



## **CANNABIS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN GHOMARA'S MOUNTAINS (WESTERN COASTAL PART OF RIF - NORTH OF MOROCCO): THE GENDER MAKES THE DIFFERENCE?**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Ghomarian woman plays fundamental role in her society: the ruling agricultural activity as well as the sociocultural life depends strictly on her, but this woman still suffers some discrimination. To clear up this situation, a study concerning about 249 peoples was realized through the adoption of a quantitative and qualitative sociological approach. According to the obtained results, the woman is relatively deprived of certain fundamental rights, especially those concerning the management of cannabis farms and the work out the family environment. Nevertheless, she plays a fundamental socio-cultural role from her first age, protects customs linked to the traditions and the local culture and constitutes an axis around of which revolve all the activities and the aspects of the development in the studied region. Therefore, it is necessary to give a major importance for the role of the woman before any aiming action to improve the conditions of the sustainable development in the zone.

**Keywords:** Gender, cannabis cultivation, sustainable development, qualitative analysis, Ghomara, Rif, Morocco

## EL CANNABIS Y EL DESARROLLO SOSTENIBLE EN LAS MONTAÑAS DE GHOMARA (COSTA OCCIDENTAL DEL RIF - NORTE DE MARRUECOS): EL ENFOQUE DE GÉNERO

### RESUMEN

La mujer Ghomariana juega un papel fundamental en su sociedad: la actividad agrícola, así como la vida socio-cultural depende estrictamente de ella, pero esta mujer todavía sufre algún tipo de discriminación. Para aclarar esta situación, un estudio sobre alrededor de 249 personas se realizó a través de la adopción de un enfoque sociológico cuantitativo y cualitativo. Según los resultados obtenidos, la mujer es relativamente privada de ciertos derechos fundamentales, especialmente los relacionados con la gestión de las explotaciones (especialmente aquellos cultivados de cannabis) y el trabajo fuera de su entorno familiar. Sin embargo, ella juega un papel socio-cultural fundamental desde su primera edad, protege costumbres y tradiciones relacionadas la cultura local y constituye un eje alrededor del cual giran todas las actividades y los aspectos del desarrollo en la región estudiada. Por lo tanto, es necesario dar una gran importancia para el papel de la mujer en desenar cualquier acción destinada a mejorar las condiciones del desarrollo sostenible en la zona.

