

From the Editors

Volume six of the *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* is devoted to different aspects of the process of globalization. The first article by Pedro Hespanha discusses the negative effects of globalization in the case of Portugal. It seems that rural areas are being transformed into non-productive zones by the policies of the European Union. The affiliation to the European Union and the competition from newly industrialised countries has produced a situation where traditional sectors of the economy are threatened in their capacity to survive. In the agricultural sector the implementation of the "North European productivist and technological model" has pushed forward a process of standardisation of products "in the name of consumer preference". As a consequence small producers unable to adapt to these change may end up becoming squeezed out from the regional field of economic activities.

These economic tendencies are matched by a European bureaucracy which is distantiated from small producers and in need of local control. This as an issue, apparently is solved by

the generation of local agencies which mediate and implement European Community bureaucracy decisions; the outcome of this process seems to be a slow and more expensive process of policy implementation. Apparently this situation has favoured a process of 'artificial' creation of producers organisation which are 'dependent' economically and technically on the State. Hespanha argues that in Portugal aspects of the globalization process are entangled with the process of modernisation.

The implementation of European Union policies has produced a dramatic rupture of national agricultural policies and this has brought the dissarticulation of the traditional forms of use of natural resources. Hespanha explains this local process of transformation following a rather 'traditional' view of the 'new' international political configurations. He sees Portugal as a semi-peripheral member state in Europe and the meaning of this is express in a sharing of sovereignty and an increase in the centrality of the nation-state regulation in the internal affairs (social and political issues).

Hespanha contends, that in the compulsive nature of globalization and modernisation in the Portuguese economy

is producing dramatic changes at the local level, in this sense, the discontent and protest in the countryside are expressions of populations that feel abandoned and betrayed by the local political power and by the State regulation policies. The dynamic of globalization is mainly presented as creating new vulnerabilities and the abandonment of traditional farming and crop production. In short, globalization represents the loss of local and regional capacity to negotiate the destructive effects of the enlargement of agricultural markets.

Local aspects of the process of globalization are also raised by Cristina Cruces Roldan. The author discusses the process of transformation of small agricultural producers, who traditionally acted as wage-labourers for Andalusian landowners, into the backbone of the so-called "new agriculture", characterised by out of season horticultural production.

Technical innovations and infra-structural investment in glass-houses and irrigation has transformed the Andalusian landscape. Cristina Cruces fascinating description of Andalusian agricultural social change is somehow slightly undermined by locating the traditional vertical integration of capitalism as the

main generating driven force that is shaping this local processes. In the account of Cruces the Andalusian case presents similar characteristics to the one described by Feder in the case of strawberries expansion in Mexico (1977, *Strawberry Imperialism: An Enquire into the Mechanisms of Dependency in Mexican Agriculture, The Hague: Institute of Social Studies*).

What is significant in the paper of Cruces is how the technical innovations has invaded the spheres of local organisation and spread the information about the 'new agriculture'. The increase in the use of agro-chemistry has affected the bio-diversity in the region. She argues that North European markets appear as the driving force of these transformations, however in the 1990's Andalusia has not changed the traditional lack of quality control nor regional dependency on the central accumulation circuits that direct value to the external 'world' while generating ecological degradation at local level.

In this paper, the "new agriculture" of Andalusia is presented as caught in a 'Punch and Judy' sort of interaction, that has nominated Andalusia as the 'New European California'. In Cruces's paper

we find an innovative methodological way of using Chayanov's approach to the domestic group in the 'new agriculture', provides us with an important empirical inside into the logic of these small units of producers and their commodities. Cruces shows how in an era of globalization, small producer units are still highly competitive vis-à-vis- larger capitalist unit of production.

In this paper , Cruces describes the effects of globalization as significant in relation to transformations in production and the use of natural resources, however, she is less optimistic in relation to the effects of this 'new agriculture' on the auto-exploitation of the family labour and in the long term ecological and social consequences of this process of production.

The article by Carla Grass shifts attention to the process of re-structuration of the agro-industries, according to her these processes are related to macro-social processes which are linked with the globalization of national economies. To describe the heterogeneity of this connection at local and regional level implies the need to see these transformations according to the global markets and productive systems, as

well as how they are related to the regional and local actions of actors' practices and forms of organisation.

