VIII--Conclusion

Whenever I spent time in Taleb's expansive and busy compound on the edges of Rbat, I was struck by his obvious pride in all the activity surrounding him. He had left to the French mines as an impoverished teenager and returned to head a flourishing household with large landholdings, a stable of cows, and a herd on the range. As we talked in the family living space, his young son would frequently waddle in and Taleb would affectionately scoop him up in his arms. Taleb's first wife had died and so in addition to his adult children, he had four younger children with his second wife and clearly reveled in his new fatherhood. He patiently sat through my interviews with an occasional break to supervise a task or answer a question about the various operations happening any given day: harvesting, feeding the cows and sheep, taking livestock to market, and many others. The work was hard, but migration had brought the family a level of prosperity Taleb never could have imagined as a youth. He had achieved everything he had hoped for when he left for France in 1969, and he was happy.

Early on in my fieldwork, I interviewed one of Taleb's neighbors, a 65-year-old man who sat every evening on the rocky outcrop in front of Rbat to contemplate the sunset. Haj Mohamed had also retired from the coal mines of France though he had spent 26 years to Taleb's 18. He returned to find life not at all what he had anticipated. He was frustrated that his sons did not want to stay in Rbat or farm the land he had bought. The family did not seem grateful for his sacrifices: "the women raised the children without me and they did what they wanted." Haj Mohamed had not taken his family with him to Europe because he did not want to them give up their identity as Rbatis--their connection to place--but he did not anticipate that his children would not want the life he envisioned for them. He shook his head, "my son went to France on his own and he says he works, but I don't really know. I don't do anything here. You get irritated, irritated by the children who do not want to work." His disappointment was palpable.

Migration was a fraught and ambivalent experience. It opened a path to upward mobility for many, though that mobility often came with emotional costs or unexpected consequences. In

this way, migration serves as a useful metonym for the various transformations that remade the social, economic, and physical landscape in Mgoun over the second half of the twentieth century. Throughout this dissertation, I have emphasized the tensions in the various processes I describe as essential to understanding their heterogeneous effects over space, time, and social categories. Migration remittances had not only thrown a lifeline to impoverished families, they had helped break apart the institution of sharecropping and disrupt entrenched social hierarchies. However, many people could not take part in the lucrative opportunities offered by international migration, and in conjunction with chronic drought, found themselves turning again to sharecropping, low wage labor, and other coping strategies to make do. The new axes of inequality that emerged in the contemporary context meant that new opportunities accompanied, or were even dependent upon, reduced possibilities for those struggling with chronic poverty. In some places, "reactivated" customary institutions and networks of reciprocity sustained a moral economy to support the economically marginalized (Chauveau and Colin 2010: 95). In other places, an emergent moral economy contested the historical bases for land tenure relations and the hierarchies they sustained to put forward a different understanding of what it meant to have subsistence rights as members of a community.

Examining these processes through the lens of land use change throws these tensions into sharp relief. The search for autonomy framed the peasantization processes I have described but autonomy was a complex political and economic construct that could only be understood in relation to exclusion. Households' ability to base themselves on local livelihoods, especially agriculture, depended on their ability to access land as an essential productive resource as well as the networks of reciprocity that grew out of land tenure relations. Autonomy for these households meant an ability to move in and out of markets when it was advantageous to them, to root their livelihoods and their families in the tamazirt, and to disengage as much as they could from distant labor markets, even if those markets had once served as a crucial stepping stone to local autonomy. And autonomy constituted the ability to say "no," as Imzilne's residents did when they

divided their land, or a whole class of sharecroppers did when they refused to work on the land of families that had indentured their ancestors for generations. The political dimensions of autonomy were poignantly local and at the same time implicated in Mgoun's relationship to multi-scalar circuits of state-building, production, and exchange that had long marginalized the region.

The fact that land use change had exclusionary effects was not an unfortunate by-product of economic transformation in Mgoun. Particularly in the context of land, exclusion needs to be understood more broadly as a fundamental aspect of negotiating use and ownership.