**Palabras clave:** Género, desarrollo sostenible, cultivo de cannabis, análisis cualitativo, Ghomara, Rif, Marruecos.

## INTRODUCTION

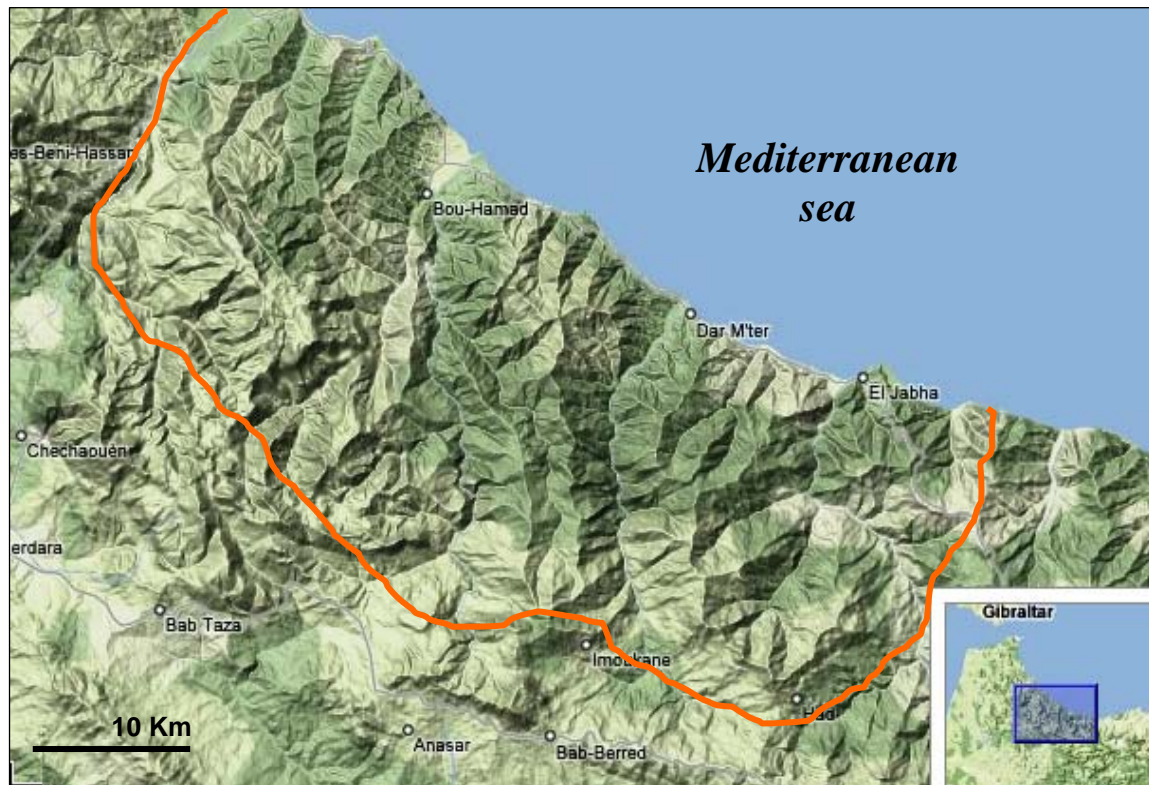
In the countryside, women's sphere activities are linked and overlapped, in a way that it becomes difficult to make a difference between indoor and outdoor responsibilities. Indeed, in rural areas, women being at once housewives, with all what this "function" implies, contribute efficiently in the agricultural works. Furthermore, they play a vital role and /or take full responsibility in some part. It is the case, for instance, of the breeding, keeping the truck farmer, picking fruits, and even crop harvesting; food transformation, storage and safety of their families, generators of extra-income, thanks to their handcraft activity, in particular the weaving of clothes, covers or carpets. In this regards, the handcraft activities contribute to the family livelihood, either directly by the price of their product sold in markets, or indirectly by the economy of the cost price of these products on the market (BLPNTTA. 1997). On an international scale, the United Nations, through its reports since the 80s (United Nations, 1985) And since, its future perspectives (United Nations, 2008) They exhorted the states member, in association with the organizations of United Nations and civil society, to take measures to improve the situation of these women, including the autochthonous women, in their national, regional and world strategies of development. These measures foresee the creation of favorable environment to the improvement of the women living situation in their rural area, the continuity of the political and socio-economical autonomy, the support for their full participation in the decision processes, the guarantee of the rights of old women living in rural areas, the mobilization of resources to facilitate the access of the women to the credits, the integration of the rural women in all the national and international development strategies of the poverty eradication. So, without the presence and input of women, agriculture would not exist (Agriculture : The spotlight on women, 2002). Nobody can neglect the role of the woman in the local policies of development; she is an active element in changing society in general, and particularly in Morocco. According to the thematic report of the Human development in Morocco (2006), one of the reasons behind the development in these last years in this country corresponds to the role of the woman and more exactly to the demographic decrease at the global level (although the rural zones still present birth rates raised with regard to the urban zones). This is due to several reasons; a more and more late marriage rate (31,2 years old for men and 26,3 years old for women), The girls frequent more and more school and consequently the schooling rate increased. The insertion of these in the labor market, the wide use of the average contraceptives, the improvement of the sanitary conditions, the decrease of the infant mortality, the urbanization and the other factors less important as the difficulty to have a housing for the young people.

Several works have been appeared, studding the relation of Rifian people with cannabis cultivation and the sustainable development in this region (Labrousse et al 2001 and 2002; Alhama, et al 2005)

This paper highlights the contribution and the input of the rural women of Ghomara tribes during all the agricultural activities, including the cannabis cultivation, by answering the following questions; how much integrated a rural woman becomes into the everyday life of Ghomara? What are the perspectives towards her well-being? How does the autochthonous population of the region perceive the rights and the duties of the Ghomarian woman?

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The studied zone is situated in the coastal hillside of the province of chefchaouen in the western North of Morocco (Fig. 1). From the ethnographical point of view, the Ghomara country is formed by ten tribes: Beni Ziat, Beni Sejel, Beni Bouzra, Beni Selmane, Beni Mansour, Beni Guerir, Beni Smih, Me tioua, Beni R'zine and Beni khaled. According to administrative subdivision, this zone includes two circles (Bab Bered and Bouhmed) and four caïdats (Jabha, Assifane, Bou Ahmed and Talambote)



**Figure. 1.** Demarcation of the study region

### Quantitative aspect

The concerned population constitutes what we call "*the country of Ghomara*", it is estimated about 145.000 inhabitants (49.5 % are women). A total of 249 (for all sexes) selected in the four *Caïdats*, are interviewed. This sample size was representative enough to give estimations of measured factors. Besides, this survey focuses rather on the explanation of the studied phenomena without claiming to give very precise measures onto their scale.

### Qualitative aspect

The study is inspired by sociological and anthropological methods. The adoption of qualitative approach constitutes a major importance, because not only the qualitative data allows refining the statistical information, but they give the possibility of explaining the mechanisms which govern the studied phenomena. Qualitative methods can be used

to design and implement quantitative methods (Kanbur, 2003). The qualitative interviews undertaken in this study were taken to represent personal experience narratives based on perspectives from interpretive sociology (Coffey et al, 1996; Silverman, 1999 ), in particular the perspectives of 'active interviewing' (Holstein et al, 1997).

