After the fire: The processes of social learning of forest owners after the great forest fires in Central Catalonia

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Over the last few decades, a small number of fires (less than 1%) have been responsible for the destruction of more than three quarters of the burnt forest area in Catalonia and this is also the case for most of the countries that make up the Mediterranean Basin. These wildfires produce the transformation of the landscape components such as vegetation and soil. Despite this, wildfires bring to landowners the opportunity to learn about past decisions. This article aims to analyse the responses (definition of objectives, strategies and actions) of forest owners in central Catalonia after the great forest fires of the 80s and 90s. Through interviews with associated owners and participant observation in owner's meetings, we wish to observe what processes of social learning have been given to this collective and what mechanisms they use to try to create socio-ecological structures that are less vulnerable to fire. Associationism, unusual in the world of Catalan forest ownership despite the great number of private forest areas, seems to be a strategy of cooperation which has come about from the need to link ecological and social structures in the territory, which we define as socio-ecological resistance. The main results are that the goals and actions that associations of owners develop have both an instrumental and emotional component. Reason, emotion and action are the three vertices of socio-ecological resistance to fire.

Keywords: Wildfires; forest management; forest owners' associations; social learning; resistant socio-ecological structure.