"Normatively, exclusion is seen as negative and is counterposed to a positively weighted 'inclusion.' These framings convey the sense that exclusion is something imposed on the weak by the strong, something that should be opposed" (Hall et al. 2011: 4). Hall et al. propose an approach to exclusion that resonates more with the nuanced perspectives of the Mgounis I met than the normative binary they describe as common in scholarship on land tenure. "All land use and access requires exclusion of some kind. Even the poorest people, farming collectively and sustainably, cannot make use of land without some assurance that other people will not seize their farms or steal their crops" (4). Starting from the premise that all land use is necessarily exclusionary in some way places the idea of peasantization as a "search for autonomy" in context. It warns against imposing a Euro-American notion of autonomy as the sovereignty of an individual subject--or in a more limited sense, the assumption that Mgounis aspired to become peasants in an effort to establish family farms independent of external political, social, or economic pressures in the mythical image of 19th Century American homesteaders.⁶⁴ Rather, I encountered conceptions of autonomy that integrated communal attachments, exclusion, and notions of rights in complicated ways. Some of these conceptions sedimented new forms of inequality based on households' economic wealth while simultaneously providing subsistence support to the most vulnerable through enactments of a longstanding, village-based moral

⁶⁴ See Mahmood 2005 for an important analysis of how Euro-American notions about the autonomous subject have permeated scholarship on Islam and the Middle East.

economy. Alternatively, the land conflicts I described in Chapter Seven showed how marginalized groups began to articulate forms of autonomy based on enclosure--the archetypal form of exclusion in land tenure--but their vision of enclosure was rooted in new kinds of communal identities, not an atomized sense of individual rights.

If those particular conflicts were resolved in 2010, the larger context in which they were embedded left many open questions. When the elected official of el Bour described the agreement reached for the distribution of the steppe to local residents, he explained that the allotments would extend until the foothills of the Atlas, a line of jagged hills marking the northern horizon. This was a huge area of currently unoccupied rangeland. I asked what kinds of public services would be provided: had the commune laid out a plan for roads, water provision, or other utilities? "Not yet," he said, "We will do that soon." I had heard from Fatima and other women in el Bour that houses built on the edge of the settlement had to pay for water service but could rarely count on water in their pipes. The communal well had not been dug deeply enough or the distribution system was faulty; no one knew the exact reason why they paid for water that never came. They wondered what would happen to the water with these new allotments even further into the steppe. Residents in el Harte also understood that the expansion of el Bour n'Ait Yahya would eventually abut their own village horn, putting pressure on their water supply and perhaps even their access to land. The environmental implications of this situation worried many but for the families receiving land, the uncertainties did not outweigh their need or desire for land.

Indeed, the environmental dimensions of the various processes I have described may alter the social and economic alignments that took shape in the post-migration era in the not-too-distant future. While I found that farmers in el Harte who extended their cultivation into the steppe were quite cognizant of water scarcity and the general variability that characterized the region's climate, much of the land use change I documented involved housing construction, urban expansion, and to a lesser extent, agricultural concessions on a larger scale than the smallholder extensions. The drivers of these various kinds of expansion were related to one another, but they

also were highly differentiated across the region and the social position of the actors involved. This underscores the importance of examining land use change in Mgoun and elsewhere as a regional--or perhaps more accurately, multi-scalar--phenomenon that emerges from the specific experiences of households and communities.