The technique of the survey used corresponds to the opened and detailed interview, realized in our case with 5 farmers, 1 "administrative", 5 girls, and 6 fathers. A semi-structured guide of the questions was established, to lead to successful conclusions in the progress of the survey.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### Quantitative Analysis

From a perspective of the quantitative analysis, we try to collect the local population opinions about the theme of "gender equality", rights and duties of the woman. In the everyday life of the Ghomara agriculture and the other social and political aspects, The most significant results are the following:

### **1. THE AGRICULTURE AND CANNABIS**

#### **To represent the head of a farm**

Two third consulted people (61 % against 39 %) do not find logical that a woman is qualified to lead the farm and takes advantage or manages the economic properties.

#### **To work in the Cannabis exploitations**

For more than half of the interviewed people (57 % against 43 %), the woman task is a realization of the necessary works to make this type of culture profitable. Nevertheless, we notice the absence of the equality notion when it comes to harvesting results, and acknowledgement of the sharing right of goods and income.

#### **To look after the Cannabis crops, after field works**

As regards to the intervention of the women in the cannabis cultivation, it emerges that more than two thirds (73 %) asserted that the woman contributes actively in taking care of **Cannabis crops**, while the rest doesn't see it in the same way.

#### **In what phase of the cannabis cultivation does she intervene?**

Except the preparation of grounds, the plowing and the commercialization of the farmer product, which is can be a male specialty, almost 85 % of the interviewed people assert that the women participate generally and sometimes totally in the seed of grains, in the weeding of plants, in the harvest, in the transport and in the drying and sometimes even in the beating for the resin outcome.

#### **How is her contribution at the work of fields estimated?**

The opinions related with the contribution of the woman in the various works do not seem too much contrasted; 51, 5 % of the interviewed people think that the women work hard in their fields. Those who think of the opposite are 48,5 %.

#### **Does woman participates in the final phase of the Kif and/or the hashish production?**

In general, the majority of the investigated people (82 %) declared the participation of the Ghomarian women in the final phase of the production of the Kif and/or hashish.

### **Does woman participates in the commercialization?**

Concerning the marketing of the final products of cannabis, it always remains, according to the 70 % of the investigated people, a male practice, although 30 % assert a participation of the woman in this practice.

### **Does she manage the income of the cannabis production?**

More than a third of the interviewed people (35 %) assert that the women, at Ghomara region, intervene in the management of incomes stemming from the cultivation of cannabis; while 65 % neglect this role.

### **How do the men evaluate this management?**

For those who confirm the participation of the woman in the incomes management: 81 % of them think that the woman manages the financial resources efficiently.

### **To consume the Cannabis (Kif or Hashish)**

The consumption of the cannabis by the woman is not admitted as a feminine behavior in the region, because "the woman does not have to consume these products". More than 8 of every 10 interviewed people (83% against 17%) do not accept that "the woman consumes the by-products of the cannabis".

## **2. FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS**

### **To receive a health care**

The right to receive the sanitary care for the women doesn't provoke any hesitation to the population. (100 %)

### **To complete her secondary or high education**

A little more than 1 of every 4 interviewed people (28 % against 72 %) asserts that the woman doesn't have the right to quit her studies beyond the primary education. On the other hand 3 of every 4 interviewed people defend the right of the woman to end her studies.

### **To express freely her opinion in public**

A little more than 1 of every 3 consulted (38% against 62%) refuse the woman's right to express her opinion freely in public. For these interviewed people, this practice has to remain limited in the familiar environment.

### **To reach a job**

Generally for the residents of the studied zone, more half (the 53 % against 47 %), do not consider acceptable the access of the woman to the labor market.

### **To choose her husband freely**

According to the frequencies distribution obtained from the answers of the interviewed people, 57.4 % agree that the women should be free in choosing her husband. For the remaining 43 %, the woman doesn't have this right.

### **To show herself in public and gets dressed the way she wants**

The right of the woman to express herself freely in public is considered acceptable by 25 % of the interviewed people. And this practice must be limited only in the familiar environment in the 75 % of the interviewed population.

### **To express her political opinion by vote**

About 2 (67 %) of every 3 interviewed people, they assert that the woman has the right to vote and to express her political belief. While the rest (32.5 %) does not see that she has to have this right.

According to the results aroused, we can assert that:

The majority of the interviewed people, residents in the studied region, consider that the woman is relatively deprived of her fundamental rights (receive a necessary health attention; complete her academic education until a wished level; show herself in public and express her political opinion). The same studied population totally confirms that the woman is not of equal for certain rights, such as, the management of farms (more specially those cultivated by the cannabis); so that she expresses freely her public opinion and to consume of the cannabis and these extraction-products. Because, at least, 60 % of the studied population asserts that the woman does not have to reach these rights.