Among the process identified is the role of trans-national enterprises in the local market which has made local firms to disappear. The paper illustrates this process through the analysis of the Argentinean Tabasco industry. Grass describes the integration of local economies in the 'world economy', the lost of regulation and control of the national State and the process of commodity adaptation to the demanded markets, by the injection of fresh capital and technology, this process is conducive to the construction of global actors, their presence and strategies finally has challenged the old economic agents in Argentina.

In the new scenario the stability of small producers has been affected, their conditions of production and life-style substantially decreased and this, in spite of small producers having increased their productivity. Small producers debts with financial institutions have increased their economic vulnerability. This phenomenon has significantly affected Argentinean regional economies. Nevertheless, local producers continue to

build strategies to survive in this, their relationships with dealers are shown as an important mechanism. The conclusion stresses a new 'social construction', which apparently has arisen with the process of globalization, in this construction all social actors are involved, negotiations and processes of re-accommodation are taking place, not through an homogeneous process but mainly based on the actors' experiences with the agro-industry integration and the constitution of the local organisation, this experience has provided the background to develop new resources, skills and capacities, with these local actors are confronting the new global scenario.

In the paper of Alberto Arce there is a critical examination of the notion of global consciousness. The paper analyses the paradoxical problems of how to develop interpretations relevant to processes of change that are taking place in the world, the paper attempts to combine the study of individual's social practices and experiences with 'others'. Taking the case of actors' in Chile the paper argues that the globalisation concept does not provide us with a systematic and holistic vision, but instead

the global image generates a diversity of 'personal' visions of the world. The author argues that to re-conceptualised in sociology the concept of global processes we need to analyse people's contemporary practices in order to elaborate an interpretation of how 'modernity' is put to work. In this vein, the paper is in tune with several of the other contributions in this issue, but it does depart radically from them in the way the paper describes how actors translate into practice new globally- orientated economic ventures. Using the illustration of how the consumption of food objects take place, it stresses how processes of 'objectivisation', arise among consumers. The paper demonstrates that the main element constructing the social, technical and economic reality of agricultural commodities are produce and consume should be sought in the ways that consumers, retailers and producers have actively engaged in actualising the global flows of these agricultural commodities. In conclusion one can say that, the issue of global transformation of agriculture is a consequence of the sociological phenomena involving the multiplicity of actors interconnections rather than an effect of the driven force of international

economic structures.

The final paper by Eleanor Fisher presents a detailed case study of the importance of the international 'fair trade' market in honey and beeswax from Western Tanzania. The author examines producers decision-making in relation to a diversity of market options-local, regional and international- and argues that fair trade retail outlets in Europe enable consumers to buy goods believing that the commodities have been produced and sold in ways that are in keeping with their desire to promote global relations of justice, equity and development. However this 'global consciousness' does not always represent the complexities and 'realities' of local trade, and furthermore the meanings for consumers and producers do not symmetrically correspond. This implies that the concept of 'fair', while important in the West, becomes meaningless for local Tanzanian producers. Despite this, the asymmetrical relation of agricultural commodity markets does not necessarily mean that 'fair' international trade is not potentially important for local producers. The case study demonstrates that a commodity like honey can be a medium around which processes of development can be

constructed. In the paper of Fisher it is the value embedded in commodities and the diverse interpretations that can be made of this value, that enables actors to perform different roles and actions in the fair trade network. In this sense, the globalising tendencies carried by the circulation of honey and wax are ambiguous and cannot always provide clear-cut negative or positive consequences for 'locally situated realities'. This paper slightly departs from some of the other contributions in this volume, because it does not condemn globalization as producing always negative effects for local realities. In summary, globalization as a process carries a discontinuity of value, brought to light in the ways that producers and consumers attribute differential and distanced meanings to locally situated process of production and consumption.

As the authors of these papers point out in their contributions, analysis of the globalization processes at local level is in its initial stages and consequently far from complete. The circulation of commodities, the discontinuities in values, the organisation of actors' strategies, the movements of protest and discontent, and transformations in local

agriculture are all aspects that need further consideration when we are referring to globalization processes. The papers contained in this volume are an initial contribution to the 'global-local' venture.