A regional political ecology linking land, rights, and livelihoods

The regional perspective this research adopted shaped the empirical and theoretical conclusions in fundamental ways. Working throughout the valley brought to the surface processes that would not be visible through a single village-based ethnography. Conversely, the local perspectives that emerged in community-level ethnography grounded the sometimes contradictory regional processes in the lives of individual families. By focusing on the dialectical relationship between spatial and social differentiation, I attempted to show that land became increasingly important to people's livelihoods through the last fifty years of social and economic transformation--but in highly uneven ways. Migration fueled an agricultural renaissance in low-lying areas while drought and vulnerability in the mountains spurred a regional reconfiguration of population settlement and livelihoods. Land served as a key site for contesting community, political authority, and social hierarchy. I emphasized the importance of extensions into the steppe as a flashpoint for land conflicts, but through case studies and ethnographic narrative I also showed the extent to which claims for subsistence rights wove in and out of the daily work of constructing livelihoods. When people negotiated or contested their relationship to the land and the institutions governing land, they were redefining how communities should provide for their members--and what constituted a community in the first place.

This process of redefinition led to two major outcomes that at first glance appeared counterintuitive, especially from a political ecology perspective that critiques the ways in which global capitalist markets constrict agrarian livelihoods or neoliberal tenure policies erode customary regimes. First, instead of an oppositional relationship between markets and customary institutions, I found that upwardly mobile smallholders deftly navigated both customary tenure

regimes and an emerging petty commodity sector to forge agricultural livelihoods in ways that, as poor sharecroppers, they had not been able to do before. Second, the ambivalent relationship between customary land tenure and emergent social hierarchies meant that many of the most economically marginalized families mobilized to divide collective lands, while state authorities and local elites were the most vociferous defenders of communal regimes. Customary tenure regimes did not guarantee access to land as a productive resource for the poorest residents of Mgoun, and so for them, individual freehold was a way to secure their rights in land and defend against challenges to local autonomy. But these positions were complicated: while local elites had been able to use customary regimes to their benefit, counterclaims by those who felt exploited in the new institutional environment were mitigated by the enduring moral economy that provided a social safety net in the context of a burgeoning agricultural sector. In the dissertation, I traced how these processes unfolded through four different frames: a local institutional analysis, household livelihood strategies as they related to land use change, the practice of agriculture as a central element in regional transformations, and collective action around land.

An institutional perspective: customary tenure regimes and rural capitalism in Mgoun

An analysis of the institutional dynamics of el Harte underscored the extent to which customary tenure institutions shaped the direction of economic change in Mgoun. I described how labor migration and the accompanying capitalist transformations in Mgoun did not thrust the community's customary institutions into a purely defensive posture. Rather, those institutions asserted a new importance in land governance by serving as a mediator of the increasingly pluralist institutional environment for accessing land, mobilizing labor, and generating capital for investment in agriculture. Customary tenure did not look the same as it did when sharecropping dominated a largely unmonetized economy, but it most certainly did not atrophy, particularly in a context in which the state explicitly abdicated any formal role in adjudicating community-level land tenure. Tracing how migration transformed economic and social life in Mgoun was essential to understanding the continued relevance of customary institutions. When migration remittances

began to flow into the valley in the 1970s and 1980s, well-placed farmers embarked on petty commodity production to supply produce to growing regional market towns. They brought new land under cultivation in part through purchase on activated land markets but also by calling on customary, non-market mechanisms such as the allocation of communal land or the development of uncultivated areas. This emerging group of petty commodity producers took advantage of market opportunities offered by their proximity to Kelaa Mgouna and their access to land to forge a new hierarchy of authority based on agricultural livelihoods.

However, the rise of markets for agricultural production did not erode the power of customary tenure institutions as many accounts of agrarian change would predict. Instead, customary tenure regimes became the primary mediators of the diverse mechanisms and institutions governing access to land. Land had developed an exchange value as markets for agricultural production matured, but customary institutions halted the process of land commoditization, preserving the institutional pluralism that marked land and labor mobilization in el Harte. By buttressing the power of customary regimes, the emerging market for agricultural production also had the effect of bolstering networks of social reciprocity and communal identities. Whereas resistance against customary regimes in the collectively owned rangeland reflected people's sense that their community needed to provide for them differently given the new realities of their livelihoods, at the level of oasis villages, customary regimes became central mediators of change and increasingly relevant to people's lives and livelihoods.