As regards to the right of the woman to work in a farm destined for the cannabis cultivation, to reach a job, outside the family house with the same possibilities of success as at the man and/or to choose freely her husband, approximately 50 % of the investigated population expresses the same rights as those recognized for the man, while the rest (50 %) of the population does not admit it.

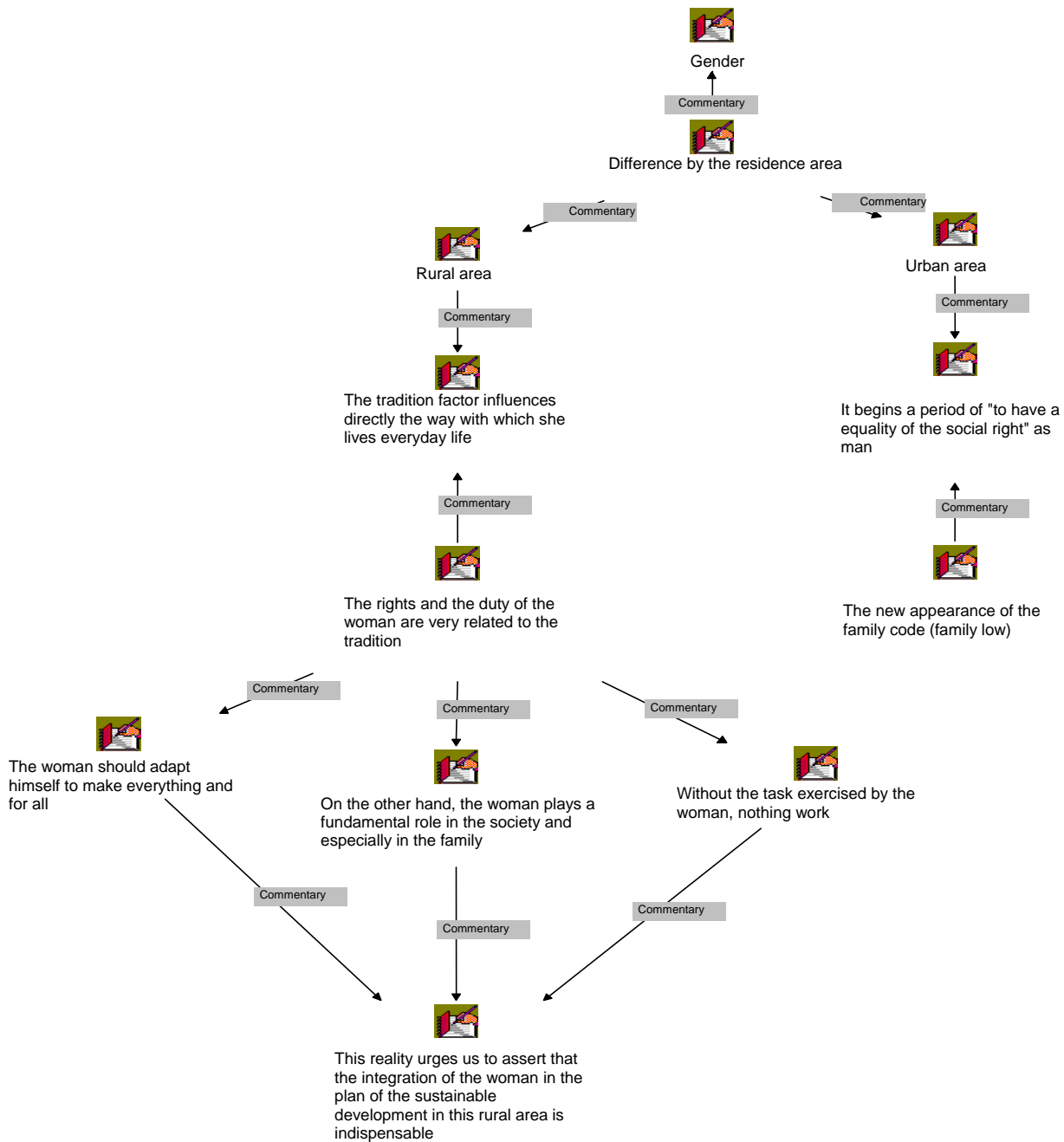
In fact, it must be noted that the degree of change of the woman status in this region (Wife, girl and sister) after the expansion of cannabis cultivation, their contribution to the production of cannabis is recognized as fundamental. Since the woman is recognized as a person among whom the wage spending (expenses) and the redistribution of the cannabis incomes are relatively under her control, we can assert that she is spirit to acquire a certain financial independence and a social recognition in her *Douar*, and her family. This new position had positive effects on the extension of her cultural space, more and more important mobility towards the souk (Rural market) or the city and improvement of her domestic role.

