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Fire and People in Three Rural Communities in Kabylia (Algeria): Results of a Survey

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate about the causes of wildfires in three municipalities of the Tizi Ouzou and Bouira provinces, in Kabylia. Unknown forest fire causes account for 80% of total in Algeria, with a peak of about 99% in Kabylia, the most forested region in the country but also the most severely affected by wildfires. The three study areas exhibit a rather high forestry ratio (40% on average) but also a very high population density, up to 300 people per km², living in a multitude of small hamlets, near or inside the domanical forests and exerting an enormous pressure on them. Survey was carried out on people (N = 300) randomly selected in nine hamlets (*thaddarth*) through ad hoc questionnaires (134 possible replies) filled with face-to-face interviews. Factorial Correspondence Analysis was used to process data (300 × 134 replies in total). Fires result mainly voluntary (52.95%): pastoral fires to renew pastures (11.30%), political fires as security counter-terrorism measure (11.24%), uncontrolled garbage burning (6.83%). Negligent fires account for 41.79%: carelessly tossed cigarette butts (9.13%), agricultural works (burning of cut bush, stubble burning, 7.03%), restart of fire (6.83%) and forest activities in the forest (6.31%). Results depict a common core of fires due to the pressure on the domanical forests, on which traditional use of fire (pastoralism) and national security needs (counter-terrorism) dominate.

KEYWORDS

Fire Motivations; Folk Crime; FCA; Kabylia; Pastoralism; Political Fire

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