Household livelihood strategies and land use change

These institutional transformations were implicated in a regional reconfiguration of livelihoods visible in the new ways people used land in Mgoun. In particular, examining extensions into the steppe around the oasis valley shed light on how new land uses figured into households' differential livelihood possibilities. A cultural framework for analyzing land use change was essential to understanding how livelihoods in Mgoun were changing. Concepts such as "rangeland conversion" or "extensions" imply a straightforward conversion from one stable

land use to another, erasing the historically malleable constructions of appropriate land uses and the institutional environment governing tenure. The oasis along the Mgoun River always had fungible borders, and people assessed changes in land uses in terms of the tenure regimes and economic situation prevailing at any given time. This broader cultural perspective does not represent a challenge to ecological assessments of the way disequibrial environments work, but it does shed light on how risk management and mobility shifted as a result of the regional reconfiguration in livelihoods over the latter half of the twentieth century. Using case study narratives to add nuance to a typology of new land uses, I described how settlement in the steppe, agricultural extensions, and other land uses reflected new approaches to risk management and flexibility in a changed economic and social environment. This should serve as a corrective to simplified accounts of change in arid lands that couch all extensions for agriculture or settlement as an end to the mobility represented by transhumant pastoralism. There are many concerns-- ecological, economic, and social--raised by the transformations I described, but approaching them through Mgounis' own perspectives on mobility and risk promotes a more sensitive understanding of the causes and consequences of household livelihood strategies.

While my research highlighted new land uses and allied livelihood strategies as emergent risk management practices, the opportunities afforded by such practices had highly differentiated implications depending on the social position of a given household. Using the tools offered by the economics literature on poverty traps, I presented a qualitative assessment of the determinants of household trajectories along pathways to chronic poverty or upward mobility. Access to land was important but alone was not sufficient to enable households to specialize in agricultural livelihoods: that ability depended on access to labor and capital, embeddedness in networks of social reciprocity, and participation in migration. However, the type of migration was crucial: families that had access to international remittances in the 1970s and 1980s were able to invest in land improvements and other productive activities that cemented their social position into the 1990s and 2000s. Explaining out how these factors shaped household livelihood opportunities

clarified how certain kinds of extensions could support upward mobility (i.e. agricultural extensions for international migrant households) while others perpetuated chronic poverty (i.e. settlement in the steppe far from social networks).

The practice of agriculture and repeasantization

My analyses of land use change indicated that extensions into the steppe could not simply be understood in terms of the expansion of agriculture: households' increasing reliance on wage labor and the growth of regional towns such as Kelaa Mgouna spurred other kinds of extensions for housing or commercial development. However, an emerging commercial agricultural sector was a key driver of economic change in the region. I devoted a chapter to agriculture to underscore this importance, arguing that increased investments in petty commodity production represented the "repeasantization" of livelihoods in the Mgoun valley: the active construction of peasant livelihoods and identities in the context of globalized markets for food and agricultural production.

Mgoun offered a particularly interesting case because farmers were not attempting to return to an agrarian lifestyle that had been eroded by global capitalism--their past was as oppressed sharecroppers--but to explore a creative combination of petty commodity production and time-honored techniques for intensive oasis agriculture. This was not an easy path and many were excluded from the possibility of specializing in agriculture because of labor, land, and capital constraints. By attending to how farmers practiced agriculture, though, I tried to move beyond prevailing assumptions among local policymakers about what constituted "modern" and "productive" agriculture. It was precisely the "non-modern" practices that drew on a history of intensive farming adapted to the oasis context that allowed repeasantization processes to take hold in Mgoun. Farmers developed a hybrid agriculture that integrated traditional oasis farming systems into a productionist approach geared to local commercial markets and in the process, articulated a material expression of autonomy.