### Qualitative analysis

The analysis of qualitative data began with the textual transcription of sound tracks recorded during the conversations. They were seized on the qualitative data analysis software Atlas ti 5.0 (Atlas-ti.; 2006). The collected data are analyzed by subject and their meanings are recapitulated by assigning a code to every subject. The codes (or data) were compared and links were established (explanations, problems, comments) by editing the "network" tool on the software. To ensure the objectivity of the work, the codes are analyzed by three researchers belonging to the Biology department in the faculty of sciences in Tétouan.

### ***Gender perspective in the urban and rural environment***

The most important factors which mark the development of the everyday life in the studied zone are defined from the "Gender perspective" shown in the following network (Fig. 2):



**Figure 2.** Gender perspectives

Before studying the evolution mode of daily life from a gender perspective, as well as in its general aspect in Morocco and also at the rural area, it is necessary to know the differences which exist at present time between the roles and the presence of the woman in this rural and the urban area.

The urban woman lives in an environment marked by the installation of a series of laws and legislations (new family code) which constitutes the beginning of the socio-cultural change which the kingdom of Morocco is leading, by removing the rights classically attributed to the man. As an example of this reform, we can quote "The new drafting of the family code" and the rectified divorce law which obliges the man legally to justify the essential causes for which, he asks the divorce from his wife (DAHIR, 2004)



and recently by the elimination of the reservation that Morocco had mentioned towards the international convention on the elimination of all the discrimination forms towards the women.

Consequently, we can clearly see the changes that rural woman can benefit from, while she has been suffering from an environment which was typically patriarchal. But, on the other hand, it is a question of producing a true shock affecting the habits and customs which cements the social structure of the everyday life of the Moroccan family. Therefore, we can assert that the rural woman, traditionally lives in a closed environment, exercises a role imposed by the traditions which exists in the zone, so that:

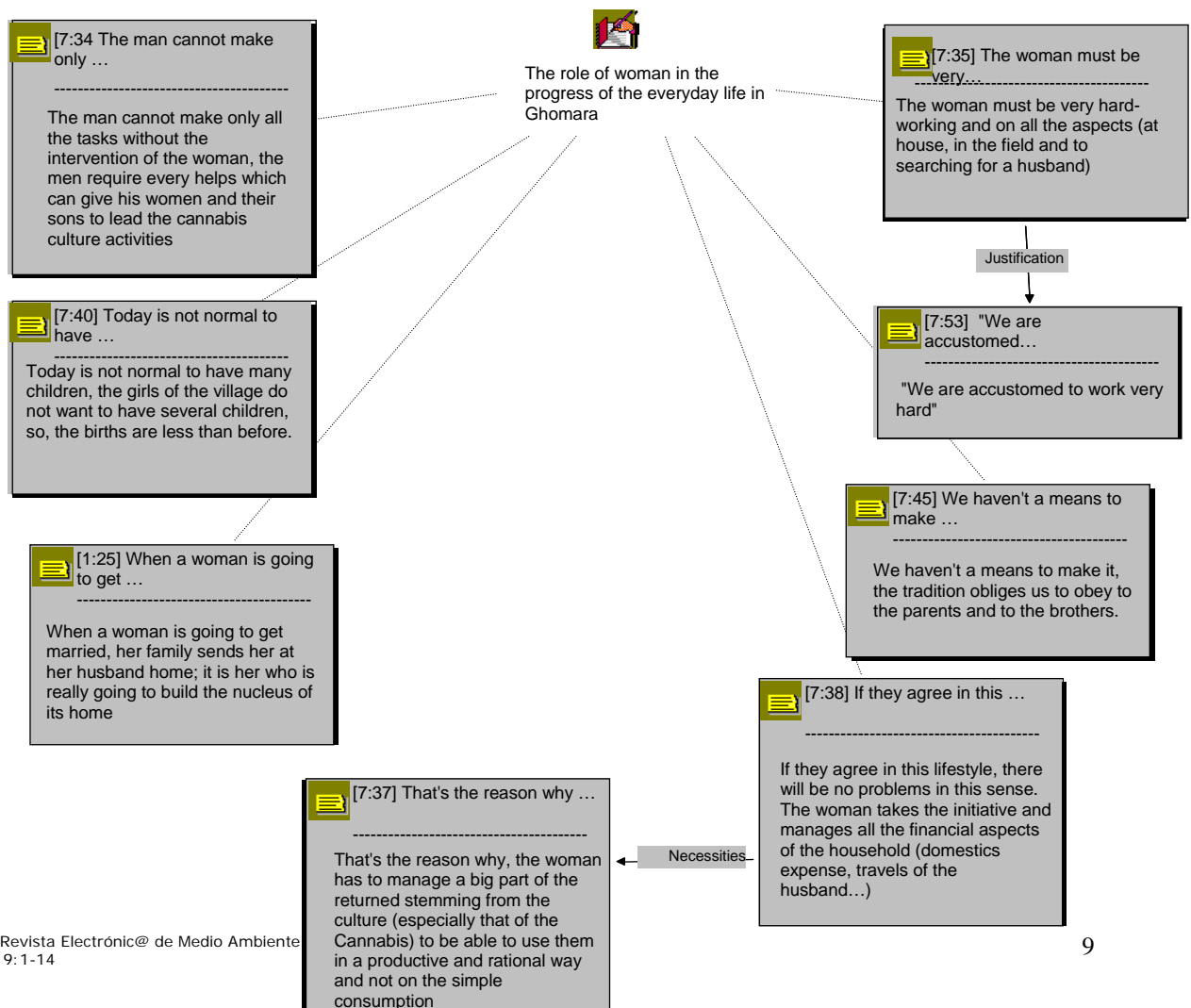
- She is considered as a resourceful person "for everyone and for everything", without her presence "nothing works ", but, on the opposite, her social importance is submersed in a socio-cultural atmosphere, fundamentally patriarchal.
- The woman plays a fundamental role in the development of the socio-cultural life, both for societal part as well as for her family core.
- The Ghomarian woman is strongly attached to the local tradition of the region.

