

result of pressures exerted by local deputies or Ministers.’ (Triantafyllopoulos, 2017, 25)

So, the state funded the land speculation in two instalments, first by its economic development policies and, second, by its bale out policies after it has shown that expectations based on which high land prices were paid were too high. This may relate to the issues of institutional structures in relation to planning, property markets and Island development policies. It seems that the allocation of market risks and profits is not balanced between public and private agents.

#### 5.1.4.3 Aosta

Remarkable is that Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste (IT) is in this category. Up to 2013, Aosta ranked nationally to the ‘higher performers on all underlying indicators’ (Charron *et al.*, 2019a, 1938) in the Quality of government scores. In 2017 the score went down to a low QoG, which the highest divergence between 2017 and 2013 of all regions measured by QoG institute (Charron *et al.*, 2019a; Charron *et al.*, 2019b). The QoG is survey based, using three pillars of QoG. The lowest score of Aosta is in the quality pillar, which is built on the following three questions: ‘How would you rate the quality of public education in your area?’ ‘How would you rate the quality of the public health care system in your area?’ ‘How would you rate the quality of the police force in your area?’ (Charron *et al.*, 2019b, 13). The responses to these questions are a lot worse than the Italian average, which is worse than the EU average and this is a recent development for Aosta, as it did not come up in the 2013 survey. This may relate to the situation that this autonomous region was relatively well off until recently. ‘However, this situation has changed dramatically in recent years with the region, as an integrated part of the national economy, having to align more closely with an Anglo-European imperative for austerity.’ (Sofritti *et al.*, 2019, 2) This has also impact for new generations.

‘As such, young people in the region are facing the effects of a rise in local unemployment rates and, in turn, the risks of finding themselves at an impasse with increasingly limited access both to work and to education and training opportunities.’ (Sofritti *et al.*, 2019, 2)

In interviews with young people there ‘is a dialectic between “before” and “after” in several participant’s narratives, Aosta Valley is depicted as being no longer a “happy island” like it had been previously.’ (Sofritti *et al.*, 2019, 11). So, Aosta shows the fragility of remote mountain regions. Even regions that perform rather well, may transfer to an area which does not provide chances for new generations within a few years.

Land prices in Italy are in general high, much higher than in France or Spain, and the prices are in the North higher than in the South (Mela *et al.*, 2016). Mela *et al.* (2016) indicate that in Aosta the farmland values ‘are very high due to local factors’ (Mela *et al.*, 2016, 9), making it difficult to model the determinants of agricultural land values. In Aosta (based on FADN data) farmers rent about 90% of their utilised agricultural area. The UUA is large and rents are relative (for an Italian region) relatively low. This is probably due to rents for mountain pastures.

Over 99% of the farms and the land are held by natural persons. So, it is an area of family farming. Here traditional, patriarchal, gender values persist. Only 1/8 of the farmers below 40 are female and these held less than 10% of the farmland held by farm managers below 40. Inequality in farm sizes is also large, 50% of the farms are below 5 hectares, the average farm is over 40 hectares, the GINI is 0.78, a lot higher than the average EU region. Here some specific differences in crops may explain part of this, i.e., the cultivation of wine in the valleys on smaller farms of which '87% are below 0.5 ha' (Bagnod *et al.*, 2020, 104) versus large pastures at higher altitudes. After all, in the region there is (according to EEA data) only 628 hectares for arable land and permanent crops (which has been grown with 3% between 2000 and 2018) and 26068 hectares of grassland and farmland mosaics (which stayed about the same in size). This makes that inequality may be more limited than the data suggests. A farmer needs to hold many more hectares of pasture land high in the mountains to be in the same position as a farmer holding a vineyard in the valley.

However, there is only few generational renewal in the wine areas: Bagnod *et al.* (2020) report an average age of 59.7 years for wine farm holders in the area. The wineries have steep slopes, plots are fragmented, small and difficult to access resulting in few mechanisation, especially in relation to the pergola type of wine growing on terraces (Bagnod *et al.*, 2020).

'The high land fragmentation we can observe in Aosta Valley is certainly one of the causes responsible for the decrease in agricultural activities and the ageing among agricultural farmers, especially wine-growers. A similar situation can be easily found in many other Alpine regions (...)' (Bagnod *et al.*, 2020, 109)

Winegrowing in the form find in Aosta adds to the heritage of the area and its current situation is very fragile as rural regeneration is not taking forward.

To the positive site it can be indicated that there are few land covers flows in the area. So, the system has not yet collapsed in its spatial manifestation. However, the change of governance context happened very fast and it is so not clear what this will bring.

In **Conclusion** remote mountain areas provide less fertile ground for the development of very large farms. Traditional practices may continue longer, which in some cases may also result in that local labour is still wanted, because more labour-intensive and diverse farming practices are continued and developed further using entrepreneurial skills. The higher share of forests and nature areas in land, and the mosaic pattern of land use, makes that more frequent shifts are taken place between these two green functions. Tourism is another function that play an important role in many of these areas, which may, on the one hand, make it possible for farmers to diversify their incomes, but on the other hand, can result in a disposition of farmers for tourist accommodation and attractions. This may result in extra pressures on the land market, making it more expensive to have access to land. Tourism can also be very volatile in its income. Consumer preferences may change and may impact opportunities. As mountain areas are often relatively isolated, they may develop different from their surroundings and may face issues of lack of resilience; this may relate to issue of climate change, but also socially in relation to public service provision and opportunities for new generations. This has its impact on the land market.