Collective action and competing enclosures in Mgoun

The search for autonomy also framed my analysis of how land conflict factored into regional reconfigurations of livelihoods and land use. Throughout the dissertation, I used a largely informal conception of politics that treated resource access and the institutional environment governing land tenure as inherently politicized and differentiated. This is implicit in a political ecology approach, but even in this tradition of scholarship, a tendency to focus on often dramatic, galvanizing conflicts such as land occupations or expropriations can obscure the extent to which day-to-day life is informed by contestations over the meanings and uses of land. I presented an array of cases to illustrate this continuum of contestation, from individual assertions of resistance or power using land as the idiom to overt collective action that in Mgoun, represented the first popular mobilizations linking land and subsistence rights. Such conflicts were an alternate expression of the same struggles over community, autonomy, and subsistence that I detailed for individual households as they tried to navigate pluralist institutional environments and shifting social hierarchies to secure their livelihoods.

My research yielded the uncomfortable conclusion that the most economically marginalized groups were actively pursuing enclosure. It is uncomfortable because an important critical strain of political ecology emphasizes how neoliberalism in its various incarnations challenges the very notion of the commons and collective models of resource management. In asserting people's positive claims for enclosure, I raised the possibility that people were forced into a defensive posture, using the only tools left to them by dominant political regimes to carve out their land rights. However, close ethnographic analysis challenged an easy categorization of these popular mobilizations as inherently or exclusively defensive for two reasons. First, the circumstances of each conflict mattered tremendously for how to interpret them theoretically: one conflict I witnessed was essentially opportunist, seizing an opening to make land claims in the collectively-owned range, while another was openly defensive in its effort to preclude further state appropriation of village lands. In this context, it became quite difficult to interpret popular

movements for enclosure as a straightforward response to neoliberal capitalism. Second, despite this specificity all of the conflicts shared an important similarity: they became a platform for contesting the meaning of community and the nature of one's right to subsistence. These contestations were not purely responsive or defensive in nature but were open ended, forging new conceptions of what it meant to be part of a collectivity. They took into account the transformative power of migration and other social changes to challenge traditional hierarchies in Mgoun, asserting that new communities could be constructed that bind people together through an ethical acknowledgement of their right to subsistence. The lesson for scholarship is to be wary of normatively coding certain kinds of political mobilization as inherently liberatory or reactionary. Tracing how Mgounis expressed their political and ethical aspirations in particular conflicts underscores how empirical specificity--attending to the circumstances of each case--can lead to a theoretical openness to new kinds of political strategies and creative imaginings of community.

Policy perspectives on livelihoods and land use change

While I have emphasized the importance of specificity for understanding the ways these processes unfolded in Mgoun, my theoretical conclusions have broader implications for economic and agricultural policy. I have noted that the Moroccan government is sensitive to the importance of migration to the national economy, but both policymakers and scholars alike still need to elaborate a more integrated perspective on the interactions between migration, investment and livelihood strategies, and agricultural practice in rural sending areas (Iskander 2010). The relationship between migration, land use change, and land tenure has received even less sustained attention. My research in southern Morocco indicates some possible directions for further research and policy.

First, a more integrated approach to migration, livelihoods, and agriculture would shift the focus of state policy in rural sending areas such as Mgoun from poverty alleviation through a focus on agricultural development to support for diverse livelihood systems. As this dissertation

has shown, agriculture plays a crucial role in those livelihood systems in the rural south, but it is intimately linked to other social and economic processes, especially migration. Currently, national government policies address migration by trying to capture financial inflows through the formal banking system and more recently, by supporting expatriate/local partnerships for rural development. Agricultural policy, on the other hand, treats farmers as actors locked in place and in tradition. In Mgoun, this "siloeed" approach to policy blinded officials from an emergent agricultural economy that served as a prospective source of growth and also hampered their ability to address the potentially negative environmental and social implications of the land use change I documented. Acknowledging the investment priorities and creative agricultural strategies of smallholders in Mgoun requires a broader perspective on how even the most agriculture-focused households construct diverse livelihood portfolios. In many cases, the greatest assistance the state could give to agriculture would be to support local wage earning opportunities. Improving access to wage labor, providing investment support for local businesses, and basic infrastructure development would enhance access to capital and keep economic activity centered on the regional "catchment" represented by the Mgoun valley rather than hinging local fortunes on the vagaries of European and urban Moroccan labor markets.