The results obtained, concerning the role of the woman, demonstrate to us the way to know the basic criteria to elaborate any plan of human sustainable development. Therefore, the implication of the woman in this plan is basic, and can even be essential.

### ***The role of woman in the rural environment of Ghomara***

According to the opinions obtained from the detailed interview with the local population, the role of the woman in its environment ensures an essential function, as presented in the below relation network (Fig. 3):

**Figure 3.** Women in Ghomara's environment



The Ghomarien woman exercises several roles in her local society while keeping herself under the control of the traditions and customs of this society:

- She constitutes a fundamental element of the development of the agricultural tasks, because the man, alone, can make nothing. His wife participates actively almost in all the tasks associated with the agriculture and especially in the culture of cannabis.
- The woman of Ghomara gives birth several times (social Phenomenon widely held in the rural world) and she takes in charge of her children until the adulthood. But today, the married girls of the village tend to have few children. Thus, we observe a social change which begins to develop, touching the planning of the family.
- The woman intervenes in the forecast and the management of the expenses especially of the families which buy or commercialize their farm produces.
- She is known by her respect and her obedience, sometimes blind, of traditions, because she is afraid of not being in harmony with the used traditions.
- To look after her children, with daily home and the field tasks (" we are already used to work too much ") .
- To demonstrate her qualities as a good home and field worker to be able to be chosen by a future husband (" to be afraid of being badly seen as she is not yet married, " it is not good ", " because it is unacceptable in the view of values which reign a great deal of that particular social environment ") .
- To accept the idea of the marriage as "a fatality tradition" which obliges the woman to obey to the norms, by leaving away all her possibilities of choices.

Now, we can state that the role that makes the woman, in the rural area, and exactly in the studied zone, very important, is centered in the development of the everyday life (family life, social life and professional life), especially in the management of incomes stemming from the cannabis culture and their future re-uses in a productive and rational way and not in the immediate consumption.

This role, in spite of the fact that it's accompanied by the other obligations and duties, must be adjusted according to traditions and according to a purely patriarchal lifestyle. The woman is still submitting "to rules and obligations" and that she has to honor them. It is, thus, too early to talk about the gender equality.

### ***Improvement of socio-cultural conditions***

The following relations of network show the aspiration of the women interviewed towards their improvement of living conditions:

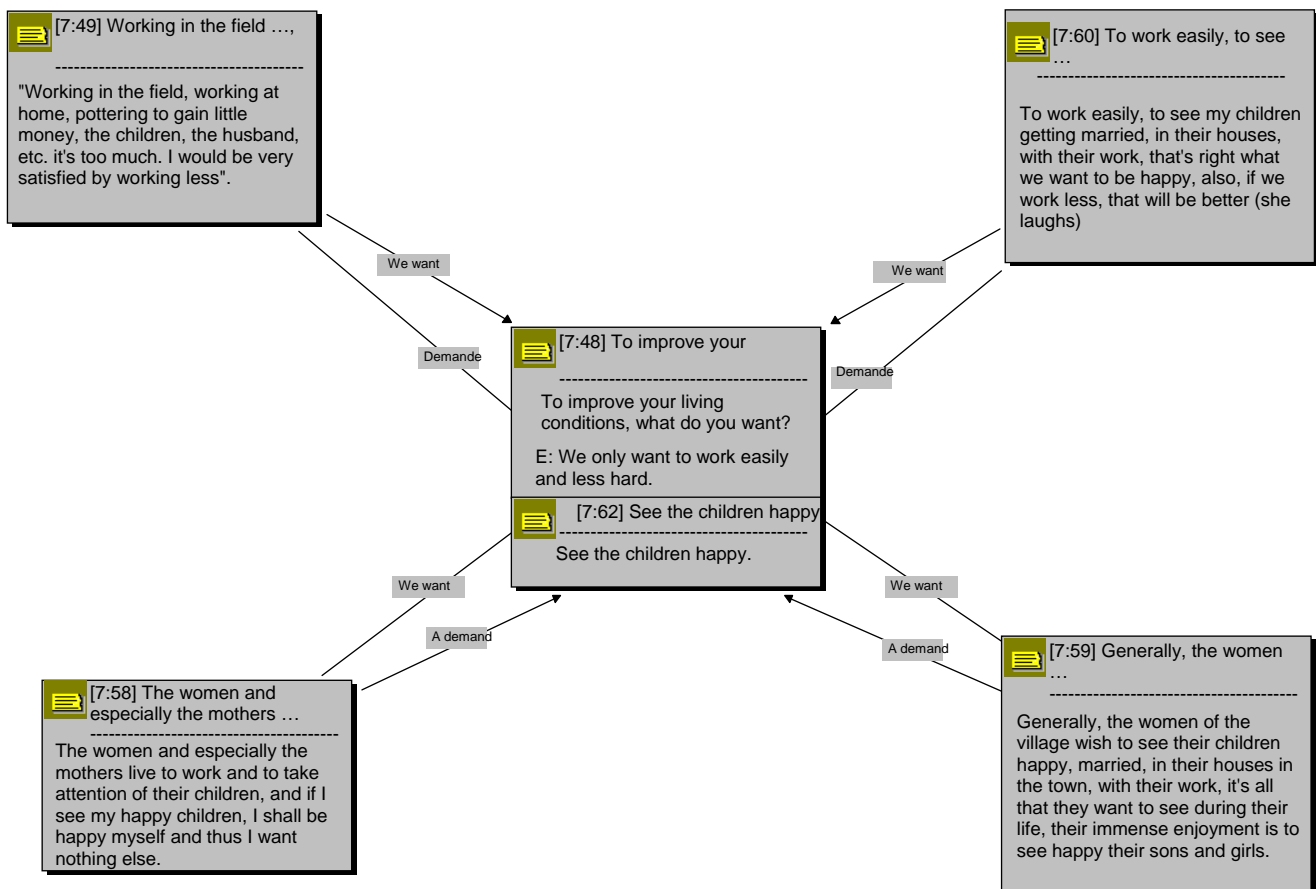
In spite of the reality detected and described in the previous point, women were consulted in what they would ask to improve their living conditions within their community. The answers don't evoke the rights or the duties of the women, but they ask for the improvement of the living conditions in their living house for instance;

In the relations network (Fig. 4), there are two main axes which summarize the women delay to improve their socio-cultural conditions.

1) On the one hand, they express the opinion according to which "by seeing their children happiness, they are too ", thus their demands are simply reduced to the desire to see their children happy.

2) On the other hand, they ask with a smile "to work a little less" while admitting the impossibility of this wish, but they consider it necessary for the improvement of the daily life condition.

3) The sacrifice sense is anchored for those mothers. They want at least to see their descendants enjoying better conditions (having a livable home, appropriate work and being healthy)



**Figure 4.** Woman and her improvement of socio-cultural conditions

### ***Presence of the woman in the rural environment***

The presence of the woman, according to the tasks which she exercises, in the development of the rural everyday life in Morocco and exactly in the Ghomara region, is very important. In the following relations network (Fig. 5), we explain this presence while making reference to the activities and functions. All these activities are realized in a purely patriarchal social environment which the Ghomarian woman accepts without any hesitation (According to the own speeches of the women interviewed in the study zone)

