

FROM THE EDITOR

The forum of the present issue of the *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* is devoted to the relationship between sociology and economics in the study of development. This theme has assumed increasing importance in recent years for a variety of reasons. First, problems of development have become increasingly complex. This situation has motivated interdisciplinary research involving both sociologists and economists. Second, debates internal to economics and sociology have pointed out limits in both disciplines. Attempts to overcome these limits have often indicated solutions which involve extra-disciplinary options. Third, economics and sociology have taken diverging epistemological directions. Economics has grown to be more formalized. Sociology has opted, to a large extent, for less formalized and more flexible epistemological postures.

The overall outcome of changes in the relationship between sociology and economics is a contradictory one. In a situation in which more dialogue is necessary, the two disciplines are evolving in opposite directions. In a situation in which interdisciplinary research seems to be a fundamental step toward the effective study of current issues, disciplinary rigidity is dominant. This situation assumes particular importance in a context in which the difficulty of overcoming the intellectual division of labor between the two disciplines is made more relevant by the crisis of models assuming unity of science. Indeed, both Positivism and, more recently, Marxism have been the subjects of various attacks and/or dismissals.

In his article Professor Vernon Ruttan explores

possible patterns of cooperation between sociology and economics at the metatheoretical level. This endeavor, however, is not conducive to satisfactory results, the author argues, as metatheory in sociology has little to offer to economics. It is stressed, instead, that «middle range» approaches provide more attractive opportunities for cooperation between the two disciplines.

A more pessimistic view of the relationship between sociology and economics is provided by Enzo Mingione. Responding to Ruttan's article, Mingione underscores the connection between the intellectual division of labor and the internal evolutions of sociology and economics. In his view, a possible common ground between the two disciplines is impossible. The increased formalization of economics has enabled students to develop increasingly homogenous theoretical assumptions and a common body of knowledge. Conversely, sociology has been characterized by the development of competing paradigms which have fragmented the discipline. This situation, however, has made sociology more suitable for explaining existing complex social relations. Ultimately, these diverging paths are impossible to reconcile.

A different direction is taken by Lawrence Busch in his piece "Metatheories and Better Theories." Busch underscores the metatheoretical differences and similarities between sociology and economics. At the same time, he argues the undesirability of a division of the social sciences. He proposes, instead, the creation of a science which would encompass all of society's complexities.

The "articles" section contains contributions which touch upon aspects of the internalization of the process of agricultural and food production. Through the use of specific national cases, the impact of the evolution of international relations on specific societies is assessed.

In the first paper, Bye, Fonte and Frey employ input-output analysis to illustrate the relationship between trade and the internal structures of agro-food systems. Utilizing the case of Chile, they argue that indiscriminate export-oriented liberalization policies lead to homogenization of techniques, specialization in agriculture and an extraverted economy. Paradoxically, this situation runs counter to the enhancement of global exchange in agriculture. Alternatively, selected protectionist policies may result in the diversification of production and the enhancement of international trade.

The following paper by Giacitúa Marió and Bello addresses the relevance of disarticulation in regard to Third World development. The concept of disarticulation refers to the absence of a significant association between production growth and changes in consumption patterns within one country. It is maintained that higher levels of disarticulation are related to decreasing levels of food consumption in the Third World. This situation is ultimately detrimental to the well-being of the populations of underdeveloped countries.

The article by Marie-Christine Renard entitled "World Market and Regional Economy" addresses the evolution of the coffee sector in the Soconusco region of Mexico. She argues that the emergence of a global economy has altered the previously established relationships between coffee production and the evolutions of international market and capital. This situation has generated a reduction of state intervention in support of the price of coffee and an intensification of the processes of exploitation of local labor and of the environment.

Luis Llambi's "Open Economies and Closed Markets" provides an analysis of the changes in agricultural trade relations in Latin America. It is maintained that the "unilateral" opening of Latin American to free market oriented policies is not conducive to socio-economic development of that

region. Solutions for sustainable balanced socio-economic growth ought to be sought, Llambi continues, through strategies emphasizing food security and a new development of the agricultural and food sector.

The case of a specific Latin American country, Venezuela, is examined by Professors Morales and Montilla in their article entitled «Effects of Measures of Economic Adjustment in the Agricultural Sector in Venezuela.» In this work it is maintained that the economic measures adopted by the Venezuelan government respond both to strategies imposed by the International Monetary Fund and to the overall principles of economic liberalism. It is concluded that the action of the government in agricultural matters is ultimately consistent with the global division of labor in agriculture and with the interests of food exporting countries.

The following article by Lourdes Gouveia shifts the focus of analysis to the United States. Employing the case of the meatpacking industry in Nebraska, she illustrates the relationship between the internationalization of the agro-food sector and local actors and social relations. Findings indicate that growth of the meatpacking industry in that region has been fueled by the use of migrant workers from Central and Latin America and has resulted in the degradation and restructuring of local communities.

The last article of this section abandons the theme of the socio-economic implications of the international reorganization of the agricultural and food sector to address theoretical issues in the study of agricultural and rural topics. In "Theory, Epistemology and Critical in Rural Sociology," Bonanno and Swanson provide an epistemological alternative to both Weberian scholarship and Structural Marxism. Their objective is to illustrate the tenets of critical sociology and its possible applications to the study of the agricultural and food sector.

The "Proposed Research" section concludes this issue of the IJOSAF. It contains the research proposal "The Globalization of the Agricultural and Food Sector and the State". Written by a group of researchers associated with the Research Committee on Sociology of Agriculture and Food, the proposal describes a plan

to research the relationship between the State and current processes of globalization of the agricultural and food sector. Focusing on the gap between the transnationalization of the economy and the still national dimension of the polity, research is planned on the manners in which the State responds to changes occurring in the socio-economic sphere.

The publication of this issue of the International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food marks the end of the second year of activity of the journal. Thanks to the work of the editorial consultants, the staff at CENDES and at the University of Missouri, and certainly of the authors, quality articles have been published and conditions for the furthering of the North-South dialogue have been reinforced. An increase in the diffusion of the journal and the publication of outstanding articles addressing other relevant topics in the area of agriculture and food are among the primary tasks for the future. It is in these directions that we encourage additional cooperation from our readership and the interested international scientific community.