This is particularly important given the role of credit in the local agrarian economy. I noted in Chapter Six how farmers actively avoided formal credit markets, relying on informal credit relations and other ways of mobilizing capital. Rather than try to promote formal credit markets in rural centers like Kelaa Mgouna, government policymakers should recognize and support these alternative practices. That would mean focusing fewer resources on drawing people into the formal banking system and instead removing barriers to the local generation of wage labor opportunities. By taking a holistic view of regional economic dynamics, such as that described by Hein de Haas in his work on migration in southern Morocco (2006 and 2007), the state would not have to settle on one "engine" of economic growth in the rural periphery but would instead adopt a series of smaller measures similar to regional development plans used in

the European Union that recognize the complex flows of resources and labor within the region and between the region and other sites (such as European and urban Moroccan labor markets).

Second, a pragmatic approach to the ways government policy intersects with people's livelihood strategies might open up spaces of productive collaboration at the local level. In Chapters Three and Six, I described how government agricultural development plans such as the Plan Maroc Vert assimilated a modernist, productionist view of agriculture into state territorialization strategies; the result was that policies reinscribed the region's marginalization and further cemented relations of distrust with Mgounis. In this context, policies to clarify land law and tenure systems run an especially high risk of further excluding the most marginalized community members who would theoretically benefit from having their rights in land formalized by the state. However, greater state involvement in charting and managing land-use change--through, for example, doing basic planning for services in extensions such as el Bour n'Ait Yahya--might provide the support necessary to ensure that people's investment strategies bear out over the long term and to ensure that environmental concerns are addressed early on. To the extent that such involvement could provide an institutional and infrastructural framework for the rapid land-use changes and simultaneously serve state territorialization strategies without opening the political Pandora's box of reforming land law, an emphasis on local government planning may be a policy direction worth exploring. It would allay the political concerns of local officials, provide tangible support to residents, and hopefully manage land-use change so that rangeland conversion remains the limited and spatially differentiated phenomenon that I documented in 2010.

Trying to draw policy lessons from the often contradictory processes I observed in Mgoun is a fundamentally fraught project: there are inevitable tensions and unforeseen impacts when the government attempts to increase its involvement in transformations that historically bore a complex relationship to state power at the local, regional, and national levels. What the case of Mgoun underscores is that we cannot assume the direction of agrarian change or land-use

practices based on aggregated measures or simplified understandings of the "social drivers" of land use. The specific experiences of households and communities were bound up with histories of oppression, opportunities opened up by migration or closed off by immigrant status, and the personal affinities for a particular farming style, among many other factors. My ethnographic account examines these experiences in the context of individual cases, but my broader aim is to inform analysis of phenomena such as "rangeland conversion" that are often considered at an aggregate level, erasing the countervailing processes that emerge in qualitative research. Considering the tensions inherent in the socio-economic dimensions of land use and livelihood transformations underscores the fundamental lesson of the political ecology tradition: how environmental change is embedded in the essentially political question of who wins and who loses when people use the land in new ways.

APPENDIX A: NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

For place names, I draw on Moroccan government documents or local usage if residents do not acknowledge the official spelling. For people's names, I adopt local spellings or those commonly found on identity cards, which usually follow conventions for transliterating Arabic into French (for example, *ou* for *oo* or *u*; *dj* for *j*, as in "jury"). For all other terms, I use the French spelling used in government documents and academic writing. If there is no conventional written spelling, I transliterate the term by approximating local pronunciation, using a simplified IJMES format (in particular, denoting the *ayn* with 'a and the *qaf* with q; I elide the *hamza* into a short a). This holds true for Tashelhit, the local Berber dialect, or Darija, Moroccan colloquial Arabic. Modern Standard or Classical Arabic terms are transliterated as they appear in French language Moroccan texts.