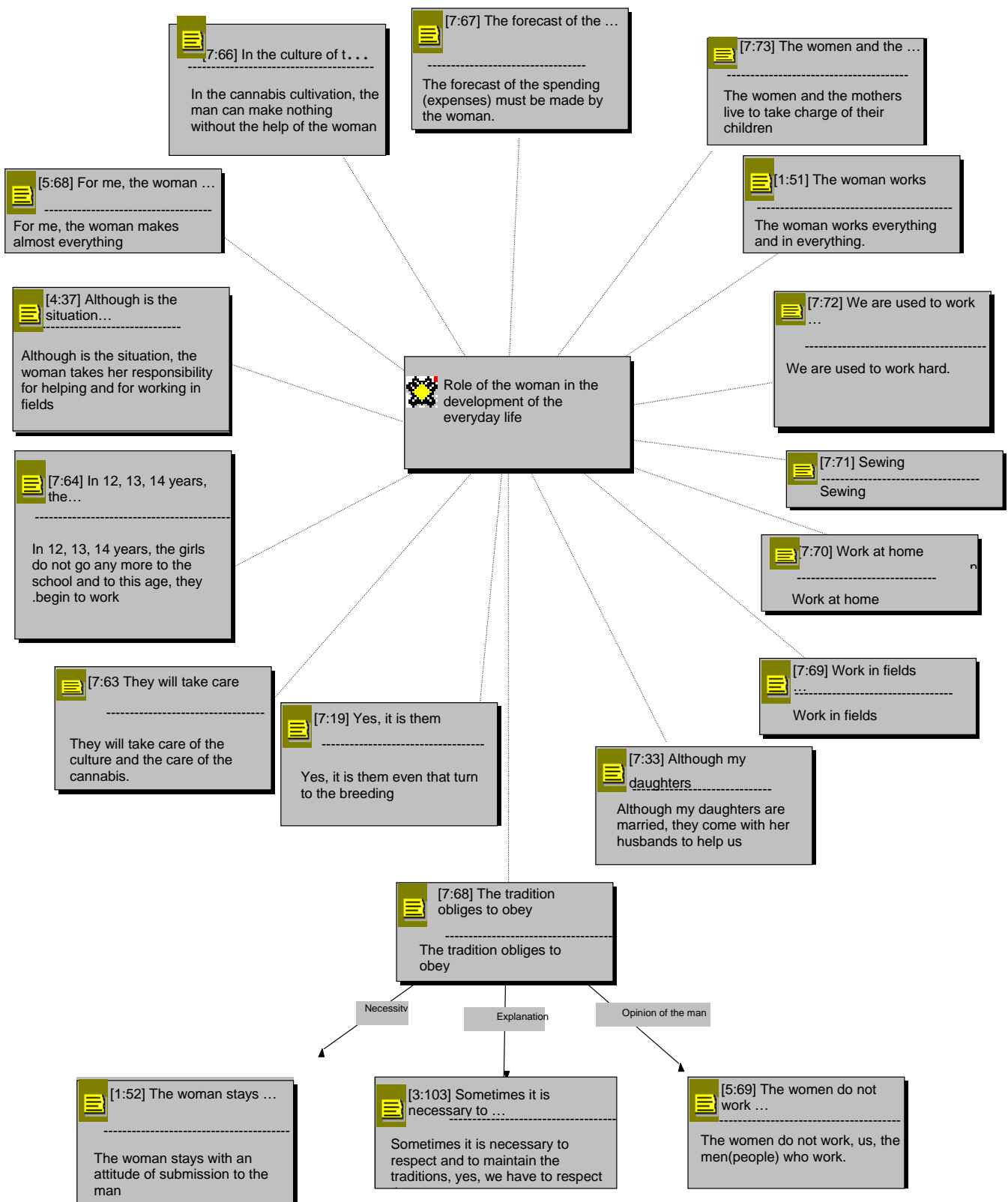


Figure 5. the woman and the rural environment

- Active and fundamental socio-cultural presence (Without the role of the woman, the man could not succeed in his work);
- Presence and assistance in the activities of the field in a precocious age ( 12, 13 and 14 years);
- The omnipresence at the family sphere (as well in the activities of the field as within their own family);
- Important role in the preservation of customs linked to the traditions and the local culture of the zone;
- Integral presence (" For me, she is the woman who makes almost everything");
- The man always denies the efforts exercised by the woman (the women don't work).

The woman is, thus, the mainspring of all the socio-cultural and socio-economic activities, developed in her region. Besides, she ensures the essential function to perpetuate the continuity of the tradition.

Beyond this omnipresence in the development of the communal life (Without her it would not be possible to maintain the society as it is established in the concerned communes) she always keeps this obedience to her husband who wants, in his turn, to keep the cultural rules already established. Furthermore, this presence which constitutes the socio-economic and socio-cultural pillars of development and the subsistence of these communes, is undervalued by the man .Because according to the assertions of the people interviewed in the zone , " the women don't work, it is us, the men who work ". We can notice while the woman, the object of study, is necessary for the development and the preserving of the traditions and who brings all the social and family values to her population.

## CONCLUSION

The present study allows us to conclude that:

- a) The presence of the woman constitutes an essential element in the socio-economic and socio-cultural development of the region.
- b) Outside of a purely patriarchal social tradition, which is spread in the commune, the woman constitutes an axis which revolves all the activities and the aspects of the development in the studied zone.
- c) The Ghomarian woman is characterized by:
  1. The respect for the tradition.
  2. Supports for the family unity
  3. Active contribution in the working tasks in the field.
  4. Management of the family patrimony.

## PERSPECTIVES

It would be necessary to give a major importance to the place that the woman, otherwise occupies at the time during the elaboration and of the application of the sustainable development plan, any sort of aiming action to improve the conditions of the development in the zone will fail.

Consequently, to attain their objectives, any development plans have to take in consideration the essential roles of Ghomarian woman.

Finally, we have to recognize the important tasks and responsibility which are exercised and assumed by Ghomarian woman in her environment. These efforts must be compensated in an equalitarian, fair and an equitable context by respecting the rights and the gender.

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