All translations from written texts are mine.

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

'Abra: a local unit of measure equaling ten kilograms.

'Acher: An 'acher is the local unit of land measure roughly equivalent to 1/40 of a hectare. I retain usage of the term throughout the dissertation because the landholdings tend to be so small that expressing them in terms of hectares results in awkward fractions. 'Acher was also the only term people used to describe plot size.

Amazigh (pl. Imazighen): The Tashelhit word for Berber. In pre-Saharan Morocco, the term has historically also implied a free, white Berber. Imazighen were historically dominant in the southern oases.

Bour: a term used throughout Morocco to denote rain-fed agricultural zones. In the south, rain-fed agriculture is not possible without irrigation, but the steppe surrounding the irrigated valleys and oases is still called bour. In this dissertation, el Bour is a proper place name for two different areas: el Bour, the outlying steppe and cultivated region around the village of el Harte, and el Bour n'Ait Yahya, a newly settled community that served as one of the field sites.

Haj: In formal terms, a man who has completed the pilgrimage to Mecca but commonly used as an honorific for elderly men who have not necessarily been on the pilgrimage. Hajja is the parallel term for women.

Haq: A multivalent Arabic word signifying a right, the truth, or a share (i.e., the right to enjoy a specified good or entitlement). In this research, *haq* primarily refers to a household's rights in land as members of an ethnic collectivity at the village or regional level.

Horm: The protected space around a rural community, the horm usually comprises uncultivated steppe or buffer lands surrounding agricultural land and settlement. Extensive pastoralists are prohibited from pasturing their herds in a village's horm.

Jma'a: The traditional governing council of local communities and larger tribal confederations. While still in existence in many places, these councils do not have formal administrative authority.

MAD: Moroccan Dirhams, the national currency. Throughout the dissertation, I use a market exchange rate of \$8 = 1 MAD. The rate has been fairly stable in the 2000s.

Mgoun: The geographic name of the valley in which the fieldwork sites were located. Mgoun is also the name of the tribe or ethnic collectivity that has historically controlled the high altitude plateaus overlooking the valley and the lands on either side of the Mgoun River descending to the market town of Kelaa Mgouna.

Quintal (French and English): The unit of measure (equivalent to 100 kg) used by the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture for denoting agricultural production for many crops, especially grain, fruits, and nuts.

Tamazirt: Tashelhit term for home, homeland, or natal community.

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VITA

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Birthplace: Bogotá, Colombia

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Academic training

M.A., University of Michigan - Ann Arbor (1998)

Field: Cultural Anthropology and History

M.P.A, Princeton University, Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs (1994)

Field: Public Policy, with a focus on economic development in the Middle East

B.A., Princeton University (1992)

Field: Public Policy (Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs) with a certificate in Near Eastern Studies

American University in Cairo, Center for Arabic Studies Abroad (1995-1996)

Field: Year-long intensive study of Modern Standard/Classical Arabic

Academic positions

2012 Qatar Post-Doctoral Fellow, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies
Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

2011 Online course Instructor, Department of Anthropology
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

2011 Teaching Assistant, Department of Anthropology
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

1997 Graduate Student Instructor, Department of Anthropology
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Research grants, fellowships, and awards

2012 American Institute for Maghrib Studies Research Award

2011 Jeanne Jeffers Mrad Graduate Student Travel Award
The American Institute for Maghrib Studies

2009 Dissertation Fieldwork Grant and Osmundsen Initiative Award
The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research

2009 Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant
The National Science Foundation

2008 Graduate Student Research Support
University of Kentucky

2007- Multi-year Fellowship
2010 University of Kentucky

2007- Daniel R. Reedy Quality Achievement Award
2010 University of Kentucky

1996 Foreign Language Area Studies Grant – Arabic (1996)

- University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
- 1996 International Institute Research Award
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
- 1994 Mellon Graduate Fellowship
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
- 1994 Honorable Mention
The National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship
- 1991 Dewitt Clinton Poole Fellowship
Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Publications

- In press, Time, Children, and Getting Ethnography Done in Southern Morocco. *In* Encountering Morocco: Reflections on North African Fieldwork and Ethnography. David Crawford and Rachel Newcomb, eds. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- 2008 *Review of* Pastoral Morocco: Globalizing Scapes of Mobility and Insecurity. *Development and Change* 39(4):717-718.
- 2003 Beyond Patriotic (An Arab-American perspective on the Patriot Act). www.tompaine.com, November 4, 2003.
- 2000 Building the Infrastructure of Arab-American Identity in Detroit: A Short History of ACCESS and the Community it Serves. *In* Arab Detroit: From Margin to Mainstream. Andrew Shryock and Nabeel Abraham, eds. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- 1997 Building an Arab-American Community in Dearborn. *The Journal of the International Institute. The University of Michigan--Ann Arbor.* (5)1:6-7.

Papers and presentations

- 2012 Discussant, "Transitional Livelihoods," Dimensions of Political Ecology Conference on Nature/Society, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, April 14.
- 2011 Paper presentation, "Land, Livelihoods, and Renewing a Sense of Place in Pre-Saharan Morocco," Middle East Studies Association Conference, Washington, D.C., December 2.
- Paper presentation, "Customary Institutions In the Margins of Neoliberalism: Land, Labor and Capitalist Farming In Pre-Saharan Morocco," American Anthropological Association, Montréal, PQ, November 16.
- Roundtable panelist, "Human Rights and Social Justice Committee Roundtable: Anthropological Insights into the 2011 Uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East," Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA, March 31.
- Paper presentation, "Private Property and Collective Lands: Moroccan Neo-liberalism in the Pre-Saharan Periphery," Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA, March 31.
- Paper presentation, "Land Conflict, State Power, and the Perils of Agriculture in Pre-Saharan Morocco," Dimensions of Political Ecology Conference, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, February 19.
- 2010 Paper presentation, "The Problem of Land: Expanding Cultivation, Land, and Livelihood Transformations in Southern Morocco," *Arid Lands: Environments and*

Societies at Risk Conference, Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco, May 20, 2010.

Paper presentation, "Expanding Cultivation, Land, and Livelihood Transformations in Southern Morocco," Maghrebi Area Studies Symposium, Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange, Rabat, Morocco, April 24.

2003 Panelist, "A Dialogue on Cultural Diversity: Building Understanding," U.S.--Arab Economic Forum, Detroit, MI, September 29.

2002 Panelist, "Are We Safe and Are We Free?" ACLU Speaking of Rights Conference, Cleveland, OH, October 5.

1997 Paper presentation, "Rationalizing Religion: Capitalist Transformation and Habous (waqf) in Colonial Morocco," Middle East Studies Association Conference, San Francisco, CA, November 22.

Paper presentation, "The Politics of Urban Space: Culture and Class in Colonial Morocco," Middle East History and Theory Conference, The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL, April 18.

Paper presentation, "Classifying Culture: The Urban Geography of Colonial Casablanca," Seen Worlds and Worlds of Being: Questions of Appearance and Experience, conference at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, March 29, 1997.

Professional experience

2005- Independent Consultant on international and domestic community development,
2007 evaluation and training
Lexington, KY

2002- National Outreach Director, Arab Community Center for Economic and Social
2005 Services (ACCESS)
Dearborn, MI

2000- Country Director, Near East Foundation
2001 Ouarzazate, Morocco

1999- Senior Associate, Westhill Partners
2000 New York, NY

1996- Development and Strategic Planning Consultant Arab Community Center for
1998 Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
Dearborn, MI

1992- Program/Training Officer, Catholic Relief Services
1993 Rabat, Morocco

1992 Field Researcher, United States Agency for International Development
Dakar, Sénégal

1991 Research Consultant, CARE
Cairo, Egypt

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